

Career Aspirations of Service Children: A Case Study of service children from a Secondary school and a Sixth Form college, their life aims and goals.

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Matthew Thorne

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Declaration of Original Authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Abstract

23% of children currently at Secondary school have parents who are in one of the armed forces (Goodwill, 2017). In the last eight years these children have been identified by the Government because of their potentially vulnerable nature because of a number of potential issues effecting their progress, including; multiple movements between schools, emotional concerns with parents being posted overseas and trouble with movement of school records. The purpose of this piece of research was to examine the aspirations and career choices of this vulnerable group and to consider the choices they are making. As children from service families have been identified as vulnerable by the government, are included in the pupil premium scheme, included in compact schemes between colleges and universities and are highlighted by Ofsted as they were an important and an underrepresented group in current educational research, this research seeks to make a significant contribution to our understanding of these students by considering whether there is something inherent in being a service family that effects the choices that they make? Does their experience in education as a service child inherently change their future career paths? Using college data and qualitative interviews this research examined what factors effect the post 16 choices that these students make. For example, do these students plan to go onto Further Education, complete other training, join the armed forces or go into other employment? What shapes these ideas and how does being a service child affect their aspirations? The findings from this research indicate that the factors affecting a service child's aspirations although complex are similar in some respects to non-service children. However, it also highlights some major issues with regards to service children, the careers advice they receive at school and their progression from school, through college and onto University. It concludes, by offering some implications for a number of stakeholders.

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List of Acronyms

BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CTEC	Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate
DoE	Department of Education
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council
HoCDC	House of Commons Defence Committee
JES	Juvenile Employment Services
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NFF	Naval Families Federation
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OfSted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	The Office of National Statistics
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
RAF	Royal Air Force
RIEG	Russell International Excellent Group
SCiP	Service Childrens Progression Alliance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UCAS	University and College Admissions Service
YES	Youth Employment Services

1. Introduction

This thesis aims to explore the career aspirations of service children whilst they study in year 11 at school and Year 12 at a Sixth Form college, in the context of careers advice given by professionals in these educational establishments. In connection with the career aspirations of these students it will also examine the Level 3 results and progression routes of service children. The purpose of this piece of research is to examine why service children have the career aspirations they do and to try to understand what factors have an impact on the aspirations that they have. It will also attempt to analyse if the Level 3 (A-Level and CTEC/BTEC) results for service children at this Sixth Form college tell us anything about why fewer service children progress to University than non-service children. In 2013/14 0.34% of young first undergraduate students were from service families (McCullouch and Hall, 2016). This piece of research is following an embedded mixed methods paradigm and employing interviews and focus groups to follow a case study methodology. Semi-structured interviews of five school students and five Sixth Form students were conducted to gain a detailed view into these students' school experiences, perception of careers guidance in school and their career aspirations. A focus group was also carried out to gather a more detailed understanding of the school student's perception of careers advice in school. The outcomes from the interviews and focus group were then coded in an 'open' style, using general themes rather than a strict content analysis to ensure that the narrative of the student's stories was not lost. The Level 3 attainment results and progression data for service children at a Sixth Form college were analysed in conjunction with the qualitative data to add depth to the student's thoughts on their career aspirations.

1.1 Professional Background

My interest in the educational attainment and career aspirations of service children really came about as a result of my present career role. I have been a Personal Tutor in a large Sixth Form college for the last eight years. My role puts me in a position to see the full two year sixth form journey of a student. I carry out their entrance interview, enrol them on courses, induct them into college, have weekly tutorials and one-to-ones with them over their two years in college and help them with their progression routes after college, whether that be universities, apprenticeships or employment. As a result of this role I was spending a lot of time talking to students about their progression routes, aspirations, and the reasons for the ideas they were having in school, in college and as they left college. This made me interested into thinking about why students were having the career aspirations that they had. I was specifically interested in did these aspirations change from their initial entrance interview to the time they left college and if they did change what was it that was influencing them to change. The college I work in is very close to a large Army base and a Royal Air Force base and as a result there are a large number of students from service families' that progress through the college. A further part of my role is to be a link tutor to a local Secondary school, where I am expected to help the students in their progression to college by going to Open Days and preparing the students for interview. The school I am link tutor to is Cardigan school¹, a school with a very high percentage¹ of service children. Through the combination of these roles I often overheard students talking about their school careers guidance experience and how they felt their experience as a service child had affected their academic achievements. This was my inspiration for investigating and researching this group of students.

¹ Cardigan school is a pseudonym for the school the interviews were carried out in, please see 3.3.1 in the Methods chapter for further details.

As I further researched and read around the subject of service children in Secondary school and Sixth Form college settings I became surprised by the relative lack of research that had been carried out previously. The fact that it was not until 2008 that the 'service child' identifier was added to the Department of Education school census (Department of Education, 2010) to better aid their tracking made it clear to me that this was an area that needed to be investigated and researched further. Within college I have easy access to A-Level attainment results and progression data for all students so I was able to look to see what data was available and whether it would be beneficial to a piece of research such as this. The initial examination of the data showed some interesting patterns that will be investigated in chapter five of this thesis. The outcomes of the thesis will be a number of ideas for practice in schools when dealing with external careers advisors and a better understanding of the career aspirations of year 11 and 12 students from service backgrounds.

1.2 The Context of the Study

In the financial year 2017-18 there were 10,472 schools who were receiving £22,515,000 in service pupil premium money (Goodwill, 2017). Each of these schools was receiving money from the Government to work at improving the educational experience and attainment of children from service backgrounds. The current interest, from academics and the government, into the educational performance of service children and their progression from school, and ultimately into University is the context that this study is set within. The recent changes in government policy towards a school careers provision model that is devolved from central government to individual schools will clearly impact on how schools can offer advice to all their children but specifically those from service backgrounds (DoE, 2014b). The school in this study is well known within the local area as one that has a large number of service children predominantly from non-officer ranks. The school is in a lower socio-economic catchment area and has a higher than average percentage of children who have

English as a second language (Ofsted, 2015). The developing work by the Service Children's Progression Alliance at Winchester University (McCullough and Hall, 2016) has focussed organisations such as the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to ensure that service children are getting a higher number of successful applicants to University. I feel excited to be representing these service children's stories at the forefront of current research and hope that their experiences will inspire future service children to aspire to achieve as highly as they can and attend the best Universities if that is their desire.

1.3 Overview of the Research

In order to be able to examine the career aspirations of children from service backgrounds, it was clear that a number of existing research areas would have to be studied to be able to place this study in an appropriate context. The first research area to be examined was the educational attainment of service children (Clifton, 2007, White, Marshall & Rudd, 2009) and Government Policies connected to the education of service children (DoE, 2010, DoE 2011). This research amongst others was scrutinised to understand how Government policy towards service children has changed over time and how these changes might have affected these children's educational attainment. Secondly, a thorough and detailed investigation of the careers service in English schools since its inception has been carried out. This includes recent governmental changes that have led to the careers service being devolved from central government control to individual schools (DoE, 2014b, Hooley, 2015). This research has been examined as it sets the scene for the careers advice that service children are receiving in school and will help to further explain some of the thoughts and ideas that these children have. Finally, educational choice theories are established. This section of the literature review will examine Bourdieu and structuralist models (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, Gambetta, 1996), Goldthorpe and rational models (Goldthorpe, 2007, Tzanakis, 2011) and postmodern models (Beck, 1992). The purpose of this section of the literature review is

to understand if the aspirations and choices that service children make can be understood in light of the existing research. Due to the limited amount of existing research (McCullough and Hall, 2016) about service children studying for their GCSE's and A-Level's the research introduced above will offer new knowledge to this developing research area and allow for this study to be placed in a thorough and detailed context.

The use of the embedded mixed methods paradigm followed by this study will allow for the collection of deep, rich and thorough data that is grounded in the related research highlighted above. The study fills a gap in the existing research by allowing this group of older children from service backgrounds to express their personal feelings about their experiences of career services and their career aspirations. A limited amount of numerical data, level three examination results, from a sixth form college will give extra depth to the interview responses and will hopefully help explain some of the service children's aspirations and progression routes. As well as the results of the study itself, it may well offer some ideas for how future research into these students may be able to be carried out.

1.4 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is shaped within six chapters. Chapter Two critically reviews the existing literature, exploring the thesis' key themes of service children and their education, the careers service and its history, and educational choice theories. It aims to examine the existing research on service children and their academic experiences and highlight areas where there is a lack of research at present. The development of the careers service in schools will be studied. Finally different perspectives on educational choice have to be considered in the context of service children and the choices they make. The literature review is concluded by setting out the research questions that arise from the examination of the literature. In chapter Three the methodology and its justification explain how the literature has inspired the construction of the theoretical framework and methodological approach. This

chapter will set out the design of the study, the data collection methods used, the style of the data analysis carried out and any problems or limitations with the research methodology followed. Chapter Four sets out the findings of the study. It uses the research questions and government policy (DoE, 2010) as a framework to bring together service children's aspirations in school and college, attainment data at college and their progression ideas. Chapter Five draws together the findings from the previous chapter into a discussion of issues in relation to the research questions defined and set in Chapter Two. Finally Chapter Six summarises the findings of the research, suggests implications for practice, limitations of the methodology used and possibilities for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to set out some of the key literature relevant to educational attainment for children from armed forces families' school, careers advice and post 16 educational choices. It will focus on what is known about the choices that students make at the post 16 level and specifically the choices that are made by children with parents who serve in the armed forces. The continual development of BTEC, CTEC, Diplomas, Baccalaureate and A-Level courses at Level 3 means that there are now a myriad number of educational pathways post GCSE completion (DoE, 2015b). These pathways can be academic, vocational or a mixture of both and how students decide on their pathway is an area of academic interest. However, in this broad area of research little has been carried out about career and academic decision making from students in armed forces families. Children from armed forces families are considered vulnerable because they have a number of potential issues effecting their progress, these include; multiple movements between schools, emotional concerns with parents being posted overseas, trouble with movement of school records and changes in curriculum options (DoE, 2008). Much of the research on service children that does exist looks at forces' families and their relationships alongside a children's development in infant and junior school (Clifton 2007 and DoE, 2011 for example). Yet the post-compulsory decision making of these particular students is an important factor to investigate, given the issues around the course choices that these students make and the current research being carried out at English universities into the aspirations of armed forces families' children and their progression to University (McCullouch and Hall, 2016). This literature review firstly examines the educational attainment of students from armed forces families, government policy in relation to these students, as well as government policy in post 16 and Higher Education with regards to increasing/widening participation. With a limited

amount of research on post 16 students from armed forces families it is important to understand what government policy is with regards to all armed forces families and then how this may affect students' attainment. Secondly, it presents a history of careers guidance and changes in the careers service, including facilitating subjects and their relevance, this is relevant as it is important to understand how the careers service has developed and whether it provides the support that students from armed forces families require. It will then consider the impacts of the decisions students from armed forces families make. The sociological context of educational choice will also be referenced and examined. It is important and relevant at this time to examine the academic decisions that students from service families make as the government is in the process of revamping the careers service in England. It is essential to ensure that any new careers service and advice that is given to these vulnerable students is focussed on ensuring that they receive advice that is both impartial and useful to them in the career decisions that they make.

The recent government focus on underrepresented groups in education (Office for Fair Access, 2014, DoE, 2014a) has led to an increased focus on the educational attainment and progression of service children. There is an interest in government and academia as to why service children are apparently not attending University in the same numbers as non-service children (McCullough and Hall, 2016). As the emphasis of this research is to see if, and in what way, being a child from a service family is important in concentrating and shaping a child's aspirations and choices, it will focus on year 11 and 12 students from one school and college to examine the education choices they make. The findings from these students will be examined to see if there are specific reasons for fewer service children going to University. Forestan (2011) found that students whose families were in the Royal Air Force (RAF) were more likely to follow them into that service, not because of parental pressure but because they saw it as a good career. Yet, clearly not all service children follow their parents into an armed forces career; so why do some choose to go to college, some into employment and others into the armed forces? The recent change in government policy that requires

children to stay in some kind of education, apprenticeship or undertake volunteer work of more than twenty hours a week until the age of eighteen, will clearly have an effect on the choices school leavers can now make (DoE, 2015a). Understanding how the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) given to students from this vulnerable group affects their aspirations and how it interacts with the guidance they may be receiving from home, friends or armed forces careers services is important. As someone who gives advice to students I need to know that the advice I am giving is impartial and actually helping the students make the decisions they need to make when they leave school and attend a college. The government paper of 2010 made it clear that all children from armed forces families must have the same educational experience as non-service children. This educational experience had to include careers advice and guidance as well as classroom success (DoE, 2010). I will start this literature review by examining the educational attainment and current government guidance for schools that have children from armed forces families studying at them.

2.2 Educational Attainment and Forces Children

The British Army has been an established organisation in the North Hampshire region since they moved to Aldershot in the 1850s during the Crimean War (www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/Aldershot-museum). Soldiers in uniform and their children have as a result become a common sight in the schools of the local area. In fact Hampshire has the second largest number of service children (DoE, 2010). These children have made an important contribution to the local community in their interactions with non-service children and their families. There has been considerable research, locally and nationally, into the school lives and experiences of service family children across all years to Key Stage 4 (DoE, 2010, DoE, 2011, White, Marshall & Rudd, 2009, Black, 1984 and Clifton 2007). This research has focussed on the impact of being a service child on the child's early schooling, relationships with teachers and early academic achievements. To summarise this research it

has become evident that students from forces families face a number of key issues that do not affect non service children. These include:

- Difficulty in finding school places as the family unit tends to be quite mobile as they move between military bases. This can result in families not having a choice about the school that they can attend as mobility can occur at any time of the year and not necessarily in line with school terms. Causing children having to attend the school that has space, not always the school of choice.
- Students from forces families face more emotional and behavioural issues than their counterparts from non-forces families; this occurs for a number of reasons, anxiety about parents being in warzones or away on a posting, worry about parents being away from the family home and concerns connected with friendship groups both in and out of school.
- Mobile students tend to under-achieve in school. This relates to students having to react to new schools, syllabus and teaching methods. Moving to a new school also results in the formation of new friendship groups which can effect achievement in school.

There is very little if any research on the Sixth Form or Further Education college experiences of children from services families and their aspirations. Therefore the aim of this research is to fill the gap that exists in understanding forces children's education experience and aspirations in Year 11 and after. Further, this was highlighted as a major area needing additional research at a Further and Higher Education Progression for Service Children conference held at Winchester University (McCullouch and Hall, 2016). It is important to research this group of students as they form part of the Governments Pupil Premium scheme, have been highlighted by the Department of Education as a disadvantaged group and are under-represented at the moment in present research. Service children make up 23% (DoE, 2010) of all students in school, this is nearly a quarter of all the children in school, and service children are a large group of children that there is very little research on their

aspirations. As of 2012 there were 18,000 children in state funded secondary schools who had at least one parent who was in the armed forces (DoE, 2014a). To make sure we as teachers are giving relevant information, advice and guidance to students from all groups of society we need to know why these students make the educational choices and have the aspirations they do. If we as careers advisors understand the reasons for a student's aspirations we will be able to offer them focussed 1-2-1 advice that will guide them in the choices that they make. The advice given may be a combination of both positive and negative suggestions, but if we understand where a student's thoughts are coming from we will understand the student and be able to guide them in a more personalised way. This section of the literature review will specifically focus on educational policies at a government level and the direct impact that they have on students from armed forces families.

2.3 Armed Forces Education Policies

The development in the tracking of children from armed forces families has only been a relatively recent event. It was not until 2008 that the 'service child' identifier was finally added to the Department of Education school census to better aid the tracking of service children and their progress through school (DoE, 2010). This change came after Parliament realised that it had no way of knowing how many service children were actually in UK schools (House of Commons Defence Committee, 2006 and NFER, 2007). Things continued to develop in 2010 when the Department of Education published 'The Educational performance of service personnel'; this highlighted previous failings when educating service children and started to signpost a way of moving forward (DoE, 2010) to ensure forces children had the best educational experience possible. In 2011 this earlier research was further developed when the Department of Education produced a 'good practice guide' document that focussed on the workings of eleven Primary schools and ten Secondary schools across the country, one of each school type in Hampshire. The 'good practice guide' was a direct response to a

Ministry of Defence white paper focussing on the Nations Commitment to its Armed Forces personnel (DoE 2010). The white paper highlighted how important it was that armed forces members and their families were not disadvantaged in any part of life; Education was a central part of this. The purpose of this research was to study the good practice of the schools visited and inform future Government policy. Armed forces children were considered to be distinctive from other social groups in four main ways; mobility, social and emotional Issues, attendance and parental involvement (DoE, 2011, p4). As a result of highlighting and examining these four differences the research came up with seven key findings to maximise the progress of children from armed forces families. For each key finding, a summary of its relevance in practice is discussed below.

- **Facilitating admission arrangements** – *Service children may move between many schools in their school career as their parents are posted to different bases in the UK and overseas. Mobility is thought to have a major effect on the attainment of all children and mobile service children are thought to perform less well than non-mobile service children (House of Commons Defence Committee, 2013). Ensuring that the children can get school places quickly if the situation dictates it is important. Armed forces families do get priority help in finding school places when moving in standard school entry times (Forces in Mind Trust, 2015), but as much mobility happens outside of this time it can be hard to find school places quickly. Attendance at school regularly helps a student's chances of fulfilling their potential and achieving good results.*
- **Securing transfer of assessment information and records between schools** – *High quality information on the child's attainment and progress at a previous school is important as it allows the new school to help new students to progress as quickly as possible. However, information transfer between schools is still being described as patchy, with the obligation being on service families to ensure the information about their children is passed on (Forces in Mind Trust, 2015).*

- **Maintaining continuity in curriculum and learning** – *Especially in GCSE years it is important to try to reduce the impact of different courses, exams boards and standards of work when children move between schools. A change in options can have a major effect on a student's schooling, for example, students may be studying one foreign language in one school, move and not be able to continue it in the new school and have to start up a new language. Problems in these areas can have a major impact on a student's college, university or employment ambitions. In a number of entrance interviews at college students from armed forces families have struggled to access A-Level courses because of this problem. At School A they could study GCSE Photography, Classics and Graphics as options, but School B offered none of these courses and because they joined through year 11 they ended up only studying the main GCSE courses (Mathematics, English and Science) with no options. These changes in curriculum then really restricted what these students could study at A-Level. Forces children need to have the same opportunity as non-service children to achieve a good number and standard of GCSE's.*
- **Ensuring continuity of provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)** – *Stateminting can take a long time and different procedures are followed between local authorities which may lead to multiple applications being undertaken. This disadvantages students with SEN as their education does not progress in a straightforward way.*
- **Supporting the social and emotional well-being of the children** – *Children may have to move school and start again with new friends. There is also the worry of separation from parents and other family members. Family members could be posted to a base in a different town or country, these postings can be for a long period of time. In addition to this family members could be posted to a war zone, this adds additional anxiety to the children (Engel, Gallagher & Lyle, 2010). So it is important that these students have support above and beyond the normal personal, social and*

health education (PSHE) offered by schools to ensure they settle into their new schools. This may take the form of access to extra pastoral care or counselling if it is required.

- **Maximising the use of available resources** – *At the time of the white paper local authorities received no extra funding for service children so it was important to use the money they did have effectively, in all areas; teaching, pastoral care and careers guidance. This issue has improved recently with service children being included in the Pupil Premium funding from 2013, schools now receive £300 per service child at school (DoE, 2013a). This means that there is now extra funding that needs to be used in the education of service children. Importantly this funding must be accounted for and its use is a major part of the Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted, 2015) which means that schools cannot just use the money for general staffing or resources, they have to show evidence of how it has been used to help the education of children from armed forces families.*
- **Facilitating effective communication with the armed forces** - *If operational procedures allow, it is useful if advanced planning can allow extra support to be put in place for the children if they are moving schools or parents are going away. Having prior knowledge of a move can help greatly with controlling the first two of these seven bullet points. Unfortunately operational rules mean that it is not always possible for families to have advanced warning of new postings.*

This Good Practice Guide (DoE, 2011) was of key importance as it highlighted the existing practices of some Primary and Secondary schools and sits as a beacon of good practice for schools to follow when educating children from service families. These seven key findings were things that many schools already did with their non-service children but it was felt that due to the vulnerable nature of the service children involved they needed to be highlighted and brought to the front of schools policies and procedures. How to support the children without that support being overt and obvious was also a key feature of the report (DoE,

2013b). The reason for this was to try and make sure that service children gained support without feeling stigmatised or different because of their parent's employment. It does appear that five of these findings focus on the administration of the schools and how to make communication between schools more effective rather than ways of maximising the progress of the children. It may be that communication between schools, the armed forces and government agencies is the area that needs the most improvement and ultimately impacts greatly on a student's progress. Certainly my experience in college would support the idea that communication between institutions and agencies needs improving. The two findings, of the seven, that are most student focussed are 'maximising the available resources' and 'supporting the social and emotional well-being of the children'. These emphasize the importance of a high level of support being in place, whether that is pastoral care, careers advice, medical or social support. Arguably these are a crucially important part in ensuring armed forces children have the ability to progress academically - if they do not have support in place to allow them to focus on their education then it can be very difficult for them to succeed. Children from forces families need to have extra support in place in school and college because they have additional needs at home. Parents may be deployed overseas; they may move around the country to different bases and may have smaller less established friendship groups. Without a detailed understanding of these students' needs and an educational plan in place in school to make sure that the students' emotional needs are met, students can fail to fulfil their academic potential. Currently, there is no extra funding at Sixth-Form level for service children, so the resources available in schools are greatly reduced in college. Any extra support that is given to service children is funded by the college itself and therefore is dependent on individual colleges' financial stability. This could result in service children being disadvantaged at college as they do not have the emotional and educational support they experienced in school. Although many students in college have needs that require extra pastoral support those who come from service families may have had a tougher time at school, due to regular movement and the emotional concern of having parents or siblings separated from them (Engel, Gallagher & Lyle, 2010). These issues from

school can represent themselves in college and can result in not only poorer GCSE grades but also a negative attitude to education. Without the pupil premium forces families funding that schools have, colleges are left to their own devices to ensure that children from forces families are supported ably. This white paper has been reinforced by the work of Noret et al (2014) who when interviewing 187 secondary school teachers that taught service children found 66% of the teachers felt service children had a different school experience from non-service children and 78.8% of the teachers believed that service children had additional support needs to non-service children. The importance of this research is that it shows the continuing need to research and examine the experience of service children in secondary school, to understand if there are further changes that can be made to ensure that service children have the best school experience possible.

2.4 GCSE Results for Armed Forces Children

Interestingly the 2011 DoE research confirmed previous Department of Education research in highlighting that service children outperformed non-service children at GCSE level. 72% of service children at the Secondary schools examined achieved 5+ A*-C compared to 69% of non-service children (DoE, 2011, DoE, 2014c). Traditionally it has been felt that children from service families have struggled academically due to the issues they face that have been examined previously. Yet this Department of Education research contradicts this view and highlights the GCSE achievements of service children. However, the evidence in this piece of research is from ten Secondary schools so we should apply caution before it is generalised across the United Kingdom. Recent research has confirmed these government findings. Noret et al (2014) in a study of 102 year 10 and 11 forces children found that in Maths and Science, GCSE attainment was at least as good if not higher than that of non-forces children. In English though there was a considerable difference in performance with the forces children not achieving as well. This is another small scale piece of research, which cannot be

generalised to examine how forces children do nationally at GCSE level compared to non-forces children. Strand and Demie (2007) found that those students who had increased mobility achieved less well at their GCSE examinations, with those who only joined the school in year 11 achieving considerably less well. He examined if other factors such as gender, free school meals eligibility and social class had a greater effect than just the mobility of the students. At secondary school level it was clear that mobility did have a negative impact on achievement regardless of the other factors studied. Further, the existing research does not take into account those members of the armed forces who may pay or have the fees paid for their children to study at boarding schools. The MoD argue that by paying for a child to stay at a boarding school they are reducing the impact of any movement between bases that may occur, they are in effect paying for the child to have a stable education (The British Army, 2014). By paying for their employees children's education the armed forces are hoping to mitigate against the seven issues raised in the 2011 research mentioned previously. It is interesting though that only 5% of forces families have children going to boarding school and this is next to the national average of 7% (McCullouch, 2017²). When examining the success rates of forces children it is important to take into account the schools studied at as there can be a wide variance in experience at school between the children of officers and privates, although with these figures about forces children at boarding schools perhaps we need not worry quite so much about the impact of boarding schools on results. In many cases there are also a variety of skills such as flexibility, adaptability and integration skills that service children may develop through their circumstances that are not examinable, but will help them throughout their future lives. These skills are not necessarily shown in their GCSE results.

² From a speech delivered by Dr Judith McCullouch at Building Bridges SCiP Alliance Conference, 28 June 2017

2.5 Pupil Premium Funding

Despite the evidence of high achievement found in the 2011 research, service children were included as part of the 2013 Pupil Premium funding (DoE, 2014c). This funding was setup in the belief that students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds did significantly worse at GCSE level. The main indicator used to evaluate GCSE success was free school meals, where those eligible did considerably worse than those who did not qualify; 37.9% of children eligible for free school meals achieved 5 GCSE A*-C (including Mathematics and English) compared to 64.6% in children not eligible for free school meals. Secondary schools receive £935 per student registered with Pupil Premium to help with their educational needs, whereas for those children whose parents are in the armed forces they receive £300. Schools are free to use this money as they see fit. Whilst most children who receive Pupil Premium do so because they are considered to come from the lower socio-economic areas of society, this is not the case with those from service families. Department of Education research showed that although traditionally service children were perceived to come from lower socio-economic groups not more than 5% of service children actually lived in the most deprived quarter of areas of England (DoE, 2010). Service children are included in Pupil Premium funding because the lifestyle they and their parents lead means that they are considered vulnerable. Children may move around the country or countries to different postings which means they often have to start at more than one school in a year. Some children may have one or both parents away on postings for significant amounts of time, which can lead to emotional stress and there is always the worry that their parents may not return. The reasons for service children's inclusion in Pupil Premium clearly links back to the 2010 White Paper (DoE, 2010) and the government's desire to ensure that children from armed forces families could achieve to their full potential. The funding that schools receive to support service children comes under the remit of Pupil Premium funding. With Pupil Premium being such a large part of Government policy and the Ofsted inspection framework, it is important to see if this funding is having an effect on the day-to-day educational

experiences of service children and how this may affect their choices and aspirations as they complete their GCSE's and leave school.

2.6 Higher Education

In Higher Education these concerns, over access for armed forces students, are mirrored in the widening participation work that is being carried out by individual Universities. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) aim to promote fair access to University for all students. Their remit is to work with Universities and Colleges to try and ensure that students from different ethnic groups, the armed forces, lower socio-economic groups and mature students are all given a fair chance to attend University (OFFA, 2017). Other groups such as the Naval Families Federation (NFF) also work to help students from their families improve their chances of getting to University after College. The NFF recently produced a student guide that will help naval family students with writing their personal statements and investigating University access arrangements (NFF, 2017). This guide from NFF suggests the sort of information that a student from a naval background might want to include in their UCAS application to highlight their educational experience from the armed forces and to ensure they access any preferential offers that a University may make to students from service families. Work from organisations connected to the services rather than specific universities or university organisations is vitally important as it comes from the services side rather than an academic side. This may mean that the advice given is more generic and generally usable than that from UCAS for example as although focused on University the advice given is equally beneficial for students applying for apprenticeships or employment. The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) give funding to Universities to help with their outreach programmes and attempts to raise aspirations and attainment for students from under-represented groups (HEFCE, 2014). Clearly these attempts appear to be working as in the period 2012-13 Universities spent £140 million extra on attracting poorer students. This

money was split £61.5 million on outreach work, £30 million on financial support and £48 million on a new scholarship programme (Richardson, 2014). Although success in outreach programmes is not entirely down to expenditure it is clear that extra funding can help Universities create programmes and schemes to connect with under-represented groups. 'Access to Leeds' is a good example of this where students from forces families if they apply to this scheme can have a reduced offer from the University (Leeds University, 2017). However far these programmes reach out to society, students still need to achieve A-Level grades that will allow them to be accepted into University. This could explain why outreach programmes from Oxford and Cambridge University are not having the same amount of success as at other universities. Although Oxbridge colleges appear to be making contact with students from underrepresented groups, those students do not have the academic results to meet the Universities entry requirements even when additional flexibility to the application process is applied (OFFA, 2014). Even when widening participation schemes reduce academic entry requirements for students there is still a high level of entry requirement required and it may be that these students cannot reach this level. The understanding of the Widening Participation for Universities is important as this is one of the key areas that will allow Universities to continue to charge £9000 (OFFA, 2014). At present UCAS and HEFCE has no way of tracking how many students from Armed Forces families are studying at UK Universities (HEFCE, 2014). Figures are available on gender, age and ethnic groups but UCAS do not require or need students to announce if they are from an armed forces background. On the whole this information, on the makeup of the student body, is left to each University or College to gather itself, resulting in huge variation in data quality. The increased focus from the department of Education on student destinations will hopefully mean that in the future data on under-represented groups will become widely available (DoE, 2011). This data is important so that schools and colleges can ensure that careers advice is tailored to the individual needs of their students. Some preliminary information is available; research by Winchester University has identified that 0.34% of young first degree undergraduate students in the 2013/14 entry were from armed forces families (McCullouch

and Hall, 2016). This is a very small number of students from forces families attending University straight from college and it is important to investigate why this number is as small as a percentage of all University students. Understanding how under-represented groups are tracked through school and college and the reasons for their subject choices may help Universities to structure their outreach programmes to ensure that they help the students that potentially need it most. The Winchester University research shows that at present there is only a very small percentage of young first degree undergraduates coming from forces families (McCullouch and Hall, 2016), so it is important to examine and research why this percentage is so small at present. It is clear that government policies will continue to benefit universities with funding if they promote and offer places for those students that come from under-represented groups.

Now that we have some understanding of the current government policies and research into the education of children from armed forces families we need to examine the careers service as it is in England. This is important to do so that we can inspect if the careers service is fit for purpose for students from forces families or whether the limitations that may exist in careers service are increased because of these students' other educational needs.

2.7 The Careers Service

Since the establishment of the Careers Service in the early 20th century it has had an interesting and changing position in the educational landscape of both England and Wales; it being an external and independent body not directly connected to the education system (Morris, 2000). The history of the careers service is very briefly examined below to explore how it has developed into the organisation it is today. The careers service will then be used as the base for research into the educational choices of armed forces children.

2.7.1 History of the Careers Service

Careers provision started in England with the introduction of the Education Act in 1910, and a school leaving age of thirteen. The main aim of this act was to try and reduce unemployment and steer children away from physically and morally hazardous employment and dead end jobs, for example, errand boy and tea girl (Roberts, 2013). By the Second World War Local Education Authorities created the Juvenile Employment Services (JES) staffed by Juvenile Employment Officers, who became the precursors of modern day careers guidance professionals. In the period up to 1948 the main role of the JES was to distribute National Insurance Cards and offer pep talks to students in their final year of school (Mulvey, 2006). At the same time the Diploma in Vocational Guidance was validated and, which as the first qualification for careers guidance professionals (Roberts, 2013 & Hooley, 2015), suggests a growing recognition of the importance of career guidance. This was therefore a landmark moment, as it was the first times careers professionals were seen as a professional body qualified to help young people. By the end of the 1960's the JES became the Youth Employment Service, (YES) and was successfully serving pupils with all levels of ability. The service had lost its old image, which was associated with finding jobs for early school leavers. The renaming of the Youth Employment Service as the Careers Service in 1973 set the base for what was soon identified as one of the finest career guidance services in the World (Mulvey, 2006).

The initial aim of the renamed Careers Service was to try and develop student's career skills and give information and guidance about appropriate transitions at the age of 16. With an increased requirement for students to continue in education post 16, the careers service found themselves being required to try and reduce student's disaffection with schooling and keep them in some type of education or training post 16 (DoE, 2011). The Education Act of 1997 required that all children from the age of 13 have access to a programme of impartial careers education and advice (Roberts, 2013). At the turn of the 21st century the Connexions

Service came into existence and absorbed the Careers Service. The aim of the Connexions Service was to support 13-19 year olds through their teenage years at a time when careers guidance was considered to be “patchy” at best (Brooks, 1998). This meant that Connexions overriding aim was to ensure that a good quality impartial careers service was available to all students at schools and colleges. Connexions aimed to be there for students to access if their own establishment did not offer good quality and independent careers advice (Fuller, McCrum & Macfadyen, 2014), Connexions did however, appear to focus mainly on those students who were at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) and as many pupils did not fit into this criteria it meant that many only received basic careers advice and often only from their school teachers, therefore not meeting the overall aim of the Connexions service (Fuller, McCrum & Macfadyen, 2014). At this time the Department for Education’s focus was to reduce the number of NEET students aged 16 and over (DoE, 2011). As this was a Government focus in education, this emphasis in Connexions is not really a surprise. This aim was an effort to try and reduce those number of students who left school without good GCSE qualifications and with no real focus on what to do after school. However, the results of an Association of Colleges survey stated that their members felt that there had been a 41% drop in access to the Connexions service since 2002 (Brennan, 2004) and clearly the service was not meeting the needs of its users, especially if they were only really focussing on potential NEET pupils. Research by Pring and Hayward (Pring, et al 2009) found that about half the careers guidance given by the Connexions Service was inadequate, specifically with respect to areas like subject choices, university courses and future careers.

In 2010 there were 77 organisations (local authorities, Connexions partnerships and private companies) providing careers guidance (Lewin & Colley, 2011). However as Local Authorities did not have jurisdiction over Further Education colleges, Independent Corporations, Academies, Trust Schools or some training providers it means many educational institutions were left to their own devices as far as careers advice is concerned

(Hodgson & Spours, 2008). After the 2010 election the Coalition Government planned a new all-age careers service in England. The new National Careers Service was intended to underpin the new careers system, help offer an independent careers service and in time it was hoped it would be as mainstream a part of the political system as the NHS education (Hooley, 2015). However, this plan was soon scrapped as a result of tensions in the coalition government, a desire for school autonomy and budget cuts (Watts, 2013). By 2012 the funding that had existed for Connexions had been devolved to Local Authorities. A change in government policy aimed to have a devolved and local careers service rather than one that was centralised and as a result the Connexions service disbanded. These considerable changes post the 2010 election have potentially lead to a reduction in the amount and quality of careers provision for young people (Hooley, 2015).

2.7.2 Current Government Policy

Although new careers services exist, Government policy has developed from 2010 with a focus on a much greater need for schools and colleges to provide their own impartial and independent careers advice, with the new power of deciding how they do that devolved to the local level (DoE, 2014b). This careers advice provision is now being bought in by many schools and made to fit within their educational budget as, despite a cut in central funding there is no extra funding for schools from central government. Some schools are tackling this shortfall by pooling resources. For example, in North Hampshire an organisation, Quest Career Consultants, is now working with seven local Secondary schools. The schools work with each other to try and ensure that the careers advice they receive meets the needs of their students. The schools however, that do not have the budget to “buy in” careers guidance appear to have to rely on the advice that can be given by existing teachers, with a limited knowledge of the careers landscape. A teacher’s knowledge of the careers system is naturally limited as it is not the main focus of their job, they are employed to teach a specific

subject not deliver careers advice. There is not the time or the funding for teachers to attend training and develop a thorough knowledge of careers to allow them to give detailed advice to their students. This devolved system cannot possibly promote a dependable level of careers advice and means some students could be seriously disadvantaged. Schools that have bigger budgets will be able to buy in quality careers advice, while those without the budget will have to rely on inexperienced staff giving careers advice where they can. The government expect all students to get impartial careers advice but at present they have given very few resources to schools to help deliver this and many schools have to rely on the National Careers Service website as their only vehicle for giving advice and guidance (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committee, 2016). These concerns were raised by Hooley and Watts (2011) when they examined how the reduction in the careers funding budget would have an adverse effect on the staff available to advise students because it would result in a significant decrease in experienced staff and specialist careers roles within Local Authorities. A recent study by the Student Room online forum supports this view. They found that 32% of students rated their careers advice as weak and 39% of the less affluent students said they had received poor subject advice (Burns, 2014). It should be recognised that this study is based purely on forum posts by teenage students, not necessarily the most consistent avenue for obtaining student's opinions, but does give an indication of pupil concerns. The article does not include any comments from students who have been happy with their careers advice and therefore could be seen as quite sensationalist and does not take into account any consideration that students and their parents should attempt to do some level of careers research for themselves. In line with these findings the 2016 government select committee on Education found that many of the students they interviewed had not received good careers advice while at school. The common concerns expressed by the students were:

- Advice was not personalised or tailored enough to the individual student
- Advice was provided by non-specialist staff who lack knowledge of modern job markets and non-university pathways

- Schools promoted their own sixth-form rather than being independent (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committee, 2016, p7-8)

Research by Woolley and Hooley may mirror Burns' findings as it has shown that students in Further Education tended to have limited contact with careers guidance in schools and those that did had a negative experience (Woolley & Hooley, 2015). These pieces of research show that potentially the standard of careers advice in schools has declined as a result of changes in government policy since 2010. This concern of a reduction in the standard of careers provision in school led to a government select committee sitting in June 2016. The committee agreed with the research by Hooley and Watts (2011) and felt that the transfer of responsibility for careers information to schools had led to a patchy careers service and this was mainly due to the lack of funding that was being given to schools. The biggest concern that the select committee had was that it was over three years since the Education Committee sat and produced a report to raise the quality of careers guidance in schools and there did not appear to be any great improvement in the service provided by schools (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committee, 2016). These changes in provision for schools have been mirrored in colleges with a duty for colleges to secure access to independent careers advice becoming a cornerstone of the government careers policy (Watts, 2013b). It seems from this research that there has been little change to colleges in the way they deal with careers provision, many self-funded their careers service so the drop in funding that schools felt did not have the same effect, as funding for careers was already in place. The biggest issue for sixth-form colleges attached to schools has been the need to offer 'impartial advice' to students when the school and college really want to ensure that students stay on and gain the school the extra funding for studying their A-Levels there.

It is clear from examining the history of the careers service in England that there have been many changes to the delivery of careers advice and guidance to Secondary school children.

Much of this change relates to the funding that is given to schools and local authorities by the government of the day, in recent years the reduction of centralised funding has resulted in poorer schools struggling to deliver a thorough and helpful service to their pupils. This patchy service can be especially harsh on children from service families who due to the nature of their family life may move around the country as their parents are posted to different bases. These children may move from an area with a good careers provision to one with a bad provision and then back again. This could mean not only a reduction in the quality of service on offer to service children but also a repetition of experience if a student's notes are lost or don't move with them they move to a new school. Repetition of initial interviews could be frustrating to students at a new school environment. It is important to examine how this interaction with the careers provision available affects the aspirations and career ideas of these students, or if they are getting their careers advice from other places, like the family or the armed forces themselves.

2.8 Facilitating Subjects – what are they, why important?

Alongside the need to offer young people good careers guidance and support, making the choices that 'facilitate' access to different pathways is also important. In 2013 the Russell International Excellence Group published the Informed Choices (The Russell Group, 2013) booklet, an iconic guide for A-Level students. The Russell International Excellence Group (RIEG) is a collection of twenty four research intensive, world class universities, who have offered guidance on what A-Levels students need to achieve high grade in to attend their universities.³ This booklet gives students information about applying to a Russell Group University and, although not coming from a specific careers organisation it has arguably become one of the most important careers publications of recent years. The increasingly

³ The publication of Informed Choices also led to the development of the 1994 group, a set of smaller research led universities who work together to defend their own interests after the formation of the Russell Group

competitive nature of applying to University means that students are trying to gain any advantage that they can. Knowing from the Informed Choices booklet which subjects Russell Group Universities look at favourably, with regards to admissions, means that students can select A-Level courses to study which will help them attain a place at a Russell Group University. This is very useful as it reduces the guesswork that some students feel exist in applying to University (Burns, 2014). The publication of the eight key “facilitating subjects”; mathematics/further mathematics, English literature, physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history and languages (classical & modern) are listed as being subjects required by those Universities in the RIEG. Therefore, to access these elite universities to study degrees requires that students are a lot more aware of what subjects they should be studying at A-Level (The Russell Group, 2013). At college interviews, students now have a much greater understanding of the need to study facilitating subjects if they wish to study competitive courses at a Russell Group university. There has also been discussion within Government circles as to where advice and guidance on facilitating subjects comes from and the need to have the best careers advice possible to ensure students are not being short-changed is key (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committee, 2016). The Government are concerned that the advice given to students by some Universities may not be impartial and may be more of an attempt to direct students to their own Universities. However, not all Universities require facilitating subjects and some students may achieve better results on other courses at other educational institutions (Harrison, 2013). Understanding the importance of choices and the links to future life course outcomes is important however.

In the United Kingdom there are one hundred and thirty Universities of which one hundred and nine are in England. These Universities are unofficially categorised into four different tiers. Tier one is Oxford and Cambridge, tier two, the rest of the Russell Group and the now defunct 1994 group, tier three, any institutions not already grouped that were created before 1992 and tier four, mainly the remaining polytechnics and former higher education colleges

(Havergel, 2015). The ratings are based on amongst other things academic selectivity, research activity and teaching quality. Any student studying or having completed level 3 qualifications (A-Levels, CTEC/BTEC and English Baccalaureate qualifications are traditionally, English qualifications accepted as Level 3) can apply to study at a University in the United Kingdom, they do this through the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS). Universities then see the application and make the student an offer of what grades they expect the student to achieve in their examinations or coursework subjects. In the academic year 2015/16 there were 1.75 million undergraduate students in the United Kingdom, within this figure there was a 78% increase in the number of students at University who had free school meals compared to 2006 (Universities UK, 2017). As discussed elsewhere the number of students from forces families who are studying at University is a hard statistic to track historically but with current research hopefully these figures will be recorded from 2016 onwards. Research from the Office of National Statistics (2013) found that students with a degree from a Russell Group University were likely to be paid 25% more than a student with a non-Russell Group University degree. This could be seen as a shocking statistic, but it must be borne in mind that medical, engineering and natural science degrees are mainly studied at Russell Group Universities and the students need higher A-Level entry grades to study there. These facts coupled together would explain why these students were paid more, it is not just that they studied at a Russell Group University. In connection to this the Sutton Trust (2015) found that on average a student completing a higher apprenticeship received higher lifetime earnings than a student with a degree at a non-Russell Group University. It is evident that accessing a Russell Group University can have a positive impact on a student's career. One of the purposes of this study is to examine whether service children are in a position to access places at Russell Group Universities.

With the position of "careers" in the educational landscape now established we need to examine what research has been carried out on the actual reasons for students continuing on with post 16 education, the choices they make and what style of education they partake

of. This is important to do as we must understand why students make the choices they do before we can think about whether being a member of a forces families shapes the educational choices that these children make.

2.9 Educational Choice Theories

After examining the position of the careers service in the educational landscape it is important to see what factors influence the way that students make the educational and career choices that they do while in school. Some sociological theories will be useful in making sense of the intricate issue of the choices that students make when they are coming towards the end of their compulsory education.

2.9.1 Bourdieu and Structuralist Models

Structuralist models of educational choice (Bourdieu, 1977, Ryrie, 1981 & Gambetta, 1996) argue that student's choices are generally the result of a series of constraints, usually institutional, economic or cultural. These are constraints that the student has very little, if any control over, as they either come from their physical being, for example gender or race or are ingrained in them through their primary socialisation from their family and educational experience. Bourdieu (1990) would argue that student achievement and possibly subject choice is down to their ability to access 'cultural capital'. 'Cultural Capital' is defined here as

'Instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 56).

This 'symbolic wealth' could be a person's skills, clothing, personal mannerisms, belongings, interests in the media, publishing or music choices, the things that a person acquires as part of their social class. The idea of cultural capital was important for Bourdieu as it set an individual's position in society and implied that the more capital a person had access to the

higher they would be up in their social positioning. Bourdieu's theory of habitus is also important to examine as it helps to further explain his theories on education. Although through reading Bourdieu there are a number of different definitions of 'habitus', I will be using this one for this study:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment . . . produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations. . . . [T]he practices produced by the habitus [are] the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72).

Habitus relates to the inbuilt nature of 'cultural capital' it is those things that we as humans do naturally as a result of the skills and habits that we have built up due to our own experiences. Bourdieu believes that habitus is important as it explains the way we are due to the culture that we are experiencing everyday through our lives. If I understand correctly it could be argued using habitus in this study that students from forces families would develop the skills and understanding to deal with regular movement from one base and school to another and their parents being posted to potential war zones overseas because that is the situation they are in and that as a member of a service family these things are ingrained in them.

Students from socially advantaged backgrounds can access 'cultural capital' while those from the working classes cannot and do not have the finances required. Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' (Lareua & Weininger, 2003) propounds that the main reason for the lack of social class equality in educational performance can be found in the unequal distribution of 'cultural capital'. As stated in the previous paragraph cultural capital are the values, knowledge, leisure interests and skills of the ruling class (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). While conducting his research Bourdieu collected his data from surveys carried out in French schools during the late 1960s and 1970s. He analysed how often members of different occupational groups visited theatres, concerts and museums and listened to classical music. He was also considered the types of newspapers, books and films they were reading and

watching. Gerwitz (1995) stated that middle and upper class children were much more able to take advantage of school choices because of their possession of cultural capital. This hinders students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds as schools test information that is only accessible through 'cultural capital'. More recently Edgerton (2014) agreed with Gerwitz's research and found that students from higher social and economic statuses were able to produce skills that schools reward. Bourdieu's theory mirrors the structuralist perspectives of Gerwitz and Edgerton, to some extent, which maintains that the purpose of education is to socialise children from different social backgrounds differently, Marxists' argue that schools socialise students so that they are ready for employment and employment that mirrors their social background (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Although Bourdieu believed that education kept the status quo because of the way education celebrates the success of student's who can access the highest levels of cultural capital that is then examined (Bourdieu, 1977). For the working class, this is achieved by teaching skills such as hard-work, punctuality and obedience as they are the skills they will need when they are employed whilst middle class students are taught to lead in society. Habitus helps to explain this situation, working class children see the skills of hard work, punctuality and obedience in their parents living experiences and believe this is what they need to learn in school. Research by Sullivan (2001) supports the theory of cultural capital and argues that the family is the most significant part of the culture of children. He agrees with Bourdieu by suggesting that cultural capital is transmitted through the reading of classic novels and quality newspapers and the watching of factual documentaries. These activities enable the development of a more sophisticated vocabulary and as a result leads to increased exam success. A large number of these activities need a good income and Sullivan found that there was a strong correlation between the higher classes and regular consumption of high culture. It is further argued that education is used to ensure that the inequalities between the working and middle classes are maintained and thus there is a 'correspondence' between education and social background (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). If this were the case then it would appear that most students from service families would have aspirations to follow their

parents into the services and continue to work at that level, there would be no attempt to try and 'improve their position in society'. The habitus and access to cultural capital of these students would mean that they would never be in a position to do anything but continue their lives in the armed forces. I cannot believe that this is the case and believe that there are other influences on a student's aspirations than just their habitus and ability to access cultural capital. We will now examine further into Bourdieu's research to see if his theories can be used to explain educational choice or career aspirations.

Smith and Noble (1995) have argued that since the 1980s government attention has shifted from equality of opportunity to parental choice which means that middle class parents with money are in a better position to help their children achieve than working class parents. Cultural capital not only potentially has an impact on success in school but also on the school that a child studies at. Recent educational reforms (DoE, 2014a) allowing for open enrolment have meant that middle class parents are potentially able to exploit the market in education and bring their social and cultural advantages to bear. This means they are in a much better position than working class parents to ensure that their children go to the school of their choice (Ball, Bowe & Gerwitz, 1994). The issue of school choice may well be one that is on occasion removed from armed forces families. The issues with deployment can mean that they do not have a choice with the school their children go to they have to go to the one with space. In addition to this, not knowing the area they are moving to means that they do not always know about the reputation of a specific school, either good or bad. Research by Smith and Noble (1995) seems to validate Bourdieu's belief that working class children could not access the resources required to succeed at school. They found that in the 1990's poorer children faced a number of barriers to academic success. These included parents having insufficient funds to buy books, computers and other academic aids, cost of paying for trips and cost of post 16 education amongst other things. With the students for this study coming from the rank and file of the army and from the lower socio-economic groups within society it

will be interesting to see if, when interviewed, these students felt that they were disadvantaged with the lack of funds that their parents had. Reay (2006) has stated that working class children are more likely to have part-time jobs and work longer hours to help with family finances. This can affect their ability to achieve higher grades in school as they are needed to help keep the family economically afloat and this takes away from study and revision time. With a large number of students in college having part-time jobs, the suggested maximum hours per week is eight hours, interviews with students with a service background will shed light on whether more of these students have part-time jobs and if they do are they working more hours than students from non-service backgrounds.

The education system, Bourdieu felt, was based on 'cultural capital' as it tests the values and knowledge of the ruling class and teachers use language that is more familiar to the higher socio-economic groups than the lower groups (Swale, 2007). Bourdieu believed that working class culture was devalued by the education system because it is not valued in the same way as the higher classes and this means that those children would never be able to compete in the educational race in terms of educational rewards (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). He believed that middle class children however, would do better than working class children because their culture is closer to the ruling class (Waugh, Allen, Brisbane, Gregory & Swann, 2009). It has long been held that non-officer army families are from the lower classes of society and therefore Bourdieu's theory would imply that these children would struggle in school. Department of Education research showed that although traditionally service children were perceived to come from lower socio-economic groups not more than 5% of service children actually lived in the most deprived quarter of areas of England (DoE, 2010). This means they can access the curriculum with greater ease and thus do better in exams than had been originally thought. By investigating the examination data of service children in college it will hopefully shed some light on whether service children achieve as well at level three examinations as non-service children. The level two data for students at

college will also be interesting to examine, if the rank and file of the services really cannot or don't want to access cultural capital then it would be expected that more service children would be retaking GCSE qualifications at college as they would not have achieved to the required level at school, a 'C' grade or equivalent.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital is a class based perspective and does not take into account the significant issues such as gender (van der Vleuten, Jaspers, Maas & van der Lippe, 2016) and ethnicity (Bradley, 2004) when looking at academic achievement. Bourdieu also argued that a child's cultural capital is linked directly to their social class, which he measured by the child's father's occupation. However, it could be argued that linking an individual's cultural practices to their social class is disputable. Thirty years ago it may have been the case, but now, it seems no longer easy to use the father's occupation as a cause of the child's cultural practices since other important factors operate. These include the mothers' job and the existing wider educational and labour market, both of which may facilitate an extension to individuals' original cultural practices and may promote their social mobility (Azaola, 2012). It could be argued that having this discussion at all is proof that Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital' is flawed. If students in the lower socio-economic bands really do not have access to 'cultural capital' then would they have achieved well enough to be considering what they would study at A-Level? May we not expect to see many army family children retaking level two courses due to students not being able to access the information required to achieve in their GCSE's and therefore needing to retake courses or bolster their basic education profile. Ryrie's (1981) research of Scottish school leavers showed that the structures of their education and family life were on the whole the features that influenced whether they continued on at school after the age of 16. This is interesting as it would imply that careers advice and guidance does not have as much of an impact as those ingrained features already mentioned. It will be interesting to see if students thirty years after Bourdieu's original research have the same thoughts. I find it hard to completely

agree with structuralist models of education as I cannot accept that the way a student's socialisation and education will progress is based purely on the features they are born with or their families' home environment (Goldthorpe, 2007). The effect of parents, friends and the school must effect the choices and success of a student during their school career. We will examine these issues and see if they do impact on a students' educational choices.

2.9.2 Rational Models

In the thirty years since Bourdieu originally produced his theory of cultural capital it has been critiqued and examined by a number of Sociologists (Goldthorpe, 2007 & Tzanakis, 2011, for example). It is argued by some that the theory of cultural capital fails to address the intricacy of individualism. It tends to ignore the ideological and cultural spaces that make change, which can be carried out by individuals or groups within society, possible. Bourdieu's theory is problematic in that it falls short of providing any convincing explanation of how individuals, socially positioned within the same habitus, may develop personal trajectories that are dissimilar (Macris, 2011). It does not explain how children from families without access to cultural capital can become doctors or lawyers. This is a major flaw in Bourdieu's theory of habitus and helps to highlight how important the issues mentioned above are. When examining educational success and choice, the contrasting theory to the Structuralist model is the Economic model (Becker, 1974 in Payne, 2003, p.16) states that:

students see education and training choices as investment decisions in which subjects make a rational calculation of the relative returns to each of the different options open to them, the time taken to realise those returns, and risk of failure attached to each option.

In this model students make choices based on what they think will be most useful for them as they progress through their lives, these choices are not restricted by their ability to access cultural capital as Bourdieu would argue. Research by Foskett and Hesketh (1997) found that the wide range of new qualifications and vocational training opportunities allowed students to think in this economic way to a larger extent than they ever had in the past when

students were considered either academic or not. The continual development of BTEC, CTEC and A-Level courses means that there are now a myriad number of educational pathways post GCSE completion. One of Goldthorpe's main criticisms of Bourdieu's theory is that Bourdieu believes that the family and the families' habitus is the only place for socialisation and the transmission of values to a child (Goldthorpe, 2007). This is clearly not the case, there are many different agencies from schools, to friends and the media that can greatly affect the values that a child develops and believes in. Goldthorpe argues that children acquire information and many of their values not in the home but, from teachers, friends and celebrities. This means that there is a far greater chance of students from lower socio-economic groups achieving educationally more than Bourdieu would suggest as their family socialisation is only part of the whole process (Goldthorpe, 2007). Goldthorpe believes that the economic base of the individual is the thing that really focusses their social class. A person's social class and then movement within class is based on their employment relationships and not the habitus or access to cultural capital of an individual (Goldthorpe, 2000). A further criticism of Bourdieu from van der Vleuten, Jaspers, Maas and van der Lippe (2016) can be observed in their research which showed that parental cultural participation was not statistically related to children's educational ambitions. This would suggest that educational expectations and choice form in isolation of cultural pursuits and do not have the direct link to cultural capital that Bourdieu identifies. Linked in with these economic models is the concept of 'pragmatic rationality' which has been propounded by Hodkinson, Sparkes & Hodkinson (1996) and Hemsley-Brown (1999). In this model students make their own choices that although couched in the economic model are restricted by the students' personal understanding of their own position in society.

Work by post-modernists such as Beck (1992) and Du Bois-Reymond (1998) has investigated how post 16 students are creating their own biographies and choosing their subjects based a lot more on potential employability rather than sheer enjoyment. It could therefore be argued that careers, advice and guidance within schools is only trying to give

these students a larger frame of reference from which to make their choices (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1993). Although this model is over twenty years old it does still resonate with my experience in college, where students often talk about their subject choices in terms of what job they can get after college and university, but, as theory suggests, it is only from within their own knowledge base. This often means further discussions are needed about different ways of making their own career plans possible as although seventeen year olds often think they know everything this is not always the case where careers are involved. From this position it is vitally important that students have access to high quality careers advice and guidance to be able to guide them on their career choices. This is even more important for service children who may be highly mobile, with slightly lower academic grades or a reduced number of GCSE's and suffering from personal issues. Investigating how service children understand and believe they are being supported by the careers service in their school will help to examine any potential weaknesses in the current setup and offer improvements for future policy in the school.

Having examined these existing theoretical perspectives I am now going to consider how the school and personal identity can have a specific impact on the subject choices that a student may make when they complete their GCSE's and move onto further study.

2.10 Influence of the School

Whilst the family can have a huge impact on a student, the direction and ethos of a school can, in some instances, have a greater impact on the choices that a student will make when leaving school. Foskett, Dyke and Maringe found that there were four strategic orientations of schools that affect the choices students make and the information, advice and guidance given by the school (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2004). The four strategic orientations of school they identified were:

School Type		Definition
1	School Image orientation	These schools often had their own sixth forms, were in high SES locations and measured themselves on high A-Level grades and the number of students heading to high quality universities.
2	Student centered orientation	These schools tended to be in all SES locations and were student focussed. Not really pushing specific post 16 career agendas but listening to what the students wanted.
3	Functional/Administrative focussed schools	These schools tended to be in low SES or metropolitan locations and focussed on the day-to-day running of the school with external agencies really focusing on the careers support for the students.
4	Strategy/Policy orientation	These schools were in low SES locations and their main focus was ensuring students could access careers advice to help find jobs. Employability rather than academic study was the key aim.

Table 1: School types and definitions (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2004)

At one end of the orientation spectrum, if a school has a high level of academic expectation and belief that their students will study A-Levels and go to University this will impact on the information, advice and guidance that the students will get. Schools that have honours boards of their students who have attended Oxford or Cambridge are good examples of this. It is possible that students from these schools have higher aspirations and goals, set by themselves, their teachers and their parents, as they will see this level of success daily and it becomes part of their 'habitus'. This 'habitus' then impacts on both the staff, students and parents, a school or college is seen as having a good reputation and getting good results and this will ensure students want to study there and good staff will want to go there to teach. These events perpetuate the idea of a good school and the cycle begins again. At the other end of the scale a school that has a more vocational focus may well assume that their students will be applying to lower level Universities, or going on to apprenticeships or the world of work, and will not be as worried about which specific A-Level subjects that they will apply for. Schools of this orientation were in low Social and Economic Status (SES) locations and therefore the aspirations from parents for their children may be lower than in the school image orientation. Parents who went straight from school to apprenticeships or work may

look for their children to do the same thing as that what they see as being 'successful' and leading to a good life. Parents may also feel that their children need to go to work to help the economic survival of the economic unit. Becker has also argued that the effect of labelling in school can have a great impact on the chances of a child succeeding. He found that middle class children were often labelled as closest to the idea of an ideal pupil. This meant that because working class children often did not fit the ideal model they were more likely to face negative labelling which they may then live down to and so not fully achieve (Becker, 1974). This research clearly shows the negative impact that the school can have on a student's chance of success, it is clearly in opposition to Bourdieu who believes that the only impact on a child's success is from the family and the environment, 'habitus', that the children are being brought up in. Goldthorpe, (2007, p. 19), argues that rather than helping promote inequality schools 'complement, compensate for or indeed counter family influences'. This again shows that the influence on educational success and choice is much more than just the family and environment as Bourdieu would argue. These issues were further strengthened by a second study by Foskett, Dyke and Maringe in 2008 that examined how schools with high socio-economic (SES) catchment areas tended to deliver careers guidance that encouraged traditional academic careers, whilst schools with low (SES) catchment areas had a much stronger commitment to vocational pathways. Personal experience of working at year 9 careers evenings would also seem to support Foskett's thoughts. Many parents, when deciding on which College stand to visit would suggest to their children that they go to the local College of Technology first as their children were more "suited" to vocational courses rather than A-Levels at the Sixth Form college. Comments such as "the 6th Form college is for clever kids, not you" were heard on more than one occasion. When careers advisors and parents are giving year 9 students the same advice is it any real surprise the decisions they make when they leave school at the end of year 11. This is something I would like to explore further.

At the lower end of the socio-economic scale it could be argued that A-Level choices and A-Level knowledge fit with Bourdieu's theory as many students do not have as much access to the information they need to be able to choose facilitating subjects at A-level. Again the influence in a school or college, certainly from schools in orientation three or four in table one (Foskett, et al, 2004), of a careers advisor or personal tutor would work with the student to overcome any lack of knowledge the student may have from their 'habitus' and help them start to understand which courses need to take if they have a specific career aspiration like a lawyer. Does this pattern replicate itself as we move up the socio-economic scale; do the private schools or those from the highest socio-economic levels access the highest percentage of facilitating subjects? In 2011 The BBC and Guardian Newspaper published research by MP Elizabeth Truss that found that over twice as many students from Private Schools were choosing 'rigorous' subjects like mathematics, physics and chemistry than their State School peers, and three times as many taking a foreign language. Reay (2006) argued that in private education, the paying of fees converted economic capital into cultural capital. This means that upper and middle class parents are paying into cultural capital and ensuring that their children get a higher level of advice and guidance from their schools. Truss found that only 11% of Sixth Form students were taking three facilitating subjects compared to 31% and 32% at Independent and Grammar Schools respectively. She felt that the reason for this was that schools in the state sector were advising their students to study easier A-Levels such as media studies to help ensure that their results looked good rather than worrying about the student's future educational plans (The BBC & Guardian, June 15th, 2011).

At a national level it is evident that there has been an increase in the number of students taking science subjects, biology is at 7.4% and chemistry is at 6.1% which are the highest since percentages were recorded in 1996 (DoE, 2013a). It may be evident that the gap in cultural capital between the upper and middle classes has been narrowing in the United Kingdom and that this is why more middle class students are being able to access the

information that may at one time not have been accessible to them. Halsey (in Goldthorpe, 2007) has argued that 'cultural capital' as explained by Bourdieu may well exist in France but that in the UK there has been a modernisation of education in the 20th Century. Between generations there has been an expansion of Secondary education which has allowed the middle class to access things that were once the regard of the upper classes only. Although Halsey mainly finds that this movement has occurred in the middle classes he argues that the working classes have been far from left behind. However research by Reay (2006) would dispute this as she has found that children from middle class families are 50% more likely to stay in education post 16 than their working class counterparts.

2.11 Personal Influence

Outside of the influence of the social conditions of the family or the school, there is one other major reason that will affect the subject choices that a student will make at A-Level, which is the students' own preference. Bourdieu's initial research took place in the 1960's in France and society in France and the UK has changed a great deal from that time to this. We are now living in a much more individualised society where people are looking out for themselves rather than just conforming to their social status. Following Bourdieu's theory it could be argued that a student's own choices come directly as a result of their environment and 'habitus' that they live in and therefore their choices are not really their own but an unwitting response to their environment. There is however lots of recent evidence of students from working class backgrounds becoming doctors and lawyers because that's what they want to do; this obviously is very much at odds with what Bourdieu believes. With this increasingly individualised society comes an enlargement in competitiveness and the need for a high level education to show your personal skills and abilities (Beck 1992). Post GCSE education is the first time that a student has what they might consider to be a completely free choice as to what they would like to study not only academic or vocational but also what type of

courses. By “completely free” I mean that it is less influenced by school issues such as timetabling, teacher availability or course costs. In college students have a relatively free subject choice with the only restriction on choice being their GCSE results. This is done as each student has their timetable individually created so they can choose whatever A-Level subjects they like. This is an institutional freedom but clearly the students choices are effected by external issues such as family pressure, friends and attainment at school. In the case of this study I am aiming to try and find out if these issues and how they impact on a service child are different to a non-service child and how they influence their subject choices and career aspirations.

The concept of young people creating their own biographies is one espoused by post-modernists such as Beck (1992) and Du Bois-Reymond (1998). They both believe that post-adolescent youngsters although having a lot of options are being made to reflect on the options available to them and justify the choices they make. This is especially the case in the further education pathway they follow as more and more often they are being asked how this education will help them get a job in the future. Students at this post-adolescent age are really starting to think about their career choices after their A-Level studies, instead of potentially just picking the courses that they think they will enjoy the most and achieve the best in. Students are making rational choices based on their knowledge of society and their financial situation rather than worrying about their social background (Goldthorpe, 2000). There are a number of degree subjects that require specific A-Level subjects so for example, to study Medicine you must complete at least two A-Levels of mathematics, chemistry and biology (University of Birmingham Prospectus, 2014) and to study architecture you must complete A-Levels in mathematics and an art subject (University of Bath Prospectus, 2014). These choices are not being made because of the student’s access to ‘cultural capital’ but, I would argue, they are thinking about what they need to study at College to make a living when they have graduated from University. In agreement with Beck (1992) students have a

much more individualised idea of what they are choosing; they are not necessarily part of a class group but are rather choosing the subjects that they think will help them the most. These choices are pragmatic and are coming from the students own limited amount of knowledge i.e. they are choosing based on what is familiar and known to them, Careers advice is merely trying to give them an extra frame of reference and enlarge the context in which they make these decisions (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1993). As has been discussed previously at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum this certainly follows Bourdieu's theories as students may follow the path suggested by parents and friends based on their own limited knowledge. A student at College who is a talented artist has told me that they plan to drop their textiles A-Level at the end of their first year, not because they don't enjoy it but because they cannot see how they will make any money out of the subject. Their other A-Level subjects are use of mathematics, psychology and sociology. Although these are not facilitating subjects she sees how they could lead to employment after University. This would seem to follow the theories of Goldthorpe where the student is making a rational choice based on what will work best in their life after college.

2.12 Educational Choice Theory Analysis

Having examined these educational choice theories it has become clear to me that trying to explain why a student makes the choices they do is a complex issue. It cannot be explained by one theory alone. Although Bourdieu's theories of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' are important, as clearly the initial socialisation that takes place in the home has an effect on a child. I do not believe that the ability to access 'cultural capital' is the only thing that impacts on a child's educational choices. The child's school and its motivation (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2004) impacts on the choices a child makes and how they see themselves educationally. Linked with this a child's friends add an extra level of support and guidance to a child as they make educational choices. This is a complex enough scenario for a child who

stays in one town or city for their whole life. For a service child who may move on multiple occasions in their school life it might appear to have an entirely negative impact. How could a service child stay in one place long enough to build the relationships with school staff or friends necessary to get good support and advice? On the contrary, I believe that this movement allows service children to interact with more teachers and friends than non-service children, all of these interactions will impact on the educational choices that a service child makes. They may meet many inspirational friends and teachers in their educational journey. The movement of service children may allow them to assimilate skills and experiences from a wide variety of people and places that help them to make their educational choices.

2.13 Implications of the Literature Review

There are 23% of children currently at school who have been identified in the last ten years because of their potentially vulnerable nature as the child of parents in one of the armed forces. There has been much research about the educational choices, aspirations and achievement of different groups of students; this research can be categorized by the gender, ethnicity or social class of the students (Fuller & Macfadyen, 2011, Forestan, 2011 and Sealey, 2007). As of 2015 there had been very little if any research on the aspirations of service family children and even less on the ambitions of these children when they leave compulsory education. As children from service families have been identified as vulnerable by the government, included in the pupil premium scheme, compact schemes between colleges and universities and are highlighted to be followed by Ofsted they are an important and an under-represented group in current research. Research within this literature review shows that the family and a child's school can have a major impact on the academic and employment choices that school children make. Linked with this many students make

choices with some understanding of the likelihood of their choices being successful, they tend not to take the route with the most risk (Fuller et al, 2014).

Research by Foskett and Dyke has produced Figure 1 as a way of showing the influences that a sixteen year old student may be under when they come to make decisions about the subjects that they would study after completing their GCSE's. It shows clearly that the family, institution and personality can have a major influence on those choices.

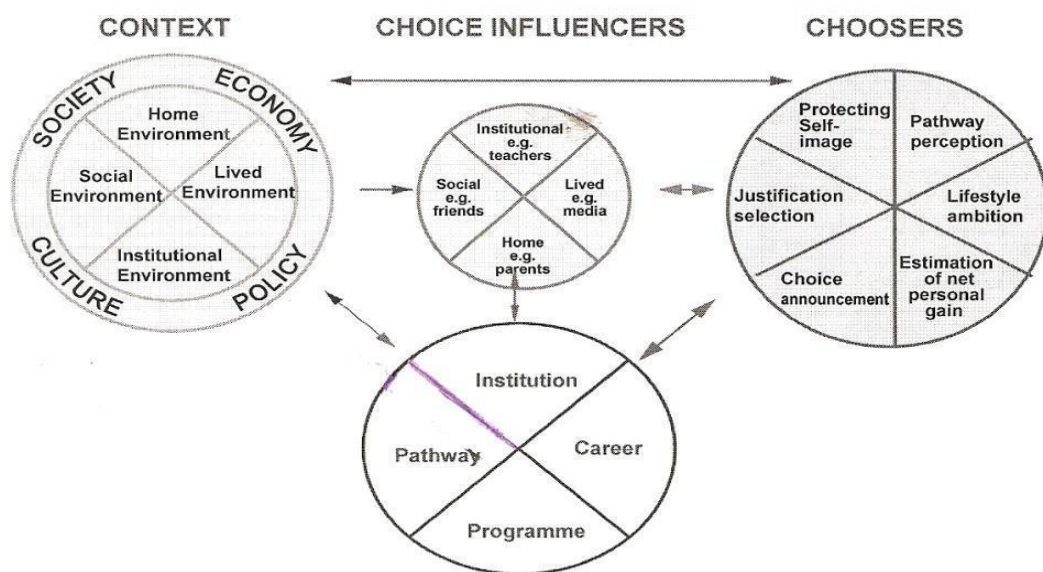


Figure 1: An Integrated Model of Education Choice (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2004)

I feel that it is important to move beyond this existing research and examine why service children make the career choices they do after completing their GCSE's. By interviewing five college and five school students I aim to be able to examine in depth what advice is having the most effect on the post 16 choices that these students are making. I will be focussing on the following research questions in a hope that I can help develop the careers advice given in college and Cardigan school to students from forces families:

- What is the career progression for children from forces families?
- What shapes these students career ideas?

- Does being a service child affect their career aspirations?
- If they are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

Is there something inherent within these children being in a service family that significantly affects the academic choices that they make or do they follow a similar pattern as non-service students and make their choices based on advice and guidance received in school, at home, from friends or their own aspirations?

2.14 Key theoretical and conceptual framework

After the examination of a large amount of literature it is clear that when examining the career aspirations of service children the key theoretical framework to base the research on is whether service children develop their aspirations in the same way as the existing literature would suggest or are there different influences on service children? Initially Bourdieu and his theories of habitus and cultural capital were examined to understand if these theories of educational choice could be seen as relevant to service children. Could it be argued that because of their parent's employment background and career experience the students were having their own career aspirations moulded by their parents? A further examination of Goldthorpe and Beck showed that to base career aspirations just on the family and home environment was far too basic an analysis and clearly other influences such as economics, a child's school and their own personal thoughts and academic ability all impact on the career aspirations that a student would have. Using these theories as a framework, three key concepts will be examined through this study to try and understand exactly what it is that shapes and influences a service child to have the career aspirations that they do. These concepts are the service child family, career aspirations and careers guidance. I plan to examine if the experience of careers guidance and service family life mould these children's career aspirations in a different way to non-service children, or are children's aspirations moulded in a similar way regardless of parental career. In the context

of this piece of research there are three key definitions that need to be explained at this stage, these concern the terms; service family, student aspirations and careers guidance.

For the length of this study the definition for 'service family' will be:

a family who has a parent or parents who are service personnel, serving in regular military units of all HM Forces and exercising parental care and responsibility (DoE, 2010 and MOD, 2007)

This definition is used as it is the one the government used when they added a 'service child' identifier to the Department of Education's school census in 2008. Within this study 'service child' will follow the definition of 'service family' given above. When investigating the idea of student's career aspirations it is important to understand what we mean by 'career aspirations', for this study the term will mean:

a hope or ambition of achieving something that is related to a student's chosen career (Anon, 2014)

The definition of careers guidance that will be used for this study is:

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their career. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample option before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services." (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2004, p. 11)

This definition has been used as although it covers far more areas than just school and college it does explain well what careers guidance is.

3. Methodology and Research Design

The purpose of this piece of research is to examine the mechanisms that help explain the process sixth form students and secondary school children from armed forces families go through when choosing their educational path and careers. It will examine if the choices that these students make are different from those propounded in the existing literature discussed in the previous chapter. The focus of this study is to examine why students make the decisions they do and evaluate if the careers support given to them in school and college meets their specific needs. As it is the students' own understanding that matters, this research naturally falls within a more interpretivist model and is the focus that this research will take. Whereas positivist research aims to uncover truth and facts using experiments and quantitative methods in attempting to either confirm or reject a hypothesis, interpretivist research is much more concerned with meaning and a desire to understand a social member's definition of a situation. To collect data, I carried out semi-structured interviews and a focus group to try and capture the students' feelings and thoughts. Some exam result and progression data for forces children was collected from college to work in conjunction with the interview responses. These methods were chosen as I feel that they were the best way of obtaining the data I was in search of. The methodology followed in this piece of research was that of embedded mixed methods. This methodology was followed to allow for a more detailed analysis of the original data that had been collected through interviews (Denscombe, 2008). The results of the interviews and focus group were collated in the form of a case study; this was prepared as the research questions and results met the requirements needed for a successful case study as propounded by Yin (2009). The research questions being asked in this piece of study were:

- What is the career progression for children from forces families?
- What shapes these students career ideas?
- Does being a service child affect their career aspirations?

- If they are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

The requirements met for a case study were that there were specific questions being asked, the context of the interviewees was important to the questions asked and that the thoughts and behaviour of the participants could not be manipulated.

3.1 The Study Design

3.1.1 Scenario

As a Personal Tutor in my college I have always been interested in the reasons for students selecting the courses that they do. Part of my role is to carry out admissions interviews for students in Year 11 and then to offer careers support, amongst other things, during the two years the students are studying in college. At interview students choose the level 3 courses that they will study and it has always been interesting to listen to their reasoning and beliefs as to why they are taking the subjects they are. Working where I do in the South East of England means that the armed forces are never far from daily life; there is an army base and RAF base in close proximity to the college. The academic achievements of students from forces families has been an area of growing interest in the current educational climate (DoE, 2013a & DoE, 2014a). In the local environment the achievements of students from forces families is important as they make up a significant percentage of the college community and it is therefore important that they have the same chance of successfully achieving well in their examinations as any other student. Nationally, since the addition of the 'service child' identifier to the school census (DoE, 2010) it has become of increasing importance to Ofsted that they can see how students from service families are achieving in their educational experience. There is very little research about the career and academic decision making of students in armed forces families. Much of the research that does exist looks at forces' families and their relationships alongside the children's development in infant and junior

school (Clifton 2007 and DoE, 2011 for example). The post-compulsory decision making of these particular students is an important group to investigate, and the current research being carried out at English universities into the aspirations of armed forces families' children (McCullouch and Hall, 2016) has highlighted the need for research into Secondary and Sixth Form students. Due to my role in college I am ideally placed to examine how the support, advice and guidance offered year 11 and 12 students impacts on the academic choices they make and the aspirations they may have.

3.1.2 Educational Position

In this case study ten students were interviewed to gain an insight into the reasons why they have selected or will select the A-Levels they do. These students were a mixture of those studying in College and in their final year at Cardigan school, all were from armed forces families. College has fifteen partner schools that in 2016 contributed 119 students from forces families to the student body. It is not physically possible in this piece of research to study students from all fifteen of the partner schools. I have therefore decided to concentrate on one of the partner schools, Cardigan school. The reason for selecting this school is relatively straightforward. I am the Link Tutor for Cardigan school which means that I have a direct access to these students both in college and in the school. Most Cardigan students who come to college are placed in my tutor groups and I attend many school events such as parent's evenings, options evenings and careers days.

3.1.3 School Background

Cardigan school is one of the College's link schools and is situated in a large town with an army base and a large proportion of military families in the town. The size of the school has fallen from 651 students in 2013 to 539 in 2015 (Ofsted 2013 & 2015), this is evidence of

parents choosing other local Secondary schools as a result of recent sub-standard inspections. In 2016 only 30% of in catchment area parents opted for Cardigan as their first choice school (Amalgamation of schools - Decision Report, 2017). In the Ofsted 2015 report it was stated that the school had one fifth of students from an Asian background with the majority of those being Nepalese (Ofsted, 2015). The local area around the school is in a lower socio-economic catchment area and has an above average percentage of students who have English as a second language (Ofsted, 2015). As a result of the large military base and the low socio-economic catchment area there are a higher than average number of children who access Pupil Premium (Ofsted, 2013). Linked with the nearby army base, this means that the school has a higher than average number of students who arrive and leave during the year, and this has been a consistent trend over the last two Ofsted inspections. The school has an armed forces co-ordinator who overlooks the use of pupil premium and service premium money for service children and keeps detailed records on the student's attendance and performance in their time at school. The armed forces co-ordinator ensures that students from service families have the support that their specific circumstances require. This is a mixture of arranging days out for the students and meeting them regularly if their parents are away on deployment, to organising taxis to get them from the army base to school. In its last two Ofsted inspections Cardigan school achieved an overall grade 3, this was a result of students not making the progress expected and students not being challenged enough to develop depth in their learning and understanding (Ofsted, 2013 & Ofsted 2015). On the Ofsted scale grade 3 means that Cardigan school requires improvement. The result of these last two inspections has been that the school is converting to an Academy and merging with a local Infant and Junior school to offer education under one banner from ages 4-16. (Amalgamation of schools - Decision Report, 2017).

3.1.4 Research Design

This piece of research is reported as a case study. The reasons for using a case study format for this research are that the study will have clear boundaries and it is only related to students studying at the college I work at, and children in Year 11, in the school I am the link tutor for, who are from armed forces families. The clear boundary that exists in this case study ensures that the research does not become too broad and stays focussed on the key questions being asked (Yin, 2009). The 'case' that I am analysing is the aspirations and career decision making processes of students from forces families at the selected educational establishments. One of the main advantages of using a case study design is that it allows the researcher and participants to work closely together, ensuring that the participants can tell their stories (Baxter, 2008). Due to only a small number of students being interviewed, ten, the data collected about them can be analysed in a great deal of depth and in a holistic way to try and gain a full understanding of the case being examined (Punch, 2009). This method allowed the participants stories to be told in a thorough manner. This case study is an exploratory case study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011); as there is little if any research on career choices and aspirations of forces children during their GCSE's or A-Levels. This means that the findings from this research should help careers advisors and teachers understand the way these children make the decisions they do and if there is any other advice that could help them in the decision making process. A number of different data collection methods were used as part of the case study. I used a combination of interviews and focus groups to collect the required amount of data. The use of these data collection methods allowed all students to answer questions, with those not happy to talk in a group able to take part in 1:1 interviews and vice versa. As well as this interview data, numerical data of level 3 results and progression was collected and used to add some depth to the students own voices.

As with all research methods there are strengths and weaknesses of using this method. I have discussed some of the strengths of this type of research above and why it fits the research being carried out. There are however some weaknesses with using case studies as a research methodology. Issues such as observer bias and subjectivity will be examined elsewhere in this methods chapter. The biggest criticism of case studies are that they are not generalizable, that their strength of being in detail and specific to one case, is in fact their weakness as they do not allow you to generalize the findings across society or to other research (Cohen et al, 2011). These criticisms arguably come from a very positivist epistemology where objectivity and the ability to generalise your findings are important. I would argue that the aim of case study research is not to gain an objective account of an issue but to understand the feelings and beliefs of the subjects involved. There is no requirement to generalise the findings as that is not the focus of this style of research (Floyd, 2012). A case study is about the particular details and facts of the participants rather than the general (Thomas, 2015). It could be argued though that a case study can have a logical link rather than a statistical link with wider theory. This means that rather than being statistically generalizable it can help researchers understand other similar cases or events (Yin, 2009).

3.2 Methodology

In deciding on the paradigm to follow within this piece of research it was important to first examine the existing options that were available. The positivist model follows the belief that all research outcomes are measurable and generalizable. Researchers who follow this model believe that the logical procedures of natural science can be applied to social science research (Cohen et al, 2011). Positivism has been the dominant research paradigm since the nineteenth century and is still used by a large number of researchers. The alternate view to that of positivism is the interpretive paradigm, this argues that individual's behaviour can only be understood by the researcher being part of the subject's environment. In social science

research it means that rather than being objective and having an outside looking in position as would be propounded by positivist researchers, interpretivist researchers are looking at their research subjects from within their environment (Bryman, 2016). The interpretivist position means that researchers are not attempting to be objective and they accept that there is some subjectivity within the research position that they take up. There is a clear connection between Positivist research using quantitative data collection methods so that outcomes can be generalised and Interpretivist research using mainly qualitative data collection methods that allow for a more personalised individual and in depth set of data.

In planning this piece of research I examined the existing models and adopted an embedded mixed methods model to examine the thoughts and opinions of school and sixth form college students, with some numerical data to add extra depth to those thoughts and opinions. Working in a college that prides itself on counting in ones, following a research model that had the individual as the main focus seemed a natural course of action (Cohen, et al, 2011). My research followed the work of Robson and McCartan (2016) in its interpretivist leanings, as it contained many of the typical features of qualitative research:

- Accounts and findings are presented verbally or in non-numerical form
- A focus on meanings
- Contexts are seen as important. There is a need to understand phenomena in their settings
- Situations are described from the position of those involved
- The generalisability of findings is not a major concern
- It is usually small-scale in terms of numbers of persons or situations researched (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 20)

The final decision to follow an embedded mixed methods approach rather than a mixed methods approach was a straightforward one. I wanted the student's interview responses to

be the main focus of the case study, with the college numerical data being used to add extra depth rather than both data sets being at the same level of interpretation (Cresswell, 2009). The epistemological positioning for this study was that the student's career aspirations were developed through their own experiences and that 'the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated' (Cohen, et al, 2011, p. 19). This focus was selected as it would allow the best opportunity to examine the thoughts and ideas of the students and use some limited numerical data. I felt that allowing the students voice to be heard in both interviews and focus groups would ensure that their opinions were collected in a narrative format, it would allow me to try and view and understand the world in which the interviewees were themselves based (Cohen et al, 2011). I preferred using this model to a positivist one as in a positivist model the students thoughts and views would be left to speak for themselves with limited if any interpretation (May, 2001). It was clear to me that some level of interpretation would be needed to help understand the student's aspirations. As a teacher in college and the link tutor to Cardigan school I felt that my own subjectivity needed to be taken into account and that although following an Interpretivist approach would leave me open to criticisms of subjectivity, working to understand my own position with regards to careers advice in schools, armed forces children and their aspirations would help with the interpretation of the what the children were saying. Finally with such a large hole in the research of armed forces students at sixth form level using an Interpretivist model may also allow any emerging theory to be built on the students own experiences.

3.2.1 Data Collection

In carrying out this piece of research I used data collection methods that allowed me to collect the qualitative data that will enable me to evaluate the reasons students from forces

families choose the A-Level subjects and have the career aspirations that they do. To this end I focussed on interviews and focus groups as the main methods of collecting data.

3.2.1.1 Interviews

I carried out semi-structured interviews with five students in college, who studied at Cardigan school and five Cardigan school Year 11 children; this gave me 13% of the schools population that came to College and 4% of the forces children who came to college from Cardigan school. By interviewing students both in college and at Cardigan school I planned to get a mixture of retrospective and current opinions about the career advice and guidance the students have received. This is an important issue as many students appear to feel they are not getting good advice with regards to what A-Level subjects to study (Burns, 2014). They feel there is not enough information about good course combinations and the courses they need to be studying to access high level University courses. Getting the opinions of students actually going through the process of selecting A-Levels will reduce any possible issues of only using retrospective interview evidence, evidence which may be considered to be in the past or poorly remembered by the interviewee. It is equally important to highlight that all opinions from students are important, whether they are current or from memory is not really an issue they are still the students' own opinion (Fuller et al, 2014). As I am not interviewing all 2000 Year 12 students attending college it is important that I sample the students well. In quantitative research sampling is carried out to try and ensure representativeness of the whole population so that the research can be generalised. This is not the aim for qualitative research as we are less interested in the generalisability of the findings.

Initially I carried out one interview with each student and then a focus group as issues became relevant or as time allowed. The semi-structured plan for the interviews, meant that

although there were no specific order of the questions they had been grouped into themes that were relevant to this study (Floyd, 2012). The order and structure of the questions depended to some extent on the answers that were given by the interviewees. This style is preferred as it allows the interview to flow (Robson & McCartan, 2016) and personally I think it allows the interviewee to feel more at ease as they can answer the question asked in as much depth as they are happy with. The general themes for the questions were the students' armed forces background, the reasons for the A-Levels chosen, the advice and guidance received both in school, in college and at home and the student's career ambitions. These areas will give me the information required to acquire an in depth understanding of what influences the post compulsory educational choices that these students make and to answer the research questions raised from the literature review. In planning the interviews I followed the organisation style advocated by Floyd (2012). In this style there were three distinct parts to the process. First each student was given an information sheet, which gives them an overview of the study. This has two major benefits. Firstly, it gives each student an overview of the study and an idea of the questions going to be asked in the interview. Secondly, it gives each student essential details about the ethical context of the research. Information regarding who will see the research carried out, how the interview results will be stored, how to leave the research if they want to and who to contact if they have any concerns. Copies of these information sheets can be found in Appendix A. Second a face-to-face interview was organised, this was conducted in a classroom in the college or school to try and make the interviewees feel more at home. In Cardigan school this was the student's home room and if the student desired then the armed forces co-ordinator would be in the room as well. Before the interview each student completed a consent form, which was also signed by their parents. Third, after the interview was completed each student was sent an electronic copy of the interview transcript so that they could confirm what had been written and make any changes or adjustments they required. I think sending the interviewee a copy of the interview script is important as it helps to promote a level of confidence between them and the interviewer that what they have said has been recorded and considered as important. To

ensure the ethics of the research were followed in the writing of the case study all the names of people, places and dates were changed so that the anonymity of the interviewees are kept to the highest level.

3.2.1.2 Interview Transcription

Each of the interviews was digitally recorded at the time of the interview, transcribed verbatim, and then written up. I tried to transcribe the student interviews as soon as possible after I had carried them out. This was done for two reasons; firstly as the interviews were still fresh in my mind, it meant I could transcribe both from the recording and also from what I could remember of the interview. Secondly, it meant that I could start to plan out the themes that would be discussed in the focus group. As this is a qualitative piece of research it is important to transcribe everything that the interviewee has said to ensure that nothing of importance has been missed. I have also tried to record any facial expressions or non-verbal communication that has taken place through the interview. This has been done to ensure that I do not misinterpret anything that an interviewee has said. The interview scripts have been collated to make a case study. The case study has then been examined from three different points of view. Firstly, as a narrative sequence of events, summarising the environment each student grew up in; their current environment; and major life events (Wedgwood, 2005). Secondly, an investigation into the A-Level subjects they have chosen or will choose and their school careers. Finally, an investigation into the guidance that they have received both in school and at home.

3.2.2 Focus Groups

Although interviews were the primary focus of the research, I also carried out a focus group in Cardigan school to gain an even more in depth understanding of some of the issues that

came out of the interviews. There was not a focus group in college as the students in college all have individual timetables so it was not possible to arrange a mutually exclusive time that they could all make. In school the students work off the same timetable so it was possible to arrange to see the five of them all at once. Once the semi-structured interviews were carried out I arranged with the armed forces co-ordinator a Wednesday afternoon when all the students were free to meet for an hour. Although participating in this research was voluntary, the co-ordinator in school did work with the students to ensure that they all attended the focus group session on time; which reduced the risk of not having enough students attend the focus group. There were two real reasons why I carried out the focus group out after the interviews. Firstly it was down to the logistics of when I could see the students in school. There were exams, tutorial sessions and revision sessions setup that the students needed to go to. As a result I was able to see individual students earlier in the year and then a group of them once the exams and revision had been completed. Although not ideal I had to work within the setting of the school and the student's educational needs. Secondly, by using interviews, focus groups and documents (identified in the literature review) together it allowed me to triangulate the data for cross-checking and ensure that the findings of the research were more valid and rigorous (Bryman, 2016). To ensure that the focus group ran well a basic agenda was set so that there was a starting point for discussion (Punch, 2009). The reason for carrying out a focus group was twofold. Firstly any students who do not want to take part in a 1:1 interview due to personal reasons have the opportunity to express their opinions and have their voice heard in an environment that might be more to their liking. School students may prefer this as focus groups unlike normal interviews do not rely on the researcher asking questions and then the interviewee answering, they allow for discussion within the group, students can talk to each other freely rather than relying on the researcher asking direct questions (Fowler, 2009). Secondly it allowed me to investigate deeper any issues that came up in more than one of the interviews, this allowed for further analysis and discussion in a group setting. The agenda for the focus group concentrated on the student's experience of careers advice they had received within school. This was the focus because it

had been covered briefly in the individual interviews by the students but was a key focus for the school. I felt it would be interesting to unpick further why the student's observations on careers support and advice were so different to what the school thought they were providing. Within the focus group questions were asked in a more general way about the schools attitude to careers advice, for example "Who is the careers advisor in school" and "How often do you see the careers advisor". These questions worked well as they set off a discussion with the group and gave further depth to the individual interview answers. The final benefit I felt of the focus group was that it would allow me to see the interactions between the students (Berg and Lune, 2014) which might add extra depth to the words they were saying.

3.2.3 Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research is used to improve the overall validity of the research, to ensure that there is an internal consistency and coherent logic to the research (Punch, 2009). Students from armed forces families come to college from all areas of society, genders and ethnic backgrounds. As I am focussing on the impact of these students being from families in the armed forces on their aspirations I have decided to try to interview an equal number of males and females and students from different ethnic backgrounds. I am following a revelatory case sampling approach (Cohen et al, 2011), which allows me to focus on the previously under-represented group of year 11 & 12 students whose families are in the armed forces. I identified students in college and Cardigan school with a forces background and have asked for volunteers to take part in the research, so those in the research are those who chose to take part (Fuller, 2017). This is being done to try and ensure that the impact of being in a forces family is the main point that comes across in the research rather than anything else.

3.3 Data Analysis

With such a wealth of detailed data coming from the interviews and focus groups it was vitally important to ensure that the analysis of the data was carried out in a thorough way. Data analysis ultimately was the most important part of the process as inadequate transcription or initial investigation of the data would have meant vital details from both the interviews and focus group being missed. Ensuring that the data collected was fit for purpose and would allow me to answer the research questions that I had posed was of paramount importance (Punch, 2009). Connected to this it was important to ensure that the data collected was consistent and trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), this is important to ensure that the data generation and analysis are not only appropriate to my research questions but are also thorough and accurate (Mason, 1996).

3.3.1 Quality Criteria

In quantitative research the concepts of reliability and validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994) are well established means of confirming the quality of the research being carried out. In qualitative and mixed methods research neither of these terms really meets the requirements of the research being carried out. To this end there has been some debate as to how to determine the quality of qualitative and mixed methods research (Cohen, 2011). There appear to be two existing positions of how to assess this quality. Firstly, the existing ideas of reliability and validity are transferred from quantitative research to qualitative research, but these ideas are operationalised and reformulated using concepts such as 'inter-coder reliability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Secondly, some believe that qualitative research needs to have its own quality criteria and concepts such as communicative validation, triangulation and authenticity should be used to ensure the quality of the research carried out (Steinke, Flick & van Kardorff, 2004). With such a wide variety of different types of qualitative research I think it is impossible to formulate a set of criteria to cover all types of qualitative research. In

this piece of research I have used the methods of triangulation and thick descriptive data as propounded by Lincoln and Guba (1986) to confirm the quality of the research. Triangulation allowed me to cross-check the data collected from student interviews and the focus group with the existing literature and results data from college to ensure a detailed discussion. My position as link tutor to Cardigan school allowed me to gain thick descriptive data from the school before carrying out the student and staff interviews. This amount of information will allow the student voices to be reported in a full and detailed context.

3.3.2 Interview Analysis

The post interview analysis was carried out in a very specific way to ensure that the narrative of the interviewee's stories was not lost. Rather than using a strict coding procedure in a piece of software like Nvivo I analysed the text, used open codes and looked for general themes by hand. Open codes are labels that I have attached to sections of text that then allow me to group ideas or themes together (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method has helped to ensure a more holistic and whole view of the interviews that took place. For me to analyse qualitative data using a scientific method such as content analysis, as espoused by Flick (1998) and Krippendorff (2004) would seem to lose the strength of the researched words themselves. There is the distinct possibility that an important issue may be missed or ignored as it only appears once in the text compared to something that has a far greater frequency (Cohen et al, 2011). Numbers and frequency are scientific constructs and would help to try and create generalisability and repeatability within the research when this is not the aim of qualitative research. I am looking for the student's feelings and opinions, and the ability to generalise is not a requirement of this type of research (Floyd, 2012). I did however employ themes to highlight the important topics in the interview responses being examined. These themes were used to see if there were any general patterns from the interview responses.

The starting point for these themes was to think of the issues that had come from the Literature Review. It is evident that the research on choice and decision making in education show that there are a number of key areas that need to be examined in relation to the interview transcripts. At the highest level the themes to be scrutinised were school, armed forces, family, careers and friends. School, family and friends have all been identified as having an impact on a student's choice in the literature (Foskett et al, 2004, Bourdieu, 1977 and Beck, 1992). Armed forces and careers are themes as they are the key focus of this research. Having themes in place allowed me to take a very inductive style of coding whereby codes were added to the general themes as they emerged through the analysis of the interviews and the focus group transcripts (Patton, 2015). The benefit I found of this coding strategy was that new codes could be added to the general themes as and when required and it gave me the real flexibility to capture the thoughts of the students. Once I had coded two of the interviews I took the decision to get a colleague from college to try coding an interview with my codes to see if they identified the same sections in the transcripts that I had. Miles and Huberman (1994) feel that inter-codal agreement should be within the 85% to 90% range to ensure that data analysis is accurate. On the transcript that my colleague examined she used the codes in about 75% of the same places that I had. This process was useful as it helped me to confirm that I was being accurate with the codes I was using and also that the coding was reliable in as much as I was identifying the relevant sections of the transcript the same that another person who did not know the research questions did. The final table of themes and codes I used to analyse the interview and focus group transcripts is below and a section of coding can also be seen in Appendix B. The table contains the most common codes, college, friends and university also appear to a much lesser rate in the interview transcripts.

Theme	Specific Coding	
School	Friends	
	Choices	
	Careers Advice	
	Teachers	
	Achievements	
	Support	
	Movement	
	Problems	
Armed Forces	Rank	
	Deployment	Pos Effect Neg Effect
	Career	
	Values	
	Countries	
Family	Background	
	Siblings	
	Career Advice	
Careers	Forces Focus	
	Jobs	
	Aspirations	

Table 2: Themes and Codes used in Data Analysis

A narrative style of analysis was then used as I feel that keeping the narrative structure of the data is more important than being able to count the number of times that a specific code appears in the text. This is important for me as all the interview responses are valid and important regardless of whether they appear once or fifteen times. I am examining the interviewee's responses themselves not the number of times a word or phrase does or does not appear.

3.3.3 Access, Ethics and Informed Consent

To ensure that this piece of research meets all ethical requirements I contacted both the Principal of college and the Head teacher at Cardigan school to confirm that they were willing to take part in this research study and to ensure that I confirm to the requirements that they had. This also gave me the chance to explain the research in detail and highlight to them any potential benefits for their institutions. Both were proffered with an information sheet (See

Appendix A) and full details of the research being undertaken to confirm that they still wanted to take part in the research. Within Cardigan school I interviewed the armed forces co-ordinator to get a staff perspective on the educational aspirations of the school children. Once College were confident that I had the necessary arrangements in place I sent an email to all of those students who attended Cardigan school and were in forces families asking if they would be interested in taking part in this research. At Cardigan school I selected five students in Year 11 who were from forces families, I also discussed these students with the armed forces co-ordinator to see if there were any issues that may have precluded me from interviewing them. If this was the case then I replaced this student with another student from Year 11. If there were not five students that allow for a complete balance then I would select the closest number that allows me to keep that balance. When students have been selected I contacted them and their parents with an information sheet and full details of the research being undertaken to confirm that they still wanted to take part in the research (See Appendix A). If they were still in agreement to take part in the research then I organised interviews with them. These interviews took place on a Wednesday afternoon in successive weeks so that it fitted in with the students own school schedules and had as little impact as possible on their schooling. As the students at Cardigan school were under 16 at the time of the interviews it was important to make sure that I have not only theirs but also their parents' consent for them to take part in the research. It was made clear to all participants that if at any stage they wanted to withdraw from the research that would be fine and I would remove them and their records from the research. At all times whilst I was on the Cardigan school site I had my college badge in full view and liaised closely with the armed forces co-ordinator to ensure that all safeguarding procedures were followed.

3.4 Problems and Limitations

In any kind of research there are potential strengths and weaknesses, some of those connected to the concepts of reliability and validity I have examined in the above sections. A number of other limitations I will now discuss. Researching in one's own institution could lead to potential problems and is an area that I need to be very clear about. A number of facets of this research project such as the researcher's identity, the time and place of the research, and the subject of the research, could cause potential problems (Mercer 2007). Many of the year 10 and 11 students at Cardigan school know me. I am the link tutor in College for Cardigan school. This role means that I try to promote the connection between college and the school through talks, parent's evenings and assemblies, it is vitally important that I did not allow my research to impact on the professional role that I have to undertake (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). The students know my position and I made sure that my role as link tutor and researcher were clearly separate so that the students taking part in the research would not change their answers in an attempt to impress me with regards to their college applications. I needed to make sure that I understood my own position within the research as this 'lens' may affect the way that I analysed and interpreted the data (Punch, 2009, p. 45). I discussed above how I have arranged the interviews to benefit the students by being in their own classrooms and at a time that fits in with their timetables. Although I am working with students who are studying in college or were planning to join college, the information that I was looking to ascertain is related to their time in Cardigan school either past or present. It is important that they understand that there are no correct answers and that all the information that they give through the interviews and focus groups will be entirely anonymous and used only for this research project. Another potential limitation was that some of the interviews were conducted at college this meant that the students were reflecting on what happened at least a year ago, which may have resulted in some students not being able to recall events exactly as they were (Cohen et al, 2011) or that they may have been influenced by in their brief time studying in college. As mentioned elsewhere I tried to combat this issue by having

a mixture of school and college interviews so that the research findings were a mixture of thoughts from students who went through or were going through the process of choosing post compulsory education routes. This was to reduce any concern of only relying on students memories which may have been forgotten or remembered incorrectly. Finally, this is a small scale case-study based on ten students from one school and college in the South of England and as a result it is not possible to have any claims of generalisability. With this kind of research this is not the aim though and the point is more to understand the thoughts and opinions of the students who have been interviewed (Robson & McCartan, 2016). It is hoped though that the case-study will increase the knowledge of why students may pick the A-Level subjects or have the aspirations that they do.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to display the results of the interviews and focus groups carried out at Cardigan school and college in light of the methodology examined and discussed in chapter 3. Data from college with regards to attainment and progression of service children will also be presented in connection with the interviews to add extra depth to the analysis. The aim of the research is to examine the career aspirations of students from armed forces families in year 10 and 11 at a secondary school and in year 12 at a sixth form college. I will be focussing on the following research questions in a hope that I can help develop the careers advice and support given in college and Cardigan school to students from forces families:

- What is the career progression for children from forces families?
- What shapes these students' career ideas?
- Does being a service child affect their career aspirations?
- If they are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

The results of an interview with the armed forces co-ordinator at Cardigan school will be applied as an initial focus for the analysis of data after the completion of the interviews in Cardigan school and college. This interview was completed to give an idea of how Cardigan school and its students believed they were reacting to the Government White Paper (DoE, 2011) discussed in Chapter 2. I have examined numerical data from college on A-Level and BTEC/CTEC results and the progression of armed forces students after they have completed their studies in college. In college I also studied the number of students from forces families who were studying on the Level 2 programme. This programme is for students who had to retake GCSE qualifications. The reason for studying this data was to see if the data for

service children was any different to non-service children, or was it following the theories espoused by Bourdieu (1977) that students from service families without access to the required cultural capital would struggle to achieve at GCSE level in school. Finally in light of this data I scrutinized the interviews that I carried out in Cardigan school and college to see if being a service child makes any difference to course choice and career aspirations.

4.2 Initial Focus

As initial positioning for the analysis of the interview data I decided to use the government white paper (DoE, 2011), examined initially in chapter 2. The purpose of this white paper was to study the good practice of certain schools and inform future Government policy to make sure schools with armed forces children followed this good practice to help confirm that these children could achieve to their full potential in school. Armed forces children were considered to be distinctive from other social groups in four main ways; mobility, social and emotional issues, attendance and parental involvement. As a result of highlighting and examining these four differences, with service children, the research came up with seven key findings to maximise the progress of children from armed forces families. In chapter 2 I examined why I felt each of the seven key points in the white paper was important. In this chapter I will be examining how these seven key points impacted on Cardigan school and whether the school felt they were following the identified good practice. I have then examined the school student's interview transcripts to see if the students identified the same things the school felt that they were doing. This second analysis was completed to see if the government policy (DoE, 2011) was actually affecting students' academic achievements and aspirations in a secondary school environment, from their own perspective. Tables three and four below contain the seven key points identified in the government white paper (DoE, 2011) as well as comments on them from the Cardigan schools armed forces co-ordinator and the Health & Wellbeing co-ordinator in college. The fifth table contains a count of how many times each

key point was identified by a student during their interviews. Table five also includes some examples of the responses students gave during their interviews to add further depth and understanding. The armed forces co-ordinator at Cardigan school (Michelle Brown) felt that her role had six main aspects, finding out where the children came from, what their general background was, what their educational background was, what their family life was like, helping them settle into school and tracking their academic progress. She interacted with each child individually and kept a record of them so that she could work on how they could be supported in their time at Cardigan school. The table shows how Michelle felt that the school was trying to implement good practice and areas that might be considered a challenge and those that potentially the school needed further help and advice on.

	Key Points from 2011 white paper	Comments from Cardigan School armed forces co-ordinator
1	Facilitating Admission Arrangements	Transfer of documents does not work well and can lead to difficulties when parents are choosing schools.
2	Securing transfer of assessment information and records between schools	We are supposed to get the records from the student's previous schools, but for those students who have moved a lot or have been overseas this can take a long time, it can in fact take months to get a student's educational records
3	Maintaining continuity in curriculum and learning	This has two real issues. One, students don't like seeing that they are repeating content again and again as they move between schools and exam boards, every time they move they repeat content. Two, if they are not repeating content then they are missing big chunks of content and they find this hard. Moving between exam boards and different content does not help with this.
4	Ensuring continuity of provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)	We find this very difficult as SEN is identified as different things in different areas and this can mean we have to do new SEN assessments for students which takes a long time.
5	Supporting the social and emotional well-being of the children	We work with the Army welfare if necessary, sometimes parents have PTSD and this can impact the children. We organise days out for the students when their parents are posted away. We have had weekly sessions where we meet and chat about issues and get computers to get work done as it can be difficult at home to work.
6	Maximising the use of available resources	We try to use the pupil premium money as much as possible, but it does tend to get eaten up in the rest of the school budget. The main other use of it is to pay for taxis to get students from the army base to school as they have no other way of doing it. I'm not sure that this is the best way of using the money effectively. Sometimes we get MOD grants to help with extra trips and other resources the families can't afford at home.
7	Facilitating effective communication with the armed forces.	This is hard as sometimes even the soldiers don't know what is going to happen and sometimes movement happens at the drop of a hat and sometimes the army can't tell us. We are trying to improve communication and I know our head teacher has been up to some of the Yorkshire bases to talk to families who might be transferring down to Hampshire to see if she can help smooth that move.

Table 3: 2011 White Paper and impacts on Cardigan School (Department of Education, 2011)

My initial analysis of these key points in chapter 2 highlighted that five of the points (1, 2, 3, 4 & 7) were really related to the administration in school and communication between the school and the armed forces. Key points 5 and 6 were more focussed on the children themselves and their needs. It was clear from the interview with Michelle that there were problems in Cardigan school with the communication that they had with the Army and, not all of the key points were really being implemented successfully. Michelle found that areas relating to key point one caused significant problems in local schools.

“Some of the parents, when I talked to them a few years ago, they said they felt that because they moved around some schools don’t like it and they are not too keen on taking kids who are likely to move. Schools that tend to do well or who like to take pupils who have high grades. It’s interesting because if there’s a delay in their school records coming what happens, and we have had this on a few occasions, a local school has rejected that child and said “Oh no there’s no place for you”. So they end up coming here because I don’t know(?) So we take them in, then the school records accidentally go to their first choice which is another school. The other school then sees “This child is really smart, a hard worker” and then they suddenly have a place open. So after a few weeks of them being here and settled in another school will say “Oh we have a place for you now if you would like to come” and most of the time the parents go “no you rejected us we’ll stay at Cardigan school thank you”. But it is interesting how other schools try and poach.”

This example really highlighted that from the perspective of this co-ordinator, some schools were looking more at their results and how they would be interpreted rather than considering the student that was being moved around between multiple schools. This poor communication had an effect on how both students and parents perceived themselves and how much the school wanted them to achieve.

Key point 4 was also one that caused great concern in Cardigan school, Michelle felt that the way Special Educational Needs were dealt with across the United Kingdom left a lot to be desired and when students were moving schools this really discriminated against them and certainly reduced their chances of success.

“Transfer of SEN information can be a nightmare particularly when they are moving in Year 10 and 11. Ensuring Continuity of Provision for children with Special Needs, because for example we had one pupil who when she was in Northern Ireland she was identified as Special Needs. She came over here and for some reason the Government over here doesn’t recognise the Northern Ireland version of Special Needs. So then the school had no money and you know it takes time to get an assessment, so it took months for us to be able to recognise her as Special Needs.”

Michelle’s comments indicate that there is evidently an issue for these students, where within the United Kingdom there are differing definitions of Special Educational Needs. For children from service families who may be moving from Northern Ireland to England and having to wait for a re-assessment of their SEN requirements the children would not be accessing the

vital one-to-one support that they needed in school. If you consider this is likely happening in Year 10 or 11 when these students are working on their GCSE's then they are at a significant disadvantage compared to other non-forces students.

4.3 Key Points 5 and 6

These are the two key points that I identified in Chapter 2 would directly impact on school children rather than be more connected to their administration within school. Table 2 shows the way that Cardigan school deals with these two points and also how college attempts to support these students. The reason for further examining these two key points is to try and see if there is a significant reduction in the financial and emotional support available for service children when they move from school to Sixth Form college and then ultimately whether this could be argued as affecting a service child's grades at A-Level.

	Key Points from 2011 white paper	Comments from Cardigan School armed forces co-ordinator	Comments from College Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator
5	Supporting the social and emotional well-being of the children	We work with the Army welfare if necessary, sometimes parents have PTSD and this can impact the children. We organise days out for the students when their parents are posted away. We have had weekly sessions where we meet and chat about issues and get computers to get work done as it can be difficult at home to work.	College has a health & wellbeing co-ordinator and counsellors who are here to help students as and when they feel it is needed. Students from Armed Forces families self-identify on their applications so staff can be aware of any issues they may be facing during their time in college. Means we don't always know how many students from Armed Forces families there are in college.
6	Maximising the use of available resources	We try to use the service pupil premium money as much as possible, but it does tend to get eaten up in the rest of the school budget. The main other use of it is to pay for taxis to get students from the army base to school as they have no other way of doing it. I'm not sure that this is the best way of using the money effectively. Sometimes we get MOD grants to help with extra trips and other resources the families can't afford at home.	There are no extra finances for students from armed forces families at Sixth form colleges. Students could access bursaries that are available to all college students. These are means tested so are more reliant on a students' parents

Table 4: 2011 White Paper and impacts on Cardigan School and Sixth Form College

At both Cardigan school and college there were policies and procedures in place to ensure that students from forces families were supported both emotionally and financially. The service children pupil premium was an important feature of school funding and allowed schools to try and support service children further than their parents could. Table three demonstrated how Cardigan school tried to use the extra money to help the students. Although the service children pupil premium were not in place for college students it did appear that plans are being pushed forward in Government to try and extend the service

children pupil premium to sixth form college students (Trevelyan, 2017⁴). This would be a great benefit to students from service families as it would allow colleges to put aside funding to support with resources that might help these students with their education. Students from service families in college may then be able to access educational trips, purchase stationary (pens and paper for example) and buy books that could help improve their educational performance. This funding would be directed at these students and would be better than the existing bursary as they would not have to apply for the funding, it would be given to them once colleges knew their students were from forces families. This might reduce one block that may possibly stop the students accessing the finance available, they would no longer have to go out and apply for the bursary money. Although this paper is looking at the need of service children it seems clear that reducing barriers for accessing the college bursary would be beneficial for all students not just those from service families.

The counselling service available in college out performs many that are available in schools (AcSEED, 2017) and this meant that emotional support for service children was dealt with very well. Students could self-refer or be referred by tutors or teachers. Once an initial session was carried out the student could then have regular weekly sessions to work on issues that they may be facing. These issues could relate to many areas but the most prevalent concerns raised by the Health and Wellbeing co-ordinator in college were over parents being posted away, students being newly moved to the area, students not having a large friendship group or concern over their own academic achievement. With regular counselling sessions it was hoped that the students would understand and be able to work through these issues so that they could achieve grades they are happy with at A-Level.

⁴ From a speech delivered by Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP at Building Bridges SCiP Alliance Conference, 28 June 2017

It is interesting to compare what the Department of Education (DoE, 2011) believe is good practice for schools' and what is actually seen to be taking place in the school. In addition to gathering the opinions of the armed forces co-ordinator in school and the health & wellbeing co-ordinator in college. I have also examined the interviews of the school children to see if they identify these good practice features as actually taking place in school. Adding these interview responses allowed me to compare in depth if students felt that staff were supporting them in meeting their needs.

4.4 Student Interview evidence connected to the White Paper

Having examined how Cardigan school feel that they are meeting the needs of the 2011 White Paper I thought it was important to examine if the students felt that the school were doing a good job as well and in turn supporting them to the best of the schools ability. This is important to scrutinise because if the students at Cardigan school do not feel supported by the school and do not believe that the school are working for their benefit then what is the real benefit of the school trying to meet the requirements of the white paper. In the interview process I did not show the students table three and ask them to comment on the different aspects, as in some cases I did not feel that they were issues that they were involved in relating to their schooling, for example admission arrangements were something that their parents would be involved in. The issues raised in the government white paper were discussed by asking the following type of questions, from which I then unpicked the student's responses:

“Where you involved in choosing you school when your parents relocated?”

“When you changed school did repeat any work in class?”

“Did you have an SEN support in school/college?”

“Did you feel emotionally supported by the school?” this led to further discussion depending on the students answer.

Table five below was formed by analysing the interview responses of the ten students, that were interviewed, and then counting up how many responses there were in each section. I have included some example student responses in Table five to demonstrate the type of answers that the students were making. Further information on the interview method can be read in chapter 3.

	Key Points from 2011 white paper	Times issues mentioned by students in interviews	Example student responses on each key point
1	Facilitating Admission Arrangements	5	"It was awkward at first getting into a new school, they lost my notes to start, but after that I settled all right"
2	Securing transfer of assessment information and records between schools	0	
3	Maintaining continuity in curriculum and learning	11	"Cos like if I went into a different lesson it would be like going over something I'd already learnt or something they're going over again" "I moved school because at the first school you had to choose to do DT as a subject for GCSE and I wasn't very good at it, so it would be a subject I got a bad grade in. So I moved here so I didn't have to do it!"
4	Ensuring continuity of provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)	2	"I know teachers will always support me, but I got support in Chesterfield and now I don't...I don't know why"
5	Supporting the social and emotional well-being of the children	24	"Kind of realised what the kind of stuff he was actually doing and the dangers and stuff he was putting himself into. Made school like quite difficult that year." "It's hard to do all the work in school, go home, help my mum out as she was still working"
6	Maximising the use of available resources	18	"I remember people who were in Military families got a trip to the zoo and school helps with trips if you need it" "Lots of sports activities after school like the gym, basketball and cricket"
7	Facilitating effective communication with the armed forces.	0	

Table 5: Count of interview responses related to 2011 White Paper

It is interesting that the two areas I identified previously as being most related to the students were the two that came out with the most mentions in the interviews. The third highest was relating to the continuity in curriculum and learning and is something that the students really identified with. This makes sense as although point three is not done directly to the students like points 5 and 6 it is possibly the one that students would notice the most, when moving between schools, as it is what happens in class.

The examples in table five show how annoying the students found repeating material in class. During the interview process it was clear that the student's biggest concern was about their movement between locations and how this would affect their education and friendship groups. These concerns I feel were more important than the points made in the White paper but do mirror other research as far as what students are concerned about with their education (McCullouch and Hall, 2016 and Noret et, al, 2014). The overriding concern about movement and the changes associated with it were clear to see throughout the interview process. A good example of the concerns came from Justin:

"I've moved around in total since I was born about ten times. I've lived in Belgium for a year, Germany and Northern Ireland and lots of places in England. The most annoying was moving between Aldershot and Windsor and back again. The second time I was only in Windsor for nine months and then I moved back to the same estate in Aldershot. It's quite difficult because you make a good set of friendship groups and then you never settled in a place for long. The longest I settled was like two years then I moved away for nine months make friends there then you basically just forget them and can't remember who they are..."

Ethan had similar thoughts in his experiences:

"It's kind of not stable. It is one month we are looking at moving in one place. One month the other side of the country. It's quite difficult. This is as both my parents look for work, mum is a kerosene truck driver..."

It was interesting though that the concerns and worries that the students had about different parental deployments and movement around the world and the UK were mainly to do with their friendship groups. It clearly was very important as a 15/16 year old that they felt connected with friends and other students, both in school and their local area. I would argue

that this was even more important as a service child as these friends could be the people who support you when your parents may be deployed to a different town or country. When you are moving on a number of occasions like Justin it could make school and home life more difficult if there were not a solid set of friends that were there to help support you. For Justin and Ethan not having this friends support network would mean they did not have anyone to talk to about school options or career plans, especially if their parents were posted away with the Army.

There were though clearly a number of ways that Cardigan school had tried to help support students through their time at the school, this was something that the school were proud of and the evidence from the interviews was that this effort was something that the students felt benefited them during their time at school. A number of students mentioned the support they had from the school when interviewed, although some discussed learning support, the support they remembered was not always in traditional class based formats. Oliver remembered:

“...people who were in military families they got a trip to the zoo and I think sometimes school pays or helps you pay for trips as well. And I still get a free taxi from school and back because the area where I live and my dad.”

Bernard remembered:

“...they kinda organised trips out for Army kids so like when my dad was in Afghanistan they organised some trips, days out, quad biking, rock climbing, that kind of stuff...”

These trips and days out were events that the students mentioned, they felt they were useful as they helped to take their mind off of where there parents were if they had been deployed overseas. They also believed that it made them feel a little bit special and that someone was thinking about them and how they were feeling. The feelings discussed above about moving around the country or world made some feel that by having these days out the school had an interest in them and how they were feeling. Clearly it is important for a school to work in the best interests of the students. The service children at Cardigan school were almost

exclusively from the lower ranks of the army so the school used funds and resources to take those students out, as it, might be the only time that trips out, for these students, could happen in a year. The school were successfully using the resources they had in a way that worked best with their own students.

Using the Service Premium to help students get to school was something that Cardigan school had also done for a number of years. The school had quite a high Nepalese population, with the majority of these families having a father working in the army and a mother not able to drive. In many cases Nepalese mothers were expected to stay at home and run the household, so there was no necessity for them to learn to drive and in some cases they had a low level of English and other smaller children that would preclude learning to drive anyway. As a result of these family dynamics there was an issue of how the children would get to school. Using some of the service pupil premium money to help with taxis was a way that the school could guarantee, as far as possible, that students were attending school every day.

4.5 Attainment at A-Level

There is very little if any data on the attainment at Level three of students from forces families (McCullough and Hall, 2016), and much of the small scale research, on academic attainment, that has been carried out has been focused on GCSE attainment (Clifton, 2007, Strand and Demie, 2007 & Noret et al, 2014). Table six contains results data collected from college over the last two years and shows all the results for Level three courses (A-Level, BTEC & CTEC) and a comparison of results for armed forces children and the rest of college. I have used the term Level three courses to cover A-Levels, BTEC and CTEC courses as these were the courses open to students in college. The table has been separated by year and qualification type. In chapter 2 it was clear to see that at GCSE level there was very little difference in the

performance of armed forces and non-armed forces families (Noret et al, 2014). The purpose of this table was to examine if these similarities continued at Level three or whether there was any significant difference between the two groups performance. Table six records the number of students and examinations for service and non-service children taking A-Levels over the last three years. It then shows the percentage of grades that were achieved by those students. Table seven shows the same data but for BTEC/CTEC courses rather than A-Levels.

Year	Category	Students	A/AS/A2	A*	A	B	C	D	E
2015	Armed Forces	107	317	1.3%	16.7%	25.6%	25.6%	17.0%	8.5%
	Everyone Else	3358	10740	4.5%	23.8%	26.2%	21.4%	13.4%	6.2%
2016	Armed Forces	114	282	3.2%	16.0%	22.3%	23.4%	18.8%	11.7%
	Everyone Else	3434	10213	4.9%	24.7%	26.4%	20.7%	12.6%	6.4%
2017	Armed Forces	117	258	0.4%	14.0%	22.9%	26.4%	17.1%	9.3%
	Everyone Else	3397	8549	5.4%	25.1%	26.8%	21.7%	11.8%	5.6%

Table 6: A-Level attainment at Sixth Form College, 2015-17

Year	Category	Students	B/CTEC	DS*	DS	ME	PA
2015	Armed Forces	107	34	52.9%	17.6%	8.8%	11.8%
	Everyone Else	3358	422	46.2%	17.5%	17.5%	14.2%
2016	Armed Forces	114	57	63.2%	1.8%	8.8%	10.5%
	Everyone Else	3434	639	52.1%	13.9%	12.2%	9.1%
2017	Armed Forces	117	56	53.6%	12.5%	5.4%	5.4%
	Everyone Else	3397	686	64.6%	9.2%	6.9%	2.0%

Table 7: CTEC/BTEC Attainment at Sixth Form College, 2015-17

Looking at the table above it is clear to see that in the A-Level results at A and A* service children are achieving about 16% less than their non-service compatriots, 14.4% of service children achieve A or A* compared to 30.5% of non-service children. This is in complete contrast to the results on BTEC courses where the Distinction* grades for forces students are 63.2% compared to 52.1% for their non-service compatriots, an 11% difference. The only real difference between the two types of course is that A-Levels are examined through

exams at the end of the two year course while BTEC/CTEC courses are examined by a process of continual coursework.

4.6 Progression at Level Two

A second part of my role in college is as a level two tutor, so along with my level three tutor groups I have two level two tutor groups, with this group my role is to help the students' progress either onto a level three programme in college or look at work or apprenticeships. These students on the level two programme are those that have not performed overly well in their GCSEs and need to retake Maths and English and study other subjects to strengthen their level two profile before possibly moving onto study at level three. The other courses that these students can take are either BTEC or CTEC Level two courses in subjects like Business, Health & Social Care and Sport. The level two programme is planned for students who achieved a '3' in Maths and/or English and have not gained 5 A-C grades in their GCSEs. As GCSE's have become harder over recent years the number of level two students has started to rise as the lower achieving students at school have found it harder to access level three courses. It seemed sensible therefore to see the number of service children who attend college to study on the level two programme to see if the number is any higher than for non-service children. The table below shows the number service and non-service children who have studied on the level two programme in the last three years.

Year	Students on Level 2 Programme	Service children on Level 2 Programme	Percentage of Service children on Level 2 Programme
2015	64	10	15.6%
2016	80	8	10.0%
2017	92	7	7.6%

Table 8: Students on Sixth Form College Level two programmes

Interestingly a first inspection of these figures indicates that the number of service children having to study at level two has been decreasing in the last three years, while the overall number of level two students has increased. This is a good result for these students and is

worth investigating why there may be this decrease in the numbers of service children on the level two programme.

4.7 What is the career progression for children from forces families?

In examining this research question I have considered a number of data sets, from both Cardigan school and college. The data from Cardigan school comes from the student interviews and will inspect what the students feel were their progression routes after they finish school. From college there are the interviews with students and their thoughts about what their progression routes would be after college. I also studied the progression data that college collects about where students go after completing their A-Level courses.

4.7.1 Progression ideas for students from Cardigan School

During the interviews in Cardigan school each student was asked where they saw themselves in five years' time and if they had thought of a future career. For each student there was a clear idea of where they wanted to be in the future and many of these ideas followed the thought of the students studying the things that they enjoyed. There was not a great deal of thought about making money after school and potentially college had finished.

Candice in Year 11 in Cardigan school felt:

“I would like to work with horses, as I am really fond of them. Because I’ve grown up with horses and I’ve been horse-riding for like 5 years and I think it is just like they intrigue me to get to know more about them....if I become an equine dentist every case is going to be different.”

Daniel had similar thoughts:

“I enjoy football and I plan on doing that. I was thinking to join SCL so I can continue playing and start to coach. It’s not just football I’m doing it’s going to be work like Maths and English as well.”

As did Amethyst:

“Well I’m thinking of like cos coming from like a military background I was thinking about joining the RAF as a PTI. Everyone knows I like sport so it might be a fun thing to do.”

From examining these three examples it may be possible to argue that students from forces families look at careers that may be considered at the lower end of the social-economic range, i.e. related to sport and animals. This is not the case with all the students and two of them certainly had career aspirations that were money related and from the highest social economic level. When choosing what he may study at A-Level Oliver certainly had ideas for future earning:

“It’s come from the subjects that I like at school. The only other one would be Law which I just thought because Lawyers get a lot of money so.....”

These aspirations were long-term and based on ideas of where students would like to be in five years’ time. Looking at a more short-term focus there was clear evidence that all of the students at Cardigan school had an idea about continuing their education whether that be through a college or another training provider. We have seen from above that Daniel wanted to learn to be a footballer or football coach with SCL, but this would allow him to continue with GCSE Maths and English and other Level two qualifications if necessary. Although Amethyst had a career goal that was armed forces based her route did involve short term planning of going to college

“I’m going to finish school, go off to college and then join the RAF”

Oliver said similar about his short-term focus

“Yeah after school I want to go to 6th Form College and then University”

Candice was expecting to go to college as she knew that she needed good grades in science and maths to become an equine dentist but wasn’t really sure where to go and do this. Ethan had only just moved to the area and although he knew he wanted to study A-Levels he did not know if there were good colleges locally where he could study them. It can be observed from these responses that the students at Cardigan school had both short and long term targets and aspirations about further education and careers.

4.7.2 Progression ideas for students from college

Most of the interview responses about progression after college followed the same path as that of the Cardigan school, i.e. that students were going to go to University or join a career in something that they enjoyed, rather than considering their money making potential. I found the response of Justin a 2nd year college student the most interesting. Justin was making choices to ensure that he went in entirely the opposite direction to his parents and family desires:

“The main thing is that I wanted to do something different to what my entire family’s done for years. Like my grandad’s been in the same regiment as my uncles and my dad so I thought you know I am going to do something different. But just basically prove to myself that I don’t have to go the Army route. I wanted to study Law in civi street.”

In the case of Justin it was quite clear that he felt his most important careers advice came from his girlfriend who wasn’t connected to the armed forces at all. While many of Justin’s family and friends were promoting how good the armed forces were as a career, with a guaranteed job and accommodation, it was his girlfriend that he listened to and who helped him develop his thoughts about breaking the family mould.

The second data set I examined was the progression paths of service children when they left college and the interview responses from students. The progression data has been recorded since 2010 and shows where the students go straight from leaving college. Ofsted require Colleges to keep a record of the progression paths for students leaving the college (Ofsted, 2015), this means that college has detailed figures for where students from service families go when they complete their Level 3 courses. Table nine shows the collected data for the last seven years. It has been collated and grouped here to show the most common progression routes that students take when leaving the college. The employment category, for the table, will include those students who have joined a branch of the armed forces after completing their Level 3 courses, as well as those who have not and just gained full-time employment.

Year Left	University	FE	Employment	Other ⁵	Total	% going to University
2010	0	0	1	0	1	0%
2011	0	5	2	0	7	0%
2012	15	10	4	8	37	40.5%
2013	25	14	7	3	49	51%
2014	35	17	10	13	75	46.6%
2015	44	3	2	2	51	86.3%
2016	36	3	8	4	51	70.6%

Table 9: Progression Data for Service Children from Sixth Form College

The collection of this data is not ideal, at enrolment into college students complete a form and optionally tick if they are from an armed forces family. This is the only time at college that a student is asked this question, so it does potentially limit how accurate colleges' numbers of armed forces children are. The progression data is recorded when students' leave college; they cannot leave college without saying where they are going. The two pieces of data are then tied together to create the table above. As the recording of being a member of the armed forces is optional it is clear that there may be more students in college from armed forces families than the ones we know about. Looking at the data in Table nine the increase in the total number of students recorded just highlights the fact that from 2012 it was compulsory for colleges' to try and record data on student's family backgrounds and progression routes as well as other traditional data like ethnicity and social class (Ofsted, 2015b). It can also be seen that between 2012 and 2016 there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of service children in college, this may be down to a mixture of better recording of the data but also service children and their families wanting to attend an outstanding college. During application interviews in the last couple of years I have spoken to

⁵ The 'other' group includes routes such as apprenticeships, volunteering/charity work or taking a gap year. In future the importance of apprenticeships will result in them having their own column in the table.

prospective students who are at army schools as far away as Stirling in Scotland whose parents have asked for postings close to the college as they know the A-Level results and achievements are very high. Unlike the issues that present with school choice and mobility, where often students end up going to the school that has space rather than their school of parental choice, at college level this does not seem to be the same with parents seeming to have the ability to work a lot closer with their employer to get postings near to colleges of choice.

4.8 What shapes these students career ideas?

From the above section we can see that students at both Cardigan school and college have aspirations and thoughts about where they would like to progress to after school and college, but what was it that shaped these aspirations and where were these students getting their career guidance from? In Chapter 2 I suggested that the new devolved careers service may make careers advice inconsistent across schools (Hooley, 2015) and that this might disadvantage the students at those schools that could not afford to buy in external careers advice. This inconsistent service would be as a result of some schools not being able to afford a high quality careers service and having to rely on existing staff who did not have careers experience or training. In this section I have examined what the students felt about the careers advice service that was available in school. A follow up question was that if the service was not useful where did these students go to get useful careers advice?

As part of the interviews, all the students were asked about the careers service in Cardigan school, the exact question was 'within school have you had a careers appointment in the last year?' I asked the same question to all the students so that I could understand exactly what they thought about the careers service on offer in the school. Some of the regular answers were:

No (Amethyst)

No (Oliver)

I haven't been to him yet at present but I am looking into like some of the subjects I could do after school (Daniel)

Yes (Justin)

There was a consistent theme through the interviews and that was that the students had an idea about who the careers advisor was and where he was based in school, but they had not been to see him. The reason for this was clearly down to some confusion amongst the students about how to make the appointments; Candice thought that appointments could be made by the students:

"There's this guy that comes in Tuesdays and we can book an interview with him"

Whereas Daniel thought that the students had to be picked by staff to have an appointment:

"They told us we have a careers advisor but I think they pick who goes to see them"

This confusion was not something that would help students make a careers appointment. To further these discussions about the schools careers advice I organised a focus group so that students could discuss this subject in more depth. It became clear in the focus group that the students had quite forceful views about the careers service in school and particularly about how to make appointments to see the careers advisor:

Moderator: Is it clear to you how to make a careers appointment or who to speak to?

Student A: Not really, I guess I would go to their office in school and see if they were there

Student B: But my teacher told me how to make an appointment when we were in registration, did yours do this?

Student C: No mine didn't, but I know other students who have had appointments so I expect I would ask them

Student D: Mine didn't either

Student E: Do we have a careers advisor?

Student C: Of course we have a careers advisor he comes from that company to be in school each week

Student B: Oh right, I'll ask my teacher when I see them next.

Student A: That's not very good though, if some students don't know about how to make an appointment they might miss out.

The focus group and interview responses gave an impression that the careers service in Cardigan school was not well organised and that the students did not know how to make effective use of it.

4.8.1 If these students are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

If students were not getting their advice and guidance from the careers service in Cardigan school where are they getting their advice from? Theory would suggest that careers advice and guidance would come from parents, family and friends, those people that the students see regularly in their home environment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). These would be the people to offer advice and guidance as they see the students the most often and understand their personalities, strengths and weaknesses the best. In Cardigan school although it was clear that the students had spoken to their parents about careers and 'the future' they did not feel that they have really been guided by these parental ideas. The ideas about GCSE option subjects in school appear to have mainly come from their own thoughts, choosing GCSE subjects that they enjoy studying. In some cases though this has come as a result of parental advice where the students have been advised to 'pick subjects you are good at' or 'pick subjects you enjoy', the students have not consciously thought of this as advice from their parents. Example responses to the question "Why did you choose the GCSE subjects you did and what options did you chose?" included:

Drama, Art, Catering and PE, because I like to be active (Daniel)

Business Studies, History and Geography, because I like the subjects and they might help in a career (John)

Catering, Music and History, because I enjoy the subjects, catering because my Nan said I'm a good cook (Candice)

PE, Computing, Business Studies and Catering, because I enjoy the subjects and Business may help if I start my own business (Amethyst)

In the case of John and Amethyst you can see that at this stage they were thinking a little about their future and planning for a career. These two responses to some degree follow the ideas propounded by Beck (1992) and Du Bois-Reymond (1998) that students were picking their subjects with an eye on future careers and employability rather than sheer enjoyment. This is not a common theme amongst the students and I would suggest that the majority are not really thinking about their future careers at this point with relation to their GCSE subject choices. In the progression ideas section it was clear that students were thinking about their careers 'something with horses', 'football', 'a PTI in the RAF', 'something with the law' but they had not really researched the career path or had unrealistic perceptions of how they would access the career. Candice for example who wants to work with horses, maybe as an equine dentist, when asked if she knew about the route to get that role said

"Well, I'm not too sure but I think you definitely I know have to have good science grades and English and Maths. Then I know you have to take a course in America I think it is to become one"

This shows a lack of information and knowledge that I find worrying at this stage of her schooling. Not only may she be taking the wrong GCSE courses and looking at the wrong courses at A-Level for her career choice but she might also be missing out on volunteering roles that could help her in her future career development. These were things that both the school and careers service could be working with her on to ensure that she fully understands how realistic this career goal is for her.

4.9 Does being a service child affect these student's career aspirations?

There have been many debates and discussions about what influences a child's choices as they move through their schooling and teenage years. These theories start with Bourdieu (1977) and the ideas of habitus and cultural capital, which believe that the family and its environment are the places where children are influenced and get ideas for their future lives. These influences came about because of where the family live and work and the culture that they were able to access in their daily lives. Understanding that the majority of service children at Cardigan school were from the lower ranks of the army, it might be a reasonable summation that the students would be influenced by their parents to join the army as that is what the parents knew about and would be able to give advice on. It was clear from the interview responses that all of the students had spoken to parents about their subject choices at school and then possible future careers. As I have mentioned above in many cases parental advice on subjects was for the students to choose the subjects that they enjoy as that would lead to more likely success in examinations. What about in career progression advice? If Bourdieu is to be believed then the advice given to the students from their parents would very much be focussed on them joining the armed forces, in this case the army, as that would be the area of society that they would know the most about. There are some interesting responses from the students, Justin felt pressured by his father to join the army:

“Because my dad's heavily involved in the army it's like this added pressure to try and do something military based because my whole family's done it.....my dad's made me aware of like this alternative career choices. Like if you want to become a lawyer outside the Army there's a path within the Army like the Army Legal Corps. He has done the same with my sister, she wants to be a personal trainer so he has suggested how much better that would be in the army...it's just because that is what he knows...”

Justin's sister, Amethyst, concurred with much of what Justin had experienced:

“It was basically just a mix of my dad's and my brothers advice cos they know I like doing sports and that so they were like why don't you just go into the Army as a PTI?”

Justin and Amethyst's older brother was also in the Army so it appeared that in this family the progression and careers advice given to the children was very much based around the

service experience of the father and that his advice was to stay within the armed forces as it was something that he knew about and was comfortable with. That was not to say that all of the interview responses were the same, Daniel's advice from his father, although based on his father's own experience, was very different:

“...no my dad doesn't want me to join the Army. The reason being because you know it's hard. It's like he said you might think the Army is easy like but coming in and going out it kinda sometimes depressing. Like he got a cold injury from the Army. Like guarding outside in the cold like six hours long just standing in the you know. He got like a back problem like I think one or two times like sometimes he go and get the injection in his back”

Candice's father also had a negative impression of her joining the Army:

“No, he doesn't want me to join the Army because he says he knows it's just not for me. My brother, dad has suggested the Infantry as he says he needs more discipline than me.”

So it would appear that the parents of service children at Cardigan school were using their own experience of the army to offer advice to their children, so those with a positive experience are suggesting it as a possible career route, while those with a negative experience are suggesting other career routes.

4.10 Section Summary

The summarised data in this section relates to the four research questions that were raised as a result of the literature review in chapter 2. The main part of the data is the transcripts of the interview with the armed forces co-ordinator at Cardigan school and the ten interviews that were carried out in Cardigan school and college. The interview with the armed forces co-ordinator has been used as an initial discussion point to examine the government white paper of 2011 (DoE, 2011). This paper highlights what schools should be doing to help service children in school. The issues from this white paper and the armed forces co-ordinator interview have been used as a starting point to examine the aspirations and career ideas of the students who were interviewed. To add further depth to these interview

transcripts, examination and progression data from college has been studied. This data offers an insight into service children's results as Level 3 and their progression routes after they leave college. The next chapter will attempt to offer some illumination and explanation into the data that has been presented here.

5. Discussion

This study emerged from my desire to be able to try to understand the aspirations of students from armed forces families studying at Cardigan school and college and examining if there were any ways of improving the careers advice given to this specific group of students.

Examining progression routes of children from forces families is important as at present there is no research of progression on this group of students when they leave compulsory education. So examining this group of students may well help give further advice and guidance to ensure they can progress as they wish. Through interviewing students at college and those in their last year of compulsory education I hoped to see if students from armed forces families had different aspirations from non-forces students and if they did what helped to shape and form those aspirations. This was to ensure that students were supported as well as possible. The four research questions posed at the start of this study were:

- What is the career progression for children from forces families?
- What shapes these students' career ideas?
- Does being a service child affect their career aspirations?
- If these students are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

In trying to answer these questions I have used both interviews from Cardigan school and college and numerical data from college. The previous chapter discusses this data, the way it was collected and its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter will summarise these findings against each of the research questions as well as highlight any implications for both practice and policy. As with the previous chapter I will set the scene by discussing the relevance of the Government White Paper of 2011 (DoE, 2011) and sixth form student's academic achievements.

5.1 Initial Focus - Government White Paper

As a starting point for my data analysis this white paper (DoE, 2010) helped to highlight how close to the government's idea of good practice the Cardigan school were in their dealings with service children. It appears clear from the interview with the armed forces co-ordinator (Michelle Brown) that Cardigan school were working very hard within their means to help service children have the best educational experience possible. This was done in a number of different ways. Michelle kept detailed records of all the service children throughout the school, from year 7 to year 11, this allowed her to record their academic achievements, their family circumstances and any other important information. This kind of detailed record keeping really helped the schools teachers get to know the service children in the school and meant if parents went overseas on deployment the school would know and could adapt how they dealt with these students. Justin confirmed this, when his father went overseas his brother found it hard and although he ended up being suspended twice, things could have been far worse if Cardigan school had not taken into account where his father was and the affect this may have been having on him. Two of the key points from Table Three have been dealt with personally by the schools head, 'Facilitating Admission Arrangements' and 'Facilitating effective communication with the armed forces'. To do this the head travelled on a number of occasions to army bases in the north of England to talk to the army, parents and children about the school and what it had to offer. She often did this at times when the school knew that the army might be moving larger numbers of soldiers to the south of England. The importance of these actions were that the families got information straight from the school and not second hand, it also meant that questions about subjects at GCSE could be answered before students moved to the school. The other reason I feel this was important was because as I mentioned earlier, her actions showed that she cared about the students and their families. She wanted to try and smooth over problems with moving between schools. In some cases students had said that someone showing them that they cared was a

really important part to them choosing the school they wanted to attend. The final way in which the school helped the academic experience of service children was to try and effectively use the service pupil premium to benefit the children, whether that be through getting taxis for the children to get to school or through arranging trips out for those students that may not normally be able to go on school trips. I believe that Cardigan school have been doing a good job meeting the requirements of the government white paper and helping ensure that the service students do well in school. This has been achieved in a number of different ways. The role of the armed forces co-ordinator is there to ensure that the movement of a student from one school to another is as seamless as possible. She spoke to the student's previous school, the student and the parents and worked with all three groups to organise a curriculum for when the student arrived at the school. Once the student started at school she kept a record of the students achievements in class and any deployments for the student's parents; this meant that the school would be able to offer extra emotional support if it was required. Pupil Premium was discussed in chapter 2 and it is evident that Cardigan school use the money from the Services Premium to ensure that students can get to school and have fun events if their parents are deployed and unable to do it themselves.

In college I believe that an equally good experience has been set up for the students from armed forces families. Although college does not fall under the remit of this government white paper it has taken a number of measures to help students from a service background. As with Cardigan school, college keeps a record all students with a service background. This was done to ensure that any financial support that can be offered to the students was offered. It also meant that the personal tutors within the college would be able to follow up with these students to ensure that they got the support that they needed. An example of this support would be talking to service children about the compact agreements college has with certain Universities and whether being a service child meant that they could get a reduced offer from Universities on UCAS. Students from armed forces families were a severely under-represented group in Universities, in 2013/14, 0.34% of young first degree 1st year

undergraduate students were from service families (McCullouch and Hall, 2016). Support and explanations, about UCAS and Universities, from personal tutors in college could help try and increase the number of students from service families attending Universities.

In this world of education where pass rates and evidence of financial correctness seem to be the most important factors when schools and colleges are inspected I feel that care for the individual student is still vitally important. I understand that schools have concerns and feel pressure from government to meet targets but I believe that ensuring school records and school choice are open to all students who have mobility issues, whether they be from the armed forces or traveller families, is essential in ensuring that these students feel settled in school and in a situation that they can achieve well academically. To really help and benefit school and college students from forces families there needs to be an ability to count in ones and make education fit their special needs and home life rather than trying to fit them into the existing educational system. There must always be space available in schools and colleges to allow students who move with the armed forces to be able to pick up their education wherever they may be in the country. It is clear from the research examined in chapter 2 that movement between schools, repeating classwork and having to change curriculum are all issues that severely negatively impact on student's abilities to achieve well when they are at Secondary school. If the number of service children going to University is to increase then there needs to be help given by schools to ensure that these students can achieve to their full ability when they are studying for GCSE's. Good GCSE results allow students to access A-Levels which then allows them to access Universities in general and potentially Russell Group Universities.

5.2 Attainment at Level Three

Examining the level 3 data for college makes for interesting reading. College as a whole had a 99.2% pass rate at Level 3 for the last academic year, so the results of all students were

outstanding. To examine one group of students in these outstanding results is not meant to demean their achievements but to investigate if they achieved at the same level, and if they do not, where potential improvements could be made. Table six and seven, in Chapter Four, show that there is very clearly a difference between the results for service children depending on whether they were taking A-Levels or BTEC vocational courses. These results in college for the last three years were examined in light of existing research to see if anything can be done to try and help improve service children's achievements.

5.2.1 A-Level Attainment

At A-Level in 2016 14.4% of forces children achieved A-A* compared to 30.5% of non-service children. This 16.1% difference is quite a large difference and needs to be investigated to try and understand why the gap is so high. The answer might be in the GCSE results examined by Strand et al and Noret et al (2007 and 2015). Strand found that the more a student was mobile in their secondary schooling the lower their GCSE grades would be. Strand et al (2007) did not just focus on forces children but also groups such as travellers, but his evidence may help to explain why forces children do less well studying A-Level courses. Noret et al (2015) found that although service children on the whole achieved as well if not better than non-service children at GCSE there was a drop off in the results of service children in GCSE English. I feel that this is really important and that service child mobility is affecting GCSE results and that there is potentially a poorer performance in GCSE English for these students and this performance at GCSE is having a major impact on A-Level attainment. For students to achieve at the highest level at their A-Level they need to have a GCSE English grade at a 'B' (or 5 in the new grades) or higher. Achieving at this higher level allows students to not only be able to write good answers in their exams but also be able to understand the questions being asked. If service children in the local area are not achieving these grades in their GCSE's it may be that when they attend college they find it

hard to access and achieve A-Level's at the A/A* grades. It must be said though that these service children at college were mainly students who have come from parents who were in the rank and file in the forces rather than from officer families. The importance of this was that these students potentially had a number of issues that affect their educational performance at GCSE; issues mentioned previously about being from a forces family and issues with regards to educational performance related to being from lower social and economic backgrounds. It could be argued though that the issues related to being from a lower social and economic background were helped by the £900 pupil premium money that schools get for those students. This money has been used for extra support classes and further teaching support and is checked on by Ofsted when they conduct inspections on schools. At the moment a service child gets a school £400, but the use of that money is not checked on by Ofsted. As the forces co-ordinator at Cardigan school highlighted often times this money, although ring-fenced for the service children for the extra support they need, is just subsumed by the whole school budget. Until there is a time that the service children premium monies are tracked like the pupil premium there is a temptation for schools to not use the money effectively on improving the attainment of service children at GCSE level.

5.2.2 BTEC Attainment

When considering the BTEC Level 3 results and comparing service and non-service children the picture is very different to that at A-Level, in fact it is almost completely reversed. In 2016 the highest grade level (Distinction *) service children outperform non-service children by over 11% (63.2% for service children, 52.1% for non-service children). The main reason I feel for this difference in figures is that the BTEC courses do not have exams and are based around coursework. This has two effects on the students. Firstly, I think that the lifestyle of service children and the skills that they develop help with them completing coursework. With service children and their families moving around the country with their postings they gain

resilience and potentially compartmentalise their life. They move from different postings and just focus on that part of their life until they move on again, this means that often times they are having to catch up with work from the new school that they have moved to. This really helps with coursework as these students can use these skills to focus on each assignment as it arrives and keep up to date with the many pieces of coursework and regular deadlines. They can work through each assignment and then move onto the next assignment without concerns about deadlines and the next assignment that non-service children may face. Secondly, this learning style is more suited to students with slightly lower GCSE grades in Maths and English and although this would mean all of these students would do exceptionally well I think that the regimented nature of the armed forces may help children from that background to achieve better. In interview Justin said:

“...they discipline you on what’s right and wrong. From the Army you obviously follow what your superiors tell you. So I guess dad kinda got his values built into him, brought me, my brother and sister up in that way to respect and my superiors have said you just do what you have got to do. So do what they say and what they say is right and don’t question it. I guess those kind of values in education do obviously help quite a bit. The teachers teach you stuff you need to know and if you follow that you should be fine.”

This point from Justin may help to explain why service children have done so well on coursework based courses in college. It could be argued that they have a built in set of rules and instructions from the armed forces that helps make them stick to deadlines and produce good coursework for the teachers. Some may argue that this links back to theories propounded by Bourdieu (1977). The ‘cultural capital’ and ‘habitus’ that service children exist in and can access is beneficial on this kind of course. I would argue that although it has some impact so does the school or college the students study at and the friends that they have. You could argue that this should also be the case with A-Levels and revision for exams but I think that the hard work ethic although good is not enough to overcome the potential deficiency that service children face due to their reduced GCSE English grades (Strand and Demie, 2007). If we are to improve service children’s routes to University and Higher Education then it seems clear that we need to ensure they have the best chance to succeed at GCSE level and specifically English. As has been mentioned above, when investigating A-

Level results, it seems that the concerted use and monitoring of service pupil premium is needed. This would ensure that the money that is given to schools to help service children with their specific issues is used to help directly with their GCSE English. This seems to be the part that these specific students struggle with the most, maybe moving between countries or counties affects how they learn English. If they are not taught by good quality teachers or hear English being used in the way that GCSE examiners expect then they will be at a severe disadvantage. Maybe this has nothing to do with being a service child and actually they are disadvantaged purely because they come from a generally disadvantaged background that does not see the benefit of education. One of the criticisms regularly raised by teachers at Cardigan school was that the students tried hard but their parents did not have high aspirations for them and that is what stopped the children achieving really well; this was however true of many parents not just those from service families.

These attainment figures may also help to explain why fewer service children at college head to Russell Group Universities. Russell Group Universities on the whole expect A and A* predictions to attend their Universities (Leeds University prospectus, 2017) and do not consider students who have taken BTEC or CTEC qualifications. In college if service children are not achieving these grades then it would be difficult for them to attend Russell Group Universities.

5.3 Progression at Level 2

The figures with regard to the level 2 students are interesting as it is clear that the overall number of level 2 students in college has increased year on year over the last three years. The reason for this I would suggest is down to the change in government policy to make GCSE qualifications harder. This is especially the case this year where the change to

numbers as grades for GCSE Maths and English resulted in a lot of students needing to retake these qualifications when previously they might have just about accessed level 3 BTEC/CTEC courses. With the trend being for more students to be studying at level 2 in college it is then very interesting to see that the number of service children on level 2 courses has decreased each year in the last three years. Why this decrease is happening is difficult to say, but it might resonate with the evidence from the research of Strand et al and Noret et al (2007 & 2015), that is service children do as well as non-service children at GCSE's. If this was the case then the number of service children studying in college at level 2 would be no different to any other group in college. To complete a real analysis of the service children studying at level 2, and see if it reflects other groups, it would require the data for other groups in college, such as travellers and differing ethnic groups. Having the data for these different groups would allow for a comparison to see if there are any differences between the numbers of service children at level 2 with these other groups. There could then be some real investigation to see why there might be more or less service children studying on the level 2 programme in college.

5.4 What is the career progression for children from armed forces families?

In trying to answer this key question I have focused on school and college separately as the data from each institution is very different. With regards to Cardigan school there was a focus on the interviews and focus groups carried out with students. This data was split into two sections, short term aspirations, i.e. will I go to college and/or university and long term aspirations; i.e. what job would I like in the future. This allows for a detailed investigation and to see if these students' aspirations mirror the research that has been carried out or whether it is significantly different. In college there is both interview and numerical data that will be examined to see what the aspirations of service students at college are. The main reason for examining this key question was to see if students from service families had different ideas of

career progression than those from non-service families. Although the interviews I completed were only with service children it is possible to examine if their aspirations are in line with other students by examining their interview responses in light of the literature that was identified in Chapter 2.

5.4.1 Progression Ideas for students from Cardigan School

The interview responses that were gained from the students in Cardigan school fitted into to clear fields; their short term and long term aspirations. Short-term aspirations I have taken to mean those aspirations related to school and college and long term aspirations I have taken to mean anything that is concerned with careers and employment. All of the students who were interviewed had both short-term and long-term aspirations. It was clear from the interview responses that most of the students had a very strong idea as to what they wanted to do in both the short-term and long-term.

Taken as a whole, the data suggests that the students at Cardigan school follow the trend suggested by Beck (1992) and Macris (2011) that students see education choices as investment decisions and make those choices based on what that investment will reap for them in the future. This can be seen in the great number of students interviewed who in their short term aspirations said that they would attend a college after completing their schooling. They felt that attending college was a way of getting further qualifications that would help them in their future lives. Although attending college and studying for A-Levels was by far the most common answer to the question “What do you want to do once you finish your GCSE’s at school?” there were other responses. These alternative responses did all have some training component included in them. Daniel who wanted to be a footballer or football coach still wanted to continue his education through his time with SCL, training at football while

retaking his Maths and English GCSE's if he needed to. This example seemed to confirm that school students were making choices that were inherently linked to their future career ideas not as Bourdieu (1977) would argue as these students staying within their own known habitus and not looking to move away from this. The need to continue with some kind of training or education was considered to be important by the school students and was something they were focused on. There was an understanding amongst them that simply getting GCSE qualifications in school would not be enough to help them access a 'good' career. I would argue that this desire to continue on in education was one that was seen in all areas of society and was not one that was solely found in service children, children from all areas of society were realising that there was a need to achieve at as high a level as possible in education. These feelings from the students may well be as a result of the government increasing the age from 16 to 18 (DoE, 2015a) at which students can leave education or training and rather than being their own thoughts they now feel that they don't have a choice and have to carry on in education and training until the age of 18.

The long-term career ideas and aspirations of the school children at Cardigan school were interesting as the majority of them did not involve the children saying that they wanted to go into a career in the armed forces. In fact in only two of the ten interviews did the children say that they wanted to follow their parents into the armed forces. Why would this be the case? If research from sociologists such as Bourdieu (1977) were to be believed then you would expect the majority of these children to say that they wanted to follow their parents into the armed forces as that would be the advice their parents would be giving them. The habitus of the families would mean that the advice and guidance that they could give would be based on their own experience from the armed forces, although this would tend to be in a positive context it would also be possible for parents to give a negative observation of the armed forces. Interestingly in a number of cases the parents own experiences were clearly the fore in the advice and guidance they were giving but they had a very negative perception of

the armed forces and this was what was being projected on their children. In the interviews with Daniel and Candice this came across very clearly as helping them to decide on their future career aspirations. Their parents had been so negative about their own experience in the armed forces that there was no way their children would consider it as a possible career. I would argue that students from forces families do listen to their parents with regards to career ideas but these parental thoughts are not the only ones that mould their aspirations and that the child's schools and friends have as much of an impact. It appeared to me that a lot of the long-term career aspirations were still just that, aspirations. At the age of 15/16 many of these children had not really done any detailed planning into what qualifications or experience they needed to be able to carry out the job they aspired to. A number of the boys wanted to be footballers even though they didn't play for a team and hadn't really considered how hard it actually was to be a footballer. Candice wanted to be an equine vet but was studying GCSE's in Catering, History and Geography as her options, not really the choices needed to follow that career path. For these children in their last year at school their career aspirations had not really been moulded into something that they could realistically do as a career.

5.4.2 Progression ideas for students from college

Examining the numerical data collected at college over the last seven years lead to a number of key points. I split this part of the analysis into three areas; number of overall students going to University, number of students going to Russell Group universities and number of students joining the army. These three sections are the ones that stand out most in the data.

What seems interesting in examining the number of students going to University is that in the last five years the percentage of service children going to University has risen from fifteen to fifty one, with the actual percentage of students from service families attending university rising from 40.5% in 2012 to 70.6% in 2016. The figures for 2015 were even more impressive

with 86.3% of students from armed forces backgrounds leaving college to study at University. Why had there been such a jump in the number of students from armed forces families going onto University? The number of students from armed forces families in college had stayed at about the forty mark so something was allowing those students to have a better chance of accessing University. There were a number of reasons for this increase in the percentage attending University. Firstly, within college there was a better process in place to identify those students from forces families and help them to access the information required to make a competitive UCAS application. This is important because as we have discussed before if service children feel that they are supported by school or college and have as much chance of getting to University as non-service children then they feel more confident. This confidence means that these service children are more likely to think of University as a possible progression route even if their parents had not. Secondly, linked in with the better recording of forces children, there was a move in pastoral provision in college to having more 1-2-1 sessions rather than just group tutorials. This meant that as a tutor there was more time to sit with a student and talk about their progression ideas and plans. In a 1-2-1 scenario a student was much more likely to talk about their parent's career, the fact that neither of their parents went to University or what University support there was available to help with their application. Information from organisations such as NFF (NFF, 2017) could be discussed with a student and used to help them in their UCAS application. Finally, it was clear that more Universities were starting to identify the armed forces as a group of students that were accessed in their widening participation schemes. Winchester University, for example, added service child to their list of underrepresented groups in the compact agreement that they have with college. These compact agreements help students from forces families' access university places because they often reduce the entry requirements for university places. This reduction in entry requirements may work in favour of service children who don't always get the highest A or A* grades at A-Level. UCAS also produced a guide for service children to help them when writing their personal statements. This guide focused on how service children could highlight experiences such as mobility, resilience

when parents are away or living overseas in their personal statement to show admissions tutor's non-academic skills and experiences that they may have (UCAS, 2017). These features in conjunction I feel really explain why the percentage of service children going to University from college has increased by at least thirty percent in the last two years. These figures of service children going to University were also impressive when compared to non-service children. In 2015 86.3% of service children at college went to University compared to 73.1% of non-service children and in 2016 the comparison was 70.6% to 66.8%. The factors examined above of better identification of service children, more tutorial 1-2-1's and service children on University compact agreements have all had an impact on increasing the number of service children leaving college for University. Since the first smaller numbers of service children went to University from college it is clear that the aspirations of more recent students has been influenced by their predecessors. At Cardigan school it was evident that the experience of previous students has been used by the armed forces co-ordinator to tell present school students about where they could possibly progress to after school. She had used the example of Justin and his desire to study Law at University to promote to the current students where it was possible to reach educationally. At a school that had a serious issue with the aspirations of the parents the influence that the armed forces co-ordinator had over the service children really impacted on the aspirations that they were taking from school. It was clear in the interviews that were carried out that the service children all wanted to go to college or continue training after school. These aspirations were higher than those normally associated with children from Cardigan school with many children finishing their education as soon after their GCSE's as possible.

In college in the years 2010 – 2016 of one hundred and fifty five students from service backgrounds who went to University only twenty went to Russell Group Universities (12.9%), why was this the case? All students from college should have the same potential to study at a Russell Group University if that is their desire. Maybe this low percentage is linked to the reduced number of A and A* grades that service students were achieving at A-Level

(examined in the previous section). Most Russell Group universities were looking for all 'A' grade predictions with many expecting at least 1 A*. Leeds University required AAA predictions to study Law, History or English (Leeds University prospectus, 2014). If service students were struggling to achieve these high grades then it would be understandable why they were not going on to attend those Universities. As has been discussed above service children seemed to achieve the higher grades more often in the CTEC/BTEC courses. Unfortunately for service children CTEC/BTEC were not courses that were considered the same as A-Level qualifications by Russell Group universities. On the UCAS website it said for many Russell Group universities that BTEC qualifications would be considered in combination with other qualifications, and that students should contact the Admissions Office for more information. For A-Level qualifications the student was told the exact grades that were needed. It may be that students from forces families were put off applying to these universities because if they achieved well on BTEC courses they may not consider themselves at the same level as A-Level students. Linked with this more Universities were looking at potential students GCSE results and although the overall profile of service children might be similar to non-service children, lower grades in English Language may well hinder service children from achieving offers from these Universities.

In the same period only 6 students joined the armed forces (4 to the Army and 2 to the Navy) why might fewer be following in their parents footsteps? It is interesting that in the interviews carried out in college more often than not the students said they were not looking at joining the armed forces, this is replicated in the numerical data at college. With the students at Cardigan school and college being mainly from the rank and file of the army you might expect that their habitus and access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) would be of a level that would suggest the armed forces as a career as that might be what the parents would know the most about. The socialisation that then took place within the home would reinforce those thoughts. This knowledge would then be shared with their children, with the armed forces seen as the career to be looking at when they grow up. I would argue that

socialisation and the development of career aspirations clearly takes place in a number of different locations for a service child and that although they listen to their parents they are gaining information from a number of sources, friends, school and careers advisors being to the forefront. This mix of different ideas would help the students to develop careers ideas outside of their parent's experience.

5.4.3 Summary of Progression Discussion

In conclusion, for both the students at Cardigan school and college it would appear that their subject choices and career ideas were made with thoughts of doing things that they enjoyed, this in some cases linked into a career and potential earnings but others had not really looked that far ahead. To some extent this follows the ideas of Goldthorpe (2007), who argues that students makes choices on a purely economic footing. What was clear was that in Year 11 many of the students had a career idea but they hadn't really considered how practical it was or what qualifications they would need to reach that career goal. The progression data from college was very interesting and showed that in recent years the number of forces children who have gone on to University has increased, reaching a high point of 86.3% in 2016. There seem to be three reasons for this increase, all of them working in connection to help more service children attend University. I have tried to explain why I think the Russell Group numbers may be so low, but this is certainly an area that needs further wide scale research to see if service children are really disadvantaged in their ability to study at Russell Group Universities.

5.5 What shapes service children's career ideas?

I would suggest that the service children in Cardigan school's responses about where they were getting their careers advice and guidance from follow a similar path to non-service

children at Cardigan school from their perspective. It appears to me that there were three aspects to the school children's careers advice linking into how they could or should be making subject and career choices. Firstly, there is an independent careers service accessible in school, but many of the children do not know how to do this, either through not knowing the name of the careers advisor or when he would be in school. In addition to this many of the children appeared to be quite reactive in seeking out careers advice, tending to wait for a teacher to make a careers appointment for them. It seemed that the children do not really value the service that is available to them and do not actually see how it would benefit them to have an appointment. This may well be as a result of the decentralised careers policy that has developed (DoE, 2014b). These issues that have been highlighted follow the problems raised by Hooley and Watts (2011). Secondly, children talked to their parents, close family and friends to see what they thought about their subject choices and career ideas, in most cases the response from parents, close family and friends was to 'do subjects they enjoy or are good at'. This advice may be more of an attempt to keep their offspring or friends happy rather than considering what may be best for them. Finally, the children thought about their own ideas for their futures and consider what they would like to be doing as careers. The students tended to choose subjects that they enjoyed but they did not feel this was due to parental advice but was more down to their own ideas, there were a couple of exceptions, John and Amethyst, who had started to think a little about how their GCSE subjects might impact on any future career.

In Cardigan school it would appear to me that the children, both service and non-service, were getting the majority of their careers advice from agencies not connected to their school, i.e. family and friends. They were not really interacting with the school for careers advice and this was a potential problem. While careers advice from family and friends was fine it did not have the specific knowledge that a careers advisor would have. This means that these children may be missing out on information about specific school, college or university subjects that are needed to follow a particular career path, and this may lead them down a

path that they are not suited to. A prime example from these interviews was Candice who wanted to become an equine dentist because she liked horses but without a real understanding of the complexities of the role or the length of time it would take to study for at University. A couple of meetings with the careers advisor in school could really help focus her on what the career entails, required qualifications and possible contacts for volunteering opportunities. At this early stage in her life this careers advice in conjunction with that from her family and friends could ensure that she was not disappointed in the future if she could not access this career due to her earlier subject choices. Linked with this many of the staff in Cardigan school stated that one of the biggest issues with the school were 'the low aspirations of the parents for their children'. The school is in a low SES catchment area and clearly a Strategy/Policy orientation school, if we use the Foskett, Dyke & Maringe (2004) school orientation theory. This would mean that on the whole the schools focus was to make sure students achieve grades good enough to go off into employment, only those with real potential would head off to University, students would not be pushed into this situation by the school. The forces co-ordinator within school was trying to reverse this trend by using students like Andrew as example to show the service children in school. He was now studying Law at University of Surrey, so was a good example of what could be achieved and a possible role model for students to try and aspire to be like.

In Cardigan school it seems to me that there are two main problems with the careers service offered. Firstly, linking in with my concerns and that of Hooley (2015) from the literature review as the careers advisor was an external consultant he was not in school all the time and is not seen regularly by the students, this made it harder for the students to identify with the careers advisor, as they may have if the advisor was a member of staff and in school every day and in school events like assemblies etc. Again this highlights the potential problems of a decentralised careers policy (DoE, 2014b), where schools are left to arrange their own careers advice. This sets up a two tier system of those schools who can and cannot afford quality careers advice (Hooley and Watts, 2011). Secondly, staff in school were

not advising and guiding students on how to make careers appointments and where to find the careers advisor. This surely should be one of their pastoral roles of a class tutor who registers students daily. In future I would suggest that the school need to make the external careers advisor a larger part of the school life, this however may be expensive if the school have to pay for the careers advisor to be in school more often and this may be something that they cannot afford. I also feel that teachers need to make it clear how the careers appointments work and who is expected to make them, either students or staff. Maybe during registration teachers could have the careers advisors timetable online and then make appointments with the students in class.

5.6 If service children are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

In answering this key question I think that it is important to firstly highlight from the interviews that the vast majority of the service children were planning to carry on with their education in one form or another. It was evident that going into employment was not really an option and that they all wanted to carry on in some form of education. There were aspirations from the service children to go onto a local Sixth Form college, join a company with some internal training or get an apprenticeship but they all had some form of education to carry on after school. This was important as it links in with recent government policy of requiring children to stay in education or training until the age of 18 (DoE, 2015a). When discussing this with the children they did not seem concerned about staying in education and training and all felt that further education was the way for them to progress their careers. It was also evident that University was a long term goal that the students had, this showed that despite living in a low socio-economic area and studying at a struggling school they still had long term goals to improve their educational experience to the highest level.

The interview responses of the service children in Cardigan school made it clear that they were choosing subjects at GCSE almost entirely on the basis of the subjects that they enjoyed. Daniel, John, Candice and Amethyst all selected GCSE options because they were the subjects they enjoyed. Daniel was a good example he chose PE and Catering as his options. He chose PE as he liked to be active and catering as he enjoyed cooking. Daniel had not had the best educational experience due to moving around the country and had made his options based on what he enjoyed and what would give him the most confidence. These may not be the most academic of subjects but they were the ones that he thought he could achieve well on due to enjoying them. It was evident that in the cases of Candice, John and Amethyst the advice and guidance they had received from their parents was that while at school they should study the courses that they enjoyed the most. The rationale for this was that if the students enjoyed the courses then they were most likely to achieve well and get grades. This does mirror the advice I give students at interview for college places. Unless they have a career aspiration that needs a very specific set of A-Level courses, like for Medicine, and if they were not sure what to take I would always advise doing the courses they enjoyed as that would help ensure that they achieved well.

5.7 Does being a service child affect these student's career aspirations?

I think the evidence from the previous key questions and the interviews seems to indicate that being a service child does not have a great effect on a child's career aspirations. The interviews in Cardigan school show that service children have the same influencers on their career aspirations as other children. It may well be that the educational effect of being a service child is more of an impact on their academic success and this then effects these students ability to meet their aspirations. I cannot agree that there is one key influencer on a service child's aspirations, be that the family (Bourdieu, 1977), economic ideals (Goldthorpe, 2007) or the school (Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, 2008), it is a combination of all of these

things and the child's very individual experience of being a service child. A child's family, friends and the school are all things that influence the career aspirations that these children have both in a positive and negative way. In the case of Daniel this was most definitely a negative perception of the army which may well have come about due to illness or what his father perceived to be poor postings. This advice would seem to be only natural and I would suggest is not much different to parents in whatever career they were in and not just related to the armed forces. If you as a parent have a positive or negative experience in your career, as a teacher for example, your children will experience this perception and were likely to take it on board when they are thinking about a career route that they would like to take on.

Another issue that has become clear is that the parental advice to their children may well depend on the gender of their children. In the case of both Candice and Amethyst the advice has been that they really should not join the Army, it is not for them and that other careers would be better. In Candice's case she was quite committed to the Army regardless of what her father said. It is also interesting to note that in both these cases Candice and Amethyst's father had suggested that their brothers should join the Army as they needed the control and the structure that the Army gave as it would keep them out of trouble. This is an area that could benefit from further research, both to examine why there was this gender difference in the father's advice and also to see if the student's mothers had the same thoughts on which siblings would benefit from the army.

5.8 Section Summary

The aim of this chapter was to try and examine some of the themes existing in the collected data and to link this to the literature examined in chapter two. The issue of what shapes the career aspirations of a service child is a complicated question to answer. By separating the

subject into four key questions I have strived to make it a little simpler to understand and possibly come to an answer. From the point of view of career aspirations one could argue that service school children have very similar aspirations to non-service school children. Although the interviews were only carried out with service children, the interview responses show that service children aspirations often are inspired by a combination of the influences discussed in the literature review. They and their parents look at them studying subjects they enjoy and think of careers in much the same way, without always considering how realistic those careers are. It is not until college that these students really start to examine how realistic their career goals are and how they can reach those goals. Numerical data was used to highlight how service children achieve in college on different level three courses and whether they are favoured by certain types of courses. Progression data was also examined to see if there was any difference in the number of service children heading to University after college and, it showed that they were equalling if not exceeding non-service children. With regard to careers support and how to try and get students to have realistic aspirations at a slightly early age I believe that there is a very clear structure that should be followed. In terms of careers advice and guidance I feel having a three-pronged attack is one that will offer service children and students the best opportunity in their future lives. In accordance with the work carried out by Hooley & Watts (2011) which argued that a number of agencies are needed to be used by students to ensure that they are and given fully rounded advice and guidance. The interview results from Cardigan school showed that students need to have a combination of advice from schools, parents and themselves to ensure that they get all the information possible to help them make the best choices. If one of these three channels is not being used by the children to its full extent then they are missing out on a vital part of the advice that they need, whether that be their own personal aspirations, the checks and balances offered by their family and friends or the specific focussed advice from a careers service. In this case service children are no different to any other group of students.

In conclusion, this research has made an original contribution to knowledge by extending our understanding of the needs of service children in secondary school and Sixth Form college. It has examined, for the first time, how the aspirations of these service children are shaped in school and sixth form college, what influences their subject choices and progression ideas. It appears evident from the interviews carried out that in many cases service children aspirations follow that of a combination of the existing research on aspirations and decision making. In the sense that the decisions they make are some way influenced by their parents, their friends, their school and their own ideas. What the interviews have shown is that the school also has an important impact on the aspirations and decisions that its children make. In Cardigan school the biggest impact was made by the armed forces co-ordinator rather than the careers service. The interview responses show that the students really had very little interaction with the careers service due to not knowing the external careers advisor that came into school one or two days a week. In addition to the interview responses, for the first time evaluation of Level 3 results and Sixth Form College careers progression has been carried out. This evaluation has shown how service children tend to do better on vocational courses than A-levels at the highest grades. It can be argued that this is as a result at least in part to lower GCSE grades in English Language for service children, but I feel that it is more important to consider that the funding for service children is considerably less than that for other disadvantaged students. Schools receive £900 pupil premium for each disadvantaged child whereas they only receive £400 for the service premium and there is no further funding for service children when they move from school to Sixth Form College. Service premium money is not inspected by Ofsted in the same way that Pupil premium is and it means that on occasions the service premium money is subsumed into the general funding for the school and not used to specifically help the service children in the school. To me the significant challenges that service children face due to movement between homes, schools and emotional challenges means that they need to have the same kind of funding as students who are on pupil premium and this funding needs to go on into post compulsory

education. The funding needs to be directed at improving service children's performance at GCSE English and then at A-Level.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this thesis is divided into five sections. Firstly a summary of the thesis and what its initial purpose was. Secondly, an evaluation of implications for practice and possible developments in policy for careers advisors and teachers. Thirdly, an examination of the methodology used and any possible limitations that may exist with it. Fourthly, ideas for research developments and future areas of enquiry have been made. Finally, there is a summation of the whole thesis and its original contribution to knowledge.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The desire to research this subject area was born out my role as a personal tutor in college and a wish to understand why students from service families made the subject choices and career aspirations that they did. While investigating these aspirations it became evident that an understanding of this group's examination results at Level 3 would be vital to understand what may be influencing the career choices that they were making. There has been very little research into the aspirations and examination results of Year 11 school students or post 16 college students from service families. Much of the previous research into service children has focussed on Junior School children or GCSE attainment. The work carried out by Dr Judith McCullouch and Michael Hall (2016) and the Service Children's Progression Alliance based at Winchester University has started to investigate and research the post 16 age group. This thesis has added to the small body of knowledge that exists in the research on this age group and will hopefully help develop the understanding of the choices and aspirations that post 16 children from service families have. The findings from interviews, focus groups and the progression data examined previously will allow careers professionals and teachers to understand further the needs of this specific group of children.

The methodology for this piece of research was based in an embedded mixed methods framework to ensure that these service children have their voices heard through both interviews and focus groups (Cohen et al, 2011). These students' voices have been written up as a case study focussing on one school and college with examination data used to add extra depth to the initial findings (Yin, 2009). Initially the research questions that developed from the literature review were:

- What is the career progression for children from forces families?
- What shapes these students career ideas?
- Does being a service child affect their career aspirations?
- If they are continuing in education why do they choose the subjects they do?

The data analysis and my interpretations of that data has allowed me to examine each of these research questions and draw out some possible implications for future policy and practice.

6.2 Key Findings and contribution to knowledge

This thesis has added to existing knowledge by allowing a group of service children to have their voices heard with regards to their career aspirations. It has attempted to fill a hole in the existing research by focussing on the career aspirations of Year 11 and 12 students with service backgrounds, something that has not been done before. Looking at these students career aspirations is important as it will allow careers advisors to get a better understanding of what these students are thinking about, as they are making important careers decisions. If we, as careers advisors and tutors, understand service children's thoughts better we will be able to offer a better quality of impartial advice. By interviewing this group of students I have gained an appreciation of these students' aspirations and when these are examined in association with the views of the service-child co-ordinator in Cardigan school it is possible to see how a student's education is affected by the communication and actions of the school

and the armed forces. The detailed analysis of one specific school and its experiences is in more depth than any other research and will hopefully give ideas for how the relationship between a school and the armed forces can be improved to benefit the students as much as possible.

In examining the attainment of service children at a Sixth Form college, for the first time, it is possible to see how service children perform, at level three, in comparison to non-service children. This analysis has not only studied level three qualifications as a whole, but specifically focussed on A-Levels and CTEC/BTEC vocational courses separately. This specific analysis has found that service children do not seem to achieve as well as non-service children in achieving the highest grades in A-Levels. In contrast service children do as well if not better than non-service children in achieving the highest grades on CTEC/BTEC courses. It can be argued that the specific life experiences of service children set them up to achieve to a better level on CTEC/BTEC courses. Service children learn through postings and school changes to compartmentalise their lives and focus on specific tasks and deadlines. These skills are ideal for students to achieve, at the highest grades at CTEC/BTEC courses where there is continual assessment and deadlines. I would also argue that the lower number of service children in Russell Group Universities is as a result of them achieving lower GCSE English results (Strand and Demie, 2007), which then impacts on their ability to achieve the highest level of A-Level grades that then means it is harder for them to get offers from Russell Group Universities.

6.3 Possible contribution for Practice

The main aim of this study was not to create a piece of research that was able to be generalised throughout England. This was due to two main reasons, firstly, the number of respondents to the interviews was only ten, a sample size that does not really allow for useful

generalisation. Secondly, the epistemological basis for the research is the depth of the interview responses and the student's stories rather than the generalisability of the data. This is the naturalistic approach followed throughout the study. Although generalisability is not the focus of the study it is hoped that the results of the interviews and focus groups at Cardigan school, the progression data collected at Sixth Form college and the interpretation of this data may be helpful to both careers advisors and teachers in the future. The following paragraphs are a number of small ways that this may be possible.

The interview and focus group results from Cardigan school showed a distinct lack of connection between the school children and the schools careers advisor. It was evident that although the students were aware of who the careers advisor was, because he was only in school two days a week they did not have a real connection with him, the kind of connection that they would have had with a member of the teaching staff doing the same careers job. This might mean the students were less confident to go and speak to someone they may have viewed as a stranger. This lack of association with the careers advisor linked with a lack of knowledge about when or where careers appointments could be made, meant that they were really not connecting with the service in a way that could benefit their futures. In an attempt to reduce this problem it is important that external career advisors need to be integrated into school life better. This could be done by having the careers advisors speak in assemblies, talk to tutorial groups and have a visible office. These changes would allow the careers advisor to be part of the school life and more visible to the students. Improved visibility would mean that students would know who the advisor was and that would give them more confidence to arrange careers appointments and talk to them about what they need to do in school to achieve their aspirations. This improved visibility may cost a school more money as they have to have external careers advisor on site more often. I would argue that, if money was an issue for the school, this is the perfect reason to if possible retrain a member of the teaching staff so that they have careers advice as a major part of their job role. In the short term this may prove difficult due to timetabling, but in the long term a

member of teaching staff with a careers advisor focus can only benefit the school. This member of staff would be someone the students knew and a friendly face is always likely to attract students to careers appointments as if the students are relaxed with the careers advisor they are more likely to interact to the fullest extent.

In light of the interview with the armed forces supervisor at Cardigan school it is really important that the connection between the armed forces and schools with service children is developed and strengthened. This may sound like a pretty clear requirement but it was surprising the politics that occurred between schools and the armed forces. To hear that parents were told by the Army not to send their children to Cardigan school as 'it is not very good' was a surprise. Recent research (Engel et al, 2010) has shown that parental deployment and school movement has the biggest impact on service children's attainment at GCSE level. This is one area that it seems communication between the armed forces and schools can work to improve things. The head teacher at Cardigan school would travel to Army bases across the UK, if deployments were upcoming, to try and talk to parents about Cardigan school and what they could expect from the school. This seems like a good policy to follow as it may allow the head teacher to deal with issues like changes in curriculum, uniform or timetables before the students arrive in the school when it might be a little more stressful for the students and parents to deal with. I would advise that schools should be proactive like Cardigan school and work to contact forces bases that may be deploying families to their catchment areas. Some of the issues mentioned above could then be dealt with swiftly and successfully.

In College it is not enough to just have the compact agreements with certain Universities listed on UCAS paperwork. It has become clear that service children need as many potential barriers removing to help them attend University as possible. Requiring them to research the Universities and the associated compact agreements seems a lot, especially when college has all the information in one place already. All of the details for how service children can

access compact agreements between college and Universities need to be further and explicitly given to students from a service background. When students are making choices of which Universities to add to their UCAS application they don't know which Universities their college has compact agreements with and this information is vitally important. Some Universities may drop entry requirements for students from a service background or offer further bursary support when they attend, Leeds and Winchester universities are good examples of this. If students from a service background knew this information from the start of the process it may really help them direct their five choices to those Universities that will work with them to help them get to University. I would suggest that detailed information on compact agreements are given to all students in college so that those who could benefit from it the most would do so.

6.4 Review and Limitations of Methodology

Using embedded mixed methods data collection methods in this piece of research was intended to ensure that the students were able to elicit their voices and opinions to the fullest extent. Using a mixture of interviews and focus groups allowed all the students to contribute to the case study. Extra depth and understanding was added to these student responses by interviewing the armed forces co-ordinator at Cardigan school and examining Level 3 exam results for service children. All of these different data collection methods worked together to reveal the students thoughts and issues that impact upon them.

Student interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format with some questions planned before the interviews, but others developed as the interview progressed (Floyd, 2012). This allowed for some flexibility in the questioning style so that I could react to the students' answers and move in whatever direction their answers took the interview. Five interviews were carried out in Cardigan school and five in a Sixth Form college to ensure that I was interviewing those who were both experiencing careers guidance in school and those who

were retrospectively looking back on what had happened when they were at school. The reason for doing this was to add extra depth to the interview responses and try and get a thorough understanding of what the aspirations and career ideas were of these service children. In light of the interviews a focus group was organised to centre on the students thoughts on the external careers advisor in Cardigan school. I used a focus group in this stage of data collection as it allowed me to get all the students together in one place at one time and focus on this one issue that they had all raised in their interviews; careers advice in the school. This was the first time that I had run a focus group and I felt that the discussion and the responses the students gave made the process worthwhile as it allowed me to examine this issue in further detail than I would have able to if I had just tried to expand that one area of the interview.

In any kind of research there are potential limitations and issues that need to be recognised and inspected. Researching in one's own institution could lead to potential problems and was an area that I needed to be very clear about. Although I was working with students who were studying in college or were planning to join college, the information that I was looking to ascertain was related to their time in Cardigan school either past or present. It was important that they understood that there were no correct answers and that all the information that they gave through interviews would be entirely anonymous and used only for this research project. In preparing the interviews and sharing fact sheets at Cardigan school I made it very clear that the answers that they gave would have no bearing on their ability to be accepted into college in the coming years. One of the reasons for conducting interviews at Cardigan school was that one of my roles as a personal tutor was to be link tutor in College for Cardigan school. This role allowed me extra access to the school and a prior knowledge of the student body. The main focus of the link tutor role meant that I was trying to promote the connection between college and the school through talks, parent's evenings and assemblies. I would work with the school to help ensure that the students could apply to college successfully, it was therefore vitally important that I did not allow my research to impact on

the professional role that I had to undertake (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). To help with this process I ensured that the students that took part in this research had exactly the same experience in their transition from GCSE to Level 3 study as other applicants from Cardigan school. I made sure that I understood my own position within the research as this 'lens' may have affected the way that I analysed and interpreted the data presented by the students (Punch, 2009, p. 45). While interviewing the students I was very careful to not offer too much advice and guidance that would give the students an unfair advantage when applying to college.

The interview process for this piece of research was conducted at both Cardigan school and college, investigating student career ideas, aspirations and subject choice for level 3 study. This focus meant that the students interviewed in college were reflecting on what transpired at least a year ago, which may have resulted in some students not being able to recall events exactly as they happened (Cohen et al, 2011) or that they may have been influenced by their brief time at College. It is entirely possible that during a year at college the students thoughts on career aspirations may well have changed and not been the same as when they were studying at Cardigan school. As mentioned elsewhere I tried to combat this issue by having a mixture of school and college interviews so that the research findings were a mixture of thoughts from students who previously went through or were now going through the process of choosing post compulsory education routes. The reason for this interview style was to reduce any concern of only relying on students memories which may have been forgotten or remembered incorrectly. To improve this interview process and get a further depth of analysis from the student's aspirations it would be ideal to interview the same set of students both in school and then two years later either in college or wherever they had progressed to after school. The advantage of this process would be to see how a student's aspirations may change over time, rather than just relying on one snapshot in time.

Finally, this was a small scale case-study based on ten students from one secondary school and one sixth form college in the South of England and as a result it was not possible to have any claims of generalisability. With this kind of research this was not the aim though and the point was more to understand the thoughts and opinions of the students who have been interviewed. The findings from the research although not generalisable due to the small scale nature of the research will be able to offer a further insight into the career thoughts and aspirations of service children in this part of England.

6.5 Possibilities for Future Research

Although this is a relatively new area of research with many gaps that could be filled, it seems that there are a number of intriguing areas that could be examined to develop the research initially identified in this work. This piece of research has focused on a small scale case study of ten students from non-officer families at one school and Sixth Form College. There are three initial ways that the research could be developed in the future. First, more students from Cardigan school could be interviewed to see if the trends highlighted in this piece of research are found consistently when a larger cross-section of the service children in Cardigan school community are interviewed. Secondly, interviews could be carried out with service children from a second local secondary school. Brownthorpe school is a local Secondary school that takes a significant number of service children in its cohort. It would be interesting to examine if the service children from Cardigan school and Brownthorpe school had similar aspirations and career ideas despite being in different schools and towns. This research would be valuable as if findings are from multiple towns they might be more useful in improving on practice in careers advice for service children. Finally, Brownthorpe school has a large percentage of its service children from officer families, this is in stark contrast to Cardigan school that has very few officer families. It would be fascinating to compare the aspirations of officer and non-officer children to see if there was any real difference in their

aspirations and what was having the main impact on the choices they were potentially making. All three of these ideas would expand the existing research and help with our understanding of the aspirations of service children.

As mentioned in Chapter Five one area with regards to aspirations that could be further investigated would be to examine the aspirations of male and female students from service backgrounds and the advice and guidance that they receive from their parents. This area would allow careers advisors to see if there is a difference in the kind of advice that male and female students get from their parents.

The suggestions made above are still very time specific so they examine students' aspirations and career ideas at a specific time in their school or college career. Although this is helpful it does not show how students' aspirations may change over time and be effected by changes in their living conditions or location. Carrying out a longitudinal study over a number of years would allow the researcher to see if service children's aspirations and career ideas change during their school and college career. Might these students want to join the army more when they were younger due to parental influence and does that change over time or not? The idea with this study would be to interview a group of service children in Year 7 and then re-interview them each year through to them finishing school and then whatever post school route they took, college, apprenticeship or employment. The study would also allow the researcher to see if students' parents' deployments changed their aspirations based on location as well as time. Carrying out a longitudinal study to expand this important area would add a rich level of data that could only be gained through research over a number of years (Cohen et al, 2011). One major impact of carrying out a longitudinal study on the aspirations of service children in Secondary school and Sixth Form college would be the size of the sample group required for the study to be carried out. The sample size for the study would have to be considerably larger than that used in the current research because of

concerns over the drop in the number of participants over time. There would be no way of ensuring that all the students that started the study would finish it. Gorard (2001) found that in a study that had between a 60 and 70 per cent involvement in the first section of the research then risked dropping to 25 per cent by the third section. This kind of drop in a potential piece of research of this style could have a real impact on the quality of the data collected both in its amount and breadth of answers.

A further development in the research would be in college collecting progression and attainment statistics over a number of years as this would allow a detailed investigation of how the attainment statistics for service children change over time. Have attainment statistics for service children continued in the same vein as my research or is there a more significant difference with non-service children and why might this be the case? Further analysis of officer and non-officer children could be carried out to examine if there is a difference in their attainment at GCSE level, Level three qualifications and their progression to Russell Group Universities. This comparison could also be done for service children from different feeder schools to see if there is a difference in attainment at Level two and then how these students' achieve at Sixth Form college. One of the things to take note of with this research project would be that the continually changing nature of qualifications and type of grades awarded in the United Kingdom would have to be taken into account. A comparison over time would be difficult if the qualifications and grade style at Level three changed considerably during the timeframe of the study. This would mean that not like things would be being compared and this would not make for a quality and easy to understand piece of research (Cohen et al, 2011).

A final area of research that really needs to be investigated is the group of students whose parents were once in the armed forces but now no longer are. Within college there are always students whose parents were in the armed forces but then as a result of illness or a

change of job career no longer are. This group of students would be important to investigate as they are students who potentially face all the challenges of being in a service family but do not get picked up in the service child data. This 'invisible' group may face the challenges of education in multiple countries, regular school movement and absence of one or both parents, but are not highlighted in data about GCSE attainment or service premium as their parents no longer meet the requirements of that identifier. This group of students needs to be researched further to examine if there is extra support that can be offered, to students whose parents had once been in the armed forces, to ensure they achieve to their full potential.

6.6 Final Summary

The research questions which have been examined in this thesis are both complex and wide ranging and are relevant to ask of a large group of students in UK schools. Whilst this study can only relate to the experience of those included, this study has made an original contribution to knowledge by allowing a small group of service children to have their voices heard with regards to their career aspirations, school attainment and progression routes. It has found that these students' career aspirations are moulded by a number of different groups, with the influence of their parents both positively and negatively having the most impact. It has identified a problem in Cardigan school with regards to these children identifying with, and accessing, an external careers advisor who is only in school two days a week. This has led to some suggestions of how Cardigan, and potentially, other schools may work to integrate external careers advisors into their school to a more successful extent, or if that cannot be done then look at how to retrain current staff. It has identified a concern with service children and their attainment in GCSE English Language and how that lower attainment may affect their ability to access A-Levels and Russell Group Universities. This is an area that needs further investigation to see if there is a possible solution that could help these students in their chances of University progression. Finally, it has reconfirmed my

belief that all students need to have their educational path arranged individually for them. We must count in ones and ensure that service children are not all grouped together in a block. They all have their own identities, histories and aspirations that need to be taken into account when giving guidance both educationally and careers related.

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Appendix A – Information Sheets

Principal/Head Teacher Information Sheet

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Project Team Members: Matthew Thorne

I would like to invite students from your school to take part in a research study about the aspirations of armed forces children in their post-16 education.

What is the study?

The study is being conducted as part of my thesis for the EdD course at the University of Reading. It aims to investigate the educational decision making of armed forces young people after their compulsory education has been completed. The project specifically explores the role of career guidance and advice. The study will be based around interviews with five participants from your school or college. The interviews will examine the aspirations and reasons for course choices of students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory education. These interviews will take place in the spring term and will be recorded, transcribed and anonymised before being analysed. It hopes to make recommendations regarding how we can best support and advise students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory educational choices.

Why has the college/school been chosen to take part?

Your college/school has been invited to take part in the research because you have a number of children who fit the required profile of being a member of an armed forces family and studying either GCSE's or A-Levels. The advice and guidance these children have received is a key component of the research being carried out.

Does the college/school have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you give permission for the college/school to participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting me, Tel – 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

With your agreement, participation would involve me carrying out five interviews in your college/school. If the children in your school being interviewed are under the age of 16 then further consent from their parents will be sought, to ensure the parents are happy for them to take part in the research. The interviews will take place in the spring term, 2016, and will take one hour. The sessions will be audio recorded with the consent of the students taking part in the research. There may also be a focus group carried out with the five interviewees to attain further information and discuss similar issues amongst the group. The interviews and the focus group will be carried out by myself, I am fully DBS checked and have considerable experience in working with students of this age and discussing their career choices. If you agree to the college/schools' participation, I will seek further consent from the students who have been asked to take part in the research.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information that students from your school give will remain confidential. Neither you nor the college/school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the college/school. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings will be useful to teachers and careers advisors who offer careers advice and guidance to children from armed forces families.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you or the schools you have studied in will be included in any sort of report that will be published. Participants will be assigned a random name and will be referred to by that name in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only I will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. I can send electronic copies of the results of the study if you wish. The results of the study will be produced as a thesis as part of the EdD course at the University of Reading. We can send you an electronic copy of this publication if you wish.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard the college/school's data.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Carol Fuller, University of Reading; Tel: 0118 3782662, email: c.l.fuller@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please contact me. Tel: 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk. I do hope that you will agree to take part in this study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your time.

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Headteacher Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All of my questions have been answered.

Name of Head Teacher: _____.

Name of College/School: _____.

I consent to the involvement of my college/school in the project as outlined in the information sheet

Signed: _____.

Date: _____.

Student Information Sheet

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Project Team Members: Matthew Thorne

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about the aspirations of armed forces children in their post-compulsory education

What is the study?

The study is being conducted as part of my thesis for the EdD course at the University of Reading. It aims to investigate the educational decision making of armed forces young people after their compulsory education has been completed. The project specifically explores the role of career guidance and advice.

The study will be based around interviews with ten participants. Five of these participants will be in Year 11 (school pupils) and five in Year 12 (college students). The case-study will examine the aspirations and reasons for course choices of students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory education. These interviews will take place in the spring term and will be recorded, transcribed and anonymised before being analysed. It hopes to make recommendations regarding how we can best support and advise students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory educational choices.

Why have I chosen you to take part?

You were sent an email earlier in the year asking if you would be interested in taking part in this research. You have been invited to take part in this project because you expressed an interest in being involved in the project. You are also ideally placed to take part in the project as you are a child from an armed forces family.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting me, Tel – 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in a single interview; this interview will take place in the spring term, 2016, during school time and in the school. The hope is that the interview will take one hour. The interview will be recorded electronically and then transcribed, a copy will be sent to you at this stage to ensure that it is a fair and true reflection of the interview. If you wish to make any changes or edits to the transcript of the interview please highlight them or add them. You may also be asked to take part in a short focus group in the spring term to further discuss your experience of the careers advice and guidance you received in school.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential. You will not be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings will be useful to teachers and careers advisors who offer careers advice and guidance to children from armed forces families.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you or the schools you have studied in will be included in any sort of report that will be published. Participants will be assigned a random name and will be referred to by that name in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only I will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. I can send electronic copies of the results of the study if you wish. The results of the study will be produced as a thesis as part of the EdD course at the University of Reading. We can send you an electronic copy of this publication if you wish.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the research, you can stop completing the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Carol Fuller, University of Reading; Tel: 0118 378 2662, email: c.l.fuller@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please contact me. Tel: 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk

I do hope that you will agree to take part in this study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your time.

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Student Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All of my questions have been answered.

Name of student: _____.

Name of College: _____.

I consent to completing an interview

I consent to taking part in a focus group if required

Signed: _____.

Date: _____.

Parent Information Sheet

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Project Team Members: Matthew Thorne

I would like to invite your child to take part in a research study about the aspirations of armed forces children in their post-compulsory education

What is the study?

The study is being conducted as part of my thesis for the EdD course at the University of Reading. It aims to investigate the educational decision making of armed forces young people after their compulsory education has been completed. The project specifically explores the role of career guidance and advice.

The study will be based around interviews with ten participants. Five of these participants will be in Year 11 (school pupils) and five in Year 12 (college students). The case-study will examine the aspirations and reasons for course choices of students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory education. These interviews will take place in the spring term and will be recorded, transcribed and anonymised before being analysed. It hopes to make recommendations regarding how we can best support and advise students from armed forces families in their post-compulsory educational choices.

Why has my child been chosen to take part?

Your child has been invited to take part in the project because they are ideally placed to take part in the project as they are a child from an armed forces family. All students in the school who are from armed forces families have been invited to take part in the project.

Does my child have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether they participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you or your child, by contacting me, Tel – 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?

Your child will be asked to take part in a single interview; this interview will take place in the spring term, 2016, during school time and in school. The hope is that the interview will take one hour. The interview will be recorded electronically and then transcribed. It will be carried out by myself, I am DBS checked to work in schools and colleges and am the link tutor from college to this school. Your child may also be asked to take part in a short focus group in the spring term to further discuss their experience of the careers advice and guidance they received in school.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information your child gives will remain confidential. Neither you, your child nor the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings will be useful to teachers and careers advisors who offer careers advice and guidance to children from armed forces families. An electronic copy of the published findings of the study can be made available to you by contacting myself.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your child or the schools they have studied in will be included in any sort of report that will be published. Participants will be assigned a random name and will be referred to by that name in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only I will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. The results of the study will be produced as a thesis as part of the EdD course at the University of Reading.

What happens if I/my child change our mind?

You/your child can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the research, your child can stop completing the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard you/your child's data.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Carol Fuller, University of Reading; Tel: 0118 378 2662, email: c.i.fuller@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please contact me. Tel: 01252 640220, email: mthorne@farnborough.ac.uk

I do hope that you will agree to your child taking part in this study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your time.

Research Project: Student Aspirations: the impact of being an armed forces child on post-16 educational choices.

Parent/Carer Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of my child and me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of child: _____

Name of secondary school: _____

I consent to my child taking part in the interview and focus group as outlined in the information sheet

Parent/carers telephone number (mobile preferred): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Sample Transcription and Coding

The following two pages show some samples of the transcription of student interviews and the coding added to those transcripts

OK and why did you choose those GCSEs?

Well I chose PE because I like doing sport and then I thought Computing was really good. I didn't want to do French or German or History or Geography.

OK that was chosen not to have to do other things?

Yeah

OK

But I like Computing anyway.

OK that's cool.

Business Studies because I was thinking like about starting my own business and Catering cos I just like cooking.

OK no, no that's all good reasons and what kind of advice did you get in choosing GCSEs?

I was told to choose the ones I enjoyed.

OK so was that from within School?

Yeah and from my parents as well.

So parental advice was kind of choose the things you enjoy? Did they talk about what you might want to go on and do after that or was it just what you enjoy at the moment?

What I just enjoy at the moment.

OK excellent, excellent ok that's all good and you were saying you've been to kind of seven or eight Junior Infant Schools. Was that because of your Dad moving around? Were all of those ?

Due to my Dad getting posted abroad.

Were those schools all in England or where else did you get?

Germany Northern Ireland

OK how did you find that experience of being posted to different countries?

It was alright.

Yeah

Yeah

OK that's cool and how did that, did you feel that affected your education at all?

Yeah

OK so in what ways?

school choices

school choices

school choices

school choices

family advice

forces deployment

forces deployment

school movement

school movement forces deployment

Cos like if I went into a different lesson it would be like going over something I'd already learnt or something that they're going over again.

OK so there was quite a lot of repetition amongst what you were learning?

Yeah

And now you've come to Connaught how have you found that as a school? Do you get any extra support because your Dad's in the Army?

Yeah

OK so what kind of things do you get?

I get support with my reading because I'm not very good at reading or my spelling so ..

OK so what form does that support take? So how does that work? Is it someone else in class or do you go to extra lessons or ... ?

I get like sometimes taken out of lessons or help with my reading so you just read to someone.

OK so that just helps focus and that's extra?

Yeah

OK so is there anything else you have within school?

No, not really.

OK and do you have lots of friends in school?

Yeah

Yeah, would you say those friends are friends of other families whose parents are in the Armed Forces?

Yeah

Is that the kind of main area you friends are or would you say you have overall friends from across College, sorry School?

Most of my friends like parents aint in the Army but some of them are.

Some of them are, ok that's cool. And as you moved through your time in school have you thought about what you want to do when you have finished in school?

Well I'm thinking of like cos coming from like a military background I was thinking about joining the RAF as a PTL.

OK so what kind of what's given that idea to want to go down that route?

My Dad