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On the Battlefield

Exploring Gendered Experiences of Being Infantry in the New Zealand Army

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Abstract

Prompted by the question 'why aren't there more women in combat trades?', this research reaches beyond this to ask about the broader gendered context of the Infantry. Bringing in the experiences of both men and women, this thesis contributes a more nuanced understanding of the gendered issues at play by identifying what factors enable or inhibit success. As such, this thesis seeks to address a gap in knowledge that currently exists with respect to the experiences of men and women working together within a hypermasculine gender integrated combat-focused unit. It does so through the conduct of a qualitative study of soldiers enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) of the New Zealand Army (NZ Army).

As this thesis will reveal, the production of 'war-fighters' is not an accidental or inevitable process. Infantry soldiers are socialised into certain ways of thinking and doing, and it is the performance of institutionalised habits, traditions and behaviours that makes an individual Infantry. The production of a war fighter is, therefore, a purposeful process of creating a particular type of Infantry soldier that is deemed to be most effective on the battlefield. What also becomes apparent in the course of this research, however, is that 'success' within Infantry is a complex concept; one which is underpinned by a specific gender performance, and which requires negotiation of a number of factors that extend beyond the professional realms of the 'actual job'.

Notwithstanding the need to produce 'war-fighters' this thesis argues that the way in which Infantry soldiers are produced within the NZ Army perpetuates a very specific masculine gendered ideology within the RNZIR. This ideology is based on both assumptions and understandings (and also misunderstandings) of gender, coupled with a battlefield narrative that inhibits the possibility of contesting the 'status quo'. This thesis will illustrate that while some of the participants thrive within this context, others do not. Indeed, the gendered ideology which supports 'the way things are done around here' inhibits the participation (and retention) of many men and women, including men and women who exhibit the same qualities and attributes that are claimed to be necessary for Infantry success on the modern, or future, battlefield.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

In 1986 a schoolgirl made an inquiry to the New Zealand Prime Minister (the Rt Hon David Lange at the time), about why she could not train as an Air Force pilot (Chen, 1990). This query sparked a chain of political events, beginning with a three month debate between the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and Government regarding the policy that barred women from being committed to combat (Chen, 1990). The NZDF's stance on the debate was that committing mixed gender forces to combat would be socially and operationally "irresponsible" (Chen, 1990, p.96). The NZDF made its stance clear by stating that: "to employ women in combat units would prejudice the chance to maintain a cost effective and combat ready force" (Chen, 1990, p.96). Government's rebuttal was, however, that:

> we fail if we pursue the goal of effective and combat ready forces through a policy of unfair discrimination against members of our community. The elimination of such discrimination and the pursuit of effective defence do not have to be incompatible (Chen, 1990, p.96).

The decision was therefore made to have the combat exclusion policy revoked. This meant that, from 2000 onwards, women had the same opportunity as men to enlist into any trade within the NZDF that was deemed 'combat' (Chen, 1990). For the New Zealand Army (NZ Army) this included enlistment into trades of the Artillery, Armoured and Infantry corps.

This anecdote illustrates the power of asking a question. Prior to 1986 it was presumably considered the norm that women should not be committed to combat. Women within New Zealand society were up until, and during, the 1980s regarded as home makers, not 'life takers' (Dalziel, 2001; Johnston, 1974; Phare, 1993). Although women had been allowed to enlist in the NZDF since World War Two, it was accepted as normal that their military service should be confined to supporting, or 'non-combat', roles. Women's participation in combat, a term defined by the NZDF as "killing or capturing along with the associated risk of being killed or captured" (Chen, 1990, p.13), was seen to pose a critical risk to the operational

effectiveness[1] of the NZDF. It was also viewed as a disruption to the social order of New Zealand. However, the simple asking of a question brought about a discussion of the validity of these norms, and ultimately lead to women having equal opportunities of enlistment and employment within the NZDF.

In 2019, another question was asked. This time it was by the senior leadership of the NZ Army, who wanted to know why there were not *more* women in combat trades. Twenty years after the removal of the combat exclusion, the numbers of women within combat roles equated to less than 3% of the total number of uniformed NZ Army personnel (Brosnan & Jefferies, 2019). This percentage was less than that of women within the broader context of the NZ Army (a figure which had reached nearly 15% by 2019). In a complete reversal of previous sentiment, women's participation in combat was now regarded as an operational enabler. Therefore, NZ Army senior leadership wanted to understand how to attract and retain more women in combat roles. The origin of my research lies with this question.

However this thesis is not solely about the participation of women within combat roles of the NZ Army. It is a thesis that explores gender as a particular construct that shapes the lives of both men and women, and which underpins understandings of what it means to be a combat soldier. To only explore the experience of women would fail to take account of the fact that the experiences of men are also shaped by gendered assumptions and expectations. This thesis is, therefore, a study of the lived reality of being in a combat trade of the NZ Army, as experienced by both men and women.

While there are several combat trades within the NZ Army, my research focuses on the experiences of members of the Regular Force (RF) Infantry soldier trade that sits within the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR). Infantry was selected as the focus of this research as it is the largest combat soldier trade of the NZ Army. It is a trade that has also struggled, since the removal of the combat exclusion policy, to either attract or retain female soldiers. This chapter introduces the context of the RNZIR, presents the research questions,

[1] Operational effectiveness can be defined as the ability of a miltiary force to achieve required outcomes wtihin a given operational setting.

provides an overview of how the study proceeds and concludes by presenting an outline of the thesis structure.

1.2 The Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR)

The purpose of the NZ Army is "to sustain a combat-ready force postured to secure New Zealand against external threat, to protect its sovereign interests, and be able to take action that meets likely contingencies in its strategic areas of interest" (NZ Army, 2023, p.3). The Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) contributes towards the NZ Army's ability to achieve this purpose through the provision of Regular Force Infantry officers and soldiers who are trained in the application of both lethal and 'non-lethal' force.

The NZ Army regulates its Regular Force Infantry capability through the sustainment of two Infantry units. These units are named 1 RNZIR and 2/1 RNZIR, also referred to as 1st Battalion and 2nd/1st Battalion[2] respectively. 1st Battalion is based at Linton Military Camp (near Palmerston North, in the North Island of New Zealand), and 2nd/1st Battalion is based at Burnham Military Camp (near Christchurch, in the South Island of New Zealand). Both Infantry units consist of three Rifle Companies and a Support Company. Whilst numbers of personnel within each Battalion will fluctuate according to recruitment and attrition, the total number of positions within 1st and 2nd/1st Battalion (including both officer and soldier roles) is approximately 475 and 390 respectively (NZDF, 2024). The actual number of Infantry soldiers and officers enlisted in the NZ Army is generally greater than the number of positions within the Infantry Battalions as Infantry personnel will also take up roles within the broader Army context. At the commencement of this research, there were 1130 Regular Force Infantry soldiers and officers enlisted in the NZ Army. This represented approximately 20 percent of the NZ Army's uniformed personnel (NZDF, 2021a).

The Rifle Company of an Infantry Battalion is often the first posting location of a newly enlisted Infantry Private soldier. It is here, upon successful completion of ab initio[3] training and Combat Corps Training, that an Infantry Private will consolidate their learning and

[2] 2nd/1st Battalion is spoken as 'second first' Battalion.
[3] Ab initio training refers to the initial military training (i.e., recruit training) of newly enlisted personnel.

understanding of what it means to be a member of the RNZIR. A Private is the lowest ranked soldier within the RNZIR, and has few responsibilities other than to follow orders and to undertake the Infantry tasks that they have been assigned (such as firing weapons, communicating via radio, navigating terrain and applying first aid). Infantry Privates will also be expected to perform their role as a member of an Infantry 'section', which is a small team of eight to ten soldiers commanded by a Non Commissioned Officer (NCO)[4] of Corporal rank (NZ Army, 2021).

Both 1st Battalion and 2nd/1st Battalion have a number of layers of hierarchy based on unit structure and rank. Whilst Infantry Privates will generally be employed as a member of an Infantry section that is commanded by a Lance Corporal or Corporal, three Infantry sections are embedded within a single Rifle Platoon. A Rifle Platoon is commanded by a Commissioned Officer (simply referred to as an 'Officer')[5] of Second Lieutenant or Lieutenant rank, who has an NCO of Sergeant rank working alongside them to provide support and advice. Three Rifle Platoons make up a Rifle Company, and each Rifle Company is commanded by an Officer of Major rank who works with a Company Sergeant Major (CSM) – an NCO of Warrant Officer Class Two (WO2) rank. Each Infantry Battalion within the NZ Army is commanded separately by an Officer of Lieutenant Colonel rank, who is supported by an NCO of Warrant Officer Class One (WO1) rank. Designated levels of responsibility (for both NCOs and Officers) increase in direct correlation with progression in rank, as does their sphere of influence over more junior personnel. Therefore, whilst this thesis focuses primarily on the experiences of Infantry Private soldiers, it is important to note the influence of NCOs and Officers in shaping the hierarchical context of the RNZIR.

As well as the professional expectations of their role, the historical context of the Infantry continues to influence what it means to be a member of the RNZIR (see Chapter 4). New Zealand Infantry soldiers have a proud history of fighting in conflicts that date back to the

[4] NCOs are soldiers who have progressed in rank, through promotion, from Private through to Lance Corporal, Corporal, Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Warrant Officer Class Two and Warrant Officer Class One. Promotion is based on training, time, and performance assessments.

[5] Officers enter the NZ Army as Officer Cadets, and are commissioned as Officers upon graduation at Officer Cadet School (OCS). Due to their commissioned status, officers will hold a position of command over soldiers from graduation. They will also progress in rank based on training, time and performance, from Second Lieutenant to Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel and (potentially) to Brigadier.

South African War in 1899 (Palenski, 2011). Infantry personnel made up the bulk of New Zealand's forces deployed to fight overseas during the First and Second World Wars, and this trend continued through to the more 'modern' wars of Korea and Vietnam (Palenski, 2011). The RNZIR in its current form descends from New Zealand's early fighting forces and proudly displays its predecessors battle honours (Latter, 1992). There is, therefore, an unwritten expectation that Infantry soldiers live up to the traditions and history of the RNZIR.

Often described as the 'backbone' of the NZ Army, the RNZIR more recently ensures the NZ Army's flexibility to respond to a broad spectrum of operations. Whilst trained traditionally for close combat, the NZ Army's Infantry must also be ready to participate within a range of non-combat situations. Examples might include peace keeping, civil support operations, Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) and capacity building with partnered forces. A recent example of the latter is the use of RNZIR personnel to train Ukrainian soldiers as part of the international community's support for Ukraine's self-defence (NZDF, 2023). An example of civil support operations is the deployment of Infantry as part of an NZDF response to assist flood victims of Cyclone Gabrielle within the North Island of New Zealand during February 2023. These types of activities exemplify the changing nature of Infantry tasks, which are no longer confined to seeking out, and engaging with, enemy forces.

The changing demands placed upon Infantry units should necessitate that militaries rethink the way in which Infantry soldiers are trained. Holmes-Eber (2020), for example, discusses how traditional 'Clausewitzean' notions of war (those characterised by destruction, bloodshed, and conquest) are inadequate for dealing with the spectrum of operations now required of modern militaries. Changes to operational or training imperatives are, however, likely to challenge the historical culture of Infantry units, such as the RNZIR, whose identity has been founded upon traditional ideals of soldiering and the primacy of the combat role. Broesder, Op den Buijs, Vogelaar & Euwema (2015) suggest that challenging these also challenges the identities of soldiers themselves, because the military role is often viewed by combat soldiers as a "unidimensional bipolar construct" (p. 520). In other words, warrior and peacekeeper constructs are considered to be mutually exclusive of one another, and as such, "the more warrior a soldier is, the less peacekeeper and vice versa" (Broesder, et al, 2015, p.520). Within the NZ Army, despite typically deploying Infantry soldiers for peacekeeping

roles rather than combat, leadership continues to uphold its warfighting ethos as a primary measure of success (NZ Army, 2023).

The opening of doors to women also potentially challenges traditional notions of what it means to be a soldier in the RNZIR. As Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis will discuss, soldiering has traditionally and purposefully been equated with men and masculinity. This is certainly the case within the RNZIR, as, up until the year 2000, women were prohibited from enlisting as Infantry (or any other trade within the New Zealand Defence Force that was deemed to be 'combat'). Infantry soldiering within the NZ Army was, therefore, masculine by default. The inclusion of women as combatants challenges both societal and institutional gender norms. As MacKenzie suggests, this is largely due to the fact that women as soldiers, "challenges dominant war mythologies, including the myth that women are naturally peaceful and men are naturally violent or heroic" (MacKenzie, 2012, p.45).

Despite the potential challenge posed by women's participation, statistics reveal that the removal of the combat exclusion policy in 2000 has not had a significant influence on gender diversity within the RNZIR. In 2023, with eleven female Infantry soldiers enlisted in the RNZIR, this equates to 1.2% of all Infantry soldiers in the NZ Army (NZDF, 2023). Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that other gendered initiatives, such as NZDF's 'Rainbow Tick'[6] accreditation, has increased the participation of any gender other than male (indeed, there is no statistical data available to verify the participation of LGBTQ+ personnel within the RNZIR.) This situation contributes to tensions within the NZ Army between a stated desire by senior leadership for gender diversity, and the reality of the statistics of gendered participation within the RNZIR.

1.3 Gender Integration and the RNZIR

New Zealand was one of the first countries globally to remove the military combat exclusion policy (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). In 2005, the year at which 'full gender integration' was to have been achieved, a review of gender integration within NZ Army's combat trades was

[6] Accreditation is based upon an assessment of NZDF's policies and practices by the Rainbow Tick organisation, which has deemed the NZDF to be a safe and inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ personnel (NZDF, n.d.).

undertaken (Hanson & Burns, 2005). This review identified that with just three female Riflemen[7] enlisted in the RNZIR, there was much progress yet to be made before gender integration could be assumed successful. In 2021, the statistics of women's participation within Infantry indicated that gender integration remained a notional concept. This issue was further amplified by the fact that the average length of service of female Infantry soldiers was approximately two and a half years, (in comparison to approximately nine years average length of service for men) (NZDF, 2021a). Additionally (in 2024), no female Infantry soldier has yet been promoted beyond the rank of Lance Corporal (NZDF, 2024).

It could be argued that there is no 'gender problem' to solve within the RNZIR, because the arduous and physically challenging role of Infantry necessarily requires the 'right person' to meet its exacting requirements. If the right person happens to be (99% of the time) a man, then this is arguably a necessary consequence of the role itself. Indeed, perceptions of the biological inferiority of women in comparison to men is one reason that women were previously excluded from participating as infantry (Chen, 1990). However, existing literature in this topic area also proposes that the limited participation of women in combat roles is a consequence of an underpinning masculine culture which resists the participation not only of women, but of any performance of gender which is not considered 'masculine enough' (Whitworth, 2004; MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). Regardless of the reasoning, the NZ Army acknowledges that the low representation of women poses an issue in two different ways.

Firstly, the low numbers of women participating in combat roles signifies that the NZ Army is not meeting its self-stated desire to be an employer that practices inclusivity, or which values gender diversity and gender equality. Claims of gender equality might be made across the broader NZ Army context, where female representation in non-combat trades reaches approximately 20% (NZDF, 2023). However, the same cannot be said of combat trades (including Infantry, Armoured, and Artillery), where female representation sits at less than three percent (NZDF, 2023). A Ministry of Defence review in 2014 of women's participation within the NZDF suggested that the impact of an over-representation of women in support trades (and conversely, an under-representation in combat trades) not only indicates a barrier

[7] 'Rifleman' was the trade name previously given to Infantry soldiers, before it was changed to 'Infantry'.

to women's participation within specific parts of the institution – it also means that women are then, "blocked from entering the top ranks of the organisation" (p.30). This is because gaining access to senior ranks reportedly depends upon being enlisted as combat (MoD, 2014).

Secondly, the low representation of women in combat trades represents a gap in operational capability. Since the removal of the combat exclusion policy, the NZ Army has linked gender diversity to operational enhancement, as a more diverse military force reportedly enables better operational engagement with local populations (NZ Army, 2023). Given that militaries are no longer simply required to violently compel an opponent to fulfil their will (Clausewitz, 2010), skills such as cultural competence, communication and conflict resolution become increasingly important (Estilow, 1996; Holmes-Eber, 2020; Goldewijk & Soeters, 2018; Tuck, 2022; Kronsell & Svedberg, 2011). These types of skills have traditionally been linked with femininity, rather than masculinity, and as such women are perceived as having greater ability than men in deploying these skills in operational contexts. As Kronsell & Svedberg (2011) suggest, "'womanly' skills and competencies previously thought to damage the military's fighting capabilities, are now cherished and regarded as necessary for peace-building tasks" (p.10).

Across the world, military forces have, therefore, sought to bring more women into their organisations, either due to a conflation of 'women' and 'feminine traits' or due to a belief that an increased presence of women will encourage a broader uptake of feminine traits across the institution (Pendlebury, 2019; Stevens & Greener, 2017; ; Eichler, 2014; MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). An increase in the number of women participating as combat soldiers, would (according to common belief) also increase the capacity to successfully undertake non-combat tasks (Pham, 2023; Egnell & Alam, 2019; Egnell, 2016). It is this gap in 'womanly' skills which has lead the NZ Army to seek an increase in women's participation as an operational enhancement to the predominantly male composition of its combat force (NZ Army, 2017; NZ Army, 2020; NZ Army, 2023).

Being an inclusive employer and achieving full operational capability are both commendable justifications for seeking to increase gender diversity within combat trades. However, a key

element of the gender integration puzzle, that has not yet been fully considered (if indeed it has been considered at all), is that the low representation of women is indicative of a broader gender issue that not only impacts women, but which *also impacts men*. The fact that men make up approximately 99% of Infantry soldiers has previously indicated that there is no particular problem related to male participation within the RNZIR. However, this assumption inhibits an exploration of how gendered expectations of behaviour and performance might be impacting both men and women. Furthermore, placing the onus of responsibility on women to be the change that is desired does not address the underpinning barriers which inhibited gender diversity in the first place. It is suggested, therefore, that issues of gender diversity might be better understood (and addressed) if gender, and gender integration, were investigated as concepts that include the experiences of both men and women.

1.4 A Qualitative Study of Gender in the RNZIR

Despite statistical indicators of gendered participation, no qualitative research or quantitative research had previously been conducted to understand the gendered experiences of either men or women within the RNZIR. Furthermore, whilst studies internationally have explored the gendered experience of men in combat roles (Wadham, 2013; Hockey, 2014; Woodward, 2000), or the gender integration experiences of women in the military (Heinecken, 2017; MacKenzie, 2015; Cohn, 2000; Carreiras, 2008; Kronsell, 2006; Sion, 2008), few have explored the experiences of both men and women working together within a combat-focused 'gender-integrated' unit. This thesis seeks to address these gaps by undertaking a qualitative study which begins with the research question:

- **What factors inhibit or enable success within the Infantry trade of the New Zealand Army?**

Clearly this question does not focus specifically on gendered experience. Instead it provides the possibility to engage with, and explore, the participants overall experience of being Infantry. However, the two subsidiary questions guide a deeper exploration of the gendered elements of the research context and data to be collected. They also enable an examination of how those factors that either enable or inhibit success (regardless of whether they are

gendered or not) might be influenced. These sub-questions are:

⇒ **Are any of the factors gendered?**

⇒ **Which of the factors are most open to influence?**

The purpose of taking a slightly 'less gendered' approach towards researching gender will be explained within Chapter 5 (the methodology chapter). The findings chapters (Chapters 6 to 8) will also reveal that taking this approach has not detracted from examining the gendered nature of being Infantry.

To answer the research questions, I engaged with two cohorts of participants from the RNZIR. The first was a cohort of senior personnel (both Non Commissioned Officers and Commissioned Officers), who held positions of command, leadership and management as Infantry. Engaging with this cohort allowed an exploration of their own experiences as Infantry, and also a discussion of their perspectives on, and/or experiences of, gender integration in the RNZIR. The second cohort of participants consisted of junior soldiers who had recently enlisted in the RNZIR. I initially engaged with the junior soldiers during ab initio training, which allowed an exploration of their expectations and understandings of what it might be like to be Infantry. I then re-engaged with this cohort approximately twelve months later, once they had been posted to either 1st Battalion or 2nd/1st Battalion (on completion of Combat Corps Training). It was during this second engagement that I was able to explore the junior soldiers' lived reality of being Infantry as compared to their imaginings.

My aim throughout the research process was to 'make sense' of the participants' lived experience of being Infantry in the New Zealand Army. It is the human experience of being Infantry which underpins and contextualises the statistical data, and generating knowledge of human experience is a valid means of understanding both the extent and causes of social issues (Sarantakos, 2013; Flick, 2018). My research also sought to make sense of the way in which *gender* may shape the participant experiences and their perceptions of their lived reality. In order to do this, my research is framed by a social constructionist perspective (which will be elaborated on in chapter 5). Social constructionists contend that reality is not a fixed or pre-determined state; instead, it is produced socially through shared habits, human interactions and perceptions (Couper, 2015; Flick, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Social

constructionism is an important concept for understanding gender (see Chapter 2), and also a key concept for understanding the 'making' of Infantry soldiers.

It is also important to note that this thesis still uses binary understandings of gender. In other words, it explores the experiences of men and women, rather than exploring the experiences of people who identify with other gender categories, such as transgender or gender fluid. The decision to constrain this research to binary categories was twofold. Firstly, these are the categories of gender with which Infantry (and indeed, NZ Army) personnel are most familiar and comfortable discussing. It was considered important, therefore, to use the categories of gender that would maximise participant engagement with the research study. Secondly, as alluded to earlier in this chapter, although this binary conceptualisation is under pressure, there is no data available to suggest that there are any soldiers employed within the RNZIR who openly identify as a gender category other than male or female.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research it was also important to acknowledge, from the outset, my position as an 'insider' researcher to the NZ Army. This is a position that had the potential to impact (both positively and negatively) on the research process, and as such necessitated a high degree of reflexivity. The concept of reflexivity necessitates a critical self-awareness of how one's previous lived experiences might influence perceptions and/or understandings of the research and the research data (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2014; Ackerly, 2008; Mann, 2018). The concept of reflexivity will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5 (Methodology), however given the importance of my own position within this research the following section provides a detailed account of my experiences within the NZ Army, and explains what being a military 'insider' meant for me as a researcher.

1.5 Research as an 'Insider' to the NZ Army

My journey as a member of the NZ Army began in 1996 when I was encouraged by my parents to apply for an Officer Selection Board (OSB). I had very little understanding at the time of what being an Officer in the NZ Army meant, or even what an Officer in the NZ Army did. However, after completing a Bachelor of Arts (with majors in English and French) at Massey University, I liked the idea of a career that would provide more interesting opportunities than

those which my academic degree were likely to afford. I also enjoyed being outdoors (albeit mostly horse riding), and considered that an 'outdoors' job with the career opportunities that the NZ Army offered would be a good suit for me. Somewhat naively, therefore, I attended an OSB in May 1996 and upon selection began my training as an Officer Cadet at Officer Cadet School (OCS) in January 1997.

1.5.1 Being an NZ Army Officer

Being an Officer Cadet in the NZ Army is the officer equivalent to being a recruit as a soldier. However, instead of training for four months to become a soldier, officer training is completed over a 12 month period. It specifically focuses on developing the knowledge and skills required to be a platoon commander, which is typically the first position of responsibility that a newly graduated officer will be posted to. As a platoon commander, a new officer will be responsible for the command and management of approximately 30 soldiers. However, although officers graduate from Officer Cadet School (OCS) into a wide range of corps (from combat through to combat service support), the training at OCS is designed around the role of an Infantry platoon commander. As such, there is a strong emphasis placed upon the ability to plan and execute Infantry tactical manoeuvres. Much of the assessment of the leadership capabilities of officer cadets is also conducted in the field environment, which entails the demonstration of competence at creating tactical plans, giving orders, and leading teams. This assessment is made more challenging due to the arduous conditions of the field (which necessitates walking long distances, carrying heavy loads, digging holes and essentially living for up to two weeks at a time in all weather, seasons and terrain). It is, therefore, a difficult 12 months of training and it is not uncommon to have a non-completion rate of 40-50 percent within a 12 month course.

My OCS class graduated in December 1997 and included six female and 12 male Officer Cadets. The number of female officer cadets equated to 30 percent of the class, which was approximately twice the overall percentage of women in the NZ Army. At the time I was not cognisant that this was an anomaly, nor was I aware of any differences in the ability of female Officer Cadets to complete the OCS training in comparison to the males as it appeared equally difficult for both genders (other than an observation that my male peers had superior abilities

when it came to digging holes and climbing six foot walls). This was confirmed by my informal observation that a significant number of *both* men and women did not complete the course – either by choice, due to injury, or because of a performance related decision by the Commandant OCS. Eight male members (and no female members) of our class were, in fact, 'back squadded' just one week prior to our graduation date. This meant they were required to repeat the second six months of OCS training before being permitted to graduate.

On reflection, however, there were a number of instances during my 12 months at OCS where my gender did perhaps result in a slightly different type of experience than that of my male peers. For example, I don't recall the male officer cadets being issued handbags. The female officer cadets were issued two different styles, one shiny black 'evening' bag and one large brown leather 'work' bag. Nor do I recall the male officer cadets being told by the female staff members that they looked like a 'pack of sluts'. This happened to the female Officer Cadets after we had unwittingly worn make up and put our hair in pony tails, instead of buns, at our first formal mess dinner. I also don't remember any of my male colleagues being sent an inappropriate 'love letter' by a member of staff. However, while these examples of gendered difference (i.e., sexism) appeared odd at the time, I generally found them to be entertaining or annoying rather than detrimental. I considered myself to be a resilient individual, and it is therefore important to acknowledge that someone with less resilience towards sexist behaviours may have experienced these situations differently. For me, however, such experiences did not create doubt in my mind about whether or not I wanted to, or could, perform the role as an officer in the NZ Army. Instead, I felt that it was simply necessary to shrug it off and carry on.

I did become more aware during my time at OCS that there were different expectations for being an officer within different corps of the NZ Army. This difference was exemplified to me by the process towards the end of OCS, where Officer Cadets are given an opportunity to indicate which corps they would like to graduate into. It was during this process that it became obvious that each corps had a specific 'type', and that selection of which officer would go to which corps was based around an individual's potential fit. Those Officer Cadets selected to go to Logistics or Engineers, for example, had a distinctly different demeanour than those graduates selected for Infantry. To be selected to graduate as a combat officer also appeared

to be associated with a higher level of prestige than selection for a ‘non-combat’ corps. In 1997, the possibility for women to graduate into combat corps was just beginning to open, with the first female officer having graduated two years prior to my course into the Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA). The female Officer Cadets’ ability to fit within combat corps officer roles therefore appeared to be scrutinised in greater detail than that of the male Officer Cadets.

I am not sure how many of my female peers listed a combat corps as one of their preferred options, however of the six female Officer Cadets in my class one graduated as a combat officer into the RNZA. At that time, no female Officer Cadet had yet graduated to the Royal New Zealand Armoured Corps (RNZAC) or the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR). This was to occur the following year, in 1998. The high level of scrutiny applied to women selecting combat corps as a preferred option did not unduly affect me, as I had developed a particular aversion to being Infantry due to the training endured throughout OCS. In my mind, Infantry was equated with carrying heavy loads and living a subsistence lifestyle in bad weather. The RNZIR was, therefore, not one of my selected options, and neither was the RNZAC.

I did, however, list RNZA as one of my preferred options as our exposure to the role of this corps during our time at OCS had appealed, and was subsequently advised that I wasn’t physically fit enough for this corps. This decision was made despite the fact that I was the only female Officer Cadet who had completed every field exercise during the year at OCS without having been withdrawn for any reason (as one of my male colleagues suggested a few years later, I was also quite possibly the only Officer cadet to have achieved this feat that year, regardless of gender). I was instead told that the decision was based on the fact that I had failed the press up component of a Required Fitness Level (RFL) assessment during the latter half of the year. This assessment was made despite having passed the subsequent RFL without difficulty. As a result, I was considered for my alternate choice of corps: the Royal New Zealand Signals Corps (RNZSigs). This corps had appealed to me due to the technical nature of the signals trades. My ‘fit’ within this corps was also clearly assessed to be adequate, as I graduated from OCS in December 1997, with the rank of Second Lieutenant, as a Royal New Zealand Signals Officer.

Although the rank of Officer Cadet is viewed with disdain by most people in uniform, graduating from OCS as a Second Lieutenant resulted in an immediate change in our position within the NZ Army. An example of this change was indicated through certain practices of addressing other people in uniform. For example, we no longer had to stand to attention when addressing Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs). The NCOs (and indeed, anyone that wasn't an Officer) now had to address us as either 'ma'am' or 'sir', and also salute us while we would salute them back. We could now also call officers of Captain rank, and below, by their first name, rather than the obligatory 'ma'am' and 'sir' that we had used as an Officer Cadet. Our living arrangements also shifted from the Officer Cadet training barracks to the Officers Mess. This meant a higher level of luxury than we had previously experienced. For example, we were waited on by stewards in the dining room, rather than eating from self-service buffet style meal options that officer cadets or soldiers would normally have. We had a cleaning service for our rooms once a week, and were no longer subjected to inspections of our dress, rooms or equipment. We were also permitted to drink at the Officers Mess bar, which is purposefully separated from the bars where NCOs and Private soldiers (or 'baggies') might drink. There was, therefore, a particular sense of prestige and privilege associated with being a graduated officer – both in comparison to being an officer cadet, as well as in comparison to being a soldier. After spending 12 months of relative hardship at Officer Cadet School, the changes and prestige that came with graduation felt slightly surreal, but also well-deserved.

My first posting after graduation was to The Army Depot (TAD), where I was to perform the role of platoon commander for recruits undertaking Basic Training. One of the reasons that I was posted to TAD rather than directly to a Signals unit was that it had been decided by the Commandant of OCS that I needed to improve my ability to apply leadership direction in a more authoritative manner. In other words, my leadership style at OCS did not include enough yelling and forcefulness, and it was believed that being put in charge of recruits would help to rectify this perceived flaw. I was fortunate, however, that my Officer Commanding at TAD did not consider this to be a weakness. He also recognised that my effectiveness as an officer did not depend upon my ability to yell at people. I know this because he wrote a report to this effect, and he also explicitly stated these words to me. Upon reflection, it was fortunate that this was specifically drawn to my attention at such an early stage of my career.

Understanding that there was a space within the NZ Army for demonstrating a less 'authoritative' style of leadership no doubt had an influence on my leadership style from that point forward. While my rank required certain decisions or actions as a result of being in a position of command, overall my style would probably be described as more collaborative and less egoistic than the style I observed from a number of other officers around me. Whether this was an asset or a hindrance to my career progression, I am undecided. Humility, for example, certainly does not appear to be rewarded within the NZ Army as much as assertiveness and over-confidence. However, I do feel that this particular way of 'doing' leadership was a truer reflection of my personality.

During the next fifteen years I experienced Army life within a number of different units and whilst undertaking a variety of roles. By 2013 I had been posted to units based in Burnham, Waiouru and Linton Military Camps. I had been overseas on exercises and on operational deployment. I had worked in operational units, training schools and staff headquarters. I had completed career courses and been promoted through the officer ranks to Major (the first rank at which officers are considered to be 'senior' officers). I had also had two children, both boys, who were born in 2000 and 2006 respectively. In hindsight, I would not have continued within the NZ Army up until this point had it not have been for a particular female Officer Commanding (OC) who was to be my new boss on return from parental leave in 2001, after having my first child. I was intending to leave the NZ Army at this time, primarily because I perceived the commitments of being an effective Signals Officer (which necessitated significant amount of time away from home on training exercises) to be incompatible with my desire to also be an effective parent. However my new OC suggested the idea of 'flexible working', which provided a pragmatic and effective solution to this dilemma. Whilst I can't be certain that this suggestion was made simply because my new OC was female, I am quite sure that flexible working would not have been suggested as an option by my previous OC who happened to be male.

By 2013 I was also completing a Masters of Management, which I had undertaken part-time and outside of work hours as a means of furthering my professional education. To conclude my Masters degree I was about to embark on my first attempt at a research study and I was considering a topic that was beginning to draw attention at the time, which was that of

women's participation and progression within the NZ Army. I was interested in this topic for two reasons: firstly, because I *am* a woman in NZ Army. And secondly, because I was starting to become frustratingly aware of the way in which my own life 'choices' (i.e., being not only a parent to two children, but now also a 'single' parent) created challenges to participation and progression. A report on the topic of women in the NZDF was also released in early 2014 by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). This report was titled "Maximising Opportunities for Military Women in the NZDF", and it outlined the fact that the NZDF needed to take advantage of a potential recruiting pool that was hitherto underrepresented in all three services of the NZDF (i.e. women). The report also provided information about the barriers to the progression of women.

My initial reaction to MoD's report was that although it addressed some of the challenges of being a woman in the NZDF, it took a largely quantitative approach and missed the human aspect of this phenomenon. It also seemed to take the stance that an increase in women's participation was important based primarily on the fact that women represented an untapped recruiting pool, instead of identifying that women are actually pretty good at their job and that increased participation would consequently make the NZDF a far more effective organisation. My idea was, therefore, to undertake research that could address these gaps in understanding. This would be completed by interviewing all women in the NZ Army who were currently serving in the Regular Force, and who had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel (the highest rank held by female officers at the time). I had a further idea that the knowledge gained from this research might then be translated into practical advice to help junior female officers aspiring to progress within the organisation. This made sense to me, as I thought back to my own life choices and how it might have helped if I had a clearer plan of what I was hoping to achieve in my career and how the two might have been made more compatible. My decision was confirmed when I suggested the idea one day to my male boss at the time. To which he replied, "*I think that we already do enough for women in the Army*." That response confirmed my desire to pursue this line of research.

Reaching out to potential participants, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the responses. Every female officer more senior to myself at the time agreed to be interviewed. Furthermore, each gave a full and amazing account of their experiences within the NZ Army. I completed

this research in 2015, which was the first piece of qualitative research that I had conducted as a military 'insider'. It was also judged by the examination process to be of very high quality. Overall, I felt that the Masters research report that I had produced met the initial intent of my research idea. There were a number of themes, however, that came up throughout the process of completing this research study which made me realise that there was still more to consider with respect to enabling women's success within the organisation. In particular, I felt that there was a pervasive resistance to accepting women as equals within the NZ Army, which needed to somehow be 'unpicked'. I was also becoming even more aware of the way in which masculinity, and being a man, could be overly conflated with military competence. My observations were, therefore, beginning to formulate questions in my head of, 'who' is privileged within the NZ Army, and 'why'? These questions perhaps echo my early observations at OCS of the way in which certain ways of 'being' an officer in the NZ Army were more well regarded, over others. My growing consciousness prompted me to think about whether there were different ways of being an NZ Army officer that could be equally recognised and rewarded. I am not sure that I thought of these ideas in terms of 'military masculinity' or 'hegemonic masculinity', as at that stage I had not engaged with literature on these concepts. However, the principles of these ideas were beginning to emerge in my thinking.

By 2019, the NZ Army was continuing to grapple with issues of gender, gender equality and gender integration. The percentage of women in the NZ Army had stagnated at around 15 percent, with very little change during the 23 years since I had enlisted. Questions were also being raised by senior Army leadership about the extreme lack of representation of women in combat trades, which (after 20 years since the removal of the combat exclusion policy) was sitting at approximately three percent. Myself, I was 'still' a Major, having chosen to limit my posting flexibility so that I could maintain being a single parent with shared custody of two children. This meant that I hadn't been able to attend staff college – an assumed pre-requisite for being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. In 2018, during a posting as the Chief Instructor of the NZ Army's School of Signals, I had also had a third child, which threw another career spanner in the works. However, as a result of Army's interest in the topic, and my previous experience in conducting qualitative research, I seized the opportunity to propose a research project which seemed likely to address many of the questions that were being raised with

regard to the participation of women in combat roles. This involved creating an appealing and yet operationally focused research proposal, which was swiftly approved by the Deputy Chief of Army at the time. A key driver for my desire to undertake this research was that it also presented an opportunity to give voice to a group within the NZ Army that I had often observed as being impacted by their position at the bottom of the pecking order within a strictly hierarchical institutional system (i.e., Private soldiers). Conducting a study of how gender impacts upon participation within combat trades of the NZ Army therefore found me heading back to The Army Depot (TAD) to engage with newly enlisted Infantry Privates. The following section will now discuss what this meant in terms of being an insider researcher within the NZ Army context.

1.5.2 Being an 'Insider' Researcher

Before I could begin my research project, I needed to gain access to both the research participants and the research environment. Access is described as having permission to both enter and remain within the research setting, observe activities, speak with participants, and obtain written material that is required to answer the research questions. Access also consists of a secondary and ongoing process which of building relationships and developing trust with participants and key members of the organisation (Navarro, 2013). Access to military personnel for research purposes has been documented as being particularly problematic, due in part to the hierarchical nature of the military institution as well as a general mistrust of 'outsiders' (Ben-Ari & Levy, 2014; Deschaux-Baume, 2012). Gaining access can also be difficult because of the 'gatekeepers' who commonly facilitate this access (Morris, 2015). In line with other military insider experiences (Sheard, 2021; Pendlebury, 2019; Pastor, 2016), my ability to navigate access to the participant locations was distinctly advantaged by being a uniformed member of the NZ Army. Having the insider knowledge and connections to build rapport as both an officer and a researcher enabling ongoing access to, and generation of, data within this project. That said, there were a number of layers of hierarchy that needed to be negotiated before the research could begin.

Access for my research project was initially approved by the Deputy Chief of Army in 2019. I was then provided a sponsor, a Colonel within Army General Staff, who helped to provide 'top

cover' with respect to approaching key gatekeepers of the areas within which my study was to be conducted (Morris, 2015). The primary gatekeepers were the Commanding Officers (COs) of The Army Depot (TAD), 1 RNZIR and 2/1 RNZIR, who I engaged with separately in order to facilitate direct access to the research environment. Once the COs were comfortable with my planned approach, I was then permitted to liaise with the Officer Commanding (OC) of the various companies of their unit to access potential participants. Liaison with the OCs then resulted in being given access to the Platoon Commanders or the Company Sergeant Major (CSM). It was this access that generally resulted in the ability to engage with participants.

Although this sounds like a convoluted process, there was also a high degree of willingness to support the research at all levels of command. In all instances where I approached a unit or subunit for access, for example, I was given assistance to contact specific individuals or I was provided a space for conducting interviews. I felt that my rank of Major also gave me an ability to negotiate more easily both upwards and downwards within NZ Army. Pendlebury (2019) notes a similar experience in regards to his own insider experience as a Wing Commander (the Air Force equivalent of a Lieutenant Colonel), where he states that, "a lower rank may have facilitated easier interaction with cadets and trainee officers, however it is possible that convincing senior leadership of the worth of the research may have been more difficult if I had possessed less rank capital" (p.59). Similar to Pendlebury's (2019) experience, my Major rank was not necessarily high enough to make participants feel uncomfortable, but high enough to suggest credibility amongst senior decision-making and gate-keeping personnel.

Ironically, and despite the advantage of having Major rank, the ultimate aim throughout the research process was to understand how I might be able to break down hierarchical relationships and encourage collaboration (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2014). Given that uniform is a visible signifier of rank and organisational authority (Bonne, 2020; Kirke, 2012; Ben-Ari & Levy, 2014), I chose to wear civilian clothing rather than uniform during interactions with the research participants. I did not pretend that I was *not* a uniformed member of the NZ Army, which would have been an act of deception. However, wearing civilian clothes and referring to myself by my first name, rather than by my rank, helped to develop a non-authoritative

relationality. I also found that the principles of collaboration and humility, previously described as features of my leadership style, were valuable assets as a researcher.

It became apparent throughout the research process, however, that a researcher can never be completely divorced from their work (Greenwood, 2017; Higate & Cameron, 2006). Although I wore civilian clothing and tried to maintain a relaxed atmosphere during my interactions with participants, my status as an 'insider' could not be completely disregarded. I had, for example, initially intended to include observation as one of my qualitative data collection methods, however I discovered that observation as an 'insider' to the military was impossible. Rather than being able to blend into the background as previous outsider researchers had successfully achieved (Harding, 2016), activity organisers often felt compelled to announce my arrival and take me on a guided tour of an activity setting. This meant that participants then felt obliged to observe my rank, rather than continue their activity uninterrupted. Furthermore, due to my obligations with respect to both my rank and the Armed Forces Discipline Act (AFDA), I had to remind participants that if they were to reveal any information to me that indicated that an offence against the AFDA had occurred, then I would be required to report this information. It is unclear whether this altered the information offered by the participants, however I was fortunate enough to not be placed in the position of needing to make such a report.

It was, therefore, essential to maintain a constant reflexive awareness of my position and influence in relation to the research environment, the research 'sponsors', the research participants and the research data (Walker, 2016; Pastor, 2016). I found myself regularly having to adjust my approach, depending on what I wanted, or needed, from a specific person or group of people. I was essentially balancing the need to act in a way that was congruent with my rank, with the need to also mitigate the practical impact that being an officer might have on the research. This was made slightly more difficult given that although I was an 'insider' to the NZ Army, I was an 'outsider' to the RNZIR. That is, I belonged to a different corps (the Royal New Zealand Signals Corps), which meant that I had not completed Infantry courses or experienced many of those ways of 'being' that differentiated Infantry from other corps or trades. My insider/outsider status, therefore, possibly created a sense of mistrust towards my intentions as a woman and an officer, who didn't know 'what it was like' to be

Infantry, conducting a study on, and about, gender within the RNZIR. I therefore made sure that I approached participants without any assumed ideas, and listened to the stories of their experiences without any pre-judgement.

Maintaining a reflexive awareness of my position in relation to the research also meant maintaining an awareness of the way in which my own experiences and perspectives as an insider might be reflected in the research outcomes. As Mann (2016) suggests, "it is important to keep reflexivity at an appropriate scale to avoid a form of qualitative 'navel gazing' (Sparkes 2000: 21; Finlay 2002: 215) and a narcissistic self- preoccupation (at the expense of getting on with the research), or that it privileges the researcher's voice rather than the informants' voices" (p.18). Allowing the participants' voices to tell the story of being Infantry was an important objective of this thesis, and I was conscious of not assuming to know what they had experienced. In saying that, however, my familiarity with being in the NZ Army also gave me an ability to understand and interpret the data through a lens of experiences a civilian might not so readily understand (e.g., the nuances of Army life, or being able to differentiate between those experiences specific to Infantry and those more broadly related to just being in the Army). I also felt that my rank as a Major could also be used as a vehicle through which junior ranked personnel (a group whose voices are often marginalised within a strictly hierarchical institution) might be able to tell their stories and to be heard.

Similar experiences of 'insider' research have previously been noted by other military researchers. Pastor (2016) speaks, as both a PhD student and a uniformed member of the French Land Forces, of having to adapt her behaviour or the presentation of 'self' in order to interact effectively with different groups of participants. Sheard (2021) was also required to navigate potential conflicts of interest relating to her PhD research of NZDF Nursing Officers whilst herself being a uniformed Nursing Officer. Her approach towards potential participants was, therefore, carefully considered to ensure that her own positionality did not unduly influence either participation or the research findings (Sheard, 2021). Pendlebury (2019) also noted that while his military insider status afforded him a great deal of benefits, within his study of Air Force Officer Cadets it also presented "methodological and practical challenges" (p.53) that needed to be carefully considered. It was necessary, for example, to ensure that his own assumptions or biases did not colour the analysis of his research data. Employing

reflexivity was an important aspect of mitigating this risk. These were all considerations that I also needed to maintain throughout the process of my own research, as I navigated my way across the boundaries between academia and the military to complete this doctoral thesis.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This chapter has introduced the RNZIR and the context within which the research and its guiding questions are embedded. It has also, importantly, introduced my own position as both a member of the NZ Army and as an insider researcher. Chapter 2 will discuss definitions of gender and explore how militaries are gendered. This chapter also discusses the impact of masculine norms of behaviour on the performance of both men and women in military roles. Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the purpose of war and warfare and the role of ground combat (or, 'infantry') soldiers. It also illuminates the ways in which the historical connection between men, masculinity, and combat has resulted in a deep-seated resistance towards the inclusion of women as combatants.

The fourth chapter of this thesis introduces the specific historical gendered context of the NZ Army, which sets the scene for the presentation of the research data and findings. Chapter 5 then discusses the methodological approach taken for this research. It will describe the selected research methods being deployed. It will also review the range of practical and ethical considerations that were taken with respect to the research participants and data management.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present an analysis of the research data, contextualised with the relevant existing body of knowledge. Chapter 6 reviews the context of the RNZIR from the perspective of the Senior Leader cohort. Chapters 7 and 8 explore the lived reality of the Junior Soldier cohort at two different timepoints as they experience the first twelve months of being Infantry. The thesis finishes with a chapter (Chapter 9) presenting conclusions derived from the research findings. It directly addresses the research questions and outlines the ways in which this thesis has made an original theoretical contribution to the body of literature on militaries and gender.

Chapter 2: Gender and the Military

2.1 Introduction

As the objective of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which gender influences success within military combat roles, it is essential to understand the broader context of gender relations and gender integration within military contexts. The research draws upon the constructs of both feminism and masculinity, and this chapter presents some of the key literature that explores how these theoretical concepts assist in understanding how militaries are gendered. It will also elucidate the ways in which some specific performances of gender have historically been marginalised within military settings. The chapter begins with a discussion of how gender is defined, and then turns to a discussion of the way in which the gendered ideology of the military has challenged the participation of women. This is followed by a discussion of the impact of masculine norms of behaviour on the performance of both men and women in military roles (which will assist in navigating the subsequent chapter which explores the nature of military combat). This theoretical framing will also help to contextualise the experiences of the research participants who serve within a specific hyper-masculinised domain of the New Zealand Army: the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR).

2.2 Defining Gender

Given that this thesis is oriented to the construct of gender, it is important to examine the different ways in which 'gender' is understood. Rather than referring to the biological differences between men and women (i.e., sex), gender refers to the social and cultural expectations that are ascribed to men and women as a result of their biological differences (Connell, 2002a; Connell, 2005). Perceived gender differences often shape what is acceptable or 'normal' for men and women in terms of behaviour, traits and roles (Connell, 2002a & 2005; Maruska, 2010; Holmes, 2007). Within many Western societies the traits that are commonly associated with men, (and masculinity), include aggression, decisiveness, independence and rational thinking. Conversely, women are more commonly associated with passivity, nurturing, dependence and peace (Maruska, 2010; Buchbinder, 2013; Connell, 2002a; Connell, 2005; Ridgeway, 2011).

Essentialist theories suggest that differences between men and women can be attributed solely to biological difference. Consequently, gender based differences are considered to be predetermined and, as such, have been used to justify gendered inequalities (Maruska, 2010; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). As Pilcher & Whelehan (2004) suggest: "essentialism in this formulation makes constant reference back to biological differences between the sexes, using this logic to explain wider manifestations of sexual difference" (p.41). For example, biological differences have historically been used to justify the exclusion of women from some aspects of society, such as academic and military institutions (Connell, 2005). This being due to the supposedly inferior nature of the brains of women, and their physically weaker bodies (Connell, 2005). Such differences have also been used to excuse certain 'innate' behaviours of men, such as acts of aggression and violence (Connell, 2002a; Whitworth, 2004).

More recent conceptualisations of gender, however, argue that gender is not 'fixed' or predetermined as a result of biology (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004; Connell, 2002a; Butler, 1990). Social constructionist theories of gender instead suggest that it is the socialisation process that occurs *after* birth (rather than biology in itself) that influences the perceptions and experiences of male and female gender based differences (Lindsey, 2021; Holmes, 2007; Ridgeway, 2011). This process begins as soon as a baby is announced to be male or female, and often dressed thereafter in either pink or blue (Lindsey, 2021). Thus, as Connell (2002a) explains, "one is not born masculine, but acquires and enacts masculinity, and so becomes a man" (p.4). The same is also true of women (Connell, 2002a).

The idea that gender is *not* predetermined by biology suggests that men may choose to enact femininity rather than masculinity, as women may also choose to enact masculinity. It is, in fact, common for men and women to display a combination of both feminine and masculine characteristics (Connell, 2002a and 2005). As a social process, however, gender is commonly enacted in line with cultural expectations (Ridgeway, 2011; Connell, 2002a). Indeed, societies have historically been organised around beliefs about the way in which men and women should act, and the roles that they should perform (Ridgeway, 2011, Lindsey, 2021; Butler, 1990; Butler, 2004). The complicit 'doing' of gender by men and women has, therefore, also perpetuated gendered beliefs (Connell, 2002a; Connell, 2005; Butler, 2004; Enloe, 2004; Ridgeway, 2011; Buchbinder, 2013). As Buchbinder (2013) states, "it became normal for men

to leave their homes to find and maintain employment, whereas women remained at home, keeping house and tending children" (p.5). Beliefs and cultural expectations of gender have also resulted in inequities between the lives of men and women.

The feminist movement was borne from a desire to address the inequities that arise as a result of assumptions about gender and, consequently, the roles that men and women are expected to perform (David, 2016; Tong & Botts, 2018; Kent, 2022). Inequities that have also lead to gendered hierarchies and power imbalances between men and women within public and private spheres of life (Kent, 2022). Early (first wave) feminists fought in the 1860s, for example, for the rights of women to vote and have equal access to education (Hannam, 2006). Second wave feminists of the 1960s and 1970s advocated for equal employment opportunities and sought to liberate women from the oppression of domesticity (Hannam, 2006). Feminism has since evolved to incorporate a diverse range of approaches and perspectives, such as 'radical-libertarian feminism', 'Marxist feminism', and 'women of colour feminism' (Tong & Botts, 2018). Whilst liberal and radical feminism originated from first wave feminist activity (Tong & Botts, 2018), more recently (from the 1990s onwards), third wave feminism has paid attention to how intersectional factors, such as race and sexuality, also influence gender inequalities (Tong & Botts, 2018). Ultimately, however, the primary goal of feminism (in its various forms) remains to challenge the oppression of women by men, and advocate for equality between the sexes (Kent, 2022; Tong & Botts, 2018). It is largely due to feminist movements that within many societies it is now possible for men to perform roles that are have been traditionally deemed feminine (and vice versa).

Feminist advocacy for the rights of women to participate fully in society is no doubt largely responsible for the way in which perceptions of gender, and the performance of gender roles, have shifted over time. However, statistics continue to demonstrate distinct patterns of gendered behaviour, and a broad adherence to gendered roles within many societal contexts (United Nations, 2023). This is exemplified by the distribution of unpaid domestic work, of which women globally still spend three times as many hours per day completing in comparison to men (United Nations, 2023). Thus, although the traditionally accepted role as 'mother' and 'homemaker' has been challenged in more recent history, women still tend to also be employed within roles that align with ideas of them being more nurturing or less

physically capable than men (Lindsey, 2021). Within New Zealand, for example, 60% of working women are employed within roles that are considered to be congruent with their gender (i.e., roles within the administration, retail, nursing and education sectors) (Ministry for Women, 2023). Women are also over-represented in roles that are either lower-skilled or lower paid than men (Ministry for Women, 2023). This demonstrates an occupational segregation based upon traditional ideas of gender roles (Ministry for Women, 2023). It also suggests the perpetuation of systemic barriers to women's paid employment that are founded in essentialist perceptions of gender.

One of the reasons that gender roles persist is that contradictions to socially accepted gender norms are often viewed with disapproval or confusion (Ridgeway, 2011; Connell, 2002a). This idea is exemplified by reactions to those who *do not* comply with the gendered expectations of society. As Ridgeway (2011) explains, situations which work against gender conformity create anxiety as they contradict the social order that is organised around gender norms. In other words, men and women choosing to act in discordance with the expectations of their gender disrupts "our basic cultural rules for making sense of another and organizing the social relation on the basis of that understanding" (Ridgeway, 2011, p.33). Consequently, gender conformity is generally met with acceptance, whilst non-conformity is often met with ridicule (Ridgeway, 2011; Lindsey, 2021). This has implications for challenging gendered assumptions of masculine and feminine behaviours, as well as for challenging ideas of the gendered roles considered 'appropriate' for either men or women to perform (Ridgeway, 2011; Kronsell, 2012).

Challenges to societal expectations and historical ways of 'doing' gender (Butler, 1990; Butler, 2004) can create cultural change. The pressure for men to take on greater responsibility for caring for their children has, for example, changed the ways in which nurturing roles of men and women are perceived. The opening of military combat roles to women also provides an example of how assumptions about the types of roles that men and women should or should not perform have been challenged (Ridgeway, 2011; Connell, 2002b). However, despite such changes, there continues to exist evidence of gendered occupational role divisions (Ridgeway, 2011; Ministry for Women, 2023), meaning that despite equal access, both men and women remain inhibited from participating in roles perceived as being incongruent with their gender.

The next section of this chapter will explore this idea, whilst also evidencing the way in which the military exists as a gendered institution that has constrained the equal participation of women.

2.3 The Gendered Ideology of the Military

The military is an institution that has a strong history of advocating for and perpetuating gendered role divisions (Enloe, 1988 & 2007). While men are expected to fight on the front line, for example, women have historically been expected to fulfil subordinate and supporting roles (Enloe, 1988). While the contribution of men to war has been celebrated and memorialised, the efforts of women have often been excluded or marginalised in historical accounts ((Szitzanyi, 2000; Enloe, 1988 & 2007; Percy, 2023). Furthermore, despite recent changes in many militaries that have sought to increase the participation of women, militaries globally remain numerically and hierarchically dominated by men. As a result, the military is commonly described as a gendered institution (Carreiras, 2017).

The military is gendered as it uses masculine norms and values as a reference point from which to develop its systems, policies and processes (Carreiras, 2017; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). A key example of this gendered ideology is that, despite gender being a construct which includes categories of both men and women, within the military gender is generally only associated with women, whilst the construct of gender is largely invisible relative to men (Kronsell, 2005 & 2006; Wright, 2018). Men's gender issues are presumably not considered to be 'issues', because as Kronsell (2012) explains, "for the military organisation, masculinity is not about gender – it is the norm" (p.4). Hence why women are commonly referred to as 'female' soldiers, while men are just soldiers; and additionally why 'women's issues' such as pregnancy, menstruation and menopause are seen as inhibitors to operational effectiveness (Carreiras & Kummel, 2008; Fenner, 2001), whilst men's issues, which include a predominance of alcoholism and sexually transmitted diseases, are not (Fenner, 2001).

The efforts of women, be they in uniform or not, have also been historically subordinated to those of the 'heroic' male soldiers (Obradovic, 2014; Percy, 2023). The masculinisation of war

museums and memorials, with emphasis placed on the courageous achievements of men, provides just one example of the way in which the contribution of women is overshadowed (Enloe, 2004a; Obradovic, 2014). More recently the role of women in combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan has been similarly downplayed, or otherwise framed in such a way as to reinforce gender stereotypes (Fiala, 2008; Wright, 2018). Percy (2023) discusses the experience of American female soldiers working alongside combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan (whilst being legally disallowed to do so), suggesting that: “it meant that the military was prepared to mobilise women and place them in combat, but deny they were fighting at all” (p.271). Such divisions and omissions have not only devalued the significance of women’s contribution, they have also ensured that war and militaries remain recognised primarily as a masculine domain (Enloe, 2014 & 2017; Szitzanyi, 2020). This contributes to the masculinised ideology and culture of the military (Kronsell, 2005).

The fact that women have historically been excluded from certain roles within military institutions has further reinforced gendered inequities with respect to employment and career opportunities. Consequently, while women may be entering what is widely perceived to be a non-traditional occupation, once enlisted in the military they are predominantly employed in roles that would be accepted within society to be ‘feminine’ (Woodward & Winter, 2007; Woodward & Duncanson, 2016). As Carreiras (2006) notes, women are notably underrepresented in military roles “most closely related to the core functions of the institution” (p.40), that is combat. For example, the British Army in 2016 reported women made up approximately 9% of the institution. However, upon analysis, the majority of these women were found to occupy roles related to medical, nursing, logistics and music (i.e., roles considered traditionally congruent with women and femininity) (Woodward & Duncanson, 2016). In contrast, only a very small percentage of women were employed in roles traditionally associated with men (or the core war-fighting function of the British Army), such as artillery or engineers (with women formally excluded from enlisting in Infantry at the time) (Woodward & Duncanson, 2016).

Gendered roles continue to persist within most militaries (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Sasson-Levy, 2007; Woodward & Duncanson, 2016; Carreiras, 2006), despite the removal of combat exclusion policies which has supposedly enabled equal opportunities for men and women

(MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021; Woodward & Winter, 2007; Sasson-Levy, 2017). MacKenzie & Gunaydin's (2021) research further supports this idea, finding that changes to combat exclusion policies have not positively influenced the numbers of women serving in combat trades of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) during the last twenty years (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). In reality, such policy changes have had minimal impact on the recruitment, retention, and progression of women in either of these military institutions (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021).

Woodward and Duncanson (2016) suggest that this mismatch between policies and practice is due to the fact that gendered roles in the military are strongly influenced by the culture and norms of the host society. Thus, regardless of the military's equal employment opportunity policies, gendered perceptions within society of the behaviours and roles that men and women should perform continue to persist and reinforce gender based role divisions. Enloe (1988 & 2004a) also argues that patriarchal systems have historically relied upon women either consciously or complicity fulfilling 'feminised' subordinate or supporting roles. As a result, while militaries may report positive statistics in terms of the increased participation of women over time, gendered divisions of labour continue to support systems of gendered hierarchy (Enloe, 2004a; Obradovic, 2014; Woodward & Duncanson, 2016). This ultimately has significant implications for the participation of women and their ability to influence the military as a gendered institution (Woodward & Winter, 2007).

The notion of being 'gendered' thus encompasses a broad range of factors that serve to maintain military institutional gender inequality (Szitanyi, 2020; Carreiras, 2006). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe the perpetuation of gendered inequality within such institutions as a social order. Enloe (1988 & 2017) describes it as patriarchy. These concepts both denote the power and privilege of one gender over another; more specifically the power and privilege of men over women. The next section will elaborate on feminist perspectives of the gender order that are inherent within military institutions.

2.4 Feminist Perspectives of the Military

The military institution is built upon a deeply gendered underpinning framework: one that privileges a masculine way of being. The historical exclusion of women from combat roles, and the devaluing or trivialising of the contribution of women during war or conflict, are indicative of ways in which the military has been able to sustain a patriarchal order – and do so over time (Enloe, 2004a; Obradovic, 2014). However, patriarchy is not only perpetuated by the exclusion or devaluing of the contributions of women, it is also reinforced by the discrediting of those attributes deemed 'feminine'. As Whitworth suggests, soldiers (men and women) must "excise all that is perceived to be 'feminine'" (Whitworth, 2004, p.166). Excision being achieved through the suppression of emotions and rejection of 'feminine' weakness, such as fear, pain or empathy (Whitworth, 2004). Hazing, harsh treatment and humiliation are strategies that are commonly employed to suppress femininity and inculcate desirable 'masculine' qualities of discipline, resilience and toughness (O'Sullivan, 2016). Whilst literature suggests the possibility of adopting a softer 'hybrid' version of military masculinity that exhibits a mix both masculine and feminine qualities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Stevens & Greener, 2017), the need to suppress feminine traits appears to remain particularly marked for combat soldiers – where hyper-masculine qualities are deemed critical to their ability to undertake acts of violence and aggression on the battlefield (O'Sullivan, 2016; Hockey, 2014; Whitworth, 2004) (this idea will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter).

It is also argued by feminist theorists that the sphere of influence of gender within the military extends well beyond the four walls of the institution (Carreiras, 2006; Enloe, 1988; Enloe, 2004a; Woodward & Winter, 2007). Gender issues in the military often arouse political interest and spark heated public debate on topics ranging from the recruitment, deployment, and employment of women, through to sexual harassment or abuse (Enloe, 2004a; Obradovic, 2017). Gender issues within the military are also intertwined with gender relations and cultural perspectives of gender constructed by the civilian society within which the military is situated (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Szitanyi, 2020). As Enloe (1988) states, the question of whether or not women should be in the military is just the "tip of the gendered iceberg of militarisation," (p.xvi). This is due to the fact that women across all spheres of life, not just those in uniform, are impacted by decisions, assumptions and actions taken by the military.

As such, gender issues need to be viewed holistically, taking into consideration the broader societal, cultural and historical context, rather than being considered as isolated issues that pertain only to the military (Enloe, 1988).

Feminist theorists are divided on whether military service represents empowerment and equality for women, or whether it merely contributes to perpetuating existing gendered constructs of power (Enloe, 1988; Whitworth, 2004; Feinman, 2000; Runck, 2006). Runck (2006) argues that given militaries are controlled by the state, and founded on principles of hierarchy and discipline, it is not possible for military service to allow for the empowerment of women. Importantly, Runck (2006) also states, “nor does it allow for men’s” (p.18). As an anti-military feminist, Enloe (2007) suggests that the possibility of militaries becoming less patriarchal due to an increased number of women serving is optimistic at best. It is considered more likely that women in uniform will succumb to the process of militarisation rather than question the masculine culture of the institution (Enloe, 2007). Anti-military feminists, such as Enloe, also draw attention to the disproportionately negative impacts of militarisation on the lives of women in comparison to men (Enloe, 2000; Enloe, 2007; Whitworth, 2004), and contend that a violent institution such as the military could never be feminist.

In contrast, liberal ‘right-to-fight’ feminism, which Feinman (2000) also terms “feminist egalitarian militarism” (p.12), views the participation of women in the military as progress towards gender equality; not only within the military institution but also broader society (Eager, 2014; Kennedy-Pipe, 2017; Miller, 2001). The right to fight for one’s own country not only equates to equal employment but also equal rights of citizenship (Carreiras, 2006; Feinman, 2000). The argument of equal rights has, therefore, been a driving argument for the opening of military combat roles to women. As a right of equal citizenship, militaries have become “a battleground for the testing of assumptions about the rights and capabilities of women in democratic societies” (Kennedy-Pipe, 2017, p.23). Women are also considered by liberal feminists to be empowered by proving themselves capable within a hyper-masculine institution (Eager, 2014; Kennedy-Pipe, 2017).

Despite this claim to potential equality, the perception of women as competent professionals within the military has been found to depend upon their ability to distance themselves from

their gender (King, 2017; Carreiras, 2008). Indeed, conformity is the strategy most commonly adopted by women to gain acceptance within the military (Carreiras, 2008). Conformity being typified by silence, minimising obvious gender differences, 'diluting' femininity and avoiding visibility (Carreiras, 2008). Accordingly, while enlistment in the military may empower some women at an individual level, the underpinning masculine gendered nature of the institution has been found to inhibit the collective equality of women (Kronsell, 2005; Eager, 2014; Sasson-Levy, 2003, Szitanyi, 2020). This idea is exemplified by an analysis conducted by MacKenzie and Gunaydin (2021), which found that within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and NZDF, "the three core indicators of gender equality" (p.108), (i.e., recruitment, retention and promotion rates) have shifted insignificantly during the last twenty years. Empirical evidence such as this proves the concerns of many anti-military feminist theorists to be largely valid.

It has been found that women in the military must not only distance themselves from their gender, but also from their sexuality (King, 2017 & 2019; Wright, 2018; Carreiras, 2006). Whilst displays of heterosexual prowess are considered acceptable and normal (and, in fact, expected) for male soldiers (Kronsell, 2012; Wadham, 2013), women, on the other hand, must continuously moderate and de-sexualise their behaviour (King, 2017 & 2019; Wadham, 2013). This is a difficult task given that women are commonly objectified and classified by men within the military according to their sexuality (King, 2019). As King (2017) suggests, within the military, "femininity is still equated almost exclusively with heterosexuality and sex itself; women are essentially seen as being for sex" (King, 2017, p.312).

Sex scandals such as the Skype Affair[8] (Wadham, 2013; MacKenzie, 2023; MacKenzie & Wadham, 2023) and Tailhook[9] (O'Neill, 1998; Fenner, 2001; MacKenzie, 2023) are extreme examples of sexualised attitudes towards women. The Abu Ghraib[10] torture incident is also

[8] The Skype Affair occurred at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in 2011, whereby a male cadet broadcasted "a consensual sexual encounter, without the female's consent or knowledge, via Skype to five of his male cadet friends" (MacKenzie & Wadham, 2023, p.302).
[9] The Tailhook scandal occurred in 1991 at the annual Naval Aviation Tailhook Conference, which resulted in more than 80 allegations of sexual assault (MacKenzie, 2023).
[10] The Abu Ghraib prison torture incident came to light in 2004, when photographs were released of US soldiers humiliating and abusing Iraqi prisoners (Enloe, 2004b).

considered the result of a sexist and masculinised military culture (MacKenzie, 2020; Enloe, 2004b). More recently, the CAF has seen more than a dozen senior male military officers investigated or forced into retirement as a result of sexual misconduct (MacKenzie & Wadham, 2023). A review of the NZDF's 'Operation Respect' programme (implemented in 2016 to 'eliminate' harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviours), has also found that incidents of "verbal, mental, physical, and sexual abuse or violence from colleagues" continue to persist within the institution (Teale & MacDonald, 2020, p.10).

A desire to fit in also commonly results in women refraining from speaking out about gender discrimination or sexual harassment (Carreiras, 2008; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Persson, 2011; MacKenzie, 2023). As Persson (2011) suggests,

> Women can choose to publicly object to the climate, but rarely do so. The common approach is to take active part in it to show that they are as tough as the rest. If they comply, it is easier for them to remain part of the soldier collective and keep themselves at arm's length from the negative stereotypes that tend to be assigned to women (p.64).

The recurrence of scandals such as these is, therefore, considered by feminists to be the result of an institutional climate that privileges masculinity and trivialises femininity (Enloe, 2004b; MacKenzie, 2020; Whitworth, 2004; MacKenzie, 2023). Teale & MacDonald's (2020) review of the NZDF's sexual violence reporting processes also concludes that those who *do* report often find that the "risks of repercussion far outweigh the benefits most of the time" (p.28).

Consequently, although the presence of women in the military may challenge social and institutional gender norms (Kronsell, 2005), their participation is yet to transform the military into an institution based on feminist ideals of gender equality (Duncanson & Woodward, 2016; Carreiras, 2006). Statistics and research globally continue to demonstrate the struggle of women to be accepted within military contexts, particularly within combat trades (Heinecken, 2017; Van Breda, 2016; Berga & Bjarnegard, 2016; MacKenzie, 2015). As Sasson-Levy (2003) ironically states, "the military can integrate women and empower them while at the same time maintaining gender inequality" (p.460). Despite the removal of formal barriers, the participation by women in the military continues to be limited by the masculine culture and gender hierarchy inherent within.

Although feminist perspectives differ on the assessment of the military as an institution that either empowers or constrains women, they draw similar attention to the ways in which the relationship between the military and masculinity has historically been taken for granted. Awareness of the often invisible masculine norms which create systems of inequality (or patriarchy) is considered a starting point towards transformation (Kronsell, 2005). Militaries should, therefore, be approached with a 'curiosity' that may reveal the underpinning masculine gendered processes (Enloe, 2007; Kronsell, 2005). Let us consider next the ways in which masculinity is operationalised within military contexts.

2.5 Masculinity and the Military

The connection between men and the military is often taken for granted (Hearn, 2011). Hearn also suggests, however, that "the obviousness of the connections between men, masculinities, violence, war and militarism should not mean that they escape critical scrutiny" (Hearn, 2011, p.48). This section will, therefore, apply a critical lens to masculinity as a fundamental element of militaries and militarism. It will also discuss the idea of hegemonic masculinity, and the ways in which it may be used to interpret the gendered hierarchy, or patriarchy, inherent within military contexts (Connell, 2005; Connell, 2002b; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Developed as a concept for analysing gender relations within societies, Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity is defined as a "pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity)" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). It is a pattern of practice that also "guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p.77). It does not gain its position from force; rather, it is complicit cultural and institutional acceptance which reinforces its hegemonic status (Connell, 2005). There does, however, exist a strong correlation between the accepted cultural ideal of masculine hegemony and the claim to authority, or power, of those who embody it (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As such, embodiment of the idealised hegemonic characteristics can equate to an increase in status or authority within those contexts where such characteristics are most highly valued.

Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity has been found particularly useful for critically examining heavily 'masculinised' contexts or phenomena (Connell, 2005; Obradovic, 2014; Connell, 2002b). It has been used, for example, to theorise on the relationship between masculinity and criminal behaviour (especially violent crime or rape), and to interpret certain behaviours of men, such as risk-taking or 'hooliganism' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is a theory that has also been found useful to understand gendered dynamics within male-dominated organisations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As such it is a theory that has also been drawn upon extensively to apply scrutiny to the gendered dynamics of militaries (Connell & Meserschmidt, 2005; Carreiras, 2017; Duncanson, 2015; Sasson-Levy, 2017; Eichler, 2014).

Whilst the hegemonic form of masculinity is the most revered, it is possible for multiple masculinities to co-exist (Connell, 2005). Masculine identities that co-exist within the military might include those within different trades, ranks or services (Berga and Bjarnegard, 2016; Brown, 2012); each performing varieties of masculinity according to their role within the institution (Brown, 2012). The way in which different services appeal to different versions of masculinity is demonstrated by Brown (2012), who describes the differing relationship that the US Air Force might have with masculinity in comparison to the US Marine Corps. As Brown (2012) explains:

> The Marine Corps emphasizes its elitism and sends the message that the Marines demand that a recruit prove his worth, but once he has met the challenge, he'll be accepted into an exclusive brotherhood and be part of a larger tradition. The Marines present a rite of passage into manhood. Marine Corps advertising isn't just masculine; it specifically presents a warrior masculinity (p.16).

In contrast, the US Air Force uses masculine appeals that are based on technical expertise and career opportunities, thereby "reinforcing a working-class masculinity that values skilled labor and economic independence" (Brown, 2012, p.16).

Differing masculinities will be placed in a hierarchy based upon their perceived relative value (Carreiras, 2017; Connell, 2002b; Duncanson, 2009; Whitworth, 2004), because some performances of masculinity are valued (within certain contexts) more highly than others. All versions of masculinity within the hierarchy will, however, be ultimately subordinated by the hegemonic form (Connell, 2005). Described by Connell (2002b) as the "the centre of the

system of gendered power" (p.35), it is also this form which men must aspire to, or at least use as a reference point for measuring themselves against (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The power of the hegemonic form is also gained through the marginalisation or subordination of alternate (less valued) forms of masculinity (Connell, 2005). Within many societies, these alternate forms might include men who are physically weak, emotionally sensitive, or gay (Belkin, 2012; Hearn, 2011; Connell, 2005). The hegemonic form also naturally subordinates femininity due to the inherent power imbalance between femininity and masculinity (Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018).

The hegemonic form of masculinity within the military is commonly depicted as the 'combat soldier', who is considered the 'real' soldier and most closely portrays the desired hegemonic characteristics of aggression, physical prowess, risk-taking, courage, discipline and heterosexuality (Whitworth, 2004; Swain, 2016; Brown, 2012; Woodward & Winter, 2007). As combat is considered to be the core business of militaries, military hegemonic masculinity requires mimicry of these desirable attributes. This poses a dilemma given that, despite essentialist theories of gender, not all men are naturally aggressive (Whitworth, 2004), not all men are heterosexual (Poulin, Couliquer & McCutcheon, 2018; Connell, 2005), and, not all soldiers are men. Furthermore, most men and women do not have an innate desire to kill another human (Connell, 2002b; Bourke, 1999). Regardless, the promise of being transformed into a 'real man' or 'hero' is an important and persistent lure of military recruiting campaigns (Berga & Bjarnegard, 2016; Brown, 2012; Whitworth, 2004; Hearn, 2011).

'Manhood' is said to be achieved through the embodiment of these highly exaggerated military masculine ideals (Swain, 2016; Whitworth, 2004). The construction of the soldier identity is, therefore, an active process, and one which the military invests a great deal of energy into creating (Whitworth, 2004; Connell, 2002b; Swain, 2016; Bulmer & Eichler, 2017). The 'combat-warrior' is also commonly used during military socialisation as an exemplar of the ideal masculine identity (Carreiras, 2017; Connell, 2005; Davis & McKee, 2005). As Swain (2016) explains: "the warrior hero acted as the template of how to be a soldier and it gained its influence by consent. It was there for all to see: it was reproduced and embodied in the recruits' role models, and it suffocated all other forms" (p.15). By modelling the masculine

qualities of this hegemonic model, recruits may successfully transform from civilians to soldiers (Swain, 2016; Harding, 2016; Hinojosa, 2010).

Soldiers are consequently inclined to construct a narrative that positions themselves as more masculine, and therefore symbolically higher in the masculine hierarchy, than their civilian counterparts (Hinojosa, 2010). Even within the same service, differing trades will seek to position themselves within this hierarchical structure (Hinojosa, 2012; Brown, 2012). Characteristics of "self-discipline, physical ability, emotional control, martial ability and intelligence" (Hinojosa, 2010, p.191) have been found to be particularly desirable. As Brown (2012) elaborates, differing combinations of these traits will be emphasised by individuals to justify their role as 'masculine':

> While officers in general talked about discipline, perseverance, and toughness, naval aviators focused on their risk-taking behavior, and surface warfare officers emphasized their endurance of hardship and their ability to perform under pressure. Supply officers, who have lower status because their specialty is in the realm of support, not combat, and who are often denigrated as unmasculine by those in combat positions, try to frame their work as masculine in terms of their need to exhibit technical rationality and competence and their likelihood of achieving financial success in the civilian world (p.22)

Despite the emergence of these alternate, and sometimes competing, versions of masculinity, the military continues to situate the 'combat' soldier at the top of the masculine hierarchy (Brown, 2012; Connell, 2002b; Pendlebury, 2019). It is, therefore, an ideal form of masculinity that has remained steadfast across time and despite a desire for diversity.

The celebration of this 'narrowly defined' form of combat warrior masculinity has been found to have implications for minority groups within the military (Connell, 2002b; Pendlebury, 2018 & 2019), such as women. Within this hegemony, feminine traits are said to be not only rejected but actively suppressed (Whitworth, 2004). Femininity, and arguably women themselves, are therefore viewed as incompatible with this hegemonically masculine model. As a result, in order to participate successfully in the military women must also complicitly mimic the characteristics and values of the masculine combat warrior (Eichler, 2014; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Silva, 2008). Such embodiment can, however, pose a particular challenge for women (Kronsell, 2005). As suggested by Pendlebury (2019), "put simply, there are limits to

the ability of a minority member to appropriately perform the dominant identity, which serves to reinforce its hegemonic status" (Pendlebury, 2019, p.178). As such, the rewards that come with the embodiment of the hegemonic form are far more readily available to men than they are to women (Belkin, 2012).

Women in this context are described as being in a particularly ambiguous position (Sasson-Levy, 2003): they must emulate the hegemonic masculine model in order to fit in, while also being expected to display specific and assumed feminine attributes (Kronsell, 2012). As Ombati's (2015) study of the Kenyan Defence Force concludes, this dichotomy is far more pronounced within combat trades which expects women to exhibit bravery and aggression in the face of the enemy, whilst also being expected to enact 'feminine' behaviours, such as empathy and caring (Ombati, 2015). Women are also often expected to add value through demonstration of these feminine traits, which accentuates the idea that women are different, rather than part of the same team (Ombati, 2015; Wilen, 2020). Pham (2023) describes the gender difference narrative as one which often defines women as "'force multipliers' (a military term referring to the introduction of any factor – human or technological – that bolsters its fighting power" (p.47). However, categorising women in such a way ignores the challenges that women face in order to be respected as equals (Nicolas, 2015; Pham, 2023), while at the same time disregarding the individuality of *all* soldiers (Kronsell, 2012).

Further complicating this dilemma is the persistent discouragement of men displaying those same 'feminine' attributes that are considered innate to women. As Breede & Davis (2020) suggest, the high value placed on the heroic warrior ideal can impact upon not only women, but also men who must conform to such ideals in order to gain acceptance to the group:

> In spite of the physical inclusion of such others in military units, we argue here that contemporary conceptions of the warrior assume exclusive hegemonic masculinity, which encourages social exclusion for some and, for those who seek inclusion, the persistent testing of warrior ideals, thus begging the question of who, if anyone, ever achieves full membership (p.133)

Therefore, the masculine hegemonic identity maintains its dominance due to "the power of performativity and the extent to which many of these ideal traits are woven into the fabric of

the organisation" (Pendlebury, 2019, p.148). The acceptance and inclusion of those men or women who choose *not* to conform to the dominant identity therefore also challenges their participation; most notably if they belong to social groups (e.g., gendered and ethnic monitories) that are already under-represented within the military (Pendlebury, 2019).

Gendered expectations of behaviour create a military identity that has clear boundaries of "a 'way to be' (i.e., masculine), and consequently a 'way *not* to be' (i.e. feminine)" (McAllister, Callaghan & Fellin, 2019, p.267). Particular rewards of mimicking the hegemonic form include a heightened level of status, acceptance, inclusion and progression (Pendlebury, 2019; MoD, 2014). This ultimately has implications for how both men and women ascribe to alternative ways of 'doing' gender (Butler, 2004), i.e., those that do not conform to hyper-masculine norms.

It is suggested that the mere presence of women has begun to challenge the masculine culture of the military, due to the increased visibility of gendered norms and practices that would previously go unnoticed (Kronsell, 2012). New versions of masculinity are also said to be emerging which value those traits traditionally regarded as 'feminine'. Negotiation, communication and conflict resolution, for example, are considered important qualities of a 'hybrid' peacekeeping masculinity (Duncanson, 2009). King (2019) also suggests that becoming an "honorary man" (p.149) denotes acceptance for some women within predominantly male military units. The status of honorary man being awarded to those women in combat roles who have been able to move beyond the category of either 'slut' or 'bitch', and "have been accorded the status of men" (King, 2015, p.126). The concept of the 'honorary man' is considered to indicate the evolution of a 'third gender' that might allow women to participate on an equal playing field with men (King, 2015, 2017 & 2019).

The category of the honorary man also, however, affirms masculine gender norms whereby masculine gendered language and ideas remain intact (King, 2019). Thus while some women may experience individual levels of success within the military, this is often a result of having successfully conformed to the dominant hegemonic masculine identity (Berg & Bjarnegard, 2015; King, 2019). The act of conformity ultimately supports the dominant gender hierarchy rather than disrupting it (Carreiras, 2008). For women to maintain the status of honorary man

they must not only repress their sexuality, but also avoid friendships with male soldiers (King, 2015). As King (2015) states, "honorary manhood relies on the elimination of feminine identity" (p.137). It could be said, therefore, that rather than denoting acceptance of women, or the establishment of a third gender, the category of 'honorary man', merely represents an alternate version of masculinity. Accordingly, many feminists conclude that so long as militaries continue to uphold the values of the combat warrior, the acceptance of women will remain problematic and alternate versions of masculinity (and femininity) will continue to be marginalised (Whitworth, 2004; Connell, 2005).

Successful participation within the military can, therefore, be measured by the degree to which men and women adhere to the ideals of the 'hegemonic' masculine performance (Pendlebury, 2019). It is also the 'doing' of gender (Butler, 2004) and the performance of the hegemonic form (Connell, 2005) that sustains its dominant hierarchical position. Further complicating this situation within the military is that complicity itself is considered a desirable trait. As Pendlebury (2019) elaborates, "in military circles, questioning the basis of a dominant identity is rare and, in many cases, actively discouraged. This helps, in part, to explain the enduring nature of military identities" (Pendlebury, 2019, p.165). The dilemma for militaries, therefore, is that normalisation of hegemonically masculine behaviours are in conflict with ideas of diversity or inclusivity (Pendlebury, 2019). This in turn perpetuates the gendered hierarchy, or patriarchy, of military institutions (Carreiras, 2008).

2.6 Challenging the Masculine Hegemonic Model

Issues related to gender equality or gender relations in the military are not generally equated with a lack of policy or desire from senior leadership for change. Many militaries have indeed actively sought, with low levels of success, to increase diversity and inclusivity by implementing targeted gender-specific policies (Pendlebury, 2019; Teale & MacDonald, 2020). For example, the NZ Army has publicly stated its support for increasing numbers of women, and has also implemented a range of gender-related policies to encourage the participation of women (and enhance broader gender inclusivity for both men and women) (MoD, 2014; Hanson & Burns, 2005; Teale & MacDonald, 2020). However, similar to many other militaries, the rhetoric of senior military leaders has had minimal impact on increasing

gender diversity (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021; MoD, 2014; Hanson & Burns, 2005; Teale & MacDonald, 2020). A review of the key indicators of equality (including recruitment, retention and promotion) across both the NZDF and the Canadian Armed Forces has instead demonstrated that policy changes made for the purpose of addressing gender inequities are falling well short of expectation (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021).

Changes to exclusionary policies and the implementation of new gender policies do not, therefore, provide a silver bullet solution to gender equality within military settings (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021; Sasson-Levy, 2007). Rather, such policies are the starting point rather than the end point of challenging patriarchy (Rao, Sandler, Kelleher & Miler, 2016). Given the value placed upon the masculine performance of gender in the military context, simply adding more women is also considered an unlikely resolution or source of improvement regarding issues of gender relations (Woodward & Duncanson, 2016; Enloe, 2007; MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). Addressing gendered inequities instead requires a tackling of the underpinning patriarchal structures of military institutions (Whitworth, 2004; Szitanyi, 2020; Rao et al, 2016), in concert with designing "new ways of recruiting, training and motivating soldiers that do not rely on the privileging of masculinity and denigration of femininity" (Eichler, 2014, p.84). Such changes may provide a pathway towards the construction of a version of masculinity that is "open to equality with women" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.853), and may ultimately also provide the opportunity to challenge the "patriarchal cooking pot" which is said to conspire against meaningful gendered change (Rao, et al, 2016, p.10).

The historically entrenched masculinised culture of the military makes such a transformation far easier to theorise than to actualise (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Woodward & Duncanson, 2005). As Connell (2002b) notes, "the most powerful groups of men usually have few personal incentives for gender change" (p.36). Challenging masculine hegemony and patriarchy is likely to result in resistance, especially when such a challenge represents a perceived loss to the dominant group (Buchbinder, 2013; Connell, 2002b). Resistance may perhaps even be more pronounced in military contexts where success is measured based on violent and aggressive outcomes and where the concept of 'gender 'is commonly conflated with 'women' and 'women's issues'. Focusing on 'gender' is consequently regarded in those

domains as a needless distraction from the core business of military institutions (i.e. warfighting) (Cohn & Enloe, 2003). Challenges to the patriarchal social order are also likely to be perceived as a challenge to the military institution itself (Cohn & Enloe, 2003).

The possibility for hegemonic masculinity to be challenged in order to stimulate change is, however, a viable option according to some (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2005). The combat warrior model of hegemonic masculinity has served the military in the past. However, given the changing nature of modern military operations and the pressure for gender equality from modern societies, it is questionable as to whether such a model remains relevant (Whitworth, 2004). In its current state, the combat warrior form of hegemonic masculinity is not only at odds with concepts of diversity and gender equality (Davis & McKee, 2005; Pendlebury, 2019), it also poses a risk within those military operations that do not require aggressive forms of violence as solutions (Whitworth, 2004; Enloe, 2004a). As Whitworth (2004) suggests:

> Caring, emotive human beings who feel a connection with other human beings are not, it seems, what most militaries are looking for. The ultimate irony, of course, is that these may be the very qualities that are required of anyone involved in missions aimed at keeping, creating, promoting, or maintaining something called peace (p.172).

A modification of the way in which hegemonic military masculinity is operationalised may, therefore, present a pathway towards gendered transformation (Connell, 2002). However, such transformation also requires affirmative action that addresses the underpinning structures which sustain the gendered status quo (Enloe, 2004a; Whitworth, 2004; Woodward & Duncanson, 2016; Duncanson, 2009).

In order to make meaningful gendered change within a ‘masculine’ institution such as the military, it is necessary to identify those systemic structures and practices which underpin patriarchy. In applying a gendered lens (rather than adopting a ‘gender blind’[11] approach) to the ways in which men and masculinity are privileged to the detriment of all things considered ‘feminine’, the term ‘patriarchy’ can be used to generate investigative curiosity rather than

[11] Gender blindness refers to the concept of treating everyone the same ‘regardless of gender’. It is often considered to be an equitable approach towards assessing situations and making decisions that impact upon both men and women (Greener, et al, 2023).

as an accusatory label (Cohn & Enloe, 2003; Enloe, 2000; Enloe, 2004a). An investigation of patriarchy will include, for example, observation of the ways in which men and women 'do' gender within the military context. It will also involve an investigation of the ways in which specific gendered performances may either inhibit or enable participation. Furthermore, it will involve questioning those 'sacred cows' within militaries that are assumed to be natural or normal, or ideal even. In particular this involves bringing to the forefront those practices, traditions and ways of 'being' a soldier that have gendered implications. Such an investigation will not only provide a deeper understanding of the way in which gender operates within this context, it also has the potential to reveal the ways in which both men and women may be negatively impacted by specific expectations of gendered performance (Pendlebury, 2019). It will also provide the opportunity to understand the way in which the celebration (even tacitly) of the hegemonic masculine form sustains patriarchal systems. This thesis is designed to be just that sort of investigation.

2.7 Conclusion

It is a widely accepted reality that militaries are numerically, hierarchically and symbolically dominated by men. The link between men, masculinity and the military is so deeply and historically entrenched that its very obviousness is rarely questioned by much of society (Hearn, 2011). It is only within the relatively recent history of militaries that the participation of women has become a topical issue. Governments, host societies, and even militaries themselves have begun to question why participation by women remains significantly lower than that of men (this disparity existing even within those militaries that afford equal opportunity of employment to both women and men). The 'masculine' culture of militaries has increasingly come under scrutiny as statistics demonstrate that participation by women remains fraught with examples of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment. Resistance to gendered change also appears particularly marked within combat roles, despite the removal of exclusion policies (and also despite an oftentimes explicitly stated institutional desire for gender diversity). In order to further understanding of this complex phenomenon, the next chapter will examine the deep-seated connection between war, masculinity, and the combat soldier.

Chapter 3: Combat

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter of the thesis reviewed the ways in which gender influences participation and performance within military environments. This chapter will introduce the purpose of war and warfare, and the role of ground combat (or, 'infantry') soldiers. Examining these concepts will enable a deeper exploration of the connection between combat and masculinity – a connection that the previous chapter described as being traditionally constructed in opposition to femininity, and normalising the image of a combatant soldier as male (Ombati, 2015). It will also illuminate the ways in which this historical connection has resulted in a deep seated and persistent resistance towards the inclusion of women in combat roles.

3.2 Defining War

Clausewitz (2010) defines war as "an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will" (p.44). As Clausewitz elaborates, "the political object, as the original motive of the War, will be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and also the amount of effort to be made" (p.56). In this way, war becomes an 'instrument' or extension of politics (Clausewitz, 2010). Grayling (2017) illustrates this idea by describing an exchange between an American colonel and a Vietcong colonel after the Vietnam War: "the former said to the latter, 'Your side never beat us on the battlefield,' to which the latter replied, 'True but irrelevant.' It was the political result alone that counted" (p.140). War is, therefore, characterised by political motivation, often involving the desire of one or more groups to gain power, influence, or revenge over another (Pavelec, 2017). Ultimately then, war can also be described as "a violent struggle between groups for political ends" (Pavelec, 2017, p.2).

Conventional understandings of war such as these are useful for understanding the inter-relationship between politics and military action, however they also have their limitations (Hammond, 1994; Sjoberg, 2014; Barkawi, 2016). As Kaufman and Williams (2010) state, studies of war have traditionally focussed on the causes and consequences of conflict. As a result, there is a failure to recognise the "importance of looking at the whole picture, at who made or makes the decisions that ultimately result in armed conflict or violence, and who is

affected by the decisions that are made" (Kaufman & Williams, 2010, p.17). Perceiving war simply to be a contest marked by the use of force within a specified period of time is also considered to be overly simplistic (Sjoberg, 2014; Barkawi, 2016). Indeed, as Barkwai (2016) suggests, "a corollary of the war/peace binary is that war happens only in wartime, and that peace is peaceful" (p.202). Assumptions such as this, based upon traditional perspectives of what does and does not 'count' as war, can consequently lead to the broader impacts of war being disregarded (Sjoberg, 2014; Kaufman & Williams, 2010; Barkawi, 2016). They can also result in a failure to recognise alternate means of waging war which do not resort to violent conflict (Sjoberg, 2014; Hammond, 1994).

Runyan (2018) refers to the problematic way in which "gendered divisions of violence" (p.14) may be also perpetuated as a result of such narrow perspectives of war. Gendered divisions of violence include opposing 'masculine' and 'feminine' notions, such as those of protector and protected; battle-front and home-front; life-taker and life-giver; war and peace (Runyan, 2018). Men are commonly expected to take on the aggressive role of 'life-taker' whilst women are perceived as the passive 'life-giver'. Such divisions often operate as a justification for war, because as Runyan (2018) explains, "both offenders and defenders need to justify their actions by waging war in the name of those who cannot fight and thus are in need of and worthy of protection" (p.140). It is argued, therefore, that this gendered dichotomy nurtures conditioned patterns of behaviour that disguise the true political purpose of many wars. War can, instead, be justified as a necessary act of protecting the weak and vulnerable. This also implicitly places women in a subservient position to that of men (Runyan, 2018; Kaufman & William, 2010; Grayling, 2017). Feminists would, therefore, contend that traditional definitions or understandings of war are not only overtly simplistic, but also reveal a dominantly male perspective (Sjoberg, 2014; Enloe, 1988). In order to create opportunities where societies look towards alternative means of resolving conflict it is suggested that traditional understandings of war, which remain based on gendered patterns of behaviour, must also evolve (Kaufman & William, 2010).

3.3 Warfare: The Conduct of War

As a subset of the broader concept of war, the term 'warfare' refers to the physical conduct of war, or the application of various forms of organised violence. Due to its tangible nature, the idea of warfare is somewhat easier to define than that of 'war'. As Speller & Tuck (2008) state, "it is about fighting. The degree of violence, and how it is applied, varies according to circumstance" (p.3). Grayling (2017) elaborates by suggesting that the types of violence involved in warfare include, "blowing up people, vehicles, buildings, whole towns and cities, and killing and injuring people – both deliberately as when opposing combatants are targeted, and unintentionally as in 'collateral damage'" (p.118). The conduct of war undoubtedly has destructive outcomes (Clark, 2001; Grayling, 2017). For example, the Second World War was characterised by wholesale destruction and the slaughter of soldiers on the battlefield (Clark, 2001; Pavelec, 2017). It not only left countries across the globe in ruins, but also resulted in the death of over 60 million people (Pavelec, 2017). As Clark (2001) states, "even countries that didn't suffer extensive war damage in World War II were scarred psychologically" (p.xxvii).

The style of war witnessed up until the end of World War One, and arguably also during World War Two, is defined as a literal strategy of 'attrition' (Malkasian, 2004). The 'attrition style' was typified by mass levels of destruction, with victory gained by exhausting enemy resources, and consequently the capacity and will to fight (Philpott, 2014; Henriksen, 2009). By contrast, 'modern' warfare has become increasingly complex, irregular and asymmetric. In this context, asymmetry is identified as the use of unconventional warfare tactics, by smaller groups of fighters, against conventionally organised military forces (Ewans, 2005). The Vietnam War provides an example of asymmetric warfare, and is described as the "crossroads between the twentieth century's ideological wars on one hand, and the complex dynamics of fluid insurgency-like wars of the twenty-first century" (Henriksen, 2009, p.9). As Grayling (2017) suggests, asymmetrical warfare is now the main contemporary challenge for militaries given that it is "the kind of conflict which is very hard for conventional military forces to win or even control" (p.112). Examples of this challenge include conflicts in Afghanistan which have historically seen British, Russian and American militaries fail to overcome indigenous tribal fighters (Ewans, 2005; Grayling, 2017; Henriksen, 2009).

One increasingly challenging feature of 'insurgency-like', or asymmetric, types of war is that the enemy can no longer be relied upon to be identifiable (Robinson, 2009). The elusiveness of the enemy and the absence of a definitive front line, for example, posed a challenge for New Zealand soldiers deployed to the Vietnam War who had been trained primarily in conventional methods of war (Hall, 2014). The 'enemy' within these types of conflict may also include women and children performing combatant roles (Appy, 2021; Hancock, 2000). This poses a further ethical dilemma for the soldiers of many Western militaries who have traditionally understood the enemy to be male (Hancock, 2000).

Just as the concept of a 'front line' has all but diminished, the scope of the battlefield has also changed (Tuck, 2022; Kaufman & Williams, 2010). Homes are also no longer 'safe' as warfare increasingly moves into urban areas, and there is an increased risk of 'collateral' deaths of non-combatants (Hills, 2004; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023). Enhancements in technology have also expanded the capabilities of intelligence and targeting systems, reducing the requirement for direct physical engagement between military troops (Cerasini, 2003). Therefore, whilst advances in modern forms of warfare have seen air, land and sea continue to be integral to the waging of war, cyber and outer space have become increasingly important (Tuck, 2022; Hartley, 2021; Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Sepller, Tuck & Walton, 2008; Cerasini, 2003). As Hammond (1994) suggests, the ability to conduct warfare without physical fighting is an increasingly viable option.

Despite these changes and advancements, however, many militaries contend that there remains a requirement for 'boots on the ground' (Tuck, 2008 & 2022; Cerasini, 2003). Land is considered a "politically vital medium: taking and holding it (or threatening credibly to do so) will often be an end in war as well as a means" (Tuck, 2008, p.69). Airpower may, as an example, provide a strategic advantage in the conduct of war, however the act of seizing and holding terrain (where such an outcome is desired) cannot be readily achieved by missiles alone. Such is the role of the close combat, or the 'infantry', soldier (Cerasini, 2003; Tuck, 2008 & 2022).

3.4 The Role of Close Combat 'Infantry'

Perspectives on the conduct of warfare generally suggest that close combat or 'infantry' remains an integral aspect of modern armies (Jordan, et al, 2008; Griffith, 2000; Tuck, 2022; Cerasini, 2003). The New Zealand Army's strategy to 2025, for example, states: "the New Zealand Army is, and always will be, a light combat force. Our ability to prosecute land combat operations is non-negotiable" (NZ Army, 2019, p.15). The concept of 'light combat' is further defined as "light infantry, armour and artillery" (NZ Army, 2019, p.14). The notion that combat, and indeed wars, will continue to be undertaken by soldiers on the ground is reiterated in the statement that, "people are our most valuable asset, our single biggest investment, and they provide the key building block of all combat operations" (NZ Army, 2019, p.16). Such sentiments are echoed by armies globally. For example, the Australian Army's Defence strategy states that "Army must prepare for conflict on land and from the land" (Australian Army, 2020, p.17), and further indicates that land forces must be prepared for engaging in close combat (Australian Army, 2020, p.40). The British Army's Future Soldier Guide similarly states that, "the Army's primary job is to fight war in person when it is at its most lethal and visceral" (British Army, 2021, p.14).

While technology may have increased the complexity and lethality of modern militaries, the primary role of the infantry has changed surprisingly little. In 1944, Major-General Wilson, Director of Infantry at the British War Office, defined the role of the 'modern' infantry as simply being "to close with and destroy the enemy" (Wilson, 1944, p.1). Approximately sixty years later the US Marine Corps defines the role of the infantry as being, "to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver or to repel his assault by fire and close combat" (Schaefer, Wenger, Kavanagh, Wong, Oak, Trail, & Nichols, 2015, p,3). Similarly, the Australian Army defines the role of the infantry soldier as being "to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture him, to seize and hold ground and to repel attack by day or night" (Royal Australian Infantry Corps, 2023). The role of the New Zealand Army's Infantry is described as being "to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture them, to seize and hold ground and repel attack, by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain" (NZ Army, 2021). As Hockey (2014) elaborates, "whereas there are increasingly sophisticated technologies utilized by the military, the brutal business of taking and holding ground remains

the province of the infantry. Although other combat arms (armour and artillery) kill the enemy at long distance, it is the infantry alone that normally destroys the enemy at a much closer range" (p.402).

Integral to the infantry's core role is the infantry soldier themselves. The desired attributes of whom also remain remarkably similar to those of their historic counterparts (Cerasini, 2003; Wilson, 1944). However, whilst the desirable attributes of the infantry soldier may not have changed substantially since Wilson's description of the infantry in 1944, the societies from which infantry soldiers are drawn from have. Most militaries utilise voluntary enlistment rather than conscription to fill their ranks, resulting in greater diversity of age, gender, and social and ethnic background of enlistees. While combat roles have traditionally been accepted as the domain of men, militaries have also come under increasing pressure from modern societies to remove exclusionary policies and integrate women into such roles. The mixed results with which such policy changes have been met, however, indicate that traditional norms of masculinity continue to inhibit the participation of women, as well as some men (Breede & Davis, 2014). The next section of the chapter will discuss the ways in which the role of the Infantry soldier relates to the construct of masculinity (as described in the previous chapter).

3.5 The 'Infantry' Soldier

The idealisation of the Infantry soldier as the hegemonic form of masculinity begins before enlistment into the military. As MacKenzie (2015) suggests, stories of masculine heroism in combat are at the core of America's national identity. Such stories are arguably at the core of identity of many other nations too. Serving and protecting one's country, and consequently demonstrating one's 'manhood', are common features of recruitment materials for combat roles (Brown, 2012). Indeed, combat roles rely upon set institutional values, such as courage and comradeship, and traditional forms of heroic masculinity, to entice recruits (Brown, 2012; Woodward, 2000; Pendlebury, 2019). These ideals, combined with promises of adventure, physical fitness, and becoming a 'real man', provide useful enticements in lieu of technical skills or qualifications that are more readily offered by many non-combat roles (Brown, 2012; Pendlebury, 2019).

Woodward (2000) provides an apt example of the traditional infantry 'warrior hero' that encapsulates the hegemonic ideal commonly used in Infantry recruitment materials:

> The warrior hero is physically fit and powerful. He is mentally strong and unemotional. He is capable of both solitary, individual pursuit of his goals and self-denying contribution towards the work of the team. He's also a bit of a hero with a knack for picking up girls and is resolutely heterosexual. He is brave, adventurous and prepared to take risks. Crucially, he possesses the abilities to conquer hostile environments, to cross unfamiliar terrain, and to lay claim to dangerous ground (p.643).

Encapsulating the military's hegemonic form of masculinity, the warrior hero image is not always a tangible reality but rather an image that Infantry soldiers are expected to aspire to. It is also used to attract those who see service in combat roles as a means of gaining enhanced social status (Brown, 2012). It is important to note that such ideals appeal not only to men, but also to some women, as they too can reap the benefits (such as enhanced status) of its embodiment (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The promotion of 'masculinity' in relation to military service is therefore established as a fundamental element of military recruitment (Maartens, 2021; Brown, 2012; Woodward, 2000). However, although recruitment campaigns provide a window into the gendered nature of combat roles, they do not in themselves explain why participation may be hindered by gender. Resistance towards the participation of women, for example, exists despite the lifting of combat exclusion policies and also in spite of an increasing rhetoric of inclusivity (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). To gain an appreciation of this phenomenon, and the ways in which participation within Infantry may be impacted by gender, it is necessary to examine the distinguishing elements of the role of the Infantry soldier (and particularly those which have been traditionally used to argue against the inclusion of women). These primarily include physical endurance, the act of killing, and group cohesion.

3.5.1 Physical Endurance

One of the fundamental requirements of the infantry soldier's role is that of physical endurance (Woodward, 2000). Described by Woodward (2000) as a "defining attribute within this particular model of military masculinity" (p.647), physical endurance and toughness have

long been a valued as a measure of the infantry soldier's capability (Wilson, 1944). As Woodward (2000) elaborates, the type of fitness admired of an infantry soldier is not acquired from simply undertaking 'controlled' physical activity such as training at the gym. Instead, it is primarily developed through enduring hardship in rugged rural terrains. Woodward (2000) describes such physicality as the "fitness to tackle nature" (p.647), with success measured by the capacity to "transcend the environment in which the soldier finds himself or herself" (Woodward, 2000, p.647). Physical exertion coupled with lack of sleep and exposure to harsh climates thus test the endurance of the infantry trainee, with such endurance also forming a measure of the infantry soldier's masculinity (Hockey, 2014; Woodward, 2000).

A longstanding example of the physical endurance required of infantry soldiers is that of carrying heavy loads over long distances. Even in 1944 it was noted by Major General Wilson as an 'anomaly' that "in this mechanized age anyone should require the same ability to march as in the past but, if anything, the infantryman's endurance must be greater than before. We expect him to be able to march thirty miles a day and fight at the end of it" (Wilson, 1944, p.7). Despite the increase in options for battlefield mobility, the ability to carry heavy loads over lengthy distances remains to this day firmly linked to the role of the infantry soldier (Cerasini, 2003; Larsson, Dencker, Olsson, & Bremander, 2020). An infantry soldier will have a standard weight of equipment that must be carried for day-to-day survival. However, additional equipment such as ammunition, radios, and platoon weapons, must also be carried to successfully complete tasks. Hockey (2014) describes field exercises designed to test the British Infantry soldier's physical fitness, where it becomes "normal for the infantry body to be hauling eighty pounds of weapons, ammunition, and equipment for prolonged periods" (p.406). It is further noted that the amount of equipment, and consequently the weight carried by soldiers, has steadily increased since the Second World War. This increase often attributed to the use of body armour and an increased dependence on batteries (King, J. 2017). As such, loads can weigh up to 50 or 60 kilogrammes (Larsson, et al, 2020; Jaworski, Jensen, Niederberger, Congalton & Kelly, 2015; Williams, 2019; King, J. 2017).

Although significant advances in battlefield mobility may have been made since 1944, the ability to carry increasingly heavy loads over significant distance, and over rugged terrain, steadfastly remains a physical necessity of the infantry (Woodward, 2000; Hockey, 2014;

Williams, 2019; Larsson, et al, 2020; Cerasini, 2003; King, J. 2017). This requirement also paradoxically has the potential to negatively impact on the soldier's physical wellbeing – as well as the operational task at hand (King, J. 2017). Jaworksi et al's (2015) study, for example, measured the effect of weight carrying on combat performance and injury rates, and found that the stress of carrying loads beyond 30% of a soldier's body weight had negative impacts for both performance and injury (Jaworski, et al, 2015). Not only did the caloric intakes of the soldiers increase, but the resultant fatigue increased the likelihood of being engaged by the enemy, whilst impairing the soldiers' own ability to effectively shoot targets (Jaworski, et al, 2015). It is therefore suggested that combat soldier performance could be improved if science and research were employed to guide the strategic reduction in weight of combat loads (Szayna, Larson, Mahony, Robson, Gereben, Schaefer, Polich, Ayer, Eaton & Marcellino, et al, 2015; Williams, 2019; King, J. 2017). A strategy that is reportedly "not currently done well in the NZ Army" (Williams, 2019).

Before physically engaging with an enemy, the NZ Army's Infantry is expected to be able to walk long distances whilst carrying heavy loads. This requirement is about surviving unassisted, as well as getting to the battlefield before the fight. Logistical constraints and doctrine dictate that Infantry soldiers must be able to carry a minimum of three-days' supply of rations, water and ammunition (NZ Army, 2021). This in addition to personal equipment (including pack, webbing, and rifle), section weapons and body armour. A preliminary study of the increasingly heavy combat loads carried by Infantry soldiers within the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) found the average weight carried by an Infantry soldier on a three-day mission, without resupply, to be 64 kilogrammes (Williams, 2019). The load carrying requirement is the same across all members of the Infantry, regardless of a soldier's physique (including height and weight), age, or gender. The burden of carrying such weight thus has the strong possibility of compromising the NZ Army's self-stated desire to be "agile – of both thought and action" (NZ Army, 2019, p.23). As Williams (2019) suggests, "there is no point having the best equipped soldier in the world if that soldier cannot get from point A to point B, and then complete the mission task."

The critical emphasis placed on the physical demands of combat (of which load carrying continues to be regarded as fundamental) is one of the key reasons that has been previously

used to uphold the exclusion of women (Cohn, 2000; MacKenzie, 2015; Bowman & Wagner, 2015). Supporters of exclusion have long contended that the biological 'inferiority' of women makes them physically weaker than men, and thus more injury prone and incapable of meeting the requirements of the combat role (Maninger, 2008; Bowman & Wagner, 2015). However, such notions are increasingly challenged due to a lack of scientific analysis with respect to the physical requirements of being in a combat situation (MacKenzie, 2015). Moreover, performance on physical tests, and more importantly on the job, can be the result of a range of factors that include not only biological, but also psychological, socio-cultural, nutritional, and environmental: "in other words, the observed gender differences on physical ability tests cannot be attributed fully to differences in physiology between the sexes" (Szayna et al, 2015, p.53).

Training and coaching for specific tasks, for example, form an important aspect of improving performance, and it has been observed that "in the context of military training for very demanding jobs, training has been shown to substantially increase the capabilities of women" (Szayna et al, 2015, p.57). Rather than focus on the physical and/or biological differences between men and women, or on attempts to 'reduce the gap' in performance, it may be more beneficial to focus on accurately identifying the specific performance requirements of physically demanding combat tasks (Sharp, Cohen, Boye, Foulis, Redmond, Larcom, & Zambraski, 2017), and improving individual abilities to meet these requirements (Szayna et al, 2015) – irrespective of gender.

For combat trades: "the male body is represented as the standard" (MacKenzie, 2015, p.128). The unsuitability of women for combat roles is, therefore, judged in comparison to standards that have been developed in relation to men's bodies (standards which, more often than not, are unrelated to the Infantry's operational role) (MacKenzie, 2015; Pendlebury, 2019; Szayna et al, 2015). The result is the exclusion of those who may be able to perform the role adequately, but are not able to meet the 'standard' (Pendlebury, 2019). Defining the standard in relation to operational outcomes is, therefore, critically important (Pendlebury, 2019; Szayna et al, 2015). Advances in equipment and technology, or changes in operating procedures, may also help to alter, or reduce, the physical demands of combat tasks (Sharp et al, 2017; Szayna et al, 2015; MacKenzie, 2015; Williams, 2019). All of which would enhance

the performance of both men and women as Infantry, without compromising (or in fact, perhaps increasing) lethality (Szayna et al, 2015; Williams, 2019).

3.5.2 Killing

A further key aspect of the infantry soldier's role which sets them apart from most, if not all, other trades within the military is that they must be prepared to kill another human being at close range (Wilson, 1944; Woodward, 2000; Hockey, 2014; MacKenzie, 2015). This in itself places the infantry in a superior position in the order of military masculinities (Connell, 2002b; Swain, 2016; Woodward & Winter, 2007; Whitworth, 2004). Given that all other trades are viewed as supporting the infantry in their role, they are naturally "viewed as inferior and less masculine" (Hockey, 2014, p.405). Even those 'non-infantry' combat soldiers (including armoured and artillery) that may be required to kill, are able to do so from such a distance that they are removed from the physical trauma of the act of killing (Grossman, 1995). The infantry soldier must, however, become proficient in "homicidal techniques, toughness, ruthlessness, and aggression" (Hockey, 2014, p.405). Confronting the enemy at close range becomes not only the ultimate test of the infantry soldier, but also the ultimate test of masculinity (Hockey, 2014).

Aggression is, therefore, a favourable attribute and nurtured throughout the career of the infantry soldier. Within the NZ Army, for example, the Infantry soldier's job of warfighting and 'killing' becomes explicit during Combat Corps Training (Harding, 2016). Combat Corps Training is a sixteen-week long course completed after Recruit Course which is designed to develop the skills and knowledge required to "operate as a member of a Rifle Section within a Combat Unit" (NZDF, 2022). In less technical terms, Harding (2016) quotes the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) telling corps trainees at the beginning of the course, "our job is about killing people. Our job is about doing it effectively. If you don't want to do that, leave" (p.211).

Developing the aggression to fulfil this essential skill of being Infantry is perhaps the reason why, in 2023, the NZ Army's Combat Corps Training continues to teach the art of using a bayonet on the battlefield. As Bourke (1999) explains, in many militaries the bayonet is used in training to encourage acts of aggression and develops the Infantry's "lust for blood" (p.80).

This despite the fact that even before the First World War, “combat experience showed that bayonet attacks were seldom ‘pressed home’ because machine guns, artillery and wire prevented the troops from reaching their foe” (Bourke, 1999, p.77). The ability to kill must, therefore, not only be learned through practical technique, but also through developing attitudes that are necessary to commit such an act (Grossman, 1995; O’Sullivan, 2016). These attitudes must be nurtured because whilst killing another human being may be ‘appropriate’ during combat situations, evidence suggests that there remains significant personal resistance, and consequences, for those soldiers (primarily men until recent times) who have been required to do so (Grossman, 1995; Bourke, 1999; O’Sullivan, 2016).

Interestingly, however, an innate lack of aggression, or unwillingness to kill, is rarely noted with respect to men (Ombati, 2015). Instead, these ideas are more likely to be cited as a justification of the unsuitability of women for combat roles. Traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity ‘normalise’ the image of the infantry combat soldier as being male, and associate women with weakness and vulnerability (Ombati, 2015). Such norms generate ongoing resistance to women serving in combat positions, even when put to the test they are found to lack credibility (Connell, 2002b). Hancock (2000), for example, cites evidence of ‘ordinary’ women who have most certainly demonstrated their ability to kill as nurses within Nazi Germany’s SS or as snipers within the Soviet Armed Forces.

Connell (2002b) suggests that there is a widespread belief that it is ‘natural’ for men to be violent, and therefore aggression is commonly classified as a ‘masculine’ trait. However, while the majority of violent crime may be carried out by men, this should not imply that all men are violent: “it is a fact of great importance, both theoretically and practically, that there are many non-violent men in the world” (Connell, 2002b, p.34). Anger and aggression may be present at those points in time where soldiers must physically come up against one another, however as Grayling (2017) suggests, “only maybe” (p.231). Grossman (1995) also describes the reluctance with which most men will kill another human being (especially when the act of killing is conducted at close range). Soldiers must, therefore, be encouraged to be aggressive, and combat training is designed to instil *instinctive* reactions to kill on the battlefield (Grossman, 1995; Bourke, 1999; O’Sullivan, 2016).

As Grossman (1995) notes, however, instinctive training or encouragement of aggressive behaviour does not fully prepare soldiers for the reality of killing because “when one looks an opponent in the eye, and knows that he is young or old, scared or angry, it is not possible to deny that the individual about to be killed is much like oneself” (p.118). Individual accounts of the experiences of soldiers within combat situations exemplify the human resistance to killing. They also illustrate the personal trauma that often results from being in a situation which necessitates killing another human being. Rather than being a glorified heroic act as often depicted within war histories or movies, the reality of killing is described as deeply personal and one which many soldiers struggle to come to terms with (Eide & Gibler, 2018). Eide & Gibler’s (2018) summary of the experiences of soldiers killing in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars suggests: “some veterans believe it separates them from the rest of humanity. Some veterans are sanguine about death in combat, but one veteran sees the face of a killer in the mirror every day and has to convince himself that he’s not ‘a monster’” (Eide & Gibler, 2018, p.169).

Just as masculinity is linked to innate levels of aggression that enables the ability to kill, it is also commonly argued that men will feel an overwhelming need to protect their female colleagues (more so than their male colleagues) during combat situations. As such, the inclusion of women in combat units is considered to represent a vulnerability in terms of combat effectiveness (MacKenzie, 2015; Greener, 2023; Ellner, 2015). Such notions of chivalrous conduct on behalf of male soldiers are, however, challenged by the fact that rates of assault by men against women within the military are often twice as high as those within civilian settings (Greener, 2023; MacKenzie, 2023). This evidences a flaw in the logic of the ‘male as protector’ argument. Instead, and as Hancock (2000) states, “arguments about protection of women from war, or war’s effects, by excluding them from combat, are based on an outdated view of war” (Hancock, 2000, p.170). Similar critiques can be levelled at the notion that the engagement by men in war and soldiering constitute the ultimate form of brotherhood bonding.

3.5.3 Group Cohesion

The development of intense loyalty amongst peers, and to the group, is considered a crucial element of being infantry as it not only forms the foundation of group cohesion but addresses issues (discussed in the previous section) regarding an individual's motivation to fight, or to kill (Connor, Andrews, Noack-Lundberg & Wadham, 2021; MacKenzie, 2015). As Grossman (1995) explains, "the primary factor that motivates a soldier to do the things that no sane man wants to do in combat (that is, killing and dying) is not the force of self-preservation but a powerful sense of accountability to his comrades on the battlefield" (p.149). Comradeship, esprit de corps, kinship, or 'brotherhood' are words that describe this accountability: a strong emotional bond formed between soldiers that is fostered from the point of enlistment and nurtured throughout military service (Grossman, 1995; Hope, 2020; Bourke, 1999). As described by Eide & Gible (2018), the strength of brotherhood is developed through shared experience, and perhaps more importantly through shared hardship. Thus, it is a bond that "emerges from mortal conditions, that is sustained across a lifetime, that demands complete trust, and that returns absolute obligation" (Eide & Gible, 2018, p.155).

Group cohesion as a requirement for combat motivation and combat effectiveness has been said to provide a compelling justification for nurturing bonds of brotherhood and esprit de corps within infantry units (Hockey, 2014; English, 2020; Connor et al, 2021; Bourke, 1999). The Canadian Army, for example, is said to have founded much of its traditional understanding of combat motivation on the notion that *highly cohesive* units are also *highly effective* in combat (English, 2020). Hope (2020) discusses of his experience as an Infantry Battalion Commander within the Canadian Army: "combat motivation is measured by fighting" (p.97), and the 'will to fight' is achieved as a result of both teamwork and leadership. As Connor et al (2021) suggest, the "intended function of loyalty at the meso-level is to produce social cohesion among the members of a group such that they identify the group's needs and interests with their own, over and against the satisfaction of the needs and interests of others" (p.534). Notions of loyalty or brotherhood, therefore, receive far greater focus within Infantry socialisation processes than that of other military trades (Connor et al, 2021; Hockey, 2014).

Women have previously been excluded from combat trades due to their perceived negative impact on the phenomenon of male bonding, and group cohesion (Ellner, 2015; MacKenzie, 2015). As Carreiras (2008) explains,

> behind the argument that the presence of women affects male bonding and thus performance is the belief that effective or successful performance is the result of cohesion, and this, in turn, is a result of social homogeneity (p.208).

As MacKenzie (2015) suggests, "the overarching message of the band of brothers myth is that the exceptional, elite, and essential characteristics of the male group depend on the exclusion of women" (p.3). The belief in social homogeneity results not only in the exclusion of women, but also that of any 'other' who does not fit the desired image. Exclusion has also historically included men who are gay, transgender, or of ethnic minority.

The intense loyalty that underpins notions of military brotherhood can present a double-edged sword (Groegor, 2018; Connor et al, 2021). Connor et al (2021) discuss, for example, the 'layers' of loyalty that exist, whereby loyalty to peers will commonly over-ride loyalty to either the command chain or the institution itself. Such loyalty can also foster inter-unit or inter-corps suspicion. As a result, while intense levels of loyalty, "would function to encourage soldiers to sacrifice for each other during deployment, in practice, it was also demonstrated that this strong loyalty could lead to cover-ups of unethical behavior" (Connor et al, 2021, p.542). There are certainly many examples of 'loyal' groups that have committed atrocities in times of war (Whitworth, 2004; Enloe, 1988). This includes the torture and killing of a 16-year-old Somali boy by Canada's elite Airborne Regiment in 1993 during a UN peacekeeping mission (Whitworth, 2004). The recent investigation into a former Australian SAS soldier's actions in Afghanistan that include "murdering civilians and ordering subordinate soldiers under his command to kill civilians in so-called 'blooding' incidents" (Doherty, 2023) also provides an example of brotherhood 'gone wrong' (MacKenzie & Wadham, 2023). Thus, whilst loyalty can aid in the development of a group's identity, it can also lead to a sense of exclusivity and entitlement (Connor et al, 2021; Wadham, 2013; MacKenzie & Wadham, 2023), with very negative consequences.

It is argued, therefore, that the importance placed on homo-social forms of brotherhood simply serves to reinforce gender norms and affirm the superiority of masculinity (MacKenzie,

2015). Wadham (2013) describes the way in which such exclusivity operates as a form of elitism within the infantry context of the Australian Defence Force, suggesting that:

> Infantry fratriarchy is tribal, constituted by a sense of licence that is evident in the sense of exclusiveness articulated in the popular saying attributed to George Orwell: 'Men sleep peacefully in their beds at night because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf'. Their place as the agents of state directed violence generates a sense of entitlement to operate outside the mores of conventional society. It is an expression of their sense of freedom to do whatever they please (p.226).

Wadham (2013) further argues that whilst Infantry brotherhood is founded on connotations of honour, sacrifice, friendship, and heroism, it also reflects a highly masculine culture, within which bonds are 'galvanised' through practices of bastardisation, hazing and othering. Furthermore, these practices are founded on a systemic culture of sexism and racism. Wadham's (2013) perspective is shared by MacKenzie (2020) whose analysis of soldiers' sharing of images in relation to both the Abu Ghraib torture incident of 2004 and of US military hazing rituals found that soldiers' production of illicit images in such situations "establish a vernacular that normalizes abuse, sexism, racism and homophobia" (MacKenzie, 2020, p.13). Moreover, the circulation of such images serves to reinforce the dysfunctional element of brotherhood; drawing upon peer pressure, humiliation, and exclusion as a means of enforcing loyalty (MacKenzie, 2020).

As English (2020) concludes in his discussion of the Canadian Armed Forces, assumptions about why people may be motivated to fight and kill have traditionally supported the belief that highly cohesive and homogeneous groups are most likely to succeed in combat (English, 2020). However, such assumptions also risk contributing towards a dysfunctional military culture that is not reflective of the 'profession of arms' required of the twenty first century (English, 2020). This is a pertinent idea when considering the desire of many militaries to increase levels of diversity. Rather than considering cohesion as a source of effectiveness, English (2020) suggests that it may, therefore, be more useful to think of *effectiveness* as a source of cohesion. This would alleviate the dependency of cohesion on homogeneous loyalty as its prime source (English, 2020), thus providing a pathway forward when considering the concept of gender integration.

3.6 The 'Spectrum' of Warfare

Whilst the core role of the infantry is to seize ground and engage the enemy at close range, it is important to note that modern militaries demand much greater versatility than this from their ground combat infantry soldiers. Land forces are inherently flexible in their ability to respond to both national and international crises, and as such, "have great relevance across the whole spectrum of warfare, from high-intensity conventional operations through to stability and security tasks" (Tuck, 2022, p.20). Infantry troops are typically involved in a diverse range of operations that are not confined within the parameters of conventional warfare. Commonly termed Operations Other Than War (OOTW), Hartley (2005) simply states that "operations (as opposed to training activities) that are not war are included and operations that are part of a war are not included" (p.509). Hartley (2005) explains that this extensive range of operations can be further categorised on a spectrum that ranges from Peace Operations (PO), to Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR), and National Integrity Operations to Military Contingency Operations.

Peace Operations form a specific category of OOTW that has expanded in both popularity and significance since the 1990s, with an increasing demand for troops to serve as part of United Nations (UN) peace keeping forces (Goldwijk & Soeters, 2018). There exist differing perspectives, however, regarding whether combat soldiers (who are primarily trained to kill or destroy an enemy force) are also the most appropriate force to respond to situations where success may be measured by peace and respect, rather than violence (Tuck 2022; Estilow, 1996; Holmes-Eber, 2020; Goldewijk & Soeters, 2018; Whitworth, 2004). Estilow (1996), for example, questions the suitability of combat troops performing such roles given that "combat ready forces may not repeatedly transition well from war to 'other than war', from destruction and death to building and saving, from combat to noncombat" (p.18). Many militaries contend, however, that it is more practical to 'down-scale' violence and aggression in a non-combat situation, than to be found wanting if required to meet the demands of a peacekeeping situation that necessitates lethal force.

The notion that war-fighters make good peacekeepers is a key feature of current NZ Army strategy (NZ Army, 2019), and the Infantry provides the NZ Army the agility and flexibility to respond to a broad spectrum of operations, from lethal to 'non-lethal'. Therefore, aside from

its core role, the Infantry is expected to respond to a variety of tasks such as peace-keeping, civil support operations, Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR), and capacity building with partnered forces. The RNZIR has contributed towards peace operations in countries such as Yugoslavia (1992-1996), East Timor (1999-2002 & 2006-2012), Afghanistan (2001-2014) and the Solomon Islands (2003-2013) (Tizzard-Close, 2021). More recently, contributions have been made towards the capacity building of Iraqi and Ukrainian forces. Based on the previous fifty years of history, OOTW are the most likely scenarios to which the NZ Army's Infantry will be deployed. The NZ Army is cognisant, however, of the risk that 'peace operations' can quickly escalate into 'combat' situations. These risks have been evidenced with the explicit targeting of NZ forces, resulting in the deaths of some members of the RNZIR whilst on peace-keeping operations in East Timor and Afghanistan (Tizzard-Close, 2021).

Whilst it may seem logical to employ combat troops in situations that can quickly switch from non-combat to combat, the increasing complexity of such operations can call into question the appropriateness of combat troops within these environments (Estilow, 1996). As Tuck (2022) points out, "traditional approaches to land warfare focusing on themes like manoeuvre, firepower and decisive military victory may be at best irrelevant to these sorts of operations and at worst entirely counterproductive" (Tuck, 2022, p.168). It is also argued that the particular form of hegemonic masculinity encouraged within the military makes combat soldiers resentful, if not incapable, of employing such restraint (Whitworth, 2004).

Despite differing perspectives on the appropriateness of deploying war fighters as peacekeepers, there exist indicators (discussed in the previous chapter) that combat soldiers may be capable of embodying an alternate 'peacekeeping' masculinity, which challenges the hegemonic 'heroic warrior' form (Stevens & Greener, 2017; Duncanson, 2009; Broesder, Op den Buijs, Vogelaar, & Euwema, 2015). The possibility of combat soldiers embracing an alternate form of masculine identity may present a pathway towards acknowledging that there are some qualities within the heroic warrior model that are positive, and "which, if combined with traditionally feminized qualities, such as caring, patience and empathy, could provide a model of soldier ideally suited to conflict resolution" (Duncanson, 2009, p.77). This would, however, necessitate new ways of recruiting and training combat soldiers so that they may be able to, in essence, adopt a dual identity: fierce, aggressive warrior on the one hand,

and ethical, empathetic provider of humanitarian aid and protection on the other (Holmes-Eber, 2020; Whitworth, 2004).

3.7 Conclusion

Although war and warfare has evolved significantly since the First World War, militaries remain 'human-centric' (Tuck, 2022; Cerasini, 2003). This chapter has reflected upon the human aspect of the ground combat 'infantry' soldier, exploring in particular the gendered relationship between military and masculinity with respect to their role. It can be seen that militaries have traditionally depended upon the relationship between combat and concepts of masculinity to recruit and motivate Infantry soldiers, and that this intertwining continues to the present day. The relationship between combat and traditional notions of masculinity is such that the ability of women to participate remains challenging, irrespective of the removal of formal exclusionary policies (Ombati, 2015; MacKenzie, 2015; MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). The idealisation of a traditional heroic form of masculinity has also been found to result in resistance towards participation by men who do not conform to the 'ideal' model (Breede & Davis, 2020). This situation persists despite the increasingly wide range of deployed roles of combat soldiers that call for a multiplicity of both 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits.

The NZ Army is a military institution that has sought to increase gender equality and gender diversity by creating a culture where both men and women may participate equally and within which all personnel are treated with 'dignity and respect' (Teale & MacDonald, 2020). However, specific masculine gender performance expectations may be stifling the potential of both men and women to participate successfully in combat roles of the NZDF (Hanson & Burns, 2005; MoD, 2014; MoD 2015; Teale & MacDonald, 2020). The next chapter will explore the historical and social context of the NZ Army, examining the gendered factors that have influenced this situation from inception through to the present day.

Chapter 4: The Gendered Historical Context of the NZ Army

4.1 Introduction

Whilst operating as an integral component of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) alongside air and maritime components (the Royal New Zealand Air Force and Royal New Zealand Navy respectively) the New Zealand Army (NZ Army) also exists as a standalone entity with its own unique culture and history. This chapter will examine the historical origins of the NZ Army by contextualising its development within the broader evolution of New Zealand's social and political milieu. It will examine the decisions and events that have shaped the NZ Army's force design from inception through to the present day, with a particular focus on those that have influenced gender relations and gender equality/equity issues in the NZ Army.

4.2 Gender and Force Design

The core task of the NZDF is to conduct military operations at the discretion of the New Zealand Government. The NZ Army thus forms the land-based component of New Zealand's Defence Force, providing 'combat ready' land forces that are "trained, led and equipped to win" (NZ Army, 2019, p.11). Military force design refers to the way in which the NZ Army is organised to ensure that its shape and size are adequately suited to meet these objectives (Parsons, 2018).

Force design is heavily influenced by several factors which themselves are in a constant state of flux. These include, but are not limited to, the political and security contexts, as well as influences from within the country which the military force is located. Societal changes have, for example, had significant influence on decisions around who should or should not serve, including the nature of that service. Over time this has seen some increase in the diversity of gender and ethnicity in many militaries globally (Soeters & Van der Meulen, 2006). Political agendas also influence the way in which militaries are resourced and employed, with Defence policies commonly developed in alignment with domestic and foreign policy outcomes (Rolfe, 1993a). Military forces are, therefore, shaped and re-shaped to meet the challenges of their environment as well as the expectations of both their government and host society. The

ultimate aim of military force designers, however, is to work within these parameters in order to enable success within both current and future operating contexts (Parsons, 2018).

In the case of New Zealand, the design and structure of its Army has been evolving since its inception during the 1840s. The Defence policies that guide the structure of the NZ Army have been, and continue to be, significantly influenced by the remote geographical location and small population of New Zealand, as well as the country's historical origins as a British colony (Quigley, 2006; Rolfe, 1999). As a small nation, for example, New Zealand relies upon strategic military alliances for its security; its closest ally in proximity and ideology being Australia. Located within an isolated part of the world, the perceived threat of physical attack on New Zealand soil is considered relatively low (Ministry of Defence, 2016). As a result, while there is a need to maintain a professional and interoperable[12] military force, there has also been some reluctance on behalf of the New Zealand Government to expend significant amounts of funding towards doing so (Rolfe, 1999). The percentage of GDP directed at military funding has in fact steadily declined since the 1960s, from 2.5% down to approximately 1% in the 2020s (Witton, 2024). New Zealand's Defence policies are then described as having several enduring themes which include "an overseas orientation to defence strategies, concern with alliance arrangements, close and harmonious relations with Australia and, underlying all else, a continuing preoccupation with the cost of defence" (Rolfe, 1999, p.3). Efficiency and effectiveness, as well as flexibility and adaptability, are terms that are commonly used with respect to the force design of the New Zealand Army in strategy documents (NZ Army, 2019).

A much less visible theme within the history of New Zealand's Defence policies and military force design is that of gender. As Obradovic (2014) suggests, gendered historical perspectives often provide a reflection of the society within which events occurred. New Zealand societal norms were grounded in a number of gendered ideologies, which were amplified within the context of a heavily masculinised colonial culture (Phillips, 1987). Significant value has historically placed on masculinity within New Zealand society, and the role of men has largely been considered to be that of 'protector' with that of women largely being to be 'protected'.

[12] "The ability to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives" (NATO, 2019, p.70).

The gender hierarchy at work within New Zealand society has both encouraged and perpetuated 'socially acceptable' roles for men and women and has influenced the development of New Zealand's Defence policies. Such policies, for example, have historically stated who should or should not be allowed to serve in military roles, as well as the scope of that service.

As Kronsell (2012) notes, "as long as the gender dichotomy is perceived as given and natural, life proceeds as usual and little conflict arises" (p.25). Such has been the case of the NZ Army where the gender dichotomy inherent within it has remained largely unchallenged until more recent years. The influence of gender on Defence policies has also often been assumed irrelevant. Ultimately this has created legacies of gendered force design based on traditional and cultural ideals of what a military force should look like. It is therefore necessary to apply a gendered 'lens' (Enloe, 2007) to the history of the NZ Army in order to reveal those aspects of Defence policy and force design that have historically been assumed 'natural' from a societal perspective, and perhaps taken for granted.

4.3 The Beginnings of the NZ Army

As previously noted, one of the key aspects of force design is to ensure that military purpose and military force structure are aligned. The initial purpose of the military in New Zealand was less focused on external security threats and largely concentrated on the internal stability of New Zealand (Rolfe, 1999). In March 1845 a rudimentary military group was founded by a 'Militia Ordinance', the purpose of which was to form a force that could defend the lives and property of 'Her Majesty's subjects' within the colony of New Zealand (Derby, 2012). This document stated that every man "between the ages of eighteen years to sixty years, being a British subject, and not an aboriginal [Māori] native" would be liable to serve in the Militia (Derby, 2012), with penalties existing for non-compliance by such men. Notable is the reluctance of the colonising population to include indigenous Māori people in its defence, despite some willingness on the part of Māori at the time to participate (Webb, 2018). Also absent is any reference to the service of women within the militia; such a notion clearly incompatible with societal or political thinking in New Zealand during the early nineteenth

century. The public conception of a woman's role was instead firmly oriented to that of "wife, mother, homemaker and guardian of society's morals" (Dalziel, 2001, p.191).

The Militia Ordinance was later replaced by: the Militia Act of 1858, the Colonial Defence Force Act of 1863, and the Defence Act of 1886. While the various Defence Acts from 1863 onwards broadened the eligibility of service to include "all inhabitants, including Natives" (Defence Act, 1886), participation by women in the defence of New Zealand was not a consideration. As Cooper (1999) suggests, "in Western history war has been an activity in which 'perceived differences between the sexes' are especially marked" (p.87), and this was applicable to New Zealand society during the nineteenth century. The colonial New Zealand man was expected to take up arms and defend his country; the colonial New Zealand woman's role was with home and family (Montgomerie, 1999; Cooper, 1999; Dalziel, 2001). As Dalziel (2001) notes, "New Zealand women were not inclined to challenge this emphasis" (p.185) and even women's success in gaining political voting rights in 1893 "did not lead New Zealand women rapidly into new spheres of activity but consolidated and reconfirmed their vital interest and mission in life – their role as homemakers and guardians of moral health and welfare" (p.186). Women maintained the accepted social status quo, and military service during this period remained the domain of men.

4.4 New Zealand at War: 1899

The role of the military during the early years of the Militia's formation remained focused on internal conflict, and it was not until the late nineteenth century that New Zealand began to turn its Defence considerations towards external security threats (Cooke & Crawford, 2011). The South African War of 1899 became the first overseas conflict to which New Zealand military forces deployed. It is a war that has often been described as a 'white man's war' (Hearn, 2018; Webb, 2018; Phillips, 1987). A description that was emphasised by the exclusion of 'native' Māori soldiers from New Zealand's deploying forces (Webb, 2018). Ten contingents totaling approximately 6,500 men deployed from New Zealand throughout the duration of this war (Taylor, 1996; Webb, 2018). Participation by women consisted of 10 New Zealand nurses who had enlisted with the British Royal Medical Corps (Taylor, 1996) – their participation being within socially acceptable nurturing and caregiving roles. The contribution

of New Zealand men in this war, on the other hand, was celebrated through stories of enduring physical and mental toughness on the battlefield (Phillips, 1987). As Phillips (1987) discusses, it was during the South African War that the mythology of the New Zealand soldier was born, and this mythology was built on the ideology of the rugged qualities of the 'sons of pioneers'. It also "served to entrench military prowess as a central element of the white New Zealand male identity" (Phillip, 1987, p.152).

In terms of Defence policy, the South African War marks the point in time where New Zealand began to consider itself capable of contributing towards Imperial Forces[13], and from this point forward "New Zealand's armed forces were designed primarily to fight overseas rather than to defend the country's shores" (Rolfe, 1999, p.4). The Defence Act of 1909 detailed fundamental changes that were necessary for New Zealand to defend itself against emerging threats (Rolfe, 1999). Key changes included the formation of a sizeable Territorial Force[14], with Compulsory Military Training (CMT) or 'conscription' mandated for all men between the ages of 18 to 25. While there was some minor resistance towards conscription for men (Cooke & Crawford, 2011; Cleaver, 2018), the gendered nature of conscription remained uncontested.

As Kronsell (2012) suggests, "often underlying what appears to be common sense are relations of power (Kronsell, 2006). For example, a power relationship is embedded in the perceived as natural relationship between the protector (the conscripted soldier) and the protected (the nonconscripted)" (p.26). In this way, the process of military conscription continued to support the gendered order inherent within New Zealand society; an order that was challenged by few. In the eyes of those who did oppose conscription, it was not due to its gendered nature but rather due to fears of the 'militarisation' of New Zealand as a result (Cook & Crawford, 2011).

[13] As a colony of Britain, New Zealand contributed troops towards the British Imperial Forces (King, 1981).
[14] The Territorial Force (now often referred to as the 'Reserve' Force) is the 'part-time' component of the NZ Army force and supplements the permanent, or full-time, Regular Force (NZDF, n.d.).

4.5 The First and Second World Wars: 1914-1945

By the time that the First World War broke out in 1914, New Zealand was in a position to establish a sizeable Expeditionary Force to be deployed under British command. During the war nearly 100,000 New Zealand men deployed as soldiers, equating to approximately ten percent of New Zealand's total population at the time. The Infantry formed the main fighting element of these contingents, and were required to engage with, and kill, the enemy using rifles or bayonets (Ministry for Culture & Heritage, 2017). Eighteen thousand of those deployed died (Taylor, 1986; Cooke & Crawford, 2011). As suggested by Montgomerie (1999), the "primary obligation of the male citizen was to defend his country, if necessary, at the cost of life or limb" (p.168). Meanwhile, women who sought to support the war effort as uniformed doctors or nurses were initially rejected by the New Zealand Government of the time (Hunter, 2015).

The Government's stance on women's participation did change from 1915 onwards however, with approximately 650 nurses being deployed by the New Zealand Army Nursing Service, serving in military hospitals and hospital ships (Taylor, 1996). These women have been described as "the often unsung heroines of the First World War" (Taylor, 1996, p.57) (in contrast to the national celebration of men's participation on the battlefield). Instead, the greater expectation of New Zealand's women was to support the war on the home front, as "women of the Empire and mothers of soldiers" (Hunter, 2015). As a result, even less well recorded than the war histories of those nurses who deployed during World War One, are the experiences of the many New Zealand women who played an active civilian role in the war efforts overseas (NZ Herald, 2017). For example, Blanche Butler (formerly the principal of Auckland Girls' Grammar school) who traveled to Britain after World War One broke out and worked at "Woolwich Arsenal, the huge munitions factory town, where women graduates took the role of scientific demonstrators, showing workers the functions of the parts of the shells they were making" (NZ Herald, 2017).

New Zealand continued to support the British Empire at the outbreak of the Second World War. As Rolfe (1999) suggests, "New Zealand's overall security strategy remained remarkably consistent. New Zealand stood and fell with Britain, Empire and Commonwealth" (Rolfe,

1999, p.8). The national enthusiasm towards war that had been witnessed during the mobilisation of forces for the South African and First World Wars had somewhat faded due to the toll of the First World War on New Zealand society (Taylor, 1996; McLeod, 1986), however New Zealand continued to commit its people to serve as part of three Expeditionary Forces. As noted by Taylor (1996), World War Two "left no aspect of society or national life untouched" (p.79) and the impact of war did indeed to a large degree 'militarise' New Zealand society. Women were still primarily expected to support the war effort on home soil and bore the burden in this regard: "farms and homes had to be maintained. Marriages had to be nurtured, as did children" (Montgomerie, 1999, p.171).

The Second World War did see some increase in uniformed participation by women as they were permitted to take on roles such as "clerks, drivers, librarians, telephone operators, and ran the New Zealand Forces Clubs in Egypt and Italy" (Taylor, 1996, p.79). However, on the whole, women continued to view themselves as "wives, mothers and girlfriends of soldiers, not as soldiers themselves" (Montgomerie, 1999, p.169). As Sullivan (2002) notes, the contribution of New Zealand's women to the Second World War went largely unrecorded, and attempts have only been made in more recent times to capture these experiences so that they are not completely forgotten. This includes efforts to document the sacrifice and hardships made by the 'Land Girls', members of the New Zealand Women's Land Service, who fulfilled essential roles and kept the country running while the men were sent to war (Bardsley, 2000).

For New Zealand men there remained a social expectation that they would serve in the Second World War, unless they had a legitimate reason not to do so. One hundred and five thousand New Zealand men and women of New Zealand served in New Zealand's Expeditionary Forces of the Second World War, of which approximately 7,000 died on active Army service (Archives NZ, 2023). As McLeod (1986) describes, "it was the infantry who bore the brunt of the fighting" (p.3), with infantry soldiers suffering approximately seventy percent of New Zealand's total combat casualties (McLeod, 1986). The personal motivations of those men who served in the conflict were varied, including "a desire to see the world, a sense of adventure, a chance to emulate fathers or uncles who had served in the earlier conflict, an opportunity to escape unhappy domestic situations, a sense of duty" (McGibbon, 2004, p.36).

Ironically, some also cited a 'hatred of violence' as being a reason for choosing to enlist (McGibbon, 2004).

Perhaps above all else, however, it was the fear of being considered a coward which provided the greatest motivation for New Zealand's men to serve: "not to be in uniform invited a critical hostility, in fact. People thought you were gutless and scared, and started handing out white feathers" (McGibbon, 2004, p.36). As discussed by Montgomerie (1999), men were 'classified' in terms of either their ability or inability to serve, as well as their willingness to do so and there existed a "wartime hierarchies of masculinity" (Montgomerie, 1999). Precedence was given to front line infantry soldiers; those who had proven their worth in terms of killing the enemy and enduring hardship on the battlefield (Montgomerie, 1999). This in comparison to those who served in supporting roles, behind enemy lines (e.g., as drivers or administrators)

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4.6 Military Service and National Identity

It can be seen, therefore, that New Zealand society historically placed a high value upon both masculinity and military service. As Kronsell (2012) suggests, the "association among men, masculinity, and military defense activities represents one of the most historically cemented and universal understandings of citizenship (Goldstein, 2001)" (p.25). Concepts of masculinity and nationalism, which often include words such as "honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, and duty" (Nagel, 2005, p.402) are also inextricably linked to nationhood and 'manhood' (Nagel, 2005). New Zealand, like many other Western nations, drew upon these concepts to encourage participation by men in the war efforts of the early twentieth century. Notions of masculinity and war are therefore very much historically linked to the identity of New Zealand's soldiers (Nagel, 2005). Such notions are also linked to the identity of New Zealand itself (Cooper, 1999; Phillips, 1987). Much national pride is attached to the bravery of New Zealand's men who fought overseas and, as Cooper (1999) suggests, the ideas of masculinity, war and nationalism that have become part of the fabric of New Zealand's identity have only recently become a topic for critique.

The observation of New Zealand's National Day of Remembrance, Anzac Day (25 April), provides one such unique example of gendered symbolism and identity building (Cooper,

1999). Anzac day has been observed since 1916 and commemorates the bravery of nearly 3,000 New Zealand soldiers who fought and lost their lives during the Gallipoli campaign of World War One in 1915. This campaign is considered a defining moment in New Zealand's identity (Phillips, 1987; Cooper, 1999). However, as Phillips (1987) further suggests, in the earlier years of the 19th century Anzac Day remained largely a commemoration of masculine sacrifice: "it ignored half of the country's people, who had to be content with the thought that they had mothered these manly sons" (p.165).

Anzac Day commemorations have evolved since the early twentieth century. Smith (2016) notes that the solemnity and rituals have remained consistent, however greater emphasis is now placed on understanding the experiences and suffering of those that served during the campaigns. Rather than a glorification of war, Anzac Day has become a reminder of the cost of war. It is also now considered to be a day that belongs to all of New Zealand society, rather than 'just a few' (Fleming, 2009). Despite these changes in commemoration, however, Anzac Day remains a durable symbol of masculine heroism that has shaped the identity of New Zealand as a nation. The Anzac soldier 'mythology' also continues to have a strong influence on the identity of the NZ Army's personnel (Morris, 2017).

4.7 Citizenship and Military Service

The mobilisation of New Zealand citizens for the wars up to, and including, the Second World War was heavily gendered. As Kronsell (2012), suggests, militaries and military activities are intertwined with national identities, which in turn "defines who the citizen is as well as his or her citizenship (i.e., the rights and obligations citizens have toward the state for the nation)" (Kronsell, 2012, p.24). Citizenship for New Zealand women, despite their war efforts, was defined differently than that of New Zealand men. While women had a 'part to play' their experiences differed significantly to those of their male counterparts (Montgomerie, 1999). The greater expectation was that women would keep the home fires burning and fulfil roles that had previously been undertaken by men in order to keep the country functioning (Hunter, 2015). They were expected to assume the role of 'protected' whilst men were the 'protectors' (Kronsell, 2012). This was accompanied by the assumption, however, that these

women would also be prepared to step back into their 'feminine' roles and allow the men to resume their rightful place in the community on their return from war (Montgomerie, 1999).

Women in many Western nations were the supporting actors to the war effort (Enloe, 1988; Nagel, 2005). While the contribution of both uniformed and non-uniformed women no doubt involved acts of sacrifice and bravery, such terms do not commonly punctuate stories of the experiences of war for New Zealand women (Sullivan, 2002). New Zealand's public perception of war has instead been historically linked to specific and ideological ideas of masculine heroism (Phillips, 1987; Cooper, 1999). These perceptions result in the contribution of women being largely overshadowed and devalued (Enloe, 2004; Obradovic, 2014).

Claims to citizenship via active military service were also reserved in many ways for the New Zealand Pākehā[15] male. While this thesis is primarily concerned with the gendered history of the NZ Army, there are some distinct parallels that can be drawn between the 'integration' of Māori to the NZ Army and the integration of women. As previously noted, Māori soldiers were not permitted to enlist within the Expeditionary Force deployed to the South African War (Webb, 2018). Māori parliamentarians did however seek inclusion of Māori troops within the First World War with the view that "service in the war would improve the lives of Māori, increase their status and visibility in New Zealand social and political life and put Māori on equal footing with Pākehā as citizens of the nation." (Webb, 2018, p.37). Approval by the British Army Council for Māori participation resulted in a call to arms by Māori leaders, with recruiting advertisements drawing attention to the need for Māori to maintain visibility in the war effort: "It is our earnest hope that, though the Māori Race is among the smallest of those within the British Empire, its name may not be omitted from the roll of people who are rallying to maintain the 'mana'[16] of King George the Fifth" (Webb, 2018, p.117). A segregated Māori contingent was accordingly deployed, albeit commonly assigned to combat support roles which afforded less prestige or status than those of direct combat (Webb, 2018).

Deployment of Māori soldiers to the Second World War continued to remain segregated, with the formation of the 28th Māori Battalion. Such segregation reportedly afforded both greater

[15] Pākehā is a Māori noun which refers to a New Zealander of European descent (Moorfield, 2011).
[16] Mana is a Māori noun which encompasses ideas of prestige, authority and status (Moorfield, 2011).

visibility and a degree of autonomy for Māori, and was both requested and welcomed by Māori leaders at the time (Webb, 2018). The more contentious issue, however, was that the most senior officer positions remained largely reserved for Pākehā officers (Webb, 2018). Furthermore, despite the Māori Battalion receiving "the highest number of honours and awards of any New Zealand infantry battalion" (Webb, 2018, p.242), those Māori soldiers who returned from the war were not rewarded by the New Zealand government in the same way as Pākehā soldiers. While many Pākehā soldiers were awarded farms, for example, Māori were not. Therefore, while Māori have paid the 'price' of citizenship, it is less clear whether their active service achieved the aims of early Māori parliamentarians (i.e., equal citizenship) (Montgomerie, 1999; Webb, 2018) This, in part, has lead to the Kaupapa Inquiry (Wai 2500)[17] currently investigating Waitangi Tribunal claims and grievances of Māori war veterans (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024).

4.8 A Changing Force: Post Second World War to the 1970s

New Zealand maintained strong colonial ties with the British Empire up until the conclusion of the Second World War. By the end of the war, however, new strategic military alliances were being formed, suggesting that New Zealand understood its security position to be one whereby it could not stand alone in its defence: "the major lesson from the Second World War was one that did not really have to be learnt: New Zealand could not defend itself by itself. Instead, security was to be found through working with like-minded powers; powers with similar values and similar world views" (Rolfe, 1999, p.13). These 'like-minded' countries included those primarily within the Commonwealth and United Nations. Key alliances were formed with Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, and, most notably, the United States of America (US).

The ANZUS Security Treaty, signed in 1951, bound together Australia, the United States and New Zealand, and was an alliance that was considered to work beyond just security issues. It was heralded as "an effective alliance between states which see themselves as equal and agree to co-operate, without being coerced or cajoled, in matters of common defence"

[17] The Military Veterans Inquiry (Wai 2500) will address claims and grievances involving past military service of Māori undertaken directly for or on behalf of the Crown. 109 claims have been deemed eligible to participate in the inquiry (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024).

(Bercovitch, 1988, p.6). While ANZUS provided New Zealand some surety of security, as well as helping to support possibilities for future trade deals, it also resulted in New Zealand's involvement in several overseas conflicts in support of its newly allied countries (Rolfe, 1999). For example, in Malaya, Korea, and Vietnam, all of which saw New Zealand Forces respectively deployed alongside Commonwealth, United Nations, and US forces. Unlike the wars of the early twentieth century, however, these later conflicts did not require a total 'war effort' on behalf of all New Zealanders (i.e., smaller numbers of soldiers were deployed to these conflicts, which did not require large scale support from New Zealand society).

The NZDF contingents deployed to Korea, Malaya and Vietnam were comparatively small to those committed to the Second World War. Many New Zealanders were also either ambivalent or opposed to involvement in conflicts that appeared to have little direct impact on New Zealand's security (McGibbon, 2010; Challinor, 1998). Despite political and societal division regarding New Zealand's participation in these conflicts (and despite later tensions during the mid-1980s between New Zealand and the US which resulted in an eventual breakdown of the ANZUS Security Treaty) the NZ Army's efforts achieved the aim at the time of consolidating the alliance between New Zealand, the US and Australia. It also served to demonstrate the resilience of its male soldiers in enduring new forms of physical and mental hardship, further validating their military prowess in modern combat situations (Desmond, 2013; Challinor, 1998; Thomson; 2000).

Conscription for New Zealand men continued in various forms up until 1972, however it was primarily to maintain a supplementary Territorial Force (Taylor, 1996). By the 1970s the NZ Army had moved towards using voluntary enlistment to maintain its Regular Force, which now consisted of approximately 8,000 full time professional soldiers. Those who deployed post-World War Two were drawn from volunteers (Cooke & Crawford, 2011), and the composition of these forces remained largely based on combat roles, including infantry and artillery units that were attached to allied forces.

While the involvement of women in the NZ Army had begun to (very gradually) evolve during the years after the Second World War, very few uniformed women were deployed to these later conflicts. Certainly no women deployed in combat roles as there remained a ban on

women enlisting in combat trades. Whilst 3800 members of the NZ Army deployed to Vietnam, just nine of these were women (who were members of the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps and posted to the 1st Australian Field Hospital in South Vietnam) (Weekes, 2002). The role of women serving within the NZ Army continued to be limited to specific gendered (or 'feminine') roles such as medical support, administration, and catering. Women were also enlisted into a segregated corps, the 'New Zealand Women's Royal Army Corps' (NZWRAC). Indeed, it was not until the late 1970s that it was even considered necessary to train uniformed women in basic essential military skills, such as handling weapons (Cleaver, 2018).

Although there were some gradual shifts in New Zealand society regarding gendered roles and gender equality, by the late 1970s political and public opinion was not yet in favour of women's involvement in roles that were considered predominantly 'masculine'. Johnston's (1976) description of New Zealand social norms at the time states that, "there is a strong current feeling which believes in the separation of men's and women's roles" (p.108) and women continued to be regarded primarily as the "homemaker and childminder by most men (and many women)" (p.107). As Dalziel (2001) further elaborates, the expectation that New Zealand would become a nation of equal genders merely by the fact that it was the first country to allow women to vote was somewhat misguided. She argues that New Zealand feminists of the nineteenth century saw the role of wife and mother as 'noble and fulfilling': "the vote was seen as an extension of this role, not as the herald of a new one and as such had a strangling effect on the expansion of women's role in New Zealand society. The nineteenth-century emphasis on marriage and home took even firmer root and continued to dominate the thinking of both sexes on the position of women well into the twentieth century" (Dalziel, 2001, p.194).

In line with the Human Rights Commission Act of 1977, and in an attempt to address gender inequalities such as pay and conditions of service, the NZWRAC was disestablished the same year and women were integrated into the 'mainstream' Regular Force (RF) of the NZ Army. However, despite changes to address gender equality based on a human rights rationale, equality of service did not extend to the participation of women in combat roles. As noted by Cleaver (2018), "neither the 1977 Act nor later Human Rights Act 1993 provided for complete

equality of status for women in the armed services. Both Acts included provisions that enabled preferential treatment on the basis of gender to continue in relation to combat roles" (p. 95). As Rolfe (1999) indicates, for New Zealand society the question of women in combat was 'divisive' and the NZDF was "opposed to committing women to combat until it can be demonstrated that a well-established and informed social consensus for deliberately involving women in combat exists" (Rolfe, 1999, p.157). It is a reflection of New Zealand society's beliefs at the time that women should remain predominantly in feminine gendered roles. As a result of disillusionment in the advancement of women's rights within New Zealand, a women's liberation movement (seeking equal access to education, employment and contraception) was born during the latter part of the twentieth century (Dalziel, 2001). The emergence of this movement also led to increased public debate on the participation of women in combat (Phare, 1993; Rolfe, 1999).

4.9 From War fighters to Peacekeepers: 1980-2000

The integration of women into the mainstream Regular Force was just one small change to the structure of the NZ Army that was to occur post Second World War. The NZ Army underwent a significant number of reviews and restructures, and these continued through until the 1990s (Rolfe, 1993b; James, 1994). The impetus for these reviews was the NZ Government's continued desire to cut costs and increase efficiencies (James, 1994; Rolfe, 1999; Rolfe, 1993b). While war had previously been an integral aspect of early New Zealand society, influencing both the culture and identity of the country and its citizens, the NZ Army was now distanced from the everyday life of most. Consequently, public support for the military had also declined, with an increased "demand to be shown 'the threat' as a justification for the armed forces" (Rolfe, 1999, p.179). As Greener (2017) suggests, "it is within this setting – one where consecutive Defence White Papers have said that there is no direct military threat to New Zealand – that the small but professional New Zealand Army originates" (p.21).

The focus of this 'small but professional Army' had also shifted significantly by the 1990s. The rift in the ANZUS alliance[18] that occurred during the 1980s was in part responsible for this shift in focus (James, 1994). This tension resulted in an increased emphasis on United Nations peacekeeping activities rather than involvement in "alliance wars or forward defence" (Rolfe, 1993, p.158). New Zealand was turning greater attention towards a concept of collective security as part of the United Nations. For the NZ Army this resulted in a large number of troops being committed to peacekeeping missions in a wide range of countries, including Cambodia (1992), Somalia (1992), Yugoslavia (1992), Bougainville (1997), and East Timor (1999) (Tizzard-Close, 2021; Taylor, 1996; Quigley, 2006).

There was, however, also a desire to maintain a level of 'self-reliance' whilst retaining strong links with Australia as a key military partner (James, 1994). Many of these peacekeeping operations were undertaken in partnership or collaboration with the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Despite such a change in focus (from warfighting operations to an increased number of peacekeeping operations), the NZ Army primarily focused on its traditional combat capabilities. Such a strategy was based upon the premise that being able to participate in the full spectrum of possible operations, from peacekeeping to warfighting, requires soldiers to be trained and equipped primarily for warfighting (Quigley, 2006).

The ANZUS rift of 1984 also heralded a deterioration in the NZDF's capabilities. Political and societal support for maintaining military capability had declined and, following New Zealand's split from the ANZUS alliance in 1986, the 1991 Defence White Paper clearly indicated that the New Zealand government was prepared to expend only the 'credible minimum' required for its defence (James, 1994; Rolfe, 1999). With a reduction in Defence spending of approximately 30% this had clear implications for the NZ Army, not only in terms of equipment and capabilities, but also for personnel and defence relations. While the NZ Army's operational capability had been a divisional-sized group during the Second World War, by the 1990s this deployable capability had reduced to a battalion group[19] (Fenton, 1998).

[18] The ANZUS rift was caused by New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance which resulted in a ban on US nuclear-powered ships visiting New Zealand waters This position eventually led to New Zealand's suspension from ANZUS in 1986. (Rolfe, 1999).

[19] A Battalion consists of approximately 600 troops, in comparison to approximately 7000 troops in a Division.

The numbers of Regular Force personnel naturally reduced in line with these changes: during the 1970s the NZ Army consisted of approximately 8,000 Regular Force personnel. However, by the 1990s this number had reduced to 4,300 (Rolfe, 1999). Positive international perceptions of the NZDF as a credible fighting force were also being eroded (James, 1994), with Australian newspapers, for example, reporting that "unnamed senior Defence Department officials had "warned that working more closely with New Zealand could endanger Australian lives, so run-down has its defence force become through a decade of budget cuts and its withdrawal from the Anzus alliance" (Dominion Post, 1998). Budget cuts had not only undermined the NZDF's personnel and equipment capabilities, but also its capacity to build relations and cooperate with Australian Forces (Jennings, 1993). It was not until the Defence White Paper of 1997 that 'reinvigoration' of the NZDF was eventually prioritised. This was to result in the modernisation of the NZ Army based primarily on a strategy of two light infantry battalions that would be equipped and trained for combat (Quigley, 2006).

4.10 Army25: The Strategic Vision

The NZ Army of 2024 reflects many of the intended outcomes of the modernisation that was recommended by the Defence White Paper of 1997. In particular, it remains configured around two light Infantry battalions, and the upgrade of equipment and capabilities, (such as armoured vehicles and radio communication systems), has ensured commensurate capabilities with its military partners. A review of the NZ Army's strategic plan through to 2025 reveals that interoperability continues to be an important aspect of the NZDF's strategic discourse (NZDF, 2019). In particular, partnership with Australia remains vital, as do relationships with other United Nations countries. The roles that the NZDF must be now prepared to undertake have also evolved significantly since its inception. Such roles range from "combat focused" (NZDF, 2019, p.11) tasks through to conducting a broad range of operations, "in all environments and across the spectrum of conflict" (NZDF, 2019, p.11). As such the NZ Army cites the need to remain 'agile', 'flexible' and 'highly adaptive' (NZ Army, 2019). Perhaps above all else, the NZ Army defines itself as a combat force that trains and prepares itself primarily for land combat operations (NZ Army, 2019) in order to meet the challenges of the future operating environment.

The notion that war-fighters make good peacekeepers is one that is commonly maintained among military strategists and also appears as a key feature of current NZ Army strategy (NZ Army, 2019) – irrespective of the fact that in. peacekeeping situations military personnel are often required to act as 'go-betweens' for fighting forces (McLean, McGibbon, & Gentry, 2009). Despite the emphasis placed upon the NZ Army as a warfighting institution, New Zealand soldiers have developed a reputation for having a 'natural affinity' for keeping the peace (Taylor, 1996). Research into the experiences of New Zealand peacekeepers has also indicated that "contrary to some feminist discourses on militarised masculinity, soldiers are not monolithically violence-oriented when conflict resolution is necessary" (Stevens & Greener, 2017, p.162). Such research further indicates that New Zealand soldiers have the ability to embrace those traits that are commonly regarded as 'feminine', such as communication and negotiation, in order to effectively perform their role as peace-makers (Stevens & Greener, 2017).

The ability of NZ Army soldiers to embody and display the less aggressive attributes required of peacekeepers (rather than those of war fighters), or apply a gendered perspective to the operational environment, is perhaps more by luck than by design (Morris, 2017; Greener, 2017). Little consideration has been given, for example, to deliberately training soldiers in 'cultural competence' (Greener, 2017) or 'gender issues' (Stevens & Greener, 2017). Both of which are considered important aspects of better equipping combat focused soldiers to "create security by engaging in practices that focus on culturally appropriate, equal communication and relationship-building" (Stevens & Greener, 2017, p.163). While gender may sit under the umbrella of 'diversity', gender itself features little within the NZDF or the NZ Army strategic documents oriented to their respective futures (NZ Army, 2019; NZDF, 2019). To reveal the inter-relationship between gender, operational effectiveness and the NZ Army, it is therefore necessary to explore in more detail some of the key decisions and events with respect to gender that have occurred during the last two decades.

As proposed by Egnell and Alam (2019), when reviewing 'gender reforms' of national militaries three inter-connected aspects of such reforms are important to consider in unison: "(1) the opening up of national armed forces to women, (2) the integration of gender perspectives in military operations, and (3) the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in military

organisations at national and international levels" (Egnell & Alam, 2019, p.2). Reviewing each of these dimensions, while simultaneously questioning both the process and intent of such reforms, can reveal the role of gender within the context of a specific military force. Such analysis can also bring to light successes, challenges, and key themes, which may be reviewed in comparison to the gender reform efforts within militaries globally (Egnell & Alam, 2019). This next two sections will use a similar framework to provide an overview of the gender reform process upon which the NZ Army embarked. The first will review key events that occurred during the initial stages of the reform (1998-2000), whilst also reflecting on the outcomes after more than twenty years of implementation (2023). This will be followed by an exploration of the way in which the NZ Army 'operationalises' gender.

4.11 Gender into the new Millennium: 2000-2023

As Egnell and Alam (2019) note, "throughout virtually the entire world, the relationship between gender – as a social construct – and the military has been largely ignored" (p.1). This has certainly been the case for the NZ Army, with the concept of gender receiving minimal attention in relation to policies, reviews, funding, organisational restructures, or methods of operation. This was perhaps most notably the case up until the year 2000. While women had been 'integrated' into the mainstream Regular Force during 1977, by 1999 they made up just 12% of the NZ Army's uniformed personnel (Rolfe, 1999). Since the late 1970s women had been permitted to undertake the same training as men, however they were employed predominantly within feminine gendered roles, such as nurses, signallers and logistics, as they remained excluded from combat trades. Masculinity was the enduring norm, and many serving women experienced attitudes or treatment which reportedly "at best caused distress and, at worst, caused them to leave their careers" (Phare, 1998, p.2). As documented in the experiences of one former serving officer, Lieutenant Colonel Janet Castell, who had developed her career during the 1980s and 1990s, "when I was a young officer I didn't make a mistake because I was a young officer, I made a mistake because I was a woman" (Martin, 1993, p.24).

The masculine culture was described as 'pervasive' and one which demanded conformity (Phare, 1998). Furthermore, it was a culture that not only placed high demands of conformity

on women, but also placed a high expectation upon men to be physically and mentally ‘tough’ or ‘staunch’, just because they were men (Martin, 1993). However, although gendered expectations of roles and behaviour were prevalent within the NZ Army, little consideration had been given to the implications of such expectations – or indeed to ‘gender’ issues generally. Several key events were to occur leading up to the year 2000, that would cause senior leaders within the NZDF to reassess the relevance of gender, and which would provide the catalyst for a ‘gender reform’ process.

4.11.1 Gender ‘Integration’

The first, and most observable, aspect of gender reform in the NZ Army is that of women’s participation, often labelled by the NZDF as ‘gender integration’. As previously noted, women had been integrated into the mainstream Regular Force of the NZ Army since 1977. This integration came about due to legislation (i.e. the New Zealand Human Rights Act of 1977) and resulted in uniformed women across the NZDF being on equal footing with men with respect to training, pay, and conditions of service. The release of the Burton Report in 1998, which was commissioned in response to a complaint in 1996 of sexual harassment in the Royal New Zealand Navy, was to shine a significant spotlight on the progress of the integration process. The purpose of the report was in part “to identify any cultural, social or institutional barriers which impede the progress of women within the NZDF on a merit base” (Burton, 1998, p.xi). This report was significant in that it was the first of its kind to review gender issues within the NZDF, and while it was found that women were provided equal conditions of service it was less apparent that they were provided the same opportunities as men.

One of the key findings of the Burton Report was that gender harassment was prevalent at all levels within the NZDF, and it affected not only women but also men who didn’t display suitably ‘masculine’ behaviours. Men, for example, would be ridiculed if they didn’t drink, smoke, or display overtly heterosexual behaviours (such as dating women). Women felt pressure to conform to the masculine culture, with such pressure being felt more keenly in areas that were not traditional areas of work for women, such as combat-related roles (Burton, 1998). Many women were also subjected to deliberately provocative sex-based behaviour “as if the woman were being tested as to whether she is going to accept the male

norms at the workplace" (Burton, 1998, p.57). Senior men within the NZDF, however, generally felt that there were no real issues with gender integration because "since women's problems have not been drawn to senior officers' attention, one can assume that women 'are happy with the status quo' (male senior officers, Army)" (Burton, 1998, p.7).

Contrary to this view, the report concluded that there were a number of impediments to gender integration, with one significant impediment being the "inbred attitudes" (Phare, 1998, p.3) built on years of history and tradition, with such attitudes resulting in pressure to conform and an unwillingness to change. Dr. Burton made a wide range of recommendations, labelled at the time as "far-reaching", including improvements such as "education, consultation with women, family-friendly policies including child-care, flexible working arrangements and a continuous process of review" (Phare, 1993, p.3).

4.11.2 The Removal of the Combat Exclusion Policy

The Burton Report provided a review of gender integration within the 'mainstream' Regular Force of the NZDF as at that time of its release women were still restricted from enlisting into combat trades. However, during the 1990s the debate within New Zealand regarding whether or not women should be allowed to serve in combat was beginning to gain traction. One of the prompts for this debate was that other national militaries were beginning to either remove, or consider removing, combat exclusion policies, with changes largely based on reasons related to human rights and gender equality. Denmark, for example, had removed all restrictions for women's employment in 1988; Canada had also opened all armed forces roles, other than employment on submarines, to women in 1989 (Chen, 1990). While the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) and Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) had lifted restrictions for women's employment in combat roles since 1988 and 1989 respectively, women could only fulfil these roles in peacetime situations (Chen, 1990). The NZ Army continued to maintain full restrictions for eleven trades that were deemed to be combat[20] (Chen, 1990). As a result, a

[20] These trades were: Ammunition Tech, Carpenter RNZE, Crewman RNZE, Driver RNZE, Electrician RNZE, Fireman RNZE, Gunner RNZA, Instructor RNZE, Instructor RNZAC, Instructor RNZE, Instructor RNZIR, Instructor Intelligence, Operator Intelligence, Operator Command Post RNZA, Plant Operator RNZE, Radar Operator RNZA, Rifleman RNZIR, Signaller RNZA, Surveyor RNZA and Trooper RNZA (Chen, 1990).

Government review on 'Women in Combat' was undertaken to make recommendations as to whether the policy of *not* committing women to combat should remain.

For some within New Zealand, the debate around employing women in combat roles was a case of semantics, given that women were already integrated into combat-oriented units. Women were serving, for example, as drivers, signallers or medics who had the potential to be deployed *with* combat soldiers. As explained by Rolfe (1999), "in practice, of course, the concept of 'committing to combat' is obscure. Modern warfare rarely has 'front-lines' and clearly demarcated combat and non-combat zones" (p.157). However, while the decision to remove restrictions was a political one, it was heavily influenced by New Zealand public opinion at the time which had adopted a 'protectionary' stance towards women's roles in society (Chen, 1990; Phare, 1993). It was only in 1981, for example, that the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Convention No. 89 was revoked in New Zealand, which had previously "prohibited women from night work in industries because it was thought too dangerous for women to travel to and from work at night and because it would disrupt family life since all women were presumed to be mothers with primary child-rearing responsibilities" (Chen, 1990, p.68). Many of the arguments made against easing the combat restrictions for women were emotive, with reference to the lack of readiness of New Zealand society to see 'wives' or 'mothers' being brought home in body bags (Phare, 1993). While it seemed plausible that women may be able to take lives by 'pushing a button' or dropping missiles from a plane, the idea that women might lead a bayonet charge or kill a person in hand-to-hand combat generated significant resistance (Phare, 1993; Downes, 1990).

The NZDF itself was also concerned about the potential impact on operational effectiveness of allowing women to serve in combat roles, citing seven key reasons for maintaining the status quo:

> "(i) it is too risky to change the present policy since the consequences on operational effectiveness cannot be accurately predicted; (ii) any policy to commit women to combat might subsequently be rescinded in time of war, fundamentally affecting the NZDF's effectiveness; (iii) the financial and versatility costs of allowing women into combat would reduce the available resources for funding essential activities with no commensurate return in operational effectiveness; (iv) the average woman possesses less strength and stamina than her male counterpart; (v) women's child-rearing responsibilities means that female

> combatants will 'routinely be unavailable for deployment' (vi) male protectionism towards female colleagues will result in higher death and casualty figures in conflict situations; and (vii) operational effectiveness would be undermined by the problems of sexual harassment and sexual favouritism" (Chen, 1990, p.19).

The 1990 Government working group systematically discounted each of these arguments, based on the fact that "the principle of employment equity can be extended to all positions within the NZDF without compromising its operational effectiveness. Operational effectiveness and employment equity can be compatible" (Chen, 1990, p.75). The working group's report thus recommended that the combat exclusion policy should be revoked (Chen, 1990). However, it was not until 2000 that restrictions were lifted, finally creating the possibility for women to enlist into the Infantry, Armoured, and Artillery corps of the NZ Army.

4.11.3 Equal Employment Opportunities: 'Making it Happen'?

In response to both the combat exclusion policy removal and the Burton Report, several directives on the subject of Equal Employment Opportunities and Gender Integration were issued by Army General Staff over the period 1999 to 2002. While these directives were aimed at addressing the findings of the Burton Report, one of the key outcomes was to create an environment that would support the recruitment of women specifically to combat trades (NZ Army, 2002). Tasks that were directed to support successful integration included the preparation of barracks to ensure both men and women could share accommodation; the delivery of leadership training focused on "mixed gender issues particular to the combat corps environment" (NZ Army, 2000, p.6); internal recruitment of currently-serving female Officers and Non Commissioned Officers to provide a support mechanism for incoming women; and the ongoing implementation of Equal Employment Opportunities training across Army that would allow "unfettered realising of peoples' full potential and talents" (NZ Army, 1999, p.3). These directives further identified that the 'culture' of the NZ Army would likely pose the greatest challenge to the success of the integration of women into combat roles and placed the responsibility for change on leaders within the organisation: "The issue of integration is principally a male concern rather than a female one. It will require some males to change the way they conduct themselves…The crux of any successful change in culture rests in strong leadership. For the right environment to be created all levels of command must embrace the change necessary" (NZ Army, 2000, p.3).

Despite concerns previously articulated in the 1990 Working Group Review, both the NZDF and NZ Army now stated that "operational effectiveness depends on such things as training, equipment, leadership, sound individual skills, and effective discipline and good morale, *not* gender" (NZ Army, 2000, p.1). What was less clearly articulated, however, was how the desired culture change and gender integration process was to be *measured*. Delegating the broad task of changing culture to 'all levels of command' created a diverse spread of responsibility, with minimal associated accountability. It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that the 'Review of Progress in Gender Integration in the NZDF' undertaken in 2005 found that while most senior leaders were perceived as being genuinely committed to supporting gender integration, there were 'mixed views' regarding the extent to which the tasks detailed in the directives had been carried out (Hanson & Burns, 2005).

Perhaps even more importantly, Hanson and Burns (2005) found that there was no common understanding of what 'successful' or 'full' gender integration might look like. For some it simply meant the opening up of combat trades to women and, as this had happened, the issue of integration no longer required attention (Hanson & Burns, 2005). The fact that there were no further Army General Staff directives issued on the subject of gender integration after 2002 is perhaps indicative of this belief being commonly held across the institution. For others within the NZ Army, however, gender integration was interpreted as, "an adjustment of the way things are done so that both women and men can fully contribute and have a sense of belonging" (Hanson & Burns, 2005, p.15). Such an ideal could neither be tested nor realised, however, until a significant number of women had enlisted into combat trades and had had the opportunity to progress.

By 2005, the year by which the Army General Staff directives had stipulated that 'full' integration of women into combat trades was to be achieved, there were nine female Gunners (Artillery) and three female Riflemen (Infantry) enlisted in the NZ Army (Hanson & Burns, 2005). This number was representative of less than two percent of the total number of combat soldiers within the NZ Army, indicating that integration strategies had not significantly increased the uptake of women enlisting in combat trades. Therefore, despite the impetus for the decision to revoke the combat exclusion policy being based on reasons of

equality, MacKenzie & Gunaydin (2021) propose that ‘opening the doors’ to women has not led to significant improvements in gender equality within the NZDF. Instead, the perceived positive impacts on recruitment, retention, promotion rates and sexual harassment, have been found to be woefully unrealistic (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021).

One reason for such a lack of progress may be that the NZDF was in part relying upon a critical mass of women to create the desired change. As MacKenzie & Gunaydin (2021) elaborate, critical mass theory perpetuates the belief that change cannot be expected until a ‘critical mass’ of approximately thirty percent women has been achieved. However, “the belief that removing the combat exclusion will lead to equality places extreme pressures on women to *be the solution”* (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021, p.109). The critical mass strategy can, therefore, also lead to a lack of critical analysis of the underpinning gendered ideology that may be inhibiting participation by women in the first place. While the NZ Army had itself identified the need to change its culture in order for the benefits of gender integration to be realised (AGS, 2002), attempts to do so were largely unsuccessful (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021).

4.11.4 Gendered Divisions of Labour

A further indicator of the potential inequality of opportunities within the NZ Army is provided by the types of roles that are typically undertaken by either men or women. Woodward and Winter (2007) suggest that gendered divisions of labour often represent a mismatch between policy and practice due to the fact that gendered roles in the military are strongly influenced by the culture and norms of the host society. As such, while many militaries have lifted exclusion policies on combat roles for women, very few women are inclined to enlist in such trades (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021; Woodward & Winter, 2007; Sasson-Levy, 2017). Such an observation echoes the gendered divisions of labour within New Zealand, and subsequently the influence that New Zealand society has had on such divisions within the NZ Army. For example, statistics demonstrate that the number of uniformed women in the Regular Force as at June 2023 had increased to an unprecedented 14.9 percent (NZ Army, 2023). However, a breakdown of participation by corps and trade highlights that gendered divisions of labour remained extant. In 2023 the majority of women (both officers and

soldiers) serving in the NZ Army were enlisted into combat services *support* trades, with some logistics trades boasting more than 20 percent participation by women and medical trades (including medics, nurses and dental hygienists) consisting of just over 40 percent women. By analysing the logistics trades more closely it could also be seen that certain trades, such as catering and supply technicians, had higher numbers of women. However, the more stereotypically 'masculine' trades within the logistics corps, such as vehicle mechanics and armourers, had significantly fewer women (NZ Army, 2023).

These statistics demonstrate that while women have been 'integrated' into the NZ Army since 1977, with restrictions for enlistment to combat trades removed in 2000, the percentage of women participating in the NZ Army as a whole has not increased significantly as a result. Additionally, the majority of women who do enlist are inclined to end up in roles that are typically considered 'feminine'. This is further reinforced by the fact that less than three percent of combat roles are filled by women, and that the average length of service of women in combat trades has historically been significantly less than that of men (NZ Army, 2023). Whilst it is common for men to have had careers within Infantry that span more than 20 years, the average length of service of women in Infantry has historically been less than three years (Brosnan & Jefferies, 2019). Furthermore, in the 23 years since the removal of the combat exclusion policy, no female Infantry soldier has yet been promoted beyond the rank of Lance Corporal.

In considering the ramifications of this, Sasson-Levy (2007) argues that such gendered divisions of labour have the propensity to reinforce hierarchical gendered relations. Regardless of a military's equal employment opportunity policies, such divisions ultimately have implications for the participation of women and their ability to influence the military as a gendered institution (Sasson-Levy, 2007; Winter & Woodward, 2007). The Maximising Opportunities for Military Women report drafted in 2014 found that while progress had been made in some areas within the NZDF since the 1998 Burton Report, this progress had been made based on the 'easy' fixes of implementing policies and 'opening the doors' to all trades (MoD, 2014). The greater challenge for the NZDF was identified as "getting women in the door, into the branches that lead to the most progression [in rank], and retaining them" (MoD, 2014). Since this most recent gender review, however, the numbers of women participating

in the NZ Army have remained relatively static, fluctuating between 14 to 15 percent. And as previously noted, the participation of women in the 'branches that lead to the most progression' (i.e. combat) remains limited (MoD, 2014).

Such progress, or lack thereof, reflects the gender integration experiences of many other national militaries, with words such as 'stunted', 'constrained', 'limited' and 'painstakingly slow' commonly punctuating individual country case studies (Egnell & Allam, 2019). A common feature of these case studies is also the masculine culture of military organisations which "simply fails to attract women in large numbers and fails to retain the ones that do try" (Egnell & Allam, 2019, p.258). Notably, the most recent New Zealand Defence White Paper[21] (MoD, 2016) for the first time acknowledges the under-representation of women as an issue to be addressed. This in itself is a significant addition given that the White Paper is the key strategic document that guides the operational activities and outputs of the NZDF.

The NZ Army has also recently re-stated its commitment to increasing the participation of women within all spheres of the organisation. A recent statement by the Chief of Army, for example, emphasises that, "creating the Army of the future requires us to … develop an environment of excellence that is open to the participation of *all* genders, where an individual's performance is not unfairly judged based on outdated stereotypes" (Boswell, 2020). Numerous gender-related and 'family friendly' personnel policies have been implemented by the NZDF since 2000 in order to better support the retention of all members irrespective of their gender. Additionally, and while gender may not be directly mentioned in the NZ Army's strategic documents to 2025, the pursuit of 'diversity' has been included as a key element of the NZ Army's people strategy. Ongoing efforts are, therefore, being made to adjust the organisational culture to encourage greater inclusivity (NZ Army, 2019).

4.12 Operationalising Gender

A 'gender perspective' is defined by the NZDF as being "the process of exposing gender-based differences in status and power and how women and men interact, along with their ability to

[21] The Defence White Paper of 2016 "sets out the Government's expectations for Defence over the coming decades" (MoD, 2016, p.5).

access resources and opportunities in their communities depending on being a man or a woman" (NZDF, 2016). As such, adopting a gender perspective develops awareness and understanding of the local environment by ensuring that assumptions are not made about the role, status, influence, or vulnerability of different groups of people within a certain population (NZDF, 2016). Such an awareness is thought to be transformative in terms of enhancing the understanding of 'non-traditional' security issues within military areas of operation (Egnell & Alam, 2019).

As well as reviewing the participation of women it is, therefore, necessary to also explore the ways in which the NZ Army has sought to incorporate gender perspectives into the operational sphere. This will contribute a greater understanding of the ways in which the organisation both understands and operationalises 'gender'. For the NZDF, the adoption of gender-based perspectives is often described as a 'force multiplier' and strongly linked to the Women, Peace and Security agenda (NZDF, 2016). The following sections of this chapter assess these issues in more detail, examining specifically questions of gender as it contributes towards military effectiveness – noting here the move towards Female Engagement Teams in particular, and investigating the Women, Peace and Security Agenda[22].

4.12.1 Gender and Operational Effectiveness

Examining the relationship between gender and 'operational effectiveness' in the context of the NZDF provides an insight into its understanding of gender. As previously noted, the application of gender perspectives is considered by the NZDF to be a force multiplier, and since the combat exclusion policy has been lifted the inclusion of women in both the NZDF and NZ Army has also been described as a factor that will enhance operational effectiveness. Directives distributed by Army General Staff in 2000, for example, state that the NZ Army is to undertake Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) training activities "with a focus on the integration of women into combat trades, in order to enhance operational effectiveness" (NZ

[22] As explained by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: "the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was a ground-breaking resolution adopted in 2000. In later years, this has been followed by nine complementary UNSC resolutions. Together these resolutions set out four 'pillars' of priority issues: prevention of violent conflict; meaningful participation of women at all levels of peace and security governance; the protection of rights for women and girls in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations; and ensuring women's engagement and addressing their needs in peacebuilding, relief and recovery" (MFAT, n.d.).

Army, 2000). This sentiment is reaffirmed by the Chief of Defence Force in 2016, stating that "in short, gender and diversity in operations should be seen as a force-multiplier" (NZDF, 2016, p.3). Connecting increased gender diversity to enhanced operational effectiveness is a strategy commonly employed by military forces. As Egnell (2016) explains, a 'rights based' argument towards the increased participation and empowerment of women within military organisations will most likely fall on 'deaf ears'. Instead, Egnell (2016) suggests that "a better approach is to emphasize that the implementation process serves to strengthen the military in its constant pursuit of maximal effectiveness in its core tasks—that implementing gender perspectives is actually 'the smart thing to do'" (p.82).

The NZ Army has made assertions that increased gender diversity and the incorporation of gender perspectives correlates with increased capability and enhanced operational effectiveness. However, justifying the inclusion of women based solely on the 'perceived benefits' of their gender can be problematic. As Pendlebury (2019) suggests, the 'capability' argument, whereby women and other minority groups within the military are valued only for the benefits that they bring to the organisation, is a "flawed lens through which to develop personnel policy given its propensity to consider groups of people in a similar manner to defence hardware" (p.162). A particularly problematic aspect of the capability rationale is that it relies on the 'special' or 'unique' qualities that women bring to the table, thereby essentialising the role of women by assuming that only women can display stereotypically 'feminine' traits. As further highlighted by MacKenzie and Gunaydin (2021), the capability argument places an additional expectation upon women that they will not only be equal to men, but that they must also 'bring something different' in order for the military to value the benefit of their inclusion. This additional burden upon women to prove their worth is considered to not only be unrealistic, but can also work against principles of gender equality (Wilen, 2020). As Wilen (2020) summarises:

> In some contexts, in certain situations, the fact of being a woman can have an added value for the operation—yet the same could be said for male peacekeepers: in some contexts, in some functions, being a male might confer added value. In short, both male and female peacekeepers can bring 'added value' to peace operations (p.9).

Interestingly, and despite initially rejecting the removal of combat exclusion policies for reasons of operational effectiveness, the inclusion of increased numbers of women,

encompassed within the broader definition of ‘diversity’, is now justified by the NZ Army for the very same reason. However, as indicated by Wilen (2020), the capability rhetoric that is commonly used to justify the inclusion of women also serves as a means of reinforcing gender stereotypes and accentuating gendered roles. This is particularly problematic within Infantry units which are “a heavily gendered environment, where different types of masculinities are in general valued more highly than any type of femininity (Wilen, 2020, p.9).

Within the NZ Army, increased gender diversity appears to be conflated with the increased ability to apply gender perspectives. This accentuates the idea that it is primarily women who have the capacity to assess the gendered risks or opportunities inherent within a military area of operation. A study of UN peacekeepers by Nagel, Fin and Maenza (2021) found that promoting women’s ‘extra’ capabilities in such a way can result in negative reaction from male colleagues – especially if they do not live up to the lofty expectations of performance that have been set for them (Nagel, Fin and Maenza, 2021). This study found that the UN’s campaign to “depict women as ‘more effective’ peacekeepers and boost women’s representation in missions incited resentment, hostility and a disenfranchisement amongst uniformed men. Thus, by essentialising women’s roles, the UN may have worsened gender relations within missions” (Nagel, Fin and Maenza, 2021, p.28). Women in the Norwegian Armed Forces have also reported that “gender politics caused all women to be suspected of being ‘quota-ed’ into the military without having passed the physical tests at the same standard as men, and that their integrity and respect (i.e. claim to authority) accordingly were decreased” (Rones & Fasting, 2017, p.157).

Similar tensions have been found to exist within the NZ Army, with the success of women often attributed to having been given a ‘leg up’ due to their gender, rather than to their competence and professionalism (Brosnan, 2015). Accordingly, while the capability argument may seem an attractive means of creating buy-in to ideas of gender integration, it may well be hindering the NZ Army’s capacity to effectively engage *both* men and women in the application of gender perspectives, and to also achieve broader gender equality throughout the organisation. The curious tension within the NZ Army between gender diversity, gender perspectives, and operational effectiveness is perhaps exemplified by the establishment of a

Female Engagement Team (FET) as part of the NZ Army's Special Forces unit, 1 NZSAS Regiment, in 2017.

4.12.2 Female Engagement Teams: A Gendered Solution

The NZ FET establishment was prompted by New Zealand Special Operations experiences of working with FETs from other nations in Afghanistan (Dill-Russell, 2019). The NZ FET was designed to fulfil a 'capability gap' because although 1 NZSAS Regiment sought the operational benefits of having women within the unit, no women had yet passed the 'gender neutral' NZSAS selection process (NZ Army, 2017). The FET therefore provided an opportunity to deploy women as part of the Special Forces teams, without altering the NZSAS selection standard. Drawing on their biological differences, the primary role of the FET members would be to engage with local women in 'indigenous' populations – an activity that is difficult, or at times culturally unacceptable, for male soldiers to undertake (NZ Army, 2017). The NZ Army's FET strategy is therefore a 'bolt on' capability that can be included on an as required basis. As stated in a report of the initial stages of the FET's development,

> The NZ FET role would be expansive, including, but not limited to, information gathering, engagement, search and operational planning. The women would have to be capable of learning quickly and adapting to whatever task was thrown at them. In short, these women were to be "jacks of all trades", capable of capitalising on their gender to enable mission success (Dill-Russell, 2019, p.8).

Perceived benefits of the FET included not only the benefits of women being able to engage more readily with other women, but also a perception that the inclusion of women would lead to a better understanding of the operational environment due to their innately higher levels of empathy, and their ability to apply a 'different' perspective than men (Dill-Russell, 2019). Despite such high expectations of the FET's performance, however, the women members of the FET would not be trained or tested to the same physical or combat standard as the men within the regular Special Forces unit. Concerns were therefore also raised by some unit members that the FET members could become a liability, especially given their perceived lower fitness capabilities, and the prevalence of "the notion that men would protect women in a conflict situation thereby causing risk to themselves" (Dill-Russell, 2019, p.22).

The NZ Army's FET, in a similar manner to FETs established within other militaries, sought to capitalise on the operational value of women's inclusion based primarily on the perceived benefits of their gender. This in itself can be problematic because as highlighted by Nagel, Fin and Maenza (2021), women in uniform cannot always 'capitalise' on their gender just because they are women:

> 'Womanhood' alone cannot be expected to overcome existing social divisions or structures of inequality. Women peacekeepers will not necessarily be able to transcend the religious, national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic divisions that separate peacekeepers from local women (p.27).

The establishment of a 'bolt on' female capability also further reinforces the notion that *only* women are capable of displaying 'feminine' attributes or applying a gendered perspective to operational situations. Even if this perception was wholly accurate, the ability for women to inject a feminine perspective into a masculine dominated military planning environment is questionable due to the reluctance of women to speak out within such environments (Brosnan, 2015). Furthermore, Erica Dill-Russell's (2019) research demonstrates that despite the perceived benefits of including women, perceptions of the negative impact that women may have on the effectiveness of an all-male military unit continued to prevail. The FET creation reveals tension between a stated desire for increased gender diversity for reasons of operational effectiveness, and an underpinning resistance towards women's inclusion based on stereotypical gendered perceptions. While this example is set within the unique setting of the Special Forces of the NZ Army, it is not unlikely that such tension is prevalent to varying degrees throughout the wider institution.

4.12.3 Women, Peace and Security

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda became the catalyst for many militaries to pay greater attention to the perspectives of women within a wide range of security operations. New Zealand, as a member state of the United Nations, has an obligation to both articulate and implement strategies that will meet the intent of the WPS agenda. However, it was not until 2015 that a National Action Plan (NAP) for New Zealand was developed. The delay in producing the NAP is considered to be in part a result of New Zealand's 'self-professed' status of being a world leader with respect to gender equality (Greener, 2020). The NAP 2015-2019 itself states, "New Zealand has a long history of international leadership in promoting the

rights of women to participate equally in all aspects of society" (MFAT, 2015, p.10). As such New Zealand perhaps felt that it was already 'doing enough' in terms of acting on the intent of the WPS agenda (Greener, 2020). With the development of the NAP, however, responsibilities and tasks were more clearly articulated, and the NZDF was identified as one of the lead agencies for its implementation.

While the NAP 2015-2019 allocated specific responsibilities to the NZDF, most of the tasks identified were outwardly focused, with reference made to overseas deployments, peace-building situations, and international engagement with other nations. The principles of WPS are, therefore, primarily introduced within the NZDF as an aspect of pre-deployment training – which as Greener (2020) indicates, is presented in such a way that suggests it is an issue primarily for 'others'. The NZDF, and consequently the NZ Army, is therefore inclined to interpret the WPS agenda and the application of gender perspectives as an activity that happens overseas rather than within its local environment, and/or within the organisation itself. This has meant that the strategies developed are typically directed outwards, rather than focussed inwards to enhance gender relations, or further gender equality within the NZDF. This, despite the fact that previous gender reviews have demonstrated that gender issues are most certainly matters that do need to be addressed (Burton, 1998; Hanson & Burns, 2005; MoD, 2014; Teale & MacDonald, 2020). This has created the sense that gender-based issues and gender inequality are problems faced in countries other than New Zealand. As a result, Greener (2020) considers that "explicitly owning some of these issues in a revised NAP could be helpful in a number of ways" (p.459).

Greener's (2020) criticism of New Zealand's NAP strategies were further echoed within the WPS NAP implementation review of 2021 (MFAT, 2021). This review found that some improvements had been made in the participation outcomes of the NAP, including increases in the number of women holding senior roles within the NZDF and an increase in the number of women being deployed. However, the overall percentage of women enlisted in the NZDF had not increased over this same period of time. The implementation report also identified that less progress had been made in the areas of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, in part due to a lack of both resources and monitoring (MFAT, 2021). Further to this, while the agencies tasked with implementing the NAP had made attempts to address gender

inequalities within their own organisations, they did not see this as a facet of the NAP but rather as a separate activity altogether (MFAT, 2021). The NZDF, for example, rolled out its 'Op Respect' programme in 2016 in order to "eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviours within the organisation" (Teale & MacDonald, 2020, p.12). However, the outcomes of Op Respect were at no stage linked to the intent of the WPS agenda. Teale and MacDonald's (2020) review of Op Respect in 2020 also found that the programme had achieved minimal success, largely due to the culture of the organisation which includes a 'code of silence', lack of trust and transparency, and an inability to speak out against command decisions. The overall detachment of the WPS agenda from everyday policy and practice, combined with a perception that WPS is an agenda designed for 'others', represents a missed opportunity for deeper 'structural' gender reform within the NZDF (MFAT, 2021; Greener, 2020). The NAP implementation review acknowledged these shortcomings of the original 2015-2019 NAP, however the next NAP is yet to be published. Whether the subsequent NAP helps to alter the NZDF's position on the intent of the WPS agenda remains to be seen.

4.13 Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, one of the key aspects of force design is to ensure that a military's purpose and its force structure are aligned. While this may sound like a relatively straight forward process, the evolution of the NZ Army has demonstrated that such a process is fraught with complexity. Influenced by societal, political, environmental and international pressures, the current structure and capabilities of the NZ Army reflect the myriad of decisions that have been made over time. It has only been more recently that gender has become a consideration with respect to structure and capability, with notions of gender diversity now tenuously linked to ideas of military effectiveness. However, founded historically within a heavily masculinised colonial society, femininity and so-called 'feminine' traits have not been valued within the NZ Army. The privilege of masculinity over femininity can be traced back to the inception of the organisation. It is also reinforced by dichotomous societal notions of what it means to be either male or female in New Zealand, which in turn is reflected in the gendering of the NZ Army. With masculinity being the prevailing norm, the

term ‘gender’ is typically used in reference to ‘women’ and the inclusion, or integration, of women has had mixed results.

The pressure for change with respect to the inclusion of women has primarily stemmed from societal and political desires for increased gender equality. However, opening the doors to women by removing combat exclusion policies has not had a significantly positive effect on either the recruitment or retention of women (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). Integration strategies also remain based on traditional ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman. Such strategies do not, therefore, challenge binary understandings of gender. Nor do they necessarily enable men and women to serve within the military on equal terms. Instead, reinforcing gender stereotypes by highlighting the ‘special’ contribution that women bring to the organisation places unrealistic expectations on the performance of women in comparison to men, and may have had a negative effect overall on the inclusion of women, and acceptance more broadly. As a result, and as found in the experience of many other national militaries, it could be argued the concept of ‘full’ gender integration within the NZ Army is currently notional, rather than reality (Egnell & Allam, 2019).

Compounding the NZ Army’s limited understanding of gender is that ‘gender issues’ are generally perceived as being issues for ‘others’ (Greener, 2020). While the NZ Army has sought to incorporate gender perspectives into its operational focus, it is unclear whether this has seen positive increases in the internalised gender awareness of either men or women within the organisation. Statistics demonstrate small increases in the progression of women to more senior roles, however the overall numbers of women enlisted in the NZ Army has remained relatively stagnant since 2000. The roles and trades within which men and women participate also remain heavily gendered. Instances of gender-based harassment and sexual violence continue at concerning levels, and to this day the organisational culture within the NZDF is considered to be a key impediment to achieving gender equality (Teale & MacDonald, 2020). This situation exists in spite of numerous gender-based and family-friendly policies having been produced and implemented by the NZDF, and the NZ Army, within recent years.

Changing the culture within a highly traditional and masculinised environment such as the military has been found to take time (Egnell & Allam, 2019), which may indicate that gender

integration strategies within the NZ Army have simply not yet been fully realised. The particularly low statistical representation of women within combat trades of the NZ Army, however, suggests the existence of additional factors which may be currently inhibiting participation. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the thesis present the findings of research which seeks to identify the factors which inhibit and enable success within a specific hyper-masculine environment of the NZ Army: the Infantry trade of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR). Ahead of that, the following chapter will outline the methodology of this research.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have explored the highly gendered nature of the military. They have also outlined the impact of gendered expectations on the participation of men and women in combat roles. This chapter introduces the chosen methodology for investigating the range of inhibitors and enablers to success that exist within the Infantry trade of the New Zealand Army. A relativist ontological positioning (Crotty, 1998; Willis, 2007; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2023; Couper, 2015) and complementary social constructionist epistemological framing are defended as the philosophical framing for the research project (Crotty, 1998; Couper, 2015; Sarantakos, 2013; Pascale, 2011). The subsequent qualitative methods deployed are then discussed in some depth – as well as a range of practical and ethical considerations with respect to the research participants and data management (Sarantakos, 2013; Pascale, 2011; Couper, 2015).

5.2 The Research Design

When designing a research project it is necessary to consider the broader context within which the research is being conducted. This includes ensuring that the philosophical position of the researcher is congruent with the way in which the research (or new knowledge) is to be produced (Crotty, 1998; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) suggest that research questions, and the methods used to answer these questions, are ultimately guided by the worldview of the researcher – as such, the connection between both must be transparent. This section provides an outline of the ontological position and epistemological approach taken by the researcher, which guides the subsequent methodological design of this study. Note that this methodology chapter draws more broadly from social science rather than the specific field of International Relations, hence the emphasis on terms such as relativism and social constructionism rather than post-positivism and constructivism. The ideas and content herein, however, traverse disciplinary bounds even if the terminology does not.

5.1.1 Ontological Positioning

Ontology refers to the philosophical belief of how things come to exist (Crotty, 1998; Willis, 2007; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). As such, the ontological position of a researcher reveals the underpinning assumptions that are held with respect to their own view of the world (Willis, 2007). This research takes a relativist position, which means that reality is considered to be socially constructed, and thus inextricably linked to the experiences and perspectives of those within it (Willis, 2007). A relativist contends that there can be no singular or objective truth, as reality is dependent upon context and social interaction. This is opposed to the position of realism, which asserts that reality exists independently of a person's beliefs or experiences (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

This ontological positioning is appropriate due to the fact that, rather than existing as a pre-determined biological fact, the concept of gender is constructed through social interaction, expectations and experiences (Butler, 2004). The concept of gender as one which is both socially constructed and performative underpins this thesis, and in itself forms an ontological lens to understanding, as it suggests that gender cannot be objectively separated from social experience (Butler, 2004; Pascale, 2011; Jarviluoma, Moisala & Vilkko, 2003).

The Infantry context, within which this study of gender is situated, is one where relationships between people form a critical aspect of participation and performance. The experiences and perspectives of the research participants are, therefore, integral to understanding the ways in which social interactions and performances of gender may result in different versions of lived realities. Consequently, this research takes a relativist ontological position, enabling the lived reality and subjective perspectives of the participants to emerge (Willis, 2007) – albeit with the potential for some insider-generated impact, as will be discussed later.

5.1.2 Epistemological Framing

While an ontological position demonstrates an underpinning belief about the nature of existence, epistemology refers to the way in which knowledge of existence might be acquired (Sarantakos, 2013; Pascale, 2011). The ontological position of the researcher guides the epistemological approach, and a *relativist* ontological position is broadly consistent with an

social constructionist epistemology (Couper, 2015; Sarantakos, 2013; Pascale, 2011). Social constructionism challenges the idea that knowledge can only be created through scientific or 'positivist' frameworks, such as the collection of objective or numerical data (Pascale, 2011). Instead, social constructionists argue that the reality of people's lives is in fact produced socially through shared habits, human interaction and individual and collective perceptions of things (Couper, 2015; Flick, 2018). The subjective meanings assigned by people to specific situations are just as important as their objective behaviours (Flick, 2018; Pascale, 2011).

Within this study, for example, it was important to understand the meaning placed upon being Infantry, and the way in which certain habits, practices, and ways of thinking had created institutionalised assumptions or ideas of what it meant to *be* Infantry (Couper, 2015). A social constructionist epistemology was, therefore, selected as a means of gaining insight to the Infantry experience because it provided the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Flick, 2018; Pascale, 2011; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Creating knowledge of the ways in which socially constructed ideas of being a man or a woman intersected with institutionalised assumptions, habits, and practices of being Infantry relied upon taking the subjective perspectives of participants into account (Flick, 2018; Couper, 2015).

Epistemology is, however, also concerned with the 'validity' of knowledge, or how it might be possible to know that knowledge is true (Pascale, 2011). Critics of social constructionism might argue that subjective perspectives of reality do not provide an accurate account of the way things are because such accounts depend heavily upon personal recollection as well as contextual factors; both of which can vary over time (Sarantakos, 2013). However, social constructionists argue that it is these very subjective perspectives and experiences that shape, or create, people's reality (Couper, 2015; Flick, 2018). Adopting a scientific, or positivist, approach towards understanding a social phenomenon could render the results of such research inapplicable to the actual lives of those experiencing it (Flick, 2018). Furthermore, statistics alone cannot accurately depict the reality from which those statistics were derived (Tickner, 2006).

The relativist ontological positioning and social constructionist epistemology deployed in this research together dictate the need for a ‘qualitative’ methodological design where reality is considered subjective, and created by, people’s perspectives, experiences, and interactions within a specific social context (Sarantakos, 2012; Couper, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, given that my aim is to interpret or ‘make sense’ of participants’ experiences within the context of the NZ Army’s Infantry, and to also make sense of the way in which gender may influence these experiences, this research study took a qualitative methodological approach.

5.2 Conducting the Research

This research took a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods can be differentiated from quantitative methods by the way that they seek to *understand* people rather than measure them (Sarantakos, 2013). They also assist the researcher to answer the questions of ‘why and ‘how’, rather than ‘to what extent’ (Chandra & Shang, 2019). Furthermore, qualitative methods allow data to emerge inductively, without preconceived theories or hypotheses being proposed by the researcher (Chandra & Shang, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013). Such methods focus on the participant as the central source of interest, and also allow the participants’ perspectives and experiences to be openly communicated or observed (Chandra & Shang, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013).

Using qualitative methods to gather data is especially pertinent when researching the complexities of gender and gender relations (Greenwood, 2017; Tickner, 2006; Sa'ar, Sachs & Aharoni, 2011). In the case of this research project, for example, the gendered trends of male and female participation within Infantry over time had already been demonstrated by quantitative data. However, in order to gain an understanding of the factors influencing such trends, it was necessary to investigate the *context* within which these statistics had emerged. It was also necessary to understand the feelings and perspectives of those men and women who had experienced the Infantry context. This section will now discuss the way in which the qualitative methods selected for this study were used to engage with research participants in

order to collect data that would address the research questions. It will begin by discussing the participants themselves.

5.2.1 Selecting the Research Participants

Qualitative research requires participants who have knowledge or experience of the topic being researched (Morse, 2007; Morris, 2015; Liamputtong, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Sampling for this study was, therefore, purposive (Flick, 2018). That is, participants were primarily selected based on their enlistment as Infantry soldiers or officers within the Regular Force (RF) of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) of the NZ Army. The total number of Infantry soldiers and RNZIR officers formed the population of interest (or potential participants) for this study. At the time of participant selection (during 2021) this was approximately 1149 (1033 men and 16 women). Participants were then further differentiated based on their level of experience and/or responsibility within the RNZIR, in order to form two distinctly different tiers of potential cohorts. These cohorts were categorised as 'senior leader' participants and 'junior soldier' participants. After identifying the total sample population, it was necessary to approach potential participants and invite their participation. As Morse (2007) states with respect to selecting participants, the simplest solution is, "to go find them where they are" (p.233). For this study, three key locations of interest identified for accessing potential participants. This included the NZ Army's two Regular Force Infantry units (1 RNZIR and 2/1 RNZIR, respectively based in Linton Military Camp and Burnham Military Camp) as well as The Army Depot (TAD) which is based in Waiouru, and conducts Basic Training for all newly enlisted Infantry soldiers.

The Junior Soldier sample population consisted of those Infantry soldiers who had recently enlisted into the Infantry trade, and were still conducting Basic Training (i.e., within one month of enlistment in the NZ Army). During the period that participants for this cohort were selected, the sample population was 209 (204 men and five women). Due to the significantly lower numbers of women than men within this sample population (and for ethical reasons of anonymity and in order to increase the opportunity for women's voices to be heard within this study) the sample population for the female participants of the junior soldier cohort was extended to also include those currently serving female Regular Force Infantry soldiers at the

rank of Private (6), as well as newly enlisted female Armoured soldiers attending Basic Training over the same period as the data collection phase (3). The rationale for inviting female participants from the Armoured trade was that soldiers within this trade complete the same training alongside Infantry during the first twelve months (i.e., Basic Training followed by Combat Corps Training). The Armoured trade also has a similar ratio of male to female soldiers, and is consequently extremely male dominant. The experiences of the Armoured women were, therefore, readily comparable to those women enlisted as Infantry and it was not considered that their participation would distort the findings in any way. The risk of not be able to protect the female participants anonymity by excluding the participation of these women was, indeed, a far more important reason to include them. This provided a total sample population for the Junior Soldier cohort of 204 men and 14 women. The final sample for this cohort ultimately consisted of 54 (43 men and 11 women).

An introduction to the Junior Soldier participant pool (other than the currently-serving Infantry Privates, who were contacted separately via email), was initially made via a short presentation at The Army Depot, where I was able to explain the purpose of the study and what would be required from the participants. The willingness of the Junior Soldiers to participate in the interviews was high, with approximately 90% of the men and women volunteering to be interviewed. This level of enthusiasm was very welcome, however it also created an unexpected dilemma of having to decide who to select for the data collection process. The scope of the research did not allow for much more than 50 Junior Soldier interviews, due to both my own ability to engage with the participants within the confines of the PhD programme and the limited time available within the recruits' training schedule (which is dictated by a need to complete a significant number of training activities between 0600 to 0900). Due to their limited numbers, all women who had volunteered to participate were automatically included in the study. With respect to the men, a random selection of those who had agreed to participate was undertaken, with an emphasis on maintaining an equal number of male participants from each of the various platoons of Recruit Company. This selection was made by using the nominal roll for each platoon that was provided by TAD, and selecting every second or third name (depending on the number of recruits within the platoon) on the list of those recruits who had volunteered to participate.

The Senior Leader sample population consisted of those Infantry soldiers between the ranks of Corporal and Warrant Officer (i.e., NCOs), as well as all officers between the ranks of Second Lieutenant and Colonel. This provided a total population of 415 (410 men and five women). Again, to increase anonymity for the female participants, previously serving female Infantry officers (4) were also included in the sample population. Participant selection for this cohort remained purposive, however the method used to recruit these participants was generally through network sampling (Merriam & Tisdall, 2016). Although the Commanding Officers of both 1 RNZIR and 2/1 RNZIR had sent an email to unit members on my behalf (one that I had prepared for them, explaining the rationale for the study and requesting volunteers to contact me directly), this method of calling for participation yielded very few participants. This may have been due to a lack of time or interest in the study, perhaps also coupled with the fact that impersonal emails sent to a large group of people are easily ignored or deleted. The more personal approach of network sampling method was, however, found to yield more positive engagement.

Network sampling involved asking specific leaders within the RNZIR to participate, and then asking if they might put me in touch with other potential participants (sometimes they would pre-empt this question, and offer to put me in touch with other potential participants). Some of these leaders I knew already, however the majority I met spontaneously during visits to either 1 RNZIR or 2/1 RNZIR. These chance meetings often lead to a curiosity about my research, and a subsequent willingness to participate within it. The majority of those that I approached directly were willing to be part of the study, and this resulted in 34 senior leader participants (30 men and four women). These participants were spread across both 1 RNZIR and 2/1 RNZIR, and some were also fulfilling 'out of corps' roles within the wider NZ Army or NZDF. The rank or seniority of the cohort meant that they were all in a position of authority over other soldiers, all either held (or had previously held) positions of command within an Infantry Battalion, most had held positions within Infantry training units, and many had deployed operationally overseas (in some cases multiple times). For the sake of preserving these participants' anonymity, identifying demographics (other than gender), has been removed.

5.2.2 Using Interviews to Collect Data

Interviews present a particularly useful means of gathering personal accounts of situations, and gain an insight into the way in which people make sense of their experiences (Liamputtong, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Merriam & Tisdell (2016) suggest, interviews are necessary when it is impossible to observe participants behaviours or feelings, or when the researcher is interested in events that the participants have experienced. Interviews also offer the possibility for voices to be anonymously heard from all levels of a strictly hierarchical institution (Vuga & Juvan, 2012; Deschaux-Baume, 2012). These were all important reasons for selecting interviews as the primary method of collecting data for this study. In particular, interviewing provided an ability to create a relaxed interview setting and engage in a reduced level of formality than might otherwise be considered appropriate in the military. Although the interviews were often conducted within the workplace, I would find a quiet space or office where no one else could overhear the discussion. I would also wear civilian clothes rather than uniform, refer to myself by my first name rather than my rank or position, and offer chocolate biscuits or coffee to 'break the ice'. These measures provided an effective way of developing a relaxed rapport with the participants.

Research interviews can be designed with varying degrees of structure, generally ranging on a scale from informal unstructured, or conversational, through to a formal structured format – likened to a spoken questionnaire (Mann, 2016). The interview design selected will depend upon the context of the research, availability of participants, and the type of research data that is desired (Mann, 2016; Flick, 2018). Mann (2016) for example, discusses interview techniques that are designed to elicit participants' life stories, or which may seek to gain a greater understanding of participants' perspectives on a particular phenomenon. Interviews may also be conducted in person, or through the use of video technology. Overall, however, interviews have some key distinguishing features (Flick, 2018). One is that they typically rely on questions that are open-ended, allowing participants to put forward their own perspectives and experiences rather than being guided by the researcher's own ideas (Flick, 2018). Another distinguishing feature is the facilitation of the collection of 'rich', or detailed, data (Flick, 2018; Mann, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Liamputtong, 2020).

For this research study, the type of interview selected was a structured in-depth interview. The use of a 'structured' interview was guided by a requirement to interview a large number of participants, as well as a desire to ensure that the same (or similar) questions were asked of the different cohorts of participants. Using a structured interview protocol provided consistency across interviews, and also enabled responses across interviewees to be compared (Liamputtong, 2020). Given that one cohort of participants was interviewed twice in the space of 12 months, the structured interview protocol also ensured continuity across multiple sets of interview data (Neale, 2016). This was important when reflecting on whether the perspectives of participants had changed over time, or not. As Mann (2016) suggests, however, the reality of executing research interviews is such that it is difficult to maintain absolute structure throughout an interview process. Interviews can therefore tend towards being either intentionally, or unintentionally, 'semi-structured' (Mann, 2016). This was found to be the case within many of the interviews conducted during this study, as more often than not the data was produced collaboratively as a conversation between myself and interviewees (Mann, 2016; Silverman, 2006). The structure of the interview protocol, however, enabled the interview to be guided so that the conversation remained focused on the research topic (Liamputtong, 2020), and the integrity of the interview process was maintained.

The type of interview selected for this study was also 'in-depth' (Morris, 2015). In line with this idea, my interview questions sought to open a dialogue that would enable both men and women to reflect upon their experiences and tell their own stories, while allowing me to review the gendered nature of their responses. (Neale, 2016; Liamputtong, 2020; Morris, 2015). The types of questions asked of the participants included, for example, "what have you found to be the most challenging aspect of being in the Infantry?", and "how would you describe the last twelve months of being in the Army?" Where the question might elicit a 'yes' or 'no' answer, such as "do you feel accepted by your peers?", there would be a follow up question asking the participant to explain their answer, if they had not already. Whilst a structured interview proforma provided consistency across interviews, in many cases dialogue developed based on the responses provided by the interviewees, enabling active involvement by both myself and the participants throughout the interview process.

Although the aim of this study was to explore the influence of gender on performance and participation within the Infantry, within my interactions with participants I very rarely referred to gender or notions of gendered performance. This was a deliberate strategy, as I needed to consider the way in which the interview protocol might, or might not, support participants ability to engage with the research topic. It was also important to ensure that the my discussions did not 'drive' the participants to respond in any specific direction. I was also cognisant of a growing sense of 'gender fatigue' within the NZ Army at the time of my research (Greener, MacKenzie, Harding, Lewis & Brosnan, 2023). As such, it was necessary to adopt an approach that would enable me to understand the gendered nature of this context without creating either a hostile or a 'politically correct' response. As also discovered by Greener, et al (2023), using questions that focused directly on ideas of gender were found confusing by many NZ Army personnel. Although the participants were aware that the research focus was on gender, adjusting the interview questions to rely less upon theoretical concepts of gender provided a means of tackling the topic in a subtle, less confronting manner (Liamputtong, 2020). Rather than asking, for example, what it was like to be either a man or a woman in the Infantry, the questions posed an opportunity for the participants to discuss those experiences of being Infantry that were important to them, regardless of their gender.

5.2.3 Interviewing the Junior Soldier Cohort

The purpose of interviewing the newly enlisted junior soldiers within this study was to gain an understanding of their motivations for, and expectations of, enlisting into the Infantry trade. It was also an important way to understand the experience of 'becoming' Infantry. This included any specific challenges or rewards that had been encountered as part of this experience. In order to conduct this investigation, it was decided to complete two interviews with each participant, thereby creating a longitudinal aspect to understanding their experiences. The first interview was conducted during Basic Training, while they were still recruits. The second was conducted twelve months later.[23] At this stage the junior soldiers

[23] The only difference to this process for the small number of junior female Infantry Private soldiers who were already posted to a Battalion. For these participants, I conducted one interview which covered the questions from both interview protocols. Although these participants had to reflect back on their thoughts and expectations, and key challenges and rewards at the early stages of their training, it is considered that this did not skew the data in any way.

had completed both Basic Training and Combat Corps Training, and then been posted to either 1 RNZIR or 2/1 RNZIR. The purpose of the second interview was to gauge whether or not their initial expectations on enlistment had been met, and in what areas they had found specific successes or challenges.

Once selection of the interviewees had been completed, the conduct of the interviews was relatively straightforward. During Basic Training, however, the interviews needed to fit around the soldiers' busy training schedule without unduly interrupting or distracting their learning. Every waking hour of a recruit's day is scheduled and supervised, from the moment that barrack lights are turned on in the morning (usually at around 0600) until the moment that lights are turned off at night (often at 2130). This meant that the first set of interviews at The Army Depot (TAD) were at times conducted in evenings or weekends, or during short windows of opportunity that had unexpectedly arisen due to a change in the scheduled training programme. Interviews generally ranged between 30 minutes to an hour in length, and the intensity of the training environment meant that the interview process was most likely a welcome relief from the Basic Training schedule. Having a relaxed environment to speak about their personal expectations and experiences provided a stark contrast to the formality of the hierarchical environment that the recruits were being socialised into. The offering of chocolate biscuits or lollies was also met with surprise and favourably received, given that their access to 'treats' was also severely restricted. I soon became known to the recruits as the 'lady with the chocolate biscuits', rather than the 'officer doing gender research'.

It was also necessary, however, to ensure that the participants did not feel coerced in any way to partake in the research study. This was an important consideration given the nature of the training environment that they were experiencing, within which it is not generally encouraged to say 'no' to a senior officer. All of the interviewees were therefore reminded of the voluntary nature of the study. I would remind them, for example, that their decision to participate (or not) would have absolutely no impact on them in terms of the training outcomes at TAD, or their future career. Despite this, all of the selected participants remained willing to be interviewed and they appeared keen to discuss their expectations and experiences to date of being Infantry. To eliminate any suggestion of coercion it was also

decided as part of the ethics approval process (for both Massey University and the NZDF) that an independent civilian observer would be present with me during interviews for the junior soldier cohort. The purpose of the observer was solely to monitor any potential 'abuse of rank' used to elicit information from the interviewees. Their presence was not to assist me in any way in my role as a researcher.

The observer to my interviews was most often Doctor Nina Harding, an academic colleague from Massey University who had completed her own PhD as an anthropologist embedded within a cohort of soldiers during 2013. Nina was chosen for the observer role due to her familiarity with military customs, practices and behaviours. Given this knowledge, she would have been able to easily identify if any of my interviewees felt uncomfortable or coerced as a result of my own conduct. Nina was also not associated with the NZ Army, which meant that there was no concern that information discussed by the participants might end up being used within a military context. Nina did not ask any questions or take any record or notes of the interview data, which ensured the security of the data itself. I would also explain Nina's role to the participants at the start of the interview, and it was found that her presence did not hinder the responses or create any undue awkwardness on behalf of the interviewees. When Nina was unavailable to observe interviews, my PhD supervisor Professor Bethan Greener would take on the same role, and within the same parameters. Overall, this was found to work well and there were no incidents of 'coercion' to be reported.

The follow up interview with the junior soldiers was conducted approximately 12 months after the first. I found, at this stage, that I had lost 16 participants from the original cohort who were no longer within the NZ Army. Some had left the NZ Army due to medical reasons, and others had left of their own choice. Given that I hadn't initially noted personal contact details (such as civilian email addresses or mobile numbers), I was not able to make contact with those who had left the NZ Army within the first 12 months, and as such could not confirm their reasons for leaving. I was, however, able to make contact with the three female junior participants who had left the Infantry but were still in the NZ Army (i.e., those who had changed to another trade within the NZ Army). As a result, these three participants were able to be included in the second interview cohort. Two of the male junior participants from the original cohort were not contactable at the time of interviewing, however all other

participants (both male and female) that I was able to contact for a second interview remained willing to be part of the research study and were subsequently interviewed. This provided a sample of 38 for the second interview cohort – 27 men and 9 women.

By the time of the follow up interview being conducted, the junior participants had completed Basic Training, Combat Corps Training, and were now (other than those junior participants who had changed to a different trade), located within either 1 RNZIR or 2/1 RNZIR. The interviews were conducted in these unit locations, where I was provided a private office space to meet with the interviewees. Again, I attempted to create a relaxed atmosphere during the interviews by offering biscuits and (where practically possible) tea or coffee. I reminded the participants of the voluntary nature of the research, and asked them to confirm that they were still happy to be part of the study. I gave them a copy of the transcript from the first interview to reflect upon (which many of the junior participants found amusing as they looked back on their first impressions of being in the Army), and I also re-explained the purpose of my observer (who, again, was either Nina Harding or Beth Greener). All of the junior participants remained keen to participate, and confirmed that they were willing to continue with the second interview. At this point in time, the participants had much to share about their experiences of being Infantry and the second interview was often slightly longer than the first. Most of the second interviews took between 30 minutes to an hour, with an average length of approximately 40 minutes. I got the impression that I was perhaps the only person from within Army to have really asked them about how they felt about being Infantry, and what it had been like for them – being able to discuss these feelings in a safe environment, appeared cathartic for some. Talking about their hopes and goals for the future, again, I felt that this was not a discussion that many of them had with their own superiors. In many ways, I felt that being part of the research had provided a much-needed outlet for the junior participants to speak freely and voice their opinions and ideas without fear of repercussions.

5.2.4 Interviewing the Senior Leader Cohort

The purpose of interviewing the senior leaders within this study was to collect data that would provide contextual background with regard to being Infantry in the NZ Army. This included information about the performance and behavioural expectations of newly enlisted Infantry

soldiers, as well as the key challenges and rewards of the Infantry role. Furthermore, interviewees were asked to share their own observations, experiences or perspectives with respect to gender integration, which they were able to reflect upon as managers and commanders within the Infantry context. These were topics that the participants were all well qualified to discuss. Several of the questions were, therefore, directed in a more obvious manner towards gendered participation and performance than those posed to the Junior Soldier participants. As I progressed with the interviews, I began to find that they were providing more than just contextual data. They also gave an insight to the experience of being Infantry from a more senior (i.e., longer serving) perspective. As such, they enabled a degree of comparison between the experiences and perspectives of junior soldiers, and those of more senior members of the RNZIR. In doing so, these interviews created a depth of understanding that I had not initially expected. I had perhaps expected many of the senior interviewees to be more reticent in their responses to my interview questions, however this was found to not be the case.

Interaction with the Senior Leader cohort of participants was a relatively informal process in comparison to the arrangements made for the Junior Soldier cohort. After adhering (where necessary) to 'chain of command' relationships in order to approach personnel, I was permitted to speak directly with potential participants. As these participants were of a relatively senior rank in comparison to those within the Junior Soldier cohort, they were able to coordinate their own timeframes for conducting interviews. Interviews were also able to be conducted one-on-one, without the need of an external observer, and at a time and location of their choosing. I continued to wear civilian clothes, rather than uniform, in order to reduce any hierarchical barriers to speaking freely with one another. My choice of clothing attire was generally accepted by the senior participants without comment. Only one senior participant openly remarked that I appeared 'casual' (which I inferred to possibly be a bad thing).

Due to location differences, as well as restrictions induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, ten interviews were conducted online. It was found, however, that using an online medium for conducting the interview did not detract from the interview itself. The remainder of the interviews were conducted at a place of the participant's choosing (usually in their own office

space). All interviews were completed during Army work hours (i.e., between the hours of 0800 to 1630), and lasted approximately one hour each – with some interviews taking up to 90 minutes. Overall, it was found that neither my rank nor the use of technology (when required) inhibited these interviews. The interviewees were keen to discuss their own experiences of being Infantry, and had a wide range and depth of perspectives and observations on the gender integration process that had occurred to date within the Infantry context.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethics within the research setting is defined as the "rights and responsibilities that inhere in the relationship between the research subject and the researcher" (Ackerly, Stern & True, 2006, p.6). Due to this project involving interaction and engagement with a significant number of human participants, there were a number of ethical responsibilities that needed to be considered throughout the conduct of the research process. Ethical considerations included my interaction with potential participants, my selection of participants, my engagement with selected participants, the management of data, the maintenance of participant anonymity and the management of conflicts of interest. These considerations were heightened due to my insider status, as well as the hierarchical nature of the military institution. Therefore, although several of these ethical dimensions have been discussed earlier in the chapter, this section will address specific steps taken to ensure that my ethical responsibilities were met.

5.3.1 Ethics Applications

Due to this research project being conducted as a Massey University student, and within the NZDF, ethics application were submitted to both the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) and the NZDF Ethics Committee. Both applications were similar in terms of the nature of information sought by the respective committees. I provided an outline of the intended outcomes of the study and details of the proposed research design. I also explained how I would meet my ethical responsibilities and obligations as a researcher. The NZDF Ethics Committee required me to complete a standardised, but comprehensive, application form. Ethics approval from the NZDF Ethics Committee was gained in December 2020. The MUHEC had two options of ethics application: low risk, which doesn't require Ethics

Committee approval, and high risk which does. Given that my research required the involvement of human participants, and that these participants would be asked questions of a personal and private nature, it was assessed that my study *did not* fall into the low risk category. As such, a full ethics application was submitted. This application was approved by MUHEC in January 2021. Both the NZDF and MUHEC applications were, therefore, approved before any engagement occurred with potential participants. The following sections provide an outline of the key ethical considerations that were presented within these applications, and which have not already been discussed within this chapter.

5.3.2 Participant Anonymity

A key ethical consideration for this study was the maintenance of participant anonymity. Anonymity needed to be carefully considered for this research, as many members of the RNZIR (both men and women) know each other and, therefore, individuals could be identified based on specific characteristics. These characteristics include their gender, rank, age, length of service, role, and posting location. When combined with a particular story or anecdote, these characteristics could make a participant easily identifiable. In order to maintain anonymity, the inclusion of information that may have identified a particular participant was avoided within this thesis. This includes the adaptation of direct quotations which may have identifying information of either the participant themselves, or of another member of the NZDF. For example, where a participant might refer to their Platoon Sergeant as "*Sergeant Smith*", I have removed the name and amended the quote to state *"Sergeant [name redacted]".* I have also amended any quotes of the junior participants that may have referred to which Battalion or Company they were posted.

Rather than referring to participants by their name or rank, codes were created for each interview participant (Flick, 2018). This included the letter 'J' or 'S' (signifying that they were from the junior or senior cohort), followed by a number that was allocated to each participant, which was then followed by either M or F to indicate the participant's gender. For the junior participants, the last part of the code included either '1' or '2' to denote whether the quote was from the first or second interview. For example, participant 6 from the senior cohort (who was a male) has the code S6M; and participant 12 (who was a male) from the first junior cohort interview has the code J12M1. The use of these codes within the thesis enables the

reader of this thesis to recognise the source (but not the participant identity) of direct quotes. Length of service is only referred to when considered relevant to the data being presented (and not considered a risk to identifying the participant). All other identifiers remain generic, with reference made simply to the 'senior participant' or the 'junior participant'.

5.3.3 Participant Consent

Given that the military is a hierarchical institution, within which junior members are often 'volunteered' by more senior members (described within the NZ Army as being 'volun-told') to participate in activities, it was important to ensure that all of those who participated within this study understood that it was a *genuinely* voluntary activity. This was an exceptionally important consideration for the Junior Soldier cohort, who were operating within a recruit training setting that demanded extremely high levels of cooperation. As a result, in order to ensure that these potential participants understood the nature of the study and that they had the ability to 'opt in' or 'opt out', I gave a presentation to them in groups. This presentation provided information about why I was conducting the study, and what it would mean for them as participants. I also gave them a copy of the research information sheet (attached as appendix 1). The groups of junior soldiers were then given an opportunity to ask questions, before filling out a form that indicated whether or not they would like to participate. This form was not binding in any way, but provided their regimental number and name so that I could contact them at a later date to complete an interview. The period of time between this presentation and the time of the interviews taking place was approximately two weeks, which gave participants an opportunity to reflect on both the information sheet and the presentation.

When interviews took place, the junior participants were reminded again that their participation was voluntary, and that they were not obligated in any way to participate. Once it had been clearly articulated that participation was unequivocally voluntary, all of the participants (both junior and senior) were then asked to complete a consent form prior to the interview commencing. A copy of the information sheet is attached as appendix 1, and the consent form is attached as appendix 2. Within the consent form, participants were asked to confirm their agreement to take part. They were also asked to agree to having the interview

recorded using an audio recorder, with information provided to the participants about how the recording (and resultant interview transcript) would be stored. I also advised the participants that I would be transcribing the interviews myself. All of the participants that had initially indicated their willingness to be part of the study agreed to continue with the interview process, and consequently signed the consent form. All of the participants also agreed to having the interview audio recorded.

5.3.4 Insider Status

Ethical considerations with respect to my status as an NZ Army officer are detailed in previous sections of this chapter. One further consideration, however, given this status, was the potential for 'chain of command' conflicts of interest associated with those who held more senior rank and authority than myself. For example, if the findings of my study were not 'favourable' to the RNZIR, then there may be the possibility of my future career within the service being impacted. However, while I am an insider to the NZ Army I an 'outsider' to the RNZIR. Not being directly affiliated with the corps within which I was undertaking the research was considered an important aspect of mitigating the potential risk of such conflicts occurring (Kirke, 2012). For example, I have never been posted to an Infantry Battalion during my career within the NZ Army, and the chances of this ever occurring in the future are negligible.

In saying that I am not associated with the RNZIR, however, I must also acknowledge that this research was sponsored by the NZ Army. I therefore needed to be mindful of the fact that the access and support that I had been granted was because the research was perceived as potentially beneficial to the aims and objectives of the NZ Army, rather than purely for the production of knowledge itself (Catignani & Basham, 2021). This situation was mitigated to a degree by the fact that my research was also being undertaken as a Massey University student. As such, my data and the resulting thesis remained independent from, and were not influenced by the expectations or desires of, the NZ Army. I was also posted to a newly created research position that was independent from operational Army units. I was fortunate that my NZ Army managers, throughout the period of time that I completed the research, provided me the flexibility to remain independent. As a result, I was not expected to work within an

Army office space and I was also not pressured to discuss my findings prematurely. This preserved the integrity of the data, and of the final thesis.

5.3.5 Data Management

As a result of my insider status, data management was an important ethical consideration with respect to deciding which computer system should be used to store the data (i.e., Massey University or NZDF). Data for this research study consisted of interview recordings and interview transcripts. It also included documents with participants' personal information (i.e., names), such as consent forms. The NZDF has its own computer network system, and each member of the NZDF has a personal drive that is not be able to be accessed by another member. Massey University also has a computer system that is available for students and staff to store data. The use of either of these networks does not, however, ensure that the data cannot be accessed by the network managers of each of these systems.

NZDF Organisational Research confirmed as part of my ethics application that the data belonged to myself as the researcher, and not the NZDF. To increase the security of data and eliminate the possibility of access by *any* unauthorised person, it was decided to store interview recordings, interview transcripts, and participants personal information on an external and personal data system. I therefore managed this data on a personal laptop and external hard drive, both of which had password protection. Password protection was also used for any individual documents that had identifying information of the research participants. To increase the security of data, I completed all transcripts of the interview recordings myself. Hardcopy transcripts and consent forms were also stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by me, and where necessary by my academic supervisors. Due to the longitudinal aspect of the study, ethical approval was granted to store this data indefinitely.

5.4 Data Analysis

In contrast to quantitative data which is primarily comprised of numbers, qualitative data is made up of words (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After conducting 124 interviews (which ranged between 30 minutes to an hour), each of which I had transcribed myself, I had a lot of words to make sense of. In order to interpret this data it was, therefore, necessary to select an

analytical method that not only ‘harmonised’ with the qualitative research methodology, but which also provided a means of accurately representing the research findings (Saldana, 2011). Thematic analysis is often employed within qualitative research, and involves identifying common patterns or ideas across all of the research data (Cheng, 2018; Saldana, 2011). The next section will provide an outline of the thematic analysis used to analyse the data for this project. It will also go on to discuss the presentation of the research findings within this thesis.

5.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Although data analysis is commonly associated with the concluding phases of a research project, it is often suggested that within qualitative research studies the analysis actually begins as soon as a researcher begins to engage with raw data (Basit, 2003; Flick, 2018; Boulton & Hammersley, 2006). As such, “the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase” (Basit, 2003, p.144). It was found, for example, from the beginning of the data collection of this study that key ideas were beginning to emerge. These ideas surfaced during interviews with participants, as well as during the transcription process. Rather than suppress these ideas, acknowledging their emergence was an important aspect of the analytical process (Basit, 2003; Boulton & Hammersley, 2006). Their identification gave an initial indication of what was important, and to explore these emergent ideas in greater depth, ‘codes’ or categories were assigned as a means of organising and making sense of the raw data (Williams and Moser, 2019). The naming of these emergent ideas is simply called ‘coding’ (Boulton & Hammersley, 2006; Basit, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Names or ‘codes’ given to emergent ideas can, “come from the pool of concepts that researchers already have from their disciplinary and professional reading, or borrowed from the technical literature, or are the words and phrases used by the informants themselves” (Basit, 2003, p.144). For this study, the names given to the emerging ideas were assigned based on a combination of these sources and included words such as ‘physicality, ‘purpose’, ‘toughness’, ‘professionalism’, ‘obedience’ and ‘belonging’. Whilst these categories provided a starting point of the analytical process, it was necessary to remain conscious of the emergence of new categories, or even ‘sub-categories’, as the research process progressed

(Boulton & Hammersley, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In some instances, this resulted in categories being re-named, or expanded upon as sub-categories were identified. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) liken the thematic coding process to a 'forest and trees' analogy. In other words, my codes were the individual trees, and as the number of trees increased, they formed a bigger picture forest, or 'theme' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Extending this metaphor further, sub-categories could also manifest as branches of individual trees.

To give a practical example of this process, a common idea that was reiterated during this study was, 'when you're on the battlefield.' This idea was expressed by both cohorts of participants, from the junior soldiers at the very beginning of their training through to the most senior participants. Although it took different forms, each expression had the same intent. It reminded soldiers that they must always pay attention to detail, display a high level of toughness and maintain 'standards'. The consequence of not doing so could result in the loss of their own life, or (even worse) their mate's life, on the battlefield. Examples of what could negatively impact success on the battlefield (as reported by the participants) included not having filled up one's water bottles, not maintaining a high standard of dress in camp, being one minute late to work, saying 'oh' instead of 'zero' when speaking on the radio, not being able to handle harsh punishments, not socialising with your Infantry peers, and not being able to tolerate insults. An example of a statement expressing this idea in relation harsh training and discipline is provided below by one of the junior participants:

> *It should be struggle street from day one because that's how you make the best soldier. It comes down to the future. If you train hard now you're not gonna be fucked later on. Because once you're doing an operation and you haven't squared your shit away, that's gonna fuck you up big time (J28M1).*

While the rationale behind these types of statement seemed plausible and had convincing origins, the battlefield analogy also appeared to provide an *unquestionable* rationale for why things must be done a certain way. As such, almost *anything* could be justified by reference to being on the battlefield. Even the exclusion of women, which is exemplified by this particular quote:

> *Is the goal to get females into the infantry? At what point is the standard for the infantry sacrificed. And at what point is all this cleared up and people say, 'I told you so.' In the time-honoured fashion of having a war, that will sort it out. People making decisions to suit the times, whereas the outcome of war hasn't changed. The outcome of war is, you're alive or you're dead (S27M).*

Given its common occurrence, and significance, this idea was coded as ‘on the battlefield’, and statements made within the data that related to this idea were assigned to this code. However, the battlefield statement also appeared to be an overarching symbol of what it meant to be Infantry. It seemed to have a significant influence upon culture, training and behaviour within the RNZIR. Indeed, *everything* seemed to fit into this category, and it also represented different things to different people (with both positive and negative connotations). As such ‘on the battlefield’ became the overarching theme of this thesis.

The example above has significant meaning for this thesis, however it gives a relatively simplistic insight to the coding and thematic process. There were, of course, other complexities inherent within the development of themes. Most importantly, given my insider status, it was essential that I applied reflexivity to ensure that I was not presupposing certain ideas. Allowing codes to emerge naturally, or ‘inductively’, was an important way of ensuring that the research data spoke for itself (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013). This required me to set aside any pre-existing biases, and to “make the familiar strange” (Hockey, 1993, p.208, cited in Pendlebury, 2019, p55).

Reflexive practice is differentiated from ‘reflective’ practice by the fact that reflexivity is focused on self-awareness rather than merely thinking about a previous situation or event (Mann, 2018). As Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli (2014) suggest, reflexivity includes reflection on what is already known (or assumed to be known) as a result of lived experience. It also extends to an awareness of the way that the environment within which the research is being conducted might influence the research data (Ackerly, 2008; Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2014). It was important within this study, for example, to acknowledge that my military rank and previous military experiences (factors that were discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis) created both similarities and differences, as well as power imbalances, between the researcher and the ‘researched’. My position with respect to the research also had the potential to influence the outcomes my data analysis. However, as Holmes (2020) suggests “rather than trying to eliminate their effect, researchers should acknowledge and disclose their selves in their work, aiming to understand their influence on and in the research process” (p.3).

In the case of the battlefield statement, for example, this was one that I had already come across during my time within the NZ Army. It was often heard as a justification for why military personnel should do things a certain way, and why they might be disciplined for seemingly innocuous offences, such as wearing dirty boots to work. I therefore had to take a step back from this statement and consider the broader implications of what it meant within the context of this study. For example, I had to ask myself, 'does the battlefield analogy provide a valid justification for (as one example) treating Infantry soldiers harshly, or not?'; and 'does the 'battlefield' narrative have gendered implications due to the perceived ability (or inability) of women to perform on the battlefield that is being envisaged?' Perhaps, more importantly, the question that helped me to understand that this statement was a symbolic idea rather than objective reality was: 'where is the data to back up these statements?' Had deaths *actually* been caused by a soldier not being able to handle being insulted? And if so, how many deaths? I suspected that the answer was none.

As part of the data analysis process it was also necessary to unpack how gender was understood by the participants. I needed to explore the ways in which gendered expectations and understandings may have influenced the participants' own experiences of being Infantry, as well as how it may have influenced their perceptions of others. Given that Infantry has been an historically male-dominated environment, it was necessary to "dig deep into the group's dominant presumptions about femininity and masculinity" (Enloe, 2004, p.96). Keeping ideas of gender at the forefront assisted in identifying the factors at play which may have created a different experience for women as Infantry, in comparison to men. It also helped to identify different ways that some men may have experienced being Infantry, in comparison to other men. Applying a gendered lens to the data in this way, also helped to reveal those 'male as norm' practices which had been described by the participants (Enloe, 2004; Kronsell, 2005; Wickramasinghe, 2010). These were important considerations during the analysis phase, given that my own position as a long-serving member of the NZ Army meant that I was accustomed to unquestioningly, and at times obliviously, accepting such norms.

Using thematic analysis provided an effective means of manually organising a significant amount of interview data (Flick, 2018; Boulton & Hammersley, 2006). Although computer

software is often used to assist with such analysis (Flick, 2018; Basit, 2003), I had chosen to undertake this task manually. The main reason for this was that I had transcribed all of the interviews myself, therefore I was already immersed in the data (Williams and Moser, 2019), and felt comfortable that I could organise and interpret the data without using software. Indeed, the use of software may have detracted from this process by introducing a distance between myself and the data (Flick, 2018). Instead, I developed an excel spreadsheet for each set of interviews, which I populated with codes as I noticed patterns in the data. I then 'cut and pasted' segments of data from the interview transcripts into columns beneath each of the codes. This gave me the ability to identify those codes that were more popular within the participant narratives. It also assisted in identifying whether some codes might be readily grouped together. For example, the codes of 'conformity', 'mould', 'type' and 'fitting in' included segments of data of a similar nature, and were consequently grouped together.

Once the codes were grouped together, I was able to reflect on how they might connect to create broader themes (consider here the analogy of individual trees creating a forest). The process of defining themes was made more complex by having three distinct, yet inter-related, sets of data. However, this complexity also created a depth and richness to the research findings. To help simplify the complexity (and yet retain its richness), I would consider the similarities, differences, and contradictions that had emerged across the three sets of participant experiences. Using a whiteboard to draw connections between these ideas, and reflect upon what they meant in relation to the research questions, enabled me to create shared meaning from the three sets of codes. In this way, I was able to identify themes which (in many cases) spanned across the experiences of both the junior and senior participants (Williams and Moser, 2019; Flick, 2018; Sarantakos, 2016). The presentation of themes was the next consideration, and the following section will provide an outline of how the findings were organised and presented within this thesis.

5.4.2 Structuring the Research Findings

Reflecting on the research questions of this study, it became apparent that each of the identified themes had a different level of significance with respect to the 'success' of being Infantry. Drawing upon the theory of social constructionism, it was also apparent that

different participants had different versions of lived reality, based upon their perceptions of what they had experienced. There were those participants, for example, who loved being Infantry and consequently thrived within this environment. There were also those who hated it, and who were consequently planning their exit. In presenting the research findings, it was important to demonstrate these different versions of reality and provide an understanding of what had contributed towards these differences, whilst also demonstrating (and exploring) any changes or 'shifts' that had taken place over time. This was achieved by presenting a general discussion of the ideas that underpinned each theme, as well as by providing specific experiences and perceptions of participants (Flick, 2018). Themes have also been translated and interpreted with reference to claims made in existing literature.

The findings of this thesis are organised into four chapters. The first chapter (Chapter 6) presents findings from the Senior Leader cohort, which provides the background context to the RNZIR (this being the context that the Junior Soldiers were entering as newly enlisted Infantry Privates) through the eyes of senior members of the RNZIR. The following two chapters focus on the Junior Soldier cohort, which is presented in two parts, and organised in chronological order. The first part (Chapter 7) presents data from the first set of Junior Soldier interviews; it explores the initial experiences of the participants on enlistment during Recruit Training, as well as their expectations of being Infantry. The second part (Chapter 8) presents data from the second set of Junior Soldier interviews, exploring the experiences and perspectives of the participants after approximately 12 months of enlistment. This chapter outlines key shifts in perspectives as a result of the mismatch between expectation and reality, and elaborates upon those factors which impacted upon the participants' desire to either remain within, or exit, the Infantry trade. A detailed discussion of the relevance of gender with respect to success within the RNZIR is then attended to in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9) of this thesis. This discussion also directly addresses the research questions.

By organising the findings in this way it has been possible to present an overall picture of the lived reality of the participants within the RNZIR, whilst also generating theoretical contributions related to of their performance and participation that are "grounded in the data" (Basit, 2003, p.147). Throughout the presentation of findings, examples of experiences and perceptions (as quotes) will be presented to exemplify the different versions of reality

that some participants experienced in comparison to others. These quotes also provide exemplars of the changes (in perspective, awareness, motivation, or attitude) that may have occurred over time. It will be noticed that the experiences of the female participants are at times presented secondary to those of the males; as a result, some versions of the experiences of the women may appear to sit on the periphery of those of the men. This is intentional, as throughout the data analysis process it became clear that men set the context of the RNZIR. The findings chapters therefore attempt to reproduce this context, while also giving voice to the realities of women within it.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological design of a study undertaken to investigate the gendered barriers and enablers to participation and performance within a specific hyper-masculine environment of the NZ Army, the Infantry trade of the Royal New Zealand infantry Regiment (RNZIR). Framed by a relativist ontological position and a social constructionist epistemology, this study was conducted using qualitative methods. These methods have been discussed in detail, alongside the practical and ethical considerations with respect to the research participants and data management. The findings are now presented and discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 6: Senior Leader Perspectives of the RNZIR

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of interviewing the RNZIR Senior Leader cohort was to develop an understanding of the context that the Junior Soldier cohort was entering. Having never been an RNZIR officer myself, I needed to gain familiarity with what it meant to *be* Infantry. This included learning about the experiences of the senior participants, as well as developing an understanding of the expectations placed upon newly enlisted junior soldiers. I soon became aware, however, that these interviews provided much more than just background context. I learned that although there were many common experiences of being Infantry, there were different perceptions of these experiences as well as meanings attached to them. Not unlike my own journey within Army, perceptions of some senior leaders had changed over time. As a result, some participants took a critically reflective stance towards certain ways of being Infantry that they had experienced. Some experiences perceived as normal when first beginning their career (such as extremely high levels of discipline, an inability for junior soldiers to speak openly with commanders, and a reliance on resilience to overcome physical or emotional pain) were now viewed as arbitrary or detrimental. Other senior leader participants, however, took a less critical perspective, and defended the need for specific practices or experiences in the name of developing effectiveness on the battlefield.

The differences in perspectives and awareness of the senior leaders was particularly marked with respect to ideas of gender, and the understandings of how gendered expectations of being Infantry might impact upon themselves or others. Some senior participants acknowledged the challenges of being a woman (or even a less 'manly' man) within an institution that demanded high levels of 'masculinity'. There were, however, varying degrees of acknowledgement. What also became apparent was that having higher levels of awareness of gendered challenges, did not necessarily correlate with a desire to change the status quo. Furthermore, even where there was a desire to change, there appeared to be limited capacity to do so. The status quo instead seemed to be underpinned by traditional notions of being Infantry that made change either inconceivable, or impossible. This resulting in different ways of thinking (which arguably provide the fuel for institutional cultural change) being stifled. This chapter will, therefore, discuss the varying perspectives of the 34 senior leader

participants. It will describe their own lived realities as Infantry, as well as demonstrate how the perceptions of senior Infantry personnel ultimately shaped the context for junior Infantry soldiers.

6.2 We're the heart of the Army, and the most important

It is only a small proportion of New Zealand's target adult population for NZ Army recruitment that is likely to consider a career within the NZ Army. An even smaller proportion is likely to consider a trade (such as Infantry) that necessitates enduring extreme hardship, or poses a risk to life (Dudding, Beccari & Le Roux, 2020). My initial curiosity when conducting the interviews with the senior participants was, therefore, to understand why they had purposefully selected Infantry as a career. It was through the responses to this question that one of the key perceptions of being Infantry was articulated by a number of the senior participants; this being that the Infantry *was* the Army. Responses included, for example, "*it was the most Army thing you could do*" *(S8M)* and "*in my mind, Infantry was what the Army was" (S13M), or "it felt like the pure form of Army" (S2F).* The majority of the participants suggested that they were not only drawn to the 'hands on' and 'high risk' elements of the role, but they were also attracted to what the Infantry represented. In other words, they were attracted by the idea that Infantry represented the *real* Army.

Given the perception of Infantry being the *real* Army, it was described by several of the senior participants as being superior to other trades. There was, consequently, a general perception that all other trades and corps in the NZ Army existed to support the Infantry. As one senior participant confirmed, "*we're pretty much all of the same mindset, we're the heart of the army and the most important and everyone else works for us. It sort of does work out like that most of the time, believe it or not*" *(S18M).* As another participant reflected, Infantry's superior position is also derived from the perception of it being a harder role than others within the Army:

> *I'm aware that there is a sense of superiority of the Infantry that you hear and see in conversations in the mess, or even just the fact that grunts stand around talking to each other and not talk to other civilians in the mess, or not talking to other corps, or even not talking to peers in the mess of different corps. And my hypothesis is that it comes from a sense of, 'it's harder and therefore we're better.'" (S2F).*

I found these discussions interesting, as I had not asked the senior participants directly about the existence of a possible ‘hierarchy of trades’ within the Army. These ideas, however, emerged spontaneously and demonstrated the participants’ perceived position of their corps (and as a result, of themselves) in relation to others within the NZ Army.

The perception of superiority that comes with being in the NZ Army’s Infantry has historical roots. It dates back to the Infantry of the First and Second World Wars, giving rise then to an attitude of ‘snobbishness’ amongst units (Phillips, 1987). As Phillips (1987) suggests, “to be a proper *man*, to be a genuine soldier, you had to be at the front” and further, “the infantry, because of its higher casualty rate and tougher life was ‘king of the outfit’” (Phillips, 1987, p.204). The statements of the senior participants indicated that a similar narrative continues to exist within the modern day Infantry. As Harding (2016) observed, attitudes of superiority are first encouraged during Infantry soldiers’ initial training: “on the first day of Corps Training, the Platoon Commander had announced, “remember, you’re infantry. That makes you better than 99.99% of the rest of society.” Sheard (2021) also notes, in her study of uniformed Nursing Officers, that support personnel within the NZ Army are commonly treated with contempt by combat trades, including the Infantry.

The perception by the majority of the senior participants that the Infantry was positioned at the top of the Army’s hierarchy is not surprising, given that literature suggests that the hegemonic form of masculinity is often depicted as the ‘combat’ soldier (Whitworth, 2004; Swain, 2016; Hinojosa; 2010). As such, combat soldiers are commonly observed to construct a narrative that places them symbolically superior to others (Hinojosa, 2010; Brown, 2012). However, as a modern military that relies upon teams (of both combat and combat support personnel) to cooperate in order to achieve mission success, the perpetuation of this perception within Infantry appeared counterintuitive to broader institutional aims. It was also evident that this narrative of superiority was not one that all of the senior participants agreed with. A small of the participants instead firmly believed that it created an unhealthy culture of disrespect, which was borne out through harmful behaviours towards ‘others’.

The definition of ‘others’ was indicated by one senior participant to include anyone that wasn’t Infantry. This participant went on to explain, “*I don’t think there’s the same acceptance of each other, different corps, trades, just about anything” (S26M).* As another participant stated, “*that’s why you see drivers getting punched in the head by Infantry soldiers every Friday night. Because their leaders have shown this disrespect to certain corps at an early age” (S19M).* The impacts of such attitudes were considered particularly problematic within the modern operating environment, because this is an operating environment where cooperation (rather than conflict) between trades is essential. The number of senior participants that expressed this viewpoint were, however, within the minority. The implication being that the dominant perspective was one which supported a superior positioning of Infantry in comparison to others. One senior participant explained how this narrative was perpetuated: *“a bunch of tough guys get together and get told that tough guys are awesome, and they just keep telling themselves that narrative and it gets stronger and harder to shift” (S19M).*

The senior participants who held a different perspective on this phenomenon could not be distinguished by their gender (i.e., they included a mix of both male and female participants). They did, however, all have a length of service within the NZ Army that had spanned ten years or more. They had also experienced Army life outside of a Regular Force Infantry unit, working in an environment *with* others (rather than simply with Infantry). I considered that these factors had likely contributed towards a greater awareness of how operational outcomes might be detrimentally impacted by attitudes of Infantry superiority. However, many of the senior participants who spoke of this positioning of Infantry (and yet did not indicate it to be problematic) also had a length of service greater than ten years. Many had also worked in non-Infantry environments, with personnel from other trades and corps. These two factors alone could not, therefore, explain the reason behind the different perspectives of some senior participants in comparison to others.

On further examination of the interview transcripts, it was apparent that those participants who discussed the negative implications of Infantry’s superior positioning also had a high level of awareness with regard to how behavioural expectations of being Infantry had impacted upon their own sense of self. In other words, they possessed a heightened level of self-awareness. They were also highly empathetic towards the challenges of those who might

struggle to fit the characteristic 'mould' of Infantry (such as women, or gay men). Consequently, although they had themselves managed to successfully 'fit' as Infantry, it was their critique of the impacts of *having* to fit which appeared to differentiate them most from many of the other senior participants.

The ability for Infantry to symbolically position itself at the top of hierarchy of trades necessitates that Infantry soldiers and officers display suitably hegemonic masculine attributes (Ombati, 2010; Connell, 2005). A number of senior participants explained this phenomenon by describing the way in which Infantry soldiers are expected to embody a particular 'type' or mould. Characteristics of masculine hegemony, such as self-discipline, confidence, physical ability, toughness, aggression and emotional control, were described as distinctive attributes of the Infantry 'type'. It was also explained that specific behaviours of the Infantry type included drinking, swearing, playing rugby, and picking up women. When I asked one of the senior participants to elaborate further upon what this 'type' looked like, he suggested, *"I suppose it is masculine, I wouldn't disagree that it's masculine. It's very aggressive. It's very alpha. So I think the cut out is the traditional 'man'. That's what we expect to see. And that is what we **do** see" (S13M).*

6.3 Infantry, we like ourselves… we like seeing ourselves

The majority of the senior participants believed that they had changed or adapted their personality since becoming Infantry. While some felt that this was a natural progression of maturity and/or being in an Army leadership role, a significant number of the senior participants believed that they had changed due to the pressure to conform to the Infantry 'type'. As one senior participant described, for example: "*There's this picture of what a good man is that we're meant to live up to as well. So there's real pressure on men to perform, and to meet that expectation, and you're very quickly found out. You'll find yourself ostracised if your name gets around" (S24M).* A number of participants thus spoke of having a 'work' setting and a 'home' setting. The home setting being the one where they could display their real personality, or have conversations where they could safely speak about their feelings. The 'real' personality often described by participants as being introverted rather than

extroverted, or as being less serious and less assertive than the Infantry 'work' personality would allow.

The impact, over time, of having to meet the behavioural expectations of the Infantry was exemplified by one senior participant who had spent over thirty years within the Infantry trade. As he reflected on the way in which the Infantry had influenced his personality in comparison to both his civilian peers and to his non-combat Army peers:

> *I'm certainly very different from civie mates that I've got out there, and relatives. I think very differently. and I act very differently. People find me very abrupt, and what would you say, arrogant perhaps. I don't wanna say, as it's a cliché thing, but that kind of toxic masculine personality. I intimidate people, so I've gotta really soften myself when I take this [uniform] off. It's taken me a while to figure that out. (. . .) My comrades, contemporaries, the other blokes that I've been friends with and have known for a long time, they're different to me. They're softer, and probably more technically savvy because they're in trades. Definitely thinking about the guys that I served with and that are still serving now, definitely softer. I think they see me as the hard out army man. So I think in a male dominated work environment, there's a lot of testosterone. There's a lot of chest thumping and yeah, I think it does change you (S35M).*

This statement suggests that the display of masculinity considered acceptable within the Infantry is different to that accepted within other, supposedly less masculine, trades. It also indicates that the same purposeful performance of the hegemonic masculine ideal that enables acceptance within the Infantry environment, has potentially negative consequences for relationships external to the Infantry. Given that several of the senior participants had commented on an increasing disparity between their own personality and that of their civilian friends, I wondered if this might hold potential implications for the successful transition of Infantry personnel from military to civilian life (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017). Whilst there was clear evidence of the participants creating a military identity that conformed with the expectations of the Infantry environment, there was little evidence of any mechanisms in place to assist in 'un-making' it (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017).

It was the realisation that they were not being true to their own values or personal beliefs, or in some cases as a result of negative impacts on external personal relationships, that had lead a small number of the senior participants to reflect critically upon actions or behaviours that they had performed in the name of 'fitting in'. This includes actions that they knew to be out

of character for themselves (such as bullying, drinking heavily or acting tough), but which also appeared to be the 'norm'. Norms are those ways of doing or being that have been regarded as 'normal' for so long that they are often left unquestioned (Rao, et al, 2016). As one participant explained how social norms worked within the Infantry context,

> *I don't even know what person I was before I joined. But I'm sure I wasn't the person that I became, having been posted to this battalion at 16 and a half years old. I reflect on a lot of mistakes that I made, and a lot of mistakes I made were tolerated but not necessarily right. Which means you were doing something that wasn't necessarily right, but because it was tolerated and nobody said anything you did it more and more (S26M).*

As another senior participant reflected with regret on their lack of questioning of the Infantry's social norms:

> *I never talked about my feelings. I got bullied coming into the organisation, and then I became a bully. Because that's how the organisation worked. I had mental health problems as well, I got really depressed, really anxious, felt disconnected, withdrew from people. I wanted to leave the organisation a couple of times. So for something that you give so much to and you care so much about, you spend a lot of time away from your family, you really lose a lot of you in order to be uniformed and be part of the organisation and fit in. But you know, the organisation doesn't remember. You do something that someone doesn't like and you get shunned. You get socially shunned very quickly. Over time I found myself having two settings. I had a work setting, you know, chin up, shoulders back, chest out, being a tough guy. And then my more meaningful friendships were actually with people in Intelligence and Signals and Logistics, where I could go and have a safe place to talk about how I was actually feeling. So that was the slow process of thinking that maybe I don't fit in here. Maybe I'm in the wrong corps. I suspect that no one fitted in and we're all trying to play a fairly self-defeating game (S19M)*

The very act of conforming revealed significant points of tension in the experiences of these participants. It was a tension that appeared to be created by an internal dissonance between personal values, and those behaviours expected as Infantry. This tension was further exacerbated by a perceived inability to challenge the 'the way things are done around here'. This level of critique was, however, displayed by only a few of the participants.

It became apparent that a significant number of the senior participants had not consciously conformed, but had simply done so because that was the expectation of them. As one senior participant suggested, for example, *"I have changed, but the system did it for me. Me personally, I've not pursued any active personal change. I think it just happens because of the*

environment" (S5M). Indeed, my interview was perhaps the first time that many of the senior participants had considered this idea at all. As another participant mused on the possibility:

> *I don't know if I've had to change. Did I change because of the Army, or did the Army change me? I suppose I'm trying to ask myself if I would naturally have lead in that manner if I were outside the Army. I don't know. I'm trying to separate changing my style due to age and experience, or doing it because it was expected. Certainly in my early years a harder edge was certainly expected. And so in terms of style you probably adopted a harder style than you might left with no influence. I don't know if I've changed enormously (S8M).*

As such, many of those participants who recognised changes within themselves did not view these changes through a negative lens. The need to adapt to the environment was, instead, perceived by the majority of participants to simply be a necessary aspect of being Infantry. The willingness to adapt, or even sacrifice, aspects of oneself in this way was also explained by a desire to be part of the collective entity of Infantry. As explained by one senior participant, *"even though some of us are introverted or extroverted, we all do crave being part of something" (S22M).*

Connell's theory of masculinity provides a useful framework for understanding these experiences of fitting the Infantry type described by the senior participants. As Connell (2002b) explains, masculinity is constructed both socially and collectively. As such, "masculinities are sustained and enacted not only by individuals, but also by groups" (p.36). Connell (2002b) describes this as the institutionalisation of masculinity, whereby individuals become complicit in both displaying desired masculine behaviours of the group, as well as 'policing' the behaviour of other group members (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Policing of behaviour is not a formal activity, but often achieved through informal practices such as social exclusion (Rao, et al, 2016). This particular practice was confirmed to occur within the Infantry by one of the senior participants who candidly stated,

> *Infantry, we like ourselves…we like seeing ourselves. So if we look at someone and we think you don't look right, we will judge you and write you off. And it's very much a dog-eat-dog world. If you don't look right then you don't fit in, and so you actually almost have to change who you are. And it's very difficult to not buy into it all, the guns and the drinking and all that kind of stuff. An infantry officer who doesn't drink is automatically shunned. It's actually like, we will judge someone negatively for that, even though I think it's a really positive thing if someone's brave enough to be true to themselves (S13M).*

It was consequently suggested by several participants that many talented Infantry soldiers and officers are unnecessarily 'weeded out' from the Infantry, due to their inability (or perhaps due to a lack of desire) to fit in. Conformity, rather than talent, thus appeared to afford the greater possibility of achieving success within Infantry.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe how patterns of hegemony also require the 'exclusion or discrediting' of femininity. This does not mean that women are not able make claim to the benefits of masculine hegemony. Women's ability to do so, however, remains dependent on their capacity to also embody the attributes of the masculine hegemonic ideal (Connell, 2005; King, 2017). This idea was reflected in the responses of a number of the male senior participants. As one participant reflected on women's participation, for example, "*I think naturally as it's a male dominated environment, they pick up some of the personality traits of males. They kind of conform to the environment, even though there's no expectation for them to" (S12M).* I found this statement curious given that it contradicted the experience of many of the male senior participants who had already spoken of needing to adapt according to the environment. It is not surprising, therefore, that the female senior participants confirmed that fitting in for them meant being 'one of the boys'. One female senior participant also reflected on their inability to challenge the status quo of the Infantry environment as a result:

> *I do think there's a lot of things that I allowed, or observed, or put up with, or didn't challenge in my career. Micro things, although, even if I had the knowledge I don't know if I would've challenged them because there's that fitting in bit. That ironic thing that you need to prove yourself and be accepted, before you'll be given the kudos to be able to challenge things. But it's kind of like, by fitting in and accepting the way things are, you are enabling and empowering the system to continue as it is (S2F).*

Consequently, and similar to Carreiras's (2006) study of women's participation within the Portuguese and Dutch Armed Forces, the majority of the female senior participants of this study appeared to have adopted a strategy of 'conformity' rather than 'assertiveness'. Conformity typified by women adapting to existing rules and norms, whilst also minimising their gender differences (Carreiras, 2006).

Multiple implications were associated with the female senior participants conforming to the status quo. Whilst at the outset it was apparent that conforming provided a form of acceptance, the very act of conforming also indicated acceptance of 'way things are done around here'. This acceptance then translated to the sustainment of norms and behaviours which detrimentally impacted upon women's participation. Furthermore, some of the female senior participants indicated that conforming to the status quo was not sustainable long-term. As one female senior participant explained:

> *I think there still needs to be cultural change in the infantry. It's still a bit of a boys' club. So little things, over time, build up. And when the culture's not quite right you can deal with it for three to four years, but ultimately it eats away at you and then it's like, 'you know what, I don't have to deal with this anymore' (S3F).*

Given that these senior female leaders within Infantry seemed unable to influence or challenge the status quo, I felt that this did not bode well for junior female Infantry soldiers who (due to their lower rank and status within the RNZIR) would likely have even less agency to do so.

High levels of conformity were indicated to be a feature of Infantry participation for both the male and female senior participants. Despite this, Connell's (2005) theory indicates that hegemonic masculinity is open to challenge. More specifically, it is stated that, "a pattern of practice (i.e., a version of masculinity) that provided such a solution in past conditions but not in new conditions is open to challenge—is in fact certain to be challenged" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 852).

While a specific version of masculinity may have served the Infantry well in the past, for example, this does not guarantee that it is the right version for the future. This was indicated when I asked the senior participants to describe the desirable characteristics of an Infantry soldier, whereby some of the characteristics considered to be important for performance (which included traits traditionally perceived as 'feminine', such as humility, intellect, emotional intelligence, empathy and conflict negotiation), contrasted with those traditional attributes that fit the hegemonic masculine ideal, or 'type'. This suggests a tension between the overtly masculine behaviours required to successfully *participate* (or be accepted), and those that are required to successfully *perform* as Infantry. It is the existence of this very

tension that Connell (2002b) indicates to be an important start point for the potential challenging of hegemonic gender patterns.

6.4 We don't need bipolar Infantrymen!

One of the justifications commonly provided by the senior participants with respect to the hyper-masculine characteristics displayed by Infantry soldiers was that the role demands it. Similar to the Infantry role in other militaries, the core role of the NZ Army's Infantry is: 'to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture them, to seize and hold ground and repel attack, by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain.' As discussed in the previous chapter, the requirement to kill another person at a close distance is unique to the Infantry trade, and a key aspect of the role that sets them apart from non-combat trades. It also differentiates Infantry from other trades designated as combat, such as artillery or armoured, who may be required to kill but can do so from a much longer range. As one senior participant stated of the Infantry's role: *"You must be prepared at a moment's notice to have a violent effect on the enemy. You must be prepared to violently close with them, and kill them violently. Because that's the job" (S25M).* There was a general consensus amongst the majority of the senior participants that although New Zealand had not deliberately deployed its Infantry into combat since the Vietnam War, it was necessary to prepare for this eventuality. As one participant stated, "*War is coming, combat is coming, and it's coming to the Pacific and it's coming to us and we will be affected. So I'm personally worried" (S31M).*

Many of the senior participants spoke of the need for Infantry soldiers to have the necessary levels of aggression, as well as the physical attributes, to engage in close combat (such as a bayonet fight) with the enemy. The types of attributes required of the Infantry were also, however, acknowledged by most of the participants to be different than those demanded of the 'traditional' battlefield. The senior participants spoke of the need for Infantry to have the capability to work within complex environments. Environments that necessitate high levels of communication skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and empathy. As one senior participant explained,

> *They need to be good with people. And that doesn't necessarily mean other infantry personnel, that means across all corps. Because in the modern operating environment you need to not only deal with the infantry but also people from*

> *support organisations, people from outside the army. So having good interpersonal skills and self-awareness are critical (S7M).*

This discussion highlighted a significant contradiction within the Infantry. Firstly because the superior self-positioning of Infantry previously described by the senior participants discouraged collegial relationships with anyone who was *not* Infantry. Secondly, because empathy and self-awareness (which arguably underpin an ability to communicate effectively with other people) were generally regarded as vulnerabilities in a war fighter.

Furthermore, although these types of 'soft' skills were considered critical to performance within more modern and complex operational environments, it is highly significant that there is little evidence of training conducted to develop these. The assumption being that such skills would be picked up 'on the job', as and when required. As exemplified by the statement of one senior participant: "*There's no course for it. And it's certainly not such a tangible thing to train. It's often easier just to pick that up on the job. From just going out there and being a good person" (S18M).* This statement suggests that being a 'good' person is natural or innate to Infantry. It also assumes that the characteristics of good people are encouraged within Infantry soldiers, even though previous statements had indicated an underlying acceptance within Infantry of 'not so good' behaviours. The contradictions inherent within the idea that soft skills could be picked up on the job were, therefore, difficult to reconcile.

The lack of explicit 'soft' skill training was vindicated by the perception that, unlike the tangible skills of shooting at a target, soft skills are difficult to train and even more difficult to measure. As another senior participant stated, "*It's easy enough to teach soldiers how to assault in pairs, but it's really hard to teach soldiers how to engage with civilians at a checkpoint. Which is the most likely situation that they will find themselves in" (S5M).* These findings correlate with those of Greener (2017) who suggested that the training of soft skills, such as cultural or gender awareness, was not a deliberate undertaking within the NZ Army. Traditional notions of battlefield combat therefore appeared to provide the default setting for training. As another senior participant stated, "*My guys are out on the training area right now doing assaults. When was the last time any Infantry soldier in the NZ Army actually assaulted an enemy position? Probably Vietnam" (S16M).* The focus of training on the combat

role of the Infantry also reflects the philosophy that preparing for the 'worst case scenario' is a pragmatic approach towards training for all possible types of operations.

It also became clear during the interviews with the senior participants that one of the reasons for focussing on the 'sharp end' of Infantry was that soft skills and hard skills were perceived to be mutually exclusive. That is, you can train Infantry to be either hard and aggressive, or soft and approachable – but not both. This idea was emphasised by one senior participant who suggested that a soldier trained for combat could not readily switch to a 'non-combat' personality:

> *That's a personality, and this is a different personality. We don't need bipolar infantrymen, we've got enough problems as it is! That's what we need, but the training doesn't allow for it (S26M).*

These types of perspectives are, however, critiqued by Whitworth (2004), who suggests that the pursuit to divorce emotion (other than aggressive emotion) from soldier performance is fraught with repercussions (Whitworth, 2004). In particular, the idea that Infantry cannot concurrently assimilate those attributes required for less aggressive operations brings into question the idea that war fighters make suitable 'peace keepers' (Whitworth, 2004).

It is due to the underpinning belief that the capacity of a soldier to fight on the battlefield is incompatible with the capacity to demonstrate emotion, or empathy, that the capacity of women to fight was also commonly called into question by the senior participants. As one participant stated,

> *Can she fight? Because infantry is state sanctioned violence on behalf of the government. The bottom line, the buck stops here. Can she fight? (S30M)*

Many of the senior participants adopted the stance of gender essentialists in answering this question, by suggesting that women's 'innate' ability to demonstrate compassion or empathy means that their contribution should be confined within the realm of peacekeeping, rather than combat. As one participant stated, *"At the end of the day, the focus is the combat force and I think it [gender integration] supports the combat force in a peacekeeping role. I don't know if it does in the gritty conflict" (S18M).* Another participant similarly stated, *"I think there are benefits in terms of the role that NZ soldiers have, such as the female liaison team, as there are things that only women can do due to their matriarchal abilities" (S9M)*. Such statements

illuminate deeply held assumptions within Infantry of the type of personality, and indeed the type of person, that is deemed capable of fulfilling the Infantry's core role.

6.5 Is the infantry harder on its soldiers than other corps? Yeah, 100%

Throughout the interviews with the senior participants, it became apparent that preparing Infantry soldiers for the battlefield went well beyond the formal training curriculum. It extended into day to day management within the garrison environment, where the treatment of Infantry soldiers was highly disciplined and regimented. As one senior participant explained: "*We're not that friendly to them, it's not a warm, happy environment for them to be. We're hard on them a lot of the time because being hard on them makes them better" (S5M).* This idea was reinforced by a number of senior participants, who suggested that preparation for the battlefield began in the garrison environment. As one senior participant elaborated:

> *More often than not it's peace time. But it doesn't mean that that's not gonna change anytime soon. And now we're asking these guys, we're so concerned about their feelings, and their participation and their friendships and their hopes and dreams, that we now need them to be mongrels and dogs of war, and to kill. And survive. And save their mates, and follow orders on command. And the two, you can't switch that on and off. Not without preparing them to do so. So some of these attitudes are necessary to achieve that. The role of the infantry is to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill and capture him! (S24M).*

There appeared to be an underlying sense within the statements of many of the senior participants that taking an empathetic or relaxed approach towards the management of Infantry soldiers might weaken their ability to fight and/or kill. This participant's perception indicated that being 'nice' to Infantry soldiers (through the nurturing of feelings or friendships) was incongruent with the Infantry's primary role, and would likely result in a degrading of battlefield effectiveness.

The justification for the harsh treatment and strict discipline of Infantry is often associated with the idea that a minor mistake could result in a 'life or death' situation on the battlefield. O'Sullivan (2016) explains this phenomenon by suggesting that obedience is considered especially crucial within combat roles, where soldiers may be given orders that must be acted upon instantly. The predictability of soldiers' reactions to orders within combat situations is,

therefore, considered to be a factor that may influence either success or survival (O'Sullivan, 2016). As a result, disciplinary measures are administered and reinforced in training or peacetime to condition "absolute obedience" (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.83). It was acknowledged by a number of senior participants that this was the case within the Infantry, which also created a heightened sense of discipline compared to that of other trades within the NZ Army. As one senior participant reflected,

> *I sort of feel that I can't rely on every corps to crack the whip in that manner. Some trades, like you go to the workshops, and it's pretty union rules. The issue with that is, if you always give people what they want and it's time to dig it in, people tend to grumble a bit more. In the Infantry, everyone does what they're told when they're told (S8M).*

The majority of the senior participants tended to agree with this sentiment, and did not question the need for a high level of discipline and obedience within the RNZIR.

Having worked in other parts of the NZ Army that were considered more 'relaxed' with supposed 'union rules', I began to wonder about the demands of this strict style of discipline in Infantry as compared to that of other trades or corps within the NZ Army. I would not describe myself as a particularly regimental member of the NZ Army, so perhaps I didn't understand the Infantry's requirement for such rigidity. However, I had also not witnessed significant lapses of obedience from soldiers who had been treated in a 'less-disciplined' (or perhaps more reasonable) fashion. I am sure that the majority of the senior participants would not agree with adopting a more relaxed approach. However, one of participants' reflections indicated an awareness of the detrimental impacts of the harsher style of discipline often employed by Infantry:

> *It almost seems as part of Basic and definitely Corps Training, people's characters must be crushed. These young people that are taking them don't understand that you don't have to crush someone's character to get the best out of them. Or for them to actually be a good contributing soldier to whatever they're trying to get together. But that seems to be the norm, and I'm like 'wow, you're only doing that because that's what happened to you.' Our culture of continuing to crush instead of getting the best out of someone. There's a line there, but some people… And you have those clashes when you get people come on Basic that are smarter than the Lance Corporal who's only been in for four years and will possibly only ever be a Lance Corporal (S27M).*

As well as the potentially negative impacts upon personal wellbeing, self-esteem and retention for those soldiers who had to endure having their characters ‘crushed’, it was apparent that this style of discipline and ‘leadership’ vastly contradicted the RNZIR’s own desire for a modern ‘thinking’ soldier.

The rigidity of discipline and obedience demanded by many militaries can stifle a soldier’s ability to think for themselves (O’Sullivan, 2016; Bourke, 1999). This having the potential to detrimentally impact upon operational outcomes. Within the First World War, for example, where an unquestioning level of obedience was considered a necessity in combat situations, it was observed that “automatic movements and instinctive obedience to commands were inadequate – indeed, the most perfectly drilled and well-disciplined men were frequently the first to crawl into the bushes during battle” (Bourke, 1999, p.73). As the battlefield has evolved to become increasingly complex and dynamic, so too has the requirement for combat soldiers to think critically and employ independent judgement as part of their decision making process (O’Sullivan, 2016; Bourke, 1999). As Bourke (1999) further suggests of modern warfare, “the military structure also needs to be reasonably informal and egalitarian in order to build strong bonds, camaraderie and loyalties within the group and between the group and its leader. In modern combat, the group and the group leader rely less on formal command and have an enhanced need for situational judgment and on the ground initiative” (p.124). It could therefore be argued that the creation of the modern combat soldier requires a greater focus on creative thinking, independent decision making and even ‘disobedience’, rather than an insistence on obedience and a restrictive adherence to hierarchy (O’Sullivan, 2016).

The potential mismatch between ‘old school’ methods of discipline employed within the RNZIR, and the requirement for the modern Infantry soldier to demonstrate initiative was proposed by a small number of participants. It was recognised, for example, that there was a need for a more nuanced method of training soldiers than the traditional ‘shut up and do as your told’ approach. As one senior participant stated:

> *With the grunts you’ve got this weird paradox of, ‘you are the output’ ‘you are the weapon system.’ But also ‘you’re the dumb baggy’. So how do we balance that paradox of, I expect you to shut up and listen. But then also commander’s intent ultimately boils down to you deciding when to pull the trigger. And you keeping your mates alive (S11M).*

The significant value placed upon hierarchical obedience within the RNZIR was also suggested by several participants to suffocate soldiers' initiative. As another senior participant stated,

> *the structure that we have in place doesn't really allow for innovation at all. It's a very rigid structure, and I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I think it depends on the situation, like if we went to Ukraine right now it would definitely be a good thing because I don't need you to question why, I need you to just do it. But if we're working in a SASO[24] environment it might be a bit more open. It just depends on where we find ourselves (S6M).*

The irony of enforcing a strictly hierarchical and disciplinary structure in peace time being the possibility that the same structure has the possibility to negatively impact upon desired operational outcomes in complex situations.

6.6 Surviving! Done a lot of surviving!

One aspect of being Infantry that all senior participants unanimously agreed upon as being integral to success within the Infantry, was 'resilience'. Resilience was described as both a physical and mental attribute. *Mental* resilience generally referred to as being the prerequisite for sustained *physical* resilience. Both, however, considered essential given the harsh environments within which Infantry are oftentimes expected to work within. As one senior participant described the mental resilience required to deal with the physical challenges of being Infantry:

> *I don't just mean physical exertion. I mean things like sometimes you end up living in the field, you might not have a shower for a week, or 2 weeks, and it might be freezing cold. You're walking every day, you're shaving out of a cup, and it's like, 'man, this is hard.' So I think the resilience and physicality is a challenge. And probably now more than ever, the mental resilience (S8M).*

Another senior participant similarly stated,

> *Resilience, that's the biggest one. they need to understand that they're going to get cold, wet and hungry a lot of the time when they're in the field. And they don't get to live in a tent or a container with a generator. We're under a hootchie or in a hole. So it comes down to resilience (S28M).*

These hardships correlate with those of Infantry soldiers internationally (Hockey, 2014; Woodward, 2000). They also echo the sentiments of Woodward (2000) who suggests that the

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[24] SASO is the acronym for Stability and Support Operations

physicality admired of an Infantry soldier is not the physical prowess found within a gym setting, but that which enables soldiers to 'transcend' and conquer the environment. The mental and physical resilience required of Infantry ultimately being that which enables the ability to fulfil the RNZIR's primary role '*regardless of weather, season or terrain'*.

The capacity to demonstrate resilience is profoundly admired within the Infantry environment. As one senior participant spoke with particularly high regard of an Infantry soldier who embodied the ideal image of resilience, "*He wasn't actually that fit, but he was tough. So even if he was broken, he'd still keep walking" (S8M).* As Harding (2016) suggests, the idea of resilience is even embedded within the RNZIR's motto, 'Onward':

> At first I read "onward" as conjuring up romantic images of noble troops charging purposefully forward into battle, but came to realise that it actually means that it might be cold, and wet, and you are starving, and in pain, but you just keep putting one foot in front of the other and pushing on" (p.201).

One senior participant described the critical importance of having resilience as Infantry: "*if you're resilient you can make it through all the training. It's not about being successful but surviving, and all you really need is resilience" (S5M)*

This understanding of resilience is not dissimilar to the definition of resilience offered by Britt, Sinclair and McFadden (2013) who suggest that resilience is "the demonstration of positive adaptation in the face of significant adversity" (p.6). Having the capacity to respond positively in stressful or traumatic situations is also commonly understood to be a critical aspect of effective performance within combat roles (Grossman, 1995; Britt, et al, 2013; Adler, 2013). The senior participants had many words for expressing the notion of resilience. These included, 'toughness', 'endurance', 'robustness', 'grit' and 'determination'. The concept denoted the ability to 'push on' despite pain or injury, to 'suck it up and carry on', and to be 'comfortable with being uncomfortable'. Although resilience was described as both a physical and mental attribute, the two were inextricably intertwined. It also seemed that mental resilience trumped physical resilience, as it provided the means to continue physically exerting oneself even despite extreme physical pain. However, it was not clearly articulated the point at which mental resilience might not support continued physical exertion. In other words, could someone continue to exert themselves physically, whilst in extreme pain, if they simply put their mind to it?

Throughout the interviews it became apparent that the performance of resilience that was valued and rewarded within the RNZIR was conceptualised as physical and mental *infallibility*. It was also conceptualised as a very specific version of *masculine* infallibility, which (as one senior participant pointed out) was represented by the narrative of the 'Infantryman'. The Infantryman narrative is proudly displayed within the RNZIR as the epitome of what it means to be Infantry, and states (in part): "in the end, one man, grimy, unshaven, lousy, bleary eyed, "scared as hell" will hoist himself up, grab his rifle and plug forward – he is the infantryman!" There was, however, a recognition by a small number of participants that the 'resilience' narrative can have detrimental impacts on soldier wellbeing within the RNZIR. As one participant stated:

> *We have this idealised concept, we think that men are fast and fit and tough and go forever, and don't feel emotion. And it's total bullshit. (S19M).*

As a result of this concept of infallibility, the fear of appearing weak had been observed to inhibit soldiers seeking help for mental health issues.

The detrimental physical impact of measuring performance according to levels of resilience was pointed out by a number of participants. As one senior participant reflected:

> *So they [soldiers] should be learning, not just blowing ass and surviving. Surviving! Done a lot of surviving! You don't do a lot of learning while you're surviving. And certainly the trade model changed at some stage, both CO's thought that they wanted a resilient individual so platoon commanders and infantry section commanders got significantly harder. They started calling it the Selection Commanders. So yeah, do you want the most resilient individual? Or do you want the smartest, best operating individual? I think you've gotta find a balance there somehow (S30M).*

It was also pointed out that adaptations for training that would alleviate the burden of Infantry do exist (such as using vehicles and carrying less weight). These were even suggested to be in greater alignment with the reality of the modern operating environment. However, these adaptations were not generally adopted, with preference for traditional methods of training. As another senior participant explained:

> *Well, so on the SFMG[25] platoon commander course, on that course you're carrying the machine guns, plus all the ammo, and the radio. So, the question does have to be, what are the circumstances where we are going to have to deploy that*

[25] SFMG is the acronym for Sustained Fire Machine Gun

> *equipment on foot? And again, I don't know if I've ever had that question answered around, 'where do we deploy this stuff on foot?' Where are we sneaking into places and setting up a machine gun as opposed to driving up? Especially given so much enemy or opposition has so much night vision equipment, it's like, is it even possible to walk a machine gun in undetected? And I think we take a lot of pride in being able to do that hard stuff. There is a real element to It (S2F).*

Taking a smarter, rather than harder, approach towards training appeared to exist in conflict with the wider belief within the RNZIR that Infantry must endure extreme hardships during training in order to demonstrate and develop resilience for the battlefield. The 'smarter, not harder' approach consequently being nullified by the adage of 'train hard, fight easy'.

Notwithstanding the need for building resilience within military contexts, the negative impacts described by the participants can be explained by an unrelenting focus on, and "unquestioning allegiance" to, the performance of resilient behaviour (Adler, 2013, p.228). Adler (2013) points to the way in which a focus on individual resilience can also result in the assumption that the demands of operational contexts are not able to be mitigated. It is suggested that:

> if the organization focuses only on the responsibility of the individual to be more resilient, this can unintentionally suggest that stressors are immutable. In turn, leaders may be less likely to first examine whether these demands can be reduced or even eliminated (Adler, 2013, p.228).

As observed within the context of the RNZIR, the behaviour of resilience is rewarded above having an ability to recognise personal limitations. However, a focus on resilience that fails to recognise the capacity of human fallibility can (and will be explained in the following section to be the case within the RNZIR context) result in implications for those who do not meet the, oftentimes unachievable, standard of resilience being set (Adler, 2013).

6.7 The standards are created on being an Infantryman

The resilience of being Infantry is heavily intertwined with the physical requirements of the role. The physical requirements also perceived to be a defining feature of the Infantry 'standard'. When I asked some of the senior participants to define this standard, however, I was provided a wide variety of responses. Quite often the standard was discussed in relation

to the weights that needed to be carried. However, the weights were said to vary according to the task being conducted, so there was no clearly defined 'standard' load. One senior participant pointed me towards the Infantry 'doctrine' which stipulates the number of days that Infantry must be able to survive without resupply, and hence dictates the maximum load that must be carried. However, this standard could also vary depending on additional stores (radios, batteries and section weapons) that needed to be carried. As one senior participant suggested, "*25 kilos would be your base weight. And then on top of that you'd add your rations and ammo, so I wouldn't expect any less than 30 kilos. And then worst case it could push up to 60 kilos. But 40 kilos would be your average pack weight" (S12M).* The standard was also described in relation to the Required Fitness Level (RFL) test, which was acknowledged as having no relevance to the actual role of Infantry. As another senior participant stated, "*those minimum fitness levels don't equate to the outputs in the field, to what we actually do on the job" (S29M)*.

Overall, the answer that I received (which simultaneously provided ambiguity and clarity around the idea of physical 'standards') was that "*the standards are created on being an infantryman (or Infantry, which is the name of the trade now)" (S27M).* Ironically, it was the ambiguity of this response which provided clarity, because it identified that there was no specified physical standard for being Infantry within the RNZIR. It was due to this lack of specificity that there was such a variety of perspectives on what the standard might be, or who might or might not be able to meet the standard. For example, whether one soldier or two would be expected to carry a wounded soldier to safety. Whether a G1 RFL pass was acceptable, or whether a G2 RFL pass would suffice. Or whether the weight of a pack that an Infantry soldier should be able to carry might be 25 kilogrammes, or 60 kilogrammes. Indeed, the notion of 'standards' (which should presumably be an objective measure of performance) appeared in itself misleading. As one senior participants stated when I asked about the standard load of an Infantry soldier: "*standard load…as we've become cleverer we've gone away from trying to stipulate some of these things. Because that's seen as overly restrictive" (S8M).* Rather than being an objective measure of performance, there were consequently widely varied subjective interpretations of what the 'Infantry' standard (albeit ambiguous) might be.

The ambiguity around the specification of the Infantry standard also appeared to have implications for assessments of *how well* the standard might be met. There was not only an expectation of being able to 'meet' the standard, but also 'exceeding' it. This idea most commonly expressed in relation to women's ability to meet the standard, which as one participant explained:

> *It's not that they [females] can't pass it, it's just that the high performers are usually always men. They're always setting the standard. So the females are passing the standard that the Army sets, but they're maybe not meeting the high performers standard of leading the way and charging ahead, that sort of stuff (S1F).*

It was a result of these types of attitudes that consequently lead the female participants to suggest that they needed to hold themselves to an even higher standard than the men. As another senior female participant stated:

> *I think if you're gonna succeed you can't be dropping behind on a platoon assault or platoon march, because that is the bread and butter of infantry. So you need to hold yourself to a slightly higher standard, to be respected (S3F).*

The gendered consequence of these types of expectations is oftentimes the creation of "Informal norms of exclusion" (Pendlebury, 2019, p.153). This enabling the exclusion of those who might be able to perform the role adequately but are perceived incapable due to not meeting an arbitrarily set, and inconsistently applied, 'standard' (Pendlebury, 2019).

Most of the senior female participants under-rated their own (or other women's) capabilities as Infantry unless they were able to *exceed* the arbitrarily set and inconsistently applied standard. However, as one senior female participant suggested, this expectation upon women was a barrier to both recruitment and retention:

> *People have often asked me how we would better recruit females into the infantry, and I find that question really hard to answer because I've given you a description of what someone is like that would succeed. But I think ultimately, to be successful, we ….or men….are going to have to allow females to not be as good. So for example, I would say that to be respected as a female you have to sit up here [indicates a high position] to be Infantry. So somehow we have to create a bit more scope for competence within females, as well as males. Because I just don't think that there are that many females that are interested in being Infantry. And it's very difficult to recruit people that aren't interested. I don't think that means that we have to let standards slip, such as for CFT or RFL. But there needs to be a culture change where you look at someone as a work in progress as opposed to needing to be very good from the very start. Because there are a few commanders that are*

> *definitely, as soon as someone starts dropping off, they are like, 'this person isn't made for it'. And then it's like, well maybe they're just taking a little longer to learn. So there's quite a ruthless mentality which needs to go, I think, for successful training of soldiers – both male and female" (S3F).*

However, similar to the discussion of resilience in the previous section, there was a general perception among both the male and female senior participants that it was the responsibility of individuals to meet (or exceed) the Infantry 'standard', rather than being the responsibility of the institution to re-define (or perhaps even define) this standard. This has significant implications for the successful participation of women. It also appeared to have significant implications for the physical health of all Infantry soldiers, regardless of their gender.

Being able to meet the 'standard' was evidenced as a critical measure of Infantry success. However, the implication of achieving this standard was often described by the senior participants as physically detrimental. As one senior participant explained:

> *It's really bad for us, like there's a lot of really broken senior infantry people. It's so bad for us, but that's what we require from our infantry. Does it need to be that physical? Well the last ten years suggest that it doesn't. It's a worldwide acknowledgement that infantry don't need to be able to run and carry packs all day. The work we do now is shorter duration activities. We have trucks now, we have helicopters, we have all these other things that actually move us around so that we can do the sharp fighting bit. That's the bit that we wanna do. But there is still a hangover about the 'getting to the fight' piece, you know the pack marching piece (S13M).*

The possibility for adapting training, equipment or methods of operation were all suggested to have the potential to improve the physical health of both male and female soldiers, whilst increasing battlefield effectiveness. As another senior participant stated:

> *There's a lot of questions that could be raised about reducing the weight and the burden that soldiers have to bear. And that'll play out in lighter people's favour. And potentially make us a more effective fighting force. Maybe we could accept a little bit more risk and not have so much armour and weight, and still achieve the same effect (S18M).*

It appeared, however, that these possibilities had not resulted in actionable changes to the expected performance of the Infantry standard. This having implications for the type of person that was perceived to be best suited, and best able, to meet said standard. The

standard appearing to best suit those within the RNZIR who were indeed six foot tall and male.

6.8 It wouldn’t be a job that I would want to do if I was a lady

Perceptions about participation within the RNZIR senior participant data set were largely based upon stereotypical ideas of what men and women like to do, as well as what men and women are supposedly naturally good at simply by virtue of being men or women. The reason that women were not inclined to enlist in the Infantry was, for example, cited by a large number of senior participants to be that women do not like being dirty or living in uncomfortable environments. It was, therefore, the perception that women would prefer to not live in the rough and dirty conditions required of Infantry, rather than their ability per se, that commonly brought into question women’s desire to be Infantry. As one senior participant reflected, “*I dunno, it wouldn’t be a job that I would want to do if I was a lady. Because there’s plenty of other things that you can do and still have job satisfaction” (S21M).* As another participant suggested, “*it’s not that they [women] can’t do the Infantry stuff, but do they **want** to do the Infantry stuff?” (S15M)* Another senior participant elaborated:

> *Not that many of them [women] want to be unclean for a few weeks at a time, doing an extremely physical, hard, job in the cold and in the wet. So I kind of look at it and think, population wise in the Army – and not just in the Army – probably 99% of the world wouldn’t want to be infantry. So we’re always going to have a very small portion of ladies, maybe that’s just the ladies I know, but not many of them would want to be in the dirt if they can help it. Although it's not as down and dirty as perhaps it once was, so maybe ladies would be interested (S29M).*

These perceptions were assumed to be the key reason why women would choose to not enlist into the Infantry. They were also provided as the primary reason why women chose to not stay very long in the Infantry. As another senior participant suggested: *“I think in the RNZIR most of the girls, they see after a couple of exercises that it’s pretty hard and it’s pretty dirty. They make their own mind up whether they stay or go” (S30M).*

Such statements demonstrate a shared belief that women’s biological differences make them innately averse to working hard or being dirty. This belief categorising women as the ‘fairer’ sex, and collectively framing *all* women as unsuited to the rigours of being Infantry. This belief

is rooted in traditional essentialist ideas of the roles that women (and consequentially men) should or should not perform. As illustrated by one of the senior participants,

> *In terms of my personal opinion, I feel really uncomfortable having females in a combat role because of my responsibilities as a man is to protect the innocence and purity of a woman. Again, that's very old school. But I don't like subjecting women…I wouldn't want any of my daughters to come into this organisation in a combat role because there are hardships that I don't think that they should have to be exposed to. For example, in a fire fight, if a bro gets hit I'm gonna do my job and keep shooting the enemy. And once the enemy's been dealt with then I'll tend to him. But if I'm in a firefight, and my chick mate gets hit, my beliefs and behaviour and who I am as a person, I'm gonna go to that person and protect them and help them. Help her. But that's to the detriment of the situation. I think psychologically it can be quite risky to have them in a combat environment. As well as, I want them protected. I don't want them exposed to the hardships that the infantry is required to do (S9M).*

Whilst this particular statement provides one of the more extreme examples of gender essentialism, it nonetheless gives voice to the gendered assumptions articulated by a number of the senior participants. Furthermore, despite professing the 'purity' of women this participant also refers to women within Infantry as 'chicks'. I had become familiar with this term being used by both the male and female participants (with the female participants often referring to themselves as 'chicks'). However I couldn't help but question the sexist connotations associated with it, which appeared particularly marked within this statement. Connotations which characterised women in traditionally feminine ways, and which also contested their ability to be the *protector* rather than the *protected*.

Paradoxically, in conjunction with the perception of the types of roles that men and women stereotypically prefer to do, or are suited to, it was also iterated by a large number of the senior participants that participation within Infantry was equally available to both men and women *if they chose to do it*. Such statements were often backed by the observation that men can also struggle to participate within the Infantry. It was, therefore, perceived that there wasn't a 'gender' problem to solve. Instead, any struggles were simply explained to be a *performance* problem, with performance for both men and women based on being the 'right person' for the job. As one of the female senior participants suggested, for example,

> *I think our retention isn't really an issue if you get the right people in the first place. I think that's why people get out, because they weren't the right people to be there in the first place. The guys that get out in the first year or so, it's because they*

> *didn't know what it was gonna be. And they didn't know how to enjoy it. And it just turns out that it wasn't for them. It's not, for the most part, I don't think it's usually because something has happened while they've been in. I think it's just that the job wasn't for them (S4F).*

One of the male senior participants also provided an example of the ‘wrong’ type of person being recruited for Infantry:

> *So two of the guys who’ve gone have come here and said that’s not what they signed up for. So I said, ‘what do you think the army does?’ And the cognisance of the fact that you might actually have to stick a bayonet in somebody’s chest potentially someday had escaped him. And he wasn’t prepared to do that. So that was another recruiting fail (S172).*

In this sense, it was perceived that everyone had access to the same opportunities and had the same expectations of performance. The perceived problem of participation was thus attributed to not being the right ‘fit’, regardless of gender.

Given the distinct lack of women within Infantry it appeared, however, that there *was* a gender issue to be solved. I wondered, therefore, whether the statistical data of women’s participation within Infantry could be simply explained by the idea that women don’t like to get dirty (and need their purity protected). Or whether it could be attributed to deeper issues of sexism which inhibited the participation of anyone (either male or female) that wasn’t considered to be ‘masculine enough’. However, despite the senior participants describing an ideal type of soldier who might best thrive Infantry (a type which possessed distinctly masculine attributes), gender equality was discussed as a concept of treating everyone the same, rather than a strategy of enhancing performance by supporting gender differences.

This approach of creating equality through sameness reflects a ‘gender-blind’ perspective, which was considered by many of the senior participants to be an equitable means of measuring performance. As one senior participant stated, for example:

> *I’m a big believer in, I will make an equal investment of energy into every person. I think it’s bad form to over-invest into something that to me is insignificant as a male or female tag on somebody. To me, it’s capable/incapable (S10M).*

However, such an approach also fails to take into consideration differences that might otherwise be surmountable if they *were* acknowledged. An example of the dilemma created by applying gender blindness is that this type of perspective fails to consider problematic the

fact that the 'right fit' for the Infantry job happens to be a six-foot-tall man. As one participant explained, for example,

> *I honestly believe that anyone can do the job, it's just that the equipment is all built for a man that's six foot tall, to carry and to use. The sleeping bags don't carry any smaller or any shorter, everything is the same size, like the packs. So it's all built for one specific person, that's a male and he's six foot tall. If you're any shorter than that there is a challenge – I'm not saying you can't do it, but there is (S28M).*

As a result of not recognising gender to be a factor within this situation, the failings of women (or even of shorter men) are more often considered a problem of performance and/or biology, rather than an issue with equipment.

Another symptom of gender-blindness was described by many of the senior participants as the difficulty of managing family responsibilities in conjunction with an Infantry career. Despite the existence of gendered policies that are designed to support parents and families, their implementation is inhibited by the Infantry's lack of awareness of the gendered assumptions being made with respect to family lives. As one senior participant explained,

> *The battalion is structured so that even within the officer corps it still expects that the women will fight the home battle. But when you don't have that, and you have kids but without a wife at home, you can't do it. We have a dog and even that was problematic (S19M).*

As another senior participant discussed the difficulty of implementing flexible working policies within the Infantry: "*That's very dependent on command. It's definitely possible, but it's not the organisational norm. It's also not the cultural norm" (S18M).* Several of the male senior participants described having left the NZ Army (and re-enlisted several years later), or having taken a step back in their careers, in order to meet their obligations as a parent. This having consequences for progression within the corps, which as one senior participant explained:

> *They [the Infantry] didn't have time to look at my reasons, they just posted me. And then that was me, dead. I am dead to them. I'm part of the B team, big time. So if you want your career to be really prosperous, you basically have to get divorced. That's why we keep losing people, and we keep getting people who will sacrifice their families (S32M).*

The impacts of gender-blind assumptions for women who might wish to have a baby whilst employed within the Infantry appeared especially troublesome. This evidenced by the fact

that, to date, no female Infantry soldier or officer has returned to work within the RNZIR after having a baby.

It appeared, therefore, that gender blindness reinforced the same gender stereotypes that the approach is trying to avoid. Interestingly, however, *consciousness* of gendered challenges did not necessarily correlate with a desire to challenge or change the gendered nature of the RNZIR. As a number of participants reflected on the participation of women within Infantry, for example, it was recognised that the performance of women as Infantry is more challenging due to an additional layer of complexity that goes beyond demonstrating professional competence. As one senior participant reflected:

> *So the physicality of the job I don't necessarily think is a gender issue. Women can carry a pack and dig a hole, and they prove that on basic training. So all that infantry is, is basic training with a few add ons. That's it. If they can do it on basic training then they can do it. They can get through Corps training, and they can do the job. And if they can get through Corps training then arguably that will be the hardest thing that they will do, until they start doing their command roles in several years time. By which time they would have become quite accustomed to the role. So I don't think the physicality is a gender issue. The gender issue will be in the perception piece, and the acceptance by males. I do wonder, because there's plenty of women in the army, in all the other trades. But there does seem to be this stigma with the infantry. But again as I said, if you compare Basic training to Infantry stuff, that stigma shouldn't really be there. They can already do it, so it's a perception thing. It's a societal perception. But there's gotta be more to it than that, doesn't there. Certainly there is a societal perception of men are better than women in all and everything. But that doesn't explain…I can't speak for the other trades, but I don't see that in the other trades. There's women working across the road, as far as I can see, fine and dandy alongside men in their jobs (S24M).*

I felt that this senior participant was on the precipice of epiphany, as he recognised that women could adequately perform the Infantry role. He was also baffled by the fact that women could work collegially with men in other Army trades, but were not accepted by males (and indeed stigmatised) within Infantry. However, often following a stated awareness of the inequitable struggles of women within Infantry (such as that made by this interviewee), there would be a reiteration of the idea that the Infantry role depends upon maintaining the (hyper-masculine) status quo. This idea appeared to represent a comfortable retreat of 'common sense', which could not (or should not) be challenged.

Consequently, many of the senior participants who expressed some level of consciousness of the way in which gender impacts upon participation within the Infantry had little inclination to act upon this knowledge. The perceived peaceful and passive characteristics of women were instead considered to simply render women unsuited to the rigours of the battlefield, and unsuited to Infantry. This perception was exemplified by one participant who stated: "*the million dollar question is, how do we maintain the aggression and still get enough girls?" (S25M)*.

There was, however, a small number of male senior participants who *did* articulate a desire to challenge the status quo. These were the same participants who had demonstrated greater self-awareness with respect to having adapted their own personality to suit being Infantry, and who had also recognised the detrimental impact of soldiers conforming to the Infantry 'type'. These participants were highly cognisant of the struggles of women within Infantry; struggles that were described as going beyond the physical and professional challenges of meeting the Infantry 'standards'. These participants were not only cognisant, but also highly supportive, of the value that women would bring to the Infantry. As one participant stated,

> *I think the girls have a lot more challenges than what the guys do. Isolation is one. You're isolated, even just communication-wise because when you get a bunch of 17-25 year old blokes together and if you have a few girls together, they'll congregate together and talk to each other. Because let's face it, when I was 18 it wasn't great conversation. They may feel like they may have to not be themselves and become part of that crowd, and go against their own individuality I suppose. So isolation is probably the biggest one. Then there's the fact that no one really talks about, that there's always going to be an issue with when you've got a bunch of young males and a bunch of young females together. And 9 times out of 10, usually I find that the young males are too immature to deal with the situation. So the girls have to deal with that, I suppose the attention, the unwanted attention, will be a huge challenge. The guys will never know what the girls have to deal with. I go to the gym and see some of the girls down there, and I think they'd beat a third of this battalion. They're fit, they're strong, they're smart, they generally shoot better because they listen to what you're telling them, so why wouldn't we want them on board? (S6M)*

However, despite these senior participants articulating a high level of consciousness of gendered issues, as well as a desire for institutional change, they appeared constrained by what Rao et al (2016) describe as the 'deep structures' that hold social norms and sexist attitudes in place. One participant, for example, described the disdain that is openly

expressed towards women's participation by some members of the RNZIR: "*there's a lot of people still in the Infantry that believe females shouldn't be in there. A lot of them hold rank and everything, so they voice it a lot. And they'll aim to make sure that they don't come through as Infantry" (S28M*). This statement suggests that the structures which sexist social norms in place within the RNZIR are not only deep, but also openly visible.

As Connell (2002b) suggests, "the most powerful groups of men usually have few personal incentives for gender change" (Connell, 2002b, p.36). Challenges to traditional masculine hegemony are, therefore, likely to be met with resistance (Connell, 2002b; Rao et al, 2016; Buchbinder, 2013). Such resistance towards changing the masculine gendered nature of the RNZIR was voiced by many of the senior participants. However, resistance was often represented by justification based on gender stereotypes, rather than voiced as an explicit desire to keep women out of the Infantry. Indeed, it was evidenced that longstanding symbols and practices that are the foundation of the RNZIR's masculine hegemonic status have recently been challenged in attempts to create a more inclusive environment for women. This includes the removal of the 'playboy bunny' as a company logo, and the change in title of the RNZIR soldier trade from 'Rifleman' to 'Infantry'. I had even noted the change in pronoun of 'him' to 'them' in the core role of the Infantry (i.e., to kill or capture 'them', instead of to kill or capture 'him'). More recently, in an attempt to rectify an historic instance of blatant sexism, the red diamond (a coveted symbol of Infantry belonging) was awarded to Sue Gingles, 43 years after she had qualified for the award on successful completion of Corps Training (NZDF, 2021b). However, these changes appear to have merely scratched the surface of gender inequality within the RNZIR (Rao, et al, 2016; Pendlebury, 2019). The data of the senior participants overwhelmingly suggests that there exist gendered dynamics that remain unchanged, and which continue to support the gendered status quo.

6.9 It's like training to be a world class golfer, but never getting to play a game of golf

One of the ironic challenges of being Infantry was articulated by many of the senior participants: the fact that being on the battlefield is not an imminent reality. As one senior participant stated:

I think it's that expectation that you're out there continuously training, but never actually getting to do the job. That's quite challenging and I think that has a huge impact on morale. They spend years and years training and then after while if nothing happens, that's when they become complacent. It's like training to be a world class golf player, but never getting to play a game of golf (S6M).

Another senior participant described this dilemma as being a source of disillusionment for many soldiers within Infantry:

This isn't always the job that they signed up for. Whatever lies they got told at recruiting and ended up in the Infantry, if they wanted to do Infantry that's great. But essentially, there's not the deployments, they're not out there patrolling the towns and keeping them safe, and they're certainly not out there providing a lethal effect. The amount of contacts that we've had since 2000 you can count them on two hands. So there's not that career validation and professional realisation that they can get from service In the infantry. Often they have to settle for peacekeeping, or UN operations, and stuff like that (S18M).

Such disillusionment was attributed to not having the ability to 'test' or 'validate' Infantry training through the opportunity to engage with, and/or kill, an enemy force. These were perhaps, therefore, the 'lies' that were being told by recruiters to potential Infantry recruits. Pertinent in this particular statement is also the stipulated need to 'settle' for deployments that are relegated to the realm of operations other than war (OOTW). It made me curious to understand whether Infantry recruits were actually hoping to go to war, and how disillusioned they might be if they were sent on a peacekeeping deployment instead.

In reflecting upon the senior participants' perspectives, I also began to wonder whether this disillusionment was created in part due to the relentless preparation for a battlefield that did not exist. The picture of the future battlefield (albeit ambiguous) was, for example, predicted to be vastly different to traditional notions of what a battlefield might look like. As one senior participant explained:

it's a game of chess, not bull rush. If we're gonna be instruments of influence, then it's not about, as we've learned from Vietnam onwards, it's not about the body count. It's about being able to win hearts and minds, and influence the information operation (S19M).

Indeed, the most likely scenario was described by another of the senior participants to not be a battlefield, in the traditional sense of the word, at all. As this senior participant spoke (albeit

disparagingly) of the RNZIR's recent involvement in New Zealand's border protection during the Covid-19 pandemic:

> *Certainly Op Protect was damaging, it's eroded that purpose. And it seems counter intuitive, you could argue that Op Protect was fundamentally one of the biggest operations, and literally the protection of our borders. Except the protection is of a biological nature, rather than of an invading force (S24M).*

However, despite these acknowledgments that the current (and future) operating environments were very different to those within which New Zealand soldiers have previously fought, the focus of Infantry training had not appeared to have similarly evolved. One senior participant voiced their frustration:

> *In terms of what we've been training to do, we've been saying it for the last 30 years, every officer and every warrant officer that conducts defensive operations in the open country, without fail, 'cool team, good ex, we all know that this form of warfare is obsolete but it's in the vols so we've gotta teach it.' At what point do we stop doing that dumbness? So, yes, our failure to innovate based on global situations, not only are not prepared for yesterday's war, I would argue that we're not prepared for last century's war (S11M)*

As I reflected upon the disparity between the focus of Infantry training and the perceptions of what the battlefield now looks like (or might look like in the future), this made me wonder if the RNZIR had in fact recently fought a battle (i.e. the response to the Covid-19 pandemic). The issue was, however, that it had not been recognised as such.

It is unlikely that my theory of having participated in a recent battle would be taken seriously by the senior participants that I interviewed. The way in which the majority of the senior participants interpreted war was very much in the traditional sense. As Sjoberg (2014) suggests, traditional interpretations understand war to be a "time-delimited crisis which starts on a battlefield and ends at a cease-fire" (p.128). These interpretations also have clearly defined ideas of "who count as its fighters, what kind of violence counts as fighting, and who count as its victims" (Sjoberg, 2014, p.129). However, defining war in this traditional manner provides a narrow perspective of what constitutes war (Sjoberg, 2014; Cohn, 2013) and in turn, who is suitable to participate in one. It also limits war to a series of actions *on* the battlefield, rather than recognising that war incorporates a range of human experiences that occur both *before* and *after* the battlefield. (Sjoberg, 2014).

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and discussed the analysis of the data from the senior leader cohort in order to gain an understanding of the context of the RNZIR. It has demonstrated that there exist strongly gendered expectations of performance and participation within this context. The dominant perspective of the participants being one which suggests that success within Infantry, and on the battlefield, depends upon the demonstration of specific hyper-masculine characteristics. The performance of both men and women is consequently guided by this hegemonic masculine ideal of what an Infantry soldier or officer should be.

These perceptions have significant impacts for the participation of those who do not, or cannot, meet this ideal model of performance. A performance that, paradoxically, contradicts that which is also deemed necessary for successful performance in modern operating contexts (contexts which are likely to look very different to traditional battlefields). These ideas are important to keep in mind as we now explore the experiences of Infantry soldiers during the first 12 months of their enlistment in the RNZIR.

Chapter 7: Becoming Infantry in the RNZIR

7.1 Introduction

I had been asked several times during the process of completing this research whether it was possible to understand Infantry from the perspective of newly enlisted soldiers, especially given that none of them had experienced 'combat'. I recall wondering what scenario of 'combat' was being referred to by those posing this question, and how many soldiers within the RNZIR might fit within the category of 'combat-experienced'. However, my response to these questions was that I was wanting to understand the experience of *becoming* Infantry (the first year of enlistment being an extremely formative part of this process). By listening to the stories of junior soldiers, I sought to gain an understanding of (and give voice to) those aspects of that experience that enabled or inhibited their participation and performance in this role. Furthermore, an integral aspect of this study was to identify where, and how, gender might have an impact upon success. Given the historically short retention span of female Infantry soldiers, the only way to conduct a study that included both men and women was to speak to female Infantry soldiers when they first enlisted.

My engagement with the Junior Soldier cohort achieved all of these objectives. Gathering the data across two sets of interviews also enabled an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived reality of becoming Infantry. The first interview was completed during the initial stages of recruit training when the junior soldier participants had only recently enlisted into the Infantry trade (i.e., approximately one month post enlistment), and the second interview was completed approximately 12 months later. This chapter will present the data from the first set of interviews (Chapter 8 will present the data from the second set of interviews). The cohort for the initial interview included 54 participants (43 men and 11 women). Focusing on the junior participants' expectations and perceptions of what being Infantry meant, this chapter will present the key themes that emerged from the data. It will begin by discussing the junior participants' perception of Infantry being the 'toughest' trade, and their perceived requirement to conform to a particular model of Infantry performance. It will then discuss how the concept of 'standards' influenced perceptions of what it meant to be Infantry. The

chapter will then conclude by presenting the junior participants perceptions, and expectations, of the Infantry role.

7.2 It's the toughest of the tough!

Similar to the senior participant cohort, one of the initial questions that I asked the junior soldier participants was their reason for enlisting as Infantry. The NZ Army recruitment website offers 54 potential roles, of which Infantry is just one. Unlike other roles available, Infantry offers no opportunities for gaining transferable civilian qualifications skills or qualifications. Instead it is described as a role that demands 'high levels of physical and mental stamina', with an expectation that duties will be carried out regardless of adverse weather conditions or inclement environments. I was curious, therefore, to understand the attraction of Infantry as a trade that did not offer the same tangible benefits (such as trade qualifications or the future of non-military career pathways), as many others.

The most frequently stated reason for purposefully selecting Infantry was that the junior participants enjoyed the outdoors, or that they liked being 'hands on' and physically active rather than sitting at a desk. The junior participants were looking for a physical challenge, and the Infantry was perceived to be the hardest and most challenging role within the NZ Army. As one junior participant stated, "*it's, from what I've heard, the biggest challenge. The toughest of the tough. So I thought I would go straight for the infantry, push through, and see what I could do with it" (J44M1).* Another junior participant also stated, "*I like doing hard things, challenging myself like I said. And I felt like that would have been the most challenging trade" (J38M1).* The junior participants also discussed the possibility that Infantry would offer a life 'less than ordinary'; one which would entail adventure and travel, combined with an opportunity to make a difference in the world. In many respects these participants chose Infantry *because* of the elements of danger, adventure, hardship and physicality that the role offers – not in spite of them.

The female junior participants cited very similar reasons to the men for enlisting into the Infantry. Several spoke, for example, of the desire to challenge themselves physically and mentally. None of the female participants were deterred by the hardships that they expected

to endure or voiced concern about the 'dirty' nature of living outdoors. As one female participant explained, *"I love being on my feet all day and I like being active and outside, and just everything that I was interested in was what the infantry had to offer"(J49F1).* Another female participant stated, "*I think I love the idea of being in the field and getting the real Army experience" (J51F1).* These statements suggest that (in contrast to essentialist understandings of what women like to do, or *should* do) the female participants were drawn to the same physical and mental challenges that had attracted the men.

The female junior participants were, however, keenly aware that they were defying social norms by enlisting into a trade that was traditionally regarded as the domain of men. Many of them had been told (by parents, recruiters or instructors) that Infantry wasn't a place for women. As one participant stated:

> *My whole family pretty much were like, no you can't do that! I managed to convince them. They were very concerned (J45F1).*

Another female junior participant explained about the warnings received by instructors during Basic Training:

> *Some of the like Corporals and Sergeants have warned the girls going into infantry about taking up a combat sport because apparently the boys in there can get pretty gnarly! It's pretty much what was said. And it was sort of like, 'I'll never let my daughter join a combat corps because no, it just wouldn't be happening'.*
>
> ***Gnarly in what way?***
>
> *I think they can just get a bit like, I don't know… Sometimes you can see it here like some of them just think you know 'I'm the man.' Like, females are all weak and pussies or whatever, and they sort of get a bit of an ego and stuff. So I imagine that's probably what he's talking about. But yeah, I was quite surprised when he said that. I sort of thought that might have been how it was earlier on, but with the combat roles being open to women for so long I didn't really expect that to still be a thing. So that was quite surprising (J47F1).*

This statement demonstrated an awareness by NCOs of sexist behaviours towards women within the RNZIR; behaviours that women enlisting into Infantry were expected to prepare themselves to endure (rather than such behaviours of men being discouraged). As such, from the outset, the female junior participants indicated that the toughness required to be Infantry would likely include their ability to cope with the male dominated (and sexist) environment.

Conversely, the male participants did not express in any way that their enlistment in the Infantry was challenging social norms, or would necessitate having to toughen themselves towards sexism. Instead, performing an Infantry role was congruent with expectations of their gender.

7.3 The course is designed a specific way to kind of change us

The formation of a soldier identity is fundamental to military socialisation processes (Harding, 2016; Broesder, Op den Buijs, Vogelaar & Euwema, 2015). As Broesder et al (2015) explain, "a soldier's role identity is not just a preference or a requirement for a military job but a fundamentally instilled belief about what it means to be a soldier. Soldiering becomes not just what one does, but who one *is*" (p.522). Although variances exist across nations, and even between services, in the way that soldiers are created, there exist commonalities in the practices and processes that are designed to totally immerse an individual to military culture (O'Sullivan, 2018; Swain, 2016; Harding, 2016).

It is within the environment of recruit training that recruits must forego previous civilian comforts and submit to the discipline and limitations placed upon their individual freedoms (O'Sullivan, 2018; Swain, 2016). As O'Sullivan elaborates:

> Military training is all-consuming. Nearly 24 hours of the recruits' day can be scheduled and predetermined by the military….A number of militaries dictate how the recruits cut their hair, shower, shave and brush their teeth. Not only do the recruits wear the issued uniform but their clothes may also have to be spotless, their bootlaces untwisted, all their buttons turned in a specified way and the badge on their beret in a particular spot and angle. Recruits are often required to march everywhere and there can be strict requirements for marching (2018, p.82).

The environment of the NZ Army's Recruit Regular Force (RRF) training (commonly referred to as 'Basic Training') is readily comparable to that described by O'Sullivan (2018). It is an experience that demands the participants adapt themselves to meet the expectations of the institution – rather than vice versa.

The majority of the Junior Soldier cohort was unsurprised by the need to adapt themselves to meet the NZ Army's expectations. Many had preconceptions of military training, which were illustrated by one junior participant who explained:

> *What I do know is that when you're in the Army they almost strip you of your identity in a way. And I feel like it's important to be part of the machine, do you know what I mean? The symbolism of it is that they make you shave your head and stuff like that. I always found that a kind of cool symbolism, everyone is the same and it's part of the thing. And it's not necessarily a bad thing because to be effective it's important that we have these boundaries and discipline. And I think that's pretty much what Basic is about isn't it? It's about changing you from a civvie into a soldier. And along the process you learn to get rid of your old habits and do everything 'uniform' which is the word that gets thrown around. Uniformity and stuff like that. So yeah, I guess it's important to leave that civvie stuff behind including maybe your personality traits and become part of the team, the platoon. I definitely feel like that's what's happening. And I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing at all. You're never gonna lose your personality completely are you. You're never gonna like … it's not gonna change you internally in that sense. But yeah, it's definitely a thing that I feel is taking place (J17M1).*

The willingness of this participant to abandon aspects of his personality in order to become a uniform cog within the Army 'machine' demonstrates the significant influence that Basic Training has on shaping the behaviours and ideas of newly enlisted soldiers. Very few of the junior participants questioned the need to adapt, or articulated that adapting might be problematic. Instead, the majority of the participants appeared keen to demonstrate their capacity to be a good soldier, with conformity being a significant aspect of this commitment.

The experiences and perceptions of these new enlistees to the NZ Army are consistent with the literature of military ab initio training. As O'Sullivan (2016) states:

> Military training is designed to change the individual. It is the first step in the process of shaping the soldier's perceptions, standards and behaviour and the corresponding divide between the soldier and the civilian (p.78).

It is not surprising, therefore that the junior participants found themselves having to adapt (both physically and mentally) as part of the military indoctrination process. However, these experiences also contradicted the NZ Army's stated desire to build a diverse and inclusive organisation. This contradiction was highlighted by one junior participant who explained:

It depends on who the duty NCO is, or who you've got in charge of you. Because we've got a platoon commander who says, 'we want you to be free thinking individuals! We want you to be your own person.' But then we've got a sergeant who just wants us to be robots. Who's just like, 'fucken run that sub-nine minute RFL!!' 'YES Sergeant!' Which one do I do?! (J23M1)

Despite institutional intent having evolved from one that has traditionally valued 'sameness', it appeared that the critical emphasis of recruit training had not. The focus of Basic Training remained on uniformity and obedience, thereby creating a disconnect between institutional intent (NZ Army, 2019) and the reality experienced by the junior participants.

7.4 To basically just be an absolute hard cunt!

Basic Training is an 'all arms' course, which means that soldiers from all trades undergo the same training and assessments to become a soldier in the NZ Army. However, the majority of Basic Training is based around the soldiering skills required of Infantry, and the junior participants were keenly aware that these skills would form the basis of their future role. As a result, despite undertaking an all arms course, the junior participants were already forming an impression of the type of person that they might need to become in order to be successful as Infantry.

It was suggested by some of the senior leader participants in the previous chapter that Infantry soldiers generally conform to a particular 'type'. This type being recognisable (in part) by attributes of height (preferably six foot, or taller), maleness, aggression, self-confidence, drinking, rugby playing and swearing. The junior soldier cohort fulfilled one of the descriptors of the Infantry type, in that they were predominantly (but not necessarily) male. In other respects, the proposed traits of the Infantry 'type' were not immediately obvious. Although some of the junior participants appeared confident, others described themselves as introverted or shy. Many of the participants spoke of enjoying sports that weren't rugby or team-oriented (including skiing, cycling, skateboarding, ballet, cross fit, and swimming). One participant even described himself as being too tall for Infantry, as when wearing helmet and boots he would hit his head on the door frames of the barracks. Most didn't swear (although some did), and all were generally thoughtful and articulate. It is likely that the junior

participants' awareness of my rank (as well as the fact that there was a female civilian observer in the room) influenced some of these impressions. However, overall, the junior participants could not be typified according to a specific range of attributes. Instead, there were a range of personality (and physicality) types among the junior participant cohort, with diversity in their prior experiences, education, ethnic backgrounds and upbringings.

Despite this range of diversity, the junior participants' perceptions of what would help them to succeed as Infantry were very similar. Many of the junior participants suggested that they would need to become harder, rougher, louder, aggressive, meaner, more confident, more disciplined, more serious, and/or 'alpha'. One even suggested that that he would need to start watching hardcore porn, such as that viewed by some of the Infantry NCOs. None suggested that they might need to act smarter, quieter, or more emotionally aware. Indeed one of the junior participants explained that 'thinking' would be detrimental to their potential success:

> *I would say to think less and follow orders without giving it a second thought, without thinking about the logic behind it. Just follow what you've been told without thinking why, what or where. Use less brain. Which is kind of sad really isn't it. That you work and gain experience and then when you come to a new place you can't use it. You can't use your experience, you can't use your brain. You just need to follow, and it becomes hard (J21M1).*

Another of the junior participants reflected on the personality traits needed to be successful:

> *I got told to be more alpha-like. Because I'm quite chatty and bubbly, so I've been told to be more alpha. So maybe that's something I need to work on.*
>
> ***So what does that mean?***
>
> *Be more confident, and less…I don't know! I think a lot of people in the Infantry are more stern, yeah. They're not very chatty and bubbly. At least not the ones I've met (J49F1).*

Although this junior participant was unsure of the exact changes required, she was cognisant of needing to be something different. Other junior participants were, however, more clear in their mind of the type of person that they needed to be. As one participant stated, being Infantry meant: *"to basically just be an absolute hard cunt" (J28M1).*

The leadership approach associated with being Infantry was also being assimilated during Basic Training, with the junior participants indicating that they would need to emulate a particular style to succeed. As one of the male junior participant explained:

> *Probably when I'm out in the field. Get more into yelling at people.*
>
> ***Is that what is expected of you?***
>
> *I think it will be expected, just building that leadership type mentality. Being able to yell at people (J26M2).*

The equation of leadership with yelling, or aggression, was exemplified by the experience of another junior participant, who had been made to feel that they had let the team down by not being aggressive enough towards a peer. As this participant explained:

> *We had the assault course, and we were racing in our sections. And in our section we have one of the least fit people in our platoon. And everyone ran forward and I just stayed back and kept him going. Like one of the things was running up this big hill and I had to practically push him up the hill. Like I had to stabilise him because at one point he looked like he was going to pass out. So I had my arm around him, pushing him forward as I was running to try and keep him going. But my Sergeant afterwards was saying that I was hugging him and stuff, and that wasn't the right approach and I should've been shouting at him and calling him nasty things and shouting at him to get him to go. That's just not, my personality is not traditionally really aggressive. I guess that's because of the way I was raised, especially my dad was never aggressive at all. So I just didn't grow up that aggressive. I don't really know because a lot of my mates were saying 'yeah, next time we do it we'll get somebody else to help the other person go because they'll be able to keep them going better.' They made some good points but I'm still not really sure whether I think that being supportive and staying with somebody and keeping them motivated, or just shouting at them and making them feel bad. I don't know what would work best. So I guess we'll see next time we do the assault course (J7M1).*

The act of aggression was one which conflicted with this junior participant's personal values and upbringing. He also believed that a less aggressive approach would be a greater asset in a team situation. However, despite this, he felt compelled to act in a more aggressive manner, and identified his inclination to *not* make people feel bad when they made a mistake as a weakness.

Although the junior participants did not describe the required performance as Infantry to be 'masculine', it was a behavioural performance that valued the exhibition of those traits

traditionally considered to be masculine. The consequence of not adapting one's behaviour accordingly was also explained by one of the junior participants, who noted, "*if you don't change to what's already established then you make waves and stick out, and you don't want that" (J42M1).* Swain (2016) explains this as the power of the hegemonic masculine form, which military recruits have no option but to ascribe to:

> if a recruit was to attempt to practice even a slight deviation from the hegemonic form, they would not be tolerated for very long, either by their peer group or the organisation. They would be quickly subordinated and, as life became more intolerable, they would almost certainly try to leave the army at the earliest opportunity (p.16).

An example of this happening during Basic Training was described by one of the junior participants, who explained:

> *Yeah, so like some of the corporals were like, 'I just can't wait for bla bla… I hope they go, I hope they leave.' One of the corporals at the back of the room was saying, 'bla bla's leaving' and the other corporal's like, 'thank fuck! Finally!' It's just so weird. I do know that they get frustrated with us, which is fair enough. But this is still quite new to us and we're trying. I feel like we are because why would you not? If you want to be here so bad then why wouldn't you try? So you're either not trying your best, or you simply don't understand. I think they're quite tough on the people that they want to leave. It's like they're trying to get rid of people that they don't want to be here anymore. So like sometimes they'll say something like, 'if you make it that far!' and then look at someone in particular. And it's kinda scary because they constantly say like, 'some of you won't make it'(J50F1).*

I suspected that this statement explained the consequence of 'sticking out'. I also recalled a conversation with one of the senior participants about 'fitting in', which resonated strongly with this idea. He had stated, "*the thought is that they sort of 'weed out' if that's the right term, a whole lot of people really early on and then we're left with these hard core, wannabe, down and dirty Infantry types" (S13M).* As such, conformity was not simply an individual endeavour, but a collective responsibility that was 'policed' by the weeding out of those who didn't fit (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The participants' perceptions of the way to 'be' Infantry were heavily guided by the Infantry NCOs. Examples were provided of the Infantry NCOs behaviour and demeanour appearing tougher and more serious than NCOs from other trades, with this observation indicating that this was the general demeanour of all Infantry personnel. As one junior participant stated:

> *So my section commander is Infantry, and he's pretty tough! So I guess just that, just being a tougher exterior than some trades I guess (J48F1).*

In order to develop the level of toughness perceived necessary within Infantry, many of the participants expected, and accepted, being sworn at or given punishments or group 'thrashings'. Thrashings are collective punishments administered by NCOs for non-performance, often involving physical activities over a prolonged period of time. As Basham (2016) explains, "repetitive and physically gruelling activities emphasize to each recruit that 'just getting dressed in uniform is not going to make you into a soldier'" (p.34). The junior participants explained that the thrashings were difficult to endure. However, they also described them as a means of building their capacity to endure difficult or uncomfortable situations. As such, several of the participants even lamented that the thrashings weren't as hard as they could be, with one participant stating, "*I was expecting it to be way worse, I was kinda hoping it would be way worse. Just to try to mould me into a stronger soldier" (J38M1).*

These findings are congruent with literature, which describe the process of forming a combat soldier identity (Hockey, 2014; Swain, 2016; Woodward, 2000; Basham, 2016; Hale, 2013). As Robillard (2017) suggests, this process has been designed to ensure that soldiers have the requisite attributes to successfully cope with the rigours of battle: "Sherman put it succinctly, 'war is hell'. In recognition of this fact, it would then seem necessary for any military, state, or society to forge soldiers with character traits and with identities best equipped to go through that hell" (p.217). However, as Robillard (2017) also warns:

> identity, in and of itself, can be motivationally efficacious. That is, by merely seeing one's self as a particular kind of person or group, the more a sort of momentum or inertia gets created. This inertia of identity, I have argued, can oftentimes manifest itself in the form of a default set of behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes within individuals as well as groups. In turn, this can often-times have a significant constraining effect upon the set of reasonable decision-making options that an agent comes to consciously recognize. Accordingly, the subtle yet powerful pull of identity can frequently cause agents to either mistakenly deem certain reasonable options as unreasonable, or worse yet, to fail to consciously recognize certain reasonable options as existing at all (p.218).

The experiences and perceptions of the junior participants indicated (even during the early stages of Basic Training) the existence of a 'default' Infantry identity. This was an identity that manifested itself as a specific set of behaviours, thoughts and attitudes which could be

differentiated from other soldier identities (such as soldiers from non-Infantry trades or corps). However, whilst such an identity (one that valued aggression, toughness, yelling, and obedience over empathy and thinking) might be readily justified as a necessary aspect of performing the Infantry role, it appears problematic for two key reasons. Firstly because (as Robillard, 2017) suggests, this identity defaults to specific ways of doing things, without recognising, or considering, the existence of other, more reasonable options (consider here, the example of the junior participant who was encouraged to act aggressively towards his peer to get up the hill, rather than show compassion through assisting them). Secondly, because the valued characteristics of this identity contradict with many of those described by the senior leader participants as important characteristics of the modern Infantry soldier (i.e., thinking, communicating and empathy).

The act of conforming, and thereby gaining acceptance from the group, in itself formed an important aspect of constructing this military identity (Hale, 2012). There were, however, varying degrees of ease or discomfort experienced in doing so. Some junior participants appeared to relish the idea of being a 'hard cunt', while others struggled to reconcile their previous life experiences with these new behaviours. The experiences of the female participants also suggested that despite their willingness (and demonstrated ability) to conform there were additional challenges that they faced that the men did not, simply due to being women.

7.5 You kinda have to be a bit less of a female to succeed

In order to be accepted within Infantry, the majority of the female junior participants discussed the ways in which they might need to adapt their behaviour to become more 'masculine' and less 'feminine'. A junior female participant explained their perceptions of this phenomenon:

> *you kinda have to be a bit less of a female to succeed. And even coming into a combat corps, um I was sort of told that only butch females succeed. Like ones that are like real good at CrossFit, like kind of not feminine you know, shave their hair off and I dunno, like try and be like one of the boys rather than just being a female. Um yes, I have heard of like even a lot of the females who are in the combat corps, that they might not necessarily start off like that but after being there for a while its sort of like they become one of the boys, sort of thing. Just trying to fit in and sort of keep under the radar (J47F1).*

Being accepted as 'one of the boys' is often dependent upon the ability (or willingness) of women to conform with those traits and behaviours deemed acceptable by the dominant group (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019; King, 2019; Sion, 2008; Ombati, 2015; Carreiras, 2008; Duncanson, 2015; Pendlebury, 2019). For the female junior participants, this meant being able to demonstrate their toughness in comparison to the men. As one female participant stated:

> *I do think I will have to get mentally tougher. And physically tougher. Kind of to prove myself, because that's what females have to do in the Army, they kind of have to prove themselves to be at the same level as the males (J51F1).*

The majority of the female participants did not discuss such adaptions to be problematic, but rather were considered a normal aspect of working within a male dominated role.

Examples of behaviours and traits were provided by the female participants to demonstrate the ways in which they were adapting. One of the female junior participants, for example, described a change in her demeanour and behaviour that had been noticed by her parents during 'visitor's day': "*how much I swear was one of them, and I was like 'I'm pretty mild compared to some of the boys in here!'" (J48F1).* Another female participant described how her ability to engage with other women had diminished, stating, "*I feel like I've forgotten how to interact with them. They don't talk about poo all the time!" (J50F1).* As she went on to explain, "*Because they talk about like, 'yeah, we did this massive poo this morning and it was so big', and I'm just like, 'that's awesome!' (J50F1).* As another female reflected on the pressure on women to conform in a physical sense: *"Yeah one of the girls shaved her hair coming into this, and I definitely think it was probably an attempt to try and like fit in" (J47F1).*

Symbolic female embodiment (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019) appeared to have a significant influence on these experiences of the female junior participants. Symbolic female embodiment refers to the way in which women's bodies are collectively perceived to exist in "deviation from male bodies" (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019, p.1278). In other words, those things associated with men's bodies are considered normal, whilst those associated with women's are not. This phenomenon explains the female junior participants' compulsion to outwardly project 'masculine' attributes, as a way of minimising gender difference between themselves and their male colleagues. The implication being, however, that such perceptions also justify

the exclusion of women in non-traditional environments, based on perceptions that women's bodies simply don't suit being in these spaces (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019).

An example of symbolic female embodiment at play during Basic Training was the sense of isolation or exclusion that the female junior participants experienced due to regulations that maintained social distance between themselves and the men. Although the men were able to share barrack rooms with their male section members, the female members were accommodated in a 10-person room either on their own or with a very small number of women. Furthermore, the women were not allowed to enter the males rooms (and vice versa), even for a conversation. Restrictions extended to the female participants' interaction with their male colleagues during training, as several of the female junior participants spoke about not being permitted to participate in medical training with the men. As one female participant was advised by an NCO instructor: "*Put your hands away from him, this is inappropriate! We should only have males touching males and females touching females. This is not appropriate!" (J50F1).* The women were also excluded from classroom lessons on personal hygiene in the field; presumably so that they weren't subjected to discussions about men's hygiene issues. Consequently, the female junior participants were provided no information about maintaining their own personal hygiene in the field environment.

The reason for these restrictions was presumed to ensure 'appropriateness' between the sexes. However, the resulting negative impact on group cohesion was noted by the majority of the female junior participants. As one female participant explained, "*We have separate rooms that separates us from the rest. So it kind of prevents us from getting along with the guys and stops us from bonding as fast as they are bonding" (J51F1).* The restrictions also created a sense that *any* interaction between male and female soldiers was 'inappropriate'. Another of the female participants described a situation between herself and another male recruit:

> *he said to me 'I've been told to stop talking to you, because the female corporal said 'are you two friends?' and he was like, 'yeah, we're just friends' and she was like, 'are you sure? Because you shouldn't be talking to her.' Because when we were at the mess we would go up and talk to each other, which is what you do. But it seems like if I talk to anyone, you know! I don't really like that, because I can be friends with guys (J50F1).*

The female junior participants also had restrictions placed on their attire when in the barracks (restrictions that were not placed on the men). For example, bike shorts were forbidden, and bras had to be worn under pyjamas when venturing into the corridors of the barracks. The female junior participants were also warned not to wear revealing clothes in group settings, and were encouraged to wear baggy sweatshirts and pants instead.

Ultimately, women's bodies were regarded with suspicion, whilst men's were not. One female participant described a situation that highlighted the difference between the way that women's bodies were viewed in comparison to the men's:

> *One time a corporal knocked on the door and when one of the girls opened it, here I was standing in my bra and undies. And he was like 'make sure everyone is dressed before you open the door!' He was just so embarrassed. Yeah I think stuff like that can sort of make you feel really self-conscious of your body, because like if it was a male it's like, ok. Obviously I didn't expect him to stand there and look but it's just the really overboard reactions it's kind of like 'oh no, a female body!!' Yeah it definitely sort of cements the fact that it's just still kind of new for women. Even though they've been in the army for a while it's still not fully at the same level that is for a man. Yeah there's definitely some differences there (J47F1).*

Attempts to diminish the gendered impact of female bodies within the context of Basic Training consequently heightened awareness of the various ways in which women didn't 'fit'. Furthermore, the regulations intended to maintain 'appropriateness' simply made the female junior participants feel isolated, whilst also undermining team cohesion. Exemplifying the way in which men and men's bodies were considered 'normal' within the environment of Basic Training was that none of the male participants discussed being treated differently or being held to account for modesty in their attire.

The sense of belonging that comes from being part of the military is as an essential element of forming a military identity (Hale, 2012). As Hale (2012) explains, military personnel form a sense of community through shared practice, and "what enables an individual to belong to this community is that they are all actively participating in it" (p.709). However, although the female junior participants were performing the same activities as their male colleagues, it appeared more difficult for them to participate on equal terms – especially within social settings. As one female participant explained,

From day dot you're not treated the same. So I feel like if you were treated equally then you would have the ability to be as good as the men. Just basically it feels that you're cut short because you're not given the same opportunities as the men.

Are you able to give me an example of what made you feel different?

Yeah just being secluded I guess. Um, and then not being allowed to do things like first aid on the males. And obviously when you're out at battle and if I'm the only person around, and it's a male, they're not gonna be like 'just let him die because you're a female so you can't do that'. Yeah, and then I guess just being in a male dominated group itself, there's lots of snarky comments from the guys that make you feel uncomfortable. So you basically feel a bit alienated. And obviously being surrounded by just male corporals also makes you feel secluded because they kind of try to stay away from you as much as they can, and you can't really talk to them about things like expectations, you know. Toilet breaks are never happening but they never think about the women's side of things. And all that sort of stuff is a bit hard when only having male corporals I guess (J52F1).

Another female junior participant reflected further upon the impact of attitudes and regulations that stipulate how women should conduct themselves during Basic Training:

I think it's more about like making males understand that women can do the same things as men and like we can still be feminine and stuff. We don't have to be butch to be as good as you at things. Yeah, and we can wear bike shorts. I think stuff like that, it's probably been the most shocking for me. I think It's just a bit ridiculous like, have you seen what people wear down the street? Like bike shorts is nothing! And I think trying to shelter males away from that, it's not gonna help them. It's trying to minimise females more, like put them in the box again. Whereas if you let females wear bike shorts, men would be like 'ok, they're wearing bike shorts'. You know it would just be accepted and move on, whereas like the rules around them it's sort of like if you do wear them it's such a big deal. Like it has the reverse effect than what they want so, I think it's just a bit silly. But yeah I suppose it's just how it is and you kind of have to adapt to that (J47F1).

The female junior participants were not able to challenge the status quo, so they instead found themselves having to comply with institutional norms – norms that often failed to acknowledge that women were also active participants of the group.

As Steidl and Brookshire (2019) suggest, particularly within hyper-masculine areas of the military, "it seems as if participants frequently forget that the women themselves are workers who contribute to organizational goals" (p.1283). This idea was poignantly demonstrated by one of the female junior participants who struggled with the way in which women were

discussed by her male colleagues (often viewing women as sex objects, rather than as soldiers):

> *There's also the environment of "you boys, dudes, guys" so sometimes they forget that there are females. And the way that they talk about women, sometimes it's pretty bad. It makes me feel quite uncomfortable. They can be quite objectifying of women. So it makes me kinda like wanna punch people sometimes. Because you shouldn't be talking about other humans like that, it's like they talk a lot about women like they're sex objects so that is pretty disgusting. And we've had a couple of instructors make comments like "if you want to get a girl go to medics, they all love infantry." And stuff like that. It was just like, if you actually asked the medics, I highly doubt they would like the grunts! It's not really how you talk about women, like the medics have earned their right …they've gone through all the training and earned their right to be in the Army. They're doing their job. They're not there to be mistreated like that (J45F1)*

However, as this same female participant elaborated on her inability to influence the environment, it was considered to be a matter of putting up with the status quo, or leaving:

> *I don't like taking stuff like that just like on the chin cause I don't like accepting it cos it should not have to come to that. But um I feel like I might have to let some of it go and that annoys me quite a lot because it shouldn't be happening in the first place. But I can't like single-handedly just go in and change the whole Army, so I have sort of had a few mental struggles with that. I'm going to have to deal with it or just leave but that's not really going to achieve what I want, which is to stay here (J45F1).*

A number of the female junior participants similarly spoke of needing to 'pick their battles', 'build resilience' or 'develop thicker skin' in order to cope with the environment. Indeed, this was the advice often given to the female junior participants by the NCOs. Another female participant reflected, *"I think I can see why a lot of females are put off by it, yeah because obviously if you didn't really want to do it then you just wouldn't, like why would you bother?" (J47F1).*

Further indicating that these issues were problematic for women more so than for men, were the male junior participants' descriptions of the 'same' environment. Rather than describing a sense of isolation or exclusion, the male participants generally spoke fondly of the shared sense of camaraderie. As one participant stated:

> *I'm loving it! We've got a good group of lads, we all seem to get along with each other quite well. A few of the other boys from the other platoons we sort of butt heads, but that's ok. Being together in these ten man rooms is another good thing.*

> *I'm actually quite stoked that we're in these barracks. Just because we're spending so much time together in such a confined space. There's no walls, so that's good (J30M1).*

The environment was also generally described as 'fun' or 'good', with one male participant stating:

> *I think it's just the culture, everything has its own culture. It's not toxic at all it's just different. It's just a different kind of culture you know, you kind of notice that with all the Infantry corporals. And everyone is different, it's good and I actually like it, but it's a bro culture I guess. I guess the bro culture fits with the mindset of the infantry. And so I think if you've got the right mindset I think it's a good culture. (J42M1).*

I found it interesting that this participant chose to use the phrase 'not toxic'. Furthermore, despite stating that everyone was different, he also indicated that fitting in meant having the 'right mindset'. This intimates that the culture was 'not' toxic for those who fitted (and had been accepted into), the bro culture, but *was* toxic for those who hadn't. However, the male junior participants generally described feeling comfortable within this environment, and there were no suggestions of having been spoken to (or about) in a sexually demeaning or discriminatory manner. These experiences and perceptions illustrate how the female junior participants' reality (and bodily experience) of being Infantry differed significantly to the men's.

The experiences of the junior female participants appeared symptomatic of an institutional system that views women and women's bodies as problematic, in the same way that men are not (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019). As a result, the junior female participants often found themselves needing to sacrifice personal principles and values in order to conform and be accepted as part of the team (the only other option being to leave the NZ Army). This situation has significant implications for the NZ Army, as an institution that has openly stated a desire for increased gender diversity. Firstly because it indicates the existence of sexist attitudes that are detrimental to the participation of women. Secondly, because the high level of conformity demanded by the current gender regime comes at the cost of individuality – a quality which is arguably the catalyst for challenging and transforming the status quo.

In order to progress the aims of gender equality, it is suggested that attitudes towards female embodiment need to change (not women themselves) (Steidl & Brookshire, 2019). Indicating the possibility for such change, the female junior participants noted the influence that NCOs have on forming attitudes (either positive or negative) towards women:

> *So we got spoken to about like the comments and stuff that were being made - at that point it was predominantly from the other platoon - but the corporals were just like 'oh, don't worry it's not really you guys and unless they have like formal written down stuff they can't charge you with anything anyway.' So I think, hearing that was a bit shit and just hearing stuff like that coming from the corporals. Making comments like that, as how do you expect anyone else to be better when you're meant to be setting an example, and you're setting a poor one. So I do think it definitely depends on the people that you have coaching you as to what soldier that you'll become. Like, our Staff Sergeant, he had a big chat to us about the way we treat women and that he doesn't want anyone in the organisation who thinks they can speak to women poorly. And I think for a lot of the boys that really set in because he's like ex-SAS, and so what he thinks means a lot to them. Like, they look up to him and they're like 'I wanna be him, oh my god he's awesome!' And so when he says stuff like that it really influences the way the boys act and they sort of think that if he doesn't think it's cool then obviously it's not. Whereas some of the corporals that the boys look up to are saying [negative] stuff, then that's what they're going to become too. Cos they think 'I wanna be him, so obviously that's what I have to be like'. So I think that definitely everything starts from the top but yeah, especially with recruits as this is the time to sort of shape them into being what you want in the organisation. So if you're sort of mocking like, you know, women and stuff to them that's what they're gonna be like. You're just setting them up to become like idiots (J47F1).*

This statement reveals the observed malleability of newly enlisted recruits; malleability that can be used to either hinder or progress the diversity aims of the NZ Army. However, the ability to influence attitudes and behaviours in a way that progresses diversity is dependent upon a type of role modelling and leadership that was not displayed by all instructors involved in training recruits. The consequence being that male recruits were provided mixed messages about the value that the NZ Army places upon the participation of women within Infantry (and in turn, the way in which women should be treated). The complexity of this situation appeared to increase with the perceived need for women to 'match up' to the male standard of physicality.

7.6 That's the standard for being an infantryman

As outlined in previous chapters, the Infantry places significant physical demands upon its soldiers. After just a few weeks on Basic Training the participants had become keenly aware of this fact. Being strong enough, big enough, fit enough and fast enough were key concerns of all the participants. The concept of 'standards' had also become embedded in the thoughts of the participants at a very early stage within Basic Training. Many of the junior participants cited the 'standard', or more specifically the 'Infantry' standard, after just a few weeks of being enlisted.

When I asked the junior participants what they thought the standard was, reference was commonly made to the Required Fitness Level (RFL) test. Furthermore, despite the fact that NZ Army policy recognises both a G1[26] and a G2[27] pass to be an acceptable standard of fitness, the junior participants felt significant pressure to achieve a G1 pass rather, than a G2. As one participant stated with respect to achieving a G1 pass, *"I really wanna get that under 10 minutes, because that's the standard for being an infantryman" (J32M1).* The Infantry standard was, therefore, based upon a G1 standard. Moreover it was based upon a *male* G1 standard. Those women who weren't able to meet the male G1 standard consequently doubted their ability to be Infantry. As one female participant stated:

> *Because especially with infantry there aren't many females at all. And I've been told that there's eyes on you, being female. People are looking to see if you can meet those standards, so that will be a bit stressful (J49F1).*

However, the standard upon which the junior participants either judged themselves, or felt judged, was based upon the results of a fitness test that the senior participants had suggested bears little resemblance to the actual physical requirements of the Infantry role. It was also noted by the junior participants that the RFL (i.e., running and press ups) did not equate to the key physical tasks of being Infantry.

Although the Infantry 'standard' was often equated with the RFL standard, the key physical task of being Infantry discussed by all of the participants was that of carrying heavy weight.

[26] A G1 RFL Pass indicates that the highest level of achievement has been met, according to gender (regardless of age). For a man this is currently a 10.30 minute run and 30 press ups. For a woman this is currently a 11.50 minute run and 15 press ups.
[27] A G2 RFL Pass indicates that the required standard of achievement has been met, albeit with achievement on the run and press ups graduated according to both age and gender.

This was a requirement that appeared to define the Infantry role for the junior participants; an inability to do so equating with an inability to *be* Infantry. As one participant stated,

> *Just to be able to carry a pack all day and things like that, that's quite crucial for the job. That's one thing you need to get good at (J14M1).*

The requirement to carry heavy weight was also perceived by the participants to differentiate Infantry from other trades within the Army. As another participant explained,

> *Fitness is a big part in the Army in general but especially like as Infantry, fitness has a lot to do with it. But it's a different type of fitness you know it's not like being able to run triathlons, it's being able to carry a pack and keep going up hills and stuff (J13M1).*

Although a small number of the participants had previous experience of carrying packs in their civilian life, the majority had not. In the build-up to Basic Training most had focused on the cardio aspect of the fitness requirements; a form of fitness that does not readily prepare the body for weightbearing. The realisation that marching with heavy loads was to be a significant aspect of their Infantry role was, in many cases, a surprise.

Approximately one quarter of the junior participants cited injuries that they had received as a result of the physical requirements of Basic Training. These injuries were often related to the participants' attempts to 'tough it out', or due to inadequate conditioning and preparation for load carrying. As one participant reflected,

> *I was always into PT training and all that beforehand, but right now I'm on LDs[28] because for example I was never prepared to carry extra weight. So my body, I've injured my leg, and so I hope that doesn't affect the training (J4M1).*

Another junior participant commented on the prevalence of physical injuries during Basic Training: "*Shin splints are really common. That kinda scares me a bit. A lot of people are getting sent home for that" (J46F1)*. Most of the junior participants were concerned about suffering an injury during Basic Training. This is because an injury would most likely result in an inability to continue training, or had the potential to result in medical discharge.

[28] Light Duties (LDs) are prescribed by military medical personnel when a soldier is unable to perform all those duties required of them, this due to either injury or illness.

Whilst the impact of suffering an injury was an immediate concern for many of the junior participants, several of the junior participants also spoke about the long term injuries caused by the physical requirements of being Infantry. As one participant stated:

> *I talk to the boys as well, because we wanna live healthy as well and the NCOs talk a lot about how they're injured and stuffed, and their bodies have just had it. And they're only like 25 and they're like destroyed (J15M1).*

Another junior participant indicated that the physicality of the role would potentially inhibit longevity in the Infantry trade:

> *I know Infantry isn't like a long term career because your body can only take being Infantry for so long. You know, you can't do it for 20-30 years because I've just heard stories of people like needing knee replacements and stuff. So good thing for a young person but long term, I don't think so (J13M1).*

The potential for injury, and the impact upon the ability to perform the Infantry role, was predicted by another junior participant, *"it just sounds like you break yourself and then you trade change" (J28M1).*

The carrying of heavy loads represented a significant challenge, and potential barrier to the participation of many of the junior participants (both male and female). The apparent lack of guidance provided to potential Infantry soldiers prior to enlistment (and consequently, the lack of prior physical preparation to meet this requirement) appeared to be an initial remedy that could assist with this situation. However, even those recruits who were coping well with the load carrying requirement were cognisant that they would likely be 'broken' if they stayed in the Infantry long-term. This understanding corelated with the experiences of the senior participants, who had collectively spoken about the significantly negative impacts of load carrying on their bodies. The persistence of maintaining this requirement at a level that had such detrimental impacts appeared, therefore, counter intuitive to the successful physical performance of Infantry.

The physical requirements of Infantry were considered by a number of the male junior participants to be particularly inhibiting to the performance of women as Infantry. This was due to the perception of women's bodies being biologically weaker and smaller, as well as the perception that the Infantry role is built around the task of carrying heavy loads. As one junior participant stated:

I think it's a problem when you look at the infantry because the infantry is just all about carrying a pack, and males are generally bigger and stronger across the population and so that's why they would have an advantage in a trade like the infantry (J7M1)

However, the majority of the junior participants believed that women would be able to perform as Infantry just as readily as men, as long as they demonstrated resilience and tried hard enough. As one participant suggested, for example:

I think girls can do whatever guys can, it's just if they want to train. Some guys aren't that strong or that fit, it's just by choice mostly. It's the same for girls, they can train and carry a pack. It's no biggie (J18M1).

Another male junior participant stated:

I think, fuck, because some of the chicks that are here, they are well stronger than me. They're going at it, they're going hard yeah. So if you can do what the Army needs you to do, fuck it doesn't matter [if you are male or female]. That's how I look at it (J15M1).

Thus, as long as women (and men) could demonstrate that they could meet the load carrying physical standard, the majority of the junior participants believed that any gender could succeed as Infantry. Interestingly, at no stage did any of the junior participants (male or female) question the standard itself.

The majority of the female participants foresaw their ability to meet the physical requirements of Infantry to be their greatest challenge. Their physical stature, or lighter weight, often cited as making the load carrying requirement more difficult. Furthermore, the majority of the female participants discussed having to work harder than most of the male recruits in order to 'keep up'. This led to a number of the female participants questioning their ability to pursue Infantry as a career. As one participant stated,

I'm very light so I don't weigh much so like carrying more than half of my body weight it's pretty tough. Yeah so the other girls struggle a lot with it as well. Every time I try because I'm just worried that I won't make the physical aspect because it is a lot harder. So we've been working a lot more hard like harder than some of the other male recruits (J45F1).

As another female participant stated,

I know that all of us, even the ones who are significantly fitter than me, work a lot harder than half the boys here just to get the same sort of or near the same standard as them (J47F1).

The challenges that women oftentimes face in meeting the physical requirements of combat roles has been found to result in perceptions of their unsuitability for combat roles (MacKenzie, 2015; Cohn, 2000; Steidl & Brookshire, 2019). The challenges faced by the female participants also, however, highlighted the assumption that the same physical training methods that have traditionally been found suitable for men, are also suitable for women (Dyches, Friedl, Greeves, Keller, McClung, McGurk, Popp & Teyhen, 2023).

Militaries have traditionally focussed on running and load carrying as a means of preparing soldiers for the physical demands of combat, with such methods rarely being questioned or changed (Dyches et al, 2023). Physical training techniques that are also described by Dyches et al (2023) as harmful and unnecessary, and which consequently represent:

> a rite of passage that includes high rates of musculoskeletal injury (MSKI) to achieve a level of fitness that may not even be sustained beyond basic training or necessarily represent the type of physical readiness required for modern mission success (p.20).

This 'one size fits all' approach, which fails to take into consideration differences between men and women's physiology (or which do not accurately reflect the physical requirements of modern combat operations) is indicated to have significant implications for the performance of women within combat roles (Dyches, et al, 2023).

As Dyches et al (2023) suggest, physical preparation of the *modern* combat soldier requires "a new focus on individualized training that recognizes differences in training needs and reduces training injury rates" (p.20). A 'smarter not harder' approach would be likely to have a positive influence on successful achievement of physical outcomes for women. It would also likely benefit those men who do not fit the traditional six-foot mould commonly assigned to Infantry. Changing the physical training approach would, however, require an acceptance of the physical differences amongst Infantry soldiers, alongside the adoption of physical conditioning methods that take such differences into consideration. It would also necessitate an evaluation (or re-evaluation) of the physical requirements of the Infantry role that would call into question some key assumptions that underpin the identity of the Infantry, as a collective, as well as the individuals within that group.

7.7 I didn't join the army to kill, I joined the army to help people

A soldier's identity is strongly linked to the role that they are required to fulfil. As Broesder et al (2014) suggest, military socialisation processes will determine whether a soldier's role identity tends towards that of either a warrior or a peacekeeper. Each of these identities ascribing a distinctive (and independent) set of attitudes and behaviours (Broesder, et al, 2014). The former, exalting the ability to dominate, control and overcome – whilst the latter necessitates friendliness, empathy, mutual respect, and negotiation.

Using Broesder et al's (2014) constructs of the warrior and peacekeeping identities, the experiences and perceptions of the junior participants during Basic Training suggest that socialisation to the NZ Army was heavily weighted towards the embedding of a warrior identity. The majority of the participants sought to align their behaviours (albeit sometimes with difficulty) to a singular model of performance and were rewarded for demonstrations of toughness, resilience, aggression and physical strength. The training that the junior participants received also confirmed that they were preparing for combat, rather than less aggressive humanitarian or peacekeeping roles. One participant described their impression of their future role based on the training to date:

> *We are Infantry, and I'd say the general consensus of Infantry is not so much to be nice and friendly, but to eliminate the enemy. I'd say quite similar to what we do now, just walking, patrolling, and if it does happen you know, you might need to eliminate the enemy. From what I know, that's pretty much all I expect at this point because that's pretty much all I've been taught. I'd say just as a rifleman, you walk a lot and eliminate the enemy (J23M1).*

These experiences align with the NZ Army's vision of itself as a 'warfighting' institution (NZ Army, 2019). They are also, however, incongruent with the NZ Army's acknowledgement of the complexity of modern (and future) operating theatres (NZ Army, 2019). Operating theatres that the senior participants had suggested require Infantry personnel who possess more nuanced skills of communication and negotiation, as well as cultural awareness and empathy.

The junior participants were also cognisant that New Zealand had not purposefully sent troops into combat for more than 50 years. As such, the NZ Army was frequently described by the participants as a ‘humanitarian’ or ‘peacetime’ Army. As one junior participant explained, “*like you’re trained to kill in a way right, but yeah. It’s just like we have this role because every army has to have this role, even if we are a humanitarian army” (J13M1).* When I subsequently asked the junior participants what type of tasks or activities that they might be deployed to do as Infantry, the majority suggested that it would be most likely disaster relief, humanitarian aid, or peacekeeping.

This finding suggests the potential for role and/or identity confusion (Broesder, et al, 2014; Miller & Moskos, 1995; Sion, 2008). Such confusion has been found to arise for combat soldiers who are trained primarily for war, and subsequently deploy on missions without an identified enemy, and which require minimum levels of force (Sion, 2008; Miller & Moskos, 1995). Harding (2016) noted the disillusionment of newly enlisted Infantry soldiers to the NZ Army that were trained to kill an enemy and then deployed to a ‘low-level’ peacekeeping operation in the Solomon Islands. Disillusionment is perhaps the least problematic outcome of role identity confusion. Miller & Moskos (1995) identify the *most* problematic outcome being that in the face of ambiguity, combat soldiers are likely to resort to a warrior strategy in order to make sense of the mission at hand (Miller & Moskos, 1995). This echoes the critique of Whitworth (2004) on the inherent contradiction that exists for soldiers trained to fight, who are then expected to also negotiate peace.

A number of the junior participants appeared naturally inclined to embrace the warrior role identity in preference to a humanitarian one. For these junior participants the possibility of *not* going into combat was considered a potential disappointment. As one junior participant stated:

> *Like if I had to go to war or go into combat, that would be cool. To put my training to use to like, you know. I love training but what’s the point in training if you can’t use it (J9M1).*

Another participant also described the potential excitement of being involved in a combat situation:

Just being on the front lines I guess. 'Bullet catchers' as one of my corporals calls us! But yeah, definitely a bit of combat involved. Probably a bit scary for some people, but I like the thought of doing shit that no one else has done (J36M1).

For these participants, the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in combat was also perceived to be exciting and rewarding. It aligned with the warrior (or bullet-catching) role identity that they were being introduced to. The possibility of undertaking peacekeeping or humanitarian roles was generally described as a secondary role that might occur when opportunities for combat operations were not available.

There were, however, other junior participants who had preconceptions of contributing towards the security of New Zealand primarily through actions of peacekeeping, rather than warfighting. Indeed, a more peaceful role was considered just as fulfilling as being in combat. As one junior participant explained:

I don't wanna be a killer, I wanna be someone to help people. I didn't join the army to kill, I joined the army to go overseas and help people in need. Yeah that's what I want to do, just help people at the end of the day. I don't like being on the side line, and yeah I see the Infantry is that as well as a stepping stone to help people (J4M1)

Another junior participant also outlined their personal dilemma in having to carry out the Infantry's primary role:

I do like to have a peaceful mentality but we are soldiers so I do worry about when push comes to shove, I do worry about whether I will be able to take that shot when push comes to shove in a combat situation. I don't know deep down whether I'll be able to do it… nah I will. I should be fine. I'm sure I'll be fine, but it always plays on my mind that we are actually trained to kill or capture. So it does pop up every now and then. There's a bit of a biased view…there's a bit of a leaning scale so it's kinda hard.

What do you mean by that?

Well like, they'll just talk the talk and say 'don't worry, we'll smoke them all'. And it's like, you do say that, but if you're being honest … I dunno. I'll be totally honest, I do worry. There are some that do agree with me, but maybe they just have the same personality. It's hard because what do you class as enemy to be honest, like terrorists and all that stuff. Obviously I haven't been anywhere yet so I haven't seen anything, so I don't have a real picture of the enemy. But New Zealand is like multi-cultural and stuff, but we have nations all around us fighting for scraps… it

seems silly to me. It seems silly joining the Army just really wanting peace, and I kind of know that it's a very ignorant stance. But it would be nice (J31M1)

It is important to note that these statements which demonstrate an intrinsic desire to help people or create peace (rather than war) were made by male junior participants. This contests the gendered stereotype of men being naturally aggressive. For these junior participants, their innately peaceful qualities stood in juxtaposition to those of the warrior role identity that they were being socialised to assume.

It was also apparent that, notwithstanding the natural inclination of some junior participants towards either a combat or peacekeeping identity role, *all* of the junior participants appeared prepared for the eventuality of performing both. As one participant explained, for example:

We're trained to go into combat, which is good. But helping out other people is also another strong thing that we should pride ourselves on a little bit more. Because wars mean a whole lot of stuff, but it's nice to know that we don't just go over there to wreck shit. We go over and help to rebuild and get them back on their feet (J30M1)

The female junior participants were similarly ready to deploy into either peacekeeping, or combat. As one female participant stated:

When I look at deployments I picture them as just like helping other people in need like When you go over there, there's been some sort of conflict or stuff you know and some countries especially in like Middle Eastern countries and stuff don't have armies like ours sort of step up and protect them, so even like going over there and doing it for them or even if you're going over there just to train them and help them with different things I think will be really rewarding because like obviously there are countries that are less fortunate than us that don't have the resources we do so yeah I think just doing a lot of that sort of stuff. Hopefully not too much of the gnarly stuff, but yeah obviously that's the role I'm in so it's just something that you have to deal with (J47F1).

I began considering, therefore, whether there might be a possibility for the warfighting and peacekeeping identities to coexist. Or whether they were indeed mutually exclusive constructs as presented in some of the existing research (Whitworth, 2004; Broesder, et al, 2014).

The possibility of soldiers successfully performing a military role identity that incorporates positive characteristics of both the combat and peacekeeping identities has been picked up on by authors such Carreiras (2010), who suggests:

> as military organisations change – in mission, structure, or specific patterns of civil–military relations – so do the cultural patterns and values upon which shared meanings are built. Peacekeeping missions provide one more instance where such changes might be observed and where complexity is added (p.482)

It has also been suggested that a soldier identity which values equally the attributes of femininity and masculinity may offer the opportunity to enhance gender relations within the military institution (Duncanson & Woodward, 2016). This idea was iterated by one junior participant who described an Infantry soldier in terms that did not rely upon the valuing of one gender over another:

> *I think there is more to being a soldier than being a brute, you know. A lot of it is your mentality and your mindset, your intelligence and your outlook. There's just a whole bunch of things that make a soldier, and men shine in some areas and women shine in others. But it's not just a black and white thing. There's a lot of grey area and it comes down to a mixture of things that make you a good soldier (J17M1).*

These ideas suggest that it may be possible to develop a 'dual' identity that can be performed simultaneously. Such a possibility would also align with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) theory that versions of masculinity that have provided a solution to past situations, but which do not suit new situations, are open to being challenged.

Certainly, all of the junior participants demonstrated that they had entered the NZ Army with the *capacity* to embrace a more nuanced model of soldier role identity; one that deviated from the traditionally accepted Infantry 'type'. They were also open to the possibility of women serving as Infantry on equal terms with men. However, once enlisted the junior participants also felt compelled to mimic the traditional model of performance that was encouraged and rewarded. This model of performance being one that was profoundly influenced by the training regime of Basic Training, and the trainers who were embedded within it. This intimates that the possibility for a 'modern' Infantry soldier identity to be assimilated *might* exist. However, in order for it to flourish there would need to be a

fundamental adjustment to the institutional system (and associated socialisation processes) that currently values one identity (and, indeed, one gender) at the expense of any other.

7.8 Conclusion

The experiences of the junior participants during the first few weeks of Basic Training reinforced the perception that a well performing Infantry soldier is one who can follow orders, act tough, run fast and carry heavy loads. This model of performance was considered a necessary aspect of meeting the Infantry's combat output of 'to kill or capture the enemy'. The participants felt compelled to mimic the expectations of this narrative through gendered acts of behaviour oriented to the masculine. This despite their cognisance that Infantry would most likely be deployed to peacekeeping or humanitarian missions, rather than into combat.

The junior participants generally felt positive about their future role as Infantry. However, the junior participants' ability to achieve the desired model of performance was found more challenging for some than others. Even greater challenge was experienced by the female participants who at times felt isolated or excluded simply because of their gender, and the expectations of 'appropriateness' associated with this. Nevertheless, there was little opportunity, or perceived power, to challenge accepted norms. This created implicit barriers for those male and female junior participants who felt compelled to act in a way that was incongruent with their usual way of being.

Chapter 8: Being Infantry in the RNZIR

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established that Basic Training had provided many challenges for the junior participants. However, for the most part, their experience was what they had expected. They had expected, for example, to undertake hard physical training, to learn discipline and teamwork, to be yelled at, to be given punishments, to share barrack rooms, to learn to march, and to shoot weapons. They also, on the whole, had high expectations for their future within the NZ Army as Infantry.

When I went to re-interview these participants twelve months after the initial interview I was, therefore, surprised to learn that 16 had already left the NZ Army. This included 14 male and two female junior participants from the initial cohort of 54 (which had consisted of 43 male and 11 female junior participants). Three of the junior female participants were also no longer Infantry, having changed to a different trade within the NZ Army.[29] A further eight male junior participants indicated during the interviews that they were either in the process of leaving, or had a plan to leave Infantry within the next twelve months. There was, therefore, a marked shift in the overall enthusiasm towards being Infantry. This was further illustrated by the diminishing number of participants planning to stay long-term (i.e., more than 10 years). During the initial interviews, 21 of the junior participants had indicated their intention to stay longer than ten years, but this had now reduced to three junior participants.

Seeking to understand the reasons for this change in perspective, I felt that one of the junior participant's reflections on their decision to leave was particularly poignant. This participant offered as a final comment at the end of his interview:

> *When it comes to my decision to leave the infantry, the work that we do itself isn't why I would leave, or why people generally leave. It's because of people, it's because of culture, it's because of the way things are done (J3M2).*

[29] This left a cohort of 35 junior participants (29 male and 6 female) who were still Infantry. Two of the male junior participants were unavailable at the time of interviewing which reduced the male junior participants to 27. The three female junior participants who still remained within the NZ Army (but had changed to a different trade) were included in the cohort to increase the female junior participants to 9. This provided a total cohort of 36 junior participants (27 male and 9 female).

Noting that the 'job itself' was not the key challenge of being Infantry, this chapter explores the lived reality as experienced by the junior participants. It focuses on notable shifts in attitudes and perspectives, whilst also exploring the challenges and rewards.

Beginning where the previous chapter ended, this chapter will commence with an investigation of the participants' newfound understanding of the 'actual' Infantry job. The way in which the context of Infantry shaped the junior participants' experiences and perceptions of this role will then be explored, including a discussion of those elements which generated a different experience for the female junior participants in comparison to the males. The chapter will conclude with a reflection on the junior participants' ability to fit in (and effectively participate) as Infantry.

8.2 There's this very specific feeling of when you *actually* get to do your job

In reflecting on the 'job itself', the previous chapter described how the junior participants had envisaged the Infantry role would be exciting, adventurous and action-packed. They were motivated by the idea of Infantry being the most challenging role within the NZ Army. As such, they were expecting to be challenged both mentally and physically. They were also expecting to be on the 'front-line'; whether that be in a peacekeeping, combat, or humanitarian capacity.

For a number of the junior participants, the professional elements of the Infantry job (i.e., using weapons, learning outdoor survival skills and physical training) had continued to meet these expectations. The majority of the junior participants had also found the Infantry training to be suitably challenging. As one participant stated, "*It's hard. The pack marching. The digging. The walking. The weather. The weather is the toughest, especially when it rains" (J42M2).* Another reflected on these challenges:

> *So far it's being in the field in the rain. Being absolutely miserable, but you still have to do what you need to do. Getting into your sleeping bag with wet clothes, it's probably the worst feeling ever. Wake up and it's still pissing down, you don't want to leave your sleeping bag. But I guess that's part of the Infantry aye, it's all good. But I'd say that's probably the worst (J40M2).*

Another junior participant also described:

Some of the environments that we went out to were pretty cold and wet. I'm thinking of the west coast where it rained the whole time pretty much. So that was definitely a challenge, those superficial type of things, being wet and cold and stuff like that. The rest of it is all pretty manageable. I mean all of it is manageable, or doable, but those are the types of things that stick out to me. Being wet on the west coast and cold down in Tekapo (J17M2).

In many ways, these challenges met their expectations of doing the Infantry job; they were also the challenges that the junior participants had sought from enlistment.

The challenges of training were, therefore, accepted to be necessary aspects of the job as Infantry. Seeing the end results of such training also appeared to provide particular satisfaction for the junior participants. As one junior participant explained:

There's been like this very specific feeling of when you actually get to do your job. And you do your job well, so whether it's building up to doing a BHE [Battle Handling Exercise], huge battalion attacks and stuff like that where there's been effort put into it and you know you know your higher ups have really thought about it and then put effort in. And all that build up to that one day or a few hours of hard work is just a very specific rewarding feeling, and that's probably my favourite part. Even if we don't do it as great as what we hoped we might or even if it's not as good as what we thought it would be it's just like a really good feeling afterwards because you've done something that you've worked hard for and it's actually nice to see it all play out and you've done your part in it well. And yes it's really rewarding to be able to do what you joined to do, I guess, without like going overseas and all that sort of stuff because I haven't had that experience yet (J53F2).

Having an opportunity to perform the job that they had enlisted for was considered by many of the junior participants to be one of the greatest rewards; this primarily because the practical application of their skills gave their Infantry role purpose.

To *not* have an opportunity to be challenged through training was described in itself to be a key challenge. As one junior participant reflected, "*we do a lot of waiting, that's a big one that you've probably heard the other lads say. Unexpected would probably be a word that springs to mind" (J17M2).* Another participant commented:

In Battalion it's sort of all over the place, in my experience. No one really knows what's going on! It's always chopping and changing, they're like 'stand by, but stay flexible!' And you're like, what do I do? Because I kind of need structure, but I understand it's like their boss telling their boss. It's such a long way down till you get down to this level. But sometimes It's like, am I just getting stuffed around here? What's going on? (J29M2).

Making coffee, checking non-existent emails, watching movies in the barracks, and sitting around waiting to be told what to do were all ways of filling the void of purposeful work to be done. As one junior participant stated:

> *We have so many days where we just do literally nothing, we just sit there for hours! Or we'll have a lesson in the classroom and then we'll have like 3 hours for lunch and then we come back. You know it's just like 'what are we doing?' So there's so many people that have just left for better jobs out in civie world um which is like a problem because numbers are just decreasing so much (J50F2).*

The frustration for many of the junior participants was that they were keen to do 'something', whilst the reality was that they were commonly doing nothing. As one junior participant stated, *"a lot of time we come in and we don't know what's going on. We just stand out there a lot of the time with not much direction, so I don't really know what my role is at the moment" (J24M2).*

The ensuing boredom was explained by a number of the junior participants to have a significant upon their motivation to remain as Infantry. This finding reflects that of Harding (2016), who observed the disillusionment of Infantry soldiers within both 1st Battalion and 2nd/1st Battalion for similar reasons. As Harding (2016) explains:

> The very dispositions that induce people to become riflemen - they enjoy and seek out even life and death challenges - are the exact same dispositions that make them unsuited to a peacetime Army. The boys valued "doing something" above all else, but during my time at Battalion, we routinely sat around doing nothing (Harding, 2016, p.238).

Harding (2016) made explicit that the views discussed within her study were often those expressed by the "most vocal and loudest" (2016, p.238). Such vocalisations were, therefore, suggested to not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the way in which boredom and disillusionment were impacting upon the morale of the wider majority of soldiers (Harding, 2016). In this research, however, even those soldiers who might be considered 'quieter' than others were able to put forward their perspectives. It was made clear by a wide range of participants the way in which their lack of productive work impacted upon their sense of purpose.

The point at which the mismatch between the expectations and the reality of being Infantry had begun to emerge was indicated by many of the junior participants to correlate with their posting to Battalion. As one of the junior participants described the journey from Basic Training to Battalion:

> *Good. Three quarters good. Basic, good. Corps training, awesome. Battalion, could do some work (J28M2).*

As another junior participant described the increasing sense of boredom once posted to Battalion:

> *When we're out in the field and training, it's good. I like being out. But then in the garrison environment, you come in and do PT and then you malinger around. And it does my head in a bit. Just cos I like to be kept busy, and I knew that after training things would slow down but I didn't know to what extent. But yeah, it really, really took a slow pace when we got here and I just got bored. Once we're training it's all good. Sometimes there's classes and sometimes we go out the field over there and we do practice assaults, or we go to the range and do shooting. And I like PT. But then like today it's pretty quiet, and I'm just watching a movie with the boys over in the barracks. And that's all good, we've got time to relax, but it would be good to have something to do, instead of looking at your watch every 5 minutes and wondering what you're gonna be doing …I've decided I want a job where I can do my job, rather than just train to do my job. That's why I figure the police would be good. And you get more of a chance to help out as well, obviously with different scenarios, but there's a chance to help someone and it would be time better spent than sitting in my mate's room watching a movie while I'm at work. Actually get to achieve something (J19M2).*

Boredom had consequently resulted in a number of the junior participants questioning their purpose in a role which did not seem to match that which they had been trained for.

The sense of disillusionment expressed by many of the junior participants was also linked to a realisation that they may not have an imminent opportunity to test their newly acquired Infantry skills in a 'real' combat situation. As one participant explained,

> *Another one is actually being able to do our jobs I suppose. A lot of the boys want to go overseas and go fight and all that stuff, and just you know, we haven't really had the chance to yet (J9M2).*

As another junior participant stated, "*there's nothing that we can see in the future. Like I know that a lot of our higher ups feed us this carrot of Ukraine… but yeah" (J9M2).* The fact that the war between Ukraine and Russia was seen as a 'carrot' indicated the type of combat situation that some of the junior participants were keen to be involved in. The recognition that

opportunities for deployment might not happen as often, or as easily, as expected also came as a surprise. As another junior participant explained:

> *I thought I'd be able to go somewhere, but I found out there's people in the Infantry that have been in ten years and never gone on an operation, ever. So I was like, 'I don't want that to be me.' Like a lot of people would probably deny it but a lot of us signed up to go on a deployment. It doesn't matter if it's war or anything, that's the reason we signed up really. But this section commander has been signed up for ten years and he hasn't gone anywhere. So that's like, 'what's the point'? (J15M2).*

The training that the junior participants had undergone to date had focused on the construction of a warrior role identity. However, the construction of a role identity that focused its attention towards performance on the battlefield appeared to have also created a sense of 'non-identity'. This was due to the fact that unless Infantry were *on the battlefield*, or at least *training* to be on the battlefield, they had no actual role.

The role of Infantry had created a particular way of being (or identity) for the junior participants, and the inability to test this new identity appeared to be an inherent disappointment. The sentiments of the junior participants demonstrate what Robillard (2017) calls the "paradox of soldier identity" (p.207). As Robillard (2017) explains:

> For one truly to be a warrior, it would seem, requires that there be a war. While for many persons this claim will appear to amount to little more than an obvious and ultimately un-insightful truism, for many soldiers, such a claim can be deeply perplexing if not troubling. This is precisely because to fully accept this truism seems to require of soldiers that they simultaneously hold two seemingly contradictory propositional attitudes, namely:
>
> (1) A desire that there be peace (and therefore, that one not be used nor needed)
> (2) A desire that one be useful and needed (which requires that there be a war)
>
> This is the paradoxical position that the common soldier often finds him or herself in; one of feeling at once a strong sense of obligation to fulfil his or her stated role as soldier while at the same time recognizing that in an ideal world he or she would not be needed at all (p.207).

Some of the junior participants appeared more readily able to locate themselves within this paradox by orienting themselves towards alternate goals or challenges. Articulating specific courses, education or postings that they hoped to achieve in the future appeared to provide a useful focus.

Recognising that the battlefield may be a distant (or even non-existent) reality resulted, for some of the junior participants, in a readjustment of expectations and/or the acceptance of a new reality. As one participant explained:

> *I probably built it up to be more in my mind. But in terms of what they're offering…Like, you think 'I'm going Infantry so it's gonna be cool. I'll be training for combat 24/7'. But not really (J33M2).*

As another junior participant described how this realisation had required a shift in perspective:

> *I think I glamourised the Army heaps. Like the movies and stuff like that. I thought I had a view when I first started but I've become way more grounded, because it's definitely just a day to day job now rather than thinking there's gonna be some great war in the future (J31M2).*

For others, however, this paradox appeared to have a greater impact. The possibility of going into combat represented the ultimate test; the idea that they might not have an opportunity to be tested generated an inherent sense of pointlessness, and frustration. As another junior participant stated:

> *I guess it's because you come into the Army with the idea that you're going to do something. Well, you get told you're gonna do something that has purpose or it's gonna be mean. And then you get in and it's like, 'oh, we actually can't do anything because of all these rules.' On Corps Training you do all this stuff, and they're like 'you'll be able to do this.' But we can't do it because we've got no budget. Ok, I'll wait till we get to Battalion, but get there and 'we've got no money for anything'. And it's like woah, what's the point of being here? And so you do PT, PT has no structure. Come back at 1030 for an armoury timing, but the armoury doesn't open for another hour, so you're like mincing for an hour doing nothing. And then you're on the field getting told to assault. So you do one assault and then you're mincing until 3. Come back and wait for an armoury timing, which takes another hour. And then I've just wasted a huge portion of my day for nothing. And so the guys that have the drive, realise that and go find better things to do. And the guys that are happy to pretty much dole bludge will stick around. It's pretty sad, but the reality… Yeah, lack lustre…. It's been a complete buzz kill. It has not met expectations at all. You get told a whole bunch of stuff, and it's a complete lie (J28M2).*

The primary sense of frustration appeared to relate to a general lack of direction and sense of purpose that they had expected from Infantry (with deployment viewed as the ultimate end goal of both). Those who weren't prepared to accept the lack of deployment opportunities spoke of seeking an alternative career path that might provide the purpose that they had been expecting to find within Infantry. These alternatives included selection for the

Special Air Service (SAS) or New Zealand Police, enrolling in university education, or applying to join other trades within the NZ Army.

8.3 You don't see the chefs getting thrashed. Like, why would they?

A further factor that contributed towards a sense of disillusionment for many of the junior participants was the way in which they were treated. Most of the participants had expected (and accepted) being harshly disciplined during Basic Training and Corps Training. Indeed, this had been considered an important facet of making them 'tougher' Infantry soldiers. However, it appeared that there had also been a general expectation that once becoming fully fledged Infantry (i.e., awarded the red diamond at the end of Corps Training) their treatment within Battalion would be different.

For some of the junior participants this expectation had been realised. As one junior participant described life in Battalion:

> *It's nice as you don't really get treated like nothing now. And it's a lot more relaxed now. Unless we give someone a reason to baby us again. But it's nice (J8M2).*

Another participant deliberated on the difference between Corps Training and Battalion:

> *It's a lot more relaxed, but also there's an expectation. They don't hound you with every minor detail, but they expect you to know where your standard is and not to drop it (J52M).*

Being treated like 'people' rather than 'nothing', was found to be an important factor in these positive experiences of being in Battalion. This is because such treatment equated to being afforded a certain degree of respect. Respect was important to the junior participants because it also indicated that they were valued. As one junior participant explained,

> *Sarge, he's good, he's the man for that. And I think it's that sort of like Māori aspect kind of thing. He treats everyone the same, which is mean. But you still get that feel I guess that there's still that manaaki[30] aspect to him. And he gives that to everyone, regardless of where they're from, which is cool. And I feel like that's helped a lot, not just me but all the brothers (J16M2).*

[30] Manaaki is a Māori verb which means to support or take care of, and to show respect for, others (Moorfield, 2011).

Another junior participant also described the positive influence of leadership in creating an environment where it was safe to learn by making mistakes or putting forward ideas:

> *I think this is how every company should be run. What we learn is good, what we're taught is good, and it sort of I guess is progressive but not too progressive where it's detrimental to us doing our jobs. But it's moving with the times.*
>
> ***Can you give me an example?***
>
> *Like the way we learn is very open. Like we can express what we think and can get constructive feedback on our opinions, rather than being told 'no, this is the way it's done, because this is the way we were taught, and this is the way you'll do it.' And it might not make sense whatsoever. Whereas with us there's a bit of wiggle room with how you complete a task, as long as the task is completed and you meet the objective (J22M2).*

However, it became evident that such experiences were highly dependent upon those in command and were not necessarily the Infantry 'norm'.

The norm for Infantry was instead revealed by the way that discipline was observed to be enforced within the RNZIR (in comparison to other units or trades of the NZ Army). As one junior participant reflected:

> *If you look around at the other units around camp and you meet their commanders or just the people that are in command of them, they are just like super nice! I was doing MIFs[31] and I was talking to this driver, a sergeant driver, and she was the nicest person I've ever met in the Army! She was telling me all these stories, and I was like 'wow, geez, what I wouldn't give for just one day of that!' But at the same time sometimes you don't need that. Sometimes you need Sergeant [name redacted] telling you to hurry the fuck up! Yeah, he does his job really well, and really efficiently. That's what you want though, I don't wanna come to work and be cuddled. Yeah, as nice as it might sound, it's not what I'm here for. Nah they don't get cuddled, but definitely I've never seen a whole company of loggies[32] getting thrashed. Ever. I've never seen a loggie get thrashed to be honest. You don't see the chefs getting thrashed. Like why would they? They're chefs! That's alright I guess (J42M2).*

The stricter level of discipline was, therefore, a feature that appeared to differentiate Infantry from other (less combat-focused) roles. Although some of the junior participants were

[31] Managed Isolation Facilities or MIFs were those facilities set up during the Covid Pandemic for quarantine of international travellers to New Zealand. NZ Army played a significant security role within the MIFs as part of Op Protect.
[32] Slang word for 'logistics' soldiers.

prepared to accept this as a norm of Infantry, many were not. As a result, this was a catalyst for a number of junior participants wanting to leave Infantry.

Although militaries necessarily expect a high degree of discipline and adherence to hierarchy, this requirement was observed by the junior participants to be at an even higher level for Infantry. Certainly it was more than that supposedly demanded of chefs. One of the senior participants had previously suggested that treating Infantry soldiers harshly makes them 'better'. I began to wonder, however, at what point the justification of discipline became an excuse for inadequate personnel management practices. The junior participants did not appear to be unmotivated; nor did they seem to be poorly performing soldiers. On the whole, they were articulate and enthusiastic. Indeed, they had *volunteered* to be Infantry and appeared to have those same attributes that the senior leader participants had described as being desirable within the modern 'thinking' Infantry soldier. The greater problem appeared to lie, therefore, with the style of leadership being employed rather than the soldiers themselves. It was this which was pushing a number of the junior participants to seek alternative employment options outside of Infantry, rather than any specific 'pull' factor enticing the junior participants to leave.

The experiences described by many of the junior participants illustrated that independent thinking tended to be actively suppressed in favour of submissive obedience. A number of the junior participants described an environment within Battalion where the discipline was also overly strict or unreasonable. As one junior participant explained:

> *I haven't thought about this much but for me, you get really stressed out for really small things. Like this morning we were having a room inspection, and I was the only one who was told to come into work at eight. So I got to work at 8.01 and my sir is like, 'you fucked up, see me after work.' And now I'm just real anxious for what's going to happen after work all because I was a minute late kind of thing. So like I get the importance of it, they're big on it but like we know I wasn't getting on a helicopter or something, and we'd just had a room inspection so I was a minute late. So now I'm super anxious for what's going to happen after work. So just things like that, that sort of idea, like you can have the smallest fuck up and you just don't know what's going to happen next. Like I've had some big fuck ups*

and you kinda knew. But the little ones, you're like, am I gonna get three days flag pole[33] for this? That's a hard one (J15M2).

Another junior participant also described an inability to speak out against treatment that was perceived to be unreasonable or unfair:

Being talked down to. That frustrates me. And you cannot talk back at all, and that's a big thing for me that I can't defend myself because if I do it could be seen as insubordination. So anything could be perceived as insubordination, so for me a lot of the time it's just having to stay quiet and put my head down and when I go home I tell my missus about it and she's like, 'that sucks' but she doesn't understand it fully. So yeah. So I've actually gotten quite good at brushing a lot of things off, and just taking it on the chin. But it is kind of annoying. It's probably one of the reasons why I've decided to leave. I just chat to the boys, and anyone with rank I just tell them what they need. I think the working relationship could be better if it was more open communication rather than getting flagpole or charged if you say the wrong thing (J19M2).

The style of discipline experienced by many of the junior participants appeared to serve little other purpose than to illustrate the power of the NCOs in comparison to junior soldiers. Rather than making them 'better', this treatment simply frustrated many of the junior participants. This correlates with Harding's (2016) observation that, "in response to being fucked around, you learn 'to play the game'" (p.213).

Several of the junior participants spoke about how they liked to test the boundaries of Infantry discipline by finding 'loopholes' in the rules (such as wearing 'non-regulation' PT shorts, or wearing their hair in a slightly longer style than permitted). Others spoke about having blatantly flaunted the rules in their frustration at the overly strict disciplinary system. The rules of 'playing the game' were explained by one junior participant, who stated:

You can't take it too seriously, I mean that's why a lot of people don't make it through Basic or Corps Training. They take it too seriously and you have to take it seriously to a point, but once you start getting thrashed well they're just gonna keep thrashing you until they get bored. And so there's no point in trying to put your clothes on the fastest, because no one really cares. As long as you're not last. Never be last! That's the main thing (J42M2).

[33] 'Flag Pole' is a form of punishment where soldiers must stand at attention at the unit flag pole early morning (when the flag is raised), at lunchtime, and early evening (when the flag is lowered). This is often followed by a marching session around the parade ground taken by the Duty NCO.

It appeared that playing the game (which also correlated with being a 'nobody' without a voice), yielded better results than standing out by speaking up against unfair treatment. However, the impact of this type of emotional suppression also manifested itself as anxiety and depression for some of the junior participants. As one junior participant explained:

> *Like I don't know if it's just the way it is, but I've been going through a bit of a rough time since I've been in Battalion. Even my partner notices it because I've never been… like all through my whole life I've never had any anxiety, never ever been like … I wouldn't say depressed, but never had any thoughts like that whatsoever. Since being at Battalion, it's quite a lot. It's like, shit, what am I up to? (J29M2)*

This junior participant elaborated on things that had contributed towards making him feel this way:

> *I don't know if maybe it's a financial thing, or just heaps of added stress, and even like if something happens at work I'll tell my partner about it but it's hard telling her because she doesn't understand how it all works anyway. So I try to explain it in a way that I'm not bagging too much, but I'm trying to explain it in a way that it actually happened. But it's hard to explain… Yeah, I think it's different everywhere. But you'd get a lot more out of me if you just talked to me like normal. Like a normal bloke. Instead of a lot of the time just getting talked* ***at*** *(J29M2).*

I found it hard to comprehend the change in this junior participant's attitude towards Infantry, as he possessed every attribute that the senior participants had listed as desirable in an Infantry soldier. He was educated, mature, articulate, physically fit, resilient, and highly motivated. However, for no apparent reason other than the treatment received at Battalion, he had become anxious with depressive thoughts, and was strongly considering leaving the trade. It was clear that the style of leadership generally accepted as 'normal' within Infantry not only had significant impacts upon retention of the junior participants, but also had the potential to negatively impact upon mental health.

As a result of having to endure treatment that was considered overly harsh, and which no apparent justifiable cause, a number of the junior participants had grown tired of playing the game. As one junior participant explained:

> *I feel like sometimes they're like tough love, but they're not tough love they're just rude. I think they could just handle situations better, like there's obviously a time we need to be like tough you know and yelling but then especially in the Garrison you don't need to be a dick, like you don't need to be like 'hurry up cunt'… no, it's not nice, it's not even motivating. I think they do it to try and push their authority*

sometimes …I don't know, I don't know why they do … just because you're a corporal or whatever, it doesn't mean that you have to be an arsehole. The whole like, 'cunt' and swearing every second word, it's so not necessary. I think the belittling of the corporals and whatever, just making the baggies feel shit, you know…that doesn't make me feel like I really want to go to work today because I'm gonna get ripped into again, you know? And I think that's why heaps of the boys…like heaps of the boys get made fun of, like 'you're so fucken slow' and ra ra… and they laugh about it. But I know deep down that it's not funny to them. Like it doesn't actually make them want to stay. That's why half of them want to go (J50F2).

This junior participant's assessment of the negative impacts of such treatment on her peers seemed a great deal more insightful than that of her superiors. Overall, this treatment appeared more akin to a form of bullying than leadership. The concern being that junior soldiers within Infantry who are subjected to this style of 'leadership' will in time reproduce it, creating a perpetuating cycle of harmful behaviour that is very difficult to disrupt.

The conflicting element of these experiences of the junior participants was the perception that Infantry soldiers *should* be more disciplined that soldiers from other trades. Also that it makes them *better*. As such, it was considered a requirement of Infantry soldiers to handle strict discipline (including insults and harsh treatment), or otherwise be considered unsuited to the rigours of combat. However, this perception also appeared to exist for no other reason than simply because it was the way that it had always been done. In other words, did it actually make these soldiers better at the job of Infantry? Or was enduring harsher levels of discipline simply an unwritten 'norm' based on traditional (and arguably outdated) methods of preparing Infantry soldiers for the battlefield.

Discipline is described within literature as a traditionally important element of effective battlefield performance (King, 2013; Grossman, 1995; Bourke; 1999). Harsh and humiliating treatment has also historically been justified by militaries as psychological and physical preparation for combat roles (Bourke, 1999). However, as King (2013) also explains, the evidence to suggest that combat soldiers perform better as a result of the threat of discipline is unconvincing:

> Historians and social scientists have sometimes tried to determine the effect of discipline—and especially the threat of capital punishment—on the citizen soldier. It is very difficult to establish the degree to which sanctions contributed

> to combat performance. Some scholars, noting that the immediate terror of combat must overwhelm all other considerations but the drive for immediate self-preservation, have suggested that discipline can have played little role (p.364).

In reflecting upon the experiences of the junior participants, it was notable that those junior participants who had been treated with care or manaaki, and who consequently felt respected and valued, had not suffered any significant disciplinary lapses or performance issues as a result of their more respectful (presumably 'softer' treatment). This indicated that the stricter levels of discipline instilled within Infantry did not necessarily equate to better performance. Ultimately, it simply lead to a departure of the very same soldiers who were a good fit for what is needed on the *modern* battlefield.

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8.4 We've all just had to step up physically

Despite the sense of disillusionment or frustration that stemmed from certain aspects of being Infantry as described in the previous two sections, the physical challenge of being Infantry continued to be discussed by the majority of the junior participants in positive terms. This positivity was maintained in spite of, or perhaps as a result of, the physical demands pushing many of the participants to 'breaking point'. Having the opportunity to both test and prove themselves physically provided the junior participants a sense of achievement as Infantry soldiers. Since the initial stages of Basic Training the loads being carried by the junior participants had also become heavier, and the distances longer. As one participant described a recent training exercise:

> *I guess it was just a good entry into just like breaking yourself. Yeah, everyone got broken. There are only like a few people that came out the other side that weren't broken so it was good to find your limit. I found my limit as well. When I got back it just made me want to like get better so that the next time I do it I'm not as broken at that point (J44M2).*

Another junior participant described the way in which they and their colleagues had improved physically over time: *"We've all just had to step up physically. We've all just learned to push ourselves further than what we thought we could" (J8M2).*

Having the strength and endurance to carry another person or a heavy pack were considered to be particularly important physical attributes required to fulfil the Infantry job. One junior

participant spoke of their desire to embody the particular form of physicality that meant completing these tasks:

> *So yeah, and you look at the bigger guys in the company or platoon, and during a pack mark or when they're carrying someone, it's breezy for them. And then you look at the smallest guys and they're really struggling. They barely go like 10 metres with a guy on them. But they put in the effort and that's what matters. But at the end of the day, if you can't carry someone then you're a liability. Especially in this work. So yeah, it's a goal of mine to definitely get bigger and quite a bit stronger. And that just takes time really. In a year or so I'll be this much stronger, because that's how it works. But I definitely feel like I have to change, for sure (J42M2).*

The type of physicality that was admired by the majority of the junior participants was, therefore, a decidedly masculine image of endurance, toughness, and strength. The inability to meet this standard perceived as being a potential battlefield liability.

The physical attributes of strength and endurance are suggested to symbolise the very essence of being Infantry (O'Sullivan, 2016; Woodward, 2000; Hockey, 2002). This type of physicality also distinguishes Infantry from other trades that have a more technical, and presumably relatively less physical, focus. The way in which the physicality of Infantry was juxtaposed against other trades of the NZ Army was demonstrated by one junior participant, who reflected:

> *Every time I look at the Sigs they're drinking a coffee. Chilling out. Yeah, it looks cool just chilling out. But then I see Recon[34] and FSG[35], and they're doing PT or they're muddy, or dirty hands, or they're lifting something heavy. So I just wanna do that, something cool! (J2M2).*

Proving one's physical strength was described by all of the junior participants to be an important feature of being Infantry. It was also within this masculine domain of physicality that the female junior participants continued to feel pressure to prove their performance as equal to that of the men.

As discussed in previous chapters, women are often discounted as not being strong or big enough to fulfil the physical tasks of being Infantry (Ellner, 2015; MacKenzie, 2015; Dyches, et al, 2023). In order to 'keep up', or at least 'not be last', the female junior participants spoke

[34] Reconnaissance Platoon
[35] Fire Support Group

about needing to improve their physical strength and endurance. As one female participant explained:

> *I've been working really, really hard on my fitness in my personal time because I kinda got to the point where I was like 'well, it's my choice to be fit or not. It's my choice how much I suffer at work so if I wanna you know be at the back and be suffering and not do anything about it then that's what I get.' So yeah, I started working out five times a week every morning from 5:30 till 6:30 then doing PT at work every day and I've noticed a huge difference. A huge difference, and it's done wonders for my mental health as well because normally I show up to PT thinking 'fuck like I'm gonna be the slowest again like I don't really want to do this it's embarrassing.' But now I can show up and I'm caning some of the boys and it's awesome (J53F2).*

With additional training and time carrying a heavy pack, most of the female participants described an increased ability (and confidence) to meet the physical demands. This finding correlates with MacKenzie's (2015) suggestion that "biology might not be operational destiny" (p.103). In other words, physical differences between men and women are not necessarily insurmountable in terms of achieving the physical requirements of combat roles (MacKenzie, 2015; Dyches, et al, 2023).

It was evident that those male junior participants who had witnessed the physical capability of female soldiers were more inclined to recognise the ability of women to perform the Infantry role. In some instances it was also acknowledged that women had to put in more effort than men. As one participant suggested:

> *I know most women's bodies are built differently to the way a male is structured. So for them to do it, it means a bit more, because their body is not meant to do that. That's what I think anyway. Like when I see females doing it, they're doing a bit more because we as males are built to be like strong, it's meant to be one of our attributes way back in the day. Whereas women are meant to be family, like way back in the day kind of thing. I'm not trying to be like stereotypical, but like so any woman who passes, it's like good job! (J2M2)*

A number of the junior participants also expressed the view that women could succeed physically, on equal terms with the men within Infantry. This suggests a willingness to accept women's participation within the Infantry role, albeit dependent upon proving their physical performance.

The conditional acceptance of women based upon their ability to meet the physical standard had been voiced by a significant number of senior participants, and was reiterated in the narratives of the junior participants. As one junior participant explained:

> *I think if you're strong enough and fit enough you can do everything that everyone can. It doesn't matter who you are, as long as you can do what's required of you (J14M2).*

This philosophy was also voiced about men. Indeed, the fact that weaker men were frowned upon within Infantry appeared to justify the same attitude towards women. As one junior participant stated: *"I think it's the person, always. Because I've met too many fellas that don't even deserve to be around here to be honest" (J36M2).* I found this curious, as both the senior and junior participant cohorts had frequently spoken of Infantry being a 'team' environment. This suggests that there might be allowances for those who were physically smaller or weaker than others (regardless of their gender), and yet have other skills and attributes which might enhance team performance. However, there appeared to be very little leniency for those who did not adequately meet the Infantry physical 'standard'. Physical ability consequently appeared to outweigh any other contribution that an individual could make to the team.

According to one male junior participant who spontaneously offered his perspective on women's physical performance, negative attitudes were inherent within the RNZIR due to women's perceived inability to meet the physical standard. Such attitudes were attributed primarily to the 'double standards' of the RFL fitness test, which allowed women to gain a G1 pass at a slower run time than men. As he explained:

> *Your study is about women in the infantry? Cos a lot of people reckon there shouldn't be women in the Infantry. From my experience, the idea is good. If you're good enough to be here, it doesn't matter who you are, you should be allowed in. But then, meet the standard. That's the issue, because I think I'd say males look down on women in the Infantry, for sure. But it all comes down to the standard, because everyone talks about like a G1 female, it's not that much of an achievement. So automatically you're looked down on because you're not meeting the standard. Whereas I reckon there would be a huge shift if everyone had the same standard. Maybe for 100's club, if a chick got that then good on you. But if it's just a G1? If the standard were raised there would be a huge shift in mindset in the way that women get treated.*
>
> ***Do you all have to meet the G1 standard?***

Infantry, it should be the G1. It's a good standard of fitness, so everyone should be hitting that. But there's such a difference between G1 male and G1 female, and you'll be cruising along and look back and the chick's way at the back and you're like, 'woah, why do they deserve to be here? They're useless, they can't even run properly.' But if they're already at that standard, they'll be running the same as you.

Ok so men get more time as they get older. Do they get looked down on if they're using that extra time?

That's for a G2. I don't think so. Not really. I think it's the walking RFL that gets looked down on, that's the one that gets looked down on. But I don't think as you get older that bracket changes people's opinion. Because it's all the same standard (J28M2)

I found this discussion interesting as it revealed a double standard in the application of the double standard theory. Whilst age was not a moderator of perceptions about a person's suitability to be Infantry, gender *was*. An inability to meet the male G1 standard therefore appeared to prove the assumption that *women* were unsuited to (and thus undeserving of) being Infantry, however it was not an indicator of the unsuitability of *men*.

Many of the female junior participants were able to prove their physical competence as Infantry, and this contributed towards positive opinions by men about the suitability of women as Infantry. As one male junior participant stated:

I guess it just comes down to your mindset and how far you're willing to push yourself. Because I've seen some really fit chicks that can out-perform a lot of guys. So I guess it just comes down to how far you're willing to push yourself (J8M2).

However, it would take just one example of female weakness, or inability to meet the 'standard', to change a positive opinion to negative. It was also found by some of the female junior participants that meeting the physical standard was not always enough to dispel the perception that they were not physically capable. Most of the female participants described encountering explicitly negative attitudes towards their physical abilities simply due to being women. As one participant explained:

Like everyone expects women to be weaker. Like my section commander said straight up, to my face, that he thought that I was going to be weak because I'm a woman. He said it to my face. He said, 'oh, but you proved me wrong.' But the fact that he was willing to say, because I was a woman that he thought I was going to be weaker. I was just wild. I told my section, and the dudes were like, 'yeah, I

thought you were going to be weak too!' So everyone thinks that you're going to be weaker, so you do have to prove people wrong. And even then they keep wanting to say that you're weaker. It can be pretty exhausting (J45F2).

Another female junior participant described the frustration of being judged more harshly than the men simply for being a woman:

In a male dominated job that can be quite frustrating especially because you're the person at the back and you're also a female. It's not just that it's the last person, it's 'so yeah that's the last person ….and she's a chick!' So you know I'm lucky that my fitness is pretty decent and most of the time I can keep up with the boys and stuff like that but yeah that can be a huge factor, because it's not just you're the last person it's, 'yep and you're a chick, of course!' So that's something that's been like quite hard to come to terms with and also with myself just remembering that it doesn't necessarily matter if I'm at the back or near the back, I know I'm trying hard. So that's pretty challenging (J53F2).

Both of these participants had come to terms with their own physical abilities in comparison to their male colleagues. However, it was the fear of being judged for not being able to 'keep up' that had resulted in at least one of the junior female participants seeking a trade change to a less physically demanding role.

It was, however, revealed that the greater impact upon the junior participants' ability to perform the physical aspects of the Infantry job was *injury*, rather than gender. Approximately 30 percent of both the male and female junior participants spoke unbidden about suffering an injury during the previous 12 months. This was not a topic that I had purposefully asked the junior participants to discuss, so I suspect that the official statistics of injuries suffered would have been significantly higher. The variety of injuries reported by the junior participants ranged from lower limb injuries such as shin splints, sprained ankles and hyper-extended knees, through to shoulder injuries, nerve damage and back pain. These injuries often resulted in sick leave, light duties and/or rehabilitation. In more severe cases such injuries had caused non-completion of Combat Corps Training or had posed the potential for discharge from the Infantry trade.

One participant explained their belief that such injuries were related to the way in which Infantry activities were conducted:

I think maybe the intensity, from no intensity to full intensity… if you gave a civilian a 30 kg pack and said 'go for it' for a 5 km run, they would probably break. And

> *that's the same thing with us. We're not civilians but if we go on two weeks of leave, and then come back and on the Friday we go for a pack march, my body's conditioned but at the same time there's that risk factor. And there's not a lot of build-up training. And when they chuck you on exercise, you're out there for 3 weeks and you carry a pack for the whole time. And at the end of the exercise there is usually a big pack march for 10-15 km… it's like 'yay!!' And that always breaks people. Especially after three weeks, because that is right at the end so you're already broken and already got some niggles. You've been assaulting all that time, and digging holes. You're pretty battered and then it's like 'we'll really get you now!' (J422M)*

When asked if the injuries suffered could be attributed to the physical requirements of the Infantry role, another junior participant stated, "*Yeah, but you can't really change that. It's the loads on your back, and the long distances that have to be done" (J5M2).* Although accepted as a necessity of the Infantry job, the consequence was that a significant number of the junior participants were 'broken' or unable to perform physically as a result.

It appeared that the design and style of training performed by Infantry was a key contributor towards the injuries suffered by the junior participants. Digging holes, carrying heavy loads, assaulting, and walking long distances over undulating ground, were all described as being hard on the body. These are considered standard tasks of an Infantry soldier, and arguably the risk of injury in performing them cannot be mitigated. However, it appeared that this was also an assumption that had not been challenged. Literature suggests that methods of training combat soldiers have not traditionally taken into account an individual's physiology (Dyches, et al, 2023). This appeared true of the RNZIR, with some of the junior participants discussing how they frequently had to carry a pack that weighed more than half their own body weight. Investigating opportunities for redesigning Infantry training that take physiological needs into account would likely, therefore, improve the performance and physical health of both male and female Infantry soldiers.

8.5 That's the best part, just being with the boys I think

For the majority of the junior participants, the challenges of being Infantry were mitigated by the friendships with each other. Likened to being a family (and often described by the junior participants as a brotherhood), the majority of the participants described these friendships had become the most rewarding part of being Infantry. As one participant explained in

response to a question asking what had been the most rewarding aspect of being Infantry to date:

> *Probably like the brotherhood, all the bonds and friendships that you make. That and enduring hardship together. That's what I've enjoyed most about the Infantry (J38M2).*

Another participant elaborated:

> *Probably just like the relationship that you've got with your boys, like whenever we're doing something like stupidly tough we get to the end of the week and all the boys are always there like talking about it and laughing about it. Like when you're doing this like really tough stuff they're always there with you, and it's just good to have that like comradeship. And the friendships you build are like closer than anyone that I've built relationships with in the past, but yeah that's the best part just being with the boys I think, yeah (J44M2).*

It was clear that the sense of friendship amongst the male junior participants had strengthened since Basic Training; this largely by facing hardships together. As another participant explained:

> *Even though I was suffering in the cold, you see your mates suffering as well, so you think if they can do it then I can. That motivated myself, if they can do it then I can do it. That's what I liked, my mates suffering together. And whatever we do we do together, like we get shit sleep so we all get shit sleep. It's not like one person suffering. You're helping each other out (J20M2).*

Conversely, the stronger the bonds of friendship, the greater the hardship that the participants also felt that they could face.

Shared hardships, shared punishments, shared accommodation and shared social activities are all prominent features of life within Infantry. These activities are commonly manufactured in order to foster teamwork and cohesion (O'Sullivan, 2016). The resultant relationships that develop between combat soldiers are expected, and nurtured, as a critical aspect of combat effectiveness. Phrases such as the 'band of brothers' or 'brothers in arms' are also commonly used to glamourise such bonds (MacKenzie, 2015; Kuhne, 2017). As MacKenzie (2015) states, the band of brothers ideology provides a common narrative to depict "men's unique connection to one another and their ability to overcome extreme odds to protect the nation" (p.1). It also serves as a myth that encourages men's commitment to fight (MacKenzie, 2015).

There was a very real perception for some of the participants that the loyalties of brotherhood would transpire at some point in the future into acts of heroism and self-sacrifice. As one participant explained:

> *I'm not afraid, like when people ask 'would you be fine with killing someone?' Well I'd rather kill the enemy than see my brothers die. That's something, I could live with killing the enemy but what would get me would be seeing my brothers die. So yeah, I would kill the enemy over my brothers dying (J32M).*

Relying upon one another in a life or death battlefield situation appeared to encapsulate the essence of what it meant to be brothers. As another junior participant described, the reciprocal element of these friendships was important:

> *It's more just looking after the boys, and the boys look after you in return as well and it's just like one of the biggest things that keeps you going in the field is having your guys around you to look after you and you look after them. That's what gets you through it all (J44M2).*

This indicated the need to demonstrate reciprocity (or at least the potential to reciprocate) in order to be accepted into the brotherhood (Connor, Andrews, Noack-Lundberg & Wadham, 2021). Many of the junior participants spoke of 'having each others' backs', and this appeared to be the hallmark of acceptance.

Such friendships also extended beyond the professional boundaries of the Infantry role. Living together and socialising together were considered important elements of the bonding process. In some instances the boundaries between professional and social contexts appeared profoundly blurred. As one participant explained:

> *I know I've got in trouble a few times with my wife when I've been like, 'I have to go out and socialise with these guys.' And she's like, 'no you don't, you're just going out and getting on the piss'. Yeah, but it's a bit different and it's hard to explain because you haven't done it yourself and been through Basic and Corps Training with these people. And I know we're in a peacetime army at the moment, but if the shit hit the fan and we were in Ukraine tomorrow, these are the guys I'd be going with. And I need that special bond with these guys so that I know that I feel safe, and so that they feel safe. And that kinda brotherhood sort of bond, without it becoming like a gang, is quite important. And yeah, I don't know what the word is for it, but it's there and it's real, and it's hard to explain to anyone not in the Army. And that's probably what I value the most with this job (J22M2).*

These informal ways of being Infantry that impacted the personal lives of the participants, were commonly justified by the need for group cohesion. As another junior participant stated:

"It's not just like a job, any normal job where you work and go home and do your own thing. You always hang out" (J2M2). Social acceptance, which enabled the sense of belonging to the brotherhood, appeared to be a critical aspect of being Infantry.

As MacKenzie (2015) suggests, "the band of brothers, then, is not simply a myth about an all-male unit; it is a myth about a white, heterosexual man and his nonsexual bonds with his comrades" (p.15). Mackenzie (2015) also argues that the exclusivity of these bonds enables the 'band of brothers' mythology to support the exclusion of women, even despite the removal in many militaries of combat exclusion policies. This mythology arguably also supports the exclusion of gay or transgender men, or any other minority group that may be considered a threat to cohesion. This ultimately has implications for any identity that does not fit the ideal mould (MacKenzie, 2015; Wadham, 2017; Connor et al, 2021).

It was recognised by several of the male junior participants that it would be challenging for women to fit into the brotherhood. Physical isolation was observed by one of the male junior participants to have a negative impact on the bonding process. As this participant reflected:

> *Because like to be honest, most of the time when we bond, it's when you live in the barracks as well. That's why all the companies are all in their own barrack rooms, so they can talk to each other and help each other with their packs, and that's actually one thing when if say the company has got a task to do, we go back into the barracks and do it, but she's off doing it by herself and we're not allowed to go in those barracks. So like, I don't know how that works. So when we get to know each other and stuff, she kind of gets left out and she's kind of there and we're here. And that makes it even worse, because first of all we're males and she's a female, and second of all she's got this divide already (J2M2).*

So although a number of the male junior participants suggested that women could be part of the brotherhood, full participation appeared to be inhibited by structural barriers that maintained distance between the sexes. In addition to structural barriers, some of the male junior participants had observed the explicit social exclusion of women by their male colleagues. As explained by one junior participant:

> *Being a dude, I think it's easier. Being a chick, I think it's harder. Like in regards to social interactions, and sometimes physically as well. Sometimes physically. And just like I dunno, all the boys just make really, really bad remarks and really sexist remarks that usually would not be allowed and you'd probably get fired from your job for. Just like, 'what! Did you just say that?' It's incredible, what the heck! (J9M2)*

An awareness of the challenges that women faced within the social setting of Infantry did not, however, translate into an ability to act more inclusively. As this participant elaborated:

> *Well that's the thing. I know there are a lot of boys that don't agree with the comments that are made, and everything, but it's just having the courage to actually say something. It's like, you know, you say something and it's like, 'you're just a bla bla bla'. You know, so it's like, yeah.*
>
> ***Ok, that sounds difficult.***
>
> *Yeah, it is (J9M2).*

The inability to act against discriminatory behaviours is explained by Olsthoorn (2007), who suggests that:

> the one thing that fosters physical courage most, social cohesion, inhibits moral courage (and the related virtue of integrity – mentioned as often as courage in the lists of virtues and values). Militaries tend to breed conformism, and they are for that reason, in general, not bastions of moral courage, and probably never will be (p.275).

The risk of jeopardising their own acceptance within the group prevented those male junior participants, who wanted to act more inclusively, from doing so. The implications of this for the integration of women (as well as the effectiveness of Infantry on the modern battlefield, where moral courage is becoming increasingly important), are significant. However, very few of either the junior or senior participants suggested that there might be a need to re-evaluate the ways in which social cohesion is fostered within the RNZIR (Olsthoorn, 2007).

The social dynamic of Infantry was discussed by several of the female junior participants as being difficult to negotiate. The banter, the drinking, the shared living and the socialising that cemented the bonds between the male participants were not key features of the experiences of the women. In several cases, the female participants had explicitly chosen to exclude themselves from such activities. As one participant explained:

> *I didn't want to fit in, because I knew my morals and everything, and I wasn't going to change that to try and squeeze in with the boys. Because they were out the gate, some of them were just like, shouldn't be in that job even. So no, I never thought about changing myself to do that (J46F2).*

This female junior participant had consequently left the Infantry trade. The way in which the social dynamic impacted upon women's sense of belonging was also described by another female participant:

> *For the guys it's easy because obviously they've got that like that brotherly kind of thing and they do the boy stuff, so it's kind of hard for females to get in on that. Like I'm not in any of the boy group chats because obviously like number one, I wouldn't wanna be and number two, I wouldn't wanna be. And it's just the stuff that they're posting. And so I feel like it's hard to kind of feel like that sense of belonging in a way because you kind of feel like an outsider, even though you're not, but you kind of feel like you're an outsider because it's just like 'the boys' and then there's a girl you know. Even if there's more girls, which would be better, but you'd still find the boys and the girls, you know? Yeah because I feel that the boys, no matter what, they will still not fully 100% accept you as a grunt. Because it's like a boys club. And then I feel like the boys don't want, you know, because if a girl's doing their job then it kinda makes him feel inferior in a way. And so it's like 'but she's doing my job, so we have to be mean to her a little bit'. Or just like be a bit more tough on her to boost my ego up! That's how I feel, because boys don't like girls doing what they do (J50F2).*

Furthermore, the female junior participants didn't speak about a familiar 'sisterly' bond with their female Infantry peers. This was, in part, due to their physical locations which often prevented friendships from forming (although some of the female Infantry soldiers knew each other by name, they hadn't necessarily met each other). Even when working within the same location, the female junior participants would find themselves in different companies with different schedules, which made it difficult for social relationships to form. The lack of female bonding was also perhaps a symptom of the masculine nature of social cohesion in the Infantry, whereby solidarity amongst women is not explicitly encouraged in the same way that it is for men. One of the female junior participants reflected, for example, on the change in relationship that had occurred between herself and her female colleagues since Basic Training:

> *I was saying about how the girls were such a great team we really worked together well compared to boys and all of that. It's interesting now how us girls aren't, I wanna say friends …but kind of like we're not really friends anymore. Whereas all the boys are like super close now, like hanging out on weekends. So that's kind of interesting (J48F2).*

So while the brotherhood ideology flourished, amongst the male participants, the experiences of the female participants indicated that they were more often existing on the periphery of this social context. A social context that appeared to primarily benefit men.

8.6 So accepted, yes, sometimes. Depends, I dunno. Maybe?

Gaining acceptance was a key indicator of having successfully 'fitted in' as Infantry. The majority of the male junior participants felt that they were accepted by their peers, albeit that this was often illustrated by describing ways in which they might know that they weren't. In other words, providing examples of those they had observed to be excluded. As one participant stated: *"I know if I'm doing well if I'm not getting yelled at or just like somebody physically says to me 'nobody likes you'" (J9M2).* As another participant explained:

> *It's just because we've seen people that the boys don't really accept, and everybody kind of just isolates that person. And they're kind of just left alone, and out of a lot of things that we do. Like outside of work (J82M).*

As one of the female participants observed, such practices were often modelled on the behaviour of the Infantry NCOs:

> *Like if the NCOs don't like a person then the boys will be like, 'we don't like them either.' Just to try and get in their good books. It's like they're big brother and they're trying to get on big brother's good side. Like, run with the big boys. Because it wasn't that bad at Basic, but now it's just like such a boys club, 100%. Like there's obviously boys there that people don't like, and I don't mind because I don't not like anyone, but they'll just be walking past and the boys will be like, 'oh, look at that shit cunt'. Like, what's the point? It's just unnecessarily rude comments, why are you saying that? If you don't like them then keep it to yourself. I just don't get it (J50F2).*

Practices of exclusion provided a means of regulating who was accepted and who wasn't, and based on the indications that they weren't being excluded the majority of the male junior participants felt that they were accepted by their peers. For the female junior participants, however, acceptance appeared more difficult to gauge.

It is suggested that professionalism and competence are increasingly becoming determinants of solidarity amongst soldiers, rather than 'social homogeneity' (King, 2017) – suggesting that "as long as a woman can perform, she might be accepted by male colleagues" (King, 2017, p.147). Having completed both Basic Training and Combat Corps Training, some of the female participants discussed how they had managed to gain professional credibility amongst their male colleagues. However, this required having to consistently prove the men's perceptions of them to be wrong. It also meant tolerating negative attitudes from men whilst doing so, as one participant explained:

> *I sort of expected some of the attitudes that I've encountered. Which is probably bad in itself, as I shouldn't have to expect that, people should just give you a chance. But I think I'm just a bit of a realist and I expected some of that, so things don't really affect me as much as perhaps they would affect someone else who hasn't had to deal with feeling like they don't belong or being, you know, the only chick in the room (J54F2).*

As another participant explained, it was possible to gain acceptance from those who she worked closely with, but there were frequent examples of a lack of acceptance more broadly:

> *There were other people in the company who, it tended to be the younger guys, were very immature. They'd make sexist comments, say that women aren't good enough, we're not strong enough, not capable of being combat soldiers. And that if they were in combat they wouldn't want to fight with a woman. Which is stupid when I was performing better than them (J45F2).*

These experiences suggested that, for the female junior participants, despite being professionally competent, acceptance was difficult to achieve. As one female participant suggested: *"So accepted, yes, sometimes. Depends, I dunno. Maybe? A little bit? Yes/No? It's a hard one to answer!" (J50F2).*

The female participants often found their performance to be scrutinised more intensely than that of the men. As such, they had to consistently work harder to earn the trust or mutual respect of their male peers. Any lapses (or even successes) in performance were also attributed to their gender, rather than simply attributed to their ability as Infantry soldiers. As one female participant explained after qualifying on an Infantry course:

> *I sort of disappointed myself afterwards because I don't think you can help it sometimes, because if I pass they're just gonna say 'she got a bro pass[36], she's a girl' but if I failed it would be 'well of course she failed, she shouldn't be there, she's a girl.' (J54F2)*

Another female participant described the complexity of countering such attitudes towards women's performance:

> *I think it would be absolutely easier to be a man, because no one is going to judge you and tell you that you're not good enough to be in your job despite you being one of the top performers. No one's gonna do that if you're a guy. Because everyone thinks a man can do that easy. As soon as it's a woman, it's like 'I bet she can't do it' 'I bet she's too weak' 'she's not good at this'. Even if she's out there doing it and showing everyone that she can. From what I've heard, talking to other*

[36] A 'bro pass' is a slang term for a qualification that has been handed to someone, rather than achieved through competence.

> *women, they've had other issues. They're good at their job, but people still shit on them. So it's pretty shit that that's what we get, just for being women. Because people won't talk about how well we're doing, they'll just try and bring us down (45-F-2).*

For the female junior participants, therefore, their gender positioned them at a symbolic disadvantage to the men. This despite their ability, at times, to out-perform their male colleagues.

The difficulty facing the female junior participants in terms of acceptance suggests that they were faced with stereotypical and essentialist understandings of gender (whereby women within the RNZIR are viewed as the biologically 'weaker' sex and thus less capable than men of coping with the demands of being Infantry). It is notable, however, that the female participants described the Infantry role in similar terms as the male participants: challenging but rewarding. One female participant described the most enjoyable part of being Infantry: "*Honestly, probably the field. Just learning about the different weapons and stuff, I think that wide range of knowledge is very important and I loved doing that. I don't like bookwork, I just like hands on the most (J46F2).* The job of Infantry was, therefore, not the limiting factor in the ability of the female participants to perform. The difficulties that they encountered were more often related to the negative perceptions of their performance, simply due to being women.

Acceptance did not, as King (2017) suggests, appear to be solely related to the professional performance of the Infantry job. Acceptance was instead made distinctly problematic for the female participants due to their gender. As one female participant explained,

> *You get more attention if you're a girl, you get more focus on you. But the job itself has no difference for either gender. It's just the 'you are a woman' label that follows you forever. Men have a better integration, but overall everyone does the same job (J55F2).*

The way in which women's gender problematises acceptance within the Infantry was exemplified by a female junior participant who had changed trades. She described her integration at a non-Infantry unit as being distinctly different to that within the RNZIR:

> *Like the guys there are also really welcoming and look out for you. Like even the differences between going to the bar with the Infantry guys and then going to the bar with them is completely different. Everyone is laughing, and not being rude. I*

> *feel really respected, I have no complaints about it, I love it. It's completely different culture-wise. We've done so many things that I've enjoyed. I feel safer at work, I feel comfortable that no one is talking about me. If anything, everyone is asking how I'm doing. It's a comfortable environment (J46F2).*

This distinction between a unit environment that is disrespectful and unsafe for women, in comparison to one that isn't, illustrates that within the same Army the 'accepted way of doing things' can create subcultures which may be more or less accepting of women. As one female participant explained, it was this difference in culture that had created the most significant challenge of being Infantry:

> *Probably just adjusting to like the infantry lifestyle. I think just how obviously how male dominated it is and you have to like, I don't know maybe be careful just because I don't know, the boys …I don't know how to explain it. Just like just adjusting to this lifestyle, because if I was working with my chef friends, their lifestyle being a loggie is so much more …not chill, but just nicer I think (J50F1).*

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the majority of the female participants believed that it was easier to be a man than a woman within the Infantry. As another female participant explained, "*It's not the actual job itself that's hard. I think it's being seen as equal and able to do stuff just as good as the men" (J452F).*

Most of the female junior participants had proposed in the previous chapter that the masculine nature of Infantry might necessitate that they adapt their behaviour accordingly. Developing a thicker skin to deal with sexist insults, acting 'tough' in front of their male peers, being less friendly, and not showing 'feminine' emotions were all confirmed during the second interview as being necessary adaptations to fit in better. As one participant suggested, *"I don't think that's necessarily changing my personality, it's just being a bit more manly I guess!" (J49F2).* However, another female participant explained that changing her personality had been a purposeful strategy:

> *Yeah, so from the moment I joined to where I am now I don't think I'm the same person. It's just been a lot easier to be, for lack of a better word, a bitch. Because then people can't walk all over me. Because that's what they did when I first got there. I'm not very happy with it. But I need it to do my job, and if it makes my work day easier then I'm just gonna do it anyway (J55F2).*

Another female participant also explained how she had adapted her personality to fit into the Infantry:

> *Being a grunt, like my personality I've had to like hinder it, like change it. Just to adjust to the lifestyle and adjust to the job heaps. I can't be this bubbly or whatever because the corporals will be like, 'shut the fuck up!' Because infantry is super grunty, and you do lots of physical stuff, but it's like you just do heaps of physical work but then you get told like 'don't say anything, just do'. So I feel like you don't get any say in anything, but just carry this and walk. Don't speak. Don't have a personality. They just want you to be a robot in a way. Which is annoying because I am not a robot. Like I have a flair, my flair on life (J50F2).*

These experiences demonstrate that the female participants were unable to challenge the Infantry status quo. Instead, as they had previously predicted, their participation required them to reproduce the accepted masculine model of behaviour and performance.

It is suggested that junior women within the military rarely object to the gendered conditions of the institution (Persson, 2011). They are instead more focused on fitting in and proving themselves, and would prefer to be one of the guys rather than be singled out for being female (Persson, 2011). This was true of the majority of the female junior participants; although they could see issues with the status quo, they did not feel comfortable calling attention to it. As one female participant reflected, however, there was also a need to somehow address 'female' issues or problems: *"I know that a lot of the other girls don't want to always talk about girl stuff. But then they'll complain about it. So unless you do talk, it's not going to get any better" (J54F2).* One of the difficulties that the female junior participants faced, however, was that there were few people within their unit that they could comfortably speak with for advice or support.

The lack of more senior Infantry women was described by several of the female participants as a factor that made navigation of the Infantry environment more difficult for them than for men within Infantry. As one female participant explained:

> *Also another big challenge that I don't think many people talk about is being a female with your whole rank structure being male. And most of my bosses are really good you know but what happens if out of the blue I get my period. They're not gonna wanna hear that and it's also uncomfortable telling someone that. And you would like to think that they'll be okay with it but a lot of times they're not. So with stuff like that it's quite difficult and sometimes it can be quite hard to approach those sorts of subjects on a wide range of things (J53F2).*

Another female participant described the possible benefit of having access to a more senior female to speak with:

> *Someone to see things from your point of view, because the boys really don't understand how different it is. Like every time I try to bring this up with them, they're like 'but you're doing the same job'. But I tell them that coming to work for you is not the same as coming to work for me. It's hard for people to understand why the job is a little bit harder than it is for men, I think (J55F2).*

As a result, the support available to women within the Infantry was perceived to be less than that provided to the men within the Infantry. It was also perceived to be less than that provided to women within other trades of the NZ Army. As another female participant reflected:

> *Like, the Army is very supportive of females which is really good. But I think that our unit, just because there's no females, they don't really have the support that needs to be there for females I guess (J50F2).*

The type of support that was suggested to be helpful included the presence of more senior women. However, this suggestion also intimated a need for greater acknowledgement that women are participating members of the Infantry Battalions. Such an acknowledgement might then support an adjustment to those current practices and processes (or 'ways of doing things') that are predominantly male-oriented.

In the absence of such support, it was apparent that resilience had become the key to ongoing participation of the female junior participants as Infantry. This was not the type of resilience that enabled them to carry a pack or live in the field during adverse weather conditions. All of the female participants had proven their ability to successfully do this. Instead, it was about the day-to-day resilience required within an environment where women were generally perceived as an unwelcome anomaly. The experiences of the female junior participants indicated that the desire for increased gender diversity expressed by senior leadership of the NZ Army had not readily translated into tangible outcomes for women within the RNZIR.

8.7 If you're not good enough to be here, you shouldn't be here

In reflecting upon the experiences of both the male and female junior participants, it was evident that there existed a preferred model of gender performance (Connell, 2005), which

the junior participants were expected to adopt. Whilst the female junior participants were generally aware of the masculine nature of this model, the male junior participants were not. The male junior participants did not speak of embodying certain characteristics or behaviours in order to become more 'masculine'. Instead, they simply described the desirable traits (or performance of behaviour) as a normal way of being Infantry.

As Hale (2012) explains: "the process of of miltiarization crucially serves the purpose of creating and maintaining qualities and attributes that can fulfil the military role – to fight for and defend one's nation. The military reframes masculinities as a means of meeting the aims of militarization" (p. 713). It appeared that masculine traits in the context of Infantry had, indeed, been reframed to be about operational effectiveness rather than masculinity. Reflecting on this lead me to recall a discussion with one of the senior leader participants on the topic of the Infantry 'type'. The senior leader participant's perspective was that anyone who didn't display the desired hegemonic masculine performance (not that he described the Infantry 'type' using the term 'hegemonic') would soon be 'weeded out' of Infantry. As he explained:

> *There's a lot of expectation and perceived performance expectation on Infantry officers and infantry soldiers. So if you're different it's very hard to fit in because you're perceived differently. I remember as a young officer, we lost four Lieutenants in six months who were sacked by the unit because they didn't fit in. They didn't look right. I remember all four of them by name and they were all a bit different looking. So that's really challenging because they weren't really given a fair shot based on their competence or capability. It was more that they didn't look right. Interestingly, I got told that I'd never command an infantry battalion because I didn't swear enough. And I remember when I got told that, and I don't believe it's true I think I could command a battalion if I put myself forward for one, when I got told that I thought 'you know what, I'm not going to take that as a criticism.' I'm not going to accept as a criticism that I need to swear at my soldiers more to fit in. So there is a massive pressure on infantry to fit in, and to be part of the team. And if you're a bit of an introvert or a bit on the fringes then you kind of don't fit in. And when you've got 140 infantry and 100 are full blown alphas, the other 40 don't have a shot. The thought is that they sort of 'weed out' if that's the right term, a whole lot of people really early on and then we're left with these hard core, wannabe, down and dirty infantry types. And then it's set from that point forward. So I suspect that's what's going on, and the tragedy is that we're losing good talent at the same time (S13M).*

When revisiting the junior participants, it had appeared that the majority of those who remained within Infantry had managed to fit this type (presumably those who hadn't up until this point had already been 'weeded out'). However, it was also noticeable that some of the junior participants were more comfortable doing so than others.

There were several male junior participants who appeared to be specifically thriving within the Infantry environment. These participants seemed more accepting than others of the discipline, the banter, the insults, the swearing and the socialising. As one junior participant explained about the banter, for example:

> *I don't know what the word is for it. But we know it's friendly between us, but for an outsider jumping in on the conversation they could find it quite offensive. But for us, it's our way of telling each other that we've got each others' backs… I think everyone has got, you just learn if someone is actually offended by it or not, and then you can stop it straight away. But I'd say it's probably worse if no one is talking to you like that than if they are, because then you're sort of excluded from that banter (J22M2).*

These participants also demonstrated a high level of self-confidence, and were quick to judge others perceived to be less competent than themselves. As one of these junior participants stated, for example:

> *If you're not good enough to be here, you shouldn't be here. That's one of the whole things, the shit people get through but they shouldn't because the consequence of being shit is death. It's not like we're going to get deployed any time soon, but that's the whole idea (J28M2).*

They also appeared to have invested heavily in the 'warrior' ethos of Infantry, and tended to view anyone weaker or less capable as a liability on the battlefield. As another participant stated,

> *I thought and I honestly hoped that it would be harder, because there's people that struggle, and it's a bad thing to say but at the end of the day this is warfighting. We're the front line, and it needs to be harder I think (J5M2).*

I felt that these junior participants, who appeared to fit most comfortably as Infantry matched most closely the description of the Infantry 'type' that the senior participant had spoken of.

There were, however, a number of other male junior participants who had appeared to have successfully 'fitted in' as Infantry, yet discussed an element of tension in doing so. Such

tension was demonstrated, for example, in relation to the expression of empathetic or 'caring' emotions (those traditionally labelled as feminine). As one of the male junior participants explained:

> *I don't know if it's a weakness but like when I see people fall to the back or something for example during a pack march if someone falls behind and can't keep up then I'll try and get everyone to slow down so that they can catch back up. But then the person at the front will say, nah just leave them behind. And then they'll tell me to hurry up. So I don't know, maybe it's a weakness. Yeah maybe I care about people too much, maybe? I don't want to leave anyone behind so maybe that could be something that I need to change, or that I have to change.*
>
> ***Do you feel like there's some pressure to be different in that respect?***
>
> *Yeah, just from other people in the… yeah… I guess. Because there's some people that think that if they can't keep up then they shouldn't be here. But I think, give them a chance (J38M2).*

A number of these participants also spoke about then tension of needing to harden themselves towards the Infantry 'banter', which at times included racist or sexist comments or insults. As one junior participant reflected:

> *Do you think you might need to change any part of your personality to be successful in the infantry. I said 'I would hope not so no. Maybe I will have to be a bit meaner.'*
>
> ***How would you answer that now?***
>
> *You definitely have to be tough, mentally and physically. Yeah you do have to be meaner… not meaner, well, more straight up um honest I guess, just keep it real. Pretty much, not like …and there is a lot of banter and joking around so you can't let the words get to you (J37M2).*

Others also felt frustration with the (at times) forced sense of camaraderie. As one junior participant explained:

> *So we get told to take care of the boys, but I can't be watching him in town when I'm at home. He's over 18 he should be able to take care of himself. So that actually got to me for a while, being held responsible for someone else's actions. I still haven't come to terms with it, it does my head in. So like, I don't really go out much. I'm more of a home body. So when I come in on a Monday morning finding out that such and such got into a fight, and now I'm getting punished for it, yeah… it's bizarre. It doesn't make sense to me. But then at the same time I just have to keep my head down and not say anything, and get along with it. So that's a hard thing for me (J24M2).*

The tension experienced by these participants was not related to performing the professional tasks of the Infantry job, as the majority of the participants had successfully completed Combat Corps Training and believed that they had performed well in relation to their peers. Instead, the tension that these junior participants experienced was related to those things unrelated to the job 'itself'; things that were also within the direct influence of the RNZIR. As such, I felt that these junior participants were 'good talent' that was about to be lost.

The difficulty of women being able to meet the specifications of the Infantry type was poignantly demonstrated by the female junior participants; the majority of whom found it necessary to significantly change aspects of their persona in order to fit in. As one female participant stated:

> *I have to be less feminine I think. And I can't have very many emotions because men don't know how to deal with emotions. If I cry it's like the end of the world and no one knows what they're doing. I can't cry, can't be like a girl um, kinda just gotta conform to be the person that everybody wants to see you as. So I'm not the most outgoing person at work, I'm not super approachable. It's just I've learned, I think it's more like a shield so that people don't come and offend me because I've got my fair share of not so nice comments so I've decided that I'm not going to be this really lovely person as I could be, because that's not what the Infantry wants and when I'm like that people think they can come up and tell me not so nice things. So I think yeah, less like I wish I was, but now it's just me now. (J55F2).*

The need to suppress femininity in the workplace was even found by one of the female participants to result in a feminine 'over-compensation'. As she explained:

> *I never used to be a feminine person, but I've gone kind of the opposite way. I feel like I have to compensate almost for doing a job where I'm surrounded by men all the time. I lean towards very feminine things. Like pink is all of a sudden my favourite colour now. I never thought that I would've liked pink before. But I have a vase of flowers in my room. It's almost like you're making up for the fact that you have to act like a man all the time. It's weird! (J45F2).*

The female participants (perhaps unsurprisingly) appeared to find it most difficult to meet the specifications of the Infantry type.

As Connell (2005) states, "hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy" (p.77). Thus, the power of hegemony is maintained through complicity, and supported by the

marginalisation of alternative forms. However, hegemony can also be challenged. As Connell (2005) explains further:

> New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The dominance of *any* group of men may be challenged by women (p.77).

The perpetuation of a gender performance that provides a solution to an old situation may, therefore, be open to change. Recalling the traits of the 'peacekeeping' and 'warrior' identities (Broesder et al, 2014) discussed in the previous chapter, a more modern form of gender performance might, for example, include assimilation of traits such as critical thinking, empathy and mutual respect, in concert with those of toughness and resilience.

The fact that some of the junior participants seemed naturally inclined to display a more nuanced 'hybrid' form of masculinity (one which was open to the simultaneous embodiment of those characteristics deemed masculine *and* feminine) indicated the possibility of challenging the hegemonic form. Indeed, such a challenge might provide a pragmatic solution to encouraging the range of attributes considered necessary for Infantry soldiers operating within modern battlefield environments. However, the experiences of the junior participants also illustrated that the possibility of successfully challenging the status quo was negligible. This was encapsulated by the junior participant whose reflection was provided at the beginning of this chapter. When I asked him to expand upon his reasons for deciding to leave Infantry, he replied:

> *I guess I felt in a way I was losing a bit of myself. Um, I need to get back some of my freedom, independence. I didn't realise I was going to lose as much. Yeah, it just feels like it's not really where I'm gonna find a large sense of fulfilment or enjoyment or satisfaction, you know (J3M2).*

The inability to challenge the currently accepted Infantry strategy therefore resulted in a need to either conform, or to leave. This not only results in a loss of talent, but also validates the perception that those who left Infantry were not 'good enough' to be there in the first place.

8.8 Conclusion

The data gained from the second set of interviews with the junior participants provides an insight to the experience of being a junior Infantry soldier within the NZ Army. The junior participants experienced both challenges and rewards, with the rewards often a consequence

of having persevered through these challenges. As a result, the majority of the junior participants described having gained positively, in some way, from their experiences. It was also apparent, however, that while some of the junior participants thrived within Infantry, others did not. This chapter has sought to give voice to all of the junior participants by exploring the key factors that contributed towards their differing (yet similar) experiences.

The data illustrates that the RNZIR leans heavily upon a traditional model of masculine performance to guide the delivery of its primary role 'on the battlefield'. Acts of masculine strength, toughness and discipline were, for example, deemed critical to the successful performance of the junior participants. These masculine ideals also provided justification for 'tough love' management practices aimed to prepare Infantry for combat. Socialising and living arrangements remained based on traditional models of male homosociality, and acceptance relied upon a willingness to conform. As such, the masculine model of performance not only guides behaviour, but also influences the training, management and personal lives of Infantry soldiers.

It is questionable, however, whether these inherently accepted elements of being Infantry improved performance. Instead many practices accepted as 'normal' were found to stifle those attributes (within both the male and female junior participants) deemed important for the successful performance of Infantry in *non-traditional* battlefield environments. They were also found to inhibit many of the junior participants desire or willingness to remain in Infantry. It is argued, therefore, that the exalted model of masculine performance that has served Infantry well on past battlefields not only poses an obstacle to the successful participation of those who do not fit the hegemonic Infantry 'type' – it also poses a risk to the success of Infantry in modern, or future, battlefield contexts.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

War is a human endeavour with lethal consequences, and this is no more poignantly demonstrated than by the Infantry's contribution within wars. Historically, it has been the Infantry soldier at the forefront of the battlefield: a position that demands that they be prepared (more so than other trades within the military) to place themselves in harm's way. Although the expectations of Infantry have evolved to include a range of tasks (on a spectrum from lethal to non-lethal), most militaries contend that Infantry must also remain ready to engage in close combat. These expectations of Infantry have had, and continue to have, a significant influence on the way in which Infantry soldiers are prepared for the possible realities of war.

War, and close combat, are also traditionally masculine endeavours. Despite this, after twenty years having passed since the combat exclusion policy was lifted, the low level of participation by women in Infantry was concerning to the NZ Army (especially given that that the number of women within Infantry was significantly lower than within other trades). A question consistently asked within the NZ Army was, therefore, 'why do we not have more women in Infantry?' Reflecting upon Enloe's (2004) assertion that all feminist inquiry must start with the question 'where are the women?' this was a surprisingly 'feminist' question for a military institution to be asking. The likelihood that such low representation of women was an issue related to gender was immediately evident by the statistics. However, no qualitative research had ever been conducted to identify the gendered factors underpinning the statistical data. The focus of the NZ Army had been on counting women in Infantry, rather than understanding their context. Furthermore, although no qualitative research had previously been conducted to understand the experiences of women within this context, neither had any qualitative research previously been conducted to understand the experiences of men.

This final chapter will present conclusions derived from the data presented in chapters 6-8, in order to address the research questions presented in chapter one. I will begin by reflecting briefly upon the research methodology used to conduct this study, and then turn to

addressing the research questions; first by examining those factors that were found to inhibit and enable success within Infantry, secondly by identifying which of these factors were gendered, and then by discussing the possibilities for these factors to be influenced. The chapter will conclude by outlining the ways in which this thesis has contributed original theoretical and methodological knowledge to the literature of gender within the context of hyper-masculine gender-integrated and combat-focused military contexts.

9.2 Conducting the Research

My interest in conducting this research study was sparked by own gendered experience of being in the NZ Army. This experience led to my investigation of the gendered career experiences of senior female officers in the NZ Army; the outcome of which was to inform the institution of ways that it could better support women to achieve progression to senior ranks. The possibility of investigating the gendered experiences of junior soldiers within a combat environment provided a further unique opportunity to support the NZ Army in its stated desire for increased gender diversity. My motivation was, therefore, to not only advance the theoretical knowledge of the ways in which gender is operationalised within military settings, but to also create an understanding of how this knowledge could be used to support the success of women within the specific 'hyper-masculine' setting of the RNZIR.

However, given the institutional signs of 'gender-fatigue' across the NZ Army at the time of this research being designed, it was important to select a research approach that did not draw undue attention to (or 'spotlight') women's participation within Infantry, and yet which still provided a means of understanding gendered issues. This was achieved by broadening the focus of the research to include the narratives of both men and women. The inclusion of male and female narratives enabled a fuller picture of the gendered phenomenon existing within Infantry to be gained. To support this 'less' gendered enquiry into gender, one primary question was designed to guide the research study:

- **What factors inhibit or enable success within the Infantry trade of the New Zealand Army?**

Two subsequent questions were also developed to enable a gendered lens to be applied to the data. These questions were:

⇒ Are any of the factors gendered?

⇒ Which of the factors are open to influence?

Engaging with the participants about their 'experiences' rather than their 'gendered' experiences was, therefore, an important element of taking a less gender-dominant approach to learning about gender (albeit that ideas of gender were tacitly at the forefront of the enquiry). As the data analysis has shown, taking this approach provided the opportunity to investigate all factors related to being Infantry (not just those that might be assumed to be gendered). Although the decision to adopt an approach that indirectly addressed the question of the participation of women within Infantry was based on ethical and methodological reasons, in hindsight it was also key to the study's success. It provided a means of exploring the experiences of both men and women as Infantry without presupposing the idea that these experiences were not the same.

Men's narratives within gender integrated combat trades have hitherto been an under-represented facet of military gender research, with the greater focus placed upon women's gender integration experiences. There is also a dearth of research which explores the experiences of both men and women working together within the context of a combat unit. The lack of attention to men's experiences can perhaps be attributed to numerical statistics that indicate men's participation to be unproblematic. In the case of the NZ Army, for example, the fact that men make up approximately 99% of the Infantry trade has previously given rise to the assumption that there is no need to investigate how men 'experience' being Infantry. However, by exploring the context of Infantry (rather than simply the numbers), this study reveals that men do not have the homogenous experience of being Infantry that has been previously assumed.

This research approach has, therefore, illuminated how understandings – and misunderstandings – of gender underpin a number of assumptions within Infantry; assumptions that impact upon the participation of both men and women. These include assumptions of the ways that men and women should act, as well as assumptions of the roles that men and women are capable (or not capable) of performing. Such assumptions also include the idea that gendered inequalities can be justified by men and women's biological

difference alone, and (perhaps most importantly) guide perceptions of the type of person that is best suited to participate in war. These assumptions will now be examined as we explore those factors that were found to inhibit and enable success within the Infantry.

9.3 What Factors Inhibit or Enable 'Success' in the Infantry

My analysis of the data demonstrated that success within the Infantry is about being able to do the 'job'; in other words, success is about physical performance. Digging holes, carrying heavy packs, shooting at targets, living in the field, completing sentry duty, and using a bayonet were all performance expectations that needed to be met by the Junior Soldier cohort. The ability to do so resulted in an assessment of the junior participants being 'competent' in the basic skills of the Infantry trade. Whilst the data suggested that there were differing perspectives on the physical standard for being Infantry, the physical requirements of the job were also (for the most part) objective. For example, the RFL fitness test had clear pass/fail criteria which could be measured (albeit that the G1 male pass criteria was commonly perceived to be the Infantry 'standard'). The courses that the junior participants attended (i.e., Basic Training and Combat Corps Training), had stipulated pass/fail criteria for the testing of learned skills. Learning the practical skills of the job was, therefore, a key enabler to the junior participants' success. So too was an increase in their upper body strength and physical endurance.

As such, in terms of physical performance, the junior participants understood what they needed to achieve, and achievement was an individual effort. Although success in performing the physical elements of being Infantry was dependent upon the physical bodily characteristics of strength and endurance, with appropriate training these factors were not insurmountable (for either the male or female junior participants). As such, each of the junior participants had control over their own performance within these aspects of the role. Individual success was, therefore, enabled by clearly stipulated criteria, and the provision of appropriate training to achieve these specified outcomes. It would be simple to conclude, therefore, that success as Infantry is enabled by having the physical strength and knowledge required to perform the tasks required of Infantry.

However, the data also strongly indicated that success was not solely dependent upon physical performance of the 'actual' job. Indeed, it became evident that being assessed as 'competent' on prescribed performance criteria was not enough to be deemed a good Infantry soldier. Demonstrating the physical capability to perform the requirements of the Infantry job was necessary but not sufficient. This idea was often alluded to by the participants of this study, with statements such as, 'it's not the actual job that is the problem', or 'the job itself is not that hard'. It was also evidenced by those participants who did not struggle with the prescribed performance requirements of the Infantry role, but struggled with many other aspects of being Infantry. This brought me to understand that successful performance as Infantry was also connected to a number of subjective factors that were not the physical 'doing' of the job.

The complexity of teasing out what *was* the job and what *wasn't*, lead me to understand that those factors which enable the physical 'doing' of the job were inextricably intertwined with those that weren't. This is because the subjective factors which enabled success as Infantry dictated *how* the physical performance should be delivered. These factors included toughness, resilience, camaraderie, loyalty, uniformity, discipline, and obedience. It is suggested that these factors were subjective as there was no stipulated criteria for measuring the performance of these factors. Instead, they were informally assessed by the group, and it was within the environment of the group where these subjective factors became influential in achieving success. Acceptance (the ultimate form of success as Infantry) was attained according to the group's assessment.

Success as an individual in Infantry was connected with being accepted by the team, and being a team player was more than simply performing the tasks required of Infantry. It was about performing the tasks with toughness and aggression, erstwhile demonstrating resilience and discipline (i.e., the 'mindset' of Infantry). The display of these desired attributes of Infantry would mean little if conducted in isolation from the group. As such, an appropriate display of resilience, discipline, toughness and aggression was primarily a means of signifying one's commitment, and value, to the team. This commitment oftentimes meant, however, that the junior participants had to subordinate aspects of their individual self in order to achieve success as Infantry. For example, the display of empathy or compassion was viewed as

inhibitor to success within Infantry, as it indicated weakness. An inability to handle the thrashings or endure banter (i.e., insults) was also equated with weakness, and not being a 'team player'. Those who were not considered capable of adequately meeting these participatory expectations were also deemed unsuitable to be Infantry. It is within this team environment, therefore, that key tensions developed within the experience of being Infantry – especially for those junior participants who could not, or did not feel comfortable with, conforming.

This process revealed that there were two fundamental dimensions to being Infantry: that which enabled physical performance and that which enabled 'participation' (defined through acceptance by the group). The dimension of physical performance incorporated the practical and objective factors of 'doing' the Infantry job. On the other hand, the dimension of participation incorporated those subjectively measured factors deemed necessary to be accepted, and consequently to be able to participate, as an Infantry team member. Revealing the existence of these two dimensions of being Infantry is consistent with existing literature around the preparation of soldiers for the reality of combat. Such literature suggests that it is a combination of both physical skills and psychological behaviours (including commitment to the team) that enable Infantry soldiers to endure the rigours of combat, and kill another human being on the battlefield (Grossman, 1995; Bourke, 1999; O'Sullivan, 2016). However, this thesis has extended our understanding by illustrating that the factors within each dimension can very easily shift from being an enabler to being an inhibitor of success.

This possibility that those factors which enable success as Infantry might also be inhibitors was illustrated by the way in which all factors, *when applied reasonably*, were considered important elements of achieving success as Infantry. However, tension arose when specific factors were applied *unreasonably* (at which point these factors were perceived by the junior participants to extend beyond the bounds of the actual job). There appeared, therefore, to be a tipping point at which each factor transitioned from being beneficial in supporting the success of the participants (i.e., an enabler), to becoming detrimental (i.e., an inhibitor). Consider the factor of 'physical strength': whilst it is accepted as important for Infantry soldiers to have the strength to carry heavy loads, there was a point at which the weight of the load (and the distance that it was carried) created injuries – especially where individual

physiological differences and training needs might not have been taken into consideration. Closely linked to the factor of physical strength is that of 'resilience': whilst Infantry soldiers must necessarily have a high level of resilience to perform the arduous requirements of the role, this factor became detrimental at the point where junior participants were expected to 'push through' the pain of injuries, or to suppress their emotions in favour of acting tough. The factor of discipline was frequently experienced by the junior participants to move beyond the 'tipping point', resulting in outcomes of anxiety and frustration due to treatment that was considered unreasonably harsh.

When applied beyond the 'tipping point', each of the factors which enabled a person to be Infantry came at a cost. Ironically, it was most often at the cost of those key qualities and characteristics that were considered important in the modern Infantry soldier (such as physical health, emotional intelligence, compassion and diversity of thought). This indicated that 'more' did not equate with 'better'. In other words, there was little evidence that moving beyond the tipping point created a better Infantry soldier. Notably, the point at which each of these factors became inhibitors was also the point at which many of the junior participants experienced tension in their desire to be Infantry.

It was not immediately apparent that the same factors which enabled success as Infantry could also be inhibitors. This is because all possible manifestations of the performance and participatory factors – even those that were detrimental – were readily justified in the name of preparing Infantry for the battlefield. It was considered normal, therefore, that Infantry soldiers should not have a voice because their role on the battlefield is to do what they are told, when they are told, and without question. It was accepted as normal that discipline of Infantry soldiers should be harsher than that considered appropriate for soldiers within other (non-combat) trades, because if an Infantry soldier cannot handle being 'thrashed' then how can they be expected to handle the rigours of battle? It was considered normal that Infantry should 'break' themselves in training to demonstrate their physical and mental resilience for going to war. It was even considered normal that Infantry soldiers should sit around for long periods of time with nothing to do, because that's what happens in a real battle situation.

Understanding how the battlefield narrative normalises many practices that would otherwise be considered abnormal was an important piece of this complex puzzle. This is because such stories provided an unquestionable rationale for the ways things are done. However, although the battlefield narrative rationalises Infantry's normal way of doing things, there was little evidence that being broken, talked down to, micromanaged, belittled, sworn at, or thrashed made the junior participants of this research stronger or better. There was also little evidence to suggest that such treatment (especially that which went beyond the 'tipping point'), supported Infantry to become compassionate, empathetic, or morally courageous. This has significant implications for the NZ Army, whose people strategy outlines such characteristics as being critical to its future operational success. With this understanding of how the factors within the performance and participatory dimensions of being Infantry can either enable or inhibit success, let's now explore which of these factors were gendered.

9.4 Are any of the Factors which Inhibit or Enable success Gendered?

From the outset of their Infantry journey the junior participants described the need to adapt aspects of both their physicality and their persona in order to match a certain model of behaviour. The concept of 'looking right' was also explained by the senior participants to be predicated upon an idealised version of masculinity that was often referred to as the Infantry 'type'. The way in which a specific way of 'doing' gender (Butler, 1990) underpinned all facets of being Infantry was also consistently evidenced in the lived experiences of the research participants. It became clear, therefore, that all of the factors that either inhibited or enabled success as Infantry were gendered.

The primary role of Infantry (i.e., to kill or capture the enemy, regardless of weather, season or terrain) was found to have a significant influence on the gender performance (and the exalted 'type') of Infantry. It was the requirement to fulfil a role that was deemed tougher, harder and more dangerous than other trades within the NZ Army that automatically placed Infantry in a position of superiority. The finding is consistent with the literature which suggests that most militaries situate the combat soldier in at the top of the military's masculine hierarchy (Brown, 2012; Connell, 2017; Wadham, 2017; Pendlebury, 2019). This superior positioning was evidenced throughout the narratives of the participants, and alerted

us to the way in which the NZ Army's Infantry perceived themselves in relation to others. It also alerted us to the perceptions of who should, or should not, be Infantry.

The perception that femininity could not comfortably co-exist within the Infantry gender performance made the challenges of success within the RNZIR distinctly more complex for the female junior participants. Overall, the data analysis illustrated that the female junior participants' participation was inhibited by factors that went beyond the physical performance or participatory dimensions of the Infantry role. The one factor which the female junior participants could not control, and which inhibited their ability to be Infantry (more so than that of the men's), was the simple fact that they were women. The underlying belief that women simply didn't belong in Infantry was based on the assumption that biological differences naturally render men as 'masculine' and women as 'feminine'. Attitudes towards women's ability (or lack of ability) to perform the Infantry role were, therefore, justified by essentialist ideas of gender and traditional understandings of war: i.e., war is about violence, and it is best carried out by men.

It was not, however, the construction of a specific masculine gendered performance that was problematic. There are most certainly 'masculine' characteristics that both male and female Infantry soldiers should necessarily display in order to be effective. The issue within the RNZIR was found to lie more squarely with the fact that the currently accepted gender performance relies upon the suppression of 'less' masculine, or feminine, characteristics. It also relies upon the exclusion of any identity that is considered to not be 'masculine enough'. Indeed, it relies upon a version of masculinity that has changed little since 1899. It is important to note, therefore, that challenges in demonstrating the accepted gender performance of Infantry were not faced solely by the female junior participants; they were also experienced by the men. These findings extend our understanding of the gendered challenges of participation faced by men *and* women in a supposedly gender-integrated combat-focused unit. They also suggest implications for the display of those 'feminine' traits or characteristics by Infantry, which are deemed important for modern or non-traditional forms of war.

The tasks required of Infantry have expanded exponentially since the Second World War to include a wide range of operations – many of which do not require violent or aggressive

outcomes. Despite this evolution, the primary role of Infantry has changed little (if at all) since 1899. The role identity of Infantry remains inextricably linked to the 'warrior' archetype of the South African War, with traditional models of training and management that encourage and reward (indeed, perpetuate) behaviours that are aligned with this identity. As a result, there exists a significant disconnect between the role identity that is created, and that which is desired, of the modern Infantry soldier. Furthermore, despite the possible co-existence of a 'peacekeeping' and a 'warrior' identity (one which would encompass those 'feminine' *and* 'masculine' attributes desired for undertaking the spectrum of military operations that Infantry are expected to perform), the creation of such an identity was negated within the RNZIR by the purposeful extinguishment of those same 'soft' skills, that are deemed important in operations such as peacekeeping or humanitarian aid.

Arising from the data was an indication, therefore, that conforming with the accepted gender performance of Infantry was not a measure of a person's physical or professional capability as Infantry. Instead, conforming to the gendered status quo simply equated with successfully conforming to the gendered status quo. However, as Raewyn Connell suggests, the hegemonic identity gains its power only to the extent that we support and enable it to be hegemonic. In order to change reality we must, therefore, disrupt the status quo by changing the practice. The next section will therefore discuss how our understanding of those factors that support current practice, and which also inhibit and enable success as Infantry (factors which we now also understand to be gendered), are open to influence.

9.5 Which of the factors that Inhibit or Enable Success as Infantry are open to Influence?

The possibility for the factors which enable success as Infantry to also become inhibitors, reveals that these factors are readily manipulated. In other words, they can be applied to achieve either a positive or a negative effect. As such, all of the factors which inhibit or enable success as Infantry are open to influence. However, the findings of this thesis have deepened our understanding of how the gendered nature of being Infantry inhibits a *desire* to influence these factors. This thesis has extended our knowledge of the gendered nature of combat and combat units by identifying those underpinning structures that hold the gendered status quo

in place: a mix of assumptions and misunderstandings of gender, alongside traditional narratives of battlefield prowess. Both of these position, and perpetuate, an idealised version of hyper-masculinity as the archetypal solution to being Infantry (a solution that is arguably irrelevant to the modern or future battlefield).

Consequently, a shift towards gender equality (whereby men *and* women, as well as the traits of masculinity *and* femininity, might be valued equally) requires more than simply the removal of a combat exclusion policy that had previously excluded women's participation. **Instead, it demands a disruption of the underpinning structures which hold the status quo in place.** However, whilst this thesis has extended our knowledge of the gendered nature of combat units by identifying these underpinning structures, challenging the status quo is not easy. This is not only because the status quo is steeped within a dominant discourse of traditional masculinity, but also because challenging the status quo means asking questions. As Cynthia Enloe suggests, being curious takes effort, and it this very exertion of effort which enables tradition and 'the way things have always been done' to prevail. I was often bemused, for example, by the number of senior participants who had pondered on better ways to do things and yet the question had not actually been asked. Or, if it had been asked, it appeared to be in a rhetorical fashion and had not resulted in change being effected.

The prevalence of injuries within Infantry revealed this interesting paradox. Every participant of this research spoke of the detrimental impact of the currently accepted physical demands of being Infantry. However, despite a significant number of injuries being caused by carrying heavy packs, and also despite options that would alleviate the physical burden for Infantry, this remains a steadfast feature of the Infantry 'standard' with injuries a seemingly accepted consequence. However, although my own curiosity had been aroused by the number of potentially avoidable injuries within Infantry, which were attributed to the physical demands of performing the role, it appeared that there was not a similar level of curiosity being applied by those most affected by this phenomenon. I wondered if this was simply a result of an over-reliance on tradition, or whether it was also attributable to an environment that actively discouraged questions to be asked. The experiences of the Junior Soldier cohort certainly indicated that there was little (if any) opportunity to challenge the current way things are done. Surprisingly, however, those members of the Senior Leader cohort whose narratives

countered the dominant discourse also appeared to have little power to influence change. Even those senior participants who appeared to have the agency (i.e., rank, seniority and position) to impact change, had not been able to do so.

In considering why this might be the case, it could be argued that this is indicative of the hierarchical and traditional nature of militaries generally. However, as we have seen from the data analysis, Infantry has a heightened aversion to anyone challenging 'authority' or 'tradition'. Change was possible, but any challenge to the status quo of the Infantry was perceived as being akin to challenging the historical foundations of the RNZIR itself. Consciousness was not, therefore, a determinant of change. Instead, the participants of this research perceived that the only options were to either accept the status quo, or leave.

Attrition within Infantry is often attributed to external factors (i.e., recruiting the wrong people; people who were not ideally suited to the role or who didn't want to be there in the first place). However, this idea is contested by the number of motivated, intelligent, articulate and capable junior participants within this research who had volunteered to be Infantry, who were able to effectively perform the physical dimension of the role, and yet had subsequently become disillusioned, disengaged, frustrated or anxious as a result. In most instances, the stated intention or decision of the junior participants to leave the Infantry was not a result of their inability or unwillingness to perform the professional job of the role. Instead, the decision to leave was most often attributed to the internal practices of Infantry; practices that we now know lie within the direct influence of the RNZIR.

Although the factors which inhibit or enable success within the Infantry are within the influence of the Infantry (or RNZIR), and ample evidence has been provided within this thesis to suggest that these factors *need* to be influenced, the dominant discourse within the data was one which held strong to the 'battlefield' narrative. The power of narratives (or the stories that we tell) is described by Megan MacKenzie to be such that they have the ability to deflect blame, rationalise irrationality, inhibit critique and hinder change. The battlefield narrative within the RNZIR has been illustrated throughout that this thesis to do all of these things, primarily by validating the way things are done based upon traditional and masculine notions of battlefield prowess. Even where change was acknowledged by participants to be

needed, the battlefield narrative often prevailed as a retreat of 'common sense'. As such, the power of this narrative should not be underestimated as a tool that sustains the status quo.

Whilst conducting my data analysis, I found myself wishing that I had asked the participants of this study to describe what the battlefield *actually* looked like. I also wished that I had asked them what happens *after* the battlefield, or what if there were *no* battle. In other words, what are those human emotions that are experienced both before and after the battlefield that are not currently acknowledged when preparing Infantry for war? How are Infantry prepared for coming home? And how might Infantry feel about the act of killing once they are no longer on the battlefield? This lead me to consider if the Infantry narrative were changed to **'after the battlefield'**, would this change the way in which Infantry soldiers are prepared for participating within war? And ultimately, if the stated end goal were peace, rather than war, would this shift the focus of Infantry training? I suspect that the answer to these questions would be 'yes', and as such they are questions worthy of ongoing enquiry if the NZ Army wishes to seek ethical solutions for preparing people to be modern Infantry soldiers, who are equipped (both physically and psychologically) to perform on the future battlefield.

In order to move beyond the narrative, thereby "creating space for alternate visions" (MacKenzie, 2023, p.7), it is argued that the battlefield narrative requires dismantling. The process of dismantling begins by allowing those questions to be asked that have hitherto not been (or that may have been asked, but have not been answered). Whilst this thesis has provided a start point of this process, a key question that needs to be pursued is whether or not the battlefield narrative aligns with the type of Infantry soldier that is desired by the NZ Army, now in 2024 – and in the future. In other words, does the NZ Army desire an Infantry soldier who reflects a model of masculine soldiering that was relevant in the 1940s (i.e., an unthinking but resilient 'bullet-catcher')? Or, as strategy documents suggest, does the NZ Army desire a soldier who might be male or female, who is 'agile of thought', self-aware and able to operate in modern and complex environments? If it is the former, then there is quite possibly no problem with the status quo. However, if it is the latter, then I propose that there exists a mismatch between institutional intent and the lived experience of Infantry; a mismatch that necessitates a fundamental re-formulation of the way in which Infantry soldiers are created.

As Enloe (2004) suggests, “the moment when one becomes newly curious about something is also a good time to think about what created one’s previous lack of curiosity” (p.2-3). This prompts me to wonder why we have not been previously curious about the experiences of the men and women who make up the ‘heart’ (i.e., Infantry) of the NZ Army. Have we been so focused on women’s integration experiences that we have neglected to explore the full meaning of the word ‘gender’ when we think about gender integration? Have we previously (and somewhat naively) assumed that *all* men are comfortable with the gendered status quo? How is that we have become relaxed about the idea that men and women entering the Infantry should not be afforded the same level of respect as men and women entering other trades of the NZ Army? And have we, as a hierarchical (and indeed patriarchal) institution purposefully avoided listening to those soldiers and officers whose voices sit beneath the dominant discourse?

My reason for stating ‘we’ is that I am part of the NZ Army, and in reflecting on my own institutional knowledge I have an inclination that the findings presented within this thesis will not come as a complete surprise to many within Infantry (or even within the NZ Army). This is because they have, until now, been largely hidden in plain view. This research has, however, given voice to a number of different perspectives from within the RNZIR. Most importantly, it has given voice to those who might normally not have an opportunity to be heard. It has also drawn attention to those practices and assumptions that are deeply ingrained as normal within the RNZIR (practices and assumptions that are very rarely, if ever, questioned). Thus, by presenting these differing perspectives, and by reviewing them through an alternate lens (i.e. a lens of gender) I hope to provoke the NZ Army to not only question its own previous lack of curiosity, but to also seek answers to those questions which reach beyond the boundaries of this research study.

9.6 Methodological and Theoretical Contributions

It is rare for a newly enlisted soldier within the Infantry to be asked about how they feel, or how they have experienced, being Infantry. It is perhaps even more rare for a junior soldier to speak openly and honestly with an officer about their true feelings on this experience.

Previous studies have indicated, for example, the disdain with which officers are regarded by Infantry soldiers; a disdain that is fostered as part of the process of becoming Infantry (Harding, 2016). As I reflect upon my insider researcher status, I not only feel privileged to have been allowed this insight to the journey of the junior soldier participants but I also feel confident that this research has extended the knowledge of how to negotiate the methodological and ethical complexities of being an insider researcher of the military. Indeed, it extends the knowledge of conducting insider research within any institutional setting where the variance in hierarchical position between researcher and 'researched' might be significant.

Adopting a methodological approach which sought to understand gendered experience without directly attacking the question of 'gender' has also shown that it is possible to maintain the engagement of both male and female participants even within 'gender-fatigued' contexts. The success of this approach was due, in part, to including both male and female participants, as this ensured that gender was not perceived to be a concept that only applies to women and women's experiences. Designing the interview questions to enable a discussion of 'experiences', rather than 'gendered' experiences, also ensured that I did not presume understanding of what was (or wasn't) relevant to the overall experience of being Infantry. This does not mean that the participants were not aware that the research had a gendered focus, as this was clearly articulated as part of the research brief provided. However, the broader questioning ensured that participants did not feel constrained to discuss what they thought might be relevant to a study of gender.

As well as extending our methodological knowledge of undertaking gender research as an insider within hierarchical and gender-fatigued contexts, this thesis has also made theoretical contributions to the existing body of literature on militaries and gender. Theoretical contributions have been specifically made by broadening the understanding of how gender operates within a previously unresearched hyper-masculine milieu of the military (i.e., the Infantry trade of the NZ Army). This research has extended our understanding of participation within combat roles by illuminating how those factors which enable success (with success incorporating elements of both performance and acceptance) within this milieu can also become inhibitors. In doing so, it has also illustrated how normative expectations and

performances of gender impact (in subtle and not so subtle ways) upon success. This knowledge broadens our understanding of the challenges of successful participation as Infantry, especially for those who do not immediately conform to the default Infantry identity (i.e., the Infantry 'type'). The inclusion of men's and women's experiences in this research has assisted in providing this much needed insight.

9.7 Areas for Further Enquiry and Limitations

Within this thesis I have discussed the different ways that war can be defined, and lightly explored how understandings of war impact upon the way in which soldiers are produced to participate within war. It became evident as I progressed through my research, for example, that the RNZIR defines war in a traditional sense, and the 'battlefield' narrative is a bi-product of this typical understanding. However, defining war in a traditional sense, and focusing solely on what happens *during* war, also limits our perspective of what war means and who is affected by war. It also leads to a lack of discussion about how one might feel *after* war. Or even what war might look or feel like to those on the side of the so-called opposition. As this thesis has shown, it also results in the creation of a particular type of soldier who is perceived best suited to war; a soldier who then becomes disillusioned if they have not had the opportunity to be tested in this function.

In thinking of where this research could be extended, it might be useful to investigate more deeply how understandings of war impact upon military personnel strategies. If war were to be defined in a less-traditional sense, for example, this would expand the boundaries of understanding by acknowledging that war encompasses a continuum of activity which does not begin and end according to specific 'battlefield' timeframes (Sjoberg, 2014; Cohn, 2013). It would also allow us to consider *all* of those men and women who are impacted by war, whether they be combatants or not (or even 'enemy' or not). An interrogation into the viability of these non-traditional definitions of war might find that the various activities to which the RNZIR responds are in fact 'versions' of war. Thus, investigating alternate ways to define war might more easily lend itself to also re-defining the ideal type of soldier to respond to such events.

Whilst gender was the key variable under investigation within this research study, I remained cognisant of the participants' demographic factors (such as age and ethnicity) which intersected with gender to either impede or enable their success. Conducting this research reinforced the importance of positionality in negotiating the complexities of being Infantry. However, due to the size of my participant groups (and the resultant potential for identifying participants according to their age or ethnicity) I was not able to report the varying ways in which intersectional factors altered the experience for some participants in comparison to others. Demographic factors have historically been viewed in isolation by the NZ Army, however, indicative findings emerged within this research that point to the need for greater consideration of how multiple demographic factors might impact on success. Investigating the impact of intersectionality upon success within the context of the NZ Army would, therefore, be a useful focus for future research.

This study sought to include voices from across the spectrum of personnel within Infantry (i.e., across all ranks and genders), however, a possible limitation is that there was a lack of voices from within the junior NCO ranks. Although I had extended the invitation to participate to all ranks of Infantry to participate (as part of the Senior Leader cohort), I had minimal uptake from Lance Corporals and Corporals. Reflecting on why this might be, it can possibly be attributed to suspicion of my intentions (as an insider to the NZ Army, but an outsider to the RNZIR), conducting a study about being Infantry. This, along with the fact that I am a woman (whilst 99.9 percent of junior NCOs are men), perhaps resulted in a reticence to engage with both myself and the research. I am unsure if the inclusion of junior NCO voices would have changed the findings of this thesis, however their experiences and perceptions may have provided a slightly different perspective.

9.8 Beyond the Battlefield

The military has been described as an extreme case of a gendered institution (Carreiras, 2006). This thesis has illustrated that there are pockets within the military that are even more gendered than others: pockets which have been able to turn traditional ideas of gender into an unquestionable, 'common sense', rationale for resisting change. By examining those factors which inhibit or enable success within the Infantry of the NZ Army, this thesis has also

identified the underpinning systems and structures that hold the gendered status quo in place. The possibility for gendered transformation thus exists, however it requires traditional assumptions of gender (and indeed, traditional assumptions of war) to be put aside in order to make room for change to occur.

As I come to the end of my research journey I do have doubts about the NZ Army's capacity to enact such change. This does not suggest that there is not an institutional desire, or a need, for transformation to occur, but rather that the dominant discourse of the Infantry which sustains the gendered status quo has significant established power. Moreover, those who benefit from the status quo are those who ascribe to the dominant discourse. Breaking this cycle of sustainment would, therefore, require a monumental shift in thinking, coupled with the willingness to question the very foundations upon which the RNZIR is built: hierarchy, history, tradition and masculinity. My inner feminist sceptic tells me that the concept of a gendered transformation, one which enables femininity and masculinity to co-exist within a professional Infantry environment that is welcoming of all ways of 'doing' gender, is likely to be regarded with bemusement, if not disdain.

In saying that I am sceptical does not suggest that I am without hope. As I reflect on my own Army career, there are many positive reasons why I am still enlisted. The fact that I have been provided the opportunity to complete this research study is also, in itself, a remarkable indicator of Army's desire for change. My hope, therefore, is that this thesis provokes a dialogue about how gendered assumptions have created perceptions of the type of Infantry soldier best suited to participate in 'war'. I also hope that it provokes a dialogue about how the current practice of creating this soldier might be falling short of ensuring that the NZ Army is best prepared for future and non-traditional battlefields. Whilst such conversations may be uncomfortable, as the NZ Army seeks to regenerate its land combat capability, whilst struggling to attract and retain talent, they are also timely. Furthermore, in provoking such conversations, I maintain hope that although this thesis may not lead to a gender revolution, it might lead to enough of an adjustment in the 'way things are done' to ensure that the battlefield experienced by those who choose to enlist as Infantry is not simply one of its own making. I see my role now as being one where I have both the institutional knowledge and the academic backing to support this.

This thesis has extended the boundaries of understanding of what it means to be Infantry in the NZ Army. It has revealed that success depends not only upon meeting objective markers of performance, but also achieving acceptance by the group through a number of subjectively measured factors. Revealing the tensions inherent within the negotiation of being Infantry has illuminated how those factors which enable success can also inhibit it. The ways in which these are underpinned by a deeply embedded discourse of masculinity (albeit often reframed as a discourse of operational effectiveness), also allows us to understand the difficulty with which women (or any person who does not adhere to the ideal identity) is able to participate. The inherent paradox of perpetuating this Infantry ideal (i.e., the status quo) being the loss of men and women who possess the very same qualities and characteristics deemed important for success on future and non-traditional battlefields.

Glossary of Acronyms

100's Club	Highest level of achievement (i.e., 100 %) of the RFL test
1RNZIR	1st Battalion
2/1RNZIR	2nd/1st (pronounced 'second first') Battalion
2LT	Second Lieutenant
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFDA	Armed Forces Discipline Act
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
Anzac	Non-capitalised when referring to Anzac Day or Anzac soldiers.
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, and United States
BHE	Battle Handling Exercise
LCFT	Land Combat Fitness Test
CMT	Compulsory Military Training
CO	Commanding Officer
CPL	Corporal
CSM	Company Sergeant Major
FET	Female Engagement Team
FSG	Fire Support Group
HADR	Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief
LT	Lieutenant
NATO	North Atlantic Treat Organisation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NZ Army	New Zealand Army
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
OC	Officer Commanding
OOTW	Operation Other than War
Recon	Reconnaissance
RF	Regular Force
RFL	Required Fitness Level
RNZA	Royal New Zealand Artillery
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RNZE	Royal New Zealand Engineers
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
SASO	Stability and Support Operations
SGT	Sergeant
SSGT	Staff Sergeant
TF	Territorial Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
WO1	Warrant Officer Class One
WO2	Warrant Officer Class Two
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Appendix 1: Information Sheet

School of PEP
Massey University
Private Bag 102904
Palmerston North
NEW ZEALAND

Adapting and succeeding in combat trades of the New Zealand Army

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This research is being carried out by myself, Major Amy Brosnan, as a requirement towards a PhD qualification through Massey University. The purpose of the research is to identify and critically evaluate key factors which inhibit or enable combat trade soldiers (both men and women) within the New Zealand (NZ) Army.

Project Description and Invitation

Men and women who enlist into combat trades of the NZ Army often face gendered expectations that impact their ability to participate fully. This project seeks to understand the experiences of both men and women who enlist into combat trades of the NZ Army. This is an academic project but is also seeking to improve the future recruitment, retention and career success of combat trade soldiers via practical recommendations. This issue will be investigated through three research questions:

- *What factors inhibit and enable performance and participation of men and women in combat trades of the New Zealand Army?*
- *Are any of the factors gendered?*
- *Which of the factors are open to influence?*

Participation in this research is voluntary. There will be absolutely no consequences to you if you decide not to participate, or if you do participate but decide there are some forms of information you do not want to provide. Agreeing to be a part of this study now does not mean that you have to agree to participate later on if you change your mind. You may also withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any stage, up until February 2023.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

There are three main activities that this research will use:

- **A questionnaire** will be provided to all recruits who are participants of this research. Completion of the questionnaire is optional and confidential.
- **Interviews** will be conducted with selected volunteers, including recruits, soldiers, recruiters and leaders within the RNZIR.
- I will also be undertaking **participant observation** of key activities**.** You can choose to either 'opt in' or 'opt out' of the observation by signing the consent form provided. If you choose to 'opt in' and are present at these activities you will still be able to 'opt out' at any time by requesting that I do not report on any particular observations that may involve yourself.

Project Procedures

Research participants are therefore asked to be involved in some or all of the following activities:

- Undertaking a **questionnaire**: two pages long with an estimated time to fill in of 20 minutes.
- Participating in a short **interview** that will take between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

- **Participant observation**: based on myself observing normal activities which will not require extra time of your own.

I must also point out that if you should experience any adverse psychological impacts as a result of these activities then you can access a range of support services, both internally and externally to the NZ Army. These forms of support are listed on the document attached to this information sheet.

Data Management

- Hard copies of consent forms and questionnaires will be kept in locked cabinets and separated from the written data.
- Voice recordings of any interviews will be kept until they are transcribed, and then deleted. In accordance with advice from NZDF Organisational Research, all written data will be held on my own password protected personal laptop or external hard drive. Password protection will be used for any documents that may identify individual personnel.
- All participants will be given pseudonyms, and any identifying information not relevant to data analysis will not be used. Generic descriptions will be used where possible to maintain confidentiality of data, however reference to rank may be used when relevant. Personal identifiers of participants will be kept separated from the data.
- Nothing that you tell me, or that I hear or see you do, will be repeated to your superiors or peers unless it forms an offence under the AFDA. As I am a currently serving member of the NZDF, if you tell me something that may indicate that a serious offence has occurred then I may be obliged to report any such incident via appropriate NZDF channels. I will, however, discuss this with both yourself and NZDF Organisational Research before this occurs.
- A PhD thesis will be submitted as the final report of research findings will be submitted to Massey University on completion of the PhD. A copy of the thesis will be available to participants upon request by email to myself (see my contact details below).
- Material gathered as part of this doctoral research will potentially be published in other public sources. The source data will be kept securely for an indefinite period in order to enable future comparative studies to be conducted.

Participants' Rights

With regards to the **questionnaire,** completion implies consent, however you retain the right to decline to answer any particular question.

With regards to the **interviews** you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during an interview.*

With regards to the **participant observation** you retain the right to request that any data relating to yourself *not* be included in the research report.

Project Contacts

Please feel free to contact myself if you have any questions about the project. My email address is amy.brosnan@nzdf.mil.nz.

The project is being carried out under the supervision of Dr Beth Greener and Dr Anna Powles of Massey University, and Dr Kate Lewis of Manchester Metropolitan University. They are also happy to answer any questions or concerns you have.

Dr Beth Greener: B.Greener@massey.ac.nz or 06 356 9099 ext.83628
Dr Anna Powles: A.R.Powles@massey.ac.na or 06 356 9099 ext. 63080
Dr Kate Lewis: kate.lewis@mmu.ac.uk

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 20/57. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz. It has also been reviewed and approved by the NZDF Ethics Committee.

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

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Adapting and succeeding in combat trades of the NZ Army

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I ______________________________ hereby consent to take part in this study.
[print full name]

Signature: ________________________ Date: ________________

Appendix 3: Interview Protocol (Senior Infantry Leader)

Motivations

1. How long have you been in the Infantry Corps of the NZ Army?

2. Why did you enlist as Infantry?

3. Have you enjoyed your career to date?

Gender and Identity

4. What types of behaviours and attitudes do you think that soldiers need to display in order be successful within the Infantry?
   - Have you had to change any part of your personality or physical self to be successful in the infantry?

5. What do you think is the most challenging aspect of being a soldier in the Infantry?
   - Are these challenges different for men in comparison to women?

6. What do you think is the most rewarding aspect of being a soldier in the Infantry?
   - Are these rewards different for men in comparison to women?

7. Do you think it is easier to be a man or a woman in an Infantry unit?

Performance

8. How would you define 'gender integration' in combat trades.

9. As a leader within the Infantry do you feel that you have been provided the necessary support (resources and/or knowledge) to ensure the successful integration of women into your unit?
   - If not, what would help to support success?
   - If yes, what support has been most useful?

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol (Infantry Soldier Initial)

Motivations

1. What motivated you to enlist in the NZ Army?

2. What made you choose to enlist specifically in the Infantry Trade?

3. What were you doing before you enlisted? (eg. school, work, university, unemployed)

Expectations

4. What does being an Infantry soldier mean to you?

5. What types of tasks do you think that an Infantry soldier does?
   - During deployment?
   - In camp?

6. What do you think you will find the most challenging part of being a soldier in the Infantry?

7. What do you think will be the most enjoyable or rewarding part of being a soldier in the Infantry?

8. How long do you plan to stay in the NZ Army?

9. What are you hoping to achieve within the Army during the next 12 months?

Gender and Identity

10. What aspects of yourself do you think will help you to succeed in the Infantry?

11. Do you think that a person's gender identity has anything to do with what makes the best soldier?

12. Do you think that you will need to change any part of your personality (including thoughts, feelings or behaviours) in order to be successful in the Infantry?

13. Do you think that you will need to change any part of your physique in order to be successful in the infantry?

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol (Infantry Soldier Follow Up)

Performance

1. What specific challenges or successes did you experience during recruit training?

2. What specific challenges or successes did you experience during combat corps training?

3. How well do you think that you performed in relation to your peers during this training?

4. How would you describe your role now that you are posted to an Infantry Unit?
    - What types of tasks are you performing on a daily basis?

5. What have you found to be the most challenging part of being an Infantry soldier?

6. What have you found to be the most enjoyable or rewarding part of being an Infantry soldier?

Gender and Identity

7. Have you had to change any part of your personality (including thoughts, feelings or behaviours) in order to be successful in the Infantry trade?

8. Have you had to change any part of your physique in order to be successful in the infantry?

9. Do you think that a person's gender identity makes it easier for them to be in the Infantry trade?

10. Do you think that the Army has done enough to support you to be successful?
    - If not, why not?
    - If yes, what specific support has been most helpful?

11. Do you feel accepted by your peers?
    - Please explain your answer to this question.

Expectations

12. How have you found the experience of being in the Army so far (during the last 12 months)?

13. Do you feel that your initial expectations of being an infantry soldier on enlistment have been met?
    - If not, why not?
    - If yes, in what way?

14. What do you hope to achieve within the Army during the next 12 months?

15. How long do you plan to stay in the NZ Army?

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