The Construction of Collective Identity in the British Parachute Regiment: A Storytelling Approach.

Thomas Thornborrow
MBA. Ba. (Hons). Dip. BA.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how stories and extracts from stories can be used to investigate issues centred on organisational identity in the British Parachute Regiment, the 'tribe' at the centre of this research. This thesis employs a narratological approach (Brown, 2001) in an autoethnographic study (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) in which I myself, as a member of the 'tribe' and as a scholar, am centrally implicated. By adopting this methodology the thesis includes a reflexive examination of me as a Paratrooper and as an emergent scholar. These identities can be understood as two constituents of my own 'parliament of selves' (Mead, 1934). By using myself as 'subject' and conducting an analysis of my own 'internal soliloquy' (Athens, 1994), I was able to frame a study to explore and analyse my methodology, and to illuminate the processes of autoethnographic research on which I was embarked by reference to notions of reflexivity, paradigm incommensurability and representation. The resultant story of my research is an interpretive account, constructed between the 'polyphonic' voices of my brother Paratroopers who volunteered their stories as part of my research, and myself. Data collection involved interviewing 68 other Paratroopers for between 30 and 120 minutes using a semi-structured interview schedule, either at their place of work or in their homes. These interviews were taped, fully transcribed and analysed using a form of grounded theory. The interviews were conducted with three interconnected parts of the 'tribe' - full time serving soldiers of the Parachute Regiment, part-time members of the Territorial Battalion, and members of an extended 'brotherhood' of retired Paratroopers who were active members of the Parachute Regiment Association (PRA). I analyse my data using two theoretical frameworks. First, I make use of Albert and Whetten's (1985) understanding of organisational identity to interpret what Paratroopers believed to be central, distinctive and enduring about their Regiment and themselves. In so doing I also consider issues of image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994) and reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Second, I employ Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification (*identification*; *disidentification*; *schizo-identification*; and *neutral-identification*) to analyse individual-organisation relationships. In particular, I focus on what I refer to as 'strong', 'weak' and the 'dark side' of organisational identification (cf. Dukerich, et al., 1999). I then conduct four readings of the data in which I have addressed: (1) issues of representation and credibility in autoethnographic research; (2) organisational narcissism (Brown, 1997) (3) the symbolism inherent in the attire worn by Paratroopers both at work and play; and (4) the 'implied contract' between Paratroopers and the Regiment (Watson, 2001) with particular reference to 'breaches' and 'violations,' which in turn affect the strength of organisational identification. Finally, I draw some conclusions regarding my research contribution.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What manner of men are these who wear the maroon red beret? They are, firstly, all volunteers and are toughened by hard physical training. As a result, they have that infectious optimism and that offensive eagerness which comes with physical well being. They have jumped from the air and, by doing so, have conquered fear. Their duty lies in the van of battle: they are proud of their honour, and have never failed in any task. They have the highest standards in all things, whether it be skill in battle or smartness in the execution of peacetime duties. They have shown themselves to be as tenacious in defence as they are courageous in attack.

They are, in fact, men apart. Every man an emperor.

Field Marshal Montgomery of Alamein, Tunisia, 1944
(Bridson, 1990, p. 7)

1.1 Introduction

"What manner of men are these that wear the maroon red beret?" So began Montgomery of Alamein who gave his perceptions of the founder members of the organisation at the centre of this research. It is this question that my research seeks to address. This Chapter provides a brief overview of the major concerns and issues surrounding the objectives of my research, why I am studying stories, processes of identity construction and identification, and why I have chosen the British Parachute Regiment as my case study organisation. Issues of representation and the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research into organisational identity construction are briefly presented before the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Objectives of the research

Formed in response to Watson's (1994) call for the craft of research to include "imagination, flair, creativity and an aesthetic sense" (p.78), there are two principal questions that guided this research as a contribution to the literature on narratological approaches to identity construction (e.g., Boje, 1995, 2001; Brown and Humphreys, 2002; Czarniawska, 1998; Gabriel, 1998; Humphreys and Brown, 2003; Rhodes 2000). Both initially arose from an interest in why my six years service in the Parachute

Regiment has dogged me all of my adult life since I took premature voluntary release (PVR) in 1982. The first, was why do I still identify strongly as a Paratrooper and with the Regiment? This research into the processes of narrating an organisational identity (Czarniawska, 1997) is as much an attempt to find out, as it is for me to understand how, I, and my 70 interviewees came to identify so strongly with our Regiment. The second question was: how could I do this? I remember sitting amongst a bunch of Recruits on a cold, wet hillside, fascinated, listening to my Platoon Sergeant telling us stories about his exploits in Aden, in 1967 when he was on active service with 1 Para. I already knew then what I wanted to be, and to do that, I had to go through what he had, so I too, could wear a red beret and be a Paratrooper. There was something in his stories that made me want to identify with this man and the organisation he represented, and the more stories he (and my Corporals) told, the deeper the desire grew. This is where I found an answer. If I had identified with him through his stories, then maybe, by analysing Paratroopers' stories, their social identity constructs would emerge (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). As a member of the tribe (Malinowski, 1953), I would be able to generate the 'thick description' Geertz (1973) advocates, and analyse Paras' stories about identity and about our organisation (Martin et al., 1983).

In addition, when I first met my supervisor, a Lecturer on my MBA course at Nottingham University in 1993, I had a similarly enlightening experience. I wanted to emulate him, study organisational behaviour and become an academic. We published my MBA dissertation (Brown and Thornborrow, 1996) and I consider this thesis to be another significant step in that direction. I realised that I was a member of one 'tribe' (Malinowski, 1953), the Paras, so an ethnographic approach (Van Maanen, 1973) seemed an appropriate choice. But my new identity, as a prospective academic also invited another question. What about the academic 'tribe' I wanted to join? As I began to understand what autoethnography meant (Ellis and Berger, 2002), I realised that the process of me identifying with and eventually becoming an academic was as worthy of

investigation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Juxtaposed with my own story as a Paratrooper (Chapter 5) I am also telling another story in this thesis. How and when I started to identify with my fellow academics at Nottingham University is a story too. They too told me stories. They told me of the many hoops I had to jump through to join them, about the challenge and 'dangers' that lay ahead as the process of carrying out this research unfolded. Therefore, this research is as much a story of my self-discovery as an academic, as it is an investigation into how Paratroopers construct collective identity through storytelling. My objective in this research is, then, to take a storytelling or narratological approach (Brown, 2001), and provide an autoethnographic representation (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) of my two identities (Humphreys, 2005b) in order to account for processes of individual and organisational identity construction (Pratt, 1998).

1.3 Why study identity stories?

The basic premise of this research is that man is essentially a 'storytelling animal' (MacIntyre, 1981) and that the Parachute Regiment is a storytelling organisation (Boje, 1991, 1995). I first heard Montgomery's words (quoted above) as a raw Recruit on parade with 435 Platoon, Depot, the Parachute Regiment, Aldershot, UK, in December 1976. My Platoon Sergeant spoke them and as soon as I heard them, I too wanted to be an 'emperor.' From my earliest memories of Recruit Company, I listened to stories. They were mostly epic and heroic (Gabriel, 1995,) some were tragic, yet they were nearly all crammed with a merciless humour (Fisher, 1984) which I found that 'civvies' in general did not comprehend. I quickly learned that we were different from other military personnel, not just because we were soldiers but because we were Paratroopers. Nearly all of the stories had some sort of lesson in them - how to do this, how not to do that, this outcome, that advice and so on. As the days struggled into weeks and success followed success in test after test, I began to identify more and more with these storytellers and their organisation. I knew if I could see it through, one day, I could be standing before raw Recruits, wearing *my* 'red beret' and 'badge of courage,' telling *my*

stories, teaching *them* the Regiment's history and how to become Paratroopers too. In other words, through my stories, I would be helping them construct their identities as Paras, (which I did). I realise now, as an academic, that through these stories I had started to identify with the organisation and through the processes outlined in this thesis, I eventually took on this identity for myself and became a 'proper' or 'real' Paratrooper. As an academic, I too, wanted to become a 'proper' or 'real' academic and stand in front of other academics and tell my story. By doing so, I would be revealing a new identity in that story, which has become this thesis. For me it was only a short theoretical step to realise that people socially construct identity through storytelling (Humphreys and Brown, 2003)

1.4 Why study Paras?

As a prospective academic studying collective identity constructs (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), through the metaphor of an interpretive 'lens' (Gioia, 1998), I needed a suitable organisation. As a member of a 'tribe,' why not my own? In this research, by 'tribe' I mean a group linked by social ties and who act like a community (Malinowski, 1953). From my perspective there were three methodological advantages in returning to the Regiment to collect stories for analysis into collective identity constructs. Firstly, as a member, I was familiar with the Regiment, enculturated into its ranks and conversant with its customs, artifacts and special language. More importantly, I had a lot to self-reflexively (Davies 2000) offer this research, in terms of narrative position (Hatch, 1996) and voice (Hazen, 1993). Secondly, the Parachute Regiment is an organisation in which one can die for a salary and, therefore, Paratroopers' identity constructs should, arguably, be highly salient for members. A third consideration was opportunity. Most of the research carried out on Paratroopers has been conducted by outsiders (e.g., Dobie, 1991; Longacre, 2001; McMillan and Rachman, 1987; Paschall, 1994; Semel, 1991, Winslow, 1999). As an (academic) insider, I am closer to my story (as a Para), as well as part of the ongoing narrative that is the Parachute Regiment. I could, I thought, offer a

deeper and more meaningful set of insights into this arguably unique organisation than could an outsider. In other words, I could, as Sims (2004) has suggested, 'love' my organisation to life and thereby use it, self-reflexively, to 'test' a narratological approach to studying identity in organisations in the field (Brown, 2001).

1.5 Theoretical and methodological approaches

Within the linguistic turn in the social sciences (Deetz, 2003), as Somers (1994) has stated, "new approaches define narrative and narrativity as concepts of social *epistemology* and social *ontology*. ...It is through narrativity we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world" (p.606). The narratological approach I have adopted in conducting this research (Czarniawska, 1998) operates within a framework of social constructionism (Berger and Luckman, 1967; Gergen, 1985, 1999, 2001). My main theoretical underpinning regarding identity comes from Ricoeur's (1991) notion of a 'narrative identity' as revealed through the literary conventions (Currie, 1998) of emplotment, characterisation and temporality (Czarniawska, 1997, 1998) which I use to interpret Paratroopers' stories (mine included). This is done by blending the literary genre of fiction with social science-writing (Watson, 2000), using Paratroopers' autobiographical accounts (Sims, 1993) as a primary data source from which I elicited identity constructs. This was in part aided by adopting an autoethnographic methodology (Ellis and Bochner 2002). This approach allowed me to use my own experience as a Paratrooper to navigate my way through this research using ideas and concepts borrowed from sociology (Friedman, 1990; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), psychology (McAdams, 1994, 1996a,b), anthropology (Geertz, 1973), ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994), philosophy (Ricoeur, 1991) and literary theory (Currie, 1998). In terms of data analysis and presentation I have used Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity (as that which organisational members consider to be central, distinctive, and enduring about their organisation) to organise and categorise the many different types of stories I have recorded and

transcribed. Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification proved adequate to carry out a similar exercise for the positive and negative processes of identification that emerged during my analysis of the transcripts. In terms of representation, I felt that taking an objective 'rational world paradigm' (Fisher, 1985b, 1987) was not appropriate, because in this thesis I have used "socially acquired and shared knowledge available to the participants to account for the observed patterns of human activity" (Gill and Johnson, 1997, p.6). I found Paras' stories can be full of emotion, and my own story was traumatic to write as well as cathartic. I considered Ellis's (1991, 1993) autoethnographic approach to be the best vehicle through which to represent my findings. Furthermore, to avoid "tailoring ...generalisations" (Marcia and Strayer, 1996, p.349), I claim that the British Parachute Regiment is arguably unique and not representative of identity in the world of work, business and commerce. Furthermore, there are no women Paratroopers, and the Regiment is an (arguably) elitist organisation in which its members display extreme behaviours. What I do claim is that "organising as narration is where ...interpretive organisational research derives form" (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001, p.285). Therefore, interpretive research provides an adequate 'lens' (Gioia, 1998) with which to view the construction of organisational identity in the Parachute Regiment.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Prior to reading this thesis, and in order to assist with the reader's interpretation and understanding of my stories, I have included a glossary of terms and abbreviations used in the Regiment. In Chapter 2, I present my rationale for selecting the literature I used to support and frame this research, which I consider within the linguistic turn in the social sciences. The main theoretical issues I address focus on narratives and organisations, identity, identification and organisational identity, and narrative identity. These are followed by an introduction to the literature I then use in the four readings of the data I give in Chapter 10. Chapter 3 concerns my methodology in terms of the rationale for

using the methods I applied to collect, collate and interpret the data. These involve theoretical issues centred on the representation, ontology and epistemology of carrying out interpretive research, particularly ethnography and autoethnography. This includes a discussion of reflexivity, narrative position, and voice. I also describe how I constructed and carried out the research and how I organised, analysed and presented the data, and how to read this thesis.

In Chapter 4, I provide a brief history of the Parachute Regiment, including a Section on the making of a Paratrooper and a description of the dress, insignia, symbols and cultural artefacts commonly worn and found in the Regiment. Chapter 5 is a continuation of the introduction to the research organisation through my own story, in which I chart my journey from civilian to Paratrooper to academic in 'Tam's story.' Chapter 6 focuses on centrality stories, the first aspect of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity. Centrality stories are subdivided into three Sections: *combat*, *pressure*, and *bonding*. A short conclusion draws together all the threads that emerge from the analysis. Chapter 7, follows the same format, however, in this instance, distinctive stories (the second aspect of Albert and Whetten's 1985 definition) are subdivided into *difference*, *dress*, and *macho* stories. Chapter 8, enduring stories (the third aspect of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition), are subdivided as follows: *tradition*, *qualities*, and *tragedy* stories. The last of the data presentation Chapters (9), is organised into two parts which represent the 'strong' and 'weak' identification aspects of Elsbach's (19990 model of organisational identification. In the first, I focused on the positive nature of 'strong' identification stories. These are split into three categories: *pre-identification*, *active-identification*, and *retro-identification*. In part two, 'weak' identification stories, I focus on the negative side of *identification*: *dis-identification*, *schizo-identification*, and *neutral-identification*.

In Chapter 10, I give four readings of the data in which I come to terms with the impact of this thesis on my identities as both a Paratrooper and an academic: 'putting the auto in ethnography.' As part of my journey of self-discovery, the second reading explores issues of narcissism associated with, in the first instance, my chosen methodology, and in the second, narcissism *per se* in the Parachute Regiment. The third reading addresses transactional and relational psychological contracts, both as precursors to, and reciprocal conditions in which, processes of organisational identification can be assessed. The final reading is concerned with issues relating to identity and identification surrounding dress and attire and their symbolism in the Parachute Regiment. Conceptual links between narcissism, psychological contracting and dress and identity are also discussed. In Conclusion (Chapter 11), I draw together many salient themes emergent as a result of carrying out this research. First, I provide a summary of the findings of each Chapter. This is followed by an appraisal of my contributions to the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences and to research into identity and identification in organisations, with an emphasis on the advantages of using a narratological approach. This is followed by a review of the limitations of this thesis and proposes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

"Language is seen as an indefinite set of social activities, each serving a different kind of purpose" (Wittgenstein).

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Rationale for selection of literature

My research is an interpretation of how organisational identities are constructed in narratives. This can be done by analysing organisational storytelling for identity constructs, focusing on members' stories (Humphreys and Brown, 2002), which, by adopting principles from literary theory (Currie, 1998) allows the researcher to interpret them for clues to member's identities (Czarniawska, 1998). In a brief introduction to the 'linguistic turn in the social sciences' (Deetz, 2003) I provide the foundation for the ontology and epistemology of this investigation into collective identity construction through storytelling. Three theoretical literature streams are reviewed: how narratives and literary theory relate to organisations (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000); identity and the processes of identification in organisations (Ashforth, 1998b); and how an organisational narrative identity is constructed (Ricoeur, 1991). Section 2.2 reviews some of the narrative approaches that can be used to research organisations (Brown, 2001), how literary theory applies to organisational stories (Czarniawska, 1998), and the various types (Martin et al., 1983) and forms of narratives commonly told in organisations (Trice and Beyer, 1993). Section 2.3 reviews individual identity and the processes of identification, using Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification. Different perspectives and definitions of organisational identity are discussed, focusing on Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal definition of organisational identity. The stability (Gioia and Thomas, 1996), manageability (Scott and lane, 2000) and multiplicity (Collinson, 2003) of organisational identities is also considered and this is followed by an explanation of why any investigation into organisational identity must

include other identity constructs, such as image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991) and reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). In accordance with the 'narrative turn in organisational research' (Czarniawska, 1998), in Section 2.4, I revisit literary theory and evaluate its role in the construction of narrative identities in organisations (Brown and Humphreys, 2002). This includes appreciating life stories/autobiographies as a genre (McAdams, 1996a) and subsequently interpreting autobiographical accounts (Sims, 1993) and narrating them as narratives in which organisational identity cues emerge (Czarniawska, 1997). Finally, in Section 2.5 I present the literature which underpins my reading of this research (Chapter 10) in which I consider issues of representation (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 – reviewed in Chapter 3), and identity and narcissism (Brown, 1997), identity and psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995), and issues of dress and identity (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1996).

2.1.2 The linguistic turn in the social sciences

This thesis takes as its starting point the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann (1967), and places it within what some scholars refer to as the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences (e.g., Cuff et al., 1998; Czarniawska, 2004; Deetz, 1996, 2003; Iedema and Womak, 1999; Somers, 1994). The deployment of narrative in organisation theory was pioneered in the 1970s by, for example: Clark (1972); Mitroff and Kilmann (1976, 1978); and more recently by Boje (1991, 1995); Clifford and Marcus (1986); Czarniawska (1997, 1998); Gabriel (1991, 1995, 1998); Jeffcutt (1994ab); Rhodes (1996, 2000); Rhodes and Brown (2005); Van Maanen (1988, 1995). These researchers focused on 'narratives moment' (Maines, 1993) by telling and listening to the different stories that constitute life in organisation studies (Bang, 2004). Dyer and Wilkins (1991) observed that such studies gain their power from their narrative elements rather than just their abstract concepts and suggested that narratives use theory as a plot and are effective and convincing means of communicating interpretive research. Consequently, researchers investigate organisational narratives

(Brown and McMillan, 1991), and interpret them using what has been referred to as a 'narratological approach' to organisation studies (Brown, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998). Within the 'linguistic turn' research on stories and identity construction and identification is not significantly represented in organisation studies. But there are organisational identity studies using narrative approaches that have been carried out by researchers on for example, identity and narcissism (Brown, 1997), nostalgia (Brown and Humphreys, 2002), and identity and dress (Humphreys and Brown, 2003; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993).

The narrative turn is dependent on theories of interlocution which recognise that it is in dialogue with the 'Other' (Athens, 1994; Mead 1934) that "understanding the ways the signs in language can be combined to state new ideas and/or refer to complex things" (Cuff et al., 1998, p.204). From this dialogue with the 'Other,' Gabriel (1995), alluding to structuralist semiotics (Barthes, 1967, 1973), described stories as a social process because "stories present incidents as signs and symbols, rather than as information" (p.497). Hence, my focus is on interpretation of these signs and symbols in stories as narrative identity constructs. These are based on stories and storytelling about the organisation (e.g., Boje 1995; Boyce, 1990, 1996) and as a result of my analysis, provide a basis for "the production of persuasive accounts" (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000, p.144). This places my research within the 'linguistic turn' as an alternative to the grounded fictionalism, metaphoric data construction, discursive pragmatism, and discursivism research approaches also described by Alveson and Karreman (2000).

2.2 Narratives and organisations

This Section discusses the various (interdisciplinary) narrative approaches and methodological concerns that centre on a narrative analysis of organisations, paying particular attention to sensemaking and interpreting stories for meaning (Brown 2003; Schwarz, 1987; Weick, 1979, 1995). I also include examples of research utilising

narrative approaches (e.g., Boje, 2001; Brown, 2001; Brown and Humphreys, 2003; Czarniawska, 1997; Humphreys and Brown, 2002) and give definitions of narrative, genre and emplotment (the temporal sequencing of events and characterisation) and the structure of organisational stories are also reviewed (Czarniawska, 1998). 'Macro' and 'micro' narratives and their types and forms found in organisations (Trice and Beyer, 1993) are presented, including how, as a researcher, I can make sense of, and understand, incomplete narratives and stories (e.g., Boje, 1991; Barry, 1997; Gabriel, 2000). One important distinction that I feel needs to be addressed here concerns the reification of stories. Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) commented that in narrative analysis studies, "collecting stories was initially focused on documenting cultural artifacts, but has recently returned to storytelling within organisations as an approach to capturing the narrative mode of meaning construction" (p.284). Trice and Beyer (1993) appear to treat organisational stories as such artifacts. However, according to Coupland (2001) stories are co-creations of authors and readers/listeners, and cannot be treated as *in vivo* artifacts. I do not attempt to resolve the reification debate in this thesis, but note here that I did collect narratives on tape and transcribed and analysed and interpreted them as loosely bounded stories and story extracts. These are embedded contextually and temporally (Czarniawska, 1998) in recorded storytelling events (Georges, 1969) in which autobiographical accounts were given (Sims, 1993). However, in the writing of this thesis these stories and narrative extracts are re-embedded via the process of me narrating my research (as a storytelling event about identity in an organisation in which my autobiographical account is also given), and in turn, have become part of the co-construction of this thesis. The implication is, as Coupland (2001) also points out, that for every reader of this thesis, yet another story is co-constructed, this time, between my narrativisation of this research and reader (e.g., Hopfl, 1999; Parker, 1989).

2.2.1 Narrative analysis approaches to organisation studies

This thesis is an exercise in social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) and Brown (1998) suggested that "narrative analysis ...encourages comprehension of organisations as social constructions" (p.53). This Section reviews literature on narrative analysis approaches to organisation studies. My starting point is that narrative forms "have always been with us" (Czarniawska–Joerges, 1995, p.13), and narrative analysis "is one of the best and most extensively researched areas in the multi-disciplinary study of discourse" (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 2000, p.65). According to Czarniawska (1998, p.183) "the narrative approach has no means of knowing. ...It only helps us to understand what mechanisms are at work." Czarniawska (1998) defined three narrative approaches to organisation studies: collecting stories; narrating organisations; and organisation as narration (story). This research is concerned with transcribing and analysing organisational stories and story extracts (Boje, 1991, 1995), which in turn provide a base for narrating the organisation (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). By narrating the organisation I am able to reveal the "symbolic actions – words and/or deeds [and signs] – that have sequence or meaning for those who live, create or interpret them" (Fisher, 1987, p.58) and by conducting this research I can show that organisations can be understood in terms of an ongoing narrative (Czarniawska, 2004). In addition, it is through narrative approaches that narratological researchers conduct their narrative analysis (e.g., Brown, 2001) and in this Section I also review recent research on narrative analysis and narrative approaches to organisation studies.

There are, according to O'Connor (1997), three theoretical streams of narrative analysis research – rhetorical tradition (Potter, 1996); narrative as a process of selection and decision (O'Connor, 1997); and linguistic theory (Currie, 1998). This thesis investigates storytelling in organisations (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976) as a vehicle for interpreting emergent identity constructs and draws on all three streams. In addition, I adopt a semiological approach (Barthes, 1967) to organisation studies in which "organisational

symbolism involves the construction of meaning in organisations and attaching it to form" (Boyce, 1996, p.7). Subsequently, organisational stories may, according to Gabriel (1998), "be treated as manifestations of shared belief systems ...seeking to identify meanings and symbolism ...for organisational members" (p.138). This suggests organisational stories are primarily a medium for sensemaking and meaning (e.g., Weick, 1979, 1995) as people go about their daily lives. I interpret this to mean that narratives can provide explanations of the human social condition because "stories are sensemaking narratives of an organisation ...[and] are particularly useful in showing how individuals or organisations make sense of the world" (Landrum, 2000, p. vii). Narrative analysis, or narrating the organisation as a meaningful story (Czarniawska, 1998), can be an important aid to researchers in helping making sense of and understanding the psychodynamics of organisations, and, in relation to this thesis, the behaviours and identities of their members (Brown and Starkey, 2000). Boje (2001) outlined eight approaches to narrative analysis: deconstruction; grand narrative; microstoria; story network; intertextuality; causality; plot; and theme. I considered the latter two approaches (plot and theme) to be the most appropriate approaches for conceptualising stories and story extracts for later analysis for identity constructs.

As a methodology, narrative approaches to organisation studies are usually interpretive, in that such approaches "attend to meaning and meaning-making processes in ways very similar to narrative theory" (O'Connor, 1997, p.306), and "rescue us from tailoring our [scientific] generalisations" (Marcia and Strayer, 1996, p.349). Yet, "there is more than one approach to narration" (Riley, 1991, p.220). For example, McAdams (1996a) found that the "classification [of life stories] may be drawn from mythology, folklore, drama, and literary studies" (p.313). Reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of narrative approaches, I draw on writers and researchers from sociology (e.g., Maines, 1993; Van Maanen, 1973), philosophy (e.g., Ricoeur, 1983, 1991), anthropology (e.g., Geertz,

1973), psychology (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1991, 1996) and literary theory (e.g., Currie, 1998).

I found a large selection of this interdisciplinary literature on narratives in organisations concentrates on analysing storytelling (e.g., Jeffcutt, 1994a,b; Martin et al., 1983; Mitroff and Kilmann, 1975, 1976; Myrsiades, 1987). The techniques outlined in these and many other studies using narrative analysis approaches cover a wide range of research issues. For example, the theory of narrative therapy in organisations "draws on ...dominant stories and holds that people normally incorporate ...the dominant story of the culture" (Polkinghorne (1996, p.366). Barry and Elmes (1997) took a "communication perspective ...by using the terms narrative and story to refer to thematic, sequenced accounts that convey meaning" (p.431). Fletcher (1996) described narrative "as the connective tissue of an organisation" (p.36). And narratives "have been associated with shared values which are used to legitimate institutional arrangements" (Wilkins 1983, p.83). Clarke and Greatbatch (2001) (although they claim to focus on content analysis), researched knowledge legitimation and audience affiliation in organisational storytelling. Other narrative studies involve understanding processes of change. For example, Landrum (2000) researched organisations on the basis "that storytelling is useful in revealing strategic orientation and in revealing when changes between orientations have occurred" (p.vii). Martin et al., (1983) suggested that "stories generate as well as reflect changes in organisations" (p.439). Rhodes (1996) used a narrative approach to research organisational change and learning with a "pluralistic approach to storytelling in organisational analysis" (p.1). Narratives also serve as vehicles for community memory (Orr, 1990) and help make sense of disasters (Brown, 2003; Gephart, 1993; Schwartz, 1987; Weick, 1991, 1993). O'Connor (1997) found it was through stories that decision making processes in organisations unfold. Smith and Kenton (2001) studied stories as communication in organisations, and Fletcher (1996) focused on 'story-as-barrier' to entry into the police. Additionally, like Fletcher (1996),

many other studies also allude to narratives' role in organisational power and hegemony (Boje et al., 1999; Claire, 1993; Gabriel, 1999; Mumby, 1987; Rhodes, 2000) and their use as devices for management to influence workers (Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993; Kaye, 1995; Wilkins, 1984). These scholars have shown that organisational stories can be researched using different narrative analysis approaches (Boje, 2001) to understanding an organisation as an ongoing narrative (Boje, 1991; Czarniawska, 2004). They have also provided me with valuable insight into how to conduct narrative analysis.

2.2.2 Narrative and literary theory

This Section reviews the literature on narratives and literary theory. By taking a narratological approach (Brown, 2001) I can interpret organisational sensemaking (Weick, 1991; Weick and Browning, 1996) and here I review literary theory as a medium for understanding organisational storytelling. Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) found that in organisations, "narrative can refer to three separate things: the written or spoken narrative statement; the events and their relationships to the subject of the narrative; ...or the act of narrating" (p.996). The definition of a narrative I use for the purposes of this research is a "spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening" (Thompson, 1997, p.904). A story is one conceptualisation of narrative found in organisations (Gabriel, 2000). There appears to be an important distinction to be made between organisational discourse and narratives which explains why my research is on storytelling as literary data construction, rather than discursive pragmatism or discursivism (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000, p.144). Foucault (1972) asserted that the rules of using a particular discourse can be found in organisational stories, because, ultimately, narratives are part of the discourse(s) of an organisation. By taking a narrative approach and analysing the types, forms and structures of an organisation's stories, I can reveal members' ways of talking, thinking and writing about their organisation. In this way, narrating organisations "consists of telling stories about

organisations using narrative structure (e.g., a sequence of events or plot)" (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001, p.284/5). These stories are located within the genres of an organisation's discourse (Czarniawska, 1998) and in this thesis, the rules of writing in the genre of fiction (Watson, 2000) helped me to co, and re-construct many (loosely bounded) stories from narrative fragments and story extracts in my interviewees' transcripts.

Analysing narrative structure is an important part of this process. According to O'Connor (1997), "we think, imagine, and choose according to narrative structures. We connect information – random or otherwise – to form patterns and plots [which] ..produce meaning" (p.304). The literature on narrative structure suggests literary conventions such as genre and emplotment are useful metaphors for understanding an organisation as an ongoing story or narrative (e.g., Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 2004). Seeing organisations in this way means they can be subjected to a narrative analysis using Alvesson and Karreman's (2000) 'literary data construction' approach and employing a methodology similar to Brown (2001).

Narrative also "has a pivotal function in the social construction of organisational life" (O'Connor, 1997, p.317) and this is particularly salient in the literature on narrative theory, notably in discussions on the genre of fiction and its relation to organisational narratives. Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) stated that "genre is nascent ...in which no *a priori* difference exists between fact or fiction" (p.25). Phillips (1995) suggested that including narrative fiction as an approach to organisational analysis "increases the available modes of representation, fits with the temperaments of some researchers, [and] is often very interesting to read" (p.644; cf., Watson, 2000, 2001). In equating organisation stories (such as reading annual accounts as a work of fiction (Ingram and Frazier, 1983) or Sims' (1993) analysis of CEO autobiographies) to literary conventions (Czarniawska, 1998), researchers use their knowledge of the world to make sense of organisational stories being told to them. In other words, they assess the narrative

probability (how well the story 'hangs together') and narrative fidelity (how 'true' is the story) (Fisher, 1984, 1987) of the story by applying real world knowledge to interpret meaning from the plot. In direct relation to my analysis of the transcripts, the literature suggests that genre shapes the form and structure of narratives used by members of an organisation. Even if an organisational story is a fictional account (Van Maanen, 1979; Watson, 2000), it is still representative of the social structures in an organisation. As (Dunne, 1995) put it:

> "narrating seeks to supercede sheer succession, heterogeneity, and discordance [as]...it has recourse to established genres and narrative conventions. ...Strategies of fictional narration ...and 'real life' narrative strategies are permeable to one another. ...[Fiction is] an established genre [that] sustains the story-lines" (p.149/150).

This is because, as Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (2000) claim, "the primacy of narrative as a mode of discourse ...tends to subsume all genres of narrative" (p.78). This I interpret to mean that organisational stories can be analysed and interpreted using the literary conventions of writing fiction: plot; characterisation; and temporal sequencing (Czarniawska, 1998). For example, Brown and McMillan (1991) argued that a "creative narrative is a story that is factual in content, but uses fiction writing techniques, including plot, scene and characters" (p.53). In other words, "another way of studying stories is by analysing their narrative structure and seeking to classify their plots, characters, dramatic and thematic qualities" (Gabriel, 1998, p.139). This helped me in the classification and subsequent categorisation of stories and story extracts in to themes or genre's within the organisations discourse (Czarniawska, 1998).

Narrative organisation and structures include features of temporality and this appears to support theories of emplotment (Currie, 1998). For example, O'Connor (1997) stated that narratives are "the selective, ordered representation of events as told" (p.304), suggesting a linear or sequential relationship exists in organisational stories. Maines (1993) argued that narratives are "quintessentially patterns of events occurring over time" (p.21). Labov and Waletzky (1967) also regard temporal sequence as essential to

narrative, and Bruner (1991) located "temporality in the meaning-preserving sequence of clauses in narrative *discourse* itself" (p.6). Thus, temporality (or the sequencing of events) through emplotment is a key feature of narrative organisation and structure. Significantly, Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) suggested that emplotment is the most fundamental aspect of narrative structure and there are three elements of a minimal plot: "an original state; an action; a reversed original state [and] ...therefore, it is sequentiality that ambiguously suggests causality" (p.15/16). Finally, Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) proposed that causality "is what distinguishes a plot from a mere story [for] ...(in a story) we ask: 'And then?' whereas (in a plot) we ask 'Why?' ...[A] narrative is a plot and plots have meaning. Stories have a point; they have a central theme through the use of emplotment" (p.1001). These scholars appear to suggest that by analysing narrative structure and emplotment, researchers can categorise organisational stories into themes, as Martin et al., (1983) found.

2.2.3 Types and forms of narrative in organisations

In this Section I review the types and forms of narratives scholars have found in organisations. First, I demonstrate that organisational stories and story extracts can be analysed for types of stories and in the second, I present some of the forms of narratives found in organisations by recent studies. Researchers first explored the types and functions of stories and storytelling in organisations (e.g., Brown, 1985; Martin, 1982; Mitroff and Kilmann, 1975, 1976; Wilkins, 1983, 1984). Significantly, Martin et al., (1983) identified organisational stories, each of which "emphasised the scriptal elements common to all exemplars" (p.445), suggesting seven different genres which people use to make sense of events in their organisation. Each story type has a positive and a negative outcome:

> "What do I do when a higher status person breaks the rules? Is the big boss human? Can the little person rise to the top? Will I get fired? How will the organisation help me when I have to move? How will the boss react to mistakes? How will the organisation deal with obstacles?" (adapted from Martin et al., 1983, p 445-447).

Other literature streams have focused on, for example, myths (Feldman, 1991; Oswick et al., 1996; Pondy, 1983; Smith and Kenton, 2001) and metaphors (Barthes, 1973; Czarniawska, 2004; Gabriel, 2004; Kaye, 1995; McAdams, 1993; Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976; Pondy, 1983; Raspa, 1992). My concern in this research is on the types of *stories* found more recently by organisation theorists (e.g., Beech, 2000; Browning 1992; Gabriel 1991, 1995, 1998, 2000; Jeffcutt, 1994ab; Marcia and Strayer, 1996).

With reference to the reification of stories, according to Trice and Beyer (1993), organisational narratives come in two types – 'macro' narratives (e.g., stories, myths, sagas, legends, folklore) and 'micro' (e.g., slang, jargon, gossip, jokes, slogans). I consider macro stories first, followed by a review of micro narratives. Based on Aristotle's description of four mythic archetypes of story: comedy; romance; tragedy; and irony, Gabriel (1991) recorded three types of organisational story – epic, tragic, and comic. Gabriel (1995) developed these as 'modes of subjectivity' and subsequently identified four different types of organisational narratives – the subject as: hero (e.g., Raspa, 1992); heroic survivor (e.g., Martin et al., 1983); victim (e.g., Fletcher, 1996); and object of love (e.g., Sims, 2004). Similarly, Beech's (2000) romantic and ironic stories were developed from Jeffcutt's (1994a,b) narrative types or 'styles,' which in turn are comparable to Gabriel's (1995, 1998) epic (or heroic); romantic; tragic; and ironic stories.

Significant to my process of narrative analysis, stories and story extracts do not have to be told in their entirety to be understood by organisation members (Boje 1991). Many of the interviews I recorded for this thesis contained 'narrative fragments' (Gabriel, 2000), or 'terse stories' (Boje, 1991) from which I had to piece together the whole story using my 'fictive imagination' (Ezzy, 1998). This is because many organisational speech acts are condensed or shortened, depending on the storytelling event (Georges, 1969) and/or

audience (Cortazzi, 1993). During my analysis of the transcripts, it was precisely because the teller (the interviewee) and the listener (me) were both party to organisational sensemaking that I could recognise when a story was being told, without the teller having to tell it in full. For example, Boje (1991) discovered that stories could be 'glossed' in "a brief retelling of a piece of story so that the referent experience becomes sensible in new ways, [or 'terse' where] ...much of the story that is told is not actually uttered" (p115/117). Similarly, Barry (1997) found that "stories can be quite fragmented, unexamined and partial in their accounting of events" (p.32) and Cortazzi (1993) suggested that:

> "stories are affected by the audience to whom they are communicated. To produce a coherent, interesting and personally favourable tale, told stories omit details and condense parts ('flattening'), elaborate and exaggerate other parts ('sharpening'), and make parts more compact and consistent ('rationalisation')" (p.61).

Organisational micro narratives also come in many other forms, which I found mainly in my secondary data. According to Trice and Beyer (1993) 'micro' narratives are often aimed at a wider audience and are complete in themselves. Trice and Beyer (1993) researched jargon and slang; gestures, signals and signs; songs; humour; jokes;, gossip; and rumour. Gabriel (1998) added gripes; traumas; practical jokes; (as well as two further categories of 'macro' story - romantic and romance stories) to the literature. Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1992) identified labels, metaphors, and platitudes as 'linguistic artifacts,' where: "labelling ...is calling things into being; metaphors endow them with attributes and ...structure action; ...platitudes [not in the literary sense] objectivise" (p.340). Proverbs are brief, popular sayings, or "short statements of folk wisdom" (Trice and Beyer, 1993, p.99; cf.,, Robinson, 1981, p.60) that "capture something people ...deeply believe in" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p.24). Finally, "slogans are similarly brief sayings that differ from proverbs in that they are usually exhortations deliberately invented by someone to persuade others to do something" (Trice and Beyer, 1993, p.99).

2.3 Identity, identification and organisational identity

This Section reviews selected literature on what I consider relevant to the process of socially constructing identity in organisations. A brief overview of how researchers conceptualise individual identity (Cooley, 1902; James, 1890/1963) is followed by an appreciation of the problems associated with a metadefinition of identity (Albert 1998a). The positive and negative processes of identification (Dukerich at al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999) are discussed before I present perspectives (Gioia, 1998) and definitions of organisational identity. This includes a review the definition I consider to be suitable for categorising identity constructs in this thesis (Albert and Whetten, 1985). Addressing the temporal aspect of identity, I review studies on stability (Gioia and Thomas, 1996), multiplicity (Collinson, 2003), and manageability (Cheney, 1991) of identities. Two significant identity constructs, image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dukerich et al., 1994) and reputation, (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990) are also discussed in terms of their relation to the literature on identity.

2.3.1 Individual identity

The staring point for many identity researchers is James' (1890/1963) conceptualisation and separation of the 'I' (the self as subject) from the 'me' (self as object). James argued "a man has as many selves as there are individuals who recognise him" (Gioia, 1998, p.294), coining the phrase, 'the duplex self.' Mead (1934) acknowledged this conceptualisation when he stated that within the individual there was a 'parliament of selves.' These ideas were developed by personality theorists, for example, Adler (1927); Eysenck (1952); Freud (1916/1961); Lewin (1935); Kelly (1955); Jung (1933); Murray (1938) and Rogers (1951). Research into identity was also carried out by psychologists exploring other concepts of self, for example, Sampson's (1988) notions of the self as 'bounded' or 'self-contained' or in the Eriksonian sense, 'egocentric' (Schweder and Bourne, 1982) or 'individualistic' (Hermans et al., 1992). Much of the early work on

identity carried out by psychologists investigating concepts of self (e.g., Eysenck, 1952; Jung, 1933) is still a concern of modern psychologists studying personality. For example, McAdam's (1996a) *Contemporary Framework for Studying Persons* (cf.,, Little, 1996). Dunn (1998), in critiquing the postmodernist agenda on identity, suggested scholars such as McAdams (1996a) and Giddens (1991), are preoccupied with the problematisation of identity and Albert, et al., (2000) reasoned that "because identity is problematic, and yet so critical ...the dynamics of identity need to be better understood" (p. 14). This thesis addresses some of these problems by taking a narratological approach to interpret emergent identity constructs.

Cooley (1902 [1922]) first linked identity formation to social interaction, but it is Erikson's (1959, 1965, 1968) theory of ego identity (as a competence formed in social interactions (Slugoski and Ginsberg, 1989) that underpins many of the pioneering studies on self as a social construction (Gergen, 1985; Goffman, 1959; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Marcia (1980) further operationalised Erikson's (1968) concept of self by identifying four statuses of identity formation: identity diffusion; foreclosure; moratorium; and achievement, suggesting that identity is progressive in nature. More recently, and my main concern in this thesis, organisational scholars have researched identity because "the issue of identity is central to our understanding of how individuals relate to the groups and organisations in which they are participants" (Brown, 2001, p.4), and according to Polzer (2000) "identity concepts are powerful in part because they cut across individual, group and organisational levels of analysis" (p.628).

An influential 'metadefinition' in the identity literature on identity at the individual level is that it is a 'quest for meaning' (Albert et al., 1998; Scott and Lane, 2000a,b). Other ways to view identity are, as a 'self-conception' (Epstein, 1973; Schlenker 1982), as a 'social comparison' (Festinger, 1954), an 'egocentric choice' (Sartre, 1957), as

'relational' (or comparative) (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Brickson 2000; Gioia, 1998), as 'valued personas' (Adler and Adler 1987), or as a 'metaphor' (Gioia, et al., 2002a,b; Haslam, et al., 2003). Albert (1998a), however, argued that any metadefinition of identity is problematic precisely because:

> "If one considers identity or identification as constructs, the next questions ...are: How can each be measured? What is its relationship to other constructs. ...If one considers identity to be a question then the next step is not measurement ...but rather a discussion of why identity is relevant or important. ...If identity is a metaphor rather than a construct, the question for measurement is what metaphors different individuals choose ...on what occasions, and for what purposes. [And] ...how a particular definition addresses these functions [that definitions may serve] is its metadefinition" (Albert, 1998a, p.2/4).

2.3.2 The positive and negative processes of identification.

A significant part of the dynamics (of identity) is the notion of identification (e.g., Elsbach; 1999; Hogg and Terry, 2000a,b; Pratt, 1998) that an individual experiences in identifying with an organisation. Here, I am concerned with the positive and negative processes of identification. Early work on identification was preceded by research into organisational commitment (e.g., Adler and Adler, 1988; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Mowday, et al., 1982; O'Reilley and Chatman, 1986; Salancik, 1977; Staw, 1977; Staw and Ross, 1978). These scholars primarily considered "the strength of an individuals identification with ...a particular organisation" (Porter, et al., 1974, p.604). Related research includes Brown (1969) and Hall and Schneider (1972) who investigated psychological attachment, and Kanter (1972) and O'Reilly and Caldwell (1981) who researched loyalty.

It is clear from the identification literature I reviewed that there is an apparent lack of consensus as to what identification is. For example, in an early study, Kelman (1958) suggested that identification occurs when an individual feels proud to be part of a group, and Cheney (1983), an active process by which individuals link themselves to the social. More recently Pratt (1998) said that "identification occurs when an individual's beliefs

about his or her organisation becomes self-referential or self-defining" (p.172). Aronson (1992) found identification to be a response to social influence and Dutton, et al., (1994), suggested there is a cognitive link of personal attributes to the organisation, and Tajfel (1982), said identification is an awareness of membership (of an organisation). In relation to my research, Albert et al's., (1998a) definition of identification as "the process through which individuals come to define themselves at least partly in terms of a collective's identity" (p.209) is a helpful way of understanding how individuals develop ways of thinking, feeling and acting in a social context. All these definitions suggest that identification is a social process and fits with Mael and Ashforth's (1992) comment that "social identification is a perception of oneness with a group of persons, [and] ...associated with group formation, [which] ...leads to activities that are congruent with identity" (p.20; cf., Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Ashforth and Mael (1989) also argued that Social Identity Theory (SIT) (e.g., Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Kramer 1993; Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1985/1986; Turner, 1984, 1985) can restore coherence to organisational identification research. Other debates in the literature on identification centre on traditional objectivist research which "tended to focus on a 'sense of being'" (Glynn, 1998, p.238) (e.g., stage models (Lewin, 1951)). In this thesis I adopt an alternative to the objectivist position. I mentioned that Ashforth (1998b) said that "identification is a process of becoming" (p.268; cf.,, Barker, 1998; Dukerich, et al., 1998; Harquail, 1998). I found this to be consistent with Brewer and Gardner's (1996) classification of three process of identification: the self as an individual (Erikson, 1959, 1965, 1968); as an interpersonal being (Mead, 1934): and as a group member (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Other studies on identification reveal that definitions of identification are varied. For example, Ashforth (1998a) suggested that there are four useful metaphors for understanding identification (as a process of becoming): imprinting (e.g., Hess, 1973); love (e.g., Sims, 2004); play (e.g., Salter, 1978); and theatre (e.g., Goffman, 1959). Barker (1998), and Hogg and Terry (2000a,b), defined identification as a 'social process' based on a set of 'categorised values.' Similarly, Scott and Lane (2000a,

p44/45) have defined organisational identity construction (OIC) as the "processes, activities and events through which [identification] becomes specified in the minds of organisational managers and stakeholders." Others such as Harquail (1998) argued that "when individuals *think* of themselves as organisation members, they *feel* like organisation members" (p.225). Dutton, et al., (1994) claim that identification is "the degree to which a member defines him or herself by the same attributes that he or she believe define the organisation" (p.293). In their conclusion, Albert, et al., (2000) found that "as the variety of topics indicates, identity and identification are ...generative constructs" (p.17). All these scholars suggest that identification (as a process of becoming) seems to be a direct consequence of the idea that identity is generated by the individual in response to social interaction (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). For example, adopting Mead's (1934) conceptualisation of 'I am,' Pratt (1998) asked "how do I come to know who *I* am in relation to you?" (p.178), and proposed four simple but pertinent questions that he claims provide an adequate platform for any theoretical discussion on identification. These questions dominated this investigation into collective identity. Pratt (1998) asked: what is identification (Whetten and Godfrey, 1998)? why do people identify with organisations (Glynn, 1998)? when are individuals most likely to identify with organisations (Elsbach, 1999; Harquail, 1998)? and how does identification occur (Barker, 1998; Cheney, 1983; Dukerich, et al., 1998)? Bearing Pratt's (1998) questions in mind, the definition of identification I found suitable for this research is that organisational identification is a 'self-perception' based on "a sense of active connection [and] ...a positive relational categorisation of oneself and the organisation" (Elsbach, 1999, p.178).

Identification can be understood not only as a positive relational categorisation but also in terms of the negative or 'dark side' (Dukerich, et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1998, 1999; Elsbach and Battacharaya, 1998) of identification. Such research draws principally on Dukerich, et al's., (1998) inference that "there may also be pathologies associated with

[being] under or overidentified" (p.245). This is in contrast to their definition which suggests "a need for inclusion and a reduced need to distinguish oneself from the organisation [and disidentification is] ...the active differentiating and distancing oneself from the organisation" (Dukerich, et al., p.246). Dukerich, et al., (1998) proposed four pathologies or 'general states of organisational identification:'

> "*Apathetic identification* ...the organisation – whether positively or negatively – simply is not central to the individual's identity. *Conflicting identification* is a condition in which part of the individual wants to identify with the organisation (merge with) and another part wants to disidentify (separate from). *Focused disidentification* ...occurs when there is no overlap between the individual and the organisation *and* there is a need to define oneself by stating one is not part of the organisation. *Focused identification* occurs when the overlap between the individual and the organisation is great. ...The identity of the organisation replaces self, and little of the self is left ...there is only the collective" (Dukerich, et al., 1998, p.246).

In this thesis I turn to Elsbach's (1999) similar findings that there are three negative relational categorisations of identification that are juxtaposed with positive identification processes. I consider these forms of 'weak' identification to be better suited than Dukerich et al., (1998) for my categorisation of stories and story extracts into identification themes:

> *Organisational disidentification* is a sense of active separation between one's identity and the identity of an organisation, and 2) a negative relational categorisation of oneself and the organisation; *Organisational Schizo-identification* occurs when an individual simultaneously identifies and disidentifies with an organisation's identity; and *Organisational Neutral-identification* is defined as a self-perception based on the explicit absence of both identification and disidentification with an organisation's identity" (Elsbach, 1999, p.178/188).

I judged Dukerich et al's., (1998) 'states of organisational identification' to be symptomatic of identification, but I am researching how identity is constructed and feel that identification constructs are more salient in the strengths and weaknesses of both aspects (positive and negative) of identification processes in organisations (Elsbach, 1998).

2.3.3 Organisational identity – perspectives and definitions

A major concern in this thesis is how I define organisational identity and I address the issue here. But any definition must take into consideration the ontological and epistemological perspective the research takes. For example, according to Gioia (1998, p. 25), organisational identity "can be explored from different perspectives." This is because:

> "Potentially differing statements arise from differing paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of organisations. When we start with differing assumptions about the ontology and epistemology of organisations, we can end up with ...convergent ...complementary ...and profoundly different or contradictory views" (Gioia, 1998, p.25).

An example of this can be seen in the links between identity and culture (Oswick, et al., 1996). Fiol, et al., (1998) asked what's the difference? (between culture and organisational identity) and suggested that it is "one of perspective, not level of analysis [because] ...identity at ...different levels of analysis may draw on ...cultural systems to define itself" (p.57). Bouchikhi et al., (1998a) also took the position that "one's understanding of identity depends on the perspective one takes" (p.33) and exploring this issue, Gioia (1998) identified three differing perspectival 'lenses' – functionalist, interpretive, and postmodern (cf., Bouchikhi et al., 1998a, p.34) - for "entertaining different ways of thinking about identity [that] ..changes the character of identity itself" (Gioia, 1998, p.26). This thesis employs a perspectival metaphor, what Gioia (1998) termed an 'interpretive' lens to view identity and the processes of identification found in organisation members' stories.

There are many ways of defining organisational identity that I found in the literature. Diamond (1993) suggested that organisational identity is a product of organisational culture, history and member psychology. In relation to this thesis, some organisation theorists understand organisational identity as a social construction (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Elsbach, 1999; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Kunda, 1992). For example, Ashforth (1998a) claimed that "organisational identity is not a finite construct" (p.212),

suggesting organisational identities are adaptable, unstable and fluid (e.g., Gioia and Thomas, 1996). Other organisation theorists have argued that organisational identity is psychodynamic (Brown and Starkey, 2000; Diamond, 1998), negotiated (Scott and Lyman, 1968), or evolutionary (Bouchikhi et al., 1998c). Hatch (1996) proposed that organisational identity is "how the organisation's members regard themselves as an organisation" (p.257) which Rindova and Schultz (1998) have labelled "corporate identity" (p.49). The definition I found most suited to structure this 'interpretive' research project is provided by Albert and Whetten (1985) who set out to "define, analyse and illustrate identity in such a way that empirical questions and hypotheses become visible" (p.264). In addition, Whetten (1998) later reflected "we needed an interpretive framework to make sense out of our experience as [organisational] members" (p.vii; cf., Diamond, 1988, p.168). In reviewing Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition I found it to be recognised and used by many organisation theorists as the proverbial 'stick in the sand' from which organisational identity could be further explored and researched (e.g., Brown 2000; Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Dutton, et al., 1994; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia, et al., 2000; Golden-Biddle and Rao 1997; Kiriakidou and Millward 2000; Rindova and Schultz 1998; and Whetten, et al., 1992).

In conceptualising their 'metadefinition' of organisational identity, Albert and Whetten (1985) state that three criteria: claimed central character; claimed distinctiveness; and claimed temporal continuity, satisfy "a profound, consequential and adequate statement of organisational identity in response to the question 'Who are we?'" (p.265). According to Albert and Whetten (1985), centrality of character contains distinctive features that:

> "must be a statement ...which distinguishes the organisation on the basis of something important and essential. [However] ...it is not possible to define central character as a definitive set of measurable properties. ...One must judge what is and what is not central" (p.266).

Fundamental to my thesis is the idea that distinctiveness contains features that distinguish the organisation from others to which it may be compared, for "how

distinctiveness is defined depends critically on what other objects of comparison are deemed relevant" (Albert and Whetten, 1985 p.269). Based on Erikson's (1968) concept of 'ego identity,' Albert and Whetten (1985) also suggest that "organisational identity is formed by a process of inter-organisational comparisons and reflections upon them over time" (p.273; cf.,, Slugoski and Ginsburg, 1989, p.36). According to Bouchikhi et al., (1998a), temporal continuity contains "features that [paradoxically] exhibit some degree of sameness over time" (p.35/6). I think this is consistent with viewing an organisation as an ongoing story (Czarniawska, 2004) as my understanding of literary theory (discussed above) suggests.

2.3.4 Stability, multiplicity and manageability of organisational identity

Here, I suggest that organisational identities are not fixed at one point in time and can be unstable, multiple and managed (Gioia and Thomas, 1996). Fiol, et al., (1998) and Wilkins (1989), proposed that organisational identity is not only a complex phenomenon, but it can vary with the context in which it operates. Although Albert and Whetten (1985) claim that organisational identity is enduring in an Eriksonian sense some organisation theorists propose that organisations can change their identity (e.g., Brown and Starkey, 2000; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). Others propose identities can be added (e.g., Pratt and Foreman 2000) and that organisations can have more than one identity (e.g., Albert and Whetten 1985; Foreman and Whetten, 2002) which can also be managed (e.g., Scott and Lane, 2000a,b). Scott and Lane (2000a) have also suggested that organisational identities can change, albeit much more slowly than individual identities (e.g., Gioia, et al., 2000), reinforcing an important notion in this research, that organisational identity constructs are more stable than individual identities, and, therefore, more salient.

In terms of change and stability of organisational identities, Gioia, et al., (2000) observed that "it is useful to differentiate between an enduring identity and an identity

having continuity" (p.65). They argue that organisational identity is fluid and similar to individual identity, it "is a work in progress" (Gioia, et al., 2000, p76; cf.,, Albert et al., 1998, p.211; Ashforth 1998a, p.213). Gioia (1998); Gioia and Thomas (1996); and Gioia, et al., (2000), all refer to this 'fluidity' as 'adaptive instability.' Scott and Lane (2000b) have also addressed "the enduring versus dynamic argument, [agreeing that] ...organisational identity must ...adapt [to change]. ...It is neither static, nor fluid but inherently *sticky*" (p.143). There is an advantage in viewing organisational identity in this way – its apparent adaptability (e.g., Bouchikhi and Kimberly, 2003). This idea is supported by Hogg and Terry (2000b) who argue that "[adaptive instability] is a perspective on identity that is entirely consistent with social identity theory [because] ...organisational identity remains a relatively enduring anchor ...subjectively experienced" (p.151). Yet, Gagliardi (1986) paradoxically argued that organisations "usually change to remain what they always have been ...[and] must change in order to preserve identity" (p.124/5) and this can be traced through the temporal continuity aspect of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition.

The effects of changing organisational identities can be seen in Collinson's (2003) investigation into the 'insecurities of selves' at work' which suggests that members have a "multiplicity of workplace selves" (p.541) and this echoes Mead's (1934) conception that people have a 'parliament of selves.' Some organisation theorists propose these multiple identities can be managed (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Barker, 1998; Golden-Biddle and Rao, 1997; Pratt, 1998). For example, Marziliano (1998) stated that "organisations can and do manage organisational identity and identities" (p.4) and Pratt and Foreman (2000) developed "a framework for the management of multiple organisational identities" (p.18). According to Cheney (1991), "contemporary organisations do more than manage issues by inculcating values, they also manage identities" (p.9). Kiriakidou and Millward (2000) found that employees' 'perceived actual identity' is "seen as critical to the way in which [organisational] identity is

interpreted" (p.49), and this can be 'effectively managed.' Finally, Scott and Lane (2000a) warned that any such "comprehensive theory on organisational identity management must bridge the distinctions between legitimation processes at the organisational level and identification processes at the individual level" (p.55). In my thesis, I interpreted this to mean that organisational identity clues would be found in the individual, it appears that members can adopt the organisation's identity as part of their own, thus legitimising it for themselves. But these identities can be changed and managed by the organisation.

As with individuals, some theorists have argued that an organisation can have multiple identities. Gioia (1998) suggests that "postmodern thought easily accommodates the idea of an organisation consisting of multiple, often contradictory identities" (p.29). Albert and Whetten (1985) support this, arguing that "most, organisations are hybrids composed of multiple types [of identity]" (p.270/1; cf.,, Pratt and Foreman 2000, p.18). Albert and Whetten (1985) also state that "over time there is a general tendency for mono-identity organisations to acquire a dual identity" (p.276) and identify two forms of internal organisational structure which:

> "give rise to very different kinds of organisations" [idiographic (or specialised)] ...in which each internal unit exhibits only one identity [and holographic] ...in which each internal unit exhibits the properties of the organisation as a whole" (Albert and Whetten, 1985, p.271).

Elsbach (1998) added (in reference to idiographic organisations) that "the more complex the organisation's identity ...the more ...likely [it will] retreat into a simple identity, [whilst] ...a holographic identity tends to be associated with a strong culture" (p.233). In terms of this research, these studies suggest that the type of organisation (idiographic or holographic) can affect the 'strength' of organisational identification (Elsbach, 1999).

2.3.5 Image, reputation and identity

The related concepts of organisational image and reputation are important concerns for organisational identity theorists and these are addressed in this Section. As Marziliano (1998) pointed out, there are conceptual differences here that researchers must take into account because, "identity answers the question 'what do we believe we are?' Image ...answers the question, 'what do others think we are?' and reputation [is] '...what do we know about what others think we are?'" (p.5/6). This is consistent with Dutton and Dukerich (1991) who stated that organisational image and identity "are constructs held in organisation members' minds" (p.547) and they labelled this notion 'construed internal image.' Alvesson (1990), however, viewed image as peoples' perceptions of an institution's prestige, or as Dutton and all put it 'construed external image.' Both image and reputation can reflect how organisation members believe others view their organisation. For example, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) noted that there are differences between image and identity, finding "two persistent themes: that which people see as their organisation's distinctive attributes (its identity); and what they believe others see as distinctive about the organisation (its image)" Bouchikhi et al., (1998b) described this as 'projected organisational image,' and Dukerich and Carter (1998) as 'shared external image.' What is important for this research is that image represents the "perceptions of organisational insiders" (Gioia et al., 2000, p.63/66) and Scott and Lane (2000a,) considering the duality between identity and image, argued that "organisational image, both internal and external is a prerequisite for organisational identity construction (OIC)" (p.55).

Reputation studies have their roots in impression management theory (e.g., Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Fombrun, 1996; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dukerich and Carter, 1998). Reputation here refers to what Fombrun and Shanley (1990) identified as the "objective attributes that outsiders ascribe to an organisation" (cited in Marziliano, 1998, p.4). According to Bouchikhi, et al., (1998b) "reputations exist in the minds of

constituents [of the organisation]" (p.61) and Scott and Lane (2000a) said that "when beliefs about organisational attributes become widely accepted ...we can speak of this as organisational reputation" (p.45). Similar to the conceptual links between image and identity constructs, reputation is, according to Rindova and Fombrun (1998), "interpretations and evaluations of identity ...because identity and reputation reciprocally affect each other, studies of one without the other may produce incomplete accounts" (p.63). That said, Dukerich and Carter (1998) have argued that "when there is a mis-match between the image ...(organisational identity) and the reputation cues received by members ...they will engage in external reputation management" (p.4).

I found that in the literature on organisational image and reputation as identity constructs they are inextricably linked to the processes of organisational identification (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This is because just as people create and maintain an image and uphold reputation as part of an external and internal manifestation of their individual identities, so do organisations (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Bouchikhi et al., (1998b) suggested that "studying identity, image and reputation together enables researchers to address the time dimension ...in particular ...stability and change" (p.62). Alvesson (1991) found that organisational members monitor and evaluate their actions to make character judgements about identity. This prompted Alvesson (1994) to suggest corporate identity, image and reputation are viewed from the perspective of an audience which in itself makes value judgements on identity according to the strength of their identification with the organisation (e.g., Dukerich, et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999). Finally, Dukerich and Carter (1998) argued that 'shared external image' (as identity), "serves as a lens that affects how members view reputation cues sent by external constituents" (p.2), and highlighted an area that the literature on organisational identity has not covered in any significant detail – organisational reputation and its relationship to the individual members of the organisation, which I address in this thesis.

2.4 Narrative identity

In this Section I review literature on the construction of a narrative identity that I consider as a theoretical foundation for the narratological approach (Brown, 2001) I have taken to eliciting identity constructs from stories and story extracts (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). First, I argue that any study on narrative identity (e.g., Ricouer, 1991) is dependent in part on the use of literary conventions, particularly, the temporal aspect of emplotment (Czarniawska, 1998) and is constructed in relation to the 'Other' (Athens, 1994). Second, building on this temporal aspect, I review the literature associated with the role of life stories (Cohler and Cole, 1994) and autobiographies (Sims, 1993) in the processes of constructing narrative identities from life stories (McAdams, 1996a). Third, following on from the conceptualisation of an individual identity into an organisational identity, the processes of constructing a narrative organisational identity are discussed.

2.4.1 Narrative identity and literary theory

In this Section I review the relationships between narrative identity and literary theory as a medium for eliciting identity constructs from stories and story extracts. In a seminal paper, Ricoeur (1991) set out to "outline the notion of narrative identity, that is, the sort of identity [to] which a human being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function" (p.73). Here, I interpreted narrative function to mean narrative structure, that is, emplotment, characterisation and temporal continuity (Czarniawska, 1998) and place it within the genre of writing fiction (Dunne, 1995). According to Ricouer (1991) the concept of temporality is an important aspect in the construction of a narrative identity. In particular, "one of the most important consequences of a narrative conception of the self is that it incorporates temporality" (Ezzy, 1998 p.239). Similar to organisation theorists (e.g., Ashforth, 1998b) temporality suggests that the construction of a narrative identity is also a process. For example, Somers (1994) proposed that narrative identity is processual and relational, because narrative identity "assumes people act in particular

ways because *not* to do so would fundamentally violate their sense of *being* at that particular time and place. Narrative identities are constituted and reconstituted *in time* and *over time*" (p.621). Ezzy (1998) also alluded to temporality in that "lived experience precedes narrative, and narrative shapes practical action. The complete hermeneutic circle of narrative and action involves a threefold process of pre-figuration, configuration and refiguration" (p.244). This is because, in conceptualising identity as 'narrative,' Ricoeur (1991) argued that (along with Heidegger) identity is existentially revealed as 'being-there,' through a narrative mediation of self-knowledge:

> "Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable aspect about knowledge of the self as being an interpretation. ...What the narrative interpretation properly provides is precisely 'the figure-able' character of the individual which has for its result, that the self, narratively interpreted, is itself a figured self – a self which figures itself as this or that" (Ricoeur, 1991, p.80).

The conceptualisation of *ipseity* (identity as sameness) and *idem* (identity as self) are at the heart of Ricoeur's reflections on the constitution of a narrative identity. His thesis is that "identity can be conceived in the sense of either ...*ipse* or *idem*" (Rasmussen, 1995, p.161; cf. Dunne, 1995, p.143; Kearney, 1995, p.181). But here selfhood (*ipse*) is ontologically distinct from identity (*idem*). Ricoeur (1991) said, "ipseity, I shall argue, is not sameness" (p.73). Fundamentally, *ipseity* is a statement of 'who I am' (selfhood) and *idem* refers to 'this is me' (identity) (Dunne, 1995; Ezzy, 1995; Rasmussen, 1995). While being able to characterise selfhood by reference to sameness, this view overlooks the particularity associated with the self as an entity living through and within time (Athens, 1994). According to Ricoeur (1991) identity as sameness, and identity as self, overlap or intersect "at exactly one point, precisely with regard to permanence over time" (p.75). Synthesising Mead (1934) and Ricoeur (1984, 1988, 1991), Ezzy (1998) argued that for Ricoeur, Mead's work is a watershed in identifying the significance of temporality for self-identity, because, "temporality is integral to his [Mead's] conception of the developing of consciousness ...[and] Ricoeur ...begins with an analysis of the relationship between time and narrative" (p.240). Therefore, "the most important thing

about narrative identity is its ability to make apparent the temporal dimension of selfhood" (Rasmussen, 1995, p168). Considering whether it is possible to retrieve the concept of subjectivity "under the category of the narrative identity," Rasmussen (1995) concluded, (following Ricoeur (1992)), that "one can preserve the distinctive character of the experience of the self within the framework of the constancy of time" (p.170). It is this constancy (or permanence) that gives rise to identity, and this is revealed by narrating it (Ricoeur, 1991). Identity can be conceptualised as a life story, complete with all the conventions of literary theory (e.g., Currie, 1998; Czarniawska, 1998; McAdams, 1996a; Ricoeur, 1991). Accordingly, this notion of a narrative identity "offers a solution to the aporias concerning personal identity" (Ricoeur 1991, p.76).

Considering the above, Rasmussen (1995) suggested that "if we go forward remaining within the context of a philosophy of language, it is possible to reconceptualise self-identity as narrative identity. ...[And] this is the potential for a theory of narrative" (p.163). According to Pucci (1995) a "theory of narrative ...shapes the problem of personal identity ...[by] making the search for the narrative dimension of history a search for identity. ...The story told tells about the action of the 'who.' ...And the identity of this 'who' therefore must be a narrative identity" (p.126). Narrative identities are revealed when people are called to give accounts of themselves (Scott and Lyman, 1968), and Ricoeur (1988) argued that "every speech-act (or every act of discourse) commits the speaker and does so in the present" (p.232). In this sense 'assertions' (or accounts) "are not mere empty identities, rather, they are utterances in a temporal context which carry with them the tacit implication of 'sincerity' ...The speech-act occurs at the juncture of internal and cosmological time" (Rasmussen, 1995, p.168). For example, Bruner (1991) stated that "a narrative is an account of events occurring over time" (p.6) and, according to Rasmussen (1995), "narratives link events together by giving account of the intentions of the actors so that the character appears to have a certain chronology (p.165).

Ricoeur (1991) also stated that the "narrative constructs the durable character of an individual, which one can call his or her narrative identity, in constructing the sort of dynamic identity proper to the plot. [Therefore] ...the crisis of identity of character is correlative to the crisis of identity of the plot" (p.77/8). Through emplotment and characterisation, a narrative identity avoids categorical rigidities "by emphasising the embeddedness of identity in overlapping networks of relations [plots], that shift over time and space" (Somers, 1994, p.607). Furthermore, "emplotment is the process that synthesises experience in a narrative. [Because] ...plot is a part of the organising theme of a narrative" (Ezzy, 1998, p.245). The capacity for plot and character to 'organise' reinforces the temporal continuity aspect of a narrative identity. Dunne (1995) contended that "the notion of *plot* may come into focus with the notion of character in trying to comprehend the shape of a life. ...With plot and character ...we have key elements of narrative" (p.149). Additionally, according to Pucci (1995), a "narrative identity can be made and then unmade, since it is possible to weave different plots through the same personage" (p. 126; cf.,, Brown, 2001, p.4).

Any theory of narrative identity must encompass theories of interlocution. Here, I acknowledge that the 'Other' plays a significant role in the construction of a narrative identity (Athens, 1994; Bruner, 1991; Ezzy, 1998; Foucault, 1972). For Foucault (1972) Mead's 'Other' acts as the source and guarantor for individual self-identity and for the formation of an 'I.' In contrast, "Foucault's 'Other' is historically constituted, the 'I' recognises itself, in relation to the 'Other'" (Parker, 1989, p.66). According to Athens (1994), the 'intersubjective character of speech-acts' (Ricoeur, 1988) is derived from the fact that the utterance 'is mirrored' in the act of another. Ezzy (1998) also argued that "taking the role of the other can be seen as exploring the internalisation of the intersubjective process of the creation of self-narratives" (p.246). This appears to be what Athens (1994) labelled 'the internalised soliloquy' which anticipates and

reinterprets through narrative, i.e., "the self dialogues with phantom imagined others who inhabit our thoughts and whose perspective we use as we narrate our past, present and anticipated experiences" (p.526). Athens (1994) proposed that it is the stability of the 'phantom others' with whom we dialogue that sustains a stable sense of self. Reflecting on the continuity of a narrative identity, according to Athens (1994), our soliloquies change endlessly with our experiences. What we say to ourselves invariably changes according to the nature of the social experience that we are undergoing, suggesting that narrative identities can and do change over time. The next Section addresses this phenomenon.

2.4.2 Narrative identity and life stories

The literature reviewed here comes primarily from research into narrative identity carried out by sociologists (e.g., Dunne, 1995; Ezzy, 1998) and psychologists (e.g., McAdams, 1990, 1993, 1996a,b; Polkinghorne, 1991, 1996) who have investigated narrative identity construction in life stories (e.g., Cohler and Cole, 1994) and autobiographies (e.g., Sims, 1993; Thorne and Latzke, 1996). One argument is, as McCrae (1996) said "people can and do tell stories about their lives [and] ...the ability to do so is somehow central to having a meaningful identity" (p.335). Being stories, life stories and autobiographies equate to literary theory (e.g., McAdams, 1990, 1993) and theories of interlocution (e.g., Bruner, 1991). For example, Cohler and Cole (1994) argued that:

> "the life story is a narrative precisely because it represents a discourse of a particular kind [genre], organised with a potential [Other] ...in mind and with ...intent ...to convince self and others of a particular plot or present ordering of [situational] experience" (p.6).

Regarding identity as a narrative or continuously unfolding story reframes human existence into temporal or developmental dimensions (Polkinghorne 1991). What Polkinghorne (1991) alluded to is the idea that the temporal aspect of a narrative identity extends throughout a person's life and that personal identity is revealed in recounting the

life story. This phenomenon is supported by Cox and Lyddon (1997) who made the point that "just as a written story possesses a beginning, a middle, and an end, so too is one's life perceived as progressing temporally, in a sequential and meaningful pattern [plot]" (p.212).

McAdam's (1990, 1996a,b) theory of narrative identity is an "investigative framework for studying persons that brings together recent advances in the field of personality with the emerging social science emphasis on the narrative study of lives" (McAdams, 1996a, p.295). The relevance of the framework (it is not a 'grand theory,' Loveinger (1996, p.345)) in relation to narrative identity, is that it builds on a clear distinction between the *I* and *Me* features of personality in which "the I may be the process of 'selfing,' of narrating experience to create a modern self, whereas the Me may be viewed as the self that the I constructs" (McAdams, 1996a, p.296). Ouellette (1996) added that "storytelling [is] a very self-reflexive process ...as one tells a story about self, something changes in the I as well as the Me" (p.359). Grotevant (1993) also suggested that the "conception of self as narrative ...of self as active 'narrator agent organiser,' the *I* and the *me* of a story, allows for the integration and coherence of self over a lifetime of temporally grounded events and external exchanges" (p.123). Additionally, because narrative 'organises' (Ezzy, 1998), McAdams (1996a,) suggested "the main function of the life story is integration ...the life story shows how the self is different from but connected to other Me's and to society as a whole" (p.309).

By understanding identity as a life story (e.g., Peacock and Holland, 1993) or autobiography (e.g., Sims, 1993), Dunne (1995) suggested "the notion of a history or narrative seems to be necessary in order to make sense of the notion of 'self'; for we make sense – or fail to make sense – of our lives by the kind of story we can – or cannot – tell about it. ...Living is *itself* the *enactment* of a narrative" (p.146). Additionally, MacIntyre (1981) made the point that "stories are lived before they are told – except in

the case of fiction" (p.220; cf.,, Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995, p.25). That said, characterised by its ability to make sense of self, "identity ...is a narrative construction that is the product of [a] reflective process. [A] narrative identity constructs a sense of self-sameness, continuity and character in the plot of a story a person tells about him or her self. The story becomes the person's actual history" (Ezzy, 1998, p.245). The basic hypothesis is that a narrative identity is constituted as a fusion between history and fiction, either individually or communally (Ricoeur, 1991), and that this (narrative identity) is revealed in a person's life story (McAdams, 1996a) or through autobiography (Thorne and Latzke, 1996). In terms of this research, because life stories and autobiographies borrow from the conventions of literary theory (i.e., fiction), the epistemological status of life story/autobiography becomes plausible because:

> "knowledge of the self is an interpretation, the interpretation of the self in turn, finds narrative among the signs and symbols, to be a privileged mediation, [and] this mediation borrows from history as much as fiction, making the life story a fictive history" (Ricoeur, 1991, p.73).

Many psychologists have contributed to the literature on life stories by raising additional issues concerning the construction of a narrative identities through life stories. For example, Lamiell and Weigert (1996) warned that "no taxonomy for differentiating life stories ...could properly be said to constitute knowledge about 'life stories in general'" (p.336). Polkinghorne (1996) claimed that "life stories include references to, among other things, traits and situated concerns" (p.364). Peacock and Holland (1993) found that "the complexity and variation in approaches to life stories ...is fragmented rather than unitary or fixed; accordingly, one's narration of self varies with circumstance, ...discourse form and context" (p.368/372). Peacock and Holland (1993, p372) also described "four approaches to life stories: cultural; hermeneutic; psychosocial; psychocultural." Gergen and Gergen (1986) identified life narratives of progress, regress and stability. Widdershoven (1993) defined narrative identity as "the unity of a person's life as it is experienced and articulated in stories that express this experience" (p.7), however, Singer (1996) took a more sceptical stance and in reply to McAdam's (1996a)

framework commented that "if there is not a single life story that dominates, there are a few narratives that assume centrality and give a sense of stability and familiarity" (p.369). Finally, for this research, the definition of a life story I use is given by McAdams (1996a) as:

> "an internalised and evolving narrative of the self that incorporates the reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future. ...The characteristic way in which the 'I' arranges elements of the 'Me' into a temporal sequence complete with setting, scenes, characters, plots and themes [means] ...a life story is a psychosocial construction" (p.307).

Sociologists have also identified problems with a life story approach to understanding the construction of a narrative identity. Dunne (1995), for example, emphasised two aspects of reflections on selfhood where:

> "In the province of self deception, ...a significant discrepancy [exists] between the story one lives and the story one tells. ...The story one tells oneself influences one's actions and becomes part of who one *is*. ...It will never be the case ...that everything that transpires in our lives will be faithfully recorded in our narratives; [and] ...full self-transparency is angelic rather than human, and in any case, every story is edited" (Dunne, 1995, p.153).

Kearney (1995) suggested that this 'editing' may be because "there is a fundamental fluidity built into ...narrative identity by ...the fact that it is founded on narrative imagination" (p.138), and narrative imagination fills in the gaps in the life story (e.g., Dunne, 1995). Baumeister and Wilson (1996) also warned about the incompleteness of life stories as they "require ...choosing a few thousand of events that occur in a lifetime and moulding them into a coherent narrative" (p.325). The suggestion is that historical memory (Bruner, 1991), fictive history (Ricouer, 1991), and narrative imagination (Watson 2000) are used to bridge the gaps in life stories and autobiographical memories (e.g., Sims, 1993). As Ezzy (1998) said and in relation to the construction of my own story (Chapter 5 Tam's story), "both historical action and interpretive imagination shape narratives. ...Without fictive imagination it is impossible to grasp the past" (p.243/4). Furthermore (with reference to the 'Other'), Bruner (1991) pointed out that, "individual autobiographies ...depend on being placed within a continuity provided by a constructed

and shared social history in which we locate our selves and our individual communities" (p.19/20). This I interpret to be the organisation at the centre of this research, and accordingly, "the raw material for constructing a life story [mine] may shift considerably depending on the person to whom and/or purpose for which one tells the life story [you]. ...More emphasis on the life story as ...co-constructed in a particular social context and for ...relational purposes seems warranted" (Thorne and Latzke (1996, p.374 cf., Coupland 2001).

A narrative identity, then, can be revealed in the interpretation of (life/autobiographical) stories people tell about themselves, because "a narrative can link the past with the future by giving a sense of continuity to an ever changing story of the self" (Rasmussen, 1995, p.164). Even if the account given is predominantly a fictitious self-deception (Dunne, 1995), lives may be "viewed as narrated texts, known and 'read' as stories, framed through discourse and told in culture. [Because] ...a psychosocially constructed narrative has structure and content; function; developmental course; [and] individual differences in types of self stories" (McAdams, 1996a, p.301/2).

2.4.3 Organisational narrative identity

This Section reviews literature on organisational narrative identity which this research is investigating. According to recent studies (e.g., Brown and Humphreys, 2002; Humphreys and Brown, 2002), organisations construct narrative identities, and members adopt this identity. For example, Brown (2001) identified seven features of narrative identities. They are fictional; plurivocal; incorporate temporality; voiced; embedded in a culture and its discourses; and power-laden. However, "organisations have no objective reality, but rather are created daily by the linguistic enactments of members in the course of their everyday communications [with] each other" (Evered, 1983, p.126). The3 conceptualisation of an organisational narrative identity is further problematised because, as Maines (1993) highlighted, "self narratives cannot be separated from

collective narratives" (p.24). For example, "Goffman's (1976) ...study clearly illustrates the utility of a narrative conception of identity. [And] ...specifically ...underlines the institutional sources of self-narratives" (Ezzy, 1998, p.240). Kunda (1992), borrowed from Goffman (1959) in discussing prescriptions for how organisational members should think and feel about themselves at work. Peacock and Holland (1993) found that "self narrative as events in social as opposed to psychological processes treat narrative as instrumental in the formation and maintenance of social relationships and collective identity" (p.372). Similarly, Kearney (1995) said that "the identity of human subjects (individual and collective) is recognised as a perpetual task of reinterpretation in the light of stories we tell ourselves and others. ...Narrative identity operates at the level of *both* individual *and* communal identity" (p.182).

More relative to this project, others, such as Polkinghorne (1996) stated that "narrative psychologists ...hold that cultures maintain and communicate their identity answers in storied form and that their members take in and retain them in storied form" (p.365). I found this to be consistent with the seven 'types' of organisational story Martin et al., (1983) described, where, "patterns of attribution in the positive and negative versions of ...obstacle stories becomes evident when it is placed in the broader context of identification within the organisation" (p.451) These scholars are suggesting that individuals identify with their organisation through the 'uniqueness' of their stories. Finally, it has been argued that if "organisational or (other) social identities are seen to fuel the identities of individuals" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1163), they must be narrative identities.

2.5 Identity, narcissism, psychological contracts and dress

I use this Section as an introduction to the literature for three identity related readings of the data I conducted in Chapter 10 (issues concerning representation are addressed in Chapter 3). These are narcissism (Brown, 1997; Schwartz, 1987), psychological

contracts (Irving and Bobocel, 2002; Rousseau, 1995) and dress and identity (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1996)

Scholars investigating narcissism or the relationship between narcissistic tendencies (Foster, et al., 2003) have tended to focus largely on the individual (e.g., Carr, 1994; 1997; Coffey, 1999; Freud, 1914; Holt, 2003; Raskin et al., 1991). For example, according to Foster et al., (2003, p.484), "focusing on the self may lead to high self-esteem and high psychological well being, but it can also lead to narcissism. [And] ...understanding this pitfall to unconditional positive regard for the self may shed light on sociological trends." Another consideration is narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) but according to (Foster et al., 2003) this affects less than one percent of the population and is not included as a feature of this research into identity construction in stories and story extracts, because narcissism *per se* is a 'normal phenomenon' (Reich 1960). There are two forms of narcissistic behaviour, negative and positive. Foster et al., (2003, p.471), also suggested that narcissism is "correlated with several undesirable traits and behaviours." For example, narcissists tend to be generally 'arrogant' (Paulhus, 1998) and 'less agreeable' (Bradlee and Emmons, 1992). Narcissists are also motivated more by 'extrinsic desires' (Kasser and Ryan, 1996), and 'brag about achievements' (Paulhus, 1998). In addition, there are several positive aspects of a narcissistic personality. Narcissists tend to be 'highly extroverted' (Bradlee and Emmons, 1992), 'socially bold' (Emmons, 1984) and the narcissist is also 'less depressed and less socially anxious' (Watson and Biderman, 1993). All these characteristics are embedded in the stories and story extracts I have presented in this thesis. There have been some studies carried out on organisational narcissism. For example, Brown (1997) discussed narcissism in terms of five organisational 'ego-defences' that form a useful theoretical platform for discussion: denial; rationalisation; self-aggrandisement; attributional egotism; sense of entitlement, and these all defend against a perceived anxiety. Schwartz (1987) looked at organisational narcissism in terms of disaster and found it was because members

identified with the narcissistic tendencies of the organisation that disaster became 'inevitable.'

The second reading uses the notion of psychological contract to describe the "relationship between the employee and the organisation and, more specifically, employee beliefs regarding what they should give and receive in terms of their organisation" (Marks and Scholarios, 2001, p.3). The concept of the psychological contract has been in use for some time (e.g., Agyris, 1960; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1978; 1980). For example, Schein, (1965) emphasised "the importance of the psychological contracts concept in understanding and managing behaviour in organisations." Recently, scholars have focused on the processes of organisational identity construction (e.g., Elsbach, 1999; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Pratt, 1998; Scott and Lane, 2000). In this reading I provide a conceptual bridge between this literature and the negative and positive aspects of psychological contracting. Another aspect of psychological contracts relevant to this research is 'reciprocity and exchange' within the relationship between member and organisation and the 'effects on organisational outcomes' (e.g., Rousseau, 1989, 1990, 1995; Guest, 1998a,b; Herriot et al., 1997). Guest and Conway (1998) have suggested that psychological contracts are best viewed as a metaphor for helping make sense of the employment relationship and charting significant changes in it. Using this 'literary device' (Czarniawska, 1998), the metaphor here suggests that 'an individual's belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party' (Rousseau, 1989), and that "this belief is predicated on the perception that an exchange of promises has been made" (Rousseau, 2000, p.1).

There are two main types of psychological contract, 'transactional' (e.g., Rousseau, 1995, 2000) and 'relational' (e.g., Macneil, 1985; Rousseau, 1990). Transactional contracts are "employment arrangements with a short term or limited duration, primarily focused on economic exchange, specific narrow duties and limited involvement in the

organisation" (Rousseau, 2000, p.3). Relational contracts are the state of the psychological contract between employees and the organisation and can be equated to the mediation of relationships between work experiences and outcomes. For example, studies have been conducted into motivation (Guest and Conway, 1997), job satisfaction (Guest and Conway, 1998), organisational commitment and intention to leave (Millward and Hopkins, 1998). 'Relational' contracts also induce feelings of affective involvement and can commit the employer to the individual with 'investments in training and career development' (Millward and Brewerton, 1999). A third feature of psychological contracts is member's and the organisation's obligations to each other (e.g., Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Smithson and Lewis, 2005).

When 'transactional' and' relational' contracts are satisfied, an individual enters a state of what Rousseau (1995) described as 'balanced.' The relevance to this research is that relationships between psychological contracts and identity may become more salient when they become unbalanced in members' minds. Rousseau (1995) also suggested there are two sets of influencing factors that affect 'balanced' contracts, which Irving and Bobocel (2002, p.1) described as "external, including messages and social cues provided by organisational insiders [reputation, Fombrun and Shanley (1990)], and the individual's internal interpretations, predispositions and constructions [image, Dutton and Dukerich (1991)]." Other researchers have used the concept of psychological contracts in a variety of different ways (Roehling, 1997), but my reading of the literature revealed four broad areas I used to interpret the findings in my data and are a mixture of elements of the contracts described above. The following is adapted from Smithson and Lewis (2005). In the first instance, the incorporation of beliefs, values, expectations and aspirations, including beliefs about implicit promises and obligations, and the extent to which these are perceived to be met or violated, and the extent of trust within the relationship. Second, these expectations are not necessarily made explicit. It can be regarded as the implicit deal between member and organisation and implies fairness and

good faith. Third, an important aspect of the notion of a psychological contract is that it can be continually renegotiated, changing within the member and the organisation's expectations. It is not static, but shifting and dynamic. Fourth, because it is based on the members' perceptions, individuals in the organisation may perceive different psychological contracts, which will, in turn, influence the ways in which they perceive organisational events.

Finally, for the third identity reading in my discussion (Chapter 10), the literature relating to dress and identity and identification in organisations (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993) explores issues on how dress may constitute identity, or as Humphreys and Brown (2002) put it "the key role that attire can play in continuing processes of identity construction" (p.927). For example, some scholars have researched dress and attire from the perspective of 'conflicting identities' (e.g., Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997) and there appears to be links to dress and attire in an individual's perceived need to identify with their organisation (e.g., Glynn, 1998). Dress can also be part of what people consider to be different about their organisation (Albert and Whetten, 1985) and subsequently, themselves (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). In direct relation to this research, the literature on dress and identity on the military (e.g., Bramson, 1971; Brotz and Wilson, 1946; Cotton, 1990; Downey, 1977; George, 1976; Janowitz, 1974; Kellet, 1986; Longacre, 2001; Pfanner, 2004; Strachan, 1997) has traditionally focused on issues of control and discipline (Foucault, 1978). My focus here is on organisational identity construction in which I consider issues of dress and identity to have a significant influence. According to Burton (1998) apart from control, dress (e.g., Crane et al., 2004), or uniforms (e.g., Collins, 1989) also convey identity (Joseph and Alex, 1972). For example, Kanter (1972) and Joseph (1986) indicated a connection between "strong organisational control over dress ...and members' increased compliance with a wide range of organisational rules" (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997, p.865).

The organisational identity literature also suggests a more than symbolic link between dress and identity and according to Goffman (1959) organisational dress is a symbolic representation of organisational identity. For example, in terms of issues this reading discusses, Pratt and Rafaeli (1997), argued that "dress serves as a key symbol not only of core values, but also of the more fundamental notion of organisational identity" but found that "...there is little work on how identity is represented through organisational symbols such as dress" (p.867). Although the literature on dress and organisational identity is relatively thin, some scholars contend that uniforms are an "especially privileged symbol that is key to understanding how people constitute and represent themselves both as individuals and group members" (Humphreys and Brown, 2002, p. 928; cf.,, Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993). Finally, as artifacts, uniforms can have both intended and unintended symbolic consequences (Davis, 1984). These themes are picked up again in Chapter 10, Discussion.

2.6 Conclusion

Importantly, this research is framed by the 'linguistic turn' (Deetz, 2003) in the social sciences, in particular the 'narrative turn' (Czarniawska, 1998) which focuses on the use of literary theory (Currie, 1998) as a vehicle through which to understand organisations as ongoing stories (Czarniawska, 2004). The interdisciplinary nature (McAdams, 1996a) of narrative approaches (Boje 2001) to analysing organisational stories (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976) can help organisation theorists make sense out of and help understand issues of identity in organisations (Brown and Humphreys, 2002). Additionally, the application of literary conventions of genre (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 2000) and emplotment, characterisation, and temporal continuity (Myrsiades, 1987) is consonant with modern narratological approaches to researching organisations (e.g., Humphreys and Brown, 2003). Forms of micro and macro narratives (Trice and Beyer, 1993) and types (e.g., Gabriel 1991, 1995) and exemplars (e.g., Martin et al., 1983) found in

organisations have a pivotal role in organisational sensemaking (whether glossed or terse (Boje, 1991)).

The literature on identity focuses on the Jamesian (1963) 'I' and 'me' aspects of personality and how personality theorists (e.g., Freud, 1961) and early psychologists (e.g., Erikson's (1968) notions of self) lead to the understanding of self as a social construction (e.g., Gergen, 1985). Albert (1998a) highlighted perspectival problems with any metadefinition of organisational identity, nevertheless, Ashforth (1998b) described identification as a process of 'becoming' (as opposed to 'being' (e.g., Glynn, 1998). This 'becoming' is consistent with Tajfel and Turner's (1985) Social Identity Theory and led Pratt (1998) to ask – what, why, when, and how identification takes place in the individual. The strength of organisational identification was highlighted by Elsbach (1999) model of organisational identification and was supported by Dukerich et al's., (1998) four general states of organisational identification. In addition, using an interpretive 'lens' (Gioia, 1998) as a metaphor with which to view the social construction (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) of organisational identities, is particularly suited to conducting this research. In this thesis I use Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity as that which member's consider to be central, distinctive and enduring about their organisation. Organisational identities can be changed (e.g., Brown and Starkey, 2000), are unstable and adaptive (e.g., Hogg and Terry, 2000b) and can be managed (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Marziliano, 1998). Collinson (2003) showed that individuals can have multiple identities and Albert and Whetten (1985) demonstrated that organisations can be 'idiographic' and 'holographic,' suggesting organisations have multiple identities (and these too can be managed (Scott and Lane, 2000a,b). Identity and image are constructs in organisation members' minds, have two aspects, 'construed internal image' (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991) and 'construed external image' (Dutton et al., 1994) and this is different from how outsiders see the organisation (Marzilliano, 1998). Fombrun and Shanley (1990) defined organisational reputation in

similar terms. In addition, organisational image and reputation reciprocally affect each other and are inextricably linked to the processes of organisational identification (Elsbach, 1999). Finally, any study of identity is incomplete without studying image and reputation identity constructs (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998).

Narrative identities are constituted and reconstituted in and over time (Somers, 1994) and are existentially revealed through the narrative mediation of self-knowledge (Ricoeur, 1991). Ricoeur's (1991) conceptualisation of *ipse* (selfhood) and *idem* (identity) within a theory of narrative (e.g., Pucci, 1995) shapes personal identity through revealing the durable character (e.g., Dunne, 1995) correlative to emplotment temporally revealed through narrative, in conjunction with the 'Other' (Athens 1994). The life story (McAdams, 1996a,b) or autobiographical (Sims, 1993) genre is consistent with literary theory because lives, too, have a beginning, middle and end (Cox and Lyddon, 1997). McAdams (1996a) framework clearly shows this because there is a fusion between personal history and fiction (Ricoeur, 1991) and therefore life stories must be fictive accounts (Dunne, 1995). If people have a sense of continuity in an ever changing life story, so to do organisations because they are the daily subjective creations of people (Evered, 1983) and an organisational narrative identity is a psycho-social construction revealed in the ongoing organisational story (Polkinghorne, 1996). In conclusion, concepts such as narcissism (Brown, 1997), psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995), and issues of dress (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1996) are also considered to be conceptually linked to organisational identification.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

"Methodology in the social sciences is too important to be left to the methodologists" (Van Maanen, 1979, p.540).

3.1 Introduction

This thesis is an investigation into collective identity constructs (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Elsbach, 1999) in the British Parachute Regiment and involved interviewing members, recording and transcribing their stories (Brown and McMillan, 1991), and interpreting them concurrently with artifacts of the organisation's culture (Schein, 1985). Being a member of the tribe (Malinowski, 1953), I knew the Paras culture and history intimately and could (and still do) walk the talk with my brother Paratroopers. This has allowed me a 'privileged position' to self-reflexively 'write' myself into the thesis (Hatch, 1996). My methodology, an autoethnographic (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) and explicitly narratological approach (Czarniawska, 1998), seemed to be the most appropriate way in which to conduct the research. This Chapter represents a justification of the choices I made.

This Chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.2 explores the theoretical issues underpinning my methodology. Two opposing paradigms, the positivist/objective and interpretivist/subjective are compared along with an exposition of interpretive research. A comparison between ethnographic and autoethnographic methods is followed by a discussion of narrative position, voice and self-reflexivity. Section 3.3 presents the research design in terms of defining the sample, primary and secondary data sources and theoretical and practical issues concerning qualitative research. Interview techniques are discussed, followed by the rationale, value and lessons learned from a pilot study. Section 3.4 (organisation, analysis and presentation of data) examines the methods

adopted to transcribe, store, analyse, present and read the data. Finally in the conclusion I revisit and critique the salient points of my methodology.

3.2 Theoretical issues

Here, I review some of the ontological and epistemological issues associated with the interpretation of qualitative data (Silverman, 1993, 2001). The thesis is an autoethnographic (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) interpretation of stories, elicited from members of the Parachute Regiment, taking a narratological approach (Brown, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998) to highlight what I interpreted to be social identity constructs (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Tajfel and Turner, 1985). In order to explicitly include myself in the research, I use the notion of 'narrative position,' derived from Hatch's (1996) 'narration of organisation theory' through the literary concept of four narrative positions: objective observer; minor character; main character; and omniscient viewpoint. Bahktin's (1981) notion of 'voice,' or who was speaking (me or the interviewee) was also important because of *my* self-reflexive sensemaking and subsequent interpretation of the stories. I have also provided an explanation of why I chose to conduct the data analysis using a 'self-reflexive' (referring back to myself) epistemology (e.g., Watson, 1994, 1995, 2001).

3.2.1 Ontological and epistemological issues

According to Humphreys (1999, p.63), "organisational research is underpinned by social research." In framing the research design, two opposing social research paradigms, positivist – objective (e.g., Easterby-Smith, et al., 1991) versus phenomenological – subjective (e.g., Burrell and Morgan, 1979) were considered. I focused on an autoethnographic method of collecting data (Hayano, 1979), for example, narratives of the self (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Richardson, 1994); self-stories (Denzin, 1989); and personal ethnography (Crawford, 1996). This raised several ontological and epistemological issues that I had to address before data collection could begin (Spry,

2001). Stake (1995) highlighted three major differences between the two paradigms I needed to consider:

> "1) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; 2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher; and 3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed" (Stake, 1995, p.37).

In the first instance, in conducting positivist research, there is the tendency to elicit, (re)produce and explain phenomena as generalisations that rationalise the world as out there, observable and reportable in terms of causality, i.e., an objective reality (as in a quantitative methodology (e.g., Easton, 1992). The research paradigm I favoured was to view the nature of human behaviour from a phenomenological (Husserl, 1931), interpretive perspective to help understand how identity is constructed in organisations. I adopted a narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984, 1985b; Stutts and Barker, 1999), viewing my data through an interpretive lens, rather than trying to explain complex social phenomena (i.e., collective identity in organisations) by traditional objectivist research methods, or, through the 'rational world paradigm' (Fisher, 1984). Second, as a member of the tribe, I adopted an autoethnographic approach (Humphreys, 2005a) because my own story helped me frame the method of inquiry as well as me being part of the research itself (Chapter 5). Third, taking phenomenological approach (Husserl, 1931), "signifies a descriptive philosophy of experience" (Urmson and Ree, 1989, p233), but viewing the self from a position that defines all knowledge as personal, and as being constructed "either via belief in personal experience as the route to knowledge [phenomenal/subjective], or, via the belief that knowledge can only be determined by its independence from personal experience [positivist/objective]" (Hatch, 1996, p.14). Finally, regarding the debate over the discovery or construction of knowledge, I am in agreement with Albert et al., (2000) who suggested that ontologically, identity, is best regarded as a process of 'becoming,' that is 'socially constructed' (Tajfel and Turner, 1985), rather than existentially revealed as 'being there' (Sartre, 1957).

As I was returning to my 'tribe' (with all its related anthropological ramifications) (e.g., Malinowski, 1953), in order to generate 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), I needed a research paradigm that enabled my voice, as a member of the tribe to contribute to the research (Bahktin, 1981; Hatch, 1996; Hazen, 1993). Adopting a positivist/objectivist paradigm would have denied me representation (in a self-reflexive, privileged position as an insider, familiar with the organisation's culture, traditions and language), because, I would have had to, as Alasuutari (1995) put it, "gather data that consist[ed] of observations through a single methodological lens" (p.42). By adopting a phenomenological interpretive methodology, I was able to use my own experience in a self-reflexive manner which goes beyond the observe/record constraints of traditional objectivist research.

3.2.2 Interpretive research

This project uses a symbolic-interactionist approach (e.g., Humphreys, 1999), to research into the day to day experiences of Paratroopers, interpreting the narratives, signs and symbols inherent in their culture (Trice and Beyer, 1984; 1993). Cassell and Symon (1994) stated that such qualitative research "is only valid if it examines everyday activity and takes place in the naturalistic setting" (p.5) and "is a process of data transformation [which] brings about an evolution of original, empirical data towards higher conceptual levels of abstraction" (Kandola, 2000, p.585). This abstraction takes place against a background in which "qualitative research is, by definition, stronger on long descriptive narratives [in this case stories and story extracts] than on statistical tables" (Silverman, 2001, p.33). Here, I am attempting to "understand, rather than explain" (Stake, 1995, p.38) my experiences as a Paratrooper, in order to create "an empathetic understanding for the reader through description, sometimes *thick description* [cf., Geertz, 1973], conveying to the reader what experience would convey" (Von Wright, 1971, p. 6), this is interpreted from a personal perspective which involves the "construction of knowledge" (Stake, 1995, p.99).

I conducted or took part in 70 interviews between February 2001 and July 2003, and fully transcribed them myself for later analysis (as 'long descriptive narratives' (Silverman, 2001)), in order to interpret them and formulate my own "hunches about the perspectives of the people who have been studied" (Bryman, 1988, p.77). I was careful to avoid problems inherent in seeking rigid categorisations, or "the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category" (Hammersley, 1992, p.67). This may have left me preoccupied with categorising for "a statistical logic that demanded clearly defined, 'reliable' measures" (Silverman, 2001, p.30), rather than actually searching for meaning and sensemaking in the transcripts (e.g., Brown, 2003; Schwartz, 1987; Weick, 1991, 1993, 1995).

Another epistemological concern was "how sound are the explanations" (Silverman, 2001, p.34) I offer as a result of my interpretations (e.g., Spence, 1982). This is where my self-reflexivity (Cant and Sharma, 1998; Hatch, 1996; Humphreys; 2003; Watson, 1995, 2001) provided an answer. Contrary to Bryman (1988), I am not analysing "brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews ...to provide evidence of a particular convention" (p.77). Rather, I am analysing stories (e.g., Boje, 1995; Gabriel, 1998, 2004) and these stories, which are life story extracts (Widdershoven, 1993), have a beginning, a middle and an end (e.g., Cox and Lyddon, 1997). They are a sequence of events, complete with plot, characterisation and temporal continuity (Czarniawska, 1997) in which I (as a member of the tribe) have a privileged position where Fisher's (1985a) conventions of narrative rationality – narrative coherence (how well the story hangs together) and narrative fidelity (how seemingly true to life the story is) – played a significant part in the interpretation process (Weick and Browning, 1986).

3.2.3 Ethnographic and autoethnographic research

Yin (1994) pointed out a "common flaw [in qualitative research] has been to confuse case studies with ethnographies ...or with participant-observation" (p.12). In choosing to conduct an autoethnography I had to consider three traditional prejudices against the case study strategy: "lack of rigour; little basis for scientific generalisations; and they take too long" (Yin, 1994, p.9/11). The first 'prejudice' is addressed in this case by the quality of my insider knowledge and ability to interpret the detail in the organisation's narratives. The second is a moot point because (arguably) the researched organisation is unique and this thesis is not oriented towards extrapolating a 'grounded theory' from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The third, I considered a necessary evil overcome by tenacity. Additionally, according to Hartley (1994):

> "Case study research consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organisations, or groups within organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and the process involved in the phenomenon under study. The phenomenon is not isolated from it's context ...but is of interest precisely because it is in relation to its context" (p.208/9).

During the initial phase of framing the research question, I considered a case study approach to the field (e.g., Darke et al., 1998; Hamel, et al., 1993; Hartley, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1981, 1994) on the basis that "social anthropology can contribute to organisational behaviour and management research" (Bate, 1997, p.1147). However, for me, the research was also an exercise in autobiographical sociology (Friedman, 1990) which "contains elements of both ethnography (participant observation) and autobiography" (p.60). This thesis is, in the first instance, an ethnography (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993; Fetterman, 1989; Geertz, 1973; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Hatch, 1993; Humphreys et al., 2003; Putnam et al., 1993; Rosen, 1991; Van Maanen, 1973, 1979, 1988), where ethnography may be defined as the study of a particular 'tribe,' through in depth participant observation of a particular culture/group (Geertz, 1973). Secondly, it is autoethnographic (e.g., Ellis and Bochner, 1996, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2001) in Sanday's (1979) sense in that I

was conducting a 'reflexive ethnography' (e.g., Davies, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Horton, 2001; Woolgar, 1988). Hatch's (1996) notion of 'narrative position' and Denzin's (1997) theory of 'interpretive ethnography' convinced me that a self-reflexive approach was appropriate, as Bell (1999) put it:

> "in organisational ethnography the interpreter-observer is no neutral observer, no 'fly on the wall.' Instead, interpretations are produced in quite different cultural, historical and unreproducable contexts; qualitative social research is always shaped by the researcher's own personal values ...political and moral principles" (p.17).

In ethnography the researcher must spend considerable time in the field observing, recording and participating in the subject's organisational life (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Hockey, 1986; Van Maanen, 1973; Irwin, 2002; Kirke, 2000, 2003; Malinowski 1953; Newman and Boyd, 1998; Radcliffe-Brown, 1965; Turner, 1974). Although my Regular service ended in 1982, I am a life member of the Parachute Regiment Association (PRA), which is administered at the Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) in Colchester, UK. I attend monthly meetings at the Nottingham branch of the association (Appendix 1, Constitution of the PRA), I have attended many official and unofficial reunions, funerals and charity events, and I still spend a significant portion of my leisure time in activities with close friends with whom I served. I also socialise with other Paras whom I have met since the end of my service. On the basis that I am still 'in the field' (Van Maanen, 1973) and able to 'observe and record' (Geertz, 1973), I realised that I was engaged in an autoethnographic enterprise (e.g., Ellis, 1998; Ellis and Bochner, 1996, 2000; Hayano, 1979; Holt, 2003; Humphreys, 2005a,b; Jenks, 2002; Jones, 2001; Kideckel, 1997; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Sparkes; 2002; Spry, 2001), and that this document fits into what Ellis and Bochner (2000) described as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p.733). I agree with Cant and Sharma (1998) that "writing up ethnography usually means writing oneself into the account to some degree, if only to explain the vantage point from which the research subjects were observed" (p.10).

3.2.4 Narrative position, voice and reflexivity

If an inappropriate narrative position is adopted, it equates metaphorically to being in the wrong spot with the right map of the territory. The narrative position adopted must accurately reflect the methodology (Fetterman 1989). For Genette (1980) "narratology implies that organisation theory is constituted by text and discourses produced by researching, speaking and writing about organisations" (p.25/6). According to Hatch (1996, p.3) "Genette proposed narratology as a means to understand the relationship between a narrator and the story told." This led Hatch (1996) to explore narration in organisation theory "by focusing on the literary concept of narrative position" (p.3) as developed by Genette (1980, 1982, 1988, 1992). There are four such positions. Based on position 1, the narrator tells the story as an objective observer, "the role of the researcher cannot easily be challenged within this narrative frame" (Hatch, 1996, p.4/5). Position 2 is the narrator as a minor character in the story, "speaking in the first person in which the narrator tells the story using the voice and external perspective of a character observing events enacted by and for others" (Hatch, 1996, p.5/6). In position 3, the main character tells the story, "the narrator is not restricted to discussing only what any outsider could observe, but is allowed to speak as an insider who has privileged information. ...Immersion permits access to contextually embedded meaning, but also makes the insider conscious of his or her own embeddedness" (Hatch, 1996, p.6/8). Evered and Louis (1981) also defined this insider perspective as that of the actor physically and psychologically immersed in the research setting. I adopted position 4, the omniscient viewpoint, because it:

> "is at once the most potent and the most difficult to handle. ...Potent because it offers the narrator the flexibility to move between internal and external perspectives and to use the variety of voices available (including the second person 'you') so that the best communicative strategy for a particular idea can be exploited. It also relieves the monotony associated with a singular voice and introduces the pluralism of multiple perspectives. It is the most difficult because ...the switching between perspectives and voices can result in chaos. ...The loss of the ability to distinguish between narrative positions leads to a sacrifice of perception and understanding. What the omniscient narrator contributes is the possibility of constructing

> multiple perspectives and voices within researchers and research acts" (Hatch, 1996, p8-10).

The concept of 'voice' (Bahktin, 1991; Hazen, 1993; Hermans, 1996a,b) "describes the relationship between the narrator and the narrative act and is captured by whether or not the narrator is a character in the story told" (Hatch, 1996, p.3). Genette (1980) suggested the difference between perspective and voice is the difference between defining 'who sees' and 'who says.' This, according to Hatch (1996) is "comparable to the epistemological question posed in the social sciences by the opposition of objectivity and subjectivity" (p.3). Furthermore, voice in literary theory "is comparable to the question raised by sociologists of knowledge concerning whether the researcher is openly reflexive about his or her involvement [and] ...Applying the concept of narrative voice ...involves examining the relationship between the researcher and research act ...and deciding whether or not the researcher will be represented in the research story told" (Hatch, 1996, p.4). From this viewpoint, imago, "an idealised personification of the self that functions as a main character in narrative" (McAdams, 1996a, p.309), if conceived as voice "would have the capacity to tell, as a subself, a story filled with personalised and contextualised meaning units" (Hermans, 1996, p.332). Hatch's (1996) omniscient viewpoint enables me to reveal aspects of my identity as a member of the Parachute Regiment and embed it in the text, as I do, in Chapter 5, Tam's story, and to appear in some of my interviewees' stories. "We are all authors of our organisational reality as we engage in dialogue with one another" (Hazen, 1993, p.18). According to Hatch (1996):

> "saying or voice ...constructs the communicative link established between the writer and reader of the text. Reflexivity associates writer and reader via an assumption of the possibility of shared experience whereas the absence of reflexivity leaves writers associating with readers on the basis of presumed or claimed authority" (p10/11).

What this means is that a dialogue (e.g., Bahktin, 1981; Hazen, 1993) is also entered into between writer and reader on the basis of an assumption of the possibility of experience, shared, not between the researcher and subject/object of research, but

between the epistemological assumptions that both parties bring to the text. I emphatically agree with Hatch (1996, p.13) that "narrative voice is defined by whether [in positions 2,3,4] or not [position 1] the narrator is a character in the story he or she tells. When the narrator is not part of the story, he or she slips from view in the narrative act and thus narrative position is lost from the discourse." Yes, I could still reflexively adopt positions 2, minor and/or 3, major character in the research story, but by doing so I would still be exposed to the claim that I was liable (through selective bias and influence) to affect my interviewees stories as they were given, and again as I interpreted them. By adopting Hatch's (1996) position 4, omniscient viewpoint, I can "provide the further option of mixing objective and subjective reflexivity. [Because] ...the advantages of the omnipresent position are flexibility and interpretive openness" (Hatch, 1996, p.14).

In order to do this successfully I had to be self-reflexive and admit, reveal and confess points where I (may have) influenced the minds and words of my interviewees (e.g., Watson, 1995). On the basis that you can take me out of the Parachute Regiment but I cannot take the Parachute Regiment out of me, I cannot take Hatch's (1996) first position, i.e., where "the narrator tells the story as an objective observer" (p.4). I have already mentioned I am still a member, through membership of the PRA and am familiar with the history, culture, language [see Glossary, p.3], its songs, legends and myths (Trice & Beyer, 1993), military social structures and discourses (Kirke, 2003) all the way down to individual storytelling events (Georges, 1969) that I took part in, both as a Paratrooper and as interviewer. The position of narrator is important, as part of the Regiment's story are my stories. My stories are as much a part of this thesis as those of my interviewees.' From the perspective of an omniscient viewpoint, I was able to 'test' narrative coherence and narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1985a) and using narrative imagination (Watson, 2000) add insider comments to make sense of and enrich the stories and story extracts Paratroopers told me and confirm, contrast, compare and

critique them during analysis (Section 3.5 below). I cannot distance my 'self' from the research, for I am part of (some) of the my interviewees' stories. I say this because by revealing my personal involvement in the research as subject, I am already acknowledging a privileged perspective, but claim that this potential determines the narrative position I should take, and that this position is reflected, to some degree in *my* reflexivity in conducting and reporting this research. Even if I could, I would not have conducted this research as a member of the tribe and tell the story as an objective researcher because it is impossible not to "write ourselves into the discourses of our audiences" (Hatch, 1996 p.15).

3.3 Research design

This Section defines and discusses the pros and cons of how this research was designed and conducted. Section 3.3.1 defines the sample in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for participation as an interviewee and distinguishes between the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces. Section 3.3.2 sets out what I considered to be primary and secondary data. Primary data is split into two distinct groupings, serving (Regular and Territorial) and 'retired' Paras (members of the PRA) and provides a breakdown of interview profiles in each group and a rationale for selecting the participants. I also highlight problems encountered and the solutions I employed in collecting the data. A pilot study was undertaken to test data collection, practice my interview technique and assist in the selection of interview questions. The pilot results and evolution of interview questions and evaluation of the stories I elicited proved beneficial and confirmed for me that Albert and Whetten's (1985) identity model and Elsbach's (1999) model of identification were adequate frameworks for categorising stories. The secondary data proved useful in this process, and the Section ends with an assessment of secondary data sources. In 3.3 I address issues surrounding the adoption of the qualitative interview (King, 1994; Silverman, 1993, 2001), paying particular attention to ethical issues raised by the pilot study (Dingwall, 1980), including confidentiality

(Official Secrets Act, 1989, Appendix 8), and the need (and rationale) for a pre-interview schedule 'warm up' and post-interview 'cool down' period. The Section includes a discussion of conducting emotional interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997), the selection and screening of potential interviewees, and structured open-response questions (Silverman, 2001). Finally, techniques for probing, leading and switching and what I consider to be evidence of my sensemaking and reflexivity are all addressed.

3.3.1 Defining the sample

The first practical question in this research was, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for an individual to qualify as an interviewee? First, it was necessary to have been trained by and be, or have been, a serving member of the Parachute Regiment, either as a Regular or Territorial soldier. Second, it was necessary to have successfully completed Pre-Parachute Company ('P' Company) Selection and the Basic Parachute Course (4.3, Chapter 4). It was not sufficient to be or have been a Paratrooper, as the Parachute Regiment is, and has been since inception, supported by Airborne units, for example, Engineers, Artillery, Medics, Signals (Appendix 6, 16 Air Assault Brigade Formal Command Structure). These soldiers have also completed 'P' Company and the Basic Parachute Course, but have been trained and enculturated in and by their Corps, and through their traditions, dress and capbadge integrity, maintain a separate identity:

> "More than 100,000 men served in the Airborne Forces during WWII and many thousands more [Approx. 35,000 as at 2002 (Pegasus Coy, ITC Catterick)] have belonged to Airborne Forces (Regular and TA) since 1945. Many have belonged to various Regiments and Corps to which individually they rightly owe their first loyalty" (*Pegasus*, Summer, 2001, p.1).

Even though they may work alongside, enjoy the *esprit de corps* and identify strongly with members of the Parachute Regiment, they are not members of it. Additionally, there are other, non-Airborne, soldiers within the Regiment (Musicians, Clerks and other non-combatants who fulfil ceremonial and functional roles). These soldiers serve in, but have not been trained by the Regiment, and are not part of this research. Significantly, the necessary and sufficient conditions include active members of the PRA, as all

serving soldiers (having completed 'P Company and the Basic Parachute course) automatically become life members upon Passing Out of Basic Training.

3.3.2 Primary and secondary data sources

According to Stake (1995) "there is no particular moment when data gathering begins. It begins before there is agreement to do the study" (p.49). Since this research is a self-reflexive autoethnography, my data gathering began in the summer of 1976, when I first encountered Paratroopers serving in 16 Independent Parachute Company (V), whilst attending a 'look at life' weekend as a prospective TA soldier (see Chapter 5, Tam's story). The primary sources of data for this research, therefore, were my own stories (as a member of the tribe (Malinowski, 1953)) and 70 interviews conducted with members of the PRA and serving soldiers (including one of my TV interview transcripts (27) and interview 6, where I reversed roles with a competent colleague to reflexively experience for myself what my interviewees were going through). The respondents were divided into two main groups. The first (including myself) were all active members of the PRA and included 24 Privates, 12 Junior NCOs, 4 Senior NCOs and 1 Officer. Permission to interview was granted by the Regimental Colonel at RHQ, Colchester, who administers the PRA and with the Secretaries of the branches I approached (Nottingham, Bradford and Milton Keynes). Due to active service commitments during the course of the project, access to the Regular Battalions (1, 2, and 3 Para) was repeatedly postponed. Due to time constraints, in the first instance, I relied on the members of the PRA and 4 Para (V) for data collection (5 Privates, 2 Junior NCOs 2 Senior NCOs and 1 LE Officer) whilst the Battalions were on operations and/or on leave. When I was granted permission I conducted interviews with 3 Privates, 5 Junior NCOs, 5 Senior NCOs and 6 Officers on Regular service in the Regiment. See Table 1 on the next page for interviewee profiles.

Table 1. Interviewee Profiles

Rank	Serving	Soldiers	Retired	Soldiers	
	Regular	Territorial	Regular	Territorial	LE Officers
Private	3	5	19	5	
Lance Corporal	3		6		
Corporal	2	2	4	2	
Sergeant	2		2	1	
Colour Sergeant	1	2			
WOII	1		1		
WOI	1				
Lieutenant	3				
Captain	1				1
Major	1				2
Lt Colonel	1				

One of the characteristics of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition is that which members consider to be enduring about their organisation, therefore, I felt it was necessary to interview Paras who had served from the inception of the Parachute Regiment through the decades to the present. I considered it appropriate to spend the time I was waiting on permission from the Regimental Colonel, conducting interviews with Paras who had served throughout the Regiment's history. As the Regiment was formed in 1941 and most the original soldiers' service was limited to 22 years, (since 1953, enlisted soldiers and LE Officers are limited to 37 years) the only way to obtain this data was from 'retired' Paras. I ensured I interviewed soldiers who had served in each decade from the 1940s. Later, in the data collection process, I was granted access to both 2 and 3 Para, most of whom had just returned from active service in Iraq in June and July 2003. Permission was at the discretion of the Commanding Officer of each unit I approached, and this further compounded the difficulties in gaining access. Eventually the second group (of serving soldiers) comprised of 3 Privates, 5 Junior NCOs, 6 senior NCOs and 6 Officers in Regular service, and 5 Privates and 2 Junior NCOs, 1 Senior NCO and 1 Officer in Territorial service, giving a total of 29 serving soldiers, representing all 4 Battalions that comprise the Parachute Regiment.

Data collection started with a pilot study to anticipate and deal with potential problems before data collection began in earnest. According to Stake (1995), "trying out the questions in pilot form, at least in mental rehearsal should be routine [and] ...formulating the questions and anticipating probes that evoke good responses is a special art" (p.65). On this basis I decided to probe for three broad categories of stories - joining, immersion and leaving (at this stage I had not secured permission to interview soldiers serving in the Regular Battalions) to isolate any specific emergent identity themes that related to central, distinct and enduring characteristics (Albert and Whetten, 1985), and identification themes consistent with Elsbach's (1999) model of identification. The latter was problematised by the fact that it was impossible for serving soldiers to relate their own leaving stories. Therefore, I substituted the speculative for the historical by asking 'what will you do when you leave the Regiment?'

The original questions were the result of gut feelings from my own service, attendance at reunions and a review of the abundant secondary data (reviewed below) that I had collected down the years. These helped set the pilot agenda in conjunction with probing for the features of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity and Elsbach's (1999) model of identification in an attempt to conceptualise identity using McAdams (1996a) three level frame work for studying personality. After analysing the results of the pilot study, I expanded the questions to probe for identity and identification issues, including, what a reassessment of the secondary data indicated may be important to the Paras I interviewed. For example, joining questions became more focused – 'what were you doing before you joined the Paras?' to find out how much the interviewee knew about the Regiment before signing up and "why did you join?" to see if there were any specific pre-identification themes. Similarly, immersion stories were focused on issues I believed to be central, distinctive and enduring, for example a specific probe was - "how did you feel when you were presented with your red beret?" and more generally, "what was it like when you went to Battalion?" A third group was

aimed at eliciting other identification themes, more in line with Elsbach (1999) – "when did you actually feel that you were a Paratrooper?" and "why did you leave?" Appendix 4 charts the evolution of the format and content of the semi-structured open response approach I adopted (King, 1994).

As part of the pilot study, I contacted and interviewed eight members of the PRA (myself included), plus two serving soldiers who were based in Nottingham at the time. Additionally, I accessed messageboards on official (e.g., theparachute-regiment.com) and unofficial (e.g., ex-para.co.uk/forum; Red Devils Worldwide) websites and posted messages that I was looking for volunteers (Appendix 2). However, I did not appreciate the logistics involved in reaching the many potential interviewees who responded, and since telephone interviews or internet chatrooms did not satisfy my conditions to collect 'rich data' (King, 1994) face-to-face, I networked, principally through the Bradford, Nottingham and Milton Keynes branches of the PRA (details above). In this way I was able to achieve continuity throughout the Regiment's entire history (to 2003) and probe for enduring characteristics (Albert and Whetten, 1985) whilst eliciting stories and story extracts from soldiers who have served in every decade

Fetterman (1989) has suggested qualitative researchers begin by "mixing and matching with everyone they can at first" (p.43) and this exercise opened up other opportunities. I contacted several reunion groups and began to network and attend events, for example, official (e.g., the Para 2 Club) and unofficial reunions (e.g., 2 Para Reunion Club), along with one-off and ad-hoc events (Appendix 2). For example, the Drumhead Service for Falklands Veterans at Colchester, arranged by RHQ in June 2002, provided more scope to network with the then Regimental Colonel and Commanding Officers and RSMs of 2 and 3 Para. Additionally, by attending reunions I was able to assess suitable candidates for this research and practice interview techniques and take field notes (e.g., Silverman, 2001, p.64).

The primary data were gathered in the form of 70 fully transcribed interviews conducted between February 2001 and July 2003, either by visiting a place of work or at home for the PRA members and in barracks for the serving soldiers. Interviews of between 30 and 120 minutes were conducted. As mentioned, two interviews were exercises in reflexivity. In order to understand and feel what my interviewees were going through, particularly in terms of emotion and stress, early on in the process I was interviewed (number 6) by a colleague with whom I served in 2 Para. He had pointed out that during his interview (number 3) he became upset and emotional and suggested he interview me, using the same format to see what it felt like. This provided a valuable insight into the process of data collection and allowed me to improve my interview technique and avoid the pitfalls described in Section 3.3.3, below. Additionally, I conducted a series of interviews for Central Television in May 2002, covering the 20th Anniversary of Operation Corporate, the Falklands War (interview 27). The TV company wanted my story as part of a series for public interest broadcasts and because I was collecting data, I felt the exercise included a good source for Chapter 5, Tam's story. In all, the interviews yielded a total of 686,000 words from 59 hours of personally transcribed tape recorded data.

As mentioned, an intrinsic part of framing the qualitative interview schedule (for both the pilot study and the main data collecting process) was gathering examples and extracts from the burgeoning secondary data available on the Regiment (Appendix 3, Secondary data, samples and extracts). I began reading books - documentaries (e.g., Adkin, 1992; Bridson, 1989; Hilton, 1983; Hunter, 1999; Parker, 2002), and autobiographical accounts (e.g., Asher, 1991; Bland, 1995; Colbeck, 2002) and collected back copies of the Regiment's yearbook and monthly magazine (biannual as of 2001) *Pegasus*. I also surfed websites (e.g., theparachuteregiment.co.uk) and downloaded historical documents and watched multimedia documentaries (e.g.,: Gladiators of World

war Two, The Paras; Line of Fire, Goose Green; Paras, the official story; Red Berets, The real Story, I & II). Throughout data collection, I was also shown, and given samples from private collections of Parachute Regiment paraphernalia – for example, brass Paratrooper figurines, pewter mugs, Regimental wall plaques, reproduction and limited prints and paintings, wall mounted individual, unit and group photographs, medals, T shirts, tattoos (facsimiles), personal citations and testimonials, various trophies of combat and service and I flicked through a multitude of photograph albums. Indeed, I was informed that there were two types of collectors – those that had a few scattered mementoes in a drawer somewhere (like me) and at the other extreme, those with dedicated 'shrines' (Appendix 5, Sample field notes). Some were more like museums! As mentioned, I also collected and recorded as field notes, miscellaneous anecdotes and stories because qualitative research "relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion and as another result" (Yin, 1994, p.13; cf., Stake, 1995, p.107 - 120).

3.3.3 The qualitative interview

According to King (1994, p.14), "without doubt, the most widely used qualitative method in organisational research is the interview." That said, King (1994) also stated that "there is no one way of using qualitative research interviews" (p.35). Kvale (1983) suggested the interview's purpose "is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174). The aim of this thesis is to elicit the 'phenomena' of narrative identity constructs and processes of identification from my interviewees' stories (e.g., Brown and Humphreys, 2002). The ideal vehicle was the qualitative interview because I needed to "focus on how participants in this research described and made sense" (King, 1994, p.18) of their lives as Paratroopers. Additionally, "potential participants must be assured of confidentiality and be told clearly for whom the research is being carried out and what it hopes to achieve" (King, 1994, p.21). The pilot indicated some serious ethical

and security concerns, as, due to the sensitive nature of the subject material, there were constraints under the Official Secrets Act (1989). Two considerations were, then, ethics and confidentiality (Dingwall, 1980). The interviewees had to agree to participate voluntarily and understand what the rationale of the interview was and agree what would happen to the data once transcribed and analysed (Silverman, 2001, p.54-57). I drew up a pre-interview schedule based on McCracken's (1988) 'Standard Ethics Protocol' "to be read by interviewer before the beginning of the interview" (p.9) (Appendix 4). Furthermore, as mentioned, it became apparent early on in the study that the subject nature was indeed highly emotive for the participant (and me), and lengthy opening and closing sessions prior and post interview proved to be helpful in achieving satisfactory outcomes for both parties. Another set of issues, particularly amongst serving soldiers, concerned national security. For example, during data collection, members of the Regiment were on active service in Iraq, on IS duty in Belfast, and the Saville Inquiry on Bloody Sunday was taking place. I knew these and similar issues could (and did) provoke extreme reactions in my interviewees. I drew on King's (1994) advice on "emotionally charged subjects" (p.24) whilst drawing up the interview schedule (Appendix 4, Interview schedule). This was based on Holstein and Gubrium's (1997) advice on emotionalism because:

> "interviewers should try to formulate questions and provide an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication [because] ...emotionalist interviews want to access the *subject* behind the person given the role of the interview respondent. The particular concern is with *lived experience.* Emotions are treated as central to such experience" (p.116).

I needed to include an interview format that would alert me to undesirable emotions in time to abort the interview and more importantly, spend time counselling post interview if necessary. In the majority of cases, at least 20 minutes were spent talking 'shop' as an antecedent to the interview, except some interviews conducted with serving soldiers, due to time constraints (theirs, not mine). Additionally, it became necessary to debrief each participant after the interview until I was satisfied with their (and my) "emotional state and outcome" (King, 1994, p.22). This often expanded a one hour interview schedule to

a process that could take anywhere between three and five hours. The main benefit was that the strategy helped ease any misapprehension on the part of the participant. As part of the arrangement, none of the 'warm up' and 'cool down' processes were taped. This, again, was principally due to the sensitive nature of the subject material. Paras talk appears to be centred on combat (Chapter 6). Apart from national security issues, reflexively, I myself understand it to be an unpleasant experience and can involve death, often of close friends in distressing circumstances. It is not subject matter that was everyday conversation with these men, and many interviewees found it difficult, and some were reluctant, to have their emotions taped. As a result, probing and addressing these issues often aroused suspicion in the interviewee. I decided, after my own experience (interview 6), that as a demonstration of trust and confidentiality, personal issues (even names, Section 3.4.1) would be kept private, unless the respondent willingly addressed them during the interview. Furthermore, during the process of selecting candidates, I had to go beyond McCracken's (1988) 'Standard Ethics Protocol' and spend time before arranging or conducting an interview "to talk face to face in isolation with the respondent and assess their potential as a prospective interviewee" (King, 1994, p.20/21). As a result, I considered several potential interviewees unsuitable for this research mainly due to what I perceived as their potential susceptibility to adverse emotional stress.

One advantage of this interviewing process was that it prompted access to autobiographic/life story memories (e.g., Eysenck and Keane, 1997; McAdams, 1994, 1996a,b) that produced quality data or 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) during the interview itself. Similarly, talking shop, post interview, often led to dialogue during which some interviewees produced Parachute Regiment artifacts and entered into unsolicited storytelling events (Georges, 1969) surrounding the item. On several occasions this had the effect of the participant asking for the tape to be switched on again due to associative and episodic memories being triggered, and at other times field

notes were written as soon as convenient. As mentioned, questions themselves were posed in a *structured open-response* interview format in which:

> "a quick, descriptive account of a topic is required, without formal hypothesis testing. ...Factual information is to be collected, but there is uncertainty about what and how much information participants will be able to provide. [And] ...where the nature and range of participants' likely opinions about the research topic are not well known in advance and cannot easily be quantified" (King, 1994, p.17).

By questioning, probing, leading and switching, sensemaking and reflexivity were aided during the interviews. My knowledge and understanding of the Regiment, I believe, improved the quality of the interviews. In each case, particularly during warm up, I was able to gauge if the stories I was being told hung together well and check if they rang true (Weick and Browning, 1986). I was also able to evaluate, for example, Polkinghorne's (1996) omissions; Boje's (1991) glossing and terse storytelling; Gabriel's (2000) delicate fragments of sense; Barry's (1997) partial accounting; and Martin et al's., (1983) scripts, and found no problems filling in the 'gaps' in the interviewees' stories (Dunne, 1995). However, a downside to my autoethnographic approach was that too many omissions could spoil a transcript. It may have seemed coherent to me during the interview but I could not guarantee I would remember the details months later during analysis. Therefore, when in doubt during the recording process, I asked simple questions that were contextually embedded, but which I knew from the pilot would help my narrative imagination (Kearney, 1995; Watson, 2000) in interpreting stories and story extracts during data analysis. Leading was much the same as probing but switching was a tactic I used when the respondent dried up, digressed, avoided or failed to follow my lead. In these instances, I switched subject to one that elicited a response and moved the dialogue forward. Fortuitously, an indication of my self-reflexivity, came unexpectedly at the end of interview number 3:

> 3:529 *How would you have felt if I was just an academic ...just come from university, sat down and did this interview with you?*
> I'd ask myself the question, 'could you fully appreciate what I was telling you. Could you ...understand ...relate to what I am telling you?' ...I think anybody coming from a different angle ...can't fully take in and grasp

exactly what's happened ...what's happening, within the Regiment. They'd find it very difficult. They would have to be a part of it to understand, fully what's happening.
It kind of helped ...that I know?
Well you can tell, you relate to it, I mean there may be things that I ...may miss ...slight things, and you might just slightly prompt. ...You'd know how to prompt, because you'd know what I'm talking about. You could follow, ...you're on the same level. Somebody else wouldn't know how to prompt so therefore ...their interview wouldn't have been totally 100 percent. Probably get maybe about 80 percent of it. 544

Finally, because the aim of the qualitative interview is "to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why he or she comes to have this particular perspective" (King, 1994, p.14), I think the above extract demonstrates that this research benefited from my autoethnographic stance.

3.4 Organisation, analysis and the presentation of data

Here I consider transcription for storytelling and the methodology I used to personally transcribe from recorded tapes to computer disk, including samples of transcription, problems encountered, and data storage. The methodology of how I analysed and presented the data, in particular categorisation and themes, and their associated problems, are discussed, including the organisation of interviews by rank, status and service. Samples of how I present stories and narrative fragments are also provided. Finally, a brief guide on how to read the data presentation and analysis Chapters is given, including my use of tenses during presentation (Chapters, 6,7,8,9) and my subsequent discussion of readings of the data in Chapter 10.

3.4.1 Transcription and data storage

This thesis is based on eliciting stories from tape recorded data, therefore, emphasis was on transcription for storytelling, not conversation analysis (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1974; Silverman, 1998) or discourse analysis (e.g., Potter, 1996, 1997; Silverman, 1993). Transcription coding for analysis purposes (e.g., Lapadat, 2000; Silverman, 2001) was limited to placing the interviewer's words in '*Times New Roman Italics*' and

the interviewee's in 'Times New Roman' (see extract below). Each transcript was line numbered using the line numbering facility in Microsoft Word. The transcripts were sequentially numbered in the order they were conducted, for example 5: 162, where 5 refers to the interview number and 162 represents the 162nd line of that transcript (below). Additionally, for each narrative, I prefixed the number and line to the '**thus highlighted selected extract in Times New Roman Bold**' and suffixed it with the line number where the extract ended, as follows:

From transcript number 5.

162 *Some guys used the word cohesion.*
163 Yeah, well, it could have been owt like that. They, we was, we was knitting
164 closer together, yeah, cos we were all tackling the same thing, you know. And
165 if we seen a weakness, be honest with you, if we seen a weakness, eh, we for
166 good or bad, you was, it was spotted, and **166if a guy was struggling on one**
167 **thing. It might have been a good piss up, a good session the night before,**
168 **but we knew his character from previous going through, and we, if we**
169 **could carry him, we unite, we unite, we knitted together, Tam, you know**
170 **what I mean. And we was like, we was like ehm, brothers.170** We'd lived
171 together that long, you know, with your pals, you know we was only going
172 through the course, but was reacting as if we, as if we was living together ages,
173 and you look after each other and things like that, we was getting ...it was just
174 that little bit of a thing, it's eh, going with **174the challenge of getting that,**
175 **getting your wings and your red beret, and you'd got so far, and you'd gone**
176 **through hell and high water176** sort of thing, you know.

The extract would be copied and pasted to where it was stored in a Word folder labelled 'stripped transcripts' under a corresponding file name, e.g., 'Interview No.5,' leaving the original transcript intact with the **highlighted extract** visible for when (and if) I returned to the original transcript to contextualise the extracted text and check for further emplotment and characterisation. In storage, each selection was returned to Times New Roman and separated by a blank line, as follows:

166 if a guy was struggling on one thing. It might have been a good piss up, a good session the night before, but we knew his character from previous going through, and we, if we could carry him, we unite, we unite, we knitted together, Tam, you know what I mean. And we was like, we was like ehm, brothers.170

174 the challenge of getting that, getting your wings and your red beret, and you'd got so far, and you'd gone through hell and high water.176

King (1994) advised that to "successfully transcribe a one hour interview can take even an experienced researcher up to eight hours ...and two to three days to analyse in depth" (p.20) and I found my method of copying and pasting stories and extracts eliminated irrelevant, unintelligible or unusable portions of text and speeded up this process. This distilled the interview transcript to a more manageable level for later analysis. There were other obstacles to be overcome with the transcription process - instances of laughter, talking over each other, background and accidental interruptions, accents, dialects and their elisions and unintelligible utterances. Where these instances occurred question marks '?' were inserted into the transcripts and edited out during data presentation. Finally, due to the sensitive nature of the subject, confidentiality of the interviewee and persons alluded to, directly and indirectly, was achieved by transcribing only Christian names (or nicknames, pseudonyms etcetera) and substituting surnames with a series of 'X's,' where each X represented a letter of the surname. For example, I would be transcribed as Tam (or 'Jock') XXXXXXXXXXX (Thornborrow). This allowed me to identify the character retrospectively, without having to replay the tape. In addition, if I used an extract (rather than a story) as a quote, embedded in the text of a data presentation Chapter, I enclosed the interview number and beginning and end line numbers in square brackets ([ ]) at the end of the quote. For example:

> 'We had a chap in 2 Para a fellow called Taffy XXXXX, and he was notorious for impersonating Officers' [20: 201-202].

3.4.2 Data storage

All the interviews were recorded onto micro cassettes and were transcribed verbatim onto a computer hard drive. A copy of each transcript was forwarded from home to my system drive at the research facility as electronic back-up. Additionally, copies were backed-up on floppy disks and kept in an alternative safe location. The transcripts were also converted to hard copy, one kept in a box file with the floppy disks and another used during data analysis as an aid to locating and cross referencing extracts and stories. These were sorted according to the interviewees current or last rank and divided into

two folders – 'serving' and 'retired' soldiers, which were again divided into 'Regular' and 'Territorial' services. Field notes were either dictated into a Dictaphone or hand written and sorted and stored in dedicated folders according to the date and venue of the event I attended. For example, official reunions, funerals, and memorial parades tended to be sombre affairs where note taking was made immediately post the event for reasons of confidentiality, ethics and integrity.

3.4.3 Data analysis and presentation

Before considering presentation, the major question was why was I analysing the data? The research, taking a narratological approach (Brown, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998) required the autoethnographic (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) interpretation, categorisation and analysis of stories and story extracts from which to elicit socially constructed identity characteristics and identification processes in an arguably unique organisation. Prior to transcription I spent some time listening to each tape recording (usually driving home after the event) to familiarise myself with the interviewee's accent and dialect and to get a 'feel' for the content of the tape. The advantage was that during transcription, most of the problems I encountered were smoothed out beforehand, but significantly, themes and categories around which I could organise narratives started to crystallise early on in the data collection. This was significantly aided by the huge amount of secondary data (mostly documentaries, videos, films and books) I had either collected or had access to.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 had already given me an idea of how to initially categorise the stories using the three elements of Albert and Whetten's (1985) identity definition (that which members of an organisation consider to be central, distinctive and enduring), and Elsbach's (1999) model of identification: identification; dis-identification; schizo-identification; and neutral-identification. As part of this process, I also had the notional constructs of image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991) and reputation

(Fombrun and Shanley, 1990) to organise. My objective was to analyse the transcripts for patterns of narratives clustering around these concepts. I started to copy and paste them into designated Word folders, however this process was complicated by their open ended nature. Taking, for example, Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition, the red beret is at the same time distinctive (head-dress), central (symbolic of achievement) and enduring (since formation) whilst simultaneously an indirect organisational symbol of image (recognition) and reputation (elite fighting force). Military parachuting is central (operational transport), enduring (prime function) but not uniquely distinctive (Airborne Forces; SAS; SBS; RAF Regiment; and Royal Marines volunteers are all para trained). On the other hand, with image and reputation, parachuting is portrayed as distinctive and central (external; media, internal; symbolic rite of passage, image) but not necessarily enduring (indeed, the Regiment has not always parachuted into battle). Therefore, how a story was coded depended on the embedded situational storytelling event (Georges, 1969) and the context in which the dialogue took place. This is where my strategy of confirming gaps such as omissions, glossing and terse storytelling, during interview recording and listening to the tape post-interview proved valuable in contextualising stories and story extracts.

Two interdependent issues provided the foundation for the final format in which my findings were presented – *type* of story or extract, and the *content*. The literature review has already indicated there were many types and exemplars of stories commonly found in organisations (e.g., Beech, 2000; Gabriel, Jeffcutt, 1994a,b; Martin et al., 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1993). At this stage, the primary data analysis carried out as part of the pilot study, helped significantly in visualising and contextualising what I interpreted to be identity constructs and translating them into themes under the categories outlined in my discussion of Albert and Whetten (1985) and Elsbach (1999). After deciding on context, for example, a parachuting story that involved overcoming fear, was placed in 'central characteristics,' but if it was about being 'distinct' (parachuting), it went into the

'distinctive characteristics' folder. Once I was satisfied that I had elicited and apportioned the majority of the stories and story extracts I had compiled from the transcribed data, I placed them in one of nine categories (three for Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition, plus image and reputation and four for Elsbach (1999)). In each category, I further distilled the stories and story extracts into sub-categories. For example, in Chapter 6, Centrality stories, I created three category headings I termed: *combat, pressure* and *bonding*. Stories and story extracts were further distilled into specific story types which I considered to be the most common under that heading. For example, under *combat* I created the sub-headings of 'craving combat,' 'contact' and 'courage.' I used the same sub-dividing format for all the nine categories mentioned. The stories and extracts were then identified according to status, either as a 'serving soldier,' or 'retired' (which included a chronological listing). These were ranked Private to Lt Colonel and allocated as either 'Territorial' or 'Regular' service. This process allowed comparisons between rank, dates and length of service, Regular and Territorial soldiers.

Once I was satisfied that I had the majority of the common story types categorised and labelled, analysis was simply a matter of assessing which sub-headings were to be included in the data presentation Chapters. As part of this process, I returned to the 'stripped' transcripts and started collating short extracts that contextually reflected the stories and story extracts I had categorised and along with some extracts from unused narratives, employed these to support my arguments for including them in the subsequent data presentation Chapters. The stories and extracts I selected for use, were then edited to remove background speech idiosyncrasies and elisions, for example, 'eh,' 'know what I mean,' and 'you know.' Where part of the narrative was extraneous to the story, it was removed and three dots '...' were inserted in the text to indicate words had been removed from the original transcript. Additionally, punctuation and grammar was added for the sake of clarity though I ensured that the process did not interfere with

interpretation of the text. The supporting extracts from the transcripts were then italicised (*Times New Roman Italic*) to differentiate them from the body of text. Transcript line numbers were then checked and after the last word, the interview and line number/s where the extract ended was added, for example:

> *'I want to be going where it is at ...at the thick of it if possible ...while I am in the Paras'* [62: 264 – 265].

Where I considered that the extract was a full story or a long a narrative fragment I used Times New Roman type face and indented and reduced it to single line, as was practice in Chapter 2. The interview number and line number preceding the extract and the line number where the text extracted ended was placed at the end as follows - 2: 45 [story text] 53. In addition, where I used a quote from a secondary data source, I treated it as an extract from literature and did not italicise it to make this distinction between extracts in the text, for example:

> "As tenacious and determined in defence as they are courageous in attack" (Bridson, 1989, p.7).

I found the issue of the use of tenses to originally be problematic in the writing up of my analysis as there were interviewees who were purely reflecting on their service and using past tense. Others were serving and were talking in the present tense and this was further complicated by these interviewees also reflecting on their past. The simple solution was to treat the Regiment as an ongoing narrative (Czarniawska, 2004) and write as if I am describing it in the present. Where an interviewee did refer to a past event, I used the past tense to indicate that he was doing so. To distinguish between story category and type I italicised *categories* (e.g., *combat*) or used inverted comas for 'story types' (e.g., 'craving combat'). Finally, in the following Chapters, for brevity, and to avoid constant repetition of 'Section,' any indication or allusion to another I simply gave the Section number and Chapter, as follows: *difference* (7.3, Chapter 7) stories (or e.g., 'ready for anything,' (6.4.5, Chapter 6), or, where brackets were inappropriate: as in 7.3, Chapter 7, *difference* stories.

3.4.4 Reading the data

Chapter 4 provides a background to the organisation featured in this research. It serves as an introduction to the Parachute Regiment, covers its history and structure and includes a breakdown of the basic training, forms of dress and opportunities available to enlisted men and Commissioned Officers. I have also differentiated between the three main parts that make up the organisation – full time Regular, part time Territorial and members of the PRA. Chapter 5 is my own story and describes how I came to be a Paratrooper and charts my progress through basic training and my career as a qualified soldier including, the main events and opportunities that led me to become an academic. Chapter 5 builds on the organisation's background and contextualises the organisation in preparation for understanding our stories in the main data presentation Chapters of this thesis.

Each of the data presentation Chapters (6, 7, 8) use Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity. Chapter 6, covers centrality, Chapter 7, distinctive, and Chapter 8, enduring stories and story extracts. Each is broken down into *categories* of stories which address the main themes I elucidated from the interpretation and analysis of the primary and secondary data. In turn these are broken down into 'types of stories' Likewise, Chapter 9 presents my findings in terms of Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification where two main Sections address the 'strong' and 'weak' aspects of organisational identification. In all data presentation Chapters, each 'story type' or 'identification theme' is preceded by a rationale for its selection and is illustrated with one participant's story, supported by extracts from other transcripts, along with a discussion as to why I chose the title of the theme, and its relevance to the characteristic or process of identification. Finally, Chapter 10 in which I interpret my findings and discuss the outcomes through four readings, one on issues of representation – autoethnography (e.g., Humphreys, 2005a,b), and three topics related to organisational identity - narcissism (e.g., Brown, 1997); psychological contracts (e.g., Rousseau, 1995)

and dress and identity (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1996). Chapter 11 addresses the main findings of this thesis and considers what was left out before making some recommendations for future research.

3.5 Conclusion

The methodology I adopt in this research is based on a phenomenological interpretive perspective, using narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984, 1985b) and seeking to interpret qualitative data (Silverman, 2001). It is an autoethnographic account (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) of the Parachute Regiment in which narrative identities are elicited via the interpretation of Paratroopers stories, using a narratological approach (Czarniawska, 1998) to extract social identity constructs (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) via 70 fully transcribed interviews. This was done by taking Hatch's (1996) omniscient viewpoint, in which narrative voice (Bahktin, 1981) allowed me to adopt a self-reflexive epistemology (Watson, 2001).

The definition of the sample indicated the necessary and sufficient conditions to be a participant in the research and showed that interviewees had to have been trained by the Regiment and that their stories provided the primary data. Secondary data included a wide range of multimedia documentation and cultural artifacts produced officially and unofficially by and for the organisation and its members. A pilot study offered a critical assessment of the prospective methodology after which the lessons learned were utilised in carrying out data collection, analysis and presentation. The study used a qualitative interview format (King, 1994) with structured open-response questions (Silverman, 2001), and a methodology of emotionalism (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). Issues of ethics (McCracken, 1999) and national security were paramount in framing the interview schedule. The penultimate Section discussed transcription for storytelling and samples of transcribed text were provided and the problems encountered with transcription and how they were and overcome were discussed. My method of data

storage was presented and this was followed by an overview of how I analysed, categorised and presented the data, including samples of my presentation of extracts. Finally I gave a brief guide on how to read the data as presented in the analysis and presentation Chapters.

Chapter 4

The Parachute Regiment.

'There has been no single performance by any unit that has more greatly inspired me or more excited my imagination than the nine day action by the 1st British Airborne Division between September 17 and 25' (General Dwight Eisenhower, 1944).

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter serves two purposes. First, it is an historical and structural representation of the subject organisation of this thesis, the British Parachute Regiment. Here, I provide an insight into the training, distinctive dress and insignia worn in the organisation. Second, the narrative in this Chapter functions as an introductory precursor to my data analysis and presentation Chapters. At this point in my thesis I recommend reading the Glossary I provided on page 3. Section 4.2 summarises the history, structure and military role of the Regiment, including Territorial soldiers, and includes a brief introduction to the Parachute Regiment Association (PRA). This is followed in 4.3 by an description of the training undertaken by a Paratrooper and finally, 4.4, describes the dress, insignia and cultural artefacts at the core of the Regiment's identity.

The Regiment has its roots in the 1939 – 1945 world war in reaction to the success of the German *Fallschirmjaeger* at Eben Emael, Belgium, during the *Blitzkrieg* of the Spring of 1940 (Hilton, 1983, p.49/50). The new force drew entirely on volunteers from the only special forces available for their inspiration, the Army Commandos. However, this force was to be a specialist Airborne unit that worked closely with all three services, Army, Navy and Airforce and this *modus operandi* suited the Commando ethos of hit and run raiding. Therefore, the founders of the Regiment adopted the Commandos' selection and training processes. Entry was initially volunteer-only for serving soldiers and remained policy until 1953, when direct entry (from civilian life) for enlisted ranks

first took place, followed in 1958 by the direct recruitment of Commissioned Officers (geocities.com/heartland; Parker, 2002, p.170).

Historically and culturally, a regiment is an amalgamation of troops forming a distinct unit, normally organised under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel. Until the 19th Century the norm was a single battalion-regiment, thus, the terms 'regiment' and 'battalion' became almost synonymous (regiments.org/milhist.co.uk). For brevity, the formal command and functional structures are itemised in Appendix 6 – Structures, Roles, and Opportunities in the Parachute Regiment. The following brief history includes references to the twelve battle honours won by the Regiment since its inception. A battle honour is awarded as a token of the sovereign's recognition of a particularly distinguished and gallant action carried out by the Regiment and are displayed on the Regiment's colours (army.mod.uk/battlehonours). Their importance is, I believe, fundamental in the Paras as they represent an arguably glorious history and are learned by every soldier as part of the training process, and the stories of the exploits of the soldiers who won them can, as I interpret it, become an important perceived ideal to live up to.

4.2 A brief history

Here, I chart the history of the Paras in two parts. First, from their beginning in 1940, through the World War II (WWII) campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, across Northern and Southern Europe to the largest airborne operation ever launched, the Rhine Crossing in 1945. Second, I summarise the activities of the Paras in 'peacetime' from 1946 to 2005.

4.2.1 In the beginning

On 22 June 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in a minute to Army Chiefs of Staff (Reynolds, 1990), called for the formation of "a corps of at least five thousand

parachute troops, suitably organised and equipped" (p.5). After initial trials, in a report by the Air Staff on 12 August 1940, Churchill was told "we are inclining to the view that dropping troops by parachute is a clumsy and obsolescent method" (Hunter, 1999, p.7). The advice was ignored, because Churchill still had one eye on the success and daring of the German *Fallschirmjaeger*. Ringway civilian airport at Manchester was chosen as the home of the first Parachute Training School and "on 08 July 1940, 150 volunteers from No 2 Commando were selected for parachute training" (Reynolds, 1998, p.225). On 13 July 1940 the "first recorded parachute descents [were made] by No 2 Commando [and] ...the first course began on 21 July" (Hunter, 1998, p.255) and "by the 21st September 1940, twenty-one Officers and 321 other ranks had been accepted for parachute training" (parachute-regiment.com). The same month (15 September 1940), "the title of the new parachute unit was changed from 11th Special Air Service (no connection with the modern day SAS), to 1st Parachute Battalion" (Reynolds, 1990, p.94), then to "1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parachute Regiments of the 1st Parachute Brigade" (geocities.com/heartland) as the fledgling airborne capacity increased to a Brigade size and formation. However, it was in the guise of the 11th Special Air Service Battalion that the first British parachute operation of WWII took place. Code-named Operation Colossus, at Tragino Aqueduct in Italy on 10 February, 1941 (parachute-regiment.com), "thirty-eight men dropped from six Whitley bombers to blow up an aqueduct and deprive Italian forces of water, thus slowing up their war effort in North Africa" (Hunter, 1999, p.23). The aqueduct was destroyed "but the entire force was captured as they headed for their rendezvous" (parachute-regiment.com).

In October 1941 Major General Browning DSO was ordered to "form an Airborne Division and continued to recruit and train volunteers, including on 18 October, 1941, the 151st Para Battalion formed from soldiers serving in India" (parachute-regiment.com), later to be joined by the "152nd (Indian) and 153rd (Gurkha) Para Battalions, trained by the Third Parachute Training School at New Delhi in India"

(Hunter, 1998, p.17). This enlargement continued until the end of 1942 and "under his guidance [Gen. Browning] the Parachute Regiment was formally established as a regiment on 1st August 1942" (geocities.com/heartland). However, before this formality occurred, "on the night of 27/28 February 1942 members of the new 1st Airborne Division dropped into action again at Bruneval, Northern France. Code-named operation Biting, the plan was to dismantle and bring back for scientific evaluation, technology from a Wurtzburg precision radar dish" (Hunter, 1999, p.27). One hundred and twenty men of C (Jock) Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion jumped, in "perfect weather conditions" (parachute-regiment.com), from a fleet of twelve Whitley bombers. Three men were killed and seven wounded but the operation was such a success, Churchill applauded and "guaranteed the Paras wartime future" (parachute-regiment.com). This action earned the fledgling Regiment its first battle honour, Bruneval.

4.2.2 North Africa, Sicily and Italy

Allied forces invaded Algeria and Morocco on 08 November 1942 and the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Parachute Brigade "made the first operational battalion drop in a successful assault on Bone Airfield, Tunisia, on 12 November, 1942" (parachute-regiment.com), "which was held until the [British] 1st Army arrived" (Hunter, 1999, p.40). The next action was awarded another battle honour to add to the Regiment's Colours (4.4, below). On 29 November, 1942, the 2nd Battalion, 1st Parachute Brigade, parachuted into Oudna, Tunisia, secured the airfield and held it throughout 30th November despite counter-attacks by German and Italian armour and aircraft. From 1st – 3rd December the Battalion fought its way back to friendly forces with losses of 16 Officers and 210 men (army.mod.uk/infantry). Such were the fighting skills of the 1st Parachute Brigade, "that in February, 1943, when Paras captured a group of 200 Germans ...they discovered they were carrying special instructions telling how best to fight the *Rote Teufel* [Red Devil]" (parachute-regiment.com). It was during this campaign that "the name 'Red Devils' became synonymous with the Parachute Regiment" (Reynolds, 1990, p.32). This was

due to the red sand staining their uniforms, and not because it was the maroon colour of the beret.

On 27 March, 1943, the 1st Parachute Brigade attacked the Tamera position, a vital sector of the Axis defensive system on the left coastal flank in Tunisia and "by last light on 30th March, after very heavy fighting, all enemy resistance had ceased and all objectives had been secured" (army.mod.uk/infantry). For this action the Paras were awarded another battle honour. The 1st Parachute Brigade remained in continuous action for two months before "in mid-April, the Brigade [was] finally relieved and went back to Algiers for a well earned rest" (Hunter, 1999, p.50). By this time, the Paras had taken part in more battles than any other formation in the 1st Army and "by the end of the campaign the 1st Parachute Brigade had lost some 1700 casualties [and] ..had taken over 3500 prisoners" (Hunter, 1999, p.51), whilst inflicting more than 5000 casualties on the enemy (parachute-regiment.com).

Meanwhilst, the 1st Airborne Division was expanding. The 2nd and 3rd Brigades were training in the UK, and in the Middle East a 4th Brigade, "trained by the Second Parachute Training School in North Africa, was formed out of elements of SAS, Long Range Desert Group, the 156th (Indian) Parachute Battalion and further volunteers from the UK were training in Palestine and Cyprus" (Hunter, 1998, p.17). In June 1943, 4 Brigade joined the rest of 1st Airborne Division in Tunisia, ready to invade Sicily and the 1st Airlanding Brigade [Gliders] was formed. "The 2nd and 4th Parachute Brigades, as well as the 1st Airlanding Brigade, joined a depleted 1st Brigade to comprise the 1st Airborne Division" (parachute-regiment.com). On the night of 13 July 1943, 112 aircraft and 16 gliders took off from North Africa carrying the 1st Parachute Brigade and 21st Independent Company (Pathfinders) into action at Primisole Bridge over the river Simento in Sicily. Only 12 Officers and 283 men out of 1856 made it to the bridge and captured it by dawn (parachute-regiment.com). Over the next two days they fought off

the 4th German Parachute Brigade until the arrival of 4 Armoured Brigade and 9 Durham Light Infantry (army.mod.uk/infantry). Again, the Paras gained a battle honour for the action. The fighting in Sicily ended on 17 August 1943 and "in early September the 4th Brigade made a seaborne landing at the port of Taranto in Italy" (Hunter, 1999, p.64). At the end of 1943 1st Airborne Division returned to the UK, leaving the 2nd Parachute Brigade, now independent, behind in Italy where they took part in further airborne operations in Italy, Southern France and Greece (geocities.com/heartland; 4.2.4, below).

4.2.3 Northern Europe

Operation Overlord, D-Day, 06 June 1944, "marked the first divisional airborne operation of the war" (geocities.com/heartland), another proud battle honour. The 6th Airborne Division, "a sister formation to the 1st Airborne Division, born in May 1943" (Hunter, 1999, p.66), and raised by Major General RM Gale (army.mod.uk/infantry), took part in the Normandy Landings. "The Division was 8,500 strong and included the 3rd and 5th Parachute Brigades and 6th Airlanding Brigade. Their role was to seize or destroy several bridges over two rivers and the Caen canal and ...silence the enemy positions in the area and secure the eastern flank of the beaches" (parachute-regiment.com). From "7th June to 16th August, the Division held their position against violent German counter attacks" (army.mod.uk/infantry). It was during this campaign that another battle honour was awarded for the action in Normandy at Breville by 3rd Parachute Brigade, where, "after defending a series of assaults and counter attacks ...the village was retaken in what proved to be the decisive engagement of this sector of the beach head [Sword]" (army.mod.uk). By September 1944, 6th Airborne Division, so named to convince the Germans that there were six divisions (parachute-regiment.com), returned to England to refit. The division had lost "145 Officers and 2,550 men killed, wounded or missing" (Hunter, 1999, p.107).

Operation Market Garden, 17 - 25 September 1944 was "a bold plan to secure three vital crossings [over] the rivers and canals barring the route to Germany" (Hunter (1999, p.109). The 1st Airborne Division, now part of 1st British Airborne Corps (with the US 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and 1st Polish Airborne Brigade) was tasked to secure the bridge over the lower Rhine in the Dutch town of Arnhem. The famous battle that ensued is well documented elsewhere (e.g., Hunter, 1999; Hilton, 1983; Reynolds, 1990, 1998), but "on 25 September 1944 only 2500 Officers and men returned from the 10095 who landed at Arnhem, with five Victoria Crosses and a battle honour awarded" (army.mod.uk/infantry).

4.2.4 Southern Europe

Whilst the push into Northern France and the Low countries continued, a southern front was opened up by the invasion of the South of France. The 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade, led by 1st Independent (Indian) Platoon of Pathfinders, added to the list of battle honours when they "were withdrawn from operations in Italy" (army.mod.uk/infantry) for Operation Dragoon. On 15 August 1944 the Brigade landed "between Frejus and Cannes. ...The drop was almost unopposed and within days [the Brigade] ...was withdrawn to Italy by sea" (parachute-regiment.com). On 12 October, 1944, the same formation, by now 2nd Independent Parachute Group, was dispatched to Greece to secure Athens in the face of a civil war between the government and communists, sparked by the withdrawal of the Germans. Here too, a battle honour was gained "by the action of 4 Para [battalion] who seized Megara airfield" (army.mod.uk/infantry). For the next three months "the Brigade was busy following up the withdrawal of the Germans and restoring law and order, before being withdrawn to Italy in February 1945 after defeating the rebels" (parachute-regiment.com).

4.2.5 Rhine Crossing to the end of WWII in Europe

Operation Varsity, "the biggest and most successful airborne operation in history marked the beginning of the end of the war for Germany" (parachute-regiment.com). "On 24 March 1945, 21,000 Allied Troops of 6th Airborne Division alongside the 17th US Airborne Division were dropped on the east bank of the Rhine near Wesel" (army.mod.uk) from "a fleet of 1700 planes and 1350 gliders" (Hilton, 1983, p.207). Within 24 hours the 5th Parachute Brigade had seized all their objectives and the Division was "joined by ground forces of the 21st Army Group for the advance across Germany" (parachute-regiment.com). The 6th Airborne "headed the advance to the Baltic on foot and on 30 April, 1945, crossed the Elbe and met up with Russian troops at Wiesmar" (Reynolds, 1990, p.54). On 08 May 1945, "when the war in Europe ended" (Hunter, 1999, p.167), the Parachute Regiment comprised of 18 Battalions and a number of Independent Pathfinder units (e.g., Indian Independent Platoon; Ghurka Independent Company) and were divided between two Airborne Divisions, the 1st and the 6th.

4.2.6 Peacetime 1946 - 2005

On August 26 1946 almost four years to the day since formation, "the 1st Airborne Division was disbanded after a short spell in Norway" (geocities.com/pentagon). The 6th Airborne Division (minus the 5th Airborne Brigade), was dispatched to Indonesia to restore order, then went on to peace keeping duties in Palestine as part of the Middle East strategic reserve. There "they became embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict till its disbandment in April 1948" (britains-smallwars.com/palestine). The "two and a half years in Palestine had cost the Division 58 killed and 236 wounded" (Hunter, 1999, p.179/180). To "commemorate the two [disbanded] Divisions a new Brigade, 16th Parachute Brigade was formed out of remnants of the 2nd Parachute Brigade on 12 June 1948" (Reynolds, 1998, p.256), and adopted the number 16 to "honour the men who had served in 1st and 6th Divisions and this Brigade was joined by the newly formed 1st Guards Independent Parachute Company (Pathfinders)" (Hunter, 1999, p.181). This

structure was to remain until defence cuts instigated its disbandment in 1976. It was in this guise that the three existing Battalions (1, 2, and 3 Para) conducted internal security (IS) and peace keeping duties around the world from their home in Aldershot, Hants, UK.

In 1951, 16 Independent Parachute Brigade conducted operations in Cyprus during the Anglo-American Oil Crisis. The same year the Brigade was sent to the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt, after a brief return to Cyprus in 1956 to deal with EOKA terrorists. Two years prior, in 1954, an Independent Parachute Squadron, Sabre Squadron, was "raised to assist 22 SAS in operations against communist terrorists in Malaya and was disbanded in 1957 after successfully completing the task" (parachute-regiment.com). After nearly five years in the canal zone, the Brigade was put on standby to seize the Suez Canal (Parker, 2002, p.171 - 174). The last fully operational jump with a support group took place on Operation Musketeer on 05 November 1956. 3 Para jumped onto El-Gamil Airfield, Port Said, Egypt and "secured it till a seaborne invasion, including 1 and 2 Para linked up" (Parker 2002, p.185 - 194). In this action, 3 Para lost 4 dead and 36 wounded (britains-smallwars.com/suez). In 1958, the Brigade was again in Cyprus, there was also trouble in Lebanon, and at short notice it was sent to Jordan to protect sovereignty and 1961 saw 2 Para in Kuwait to deter an Iraqi invasion (geocities.com/pentagon). IS duties in Cyprus were over by 1960, "but trouble was brewing in South Arabia" (Hunter, 1999, p.193). In May 1964, 3 Para fought an old-fashioned mountain war against dissidents in the Radfan, north of Aden (Reynolds, 1998, p.68). The same month, May 1964, 2 Para were sent to the jungles of Borneo, defending the borders against Indonesian infiltration and "took part in a small but decisive battle at Plaman Mapu, in which they lost 2 killed and eight wounded" (Hunter, 1999, p. 205/8).

January 1967 saw 1 Para return to Aden to deal with urban terrorists and they stayed "till the colony was ended a few months later in November" (Reynolds, 1990, p.68). On

12 October, 1969, the Regiment started Operation Banner, a code-name for the many IS operational tours in Northern Ireland (Reynolds, 1998, p. 257). In Londonderry, "on 30 January 1972, 1 Para were involved in Bloody Sunday" (Reynolds, 1998, p.185 – 189), where 13 civilians were killed during a riot, provoking a controversy still unresolved more than 30 years later. In total, between 1971 and 1996, 51 Paras lost their lives in the Province, including 16 members of 2 Para at Warrenpoint on 27th August 1979 (angelfire.com; Parker, 2002, p.258/9). In 1977, "16 Independent Parachute Brigade Group was disbanded and the units were dispersed to other HQs" (geocities.com/pentagon). Post 1977, with at least one Battalion in Northern Ireland throughout the troubles, the other two were on different states of alert. "Spearhead Battalion was the Army's stood too unit, based in Aldershot and ready to go anywhere in 48 hours notice" (*Pegasus* Vol. XXXIII, No.2, Apr, 1978). The other Battalion was posted to Germany under various commands, e.g., 8th Field Force - 2 Para, Berlin, 1977 - 1979; 3 Para, Osnabruick, 1979 – 1981; both however, "retained full parachute capability" (army.mod.uk/16_aaslt_bde).

Between April – June, 1982 the Paras added the twelfth and last battle honour to their Colours, the Falklands War, in which 2 and 3 Para "carried out three Battalion attacks, losing 40 killed and 93 wounded and were awarded two posthumous Victoria Crosses" (Hilton, 1983, p.241). Due to their success, "in November 1983, 5th Airborne Brigade was formed" (army.mod.uk/16_aaslt_bde), reuniting with Airborne Support units (e.g., 9 SQN, RE) and the Paras regained full Airborne capacity. During the 1990s the Paras continued to "rotate through Northern Ireland and Spearhead [and] ...catch up on jungle, mountain and parachute training in Africa, Norway and Belize" (Parker, 2002). In June – August 1999, 1 Para spearheaded the NATO intervention in Kosovo (parachute-regiment.com) and 5th Airborne Brigade was disbanded to be replaced by 16 Air Assault Brigade. Although the Paras maintained the traditions of the British Army Regimental system, within that tradition, the three Parachute Battalions "in 16 Air Assault Brigade

are now configured in a new functional structure as Air Assault Infantry Battalions" (Heyman, 2002, p.39), but the formal structure (Appendix 6) remained intrinsically the same. It was in the new Air Assault role that "1 Para took part in Operation Pallister in Sierra Leone on 7 – 26 May 2000" (*Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000, p.21). The same year saw 2 Para undertaking peace keeping duties in Macedonia, and in Jan 2002, Afghanistan (Heyman, p.55). Finally, in 2003, the Regiment took part in the Iraq war, with 2 Para returning for another 6 month tour in 2004.

4.2.7 The territorial battalion

In 2005, the Regiment has only one surviving Territorial unit, 4 Para (V). 4 Para was originally formed in 1942 and fought in Tunisia, Algeria, Italy and Southern France. In 1947, following several amalgamations, it disappeared from the Army's order of battle (ORBAT). In 1967 it was reformed as a Territorial Battalion, drawing in remnants from 12/13th (Yorks. and Lancs.) Para Battalions and 17th (Durham Light Infantry) Para Battalion. In 1993, 15 Para (Scottish) Battalion merged with 4 Para and in 1999, 10 Para (London) Battalion also merged. 4 Para is unique as it is the only Territorial unit to have national spread (parachute-regiment.com/rec/units/4para). Headquarters are based in Pudsey, Leeds, and its constituent Companies based in Scotland (15), the North of England (12) and London and the South East (10). The numbers in brackets denote the former TA Battalions that comprised 144 Para Brigade (V), which also included 16 Independent (Lincoln) Company (Pathfinders), also disbanded in 1976. 4 Para have assisted and supported the Regular Para Battalions in both peacetime and operations through the provision of tactical groups and specialist individuals. That this actually happened during data collection was fortuitous, as 189 soldiers from 4 Para were dispersed to 1 and 3 Para during the Iraq war, January – September 2003. I was able to capitalise on the opportunity and interview some of these part time soldiers and some of the Regulars who served alongside.

The formal command structure of 4 Para is identical to that of their Regular counterparts, but pay and conditions differ greatly. TA soldiers are paid according to the number of days training undertaken in a tax year and have to complete a minimum of four weekends and attend one two week exercise per year to qualify for a bounty (Appendix 6). Uniforms, insignia, and weapons and equipment are identical, excepting the black DZ Flash and Lanyard worn by 4 Para soldiers. All TA volunteers are administered and trained in-house by a cadre of permanent staff, mostly Senior NCOs and Senior Officers, posted in for two years from the Regulars. Experienced Territorial NCOs generally train and run their own Platoons and Sections. All Territorials are required to pass 'P' Company and complete all events (excepting the stretcher race) but only do seven jumps, as the night descent is only mandatory for full time soldiers.

4.2.8 The Parachute Regiment Association (PRA)

The third organisation researched is the PRA. It was formed at the end of the Second World War for the "purpose of furthering the interests of the Parachute Regiment" (*Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000, p.1; see Appendix 1 for a copy of the constitution of the PRA). A secondary role is to organise functions and activities to enable members to continue associations formed during their service. Membership was 38,000, as at January, 2005, and spread over 112 branches nation-wide. Active membership was optional, although all Parachute Regiment soldiers become life members upon Passing Out from Basic Training.

4.3 The Making of a Paratrooper

This Section describes the training that all Paras undertake, paying particular attention to the two tests that separated them from their Regular Infantry counterparts – Pre Parachute Company and the Basic Parachute Course.

4.3.1 Basic training.

There are two distinctive qualifications that separate Paras from the rest of the British Army Light Infantry. The Pre-Parachute Selection Course ('P' Company) and the Regular Basic Parachute Course have changed very little since the early days in 1941, yet, according to Reynolds (1990):

> "Today's parachute soldier in some way bears little resemblance to his war-time predecessor. ...Nevertheless the methods adopted in the early days ...for the selection, testing and training of the parachute soldier have remained fundamentally unchanged. [He] ...is in one vital respect identical to his father or even grandfather: that is in the Regimental spirit. Each man has the same sense of comradeship, the same loyalty to a team, sure in the knowledge that he can rely on his comrades just as they can rely on him" (p.2).

Both tests are "essential preconditions for entering the Airborne Brotherhood" (*Pegasus,* June 1994, p.1) of which the Parachute Regiment forms the core. The tests demonstrate that the philosophy of success is "based on the belief that there is nothing they cannot achieve. This self-confidence is developed during the physical selection process ...and instils a determination to win alongside the knowledge that their training will sustain them for the physical challenges of combat" (Reynolds, 1998, p.121).

Since training "began in 1941, till the first direct entry [from civilian life] in 1953" (geocities.com/heartland), the Regiment was not responsible for the basic training of its soldiers. This was carried out by a parent unit. Officers had to wait till 1958 for direct entry, however, all Officers still had to graduate from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) before they could take Pre-Parachute Company ('P' Company) Selection. Restructuring of Basic Training, in June 1993, saw 580 Platoon as the last course to Pass Out, fully trained from The Depot the Parachute Regiment at Browning Barracks, Aldershot, a duty taken up by the amalgamation of all infantry basic training under the auspices of Army Training Regiment (ATR) Lichfield (Appendix 6). There, under supervision of Parachute Regiment instructors, Recruits complete a 12 week Common Military Syllabus (CMS) in B (Parachute Regiment) Company, which was

adapted to "take into account the special training of Airborne forces" (Parker, 2002, p.371). Upon successful completion of the minimum requirement to enter stage II of training, Recruits are transferred to Bruneval Company at Infantry Training Battalion, Catterick (ITBC) (*Pegasus*, June, 1994). There they complete a 19 week Combat Infantryman's Course (CIC), adapted from the syllabus to meet the special needs of the Paras. It is there that 'P' Company takes place during weeks 10/11 of the training schedule (Appendix 6 breaks down the training schedules at ATR and ITBC). Officers and trained soldiers from other units take an 'All Arms' 'P' Company course (three weeks) in which a "five day test week runs parallel to the Recruits" (*Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000, p.42).

4.3.2 The challenge

Official records show that "since 1955 more than 20,000 Officers, NCOs and soldiers have passed through 'P' Company. ...The gruelling selection standards ...are designed to teach soldiers to fight beyond ...the basic acceptable standards" (Reynolds, 1998, p.129). 'P' Company comprises of a two phase selection process, the build up and the test week. The build up phase takes 2 weeks in which candidates run every morning, followed by a session in the gymnasium to build up strength and stamina. During the afternoon they carry out a 'tab' (tactical advance to battle), in full fighting order (10kg, minimum) with a progressively heavy rucksack [Bergen] as well as carrying a rifle, often for 10 or more miles, in under 2 hours. At the beginning of test week "the Bergen must weigh 45lbs (20kg) and is randomly checked throughout the week" (Reynolds, 1998, p.129). Punishment for cheating is instant dismissal from the course. Failure to meet the high standards, assessed by 'P' Company Permanent Staff, is "not revealed until all tests have been carried out at the end of the test week" (Reynolds, 1998, p.132). Table 2. on the next page describes the tests undertaken in Pre-Parachute Selection.

Table 2. Pre-Parachute Selection Test (Source, *Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000).

Test 1	10 mile battle march. Candidates carry their equipment (20kg) and personal weapon and complete the march within 1hour 40 min.
Test 2	The Confidence Course. Candidates are required to negotiate obstacles up to 60 feet [18m] above ground in a confident manner.
Test 3	Steeplechase/Obstacle Course. Candidates are required to complete the 2.9km Steeplechase route, followed by one lap of the Obstacle Course, as an individual, against the clock.
Test 4	Log Race. Candidates complete the 3.1km course as an 8 or 9 man team carrying a log weighing 55kg.
Test 5	2 Mile Test. Candidates carry their equipment and personal weapon and complete the march as a squad in 18 minutes.
Test 6	Milling. Candidates mill [controlled aggressive boxing] against an opponent of similar size and weight for one minute. Headguards and 20oz gloves are worn (adopted in 1999).
Test 7	Endurance March. Carrying their equipment (20kg) and personal weapon over 20 miles of arduous terrain as a squad in around 5 hours.
Test 8	Stretcher Race. Candidates complete the 7.1 km course as a 12 or 16 man team, with 4 of the team carrying a 65kg stretcher at any one time.

4.3.3 Regular Basic Parachute Course

Parachute training for Recruits was undertaken, between 1950 and 1976, at RAF Abingdon, Oxfordshire, then transferred to RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire. By then, the school "had trained approximately 112,000 parachutists" (Reynolds, 1998, p.137). The Basic Parachute Course normally lasts four weeks during which time trainees are taught and practice a range of dedicated skills. For example, fitting and checking parachutes and equipment, flight drills, exits, landing drills, and safety and emergency drills. Up to 1996, the first jump was clean fatigue (without equipment) from a balloon basket at 800 feet "but the financial costs of maintaining the balloon resulted in the system being retired ...and replaced by the Shorts Sky-van from which trainees now make several jumps" (Reynolds, 1998, p.140/1). Trainees then progress through the next stage, which involves jumping from a Hercules C130 Transport, an in-service aircraft fitted for parachuting. It is during this phase that all are introduced to the "best bit - the jam in the

sandwich, the blissful half minute of relief between the fear of jumping and the panic of arriving" (Hilton, 1983, p144). In all, eight jumps are made (seven for the TA), starting with clean fatigue single stick through to a full equipment tactical night jump. However, a review in 1999, "saw the development and implementation into the Basic Parachute Course of a 9th Parachute descent" (*Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000, p.43). This is a fully briefed exercise in which the Recruit undertakes a simulated operational jump, moves off the Drop Zone (DZ) and assaults a defended position. Once a soldier becomes a qualified parachutist, there are further opportunities to train and jump from a wide range of aircraft and undertake a specialist Military Free-fall Course, for example: High Altitude Low Opening (HALO); High Altitude High Opening (HAHO), (*Pegasus Yearbook*, 2000, p.11).

4.4 Dress, insignia, symbols and cultural artifacts

Here I describe the distinct forms of dress, particularly the head dress, badges and other identity paraphernalia worn by Paras. Other important cultural artifacts are also introduced and described. On 01 August 1942 at the direction of General Browning, the maroon beret, "this distinctive head dress, since adopted by parachute troops all over the world" (parachute-regiment.com) was introduced to replace the "abundance of headgear" (Hunter, 1999, p.21) worn by the early volunteers, but "soldiers continued to wear the cap badge of their old unit until 1943" (Reynolds, 1998, p.255). Contrary to a Regimental myth, the colour of the beret was chosen serendipitously:

> "A number of berets were collected, each in a different colour. ...General Alanbrooke was asked to choose one for the parachute soldiers. Alanbrooke hummed and hawed over the choice and in the end asked a private soldier what he thought. The man said he preferred the red [maroon] beret, and so the choice was made" (Hunter, 1999, p.21).

As mentioned, on the same day (01 August 1942), the Regiment formally came into existence and adopted the structures and traditions of the British Army Regimental

system and started to forge its own distinct identity, fashioned by the motto *Utrinque Paratus* - Ready for Anything (geocities.com/heartland):

> "It is within the infantry that the regimental system is truly manifest. Each regiment and corps wears its own metal cap badge, collar badges, shoulder titles, and a host of other jealously guarded tribal distinctions. These all reflect the peculiar history and traditions of each regiment. The metal insignia is symbolic of the "permanence" of regiments, while the cloth insignia of formations suggests their more ephemeral nature" (regiments.org/milhist).

The Paras' capbadge is a silver coloured "set of wings either side of a parachute above which is the crown of the reigning monarch" (geocities.com/heartland) (see appendix 2 for a reproduction) and [since 1943] only members of the Regiment wear this badge (in the Regimental tradition of the Army this includes attached personnel without a parent unit, e.g., musicians and clerks). Other parachute units, (e.g., 9 SQN, RE) adopted the maroon beret and parachute wings but retained the capbadge of their parent unit. However, any soldier (other than direct entry) can volunteer and transfer into the Paras and change capbadge upon successful completion of 'P' Company and Basic Parachute Course.

All Airborne Forces wear a distinctive DZ Flash on the right hand sleeve of their Para Smocks. In the Regiment this is: Maroon, 1 Para; Blue, 2 Para; Green, 3 Para; and Black 4 Para (V). Depot, Regimental Headquarters (RHQ), Pathfinder Platoon and other formalised functional groups within the Paras also wear their own distinct DZ Flash (see Glossary, p.5). DZ Flashes are vital symbols for recognition and identification, particularly during mass drops. Thousands of camouflaged soldiers can land in waves on drop zones, sometimes miles long. Interspersed between the aircraft, small bands of specialists (medics, signallers, etc.) are placed in the 'stick' relevant to their rendezvous point on the DZ. Thus the DZ Flash has a key functional role. Additionally, each soldier is presented with a Lanyard (same colour as their DZ Flash) upon Passing Out from the

Depot. This is primarily a ceremonial device, worn on the left shoulder of Number 2 Dress (Service Dress for Officers) and in summer, with Shirt Sleeve Order.

Another regimental tradition in the Paras is found in the Regimental Colours. They were first presented to 16 Independent Parachute Brigade on 19 July 1950, by King George VI (Reynolds, 1990, p.95). Consistent with military tradition, "The Sovereign's Colour of the Parachute Regiment bears the Regimental Battle Honours, whose anniversaries are celebrated annually" (army.mod.uk/infantry). The tradition of presenting Colours "dates back to the 1700's, [when] ...Colours were used as rallying points so they would be visible above ...the dust of battle" (members.tripod.com). The Regimental march is Wagner's '*Ride of the Valkyries*' and the slow march, '*Pomp and Circumstance, No.4*' (Parker, 2002, p.169). The first Regimental mascot (always named 'Pegasus'), was enlisted in "1950, when 1 Para was presented with a New Forest pony" (Reynolds, 1990, p.93) and the mascot as at January, 2005, is a Shetland pony (geocities.com/heartland).

4.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter I set out to introduce the organisation at the centre of my research in terms of it's formal command structures and provide a summary of the history from 1940 to 2005. The Regiment, born during WWII, has adopted the British Army's Regimental system and traditions and I presented its history, mainly to show how and where the Regiment won the 12 battle honours that adorn its Colours, including a summary of the many conflicts and IS duties Paras had taken part in since Tragino in 1941. A brief introduction to the Territorials, 4 Para (V), and the PRA, the two other significant parts of the organisation at the centre of this research was also presented. Section 4.3, The making of a Paratrooper, revealed that successful completion of two tests, 'P' Company and the Basic Parachute Course, were the basic minimum requirement to enter the Regiment. This was followed by a precise of the distinct forms of dress, insignia and symbols worn by Paras and a summary of other cultural artifacts

particular to the Regiment. In the next Chapter I move from the Regiment to the individual and follow one soldier's journey through training and into service in a Regular Battalion in the Parachute Regiment. That soldier is, of course, myself.

Chapter 5

Tam's Story

WHAT I MISS MOST

I miss the lads.
I miss those crisp clear nights.
When the frost glistens in the moonlight.
I miss those lonely exposed hills.
Lashed by the rain.
I miss the young and innocent faces,
Some of whom we'll never see again.
I miss the laughter and the crack.
I miss their morbid sense of humour,
The childish pranks and their unspoken laws.
I miss that sense of belonging, that unique bond.
I miss youth at its best.
Though I'll grow old, unlike the rest.
What I miss most
I miss the lads.

Jim Love, 7 Para, RHA

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I provided an account of the Parachute Regiment and its history and described two criteria that separated Paras from other soldiers. But these tests, 'P' Company and the Basic Parachute Course, are only part of the story and that is what this Chapter is about. This is my personal account of what it was like to serve in the Paras, and by writing it, I hope to vicariously bring you closer to the organisation at the centre of this research. My story will help you to understand the mentality of most Paras, and assist your reading of my interpretation of the narratives presented and analysed in the following Chapters (6 – 9). Additionally, because this Chapter is a short autobiography, I chose to tell it straight. In it, I chart my journey from teenage civilian, through six years service in the Parachute Regiment to becoming an academic. Here is Tam's story.

5.2 Tam's story

I was 17 going on 18 and living alone in Leicester during the Summer of 1976. Working eight till five in a dead end job, no qualifications, no prospects and the advice from an Edinburgh Sheriff still burning my ears. I'd been advised to channel my energies as a soldier, or face a prison sentence next time I was caught fighting. I went along to a local Territorial Army unit, with a view to enlisting part time, to gain a driving licence, and keep out of trouble. I joined them for a weekend 'look at life' exercise and found it to be little more than a drinking club and decided it wasn't what I wanted. But on the Sunday I went for a walk across the training area to where I had spotted some activity. It was then fate caressed me and stole the next six years of my life. As I stood on the edge of a wood, a stripped down Landrover cruised past with four soldiers on it. Something in the direction they had come from momentarily caught my eye and when I looked back, the vehicle had pulled up. I was astonished. There was no one in sight, the soldiers had vanished in what seemed less than a second. Some minutes later they reappeared from the surrounding undergrowth, mounted up and drove off.

I was fascinated. This was slick and sudden. There was something in the way these soldiers moved and carried themselves and I wanted to know more about them. Later that afternoon I made enquiries and was told they were Paras - and to stay well clear of them. It pestered me all day and night and into the next morning. I left work in a sheet metal fabricators and went along to the local Army Careers Office to find out more. There was a Sergeant, a Medic from 23 Para Field Ambulance, an awesome man compared to the other Sergeants recruiting for their regiments. I could instantly tell they respected him. Eagerly, I gleaned every bit of information I could, hanging on to his stories about what you had to go through to be a Paratrooper. Dinner hour came and went, I knew I would be sacked but didn't care, I was hooked. However, to my chagrin, he told me 16 Independent Parachute Brigade was under the axe and speculated that the

Paras had about 2 years left before they would be disbanded. I remember standing there saying 'well, at least I'll have 2 years of it,' and so began my journey.

Several months and a series of tests and interviews later, I enlisted for nine years and arrived at Sutton Coldfield in the West Midlands for assessment and selection. There, the staff tried to persuade me to join the Intelligence Corps and put up many barriers, including threats to deny me entry into the Army. But I was determined, it was the Paras or nothing. I passed every physical and mental test and was offered an opportunity to apply for a Commission as an Officer, but turned it down because I wanted to be a Paratrooper. It was on the first day at Sutton Coldfield that I met Billy. We were always in the top few, no matter what the test, became firm friends, and were both accepted out of 100 plus hopefuls to go to Aldershot for further assessment at Depot the Parachute Regiment, ominously described by an instructor before we left as 'The Factory.' Unfortunately, we arrived a day too late to join 434 Platoon and were sent on leave for three weeks whilst 435 formed up. But we had a glimpse of what was to come when a PT Instructor took us on a run with a Platoon of Junior Paras. To our surprise, Billy and I took everything in our stride, but this was just scratching the surface. I realised that if I wanted to be a Paratrooper, be prepared to go through hell.

I returned to Leicester and bought an old rucksack, filled it with bricks wrapped in a towel and started training every day. Three weeks later on return to Aldershot I was leaner, fitter, and I thought, mentally prepared for the ordeal to come. I stepped off the train with Billy and asked a Corporal standing on the platform if he was waiting to take us to the Depot. He started shouting at me. I stood and stared at him. Bad move! Although he was not to be one of my instructors, he was Depot Staff and made sure my Section Corporal heard about it. And so began twenty-two weeks of torture.

There were 67 hopefuls formed up the first day as 435 Platoon. By the Monday after the first week we were down to less than 50. The regime was harsh, unforgiving, brutal and relentless. More fell by the wayside as the pressure increased daily. It wasn't just physical, it was mental. Exhaustion, attrition, confusion and punishment – fair and unfair. Daily beatings and humiliations, long marches, heavy packs, endless running and circuit training, all took their toll as the numbers forming up each morning tumbled. But there was a core of us determined to see it through, we'd realised what it would take to earn that red beret and wear those beautiful blue wings. We formed a pact, but of six, only three of us made it.

Those early days were a painful blur. The distances covered and the weight carried gradually increased, the assault course seemed to get longer, its walls, ramps and ladders higher and steeper, the mud at the bottom of very ditch colder and thicker. Beasting sessions in the Gymnasium reached fever pitch; press-ups, sit-ups, star jumps, bruises, blisters. And on the long forced marches; Bergen burns, twists, sprains, broken bones and spirits all supervised by screaming Corporals demanding more and more. I never realised how cold the world could be, how mud could weigh so much, or how far it could penetrate into clothing and weapons. Kit inspections on the hour, every hour, all through the night, constant parading on the drill square, marching up and down, always at the double, left turn, right turn, about turn, mark time. Fifteen minutes running on the spot in the pouring rain, marking time, sweating profusely in an itchy shirt, the thermometer on the Guardroom wall just feet away hovering below zero, as our Corporal stands idly chatting to the Guard Commander. And it was down, press up position, in the driving, stinging rain, exhausted, pushing out press-ups, arms, neck, shoulders, legs, screaming 'no more, please no more!' But that red beret calls you so you pretend not to listen.

"...Not quick enough, push them out again!" A voice yells as snow whirls around a bare hilltop at the beginning of the third week. Less than 30 of us now. A PT vest, shorts and boots offer scant protection from the bitter cold and it's another fifty press-ups. And this time, like every day, another face collapses into the freezing slush, in tears, unable or unwilling to push again. Another hopeful cracks, each one makes me stronger, more resilient, more determined and my bond with Billy, always the optimist, deepens. Four weeks of it and we overcame the first hurdle, Passing Off the Square, demonstrating competence in marching and foot drill. Hours and hours of marching up and down, practicing. The staff taking it in turns to beast us, like some sick relay team. Right arm aching beyond pain, locked at the elbow, holding a nine pound rifle, and every now and again a clatter as one falls from cold fingers no longer able to hold on. The victim is marched off to the jail for his sin, forced to polish floors with a steel helmet crushing his skull, it's lining removed to add to the thrill. A forty pound pack on his back and a twenty pound iron floor bumper with the handle cut down to eighteen inches to spice up the action. Oh, the relief it's not me!

In the classroom, lesson after lesson. Eyelids drooping as the heat and exhaustion sap the will to concentrate. What's next? map reading? first aid? weapons drills? tuning radios? Constantly cleaning billets, bed blocks, pressing shirts, sheets and underpants, if you wear it, iron it! Countless hours polishing floors, toilets and boots, rushing to change into PT kit or is it smock and denims? – 'Hoi, wot we doin' next?' Into the showers, knackered, fully clothed, desperate to get the mud out of soaking clothing. Scrubbing boots in the sink, some haven't made it to the showers yet and a voice booms menacingly down the corridor...

"Outside in five minutes!! ...PT kit, red vests! ...Last one out, fifty press ups.' A mad scramble, where the fuck's my red vest? Horror! It's not ironed! A hand thrusts one in mine, I immediately understand, my panic recedes in a wave of relief. I look into a pair

of tear strained eyes, one glance tells me he's had enough. But I've no time for sentiments and he's gone by the time we stagger back in from the Gym an hour later. I crash on my bed, exhausted, spirit growing inside, muscles on the outside. Thank God it's over for the day, but it's not. Room inspection seven o'clock, remember! We failed this morning!

...And so it went on, the next four weeks, up to week eight, it got even tougher, at times almost too much to cope with, too much to take in. Out all day, snow, hail or shine, it didn't matter what the weather was doing. Cold, wet, hungry, tired and some bastard Corporal forcing you to eat a half pound of margarine because he'd rather be with his mates patrolling the streets of Belfast. The battle marches took on a new dimension, speed. We were told this was the core of the Paratrooper, marching in full battle order at speed over great distances. And it seemed that everytime I broke the trance induced by the monotony of speed marching, and looked up from the hypnotic rhythmic cycle of a pair of DMS boots rising and falling in front of me, there was Billy, whispering one liners and making us giggle through the sometimes excruciating pain. Back into the classroom, more and more intense training, perfecting weapons handling skills, constantly stripping them down, cleaning and re-assembling rifles, hand guns, machine guns. More skills, tests, fitness assessments and learning the basics of soldiering in the field. By the end of week eight, there were less than 20 of the original 67 on parade with 435 Platoon.

I'd started to feel a sense of achievement. The staff were spending time with us as individuals, encouraging us, giving extra lessons where weaknesses threatened to ruin chances. There was a shift in emphasis, Basic Wales imminent, our first excursion away from the Depot. Two weeks of pure soldiering, using and developing skills that had been hammered into us back in Aldershot by practice, practice, practice. It was in Brecon that we began to pull it all together, working as a patrol, digging trenches, setting up harbour

areas, learning hand signals and using radios. We took our first chopper ride and learned how vital the buddy-buddy system was. All was done under the close supervision of our Section Corporal and watchful eyes of our Sergeant and Lieutenant. The fitness training, beastings and punishments continued unabated but had become like water off a duck's back. Only one failed Basic Wales. Then it was back to Aldershot and 'P' Company build up. If I thought I was fit and mentally prepared, two weeks later, as the PT Instructor Sergeant had proudly predicted, I had 'muscles in my spit.' An influx of Junior Paras and backsquads from more advanced training joined us and 435 Platoon swelled to just over 40 at the start of 'P' Company test week. The Juniors were tough, aggressive and very good soldiers and once a few punches had been thrown, we all gelled and they became a great source of knowledge and help, particularly in the field, where they were very professional.

And so, after passing 'P' Company, I stood on parade outside our accommodation at Browning Barracks, Depot the Parachute Regiment, with just seven left from those who had formed up with 435 Platoon 13 weeks before. Six others, ex Juniors had also passed and we received our red berets. Made it! And in a breath, the staff changed. We were standing where every single one of them had stood before us and they welcomed us into the Brotherhood. There was no shouting, no harsh cutting words, no threats, only proud smiles as they shook hands with us, one by one, as the Depot RSM presented us with our berets. It was a glimpse of what it was going to be like in Battalion. But, back to reality, we were only half way there! Next stop, Brecon again for Advanced Wales and we were joined by four Holdees who'd previously passed 'P' Company, but who had been unable to continue due to recuperation from injuries. Four more weeks of intense soldiering, learning the real tricks of the trade, upgrading field skills from Section level to learn Platoon and Fighting Patrol formations. We fired all our weapons, did Platoon attacks and learned advanced helicopter drills, combat medic skills, did orienteering and map reading exercises and riot training. Advanced Wales culminated in the 'Fan Dance'

a fourteen mile bash in full battle order up and over Pen Y Fan in the Brecon Beacons, followed by a six mile speed march to the waiting transport. Our reward at the end of the training was a night out with the staff in Brecon, and for the first time I felt a real sense of belonging. I was starting to move in the same way as did the Paras I first encountered, in what, even then, seemed a lifetime ago.

By the end of Advanced Wales, I was strong, confident, aggressive, arrogant, unrecognisable from the boy who'd turned up that first day. But there was one more crucial test. Courage. The next week we learned basic flight drills with the Regiment's Army Parachute Jump Instructors (APJI's) in Aldershot before departing for RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, to do our Basic Parachute Course. It was a four week holiday compared to the regime in the Depot. Day after day spent leaping off platforms, rolling about on rubber mats in musty smelling old hangars, doing side rights, side lefts, endlessly tramping up and down mock aircraft fuselages, learning aircraft drills, practicing equipment checks, exits, fitting harnesses, packing containers. Happy times indeed, the giggling and laughing shattered by a dose of reality when an unfortunate candidate on another advanced course was badly injured. A combination of satisfactory progress and good weather led to my first jump, from a Barrage Balloon.

I remember standing in the gate, 800 feet up, terrified, but there was no way I could refuse after all the heartache and pain I'd been through. I knew I would jump, there was never any question of it, but when my guts replaced my brains as I hurtled down 200 feet in near freefall, I experienced two huge tugs. One, in my heart, stands as a metaphor for the sudden realisation my life could be over in a few seconds, just a split second before the one in my crotch told me my canopy had opened and I was safe. And so, one more Balloon and six aircraft jumps later, I was presented with my wings and as thousands have done before and since, I rushed back to the accommodation to sew them on. That was it, 'I'm a Paratrooper now!' Strutting around RAF Brize Norton, red beret

perched cockily on my head and wings adorning my right arm, 'hey, world! Look at me!' But as I was to brutally find out, a red beret and a badge of courage do not a real Paratrooper make. The staff had become more than just mentors, they'd become friends and we could feel their pride in sending us 'up the road' to the Battalions. Having been trained by them, as was tradition, we were evidence of their competence as instructors. Did we meet the minimum standard required to be a Paratrooper? That would be for the soldiers in Battalion to judge. On the Passing Out Parade, I was handed a blue Lanyard and to my delight, Billy and I were amongst 12 of the 17 to complete the training as 435 Platoon, and were posted to 2 Para who had just arrived in Berlin after a six month tour in Belfast.

Fortune smiled on us and we were sent to Cardiff to participate in a Military Tattoo before flying to Germany. Four weeks of storming the castle keep, throwing thunderflashes and emptying magazines of blanks two times a day, every day for the public. I was so proud standing there, breathless, on the Castle Esplanade, receiving applause, us with our red berets, wings and DZ flash on our smocks. Our Corporals had come with us, but after 22 weeks, at first it felt awkward to address God by his first name. Yet, we were now fully fledged Paratroopers and it was our new privilege. I thought Battalion was going to be the same... Wrong!

Berlin, July 1977. It had been nearly a year since I'd walked into the Recruitment Office in Charles Street, Leicester. The culture shock of 2 Para was intimidating. We jumped off a four tonner in our brand new issue DPM smocks, a whole Company was on parade on the square. Nearly one hundred men staring at us in disbelief. History unfolding in front of them. Within a few days they were ordered to hand-in their distinctive Dennison Smocks and an iconic symbol of British Para identity since WWII, was replaced that very day. DPM? Craphats wore DPM! There was near mutiny. Some Senior Toms refused to soldier, dozens more handed in PVR requests and morale suddenly

evaporated as despondency set in. The CO and the RSM responded by clamping down on dissent and so began two years of bullshit. For me it was an anti climax. Bullying of crows was endemic. I got involved in several fights, but soon got accepted as I could, and did, hand it right back. All the war stories, the tales of amazing feats of soldiering we'd heard in Depot, after all that I'd been through, to spend my first two years in Battalion, cleaning barracks and doing fire picket duties on Saturday mornings at the Garrison cinema. I joined the cross country, boxing and swimming teams to get away from the constant inspections and a myriad of boring public duties. Billy did a freefall course and found his own way through the bullshit. We did virtually no soldiering. It was a life spent in ill fitting 'Ginger suits,' carrying out meaningless duties and chores. Excepting an escape and evasion exercise in Denmark, occasional live firing and parachuting in Germany – to keep Para pay, there was not much else to do. I became disillusioned and like the majority, turned more and more to drink to escape the boredom.

However, with six months left, we received orders to prepare for a two year tour of Northern Ireland, based at Ballykinler, Co Down. All of a sudden, the bullshit went out of the window, a new CO and RSM arrived. No more 'Parashite Regiment,' the focus was back on soldiering, big style! Within days of their arrival, the whole Battalion did a 50 miler, in full fighting order. Those who didn't finish in under 18 hours were put on extra PT whilst the rest of us caught up on parachuting. Everyday was spent working hard, dusting off the cobwebs and training for active service. Morale soared, allez kit reappeared, specialist knowledge came off the backburner and was handed down to us by the Senior Toms and NCOs. There was a palpable buzz about the Battalion. Storytelling accelerated and anticipation mounted as the nightmare of Berlin ended on a high. After six weeks leave and 28 days service in Ballykinler, I qualified for my GSM, Northern Ireland, the one remaining symbol I craved to complete my identity as a Paratrooper. For the first time, I started to feel like a real Para, I'd got a medal! No

more, 'Joe the Crow.' But within a few weeks tragedy struck as a double bombing killed 18 soldiers and wounded several more on the dual carriageway outside Warrenpoint, Co Down. 16 of the dead were 2 Para soldiers. It was Monday, Aug 27, 1979. The day before, I had been transferred from 2 Platoon to 1 Platoon, A Company. The Sergeant wanted me to lead a patrol due to a shortage of NCOs in 1 Platoon, so I was appointed Patrol Commander as a Tom. I found myself on my first tour, responsible for seven experienced soldiers on active service. It was supposed to be an honour and compliment. I remember going into the barrackroom in Ballykinler that six of us had shared in 2 Platoon. It was lunchtime that fateful day and we spent an hour or so, watching a Laurel and Hardy film on television, the banter flying as always. They bade me farewell and set off by road for Newry, Co. Down, which was to be our home for the next six weeks. I was scheduled to fly down later that afternoon with 1 Platoon. That was the last time I saw them. Three were killed and two were very seriously burned.

I will never forget walking into that police station in Newry, later that evening, numbed and in shock. In front of me, stacked up against a wall were bits of bodies in bin liners. Toms I'd shared a room with and mentored as a Senior Tom, my friends, were dead. But Paratroopers are professionals, we cry in each others arms, yes, but out on the deserted streets of Newry? Stoic dignity. Six weeks of four hours on, four hours off saturation patrolling was our reply.

On return to Ballykinler, A Company went on R&R whilst I did Drill and Duties, a pre-requisite barrack duties, admin, marching and foot drill course, undertaken before promotion to Lance Corporal. A pass was no guarantee of instant promotion but the RSM considered me to be 'ruthlessly efficient' and posted me to HQ Company, Provost Staff, a job I hated. Me, a Regimental Policeman, a barrack room soldier? Ugh! Four months later I'd wriggled out of it, back to A Company and off to Bandit Country along the Irish border. Pure soldiering, a truly wonderful experience, this time with seven

crows just out of basic training. It was my turn to hand down knowledge and skills, to follow tradition and lead by example. At Foxfield Sangar in South Armagh, during an IRA attack, I understood how and why the Regiment is so good. During the ensuing gun battle, these youngsters did everything asked of them, immediately and without question. Their training carried them through, pure and simple. Total commitment to each other, total faith in the system. That day, our actions may have saved the lives of a foot patrol, about to be ambushed. 2 Para lost 21 men in total before we returned to Aldershot at the end of the tour in the late Summer of 1981.

Back in Aldershot, I was posted to Depot whilst 2 Para went on extended leave. There, I fell foul of the Depot CO and was demoted to Private for bringing the Regiment into disrepute when a practical joke backfired and I was arrested by Special Branch for a firearms offence. I was sent back up the road to 2 Para in disgrace as they came back from leave. I went to see the Adjutant and was posted to the Mortar Platoon, a nightmare scenario for me. The Corporal I ran into at Aldershot station on day one of my service was now my Platoon Sergeant! I worked eight months without a full weekend off, but despite him, I became Pivot Mortar, and the Platoon won a Mortar concentration in Denmark, in front of representatives from NATO and the Warsaw Pact. For a time, I was the No.1 in the best mortar crew in the British Army. Inevitably, the Sergeant and I had the physical confrontation that had been coming since that day in Aldershot, five years before. Fortunately, it was witnessed by the Platoon Commander and since the outcome favoured me, I could no longer stay in the Mortars. I was promoted and returned to the Provost Staff as a Lance Corporal. By then it was October 1981 and I was sent on a Regimental Police Course, run by the Royal Military Police, at Chichester, Hampshire. I excelled but wasn't interested in the job, I just wanted to beat the Hats on the course not just for me but for the Regiment. Next, it was Kenya for six weeks jungle and desert warfare training, but I sat in camp doing admin for most of the tour and missed most of the soldiering. I became disillusioned with the Provost, my career was

being mapped out in a way I didn't want and became distracted by my pending marriage. I tied the knot in March 1982, but within a month the Argentineans invaded the Falklands. I had just applied to PVR because, as I'd quickly found, I couldn't reconcile married life with soldiering at that level of intensity. Whilst on demob leave, I heard the news from the South Atlantic. Within hours I'd returned to Aldershot, knocked on the RSM's door and requested to see the CO. Minutes later, I was standing in front of him. He handed me my PVR papers and looked quizzically at me, unsure if I was going to sign them and cut and run. I will never forget his knowing smile when I tore them up. If my mates were going to war, I was going too. As I left the COs office, the RSM asked me to continue to work with him. We'd often made each other laugh and I trusted, admired and respected him so I agreed – well, he was RSM!

21 days later, in mid April, 1982, 2 Para set sail for the Falklands. Two more seasick weeks and we passed the point of no return. The Royal Navy sank the Belgrano, an Argentinean Cruiser, as it sailed outside the 200 mile exclusion zone set around the islands by the British Government. This was it. The mood changed. All of a sudden the busiest man in the Battalion was our Padre. Our history: North Africa, D Day, Arnhem, Rhine Crossing, Suez, Borneo, Malaysia, South Arabia, all took on a grim new meaning. But what an honour and privilege to stand on the start line of a full scale Battalion attack on a bitterly cold morning, armed to the teeth. Yeah, on the cusp of history, less than a mile from an enemy dug-in, in well prepared positions, and carry out an advance to contact. I had had my baptism of fire at Foxfield Sangar two years before and if I thought I was prepared, I quickly learned that nothing could prepare anyone for what was to come. After the initial assault, our momentum ground to a halt. The CO was killed and we'd taken many casualties. It slowly dawned on us there was only one way out: finish it to the death. Attrition, wear them down, let them know they are going home in a box. Although Billy survived, I witnessed the demise of two of my closest friends. During the initial assault on Darwin Hill by A Company, the Argentine defenders

refused to give ground and I understood then, on that battlefield at Goose Green what courage is. I was terrified, anxious, but I never actually felt courage. I saw it all around me. There were many instances of soldiers of every rank repeatedly going out under fire to bring our wounded and stranded comrades back into cover. There were so many selfless actions by the soldiers of 2 Para that day that it still chokes me 20 odd years later. How could I not be moved when the Patrols Platoon fixed bayonets, stood up and sprinted forward into a curtain of bullets, cannon fire, rockets, mortar and artillery shells because their brothers were pinned down, running out of ammo and taking casualties in open ground just under a kilometre in front of them? That is courage.

History records that day. Me, I spent the majority of the battle, cold, wet, tired and hungry, but exhilarated. My job was to protect the Padre and tend the wounded at the Regimental Aid Post, British and Argentinean alike. We were continuously under fire from snipers and shrapnel from 81 and 120 mm Mortar and 105 mm Artillery shells whining in all around. The irony (and bravery) of the Sergeant I'd previously come to blows with, saving my life will never leave me. And amidst the carnage, Argentinean resistance finally broke and they withdrew into Goose Green, leaving dozens trapped in their trenches facing a stark choice, surrender or die. Most chose the former. The next morning, the whole Garrison surrendered, more than 1400 soldiers and airmen. I stood with Billy at the edge of the airfield and watched, astonished, pure disbelief that we'd won - against these odds.

Within two weeks, after witnessing the disaster at Bluff Cove where the Welsh Guards suffered so badly, I found myself on the startline at Wireless Ridge about to participate in a classic All Arms battle. I returned to the Mortar Platoon and swear, I never worked so hard in my life as I did that night. It was an awesome battle, and our success led to a race for Port Stanley with our sister Battalion, 3 Para. For me, it started with a cease-fire being called on the Mortarline. An order to abandon the Mortars was given, followed

immediately by the whine of a pair of Sea King helicopters, coming up from the valley below us. We emplaned, cramming rounds into magazines, still priming grenades and handing out link for the Gimpys as we flew straight up to Wireless Ridge and landed smack bang on top of Argentine positions. I remember thinking it would be a shame if I got killed there, after all we'd been through. Port Stanley was on the other side of the ridge, wide open if we breached this last line of defence. The chopper touched down and was gone in seconds, spiralling up and away leaving us exposed in open ground, waiting, just waiting on a hail of bullets to come slicing through the sleet. But they never came. The silence was intimidating so we bounced up, dashed the 40 or so yards forward to seize the initiative and crested the ridge. What a sight. Thousands of Argies, streaming down off the hills around Port Stanley in complete disarray. From somewhere the order came not to open fire, the only decent thing I heard that whole war, and we cleared the remaining trenches and sangars around us and set off to join up with A Company, just starting their advance along the only road into Port Stanley. It was on this road that we stopped, took off our helmets, donned our red berets and advanced to contact, waiting, waiting on some form of resistance to stall us. But it never came. Again, awesome. Our forebears had marched into Arnhem and created history, they'd fought across North Africa and earned the respect of their enemies and they'd strutted around the streets of Haifa and Belfast wearing that red beret in pure defiance. I remember thinking as we picked our way along the road to destiny, I wouldn't like this lot coming at me in this mood – and I was one of them!

Upon return to the UK I read about and watched recorded news broadcasts covering the conflict. My reaction was disgust, nothing but pure contempt for the establishment. We had fought in a war for each other. It had nothing to do with Queen and Country, the Government or the Islanders' freedom. That was a bonus. No, we were there for each other, for the glory of the Regiment, for a chance to emulate our forebears and contribute to our illustrious history. And such was the spirit of the men I served with,

such is my undying love and pride, I draw on the last words of our Adjutant, Capt. Woods, seconds before he took a fatal head shot whilst storming Darwin Ridge. For me it conveys what the Parachute Regiment is all about...

"Come on lads! ...Remember Arnhem."

I returned from six weeks leave, granted after arriving back in the UK through the back door at RAF South Cerney to keep us away from a media frenzy. I was horrified to find that virtually the whole command structure of 2 Para had been replaced by Officers and NCOs from within the Regiment who had not fought with us. Wounded soldiers had been discharged, abandoned by the MoD in our absence, overturning promises made by the CO to keep everyone together. We watched television as the task force returned to rapturous applause whilst we were pushed aside. But history was ours and nothing can change that, no matter how many times the staged photo opportunity by the Marines taking the surrender in Port Stanley is repeated. As for me, I felt I could no longer sit on Salisbury Plain playing at soldiers. I had no enthusiasm or desire to remain in the Regiment as it was, once again there were too many empty bedspaces, no more laughter rolling along now silent corridors. Sullen faces and hollow expressions greeted my every glance. I considered SAS selection but my wife talked me out of it. She was right, I'd seen too much. She'd seen the damage Warrenpoint had done and noticed the change in me when I came back from the South Atlantic. Sure, the sun shone, but I was living in shadows. So once again I applied to PVR, as did more than 200 of my contemporaries from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, and finding there was no resistance, I accepted the end had come. Like many before and since, I cried when I walked away from the Battalion lines. I cried real tears for my brothers left behind on a cold windswept Island 8000 miles from home, I cried for the broken and burned bodies in those bin liners stacked against a wall in Newry, Co Down, and most of all I wept because I was no longer wearing a red beret.

...I was at the family home in Edinburgh. I'd been out the Army just a few days. It was September, 1982. The phone rang. I stared at it and looked up at my sister as she went to pick up the receiver, and without thinking said out loud 'Billy's dead.' She spoke briefly to the caller and handed me the phone. A voice I knew greeted me, 'Tam,' it said, 'I'm so sorry, ...Billy's dead.' After six years service in which I'd witnessed the death and maiming of hundreds, this was the cruellest blow. After all we'd been through, even being each other's best man at the other's wedding...

I am part of a Brotherhood, an extended family, and shall remain so until I stand in the door over the great DZ in the sky and make my final jump. Yet, until that day, I will miss the infectious optimism, the black humour, even the physical pain of long battle marches, the adrenaline rush from parachuting, the drinking games, the songs and stories and yes, the love we shared, that special relationship, that camaraderie. Oh, for the halcyon days without a care in the world, strutting round like a barnyard cock, loaded weapon held tight in my shoulder. Yeah, allez kit, red beret, badge of courage and blue DZ flash on my smock, basking in adulation from jealous admirers. Just to hear 'Thornborrow!! ...What the fuck do you think you're doing, lad?' Just once more...

It took ten years for me to walk into an education establishment and start the beginning of a new career. Up to that point I had bounced from pillar to post, striving to find something worthwhile to fill the gap left behind by such a high octane existence. Dead end job followed dead end job, dealing with anger and bitterness over the deaths of so many of my friends. The defining moment came when I realised I had to put the past firmly into perspective and be positive, do something positive with my life, do something for those who gave theirs, for those still tortured by their memories of combat. A management course at Stirling University proved to be cathartic. I had just followed my elder sister into the Open University and was doing an Arts Foundation Course as a precursor to starting an Undergraduate degree in philosophy, still dogged by

some political and psychological issues from my service which troubled me. At Stirling, I was surrounded by MBAs, MScs and the like and I was shocked to find they were nothing special. To me, the Officers and NCOs that taught and trained me in the Regiment had forgotten more about motivation and leadership than these managers with their degrees would ever know. I was encouraged by the staff at Stirling School of Management Science to formalise my skills with qualifications. Next stop, Edinburgh's Telford College and an HND in Business Management. There, I found the lecturers, too, were wanting and armed with a Merit for my efforts, I resolved that one day I would stand in front of students and do better.

Later that Summer, in 1993, I inadvertently ended up at the wrong office in the School of Management and Finance (SMF) at Nottingham University. With and HND and half an OU BA (Hons) completed, I was offered a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration and transferred to the full MBA after satisfactory progress. I suspended my undergraduate studies and it was during this degree that I was introduced to organisational culture and behaviour. Thanks to the teachers on these modules, I realised where my strengths lay – motivating and inspiring people to achieve their goals. Nearly every syndicated activity I undertook during the MBA, I led the way and spent hours and hours helping those who were struggling with the material and standards demanded by the SMF. I completed my studies, and was thrilled to find my dissertation was considered adequate for publication, though at the time, I did not realise the significance. I still had to finish my Honours degree with the Open University (OU) and changed from Philosophy to Psychology to build on the concepts I learned during the organisation culture and behaviour modules.

Four years later, in 1998, and after a joint publication on 'followership in organisations' with my dissertation supervisor (Brown and Thornborrow, 1996), I completed my OU degree and resolved some day to do a doctorate. The next few years were spent building

an Internet company which eventually triggered off a series of events that left me destitute and homeless. In response, I turned to industry and took a position as Production Manager in an engineering plant making car seats for one of the big six car manufacturers. There, I was able to test the theories I'd learned at Nottingham University and, ironically, became a victim of my own success. Although very efficient, I wasn't production oriented and didn't fit in with the engineering culture. I realised I was trying to create an identity that was not me, so we parted company by mutual consent. At this juncture, I approached Nottingham University Business School with a view to starting a career as an academic and undertaking a part time PhD. Fortune smiled and a few weeks later, in February, 2001, I found myself handing in a research proposal for this thesis and upon its acceptance, took up the option of becoming a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the duration of three years full time study and this thesis is the culmination of that story.

5.3 Conclusion

This Chapter provides a subjective bridge, from Chapter 4's more objective account of the history and structure of the Parachute Regiment, to the next four data presentation and analysis Chapters. My own story, as related above, is only one of many possible versions but its purpose has been, first, to enable you as the reader to follow one soldier's route through the training and experiences that a typical Paratrooper undergoes, and to help you understand what makes Paras tick. Second, I wanted to provide you with a background of the opportunities that led me to do this research.

Chapter 6

Centrality Stories

Who are they? Where do they come from?
What makes these men tick?
Those who wear the red beret
Whose skin is thicker than thick.

Their determination, guts and willpower
Makes them fighters to the core.
They're a force that can never be beaten
A brotherhood never seen before.

Ricky Clitheroe (Ex-Para Regt)

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter draws on Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity (as that which is considered by an organisation's members to be central, distinctive and enduring about it). My analysis of collective identity in the Parachute Regiment is self-reflexive and based on my own experience and the stories elicited from 70 interviews. In this and subsequent Chapters I use stories and story extracts that I consider best illustrate central identity characteristics. Centrality stories are presented in three broad *categories* entitled: *combat, pressure* and *bonding.* In each case I explain why I term a 'story type' as such and why I chose it. I found that the elements of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition were often narrated independently and interdependently. Therefore, in the text, I give a clear indication of the context in which the stories I have chosen were narrated. For clarity, as in all my data presentation Chapters, I have elected to italicise interviewees' narrative extracts and fragments where I embed them in the text. Where I reproduced a quote from secondary data sources, I use a normal font, as with stories where indentation (of the story) made it clear where it began and ended.

6.2 Centrality stories

I have divided this Chapter into three story categories that we (me and my interviewees) believe to be central to our Regiment's identity – *combat, pressure* and *bonding. Combat* is what my primary and secondary data suggest is the *raison d'être* of the

Parachute Regiment, that is, engaging an enemy in the field. This is supported by narratives about continuous preparation for battle which keep a Paratrooper under almost constant *pressure* to be seen to be able do the job, and to be 'ready for anything' (the literal translation of the Regiment's motto: *Utrinque Paratus).* This is the absolute minimum standard required to remain a member of the organisation. Added to the very real possibility of a brutal initiation to *combat* we form closer *bonds* than is generally experienced in other Army units. In all three Sections of this Chapter I have chosen headings derived from the most common themes emergent from the transcripts. Because of the interdependent nature of Albert and Whetten's (1985) characteristics, I found it counterproductive to try and segregate meaningful narrative fragments from the context in which the story or story extract was being told. For clarity, throughout the Chapter, stories and extracts from the transcripts are accompanied by a brief explanation of why I thought it indicative of a central characteristic, why I felt it was important, and why I chose it.

There is one story type that emerges as a wellspring from which all stories in this Chapter seem to originate, being 'ready for anything.' A majority of interviewees believed this to be paramount to their identity as a Paratrooper. It means being ready to go on active service at very short notice, constantly maintaining physical fitness, and being up to date and proficient in the latest tactics, weapons systems, transport and communications technology. Most Paras say they are continually learning and training throughout their service. They seem to spend a significant part of their working life doing PT and tabbing, and practicing and improving weapons handling and field skills. I found the motto to be a type of pseudo mantra, often used for motivation when conditions are difficult or the training becomes tedious. On occasion, the motto can become a coercive ordinance, putting the Paratrooper under internal pressure to consistently meet the very high standards the Regiment demands from its soldiers. Significantly, it can also be used by soldiers, irrespective of rank and occasion, to justify

any act or situation that calls for extreme measures. To be 'ready for anything' is believed to be a Paratrooper.

6.3 Combat stories

The stories here represent what I understand to be the inner core of storytelling events in the Paras - *combat.* By this I mean engaging an enemy either by reacting to or initiating an action that involves an exchange of fire. It is important to remember that the Regiment was born out of conflict during the Second World War (4.2, Chapter 4 for a chronology of the Regiment's combat history). All new Recruits undergo a process of socialisation common to all British Army enlisted soldiers (Kirke, 2003) in which they begin to identify with their unit. As a significant part of this process Recruits in the Parachute Regiment are often tested on their knowledge of battle honours, by established members. In my day, woe betide the Recruit who could not recite the battle honours on demand after Passing Off the Square in week 4 of their training. I originally labelled this Section 'battle honours' to reflect how important they are to Paras but found these mostly epic and heroic tales have another, more subliminal message. Through narrating the exploits of our forebears, we are learning the rules of *combat.* There are three 'types of stories' in this *category*: 'craving combat,' 'contact' and 'courage.' I chose them because they represent threads that run all the way through a Paratrooper's career. The telling of *combat* stories appears to have a dual purpose. First, they are used throughout the Regiment as teaching aids. Real experience of combat is used to demonstrate why a particular tactic was or was not appropriate in a given situation. *Combat* stories contain knowledge and provide continuous learning about the job and is handed down through the generations. Second, a powerful motivational side effect of these stories appears to be fostered consciously by the Regiment. From early on in Basic Training, most Paras seem to express a wish to be in a combat situation, to test their training, see if they really do have the 'bottle,' and therefore, finally (unofficially) proclaim themself a true Paratrooper. As a result, Recruits develop a romantic

interpretation of combat through these stories. This interpretation can be further encouraged after arrival in Battalion via the stories of experienced Paras. For those who have been in combat, their stories can also take on dark undertones. For their audiences, however, these stories appear to be desirable heroic idealisations in which bravery is implicit, simply because the storyteller has experienced it for real. The first story highlights one outcome of this process of identification which I consider to be central in storytelling events, 'craving combat.'

6.3.1 Craving combat

By 'craving combat' I mean a desire to create history, to cover oneself in glory and be seen by your contemporaries (and predecessors) to be a *real* Paratrooper. This can only be achieved through having experienced it for real, and importantly have your own repertoire of heroic stories. Not every Paratrooper I interviewed had fought in a full scale war. A Private in 3 Para 'got lucky' in Iraq in 2003: *'We were given the chance, it was the first Company attack since the Falklands. ...You are going to be the first Company to do it since 1982'* [68: 434 – 435]. A majority of Paras who have served claim to have seen action, particularly on the many four to six months Internal Securities (IS) duties. For one ex-Para: *'...next thing, I am on an operational tour, not an exercise, I thought, "oh, this is for real"'* [33: 239 – 240]. Another significant factor is that beginning in 1976, (till 1999) one Parachute Battalion was constantly on Spearhead at the apex of the MoD order of battle (ORBAT) and on 48 hours notice to move. If you want to see action, join the Paras. As a young soldier, I used to hang on to the words of those who had come under fire, irrespective of the metaphoric (and prophetic) black humour often consciously used to disguise a brutal reality. Why 'crave combat?' The bottom line, in my opinion, is that you don't go through the hell of Basic Training just to sit on some beach and show off your tattoos. As a 3 Para Private said: *'all that training, all that effort you put in to get where you are ...it's for that moment'* [68: 389]. This next

soldier's comments reveal the essence of what I mean by this story type. We were discussing his involvement in the hostage rescue in Sierra Leone when I asked:

> 4: 387 *Would you do it again?*
> Definitely, without a doubt! ...Tomorrow if I had to. I loved ...Kosovo and Africa, cos you didn't know what you was doing day to day. There was always that, you know. ...You was on edge, didn't know what ...and then you'd get called out ...sudden, and that's what I love. ...That's what I really enjoyed, you didn't know what you was doing from one day to the next. ...And you felt, you know you was doing it. That was it! You was doing it, you was doing what you was ...trained to do. And I couldn't imagine, its like ...I couldn't imagine not doing them things because it would have been like I would have stayed in, waiting for it. Cos it was ...I think it's like training for a race and never running it. You know it's good to ...good to get out and that's what you want to do. But sometimes, when you do it, I think, when I talk to other blokes ...who've done all sorts, who've got operations and ...sometimes when you know. '...Fucking hell, I would never do that again.' Yet, blokes seem to crave it, until it happens. Blokes seem to crave it. But ...even now, yeah, I'd love to do that. ...I think that's why I want to work away [as a mercenary]. But ...its like when something nasty happens on the road, like a road accident, and you have to look, know what I mean? That's what its like, you have to, ...you have to look. And eh, you'll always crave it until you do it. And you can never relax and chill out because you're thinking, 'oh, I'd fucking love to.' ...Do you know what I mean? It's like ...every Para has got that. 404

As previously mentioned, Albert and Whetten's (1985) characteristics are interdependent as well as independent. I feel the above story makes that point clear. For example, the last comment: *'every Para has got that,'* alludes to the enduring nature of this 'craving combat' which I found woven into the stories of men that formed up in 1941 right through to a young Subaltern, just posted to 2 Para in 2003, who said to me: *'I want to be going where it is at, ...at the thick of it if possible, ...while I am in the Paras'* [62: 264 – 265]. In short, I interpret 'craving combat,' as a central (and distinctive and enduring) characteristic of identity in the Parachute Regiment.

6.3 2 Contact

What I mean by 'contact' is a short sharp exchange of fire with an armed enemy or an incident involving some form of incendiary device being detonated near soldiers. I label this story type 'contact' because that is the word we dream of saying on a Battalion or Company radio network (net) whilst on operations. A good example of this is where: *'I*

could see the AR15 and it was being fired right at us. ..So what do I do? I grab the blower, "Contact! Wait, wait! Out!"' [6: 266 – 268]. And that was it, you are centre stage, a place in contemporary folklore guaranteed. That, too, seems to be craved. But my analysis of 'contact' stories reveals a huge gulf between the rush of adrenaline during a short exchange of fire whilst on IS duties and the sheer numbing brutality of no-holds-barred conflict. The next extract is one of my own. I chose it because out of all the gore-soaked stories I could have used, I feel my account of battle offers a darker take on the reality. It's not heroic, it's not romantic, it's not even epic. It's a downright nasty experience, in my opinion, an enduring theme in many Paratrooper's *combat* stories:

> 27: 171For those of you who have seen all these *Saving Private Ryan* and *Black Hawk Down*. Forget it. Because you can't smell it. You can't taste it. You don't know what fear is. You're sitting there for 'oohs' and 'aahs.' There ain't no 'oohs' and 'aahs' when somebody's head explodes next to you. Whether he's your friend or not. Whether he's the enemy. Doesn't matter if the guy gets a grenade thrown at him. Doesn't matter if there's four or five of them in the trench begging for their lives. The grenade's going in. Because he's got a gun. He's scared. ...But he's got that gun and if you don't neutralise him or take him out he's going to take you out. But you don't get that in the cinema. You don't get that from a book. You don't get that on DVD. You don't get that in the [video] arcade. ...What you get is a third eye if you're not paying attention. Yeah? And then when the mortar ...and the artillery barrage is coming in, you think you are going to die. ...Three or four times I went through it. By the time you get to the fourth or fifth time. Who gives a shit? I don't care whether I'm going to die. I just want to get this over with and I'm prepared to do anything to get it over with. 186

For me and most of my comrades in arms, this type of combat was a brutal experience. In the Falklands I took part in and saw actions carried out that brought the whole history of the Regiment alive. It meant all that I'd read, and all that I'd heard was true. As a friend of mine told me: *'it was the spirit of Arnhem. We were outgunned, we were outnumbered ...in totally open ground. ...You weren't doing it for yourself, ...as long as you got your mate out of there alive. And that spirit went through the whole Battalion'* [11: 598 – 601].

Aden in 1967, was full of 'contacts.' For example: "1 Para were being met with ...sniping and grenade attacks and after a few days decided to take Sheikh Ottoman on, sending in fighting patrols to root out the snipers" (Hunter, 1999, p.203). But for one of my interviewees: *'it was hardly the Somme ...alright, there was bullets flying and some of our people were getting killed ...but I mean, it was an adventure'* [17: 168 – 169]. The second 'contact' story of this Section came from a Paratrooper who fought Communist insurgents in Malaysia, in 1955. It describes a typical engagement with terrorists and I chose it because when I heard it, I got the same buzz of excitement I'd first felt, as a Recruit, listening to this type of story. It represents what I mean by a 'contact,' short and sharp, little or no time to think and involves quick reactions. It also displays two elements that appear to be common to this type of 'contact' story - none of the patrol get killed, for example: *'they used to drop little Mortars ...machine guns would let rip at night. ...But we lost no soldiers, ...2 Para didn't lose anybody'* [22: 355 – 360], and black humour:

> 7: 461 ...The swamp water rose, seven feet in one night. We were stuck, we couldn't move. You know, you've got a river right down the middle of any swamp. And the waters rose seven foot. We got, me and Eddie were bashering together we were rising up, we made hammocks out of parachutes. We were on survival right up this big tree. And of course we says, 'you can't move.' So they [the RAF] dropped a Canadian patrol boat, in other words a rubber dinghy! So there was me Brummie, ...[three more names] gets in this rubber boat. All quiet in this swamp, we come paddling out. XXXXXX was a farmer, come from Somerset, and he says 'I'll row' he says, and he gets in and he was rowing, and eh, ...gets out into the river. We go fifty yards down the river and comes under fire. You ever been in a rubber boat under fire? [laughing] '...Row ya bastard, row!' and I'm firing, Bob is firing, everybody is trying to make ...get to the bank. And Steve is going 'Oh, Ow! Oh, Oh.' So we jumped, ...jumps onto this bank, jumped over this tree, Bob dives over this tree and I dived over him. We were attacking the camp, it was a Bandit camp. We were attacking this Bandit camp, anyway, after the shooting had stopped and everything, I turned to Steve and said 'what the fucking hell were [you] shouting about in the boat?' I says. 'Why didn't you keep rowing?' He takes his shirt off and says 'look at my back!' My cartridge cases was going down the back of his shirt.... [laughing].
> *All your empty cases were going down his back?*
> His back was burned with all the cases! [Laughing]... 477

This type of story is known in the Regiment as a crash, bang, and wallop incident, usually over in seconds, characterised by having little or no time to think, but the scenarios and lessons drawn almost exclusively focus on soldiering skills. It demonstrates a vital lesson in tactics. Instead of rowing away, they headed directly into the ambush, because fighting through offers the best chance of survival. Often in these stories, attention to detail can be seen to be paramount, as this Para, patrolling in Palestine in 1947 explained: *'it's like we went down in Tel Aviv, doing a night patrol. ...[Of] course, we used to wear slippers, the old plimsolls. ..Cos of the boots, cos they could hear you coming'* [28: 1078 – 1080]. However, I think the real message in actual *combat* stories in the Regiment is the idealisation of 'courage,' or premeditated courage in battle.

6.3.3 Courage

By 'courage' I mean a personal disregard for one's own safety. For example: *'the Major, ...he'd charged a machine gun post with a nine milli pistol'* [7: 204 – 205]. My narrative in 6.3.2, Chapter 6 reveals something about my own personal take on bravery. I see it as something I interpreted in the actions of others. I feel it also speaks for my compatriots' understanding of what this kind of 'courage' really is. In fact, Reynolds (1990) titled his tribute to the Airborne Forces: *'The Paras, 50 Years of Courage.'* For this story type I chose a narrative which encapsulates what other Paras thought was central about 'courage.' For example: "Sgt McKay, was killed leading a small group of men forward to deal with one of the enemy positions. For this brave act he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Similar acts of bravery by the men of B Company were not uncommon during the battle" (Colbeck, 2002, p.171). But for many, any display of courage appears to be a clash between fantasy and reality. An ideal seems to form, reinforced by the narration of *combat* stories which can only be tested for real in a 'contact.' It is an individual experience, as only the self can find out if one has what it takes, if expectation matches experience. These actions I interpret to be absolutely

central to perpetuating a perceived myth of heroic glory. For example, a Major, attempting to join 2 Para at Arnhem Bridge in 1944 said: "we'd got to get to the bridge and link with the Second Battalion at any cost. My Company was asked to do a bayonet charge" (Parker, 2002, p.116). I witnessed a similar act of selflessness in 1982. It happened during the Falklands conflict, at Darwin Hill, two kilometres from Goose Green. I think this soldier's words convey why this kind of behaviour may be in part responsible for creating a 'craving for combat,' and the subsequent idealisation of 'courage:'

> 10: 431 ...When we went up a bit of a hill and it was at night and I just remember smelling all that smoke and the blokes, all the ...lights going up ...we were lying behind ...a rock ...getting mortared and me and John ...looking at each other and says 'for fuck [sake] ...someone do something' and all of a sudden these blokes said to each other 'let's go for it!' We stood up ...and we run a kilometre ...down this track getting mortared either side, hitting the deck, getting up, and going a bit further. ...We were lying down, about thirty of us there, ...just before we did that assault down towards the Schoolhouse. And we looked at each other '...right, what shall we do?' We was getting mortared at the time. 'Ah, fuck it!' ...We had about three, three options, and in the end 'let's fix bayonets.' So we fixed bayonets and he said 'lets go for it!' And we all stood up and went for it... [laughing]. That is the most vivid memory, seeing all this, everyone just standing up, under fire and just going for it, just what the hell, if you're gonna go, you're gonna go.
> *The Parachute Regiment in a few small words there, Tony. Yep, you've hit the nail on the head.* 445

His account of what I consider a heroic endeavour concludes this category of central characteristics stories. The next Section follows on from *combat* and addresses another central story type, the *pressure* to be 'ready for anything.'

6.4 Pressure stories

Here I introduce another central category of stories I have labelled *pressure*. By *pressure* I mean a constraining influence. As a metaphor it relates to story types that Paras appear to consider to be foremost in their constant preparations for operations and conventional war fighting. The following story types of 'fitness,' 'determination,' 'resilience,' and 'conquering fear,' are, as I interpret them, features of the final story type in this Section, an apparent obligation and demand to be 'ready for anything.'

In the Paras there appears to be a perceived obligation on the part of the individual to maintain combat readiness standards at all times and to be prepared to undertake operations at short notice, particularly when 'in role' or on Spearhead. The new 16 Air Assault Brigade is as proud of its place at the top of the British Army's ORBAT (Heyman, 2003), as me and my contemporaries were of ours and this puts the Paras at the forefront everytime the Government decides to take military action. As a result, the Regiment occupies a position of considerable responsibility and needs to be 'ready for anything' at all times. Individuals therefore, have to keep up their high standards in all that they do and this seems to be crucial in the maintenance of traditions. But before a soldier is ready to take his place in a Parachute Battalion (and indeed throughout his career), he has to prove that he has the necessary qualities to do the job. I consider the following stories and story extracts to be significant central characteristics in that they describe the *pressure* to perform that a Paratrooper is under. In the interviews I was often reminded that in the Paras there is no place to hide, and if you are not up to standard, you will soon be found out. The first story type addresses one critical measure, 'physical fitness.'

6.4.1 Physical fitness

This category of stories is about standards of 'physical fitness' in the Parachute Regiment. By 'fitness' I mean physical strength, endurance, and athletic ability. During his interview, this ex-Para compared Paras to civvies arguing that: *'the standard was very, very, high, and by civvie standards ...unrivalled. The best civvies, with all the best will in the world, would not be able to carry the weight a Paratrooper could ...over the distance'* [1: 213 – 216]. The ultimate indication of preparation and ability to do the job seems to be measured through endurance and stamina. Being able to Parachute with heavy equipment, complete a forced march, arrive together and fight through a position with a variety of weapons anywhere and at anytime demands extreme physical fitness. I

know. According to this Sergeant, his soldiers: *'train everyday. Whether they do it as a Platoon or a Company [and] ...there is blokes who will do it off their own back'* [60: 330 – 331]. Furthermore, apart from being able to march long distances, the job specification involves carrying everything needed to complete a mission on one's back. It appears to be a truism that you can not hide in the Regiment because: *'you'd soon get found out if you let your fitness go, let your standards slip'* [34: 181 – 182]. That quote came from an Arnhem veteran but is still valid in 2005 because an individual *will* be found out, as his performance is gauged by those with whom he lives and works. This serving Platoon Sergeant's story helps explain why:

> 59: 89 Eh, the tab is important from essentially ...mostly all the battle fitness point of view. It's eh, every tab we do is an assessment of the Platoon's fitness. ...I see almost exclusively a soldier's fitness as tabbing. I don't see assault courses, I think they are crap, I think they cause injuries. I don't see BFTs, eh, although they are a good indication. I don't see ...runs and things like that because we are all gifted in different ways, we are all built differently. I see the tab as the ultimate, the ultimate soldier's fitness. If you can do the tab you can do your job. Cos you don't go to battle in, in trainers, you go to battle in boots with weight on your back and that's the end of it. Yeah, if a soldier can do that, I am happy with his fitness. So there is a point. Also, it's confidence building within the men themselves. If they see, if they are working, it's ...again, it's like 'P' Company, it reflects on 'P' Company, a tab is a shared burden. Everybody took the same weight, everybody's doing the same distance at the same speed, so every man jack can take confidence that everyone else is suffering just the same as him. It's just like 'P' Company, and this is something that other units don't have. Doing 'P' Company is like the kite mark. 99

This story gives a commander's perspective on the minimum requirement for his charges. The next two story types represent another *pressure*, this time, focused on individual performance levels necessary to reach and maintain the minimum standard of fitness. Although there were many characteristics talked about in the interviews, it is both determination and resilience, which I feel, highlights what it takes to become and remain a soldier in the Parachute Regiment.

6.4.1 Determination

For a definition of what I mean by 'determination,' I turn to Field Marshall Montgomery of Alamien who described the Paras who fought in North Africa in 1943 as: "tenacious and determined in defence as they are courageous in attack" (Bridson, 1989, p.7). Here, 'determination' refers to a cohesive resolve to succeed at every task Paras are given, and: *'you're willing to forfeit everything ...so you can get that red beret and ...wings, so you can become a Paratrooper'* [32: 30 – 32]. As Recruits, our resolve to succeed had, I think, taught us what 'tenacity' really meant in the Paras. It appears to be a never-say-die attitude, and is central because, in my experience, most of us say we needed it at some stage just to get through Basic Training. Being 'tenacious,' which I include in my definition of this type of story, I also interpret to be a constant feature of soldiering in the Parachute Regiment. In addition, in the transcripts, I observed that 'determination' stories often referenced both physical and mental states, for example: "A new Recruit to the Regiment spends 12 weeks building himself up, both physically and mentally, for 'P' Company itself, the gruelling week of tests that will decide if he is going to become a Para" (Bridson, 1989, p.14). As I myself found, the need to be 'determined' can carry on throughout a Paratrooper's career, and appears to be a characteristic often needed when continuation training is undertaken. Nearly everyone told 'determination' and 'tenacity' stories. This Private was just out of 22 weeks Basic Training and he explains what many of us learn about ourselves - if you can handle the pressure and stick with it, you will succeed:

> 58: 70 I'd say it was ...hard basic training. The fitness you can always get along with, you, you just got to stick in there. Like, I'm not the fastest runner, I never, actual sprinter, do you know what I mean? I'm not built for sprinting but if you just hold on in there, ...you'll always get through it, ...you get fitter as you go along. It's not there to break you, it's done to make you, really. So you just got to stick in there. It's like I said, it's a mental attitude, you have got to have and ...they'll test you to see if you have got the mental attitude, really. They'll, they'll put pressure on you and see if you can handle it. If you can't handle it, then, people, like you say, ...they've got the chance to get out. But then ones that really want to stick in there and try hard are the ones that get through and stick with it. 77

The centre piece of Basic Training, 'P' Company, as I remember, requires 'determination' at every test. A mate of mine failed it first time, but like so many others, he told me: *'I hadn't gone there to come back home a failure. I said I would do it again if it killed me. ...That was my attitude, I'm not going home till I done it'* [35: 80 – 84]. I observed the same attitude amongst some of the TA soldiers I interviewed. This story, from a young Private in 4 Para, reflects the lesson in the story above, namely: *'stick with it'* [58: 77]. But in my opinion, it also highlights the main reason why most first time failures return for another go at 'P' Company. Injuries sustained on and during the build up are common. Nevertheless, in my experience, it takes a lot of guts to go through that pain and torture again:

> 50: 100 Yeah, being able to be there or watch people dropping off and you are thinking 'oh, I'm still here, I'm going to stick it out and the only thing that's going to stop me is breaking my leg or something,' which is always a really annoying thing like. Come, coming up to 'P' Company or thinking you know, 'for God's sake, don't injure yourself,' you know. A couple of guys ...had slight twists on knees, ankles and stuff but you know, they ['P' Company Staff] ...strapped them up and just kept them going but ...I was clean as a whistle going through 'P' Company which was, you know, really, really happy. Because we had one guy ...he went down, eh, down three times to do it and each time he, the two times he's failed, he's been injured. One time ...he had a really bad cold and ...it killed him on the ten miler. And then the other time he twisted a knee or something ...but he still went down and did it again. So unfortunately he'd spent a year and a half as a Recruit but you know, he stuck it out and did it. 109

'Determination,' then, appears to be a central characteristic first realised by Recruits in Basic Training. There, a Para may find he has or develops many other personal attributes needed to overcome the physical and mental demands of doing the job. But there are other aspects of being resolute, as I interpret it, that also surfaced in the interviews. For example, the ability to recover enthusiasm and the will to see any task through to the end - a factor that is consistent in the transcripts, particularly where the story is, in my opinion, predominantly epic. A 3 Para Officer's account of the 65 mile march across the Falklands, I feel, captures the essence of what I mean by 'determination' in the Paras: "It was march or die. People grew up on that march. I grew up. You looked into your soul on that march because you knew there was no way out

until you got to the other end of the island" (Parker 2002, p.304). And they fought a full scale Battalion attack up a mountain at the end of it!

6.4.3 Resilience

We all have to pass 'P' Company to get into the Regiment and this process is believed to be distinctive and central to being a member of the Regiment. By 'resilience' I mean the ability to get up and go, no matter what. The story provided below, I think, reflects the *pressure* placed on an individual to pass, and the doubts about oneself, one can encounter on a daily basis. I chose the term 'resilience' because for me, it symptomises the internal resources needed, not just to pass 'P' Company but to get through Basic Training. This 'resilience' is, I interpret to be considered something central and a feature of many of the Regiment's historical narratives. I felt there was something more in the stories than just 'determination' and 'tenacity.' For example, American General, Dwight D. Eisenhower said after Arnhem in 1944: "there has been no single performance by any unit that has more greatly inspired me or more excited my admiration than the nine day action by the 1st British Parachute Division between September 17 and 25" (Reynolds, 1990. p. 48). Additionally, it appears that 'determination' is reserved for the here and now of doing a particular job. But what about the spaces where there is time to think about the ordeal ahead? I consider 'resilience' to be a form of 'tenacity' but a more long-term form of resolve than 'determination.' Sometimes just getting out of a warm bed after a few hours sleep, packing kit and drawing weapons and going out on exercise in a winter gale, takes a lot of resolve. An ex-Para recalled a typical experience: *'Yeah, it was Concrete Hill. And it was concrete then! ...Broke about three picks, trying to dig trenches ...with all me kit soaking wet. ...It's true, I woke up and the water had frozen in my water bottle'* [23: 111 – 115]. Resolve, it seems, is often needed, especially when a soldier can see no immediate point to what he is doing, other than following orders. This is another instance of what I mean by 'resilience,' but we have a choice. We chose to wear the red beret in the full understanding of what it takes to do the job.

The following story virtually wrote its way into this research as soon as I heard it, because in my opinion, for many of us, earning the red beret is symbolic of our personal understanding of 'resilience.' It tells others in the Regiment that we too have gone through the pain barrier and overcome our doubts and are 'ready for anything.' As I often realised during transcription, a routine question had unlocked a gem of a story:

> 68: 73 *Okay so what was 'P' Company like?*
> The hardest thing I have ever done in my life and I hope to ...never ever do it again, full stop. Huh, hard. ...I wouldn't say there was a single event that you can put down and say that was ...harder than this but I mean it was just the combination of all that. ...All that build up and then all of a sudden ...you got these ...seven days with these ten events are just thrown at you. And your body, is telling you I can't do no more but your mind is saying you know, fuck it, ...you know your heart, there is something in there. ...You know you want that beret ...you have come this far, ...its time has come to just, eh put everything to one side and get on with it. And ...it was the most painful thing I have done but it is the most rewarding thing I have ever done in my life.
> *Civvies can't understand that. They think we are mad.*
> Exactly, but ...like you said it's not until you are sitting there and you are appreciating the fact that what you want to achieve and what you want ...the man you are going to become. ...It's worth all the pain, all the anguish, ...all the blood and tears that you've spent, ...you can't go any higher. ...I can't even ...describe it because ...like I said ...all the effort that you had put in had been rewarded. And ...you was going through so much pain, ...so much doubt at times, even when you go to bed and think each event. Thinking 'God, have I done enough today? Have I done enough? And we are not at the end of this, am I going to get it?' And ...just to have it and ...just to hold it, ...and to wear it, [red beret] and you know...
> *You're just about to make me cry. I'm serious! You are getting all emotional on me. 97*

This story was narrated as a soliloquy by a Private in 3 Para just back from active service in Iraq in 2003. I feel he meant it because I understood its significance at once. Here, the beret is believed to be symbolic of achievement. You know in your heart that no matter what the internal and external *pressure* is to quit, you won't. This 'resilience' appears to be something we have all demonstrated to each other, otherwise we would not be part of this research. Incidentally, a significant feature of this story, I think, is the centrality of the symbolism in earning your red beret, considered later as a distinct form

of dress (7.4, Chapter 7). The next story follows on from 'resilience' to another significant test we all have to overcome, the *pressure* to 'conquer fear.'

6.4.4 Conquering fear

According to Bridson (1990, p.37): "The Airborne Soldier is fit, but he is no superman. He feels fear, he feels pain. But he can force himself to overcome them." It is something we all have to do. By conquering fear I mean taking a rational decision to carry out an act in the face of the prospect of personal injury and/or death. In this type of story, two narratives suggest a different form of courage from that I experienced on the battlefield. We all have to parachute, but stepping through *'God's window'* [52: 306], is only one aspect of overcoming fear. In my opinion, it is totally unnatural to throw oneself out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft at 800 ft whilst travelling at 125 miles per hour, never mind the heavy equipment strapped to your leg. For many of my interviewees, peer pressure seems to play a significant role in persuading many to jump. As this Sergeant Major commented: *'the pressure of eh, refusing, ...it just didn't enter my mind. I thought there is no way you can refuse because you might, well just commit suicide. It's people thinking you are a wanker and not jumping out of aeroplanes'* [46: 110 – 112].

However, apart from the obvious centrality of parachuting stories reflecting the overcoming of fear, I transcribed many references made to other rational fears often encountered. The shuffle bars on the trainasium, during 'P' Company can put a Recruit under tremendous stress. In my experience, just getting across them can be all or nothing. The prospect of milling can also be terrifying and then there was the Depot Staff themselves (particularly the PT instructors). I also recorded many instances of personal phobias, such as fear of heights, water and claustrophobia, being overcome. The first story is an account of one soldier 'conquering' his fear of heights. I chose it to demonstrate that Basic Training is primarily about preparation for doing the job, and that includes parachuting (another feature I considered to be central, distinct and

enduring story type). For example, hesitation on the trainasium at any point means instant failure, because, to do so (under the criteria of the test) indicates a lack of certainty. Another name for the trainasium is the 'confidence course,' because that's exactly what it did to me (i.e., test my confidence) and not everyone can do it: "Two failed, however, ...one because he was not able to jump a gap of about five feet between the planks, the other because there was something telling him not to run along the catwalk" (Hilton, 1983, p.92). By passing this test, particularly the shuffle bars, a Recruit demonstrates he has the confidence to stand in the door of an aircraft, fully equipped and ready to jump. For many Paras, jumping seems to be part of their personal challenge, but for others, it can be a demonstration of 'resilience.' For me, and most of 435 Platoon, it was fun. But, if you fail the trainasium, that's it, pack your bags:

> 26: 75 I'd never done [completed] the trainasium before 'P' Company. When I'd gone up, I'd always bottled it. I, I hate it, I've got a fear of heights, it's like eh, you know what it is, it's a personal challenge. You have to overcome these things to, to prove yourself. So ehm, I mean I reckon, my personal view is because we'd done the milling, the ten miler, been on the night nav-ex, all night. By the time you got to, ...then the stretcher race, done that wrong way round, in't I?
> *No.*
> No? Yeah, then the stretcher race, by the time you come to the trainasium, you was knackered anyway, so when I was up there, I didn't give a shit. It was the thing, shuffle bars, up there, bent down, touched me toes, got across and thought 'shit! Cracked it!' And you know, I got through the rest of the trainasium. I thought, 'I ain't never doing that again!' But I'd done it, I was through, I was through the bit I feared the most. 86

Parachuting is part of the job specification and apart from the obvious role of it as a means of transport into battle, the subject appeared to provoke a wide range of responses amongst my interviewees. I observed, there was little consistency. At one end of the scale some Paras are blasé about it. This Major, an APJI with 37 years experience recalled: *'you'd be jumping all day Friday, jumping all day Saturday, jumping all day Sunday. Get your thirties in, twenties, thirties, well you are doing sixty [jumps] in a weekend'* [53: 97 – 99]. Others, however, are apparently loathsome. According to this serving RSM: *'I'm not going to beat about the bush. ...I absolutely hated it and I still*

hate it now. ...I absolutely detest it. Eh, but to that end, it's one of them things. I, you give way to fear, you are not going to do anything' [43: 126 – 128]. Yet, there seems to be some kind of consensus that in the act itself, you have to overcome a fear factor significantly greater than what the trainasium prepares you for.

The next story provides a glimpse of the kind of thoughts that can run through your head in the aircraft as the order "Prepare for Action!" pierces the drone of engines and propellers. It describes a typical jump but I selected it because I noted a natural rhythm in the text that I think reflects a complex mix of urgency, calm, and panic that I have often experienced:

> 13: 191 The adrenaline is pumping, like out of this world. It, it was ...the drill up until you go into the door, like fitting equipment, ...telling off for equipment check, then moving into the door. It's all done at a kind of steady pace, but when you are in the door and ...the light's on, ...and your arm comes down and you wait for the old 'green on' to go. ...You get twitches, you know, your heart's in your, everything is rushing through your head like, and maybe sound silly ...you always wish you'd done something fucking else. I wish I'd never stole this extra egg this morning or wonder what today really matters, you know doing silly things. ...Try and make your peace in case anything went wrong with the parachuting. But everyone to their own little aspects but ...the buzzing and excitement was out of this world. ...Parachuting, in a sense it's thirty seconds of pure adrenaline rush. Until you're coming close to the ground and then you are going to carry out the drills in the sky, and then you're up and you're just like a normal soldier in a sense, but there's more, more get up and go than your average Joe Bloggs, because you've just conquered fear. 206

The *pressure* that a Paratrooper is under seems to vary everytime he parachutes, and I can only imagine the additional urgency felt by my forebears as they were standing in the door over a hot DZ, preparing to jump into action. I was told by one soldier who made the last opposed parachute jump at Suez in 1956: *'[it] sticks in your mind. Because when you come out the plane and your chute opens, all you can hear is the schtum, schtum, schtum of the fucking rockets and shells passing you [laughing], and the machine gun bullets, you know'* [7: 181 – 183]. Well, I didn't get to know, and the thought still appals me. But I feel his experience is another example of how the 'craving combat' type of story (6.3.2, Chapter 6) can influence many Paras. The romance of

parachuting into battle appears to be, ironically, a collective central fantasy. Nevertheless, every jump involves 'conquering fear' to some extent, and serving soldiers have to do a minimum of 8 jumps per year to qualify for their parachute pay. Paratroopers are, it seems, constantly under *pressure* throughout their service. An important side effect of 'conquering fear' is in my opinion, its role in the processes of *bonding*, which I consider in the next category of stories. There is though, one more story type regarding *pressure* within the Regiment, and these, I interpreted to be centred on our motto: 'Ready for Anything.'

6.4.5 Ready for anything

Utrinque Paratus, the Regimental Motto appears to be the crux of our Regiment. To be 'ready for anything' is a statement of intent, for: *'while you are in the Regiment ...you have got to have your war mask next to you, because that's what you are there for'* [31: 486 – 487]. By being 'ready for anything,' I mean being prepared to undertake a given task at a moment's notice (literally in the shortest time possible). Although often not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, in my experience,, it can become a pseudo mantra through constant repetition. If I didn't hear it when the going got tough, it's only because I wasn't listening when it was said. Part myth, part truth, it appears to provide a focus for all the skills learned, practised and honed throughout a career. But for most Paras, to be 'ready for anything,' I think, specifically means to be ready for combat at very short notice. I asked this 2 Para Sergeant if it was still the case during his service: *'We certainly are. ...Since I've returned from the Depot [as Staff], I've been on four operational tours and I went straight into Northern Ireland'* [60: 273 – 274]. I also consider the following comments by a young 2nd Lieutenant just as poignant as his Platoon Sergeant's. I feel they link his frustration with the preparation, and subsequent reasons for most of the *pressure* we put ourselves under to be 'ready for anything:'

> 57: 433 *Okay, what does it feel like to be part of the Regiment?*
> ...I love it. I think it's fantastic, ...my feelings towards the Regiment, ...always boiled down to going operational. It's pretty much my

position. By putting myself in that, in the testing position that people have gone before me, ehm, and so I find that my motivation is geared towards everything that is going on round the world. But it does also mean that, if you don't go on operations, or you don't go somewhere where you think an operation may happen then it, you do sort of, you can get quite down about it. Certainly we [2 Para] didn't go to the Gulf, cos we were in Ireland and initially you know, I have never seen frustration like, six hundred and fifty Paratroopers who are ready and able to go to war and can't go. Watch their [sister Battalions] 1 and 3 Para go out, that is absolutely, and especially with twenty four hour news coverage, ...so that was horrendous. 443

The next narrative touches on other characteristics such as 'aggression' (7.5.1, Chapter 7) and striving to be the best (8.3, Chapter 8), and I feel shows why I consider being 'ready for anything' to be the most central of *pressure* stories in this category. I asked this ex 3 Para acquaintance of mine:

> 12: 162 *Okay, ...what did you like about the Regiment?*
> Just the general philosophy. I mean, there was ...lots of aspects to it. The number one thing for me was we were the best and everything was geared to hold up and maintain that standard. And I liked the blokes I was with. I liked the way we thought, the way we acted. I liked the aggressive physical lifestyle. It suited me down to the ground.
> *Any, ...particular incident come to mind?*
> ...Not so much a particular incident, it was just the whole ethos of we will do, ...there was an attitude of we can do anything. I mean we used to sort of ...change the Regimental motto, 'Ready for Anything.' We say, '3 Para, we can do anything' and it was just that philosophy that you knew anything was attainable. If you wanted it you could do it. And anything in, just your day to day life was geared towards that. But then as I say, I think I've heard the term before, a sort of violent chic. And it was, you knew, you were really excessively aggressive, to the point where it was manufactured but it was fucking excellent. I liked it! 174

The story also touches on the *bonds* (6.5, Chapter 6) between us, and I believe provides an insight into our attitudes to doing the job. Paras tend to spend only a fraction of their service in combat and some never experience it. Indeed their craving appears to be never satiated (perhaps one reason so many transfer to the SAS or become mercenaries). This serving Private, I think, summarises it all up by saying: *'You are fighting through, and you come to the other side of it and there is this silence, and you know you have done something most men have waited 22 years of their career to do'* [68: 434 – 436]. Yet, some Paras do spend considerable time in active service, with all the associated tensions. Chapter 4 shows that in each decade of the Regiment's history, it has been involved in

many operations, but there are also extended periods of inactivity and plenty of time off for serving soldiers. Therefore, a significant part of a Paratrooper's service may be spent socialising, both in and out of uniform. I've shown that Paratroopers believed *combat*, and the *pressure* of being ready for it as being central to them. There appears to be what I consider an associated central characteristic – *bonding*. I transcribed more of these stories and story extracts than any other type described in this Chapter. These narratives seem to be a direct and indirect consequence of the hardship, depravation and *pressure* I experienced serving in a Parachute Battalion.

6.5 Bonding stories

In my opinion, the previous two Sections provide a basis for understanding why *bonding* stories are central. By *bonding*, I mean the affinity and devotion we have for each other, the Regiment, and the job. It appears that as a result of what can happen during parachuting, in contacts and combat, and as a consequence of a seemingly relentless pressure to be 'ready for anything,' there is a closeness amongst the soldiers that I have never experienced in any organisation before or since. There are six categories of stories in this Section: 'acceptance,' 'camaraderie and friendship,' 'trust' 'drinking' 'fighting' and 'brotherhood.' Apparently, 'brotherhood' and family are interchangeable terms frequently used by Paras to describe this intimacy. In *combat* stories I presented three central characteristics and in the previous category, the kinds of *pressure* an individual can be under to keep up to standard, in my opinion, a crucial condition of matching the job specification. Here I consider *bonding* stories to be a third corner of an interdependent triangle of central story types.

A soldier may think he is a Paratrooper when he completes Basic Training, but this illusion can often evaporate quickly and mercilessly upon arrival in a parachute Battalion. I witnessed a gradual process of identification and *bonding* in Recruit Company, but my interviewees suggest there is rite of passage they say is crucial to their

identity as Paratroopers. This involves proving yourself and being accepted by the soldiers. Hence the first story type, 'acceptance.' The process of *Bonding* I think contributes significantly to a work-hard-play-hard ethic, and in the second story type of this category I focus on what I consider to be the inseparable constructs of 'camaraderie and friendship.' Stories and story extracts relating to 'camaraderie' tend to be centred on intimate working relationships, starting with 'best mates,' then, 'Section,' 'Platoon' and 'Company and Battalion' members. These *bonds* appear to extend by degrees to anyone who has served at anytime in the Paras. Personal friendship, the real core of this story type, I feel, is deeper and more personal than the wider 'camaraderie' that I suggest unites all Paras. Both 'camaraderie and friendship' I believe are built on an assumed 'trust.' The job involves dodging bullets and jumping out of planes, and narratives concerning 'trust' in one's mates and the system are frequent in the transcripts. Not just in 'conquering fear' stories but because in the act of parachuting and engaging in combat Paras frequently put their lives in the hands of others. As part of the processes of *bonding*, 'drinking,' for the vast majority, appears to be central to their notion of being a Paratrooper, but I noted it often comes at a cost. 'Fighting,' seems to be associated with 'drinking,' and for many, can become a way of life. Although these stories and story extracts are in my opinion more about posturing and establishing and maintaining the pecking order than settling serious disagreements, seemingly even long term feuds can melt in the face of the requirements of the job. To me, this exemplifies how the 'brotherhood,' the final story type in this Chapter, is instilled in, and underpins most interpersonal relationships in the Regiment.

6.5.1 Acceptance

By 'acceptance' I mean the processes by which a Recruit is seen to be able to do his job by his peers. I consider this to be a significant unofficial rite of passage. For many interviewees, this is understood to involve proving oneself, and I was told many stories concerning their arrival in Battalion. In my experience, this can be confusing and

sometimes surreal. One young soldier made me cry with laughter at his predicament: *'He [a Lance Corporal] got us in the room and we, ehm and we had to listen to The Ride of the Valkyries thirty-two times before he would let us go back to sleep. ...So we sat up all night listening to [it]'* [61: 128 – 130]. However, once the mind games and fun are over, what I consider to be the real 'acceptance' criteria, physical prowess and soldiering skills, have to be proven. It can be an intimidating experience. Like me, this soldier agreed that: *'you were under suspicion. ...Every move was being watched, every word being listened. You knew it all the time'* [31: 131 – 132]. To do the job and be seen to do the job by those you work with and for, is considered to be paramount before one is 'accepted' because, ultimately: *'the blokes make sure they [the crows] understand what is required. ...Won't accept sloppy standards, won't lower the benchmark'* [60: 273 – 275].

Another factor, and a reason I chose the next story is because I observed that 'acceptance' stories were rare in the narratives of soldiers who served in the Regiment pre-1953, before the first direct intake from civvy street started. Prior to this date, all volunteers were trained by, and belonged to, a parent unit and transferred into the Paras then did 'P' Company and their jumps before joining Battalion. Although there are some allusions to 'acceptance' by the soldiers already serving, it seems that for the pre-1953 soldiers, 'P' Company was the main vehicle through which one proved one's mettle. It appears that then, 'acceptance' by all ranks was instant upon arrival in a Parachute Battalion, and many said they were welcomed into the job with a minimum of fuss. This extract, from a soldier who served in the 1950s, indicates such a smooth assimilation. I feel this was typical of his generation. The extract is as I interpret it, principally about élitism, esprit de corps and mutual respect. However, I believe the references to 'drinking' and 'fighting' are also symptomatic of, and underpin the feeling of, 'brotherhood' that I observed to be as strong in 2005 as it was in the early days:

8: 68...The first thing I noticed there was how ...hot it was in Malta. ...We were all in shorts and because we were so new, we'd got our shorts rolled up and the Sergeant Major was the first one to say 'Get those, get properly dressed!' And we had to roll our shorts down then and I suppose then I just wondered what it was all about. Drawing kit, and living under eh, canvas which I'd never done ...before. But everybody was in the same boat and we all mucked in, four to a tent and it was thoroughly enjoyable. ...We used to go out in the evenings and eh, we'd have a few beers and ...if we couldn't find anybody to fight with from a Craphat Regiment, we'd fight between ourselves but, you know, I think that was the nature of the beast really. [Laughing] ...I think we still do it! ...Esprit de Corps. ...It's coming through again to me now, some forty odd years after having left the Regiment, that Parachute soldiers and the red beret are synonymous in helping each other. It doesn't matter what the person's like, if they are in trouble then you can look upon one of your mates to help you and it was exactly the same when I was a serving soldier. ...What we used to shout 'Waho, Mohammed!' ...And if you were anywhere and you heard that, you'd think one of our mates is in trouble and you'd try and find out where he was and you'd be there and you'd lend a helping hand. ...That ...has transferred all the way through. ...The fact that you could rely on your fellow Parachute Regiment mates, whatever they were, whether they were drivers or whether they were ...in [Support] Company, or whatever, it didn't matter, they were always there to help you. 94

Post-1953, it seems you had (and apparently still have to) to do your time as a crow. This usually involves being bullied by the Senior Toms. But it appears that once one has demonstrated their competence, both in fitness and skills, barriers to the 'brotherhood' are removed. The process may vary from soldier to soldier. In my opinion there are two critical variables that can accelerate or delay the process. One is active service. This ex-Sergeant, recalling when he arrived in 1 Para in Belfast in 1974, told me why this may be the case: *'you knew you were somewhere in danger then, this was reality. ...The attitude of the lads that were there, the 1 Para lads, the experienced guys, you could see by their attitude this was serious'* [38: 161 – 162]. Second, peaks and troughs in morale in the sub-unit at the time of joining appear to affect a soldier's 'acceptance.' My experiences in Berlin were gained during one such trough. This decorated Captain and I had a fight when I joined 2 Para. Then, he was a Senior Tom, but ironically, the same process of intimidation happened to him, and to many more of my contemporaries:

49: 120 'The first thing I done was run a bath. Went back to me room ...back to me bath and there was somebody standing in it. I said to him 'what the fuck are you doing in my bath?' He says 'listen you fucking crow, it's not your bath, ...you fucking filled it up for me.' ...So we had a

> scrap and that was me first introduction to ...Battalion life, so I got fucking battered! [Laughing]...' 124

This unofficial rite of passage seems to be in part dependent on the circumstances in which a soldier joins his Battalion. I also noted that in the mid 1990s, bullying was claimed to have been 'officially' stamped out. Yet Paras being Paras, I observed that it is still happening in 2005, albeit in what I consider to be a milder form. This narrative is a typical story about what I mean by 'crow beasting' which is, in my opinion experienced by many modern Recruits upon their arrival in Battalion:

> 24: 77 I joined A Company and ...the guys were, 'you're the crow, go out, do this, do that, make the tea, go get the pizza,' whatever. You... were just the general you know, dogs-body. You had to do all the running around as the crow and you couldn't wait for the next lot to get in so they could do it! Eh, but you know, ...it's realities of life, I mean, ...it's like if you start a job, ...you started off as the tea boy and getting through your training is all part of that learning curve. And when you ...join the Battalion, you are only at the very beginning of your Army career, you, you're not as highly trained as these guys that have been in there a few years. So you ...have to earn their respect as well by ...showing how good or how not good a soldier you are, but you will earn the respect. ...We all started off by doing the running around, being the go-for. And, ehm, you know, it's expected. Get the old beasting from time to time. ...But after a while you started to get into them and ...you started to earn their respect. ...These are buddies that, mates that ...you love and they are like brothers eventually, because you end up, you know, you are in, it's hard to put a word on it. Once you have earned their respect and everything else, you know you are one of the blokes and you can't, I don't think you can get a better feeling. ...You are in this brotherhood. ...I don't know how to explain it. 101

The two main stories appear to offer different accounts of joining a Battalion. I suspect the difference may be due to direct intake. Pre 1953, the Paratrooper was older, already an experienced soldier. In fact they were known as 'Trained Soldiers' as opposed to 'Recruits' and they appeared not to have the term 'crow' in their vocabulary. As I recall, most of my generation had no prior military experience and many were still in their late teens upon arrival in Battalion. However, both narratives do mention the 'brotherhood,' discussed below. There is also an important reference made in the above story to the 'brotherhood' being difficult to explain. A comment typical of nearly all the interviewees.

6.5.2 Camaraderie and friendship

This kind of story is about the *bonds* of 'friendship' and the feeling of being part of something special, a 'camaraderie,' something that for many interviewees was said to be hard to describe but is, in my opinion a highly significant feature of a Para's life in the Regiment. By 'camaraderie and friendship' I mean the mutual trust and respect that underpin the often life-long *bonds* I have often observed between Paras. For example, to this day I am still very close friends with several serving and retired Paras. One of them mentioned it during his interview: *'Sean, ...this guy I met the day we joined the Army ...we've been friends ever since. ...Tam* [me!] *here, obviously Tam. Eh, heard from other guys all the time'* [2: 239 – 246]. 'Camaraderie and friendship' seem to be a cumulative consequence of many factors, for example, the socialisation processes of Basic Training, parachuting, working closely together, for some, combat, and living in the same barracks. In my experience, the closest friendships are formed through working in the same Section and Platoon and sharing the same rooms, but for those of us who have fought together, the *bonds* are perhaps the strongest. This ex-1 Para soldier has returned to the fold after doing his interview. He said what he missed most was: *'comradeship. Straight away. Eh, to me the blokes that ...I mentioned, Andy and Bob, were the best blokes I've ever met in my life. Because right through Africa [Sierra Leone], right through Depot ...we all went out together and had a good laugh'* [4: 229 – 230].

'Camaraderie and friendship' also appear to foster an Airborne spirit of which I consider this next story, from a friend, to be a typical instance. I chose it because to me there is simplicity, a nostalgic affection in his words but also, I think, there is an allusion to a subtle but prominent feature of this type of story (already mentioned). It seems that no one can define exactly what the *bonds* are between us. They just exist, even when encountering complete strangers:

> 35: 267 *How do you feel about the Regiment now?*
> Well with absolute fondness really. ...I respect it, I respect it more now than what I did when I was actually in, although I did know ...when you

served in a unit like that, ...stuff that's gone on before, what it's been through. And I mean we've seen *A Bridge Too Far*, we've read the books, ...met the Veterans, but I think ...I respect it even more so now. ...I really do, [you] ...go on about blokes remaining pals I mean, people say that, 'oh you're my best mate ...in my life,' your Army pals. ...That may be one or two ...but for me it's like a community, it's like a group ...of people. ...I'm at ease with anyone that's Para Reg, past or present. Straight away if I go into a place. ...When we had the Remembrance Sundays, the Drill Hall was opened up and everyone used to come back in and you'd get all your different cap badges. ...But if I ever see anyone Para Reg, ...straight for them, because I don't know, it's just one of those things. ...It was paid back as well, it was mutual, whereas I don't believe you get that with other regiments. ...[I] am not saying it's unique to the Para Reg, but there's just something a bit more about the bonding or the togetherness from blokes that have been Para Reg, that are and have been. 281

One reason for our closeness may be going on leave together, a feature of the next story below. It reminded me of another kind of friendship that I experienced, and something I regularly did with my contemporaries. I chose it because I believe it describes another aspect of *bonding*. Many Paras travel together on 'leave.' Indeed, I remember we (my close friends and I) often spent most of our time together, in and out of uniform. A retired Para who served in the 1960s recalled: *'When we left Cyprus ...instead of coming home with the Battalion, there was seven of us, drove, ...from Cyprus, ...right through, [Europe] the long way round and eh, the things that happened on that, I suppose bon, bonded us together'* [21: 450 – 452]. I often tell stories about such adventures, but Paras stories about 'leave' can often be a source of many, sometimes hilarious, adventures. I consider what this Paratrooper said about being on leave in Norway to be typical. I also consider this to be a good insight into what I mean by Para Reg humour:

43: 570 Cut a long story short, we'd been drinking all day cos there was a white out [blizzard], couldn't really go outside. So ...we were cooking with the ration packs so we didn't have to buy any food. So this lad says 'I'll do it.' So he's got the Primus stove and he's pumping away and it's dead, it's empty. So ...this lad said 'I'll fill this up.' So he's pouring it in but he's pissed and he's not using the full amount and there's fucking Naphtha going all over the table. Needless to say, he lights this, the burner, drops the match, the match hits the table, the whole table goes up. ..I'm lying in bed watching this. ...He now tries to put it out. He has a woollen jumper on, the woollen jumper now goes up. Right, so his arms are now lit. So people are banging his arms, but the big thing about what he'd done was, he'd created smoke. ...The fire alarm goes off. The Fire Brigade ...has now got the signal, they are bombing up as fast as they can, up to this hotel, this resort is packed. ...The kids and the parents are

> launching out the window, so these people are landing by my window. You know, flying by. ...I am lying on bed laughing like mad, the hotel manager comes running in, ...and there is just a smell over all over this room. And he now throws an eppy [fit], which is doing nothing for my humour cos I am now laughing even more. ...And this bloke is 'it's alright, mate! ...we got it all under control.' And the smoke coming ...off his jumper ...and this [manager] is just like. 'I've got the whole hotel' broken English, 'out there! The Fire Brigade is going to be here in five minutes! They are twenty miles away! You Brits, I hate you, get out, get out!' So we were threw out ...that's one of the stories. 598

'Camaraderie and friendship' appears to be a very important to Paratroopers and, therefore, I believe to be a central characteristic. But without 'trust,' perhaps our apparent *bonds* and mutual respect and understanding would never be so strong.

6.5.3 Trust

This story type is about 'trust,' considered by many Paras to be a prerequisite for 'acceptance' and any subsequent offer of friendship. In the Regiment, I interpret this to be a powerful *bonding* mechanism. A feature of a Paratrooper's service is that he is often put in positions of 'trust,' occasionally with a loaded weapon. By 'trust' I mean an individual's perceived belief in the reliability of other Paras and the Regiment itself: *'trust in the brotherhood ...trust with people in the brotherhood'* [26: 351]. We are required to parachute and this means literally putting our lives in each other's hands and therefore, implicitly 'trust' the Dispatchers and the equipment the RAF provides and maintains. This Para, I think, illustrates a good example of what I mean by this kind of implicit 'trust:' *'Green on! Go! Out you go, and you just plummet and you think 'I knew I was going to die.' ...And crack! it [canopy] opens'* [32: 171 – 172]. This Basic Training story from an ex-1 Para soldier, in my opinion, is not only about 'conquering fear' but about how 'trust' can play such a central role in forming *bonds* between Paras:

> 17: 216 ...In the Depot, there is one ...thing you had to do. ...I can't swim, I still can't swim ...I'm absolutely scared of water. ...What you had to do was ...you had to swing on a trapeze, into the pool and throw yourself backwards into the pool ...off a platform. And it came to launch myself off this platform. Okay, we were queuing ...to get up there and you'd got to do it, cos it was Depot, you've got to get through it you see. [Whispering] '...I can't, ...I can't' and he said 'you'll be alright, you'll be alright.' ...I said 'look, are you, can you swim?' he says, 'yeah, I can swim.' I said 'look ...I can't swim a stroke' ...and I said 'will you

> get me out?' And he says, 'yeah! I'll get you out.' And this is me first introduction to what it was all about. ...I said 'look, if I hit the water, you've got to hit the water at the same time, cos you know, I, if I go under, I'll stay under.' And he said 'no problem' and I can still see him now, out of the corner of me eye as I hurtled down and ...as I hit the water, he hit the water, ...he grabbed my hair, ...cos I was struggling that much. Everybody was, was laughing, yeah. And he held me head up, more or less dragging me to the side holding me hair, to get me out. And, ...that was me first introduction ...on what you might call Airborne spirit. 230

As I interpret the story, there are sub-themes of 'resilience' in the narrative where the soldier reveals he was prepared to do anything asked of him to get through and 'conquering fear' by overcoming his perceived danger. But this story, I feel, also helps to explain how 'trust' influences the other story types in this category. It appears to be fundamental to building relationships in the Regiment.

6.5.4 Drinking

As is common knowledge amongst soldiers, down the years, there has always been a culture of 'drinking' in the British Army. In the Paras, 'drinking' also appears to take centre stage. Here I consider 'drinking' as part of the processes of *bonding* and building social identities that I observed during my service. By 'drinking' I mean the communal consumption of alcohol. For example, one Private soldier said *'I drink ...two or three times a week, ...maybe a little bit more now and again. ...Binge drinking is more accepted in the Paras. ...It's a way of life'* [58: 375 – 386]. However, seemingly there is a cut off point to excessive 'drinking' which again demonstrates the apparent power of the perceived obligation to be 'ready for anything.' If, by 'drinking,' you can not do your job, don't drink. Once again, as was my experience you can not hide in the Regiment. This serving Lance Corporal, stank of ale during his interview, I couldn't resist the opportunity:

> 61: 445 *What's it like waking up in the morning with a real bad hangover, ten minutes before Muster parade, knowing ...you are going on a ten miler?*
> Well ...when I have done it in the past, like this morning, I have always been still pissed on the run and then sort of sobered up, like half way round, which is quite a horrible feeling but it is alright when you are young. So I have heard. Like, a lot of the older blokes basically said

> 'yeah ...I could do what ...you are doing now. I used to be able to do that, go out on the piss twenty four seven, then go out and still do your job.' ...And eh, yeah, it depends basically how drunk you get the night before because like this morning, I, I did feel the run this morning it was quite a rapid pace. And because the weather is so hot, ...I was being sick and still running along. Then we was doing firemen's lifts and obviously that brought more up. But at the end of the day we, we all come in through the gate together and that is all that counts isn't it? Coming in, in a, a pack at the end. If you stay on that tab, then why not? If you fall off, then fair enough, you shouldn't be on the piss if you can't do your job the next day. ...I just thought the tab was funny, cos I was that pissed from the Company piss up the night before. Just tabbing along laughing me head off, chatting to my mates, just laughing. ...You just think, 'yeah this is easy,' but then again if you start serving up half way round, then you do suffer, you know like 'oh my God, when is this going to end?' But yeah, I just think it's mega. 465

'Drinking' and 'fighting' apparently go hand-in-hand and there were many stories and story extracts in the transcripts that contain elements of both. In the Paras, it all started during the Second World War as this Arnhem Veteran remembered: *'we was at the top end of Haifa, now further along there is a huge, big drinking cafe and all the lads are getting in there. ...And they are all fighting. If the Paras have no one else to fight with, they'll fight with their own'* [39: 579 – 582]. Yet, not all fights, it seems are associated with drink. The next story references what I interpret from the comment to be another characteristic of 'fighting' within the Regiment, namely pride in one's own unit.

6.5.5 Fighting

Like 'drinking,' 'fighting,' or scrapping is not unique to the Paras, though interestingly many transcripts had an unsolicited story about Paras 'fighting' amongst themselves in them, however: *'If there was scrap it usually ended up with blokes shaking hands and that would be the end of it'* [60: 174 – 175]. By 'fighting' and scrapping I mean a physical altercation between two or more persons that has no relation to the activities undertaken in *combat*. It almost appears that scrapping is part of a Para's job description and I think this has more to do with the type of person than the training. 'Aggression' (7.5.1, Chapter 7) is believed to be necessary for battle. Paras are, however, taught to control it, and indeed the milling event (mandatory 'P' Company test) is exactly that, controlled aggression. But because: *'we're built to be aggressive ...to go on operations*

and do the job and get stuck in there. ...Every now and then it spills over into whichever community we are in' [58: 546 – 548. I think the next story addresses both sides of 'fighting' in the Paras. As with many potential and actual conflicts within the Regiment, posturing and aggressive displays, in my opinion, are usually enough to prevent what happened in this story. I chose it because I feel it demonstrates just how hard some of these men are, yet, paradoxically I think it brings out another aspect of the meaning of 'brotherhood' in it's resolution - the shaking of hands and the suspension of hostilities to get the job done:

> 14: 123 There was a big heavy Scots lad from Glasgow and me and him ...shall we say had a difference of opinion. And he was giving 16 Company [Lincoln] a right slagging, so this particular evening we got off the four tonner, and eh, he'd been giving it some. ...So as everybody walked off to the billets, I just asked him if I could have a quiet word with him. And we went round the side of this Nissan hut and we started ...got stuck into each other and we kicked seven bells of shit out of each other. I can't tell you who was the winner. ...But we were both hurt. ...My left eye was nearly shut, me nose was at right angles to me head, and I could hardly speak cos my lips were that fat. ...Anyway, ...I made me point about Lincoln Company. And we came away with what I suppose you would call a mutual respect. And ...there he was, he turned up in Aldershot on 'P' Company and we finished up on the log together and he was on the opposite side of the log. [I] looked at him and he looked at me and he said to me in a heavy Scots brogue, he says 'past is dead and buried' he said 'we're on this log together' he says, 'we're gonna win.' And we reached across and shook hand[s] and we tied up on the rope. 137

The point of this story is, as I interpret it, that even Territorial soldiers, at an early stage of their training identify strongly with their unit, and aspire to the unspoken rules of the 'brotherhood' – when it comes to doing the job, personal feelings are suppressed. However, the story did not end there. At the beginning of the milling event on their 'P Company, a PTI asked, as is tradition, if there were any grudge fights. Needless to say, they both stood up at the same time, donned the gloves and fought each other to a standstill once again.

6.5.6 Brotherhood

Almost all the Paras I interviewed told me what I consider to be 'brotherhood' stories. Exactly what the 'brotherhood' is appears to have as many meanings as there were

interviewees who told stories about it. Here I interpret 'brotherhood' to be an association, society or community of people linked by a common interest. I chose this term because in my opinion, 'brotherhood' is at the apex of the *bonds* that we form as it seems to be pervasive in most of the stories and story extracts that relate to a sense of belonging. Indeed, in my interpretation, a Paratrooper considers himself to be *in* the Regiment but *belongs* to a 'brotherhood.' This poem by a 3 Para Corporal taken from, *Poems from Pegasus* (Bill Lomax, compiled 2002), I feel, captures the essence what I mean by 'brotherhood:'

> *Was it the years or the polish you lent,*
> *Or the letter you read me when you had one sent?*
> *The beret we wore as brothers together;*
> *The butt we shared at the end of our tether?*
> *No, deeper than this lay our blood brotherhood;*
> *A fierce love burning, much less understood.*
> *It was the pain and discomfort bleeding and tears,*
> *Nights of cursing, dying and prayers!*
> *The dirt on your face that had streaked as you died*
> *Had captured my heart when I fought at your side.*
> (G Cook, Cpl, 3 Para Bn)

I feel 'brotherhood' stories tend to transcend many different types of relationships when it comes to doing the job. In fact, being a member of the 'brotherhood' myself helped me gain access to the Regiment and dissolve any misgivings surrounding sensitive issues whilst conducting this research. 'Camaraderie and friendship' are, arguably, central to every Regiment in the British Army. Like me, military personnel that have had a baptism of fire understand the special bonds it forges amongst the individuals involved. But not all Paras have experienced *combat*, yet, my interviewees' stories suggest that a 'brotherhood' exists in the Regiment that extends the concepts of 'camaraderie and friendship' into something more particularly meaningful and lifelong. I noted that battle hardened Paras generally do not look down on their brothers because they have not been in *combat*. They say they don't need to. All Paras have jumped, and that (as I interpret this to mean) in itself is enough as can foster:

> 70: 159 'A bond to your fellow ...mates. ...A lot of the time, your life is in their hands in the aircraft. ...You check each other's equipment out, ...you got a common trust and bond with each person in [the] unit. ...You

> couldn't really explain it, ...it is the sort of thing that is there but you feel it's there. ...Even when you meet fellow ex-Paratroopers, there is a common bonding straight away.' 169

The 'brotherhood' also appears to be an understanding, sometimes referred to as 'Airborne spirit,' and exists only between Paras. On one level I interpret it to be a knowing, a feeling of belonging that is hard to explain, even by Paras to themselves, as the extract above suggests. On another level, 'brotherhood' can be understood as a form of love for each other. This serving Private describes some of the processes that are involved, before he gives an opinion of what the 'brotherhood' means to him:

> 58: 334 When I was in Depot ...they was always skitting me ...and calling me 'sheep's teeth' and stuff like that. It just makes me laugh, ...it really does though. That you can call somebody really, really bad. ...You will call their mothers, you'll call their fathers, you'll call them. You'll call their pet dog if they've got one and ...they'll just call you back. ...It's camaraderie, you just call each other worse names, ...always play pranks on each other and stuff like. You'll go out your way to stitch your mate up, [and] at the end of the day and he'll go out his way to stitch you back. It's all just done as a laugh and a sense of humour.
> *Does it ever get out of hand?*
> Oh, well everything, everything can get out of hand, everybody can just stop again, but you always make up. It's like a family if you, if you fell out, if you called your brother something really all that hard [he'd] end up trying to fight with you, but you make up at the end of the day. It's ...like a family, that's why they call it the Airborne brotherhood. ...You can get out of hand but you will always make friends. And if, if your friend is in trouble, you will always try and help him out. Everybody tries to help each other out here. If, if you don't, then people start sussing you out and your name will start cropping up as somebody who just doesn't, ...help out. Who, who isn't part, part of your family like. 350

The story I think also contains another example of there being nowhere to hide in the Regiment and there is also a reference to keeping up standards. Apparently, if a soldier does not conform to the unwritten rules of the 'brotherhood' then he is ostracised. This does not automatically extend to 'drinking' and 'fighting' as there are some soldiers who do neither. As the Regimental Colonel (in 2004) confessed: *'I love the soldiers. ...I miss the fantastic, eh infectious optimism, fitness, confidence ...and great friendship with lots of them. I could never drink as much as them. So long as I live I will always be a two pint squealer'* [9: 90 – 93].

Significantly, a Para officially becomes a member of the 'brotherhood' as soon as he lands after his qualifying jump on the Basic Parachute Course as: "all who have served in Airborne Forces – Regular and Territorial are eligible to join **The Brotherhood.** It is NOT another association. There are no rules, no formal meetings" (*Pegasus*, June 1994, p.1; emphasis in original). However, to become a 'true' member of the 'brotherhood,' for many the entry criteria to what I interpret to be an exclusive 'club' within the 'brotherhood' seems to be you had to have been in active service (7.4.4, Chapter 7). I based this on my observation that many interviewees stated that it was after seeing active service that they were able to call themselves a 'real Paratrooper.' For example, *'[I] didn't really feel like a proper Paratrooper until I'd done the you know, the business'* [45: 451-452]. The next story, I feel, is a nostalgic interpretation of this phenomenon, and I chose it because to me it is representative of many interviewees' opinions. I asked this soldier with service in both the Regulars and TA when he felt he was a Paratrooper:

> 15: 483 *When did you actually feel that you were a Paratrooper?*
> Eh, ...phew, that's another difficult one to...
> *I know, I know...*
> That one is a very difficult one to answer because in actual fact, during my first 'P' Company with the eh, TA. That first red beret, I thought I was on my way to being a Paratrooper. When I first done my jumps at Brize Norton, I felt that I was at last a Paratrooper. And then, it wasn't until I got into 2 Para how much I realised that the extent of being a Paratrooper is never ending. You feel that you are a Paratrooper at one level but you go up the ladder, an endless ladder. You can never, ever measure. ...You are a Paratrooper, but at what level? And really it wasn't, as I said earlier, when I came back from Crossmaglen, that first tour in Ireland. ...It wasn't till I came back from Ireland with the Battalion that I really felt a Paratrooper, in all honesty. 493

These stories, I feel demonstrate the centrality of the feeling of belonging to a 'brotherhood' both in and out of the service. There appears to be two aspects to this perception: as a job specification being part of a 'brotherhood' is considered to be paramount, irrespective of personalities, yet at the same time the process can include a powerful *bonding* mechanism, forged mainly through abstract ties. I also consider these type of stories and story extracts to be enduring (as seen in the story above) because,

apparently, the extent of being a Paratrooper and thus a member of the 'brotherhood' is never ending. Finally, 'brotherhood' stories seem to draw on and emerge from narratives of 'acceptance,' 'camaraderie and friendship,' 'trust,' 'drinking,' 'fighting,' as I presented here. In my opinion, they also indicate that this 'brotherhood' underpins most of the *bonding* stories I found in the transcripts.

6.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have presented my data on centrality stories. Analysis of the first category of stories, *combat*, showed that the desire for, and participation in an exchange of fire, appears to influence a perceived 'craving for combat' on two counts: one, the desire to do it for real; and two, to take part in an heroic action. Two further observations emerged from my analysis of stories and story extracts concerning what I interpreted to be 'contacts' and 'courage.' Apparently, taking part in an operation that involves a premeditated attack or defence of a position is less common and more intense than a short, sharp, abrupt incident I described as a 'contact.' *Combat* is generally believed by those who have experienced it to be a brutal experience, divorced from fantasies nurtured through the narrativisation of romantic and epic exploits in which heroism appears to be the ideal. Paradoxically, I noted a palpable desire by Paras who have not been under effective enemy fire, to test themselves and their training, and take part in or carry out a brave action themselves.

The second category of stories that I considered to be central to my interviewees was *pressure* stories. In these I indicate some of the perceived obligations individuals say the need fulfil to continually be able to do the job. This may involve maintaining minimum standards of 'physical fitness' required to undertake and complete operations successfully, often anywhere and at anytime. This, in my opinion is reinforced by what I interpret to be a pseudo-mantra, the Regimental Motto - 'ready for anything.' As I understand it, to be so requires 'tenacity' in the form of 'determination' and 'resilience'

on the part of the individual. Every Para, it seems, must 'conquer fear' to get into a position where their perceived 'craving for combat' can be fulfilled. As a result, a central concern in the Regiment, is that Paratroopers appear to strive to be 'ready for anything.' Meeting the minimum standards is also considered to be paramount in achieving what I believe is a state of mind, because, apparently, maintaining a constant state of readiness can be very demanding on the individual and is a continuous feature of a Para's career, from Basic Training onwards.

The first two categories of stories in this Chapter (*combat and pressure*) have another function in that I believe they lay the foundations for a third category of *bonding* stories. The first of these story types, 'acceptance,' seems to be of a more central concern to the modern Paratrooper than to his predecessors. Those who had transferred into the Regiment pre-1953, arrived from another unit with a previous identity as a soldier already established. However, then as in 2005, once 'accepted,' the *bonds* that form between Paratroopers can spill over into one's social life, during leave and time spent off-duty. This means that 'camaraderie and friendship,' appear to be central to the Paras I interviewed. In turn these *bonds* appear to be built on a 'trust' learned during Basic Training which seemingly becomes second nature to some soldiers. Without it, in my opinion, Paratroopers would not be as prepared to carry out the tasks that are demanded and expected of them. When Paras go 'drinking' they say they tend to binge drink, but will not let it interfere with doing their job. Some of my interviewees suggested Paras sometimes ended up 'fighting,' amongst themselves, but although the links to 'drinking' appear to be obvious, fights have been witnessed to break out at other times. This, it seems, is mainly due to the aggressive lifestyle of Paras. The feeling of being part of a family, being a member of a 'brotherhood' can, I was often told, quickly heal rifts, and like siblings, the protagonists often make up. A side effect of this 'brotherhood' is that Paras believe that when there is an actual or perceived threat from outside the Regiment, they will stand back-to-back, even when individuals do not personally know each other.

As is my experience, our *bonds* and mutual respect can be lifelong, and every Paratrooper is officially made a member of the 'brotherhood' upon completion of their Basic Parachute Course. My research suggests it is difficult for members to explain what they mean by the 'brotherhood,' even to each other. Nevertheless, it appears to be so strong that even the youngest Paras, I interviewed in 2003, said they identify strongly with, and respect those who have served before them, all the way back to the birth of the Regiment in 1941.

There were other types of centrality stories I considered for presentation in this Chapter, for example: Being 'special,' or 'unique;' the pursuit of 'excellence' in all that Paras do; 'coursemanship' or the *pressure* to beat other units at everything; and 'black humour,' the dark but (often subversive) hilarious compensation for so much pain encountered in the Paras. The next Chapter presents my analysis of the second of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity, distinctive stories, in which all of the themes can also be considered central. As I found here, many story categories and types are interdependent, as well as independent, and many of the characteristics I introduced here follow on throughout the stories in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

Distinctive stories

Was it the blue wings, or the posh red beret,
Or was it for the extra two bob a day?
Or was it to prove that you're number one,
And could soldier with men who are second to none?

Anon. Taken from Poems from Pegasus.

7.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I consider the second part of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition (i.e., characteristics that Paratroopers believe to be distinctive about their Regiment). The narratives are organised into three broad categories that I interpret to represent the most frequent references to distinctive characteristics emergent from the 70 interviews. The first category is *difference* stories in which I explain how and why I think soldiers of the Parachute Regiment see themselves as being different (or distinct) from other soldiers serving in Airborne Support units and significantly what Paras perceive to be their benchmark, the Line Infantry of the British Army. Second, *dress* stories reference what I interpret to be important about the main forms of dress, attire and insignia worn in the Regiment, both in and out of uniform. The last category of *macho* stories are oriented around features which in my opinion many of the interviewees suggest are distinctive about themselves and subsequently central to their reputation and image.

7.2 Distinctive stories

My argument for selecting the stories that I reproduce in this Chapter is that they address issues that are perceived by Paras to be *distinctive* about their Regiment, and thus, themselves. By *distinct* I mean a perception that the individual is somehow different from an appropriate referent. My own service proved to be invaluable in framing these *differences* in terms of classifying stories for this Section. From experience, I knew Paras think they are special and do consider themselves different when comparing

themselves with the rest of the Army. In my opinion, the Regiment's history and traditions appear to underpin its specialist methods of training, dress, and standards of soldiering. This includes participation in ceremonies peculiar to the Regiment in which rites of passage are completed. References to these ceremonies as rites of passage, as recorded in the many books and documentaries on the Regiment, were also present in the transcripts. They involve the presentation of specific forms of dress and insignia. Externally, the Regiment signifies entry in controlled stages, which I argue facilitates a gradually incrementing construction of identity from Recruit to Paratrooper and eventually to what is interpreted by the individual as their full membership of the Regiment. This happens in the mind of the Paratrooper and the story and story extracts in this Section, I feel, reflect this process. As a result, my understanding of the transcripts suggest the Paras I interviewed believe themselves to be unique both in reference to the other military units and as individuals. I have divided the stories and extracts on *distinctive* stories into three categories, to represent what many interviewees say they believe is different about themselves and their Regiment (in comparison to other military units). The first category, *difference* stories, focuses on Basic Training and the minimum requirements set by the Regiment to become a Paratrooper. In my opinion, *dress* stories symbolise this in terms of the right to wear distinct items of official clothing and insignia. Here, this includes their unofficial (and optional) forms of dress and other visual identity symbols. *Macho* stories, I feel, reflect how Paras perceive themselves and how they believe others see them. Each story is accompanied by a brief explanation of what it is that I think is distinct and why I chose the particular extract or story.

7.3 Difference stories

Here, I focus on what the interviewees say the believe was *different* about themselves in comparison to other military units. By being *different* I mean being distinguishable by nature, form or quality from another. It appears that Paras claim they are because they

are trained in-house by Parachute Regiment instructors and not by the Army. Basic Training appears to be where a new identity is constructed, as that of a prototypical Paratrooper, complete with a new set of beliefs, values and assumptions that are learned in the process. From this experience emerged tales of *difference.* I feel, the stories and story extracts I use here show that being *different* is more important than looking *different.* I also observed that being distinct is a state of mind, learned as a Recruit and encouraged in Battalion. The first type of stories are oriented around Basic Training or going through the 'factory.' Many of the Paras I interviewed described it as a brutal initiation that is noticeably unconventional compared to other units, including Airborne Support units but particularly, the Infantry (4.3, Chapter 4). Officially, apart from the gruelling regime, there are two other salient points of departure from the training undergone by the rest of the Army. First, all the interviewees have successfully completed ''P' Company,' and their stories and extracts tend to focus on the tests of character and endurance. Second, the soldiers complete a Basic Parachute Course. Unsurprisingly, the transcripts are peppered with tales being *different* because of 'parachuting.' In this Section, I interpret these narratives to be more about the resolve to jump, rather than 'conquering fear' (6.4.4, Chapter 6). To realise their claim to be *different,* Paras need a referent by which they could claim to be distinct, both as individuals and as an organisation. The last story type in this category addresses this issue by presenting stories about 'other units' (the Infantry), as I remember is considered by many Paras to be the benchmark by which they measure their *differences.*

7.3.1 The Factory

This Section concerns the core of what Paras consider to be distinct about themselves, going through the 'factory,' a term I observed to be often used interchangeably with 'Basic Training' and 'Depot.' By the 'factory' I mean a colloquialism for the training establishment in the Parachute Regiment where Recruits receive their basic instruction and learn to become soldiers. As mentioned, going through Basic Training in the Paras,

is unlike anything other Army soldiers, including, soldiers serving in Airborne Support units (e.g., 9 SQN, RE; 7 Para, RHA) experience in their training establishments. As a Senior Officer said whilst making the distinction between his soldiers and another infantry unit: *'They'd been through the real ...machine process, through the Depot'* [9: 71 – 72]. Like me, most direct entry interviewees reflected on it as a long and arduous journey and I was told many stories with what I interpreted to be explicit references to the 'factory' and its: *'brutal regime'* [10: 23], in which one was: *'intimidated mentally and physically by ...the instructors* [59: 25 – 26]. This first story comes from a close friend of mine, a Colour Sergeant with 30 years experience. I selected it because I feel it reflects a common experience and, significantly, he has been on both sides of the fence and was able to reminisce both as a Recruit and many years later as an Instructor. Additionally, I think it touches on a feature explored further in 'teaching and learning' stories (8.3.2, Chapter 8), the Regiment's capacity to learn, expressed here through a better understanding of the nature of injuries:

> 10: 46 Ehm, when I was down the factory in ...ninety-one, around about that time, ...I would say 'P' Company was if anything, was harder than when I went through it [in 1973]. But there's a ...big difference. ...It was harder in one way, as far as physically more demanding. But ...in another way it was more demanding when I went through because it was just a brutal machine. You just put your boots on and go for it. No one knew what a stress fracture was, no one knew what eh, Achilles Tendonitus was and things like that. And people had all these injuries then, but they just had to fight through it. And they were going for it and you ...carried a lot more injuries then 'cos you weren't built up to it. You were expected to do it straight away, you know, get them boots on, go for a run, go for a tab, get your kit on and there was no build up. Whereas when I was down the Depot [as an instructor], people were built up, they started off in their trainers. ...They started off with stretches and things like this ...before you go out for a run, and cool down when you come back. ...Which we wouldn't have ever known about but ...in the end, the standard, especially when you came to endurance. I believe in doing endurance pace. When I went through Depot, it was just the basic needs in these days. Now ...they're doing an endurance phase if you like ...the Fan Dance. And it was up the Fan [Pen Y Fan in the Brecon Beacons], down the other side, up Fan Fawr, down the other side, finish ...with a 10K [kilometres] speed march. That's quite ...brutal! 61

Training issues seem to evolve in the Regiment, as the above extract demonstrates. Knowledge appears to be built on. I noted that since direct entry in 1953, and

particularly amongst modern Paras, going through 'the factory' is typically said to be the core of the distinction they make between themselves and other Airborne units. I was genuinely surprised at some of the vitriol, for example: *'[What] pisses most of us is how they can actually call themselves Paratroopers. They are not. ...They are Parachutists. Yes, they have done 'P' Company, that doesn't make you a Paratrooper. ...That first day [you] walk into Depot to the last day you walk out and [are] ...sent to your Regiment, ...that is a Paratrooper!'* [68: 279 – 286]. I feel the story below demonstrates this strength of feeling, repeated by many serving Paras. A Corporal, posted to the Recruitment Team, from the new 'factory' at Catterick after 2 years training Recruits, makes the distinction clear:

> 67: 370 I think it's like any other unit [in 16 Air Assault]. ...You get idiots, dickheads who ...walk around shouting 'Airborne' all the time. And ...at that young age you think 'oh yeah, you just want to be a Paratrooper,' sort of thing. And like everyone is like 'yeah, you are a wannabe!' But I think everyone has got their own place and as long as they can do their job, ...and do their job well, which they should do if they are wearing that maroon beret on their head. ...Then I have got total respect for them. I mean the two week course at Brize, ...is just ...another course. It's, if you want to be a Paratrooper, you want to be in the Parachute Regiment, then you go away and you do Depot. And you do the whole of Depot, 'P' Company, get your wings and then you start learning your job once you get to Battalion. ...If people start calling themselves Paratroopers, ...when they haven't been through that system and they haven't worked in a Battalion for a while, then they can pretend, they can pretend all they like. And they can think what they want about themselves. ...But they are not! ...And they probably never will be. They are just ...wannabe's. 381

There is a reference to *'doing the job'* in the above story which, for me, echoes the Regimental motto. Yet, for the Corporal, and many Paras, there appears to be a belief that doing the job is what makes them *different*. Apparently, many say only Paras themselves can do what they do, but some also claim they can do everybody else's job. For example: *'the guys in the Regiment, can do anything. They can do any of those technical jobs'* [59: 382 – 383]. But here, I want to explain why I think going through 'the factory' is so important to the modern Para. To an outsider, a red beret is a red beret, wings are wings, there is no obvious distinction between the soldiers wearing them. In my time, it was similar from the inside. If you wore a beret and wings, served

in the Parachute Regiment, or Airborne Forces, you were a Paratrooper. This appears to be a legacy of the Regiment's inception and recruitment strategies pre 1953, when Paras were trained soldiers and volunteered, as this 1950's veteran explains: *'I went into the Northamptonshire Regiment. Did my basic six weeks training and applied then to go forward for pre-parachute training'* [8: 27 – 28]. However, contrary to my generation and those that went before, the 'factory' is now said by many modern Paras to be the only place that can make Paratroopers. Everything else that wears a red beret and sports a badge of courage appears to be considered an imitation.

7.3.2 'P' Company

In the previous category of stories I made a distinction between soldiers in the Parachute Regiment and soldiers in Airborne Support units. Here I consider the *difference* to be in relation to non-Airborne soldiers, i.e., most of the British Army, particularly most Paras' say is their benchmark, other Infantry units. By 'P' Company I mean Pre Parachute Company Selection (4.3.2, Chapter 4). It seems that identity as a Paratrooper is consolidated in the mind of the individual each time a critical rite of passage is completed. As I understand it, successfully completing 'P' Company represents the first significant step for the Recruit in his construction of identity as a Paratrooper. This incremental process seems to be continuous throughout a Para's career. For example, I was told *'it just builds and builds. ...It comes with experience, it comes with a bit of time'* [60: 559-560]. This Sergeant indicated he thought it was after passing: *''P' Company. [And] therefore, that identity is being bestowed on you'* [59: 219]. Passing ''P' Company' appears to be regarded by most interviewees as a potent internal and external symbol of their *difference*. The test of endurance and stamina undergone, I believe is central to the Regiment's perceived distinctiveness, because, passing can be, for many interviewees, like this Corporal experienced in the 1960s: *'Fucking hard! Hard. ...If you failed, it was something you lived with, because you wasn't up to the match of being ...a red beret'* [5: 13 – 15]. It seems that passing is regarded as an

achievement that sets the soldier apart from the rest of the Infantry. In Tam's story in Chapter 5, I alluded to the frantic nature of Basic Training, but as I realised, it is not all about fitness. A Recruit has to pass many other tests and demonstrate arguably very high 'standards' (8.3.1, Chapter 8) in a variety of skills, for example, marching, shooting, map reading and fieldcraft. This too is considered by many to be a factor that makes them *different*, as this former 2 Para Tom told me: *'the Irish Guards were ...the resident Battalion ...and they were very surprised that Private soldiers like me could point out all the fire positions, what ...their job was'* [22: 366 – 368]. ''P' Company' is officially the culmination of a Recruit's first twelve weeks and it appears that Depot Platoon Staff may spend time helping an individual with soldiering skills where they believe he has it in him to be a good Paratrooper. This is arguably unique to the Paras because in the British Army, only the Parachute Regiment has the entry criteria already described. An Instructor told me a story about one such soldier struggling with weapons skills but in whom he: *'saw the potential. Without any shadow of a doubt, the potential was there. Bloody good lad, fit lad. ...Once his confidence was built up, he was alright'* [10: 180 – 181]. The soldier went on to become a PT Instructor in 2 Para. A candidate may have fallen behind on minor competencies but can still pass, as this soldier informed me in his ''P' Company' story. I chose it because in my opinion, it focuses on his 'determination' (and resolve) to get through, and reflects what many interviewees also suggested, that ''P' Company' is not only central, but distinct about their Regiment:

> 23: 134 I struggled on the ten miler which was surprising because ...for a big guy I've always been really fit and ...never, ever had any problems with a ten miler. ...But I still struggled with it and I was looking at my marks and I was thinking, '...two events to go through, and I've really got to do well on these.' ...The stretcher race and the log race... And I got B pluses on both of them! ...Enough to get me through, but I really worked my fucking bollocks off. ...And then ...people dropping around and I just knew that if ...I couldn't achieve on those, ...I wouldn't ...get through ...get me beret. ...I would have rather have died than not passed that. ...I was just so focused on those last two events that helped passing with a really good score. ...I never really thought about failing. ...Funnily, if you thought about failing, you probably would. ..It was just totally focused along 'I'm going to pass this thing, whatever it takes.' ...That was like a milestone in my life that I was definitely going to get past. And I didn't, I didn't think about failing it. 156

It appears that to get through requires a refusal to give up, no matter what. Some Paras liken this to a process of indoctrination (by this I mean the systematical acceptance of ideas without criticism). As one interviewee suggested: *'We were brainwashed. ...I don't mean it in a derivative, derogatory manner. ...It was a way of getting you to channel everything down one path so that you didn't waver to the signs saying "I'm not going to do this"'* [22: 271 – 272]. However, as the next story in highlights, failure is not necessarily seen as the end. This I understand is because the standard of fitness required to pass is set so high, apart from injury, many fail because they are not physically capable. This story is from one such soldier:

> 32: 101 *Why did you do it twice?*
> Eh, I failed the assault course, steeplechase and I was a minute late coming in on the ten miler. Eh, the assault course and steeplechase they allow you, but the ten miler was ...critical. So back I went. And even then, me second 'P' Company, ...I came in well under on the ten miler but I still failed the assault course and steeplechase. Had ...an Officer, ...don't know what I did to upset him, but he hated me. ...I don't know why. I think it was because I never looked like the archetypal Paratrooper. ...Even in Depot. You know I carry weight and everything, ...I just couldn't stand a lot of it. ...I thought 'a lot of this is bullshit. It's their attitude.' Another reason you join the Paras is you are meant to think for yourself, and in Depot, you are just not allowed to think for yourself. When you get to Battalion, it's a good thing, you know that, they, they trained you. But in Depot it's just jump, jump, jump all the time. ...So eh, when I actually passed ...he was stood there, ...calling out the names of who had passed. ...[The Officer] went through in alphabetical order ...and he missed me. And he went ...all the way through he went, calling out all the guys that had passed and finally he went, 'oh and XXXXXX.' I remember that, I thought 'you bastard!' 118

This narrative touches on another important aspect of ''P' Company,' that Paras apparently believe makes the Regiment *different*. Apart from being trained to respond rapidly, to follow orders on demand and without question, another reason for this *'jump, jump, jump'* [32: 112] ethos, as described above, is aimed at the psychology behind another common *difference* story – 'parachuting.'

7.3.3 Parachuting

By 'parachuting' I mean the act of static line military parachuting. I consider this to be a *difference* type of story because "parachuting is, in the first case, what separates the

Parachute Regiment from all other Infantry regiments in the British Army" (Bridson, 1989, p.38). But seemingly, not all soldiers who parachute are considered Paratroopers, as the 'factory' stories above suggests. Military static line parachuting is not sport parachuting: *'It isn't until you actually ...stood up with all your kit on, ready to go down to the door and your arm has gone numb 'cos you have got that much weight on, and you are thinking, "just get me the hell out of this tin can. Quickly!" That you actually know what parachuting is all about'* [67: 186 – 188]. In my opinion, this type of story and story extract underpins Paras' perceived *differences*, because its role, from inception is to parachute into Battle as a self-contained unit. To make the perception clear, I draw on a comment by a former 1 Para soldier: *'Why can't every unit in the British Army be ...Airborne? Well, if they did that then they'd just be Craphats that could parachute. They wouldn't be Paratroopers!'* [4: 297 – 298]. Here the *difference* appears to be made in terms of soldiering. As I myself reminded several interviewees: *'the soldiering starts when you hit the deck'* [e.g., 37: 348; 52: 426], an expression learned in Depot and often witnessed throughout my career.

I chose the following story because if I wanted to express my own feelings about parachuting, I couldn't have done a better job. This serving Private's first jump was from a Skyvan. Ballooning was phased out in the early 1990s, due to Defence cuts, but I feel he speaks for many of us who have stepped through *'God's Window'* [52: 316]:

> 68: 99 The first jump ...was actually from a Skyvan. ...I remember standing up, on the back of the gate and thought. ...Obviously the gate goes down. ...The difference ...between a Herc and the Skyvan is ...you have got the side doors with the Herc. And your field of view is just narrow and you don't get to see a lot of it. But with the Skyvan, as soon as it goes down, there is this whole area and you are looking down and you see all these little cars and you are like that 'oh my God, what am I doing here?' But from the moment you let go of the static line and you walk to the end, and you leap. That is, you are doing it. It is not you, standing, and I'll tell you, walking up, giving your static line to someone who's kicking you out. It is you, wanting to get out of that plane saying 'yeah!' You know, that first jump, the first moment, after you going 'yes, I have got what it takes.' ...It certainly starts with that belief. ...Yeah, there is that fear factor, that is important you know. Every person has got to have it but the fact is as soon as that fear factor

> kicks in, you think about the moment when you got the maroon machine, when you got your beret. Have you come this far, for someone like this trying to stop you? No. No way! 115

In my opinion, the story suggests that parachuting is as much about desire as about 'conquering fear' (6.4.4, Chapter 6). One significant aspect of these type of stories and story extracts, as I interpret them, is that our identity as Paras is so strong that refusal is considered to be a strict taboo. Indeed, before every jump, an order is given, warning that: "Refusal to carry out a parachute decent ...will almost certainly result in trial by Courts Martial and the withdrawal of the right to wear the qualified parachutist badge with wings" (Hilton, 1983, p.169). I chose the next story from a serving Sergeant to demonstrate just how much I think is at stake – one's whole identity as a Paratrooper. The narrator witnessed a rare but ritual humiliation of a trained soldier who had refused to jump. In my experience, no matter how many times we jump there is that moment, the point of no return when the decision is made, often under the perception of intense peer pressure, to once again take a leap of faith. I consider this to be fundamental to the feeling of 'trust' (6.5.3, Chapter 6) for it reduces us all at that moment to equal status. Indeed: "these attitudes are in part due to the act ...itself which bonds man to man, Officer and Tom, together like no other regiment" (Bridson, 1989, p.40). It is a feeling only Paras can experience. The argument appears to be, if you refuse in the aircraft, you may refuse in battle and are therefore, in breach of both official and unofficial obligations. Men have died jumping. Refusal, as I understand it to mean, is a rejection of all the values of the Regiment:

> 60: 82 Aye, the first one was the best jump I ever done. 'Cos I jumped Balloon and eh, well it was fantastic. Somebody told me, don't look down so I was in the Balloon cage, the other three lads went, ...and it started getting a bit windy. The PJI was like that, 'right mate, when you are ready,' and he just lifted the barrier and I just run straight out. 'Cos I didn't like standing about on me own. And I just went for it and aye, it was the best jump I have ever done. ...The second one is the worst because you know what is coming. ...It was a case of 'you'll go.' I could not be embarrassed in front of all me mates and it was as simple as that. No matter how much I might hate parachuting now, I would not be embarrassed. ...Just jump no matter what and I think most of the blokes are the same. ...Military parachuting ...is not sport parachuting but eh, I would never say no.

> *Can you explain why, why you say that?*
> Because ...you get up to ninety blokes on that plane, everybody is in rag, everybody has got their own fears. But come the minute you stand up, things might go that little bit quiet. You just get that confident nod off the blokes. ...Everybody is looking at each other to make sure everybody is happy and then you go. You are not going to leave your mates, you are not going to be the man left behind on that aircraft. ...It's just a big embarrassment and for I know, the one bloke that refused. ...They made him wear a steel helmet, silver helmet, marched him in front the Battalion and marched out the gate 'cos he refused to parachute. ...Yeah, and he was sent to another regiment, no contact with the blokes. 108

A reference to 'conquering fear' (6.4.4, Chapter 6) emerges in the narrative, but I think the significance of this story is implicit in the allusion to an aspect of the 'brotherhood' (6.5.6, Chapter 6). I feel the Sergeant speaks for most Paras. Shame, and the threat of humiliation and total rejection appears to be potent enough to carry you out the door, no matter how terrified or apprehensive. I think this is distinct about the Regiment. As pointed out by the Sergeant, refusal is the end of service in the Regiment, indeed, a soldier can never wear his wings again if he refuses. And the final sanction? The start of a new career as a Craphat. As good a deterrent as any.

7.3.4 Other Units

The last story type of this *difference* category is 'other units,' what many Paras perceive to be the ultimate benchmark by which the Regiment measures itself. By 'other units' I mean non-Airborne soldiers, and this specifically relates to the Line Infantry lower down the ORBAT, who perform the same infantry role on the ground. For example, the Brigade of Guards. There was scope to label this story type 'Craphats' but the term, I observed, is derogatory and primarily used as an insult. Comments such as: *'Eh, ah, they are just fucking Craphats really'* [48: 195] are widespread in the transcripts, particularly in those of the post 1960s Paras. The word itself appears not to have been used pre-1953, as, already explained, up until that date all Paras were volunteers from other regiments and corps. However, in my opinion, one enduring *distinctive* characteristic that emerged from the data was, as an ex 2 Para soldier with several years subsequent service in another Infantry unit said: *'[We] felt better than them! ...I've worked with*

other units ...I know that the Parachute Regiment is better. It was instilled in, into us from day one ...that we were the cream. There was nobody better than us' [22: 257 – 259]. This I consider to be an example of what I mean by indoctrination. I remember we (435 Platoon) were told we were different and then shown why. Therefore, I include the comparison with 'other units' here, however it also emerged that this *difference* often underpins an 'elitist' belief and attitude (8.3.4, Chapter 8).

There are many stories in my data that suggest Paras *are* fundamentally better than 'other units.' For example, this observation comes from a young 2 Para Subaltern, talking about fellow Officers he had trained with at Sandhurst, before they were sent to serve in the Infantry: *'I feel sorry for these guys in other regiments, you know, we have got the pick of the crop here'* [57: 339 – 340]. By matching their performance against similar organisations, and wearing distinct forms of dress and insignia, Paras seem to continually reinforce their *distinctiveness*. However, it appears there is a dark side, an arrogance that can be generated by this kind of attitude. As this Officer warns: *'There is a fine line between ...wallowing in our own glory and becoming deeply resented. ...If you become complacent, and don't stay on top of the game, the reputation will no longer be given'* [63: 607 – 612].

So what is it about 'other units' that stirred up so much antagonism amongst my interviewees? I chose this 2 Para Corporal's story because I feel he makes a relevant point that may explain this 'attitude.' I was playing Devil's advocate, teasing him over his apparent boundless enthusiasm about the Regiment. We were talking about Paras' reputation within the Army in general:

> 67: 627 I think it was Margaret Thatcher that hit it on the nail when she said that we 'should be caged up and then let out, let loose in time of war.' Ehm, the nature, I think they [other units] ...look at us and they respect what we do. ...And they know that we are different. ...But I think the important thing is that they know that they need ehm, a unit like ourselves...
> *But they have got the Marines!*

[Grimaces...]
...I wish I had a camera for that look!
[Laughing...] ...The Marines? I've worked, I've had the pleasure of working with a lot of the Marines! And eh, I won't be bitchy, well I will. ...They are the best Infanteers that the Navy has and that's all I am saying. Ehm, but that is only one unit to compare with them. Nobody else in the whole of the Navy. ...During the big wars, they probably were very, very good soldiers and, and that's what they built their respect up upon. Ehm, but to be honest, the Marines to me are just, could be another Infantry unit. It's, they are only as good as one of the other Infantry units. The ...Army produces soldiers and we are the best soldiers in the Army. ...The Navy doesn't produce soldiers it just produces ...it's hard, it's hard to say. They are just not on the same level, they are not on the same park. They like to think they are ...but they are not. And I have worked with them time and time again and it, it just keeps proving that they are just that little bit not what we are. 645

The expression of disgust on the Corporal's face when I mentioned the Marines said it all for me, but the message seems to be consistent with his contemporaries comments. Most Paras say they believe they are the best, and can cite statistical evidence, as this Sergeant said about his Platoon of Recruits at Catterick: *'They are a better cut than the rest of the Army gets. The General Training Indexes is higher. ...So that is quite objective ...and we get that from the Careers Office!'* [59: 347 – 351]. But it appears it is not just 'Basic Training,' ''P' Company,' 'parachuting' and 'other units,' that that the interviewees suggest makes them *different*. It seems that there is also a powerful and potent symbolism inherent in their uniforms, clothing, equipment and insignia.

7.4 Dress stories

By *Dress* stories I mean the official and unofficial items of dress and insignia that the Paras I interviewed said made them look (and feel) distinct from the Infantry. I split the narratives into two groups of stories emergent during data analysis. The first group contains narratives relating to the symbolism Paras appear to link to wearing their 'red beret,' 'parachute wings,' 'parachute smocks and DZ flashes,' and the award and wearing of 'medals.' These narratives I consider to be associated with image at a personal and organisational level and, crucially, represent the official (and unofficial) incremental stages in which identity is bestowed on the soldier by the Regiment. With the exception of 'medals,' which are generic to the military in general, these aspects of

dress and insignia are instantly recognisable and highly symbolic of the Regiment and believed by my interviewees to be distinctive of it and themselves. Among Paras, these items of *dress* appear to be highly valued objects of desire, because they are considered to be indicators that one has passed through critical rites of passage. The second, smaller, group of stories are centred around what I term the 'Para Reg brand' These appear to say as much about the person wearing them as about the Regiment as a whole but, nevertheless, are believed to be highly symbolic of the collective identity Paras have of themselves as soldiers. All items of *dress* discussed here are distinct because they appear to be used to advertise who a Para is, in, and out of uniform in my opinion, are worn as a statement of identity.

7.4.1 Red beret

By 'red beret' I mean the clearly recognisable maroon-red head dress worn in the Parachute Regiment. It seems that some interviewees consider the 'red beret' to be a central, distinctive and enduring feature of the Parachute Regiment. I chose to include 'red beret' stories here because they tend to draw on many themes. There is the claim of instant recognition, as a member of the Recruitment Team told me: '*You can have ...ten different regiments, ten different berets. ...The maroon machine will stick out every single time*' [68: 512 – 514]. This statement, I feel, accurately describes one reason why it is so distinct, its colour. But there appears to be more than just its colour that Paras perceive to be *different* about themselves. I interpret this to mean that when a Paratrooper wears his beret, it is a strong statement of identity.

The resilience story (6.3.4, Chapter 6) suggests that the 'red beret' can be perceived as an object of desire, given as an award for achievement, and may be interpreted as the first real evidence a soldier has what it takes. But I observed there is more to it, in my opinion, it is deeply symbolic of a central identity theme, manifest in a desire to wear one in battle. For some, it appears to translate as the total consummation of what it means to be a Paratrooper. Apparently, putting a beret on under fire is a heroic fantasy

for many Paratroopers (and for some a reality), synonymous with the Regiment's reputation as a fighting force. An element of many *combat* stories was a perceived belief in the myth that by doing so, it made you 'bullet-proof' or 'invincible.' For example, this former Corporal told me: *'When you come under fire, [and] you've got your steel helmet on, you take it off, to put your red beret on. ...Because in some way you are bullet-proof. ...If the bastards are going to see me die, at least I'm going to die a Paratrooper!'* [37: 37 – 39]. I took part in such an event. I chose to use my own words here simply because it happened to me. No myth for me. I felt *'bullet-proof'* [37: 38] on the road into Port Stanley at the end of the Falklands war:

> 27: 632 We were ordered by 3 Brigade [Royal Marines] to go firm. That means you consolidate yourself. And that's when it happened. 'Right guys, helmets off!' Took our helmets off. Red beret on. That's it, we're going in. Magic. Absolutely beautiful feeling. It was like the fulfilment of my life up to that moment. ...To take your helmet off, put your red beret on and be part of this Regiment that's got so much history. We weren't even aware that we were making it. It's just the attitude of the guys, 'well fuck it, if I'm going to die I'm going to die with my beret on.' ...We moved forward and we knew there was thousands of them. ...Waiting on a fight and it didn't happen. We just kept on going. ...So of course when they see the red beret it's a psychological advantage. ...They knew who was there, they knew our reputation. We didn't have to live up to it. We were just that damned good. So that moment of putting our berets on, that poignant moment, and moving forward. It was heroic. It was just tradition, if you like. ...I was so proud. ...We took our helmets off and put our berets on because that to us, yeah, was the most important symbol of our Regiment. This is who we are – we're Paratroopers. 'This is the Second Battalion, the Parachute Regiment and we're fucking coming for you!' And ...that maroon machine on your head, you are invincible. And I guess that's why we did it. 666

In the next story I could have gone for more blood and thunder, but I found this gem hidden away at the end of my first interview. I consider it to be a gentle, romantic tale yet just as passionate as my story above. I feel he speaks for himself, but for this former Para, in terms of his identity (as a Para) this is how much his beret meant to him:

> 1: 546 ...It's a privilege to have been part of the Regiment. ...You look at it and you think, 'God, I was able to do that' and you know, I've got the little red beret, and I've still got that. ...And that's something that no-one can ever take away from you. ...You know, it will be with you for ever. ...Well, I've not got mine. I ...mine's is buried with my dog. My dog died and I buried my dog with it, yeah. Yeah, I did, cos I loved me dog so much that I thought you can have my best, probably my

> favourite, but that's not the point. There you go, my dog died 9th February last year [2001]. ...I was absolutely devastated and I just thought, '...what can I give with her.' That's a really hard thing, like. It makes the hairs stand on my neck when I think about it again and I think 'what could I leave with her that's something of me?' Because ...I'm thinking of moving now and that's worried me and I thought 'God, I've left my dog.' And to someone that's probably not into animals as much as me, they might think that's a bit odd. But anyway, so I buried me dog with ...my beret. ...The only one I had, you know, the original, that was my own proper one that I bought, I kept it. ...And I don't know what that says about someone, but that to me was my most precious thing, my beret, and she's got it now. So yeah, I shall have to buy myself another one. But don't I suppose it will be the same is it? That's the thing. 562

Incidentally, I feel his story counters a myth about Paras. In my experience, we don't see ourselves as the ruthless thugs in a uniform that this 2 Para Sergeant caricatures: *'That image ...that almost "gorilla with a machine gun," you know. "Angel of death," that civvies think, look at you as'* [59: 212 – 213]. I can identify with that. The difficulty seems to be in conveying it to someone who has never earned and worn a 'red beret.' Paras claim to be professional soldiers, not thugs. The 'red beret' may be synonymous with an image of the thug in the minds of outsiders, but inside the Regiment, it appears to be symbolic of achievement, history and tradition, but importantly, Paras believe by wearing one they look and feel distinct. The next story type turns to another significantly distinct and apparently cherished icon, parachute wings.

7.4.2 Badge of courage

By 'badge of courage' I refer to an affectionate euphemism used in the Regiment for the parachute wings awarded after completion of the Basic Parachute Course, which this serving Para suggested are: *'Part of the identity. ...Part of our uniform, ...you are not a Paratrooper till you have got a pair of wings'* [60: 141 – 142]. The comment appears to be typical of the importance most Paras I interviewed placed on earning their wings, it too, they believe makes them look and feel different from non-Airborne soldiers. For a significant few, they said earning their wings means more than their beret. I interpret this to mean that some saw the jumps course as their hardest test because in my opinion, it is representative of overcoming a subjective fear rather than demonstrating objective

endurance and stamina. However, for a contemporary of mine: *'I felt that I was a Paratrooper ...when I'd got me wings'* [23: 540 – 541]. In contrast, this RSM put it another way: *'If you pass 'P' Company, ...that feeling of achievement is like nothing else, because, let's be honest, anybody can jump out of a plane'* [43: 105 – 106]. My interpretation of the data suggests it is up to the individual as to which symbol, wings or beret, takes precedence. Nevertheless, there appears to be a consensus of sorts. By wearing a 'badge of courage' and a 'red beret,' you are a fully qualified Paratrooper, for example: *'When you finished your parachuting. Yeah, once you'd done your training ..when I got me wings'* [18: 606 – 608]. This is not to be confused with what I interpret as becoming a *real* Paratrooper through seeing active service, but it does, as many Paras believe make them distinct from the rest of the Army.

I took the story below from an ex-member of the Band of the Parachute Regiment. I think it encapsulates how meaningful being 'accepted' (6.5.1, Chapter 6) can mean to some Paras. What struck me about it was what he told me in the lead-up to his interview. He said he felt he had been cheated during the recruitment process because he was assured the Band were fully qualified members of the Parachute Regiment. He qualified as a musician and transferred to the Band, then stationed with 2 Para and took abuse (as, I remember, did all members in the band without their wings) for wearing the red beret without earning it. He persisted so much to be given a chance to become one of us that eventually the RSM intervened. He was handed over to the Battalion's PT staff for 6 months and passed 'P Company first time, then went on to get his 'badge of courage:'

> 11: 115 Well, the proudest moment was actually just before discharge from Depot. I had to go down for a medical and also a dental check up to be released. ...It just happened to be a lovely warm sunny day and I walked down Queens Avenue, [Aldershot] down to the dental hospital and there were B company coming back from doing a ...full ten miler with the whole Company weapons including Machineguns, Mortars, everything. And these lads had run their hearts out, they were knackered. They were sweating, they were tired. ...The Company Sarn't Major, stopped the Company, looked over and said 'Charlie's got his wings!' I was so proud. I just felt, 'yeah, I'm going back up there [to 2 Para].' I was worried that they might still think I was a Bandsman, 'he's

> only got his wings.' But once I got back up to Battalion, I got called into the RSM's office again, and he says 'you are no longer a Bandsman, you are now a soldier in the Second Battalion the Parachute Regiment.'
> *How did that make you feel?*
> So proud because ...everyone knows the story of Arnhem and everything. 2 Para is ...famous, and to actually know that I was actually in the Battalion, properly, I was a qualified member of the Battalion, it just ...I was on a high for weeks on end after that. 129

The beret and wings are by far the two most distinct items of dress mentioned in the interviews. A Territorial CQMS took their apparent symbolism one step further. He reminded me of an unofficial rite of passage, mentioned predominantly by TA Paras: *'When you came in the bar, after your wings parade, ...with the old 'blue badge of courage' on, everybody bought you a drink and brought you into this brotherhood'* [40: 41 – 43].

The blue wings and parachute badge is sewn on every item of uniform that has a right sleeve, and as indicted below (7.4.6, Chapter 7) is often used as a template for countless tattoos down the years. Many interviewees told me that after qualification, an unofficial ritual occurs (as soon as possible). A serving Corporal said he did it: *'On the way from Brize Norton to Aldershot. I was sewing everybody's wings on 'cos I was the only person that could sew decently at the time. So, ehm, yeah, on the coach on the way back, as soon as we possibly could, we got them on our arm'* [67: 153 – 155]. And another Corporal remembered the competition for a window seat:

> 51: 294 The minute I qualified for me wings they handed them to me on the DZ at Everley, on Salisbury Plain. ...[And to sew them on] about five minutes! And everywhere I was going, I always managed to get a window seat. And I'd be like that, pressed against the window so people could see what I had done. '...I've got wings,' you know, like that! [sticks his shoulder forward] ...Fucking brilliant. 301

The next story, comes from a serving Sergeant Major. I think it expresses a feeling many Paras seem to cherish. It marks what I interpret to be being recognised as a Paratrooper for the first time, and in my opinion, is symbolic of a new identity. I chose it because it also includes another, less significant, but equally distinctive item of *dress*. Paras (like their Infantry counterparts) sometimes wear a staple belt round the waist (Glossary, p.9).

There are two working dress formats in the Parachute Regiment on which the belt can be worn. In summer (Shirt-Sleeve Order) the belt is fixed in the waistband of denims or barrack dress trousers, and in winter (Pullover Order) over the jumper. This Sergeant Major said what many interviewees indicated they too felt about returning to Basic Training with their 'wings up:' '*when you, was sort of fully fledged*' [3: 57], to take your place as the Senior Platoon in Basic Training. This process I consider to be another unofficial rite on the journey to full identification:

> 46: 121 *How did you feel when you got your wings?*
> Again, a great feeling. Not as, as great as passing 'P' Company, eh, but still a, a great feeling. ...I remember sewing me wings on, on the coach going back to Aldershot and I thought this is the dogs [bollocks], yeah, seventeen years old, and I'm a Paratrooper, this is brilliant.
> *Bet you couldn't wait ...to get in uniform, ...strutting about Depot, yeah?*
> Walking about Depot and you were the Senior Platoon and the feeling of being the Senior Platoon is great because all the other Joes are looking at you and thinking, 'I want to be like them, have their wings' and it was just great. Staple belts, could wear staple belts as well. So that was great.
> 128

The 'red beret' and 'badge of courage' appear to be (as Paras appear to believe), distinct, central and enduring and, as I observed permeate many of the *dress* stories I transcribed. But there are two more distinct items that go together that in my opinion are just as important to the feeling of being *different*, and just as significant in terms of identity construction.

7.4.3 Parachute smocks, DZ flashes and Lanyards

As shown, the red beret and wings are perceived to be important identity and symbolic *dress differences* when Paras compare themselves to other Infantry units. The right to wear them is conditional on completing 'P' Company and the Basic Parachute Course. Here, I address other *dress* and identity issues that were frequently mentioned in the transcripts. By Parachute smocks, I mean the unique combat jacket that all Paras wear and by DZ flashes and Lanyards I mean the items that identify their sub-unit within the Regiment. Parachute smocks are issued upon completion of Advanced Wales, (4.3, Chapter 4) without ceremony, and prior to attendance on the Basic Parachute Course.

Additionally, during the Passing Out Parade two more items are added to a Para's identity. The right to wear a DZ flash and Lanyard is automatically conferred once a soldier is informed which Battalion he is joining. This is usually done prior to Passing Out Parade where the items are presented, as this ceremony officially signifies the end of your identity as a Recruit and the beginning of a new one as a member of a particular Battalion. Incidentally, I found DZ flashes and Lanyards appear to be a strong symbol of identification *between* Paratroopers (see Glossary, p.3). Although not mentioned in my interviews, I remember being informed I was going to 2 Para with one week left in basic Training. From that point on, I started to disidentify with those in 435 Platoon being posted to 1 and 3 Para and drew closer to those who were joining me. The DZ flash is worn on the right sleeve of smocks and a Lanyard, its Shirt Sleeve order and Service Dress equivalent, is worn on the left arm of all shirts and tunic tops. Parachute smocks are designed for: *'stepping through God's window'* [52: 306]. They are big and baggy and the DZ flash, is a square: "piece of coloured material worn on the shoulder [below the wings] to tell quickly between Battalions and units on the DZ" (Bridson, 1989, p.191). They are also worn by Airborne Support units and therefore, are not unique to the Regiment. Nevertheless, they are visually distinct, both within the Airborne and from the rest of the Army. For example, this serving Corporal told me about the formation of the new 16 Air Assault Brigade where: *'They still wear the same, all the DZs [flashes] are the same, no one changed. Well, there is more DZs now, 'cos ...it seems that everybody has got their own badge'* [69: 379 – 380]. That said, the DZ flash is only worn on Parachute smocks and the Infantry are not issued them, therefore, the visual distinction is still clear. In addition, before they apparently became what I consider to be iconic symbols of identity, their value was originally functional and realised on mass parachute drops. Tactical loading of the aircraft means that in a 'stick' of 45 Paras on a stretched Herc, there can be many units jumping together. The DZ itself can be 2 or 3 miles long. Once on the ground the colour of the flash is vital for DZ rallying drills because they are instantly recognisable. The next story shows just how

much, and important to identity, the DZ flash appears to have evolved. I think it also captures a typical experience of arrival at Battalion, a feature of 'acceptance' (6.4.1, Chapter 6) stories. This soldier recalled his experience of 'going up the road' from Depot in Aldershot to Montgomery Lines, a short walk:

> 13: 192 On the Friday afternoon we had the big party in the Depot. And you were there, eh 'look at me Joe, I'm off to Battalion.' No transport, marched straight up over the, the road, straight through the gates, got in the back of Bruneval Barracks. 'A' Company windows open, and I'm looking up and I'm seeing faces I know from Juniors, because they went to Recruits early. You know, they're going 'CAW! CAW!' [mimics a crow] and they're shouting 'hey, wee man!' I'm going [grinning], ...because I went to D Company. But the culture shock of standing there, I felt naked in a sense, the only thing that was missing, was the DZ flash. Because that one DZ flash made you stand out more than anything else. It wouldn't matter if you were wearing a Turban, a maroon Turban and capbadge, but if he was wearing that DZ flash he would have stood out more than you. And that was the big thing that was missing. So the first thing I did, was a pair of Army ...PT shorts, cut them up and sewed on a blue DZ flash. A bit darker than normal, but it blended in because we was going to Hythe and Lidd [Kent, FIBUA training]. ...It was a culture shock because we were all, we all looked at each other and just felt naked because none of us had the DZ flash on, never had time to get one done. It was up, and straight in the deep end. 206

I was one of the first Paras to be issued the new Disruptive Pattern Material (DPM) smock. I arrived in Berlin in 1977 wearing it with my brand new blue DZ flash sewn on. A full Company (2 Para) was on parade as we jumped off the transport. I remember them, all wearing their traditional Dennison smocks with its distinct camouflage pattern: *'[We] were all in smock and denims with red beret, Dennison smock'* [38: 155], whereas mine was 'Craphat material.' There was near mutiny when the Battalion was ordered to hand them in as another witness reflected: *'That is damn true, that is. I never even give that a thought. That was historical that was'* [47: 35 – 36]. But DPM smocks are highly visible, even without beret, wings and DZ flash. Modern Paras appear to be just as proud of theirs as the older generations were about their Dennisons. This 1 Para Private had an axe to grind about what he and several others saw as interference by the MoD, not just about smocks but also over other distinctive *dress* issues. It seems image is not confined

to just a few items, seemingly, the whole dress and attire package is believed by Paras to make them *different*:

> 4: 261 When I first got there [1 Para] it wasn't so bad. But it's like, everything changes. ...One of the things that pissed me off was when they say that they [were] phasing out Para smocks. Hat smocks are alright to jump in? So they are phasing them out now. You get one issue. And they're on about taking them off us. So that's fucked me off. And then the next thing was some rumour about Hat helmets being cleared to jump! There were blokes like that, ..."fucking hell, this is getting worse." ...To me, Parachute [Regiment] looked different. We deserved to look different because we are different. And there's no-one that could come near us. But, you know, ...no other boots, apart from issue. Eh, we went on exercise and some blokes like, ...[used to wear] South African chest rigs and some like the jungles, and eh, none of that. Nothing, not even British chest rigs. Get rid of it all. [Only wear] ...issue stuff, ...and stuff like that. ...Blokes absolutely hated that because they deserved to look eh, look different. 273

However, there is one more significant item of official *dress* that many interviewees said makes them look and feel distinct. The next category of stories is about the wearing of 'medals.'

7.4.4 Medals

Another critical *dress* issue in which Paratroopers believe makes them *different* is concerned with the number of 'medals' (by 'medal' I mean an award for active service) they are awarded compared to other Infantry units. But it emerged that having a medal is considered to be a key symbol of an individual's perception of himself as a 'proper' Paratrooper. For example, this retired Para recalled arriving in Battalion with no medals (a common theme in the transcripts): *'I felt ...very small actually when you were on parade with your Number 2 dress. 'Cos they'd all got medals and we hadn't [laughing]'* [47: 29 – 30]. The issue of campaign medals is not unique in the Regiment. But the award of the General Service Medals (GSM) is arguably more common in the Paras, because of their role on Spearhead and place at the top of the ORBAT. Therefore, opportunities to earn them are more frequent in the Regiment than in the Army in general. Beginning in 1969, (and still continuing in 2005) most Infantry units in the British Army rotate through Northern Ireland and soldiers are awarded the GSM after 28

days active service. Besides, the Regiment has maintained a permanent presence in the Province throughout the troubles, for example: "In February, 1990, 2 Para was deployed to Northern Ireland for it's tenth tour since 1969" (Parker, 2002, p.343). Recently, the Army has deployed on many operations across the world for which 'medals' were pressed. In a discussion about the Regiment and 'medals' (in 2003), a 2 Para Officer told me that: '*In the last few years, what, 1 Para, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and us [2 Para], Macedonia and Afghanistan*' [57: 448 – 449].

Some Paras I interviewed were decorated for bravery, but generally I regard this to be more of a romantic ideal than a racing certainty. Most references to 'medals' in the transcripts tend to ignore gallantry issues and emphasise what I interpreted to mean that without a campaign ribbon on your No.2s (or Service Dress), you were not a 'proper' Paratrooper. The award of a campaign medal also appears to indicate a soldier has passed a semi-official and arguably treasured rite of passage by experiencing active service. For many of my interviewees, campaign 'medals' are perceived as proof you have done and, therefore, can do the job, as this Colour Sergeant proudly informed me: '*Young lads actually ask me, "...what is that medal for?" ...You tell them it's the South Atlantic Medal and ...they say "well, it's important"...that attitude, you know*' [56: 609 – 611]. I chose the next story because, even Officers (like this CO), appear to feel strongly about wearing them, and in my opinion stresses how important dress and identity issues are believed to be by Paras of all ranks:

> 42: 373 ...There I was, going from being the military virgin with no ribbons on his Service Dress to getting the first ribbon. 'Cos everybody then had GSM's for Northern Ireland and if you didn't have one, you were a crow. ...You were a crow till you got your GSM. ...And then of course, ...nobody ever got anything more. If you were really swish, you got a UN medal for Cyprus, for there were no opportunities to get medals or anything. ...You had the clever blokes who got MBEs or BEMs or whatever it was, ...you got a second. But there was a great pride in being a swisher or a clanker, one medal or more. ...Those that ...went to South Atlantic became clankers, and suddenly the great stick was not because you had a South Atlantic Medal, but because you had two medals. Now you look at them, wearing two rows. ...The Regiment has done a lot in the last few years. ...[It was] not used properly between

> 1982 and going to Pristina [Kosovo] in 98/99. ...So nearly twenty years had passed, we had done lots of Northern Ireland, we hadn't done much else. And suddenly we did Pristina, ...Sierra Leone, twice. ...Macedonia, ...Afghanistan and now we've done the Gulf [Iraq]. Now most of these operations were quite quiet, they were all important in their way at the time and they all, at the end of the day seemed to arrive at relatively short notice. ...And from the Regiment's perspective, they were all awarded campaign medals so you can look at young soldiers and ...you are now regarding them as crows when they haven't got their second row! 400

I think the narrative identifies two features that concern the changing role of the Regiment over time. Some older interviewees were issued 'medals' for campaigns in the war which ended in 1945. After this a watershed appears. From 1946 until the Falklands in 1982, the only 'medal' awarded for operations was the GSM, one pre and one post 1962. Then, if a soldier took part in more than one campaign, he was awarded a bar on his GSM for each subsequent operation. A Late Entry Major remembered meeting his hero when he was a young Tom: *'He fought at Suez, ...you saw them when they had the GSM's on, they had two. ...Pre 62 and post 62, and they had four or five bars on them!* [53: 54 – 55]. When I joined in 1976, status was still defined by how many bars on your GSM, if you had one. Therefore, until 1998, most Paratroopers, unless they were awarded their Long Service and Good Conduct medal (LSGC), or were decorated for gallantry, were regarded as '*swishers*' [42: 384]. However, from 1998, medals have been awarded for each operation the Regiment has undertaken with the result that even young Toms can quickly become '*clankers*' [42: 384]. The next group of stories concern unofficial issues of *dress*.

7.4.5 The 'Para Reg brand'

I chose to include this type of story because in my experience, most, if not all, Paratroopers tend to wear what I term the 'Para Reg brand.' By this I mean any item of clothing, badges and personal items (jewellery, wallets etc.), including tattoos, adorned with or featuring variations of Regimental insignia and/or Airborne logos. I have divided this Section into 2 parts. First, I address items of clothing such as T shirts and sweat-tops

and associated paraphernalia and second, tattoos. All these items can be worn when the soldier is stood down, doing sport, on leave, visiting the PRA - any occasion from shopping with the family to drinking in town. The message about being *different* is often explicit in the artwork and text of these messages. Displaying the 'brand' appears to serve as a visual statement of identity whilst the soldier is out of uniform. A TA Private told me about what I consider to be a typical experience whilst in he was in civvies: *'It's like ...in me local club last year and, ehm, I had me ...Brize Norton T shirt on. And this bloke come over and he said eh, "are you in eh, the Paras?" I says, "...I'm just in 4 Para." He says, 'oh, I served with them ...when they first formed [in 1943]'* [44: 466 – 467]. His point is, as I interpret it is that the message is instantly recognisable to any member of the 'brotherhood' and the visual aspect of the reproduction of the symbol can act as a magnet.

Such clothing and associated paraphernalia, for example, cufflinks, badges and ties can be 'official' in that they are manufactured on behalf of and sold through the PRI shop and as such bear the 'brand' of the Regiment and/or a sub unit. There appear to be many 'unofficial' versions. These, I observed are occasionally individualised or are part of a small print run and often relate to something that was pertinent to a particular event or group of soldiers, for example: *'2 Para Mortars - Borneo, 1964,'* or like my own: *'2 Para Reunion. Blackpool 2002'* sweat top. This 3 Para Corporal describes a typical Para Reg T shirt:

> 69: 547 One Airborne Forces Day, ...[On] these T shirts [we] ...had 'anybody can free fall' on their back. But on their front was picture of a bloke, and he's stood in the door. He says 'but real parachuting is standing up at eight hundred feet, in the middle of the night with one hundred and twenty pound strapped to your front, and then stepping out of the door when somebody says go.!' ...Completely different whatsoever. 551

I chose this next story because in my opinion, it displays two other aspects that are illustrative of interviewees' 'Para Reg brand' narratives. The right to wear the 'brand' and to advertise who you are. The story comes from a Territorial soldier who transferred

from the REME, to 4 Para, and I feel it also reinforces the concept of 'brotherhood' (6.5.6, Chapter 6):

> 51: 175 Eh, that's where you get the fucking frauds, in the gym wearing fucking Para Reg T shirts. A couple of guys have been found out wearing Para Reg T shirts, the guys have fucked them off. ...Wannabe's, has-beens, that's not good. There is a guy in here, eh Jerry, ...who was in a gym. ...Some guy had a fucking Para Reg T shirt [and] was pumping weights. [Jerry] said 'oh I'm ex 2 Para.' '...Yeah?' he says. 'What was you in?' He says 'I was Recruits.' 'Did you get your beret?' He says 'no.' '...Well get the fucking T shirt off then!' ...What I can't understand, the mentality of guys, the Billy Liars doing that 'cos they are going to get found out. And eh, to cut a long story short, ...I live near Huddlestone which is a big sky, skydiving base so I went down there. ...I got me '12 Company' [4 Para], Para Reg T shirt on 'cos I thought maybe he'd see me, I'd get discount. An old boy come toddling across and he was walking round me looking at me top and he turned out to be ex-2 Para. And he's eh, asked me up to Eden Camp last weekend to eh, Airborne Forces Day which is eh, a Para Reg Association day. ...I'd already made plans to come in to do an exercise with 4 Para like, but he'd actually gone out of his way to, he'd seen the Para Reg T shirt. Went out his way to introduce himself to me and that is what Para Reg is all about. 192

The first part of the story appears to contain a warning. I interpret the lesson in these type of stories and extracts to be a barely veiled threat to Recruits, advice given early on in Depot by the Staff. I remember exactly the same hint being given to 435 Platoon about getting a Para Reg tattoo done before earning our wings. The lesson, in my opinion, is simple. The wearing of the 'brand' appears to be jealously guarded. My understanding is if you have not jumped, you do not have the right to wear the 'brand.' Another common subject (mentioned above) emergent in the transcripts is encountering what some interviewees term 'fantasists' wearing the 'brand.' A mate of mine was having a drink in Manchester one night and he told me: *'I saw this bloke in a Parachute Regiment tie. ...However, after listening to him telling me about the suicide jumps the Parachute Regiment now do. ...I ejaculated [sic] him off the premises'* [56: 191 – 204]. As this extract demonstrates, an impostor may convince outsiders he is a Paratrooper, but as the narrator of the first story pointed out, eventually: *'They are going to get found out'* [51: 182]. It appears that frauds can not pass the test of narrative fidelity and

because Paras are arguably unique, in my opinion, an outsider can only imagine what it is like to be one.

Apart from processes of identification associated with and displaying the 'brand,' there is another aspect to the wearing and displaying it that emerged from the transcripts – humour. For example, in the Paras, as I often did, soldiers area clean exercise areas at the end of proceedings. Apart from health and hygiene aspects, it is considered by many to be a critical element of soldiering in the Paras. In my experience, I never saw anybody leave litter in the field as we were taught that being careless can lead an enemy to your location or give away who, and how many soldiers just by examining your litter. Area cleaning is also carried out in the barracks, ritually before breakfast, every morning, except at weekends. Paradoxically, area cleaning appears to be at the root of much of the chuntering I noted in the interviews of my colleagues, and the butt of much humour:

> 2:198...We had a 'T' shirt on in D Company that said. ..It was [the Company Sergeant Major] ...this pair of lips ...with this big moustache covering it and ...a pair of boots and a pace stick and it got 'We area clean the world not once, but twice, with tread to spare.' ...The blokes would get charged for not picking dogends [discarded cigarette end] up and when you come back off the piss ...somebody always throws a chip supper and throws it. ...Ha, ha wrappers anywhere you could find and you always, in the morning at six, half six you'd be out in ...picking it up. But it got so stupid that you'd be picking up dogends that had been there months. ...I agree with keeping the place clean but not to the extent that a man would get charged for not picking a dogend up. That was the most pathetic. 205

The 'brand' then, it seems, is worn principally to advertise who you are but can also have subversive undertones. The majority of these are, in my experience, like the one described above. To me, it was an artistic expression of chuntering about a perceived injustice, unique to one sub-unit in one place at one time. In this case, D Company, 2 Para, Berlin, 1978.

Tattoos, it seems are also believed by Paras to be distinctive. Nearly every Para I interviewed had one. I chose to present the data on tattoos with 'brand' stories because

they appear to share a lot of identity themes with other *dress* stories. In reference to unspoken rules, it seems that once a Recruit has his wings, he is free to be tattooed, and many, as I observed during my service, have it done in friendship groups, as this Corporal metaphorically put it: *'I mean, I've got the tattoo on my arm. ...Got stamped like everyone does'* [67: 500 – 501]. The winged capbadge was the most common tattooed symbol I was shown by my interviewees, followed by various permutations of the wings and beret. However, it emerged in my analysis of the transcripts that there have been a myriad of designs down the ages, reflecting changing fashions in tattooing. It appears that every generation had their 'Battalion tattoo artist.' A 2 Para veteran of the 1960s confessed: *'I did draw some for other people'* [21: 469], before he told me this story:

> 21: 472 The ones that got the Regimental tattoos or the Airborne tattoos, ...Depot [Staff], didn't like it. Because if they ...saw their arms and what, the damage they could have done because they were still training and thought you, you were ...big time. ...But what got me was they'd nip out and have this ehm, skull with the red beret tattooed on their arm. And next week, they'd get thrown out and now they are going through life saying 'I was in the Airborne' etcetera. ...Eh, there's one, ...he was a Geordie, he was and eh, ...he said 'can you draw a camel on a pyramid?' and I did these ...big pyramids and camels and he eventually had it tattooed. ...One day his tent caught fire. And before he got out, this chap was trapped in the corner and his bed was on fire and he was screaming. ...Eventually he jumped up, the tarpaulin stuck to him. ...Anyway, then we got him up to the hospital and ...I went to see him the next day he was in a hell of a state, but eventually he, he came back. ...And before he went, actually went demob ...he actually threw me a match box and said 'that's for you Squeak!' And I opened it up and it was the skin of his tattoo! When he, when he got burned it had peeled off and there was still a bit tattooed on it. ...Yeah, but I thought, '...sick bugger!' 502

The story began with an allusion to this Para's understandable disapproval over non-qualified persons wearing the 'brand,' which, in my opinion Paras believe to be sacrosanct and thus exclusive to their own ranks. As with wearing Regimental insignia and items of clothing, having a Reg tattoo before earning the 'badge of courage' is asking for trouble. The message in the next story is I feel, completely the opposite but it does reinforce the concept of group tattooing which also appears to be a common occurrence in the Paras. It is about group defiance, in the face of a health and safety

warning order to refrain from getting one done whilst on R&R during and after an exercise in the far East. An former 1 Para Sergeant recalled this incident in the 1970s through tears of laughter:

> 38: 307 We'd had a briefing off the Sgt. Major. "Nobody will get a tattoo while we're here, you'll catch Hepatitis." ...So every man jack in the Company went and got tattooed everywhere. ...Everywhere you could think of. So the Company's in the bar for the last night before we left. So the Sgt. Major's there. ...He stands up and says, 'right guys, thank you for listening to me and not going out and getting any tattoo's while we were here!' And every man jack that was in the bar stood up and dropped his trousers, ripped his shirt off and 'fucking there you are Sir! Look at this fucking lot!' 316

Sometimes, as an act of group identity and identification, salient events appear to prompt this kind of group tattooing, often commemoratively. The next story, known to the participants as the 'last supper,' represents a good example of what I mean by *bonding*. I chose it primarily because, to me, not only is it (in my opinion) a moving tale, it represents a different set of emotions about the 'brotherhood,' not often witnessed in these hard, tough men. The 'last supper' happened on the eve of embarking for the Falklands war. The story reveals a prophetic apprehension of the reality to come:

> 2: 173 *Can you tell me about the 'Crew of 82'?*
> Ah, it was a bunch of us, in Mortars, Anti-Tanks, and Medics. ...Ehm, [a] bunch of lads, we went for a last supper ...before we went to the Falklands. ...And we each ordered a different meal ...and we shared our meals together. ...We were as drunk as skunks, but I mean, a lad that's dead, ...called Tam [obviously, not me!] ...we got lifted for nicking, [and] ...playing rugby with a pineapple. ...And they were, ...it ...them lads would do anything for you and ...quite a few of them are dead now. One of them died in a different war. ...Others have died since, and there's a few of us left, that will grow old and bold together I suppose. Oh, and we've all got eh, a tattoo that says 'Crew of 82' ...on our ...it's a caveman. ...And we got 'em in different positions on our body, luckily mine is on my arm. But other blokes got them on the legs. Bill, the medic, he's got his on his leg, here [shows me]. ...Paddy has got his on the ...eh, left arm. ...I've got mine on me right arm. Wack ...I think he's got his on his ...I think on his chest. And Jack ...I'm not, so long, gonna swear, ...I think he's got it on his arse! ...And which is an Anti-Tank thing, usually Mortars have them on their leg ...and Anti-Tanks have their tattoos on their arse. But I think Jack's got his on his arse ...ehm ...that's about it. 186

The story concludes this Section on distinct forms of *dress*. I interpret these stories to be important indicators of what Paras say about *dress* in their construction of identity in the

Regiment and why *dress* appears to have more to do with how Paras see themselves as opposed to how others see them (construed external image). This Sergeant Major captures the essence of what I interpret to be the most salient about *dress* in relation to image constructs: *'I particularly like going places in uniform where there are ...other regiments. ...You go to the NAAFI ...they are all looking at you. ...Because they think "fucking Paratrooper, who does he think he is?" But they are looking at you with respect'* [46: 440 – 443]. I loved the feeling too and he was obviously still enjoying it at the end of 22 years service.

7.5 Macho stories

In the final category of stories in this Chapter I present another feature of what my primary and secondary data suggest Paras believe to be distinct about themselves (as Paratroopers). By being *macho*, I mean the belligerently 'aggressive,' 'tough guy,' 'hardman' image Paras appear to have of themselves in relation to how they believe others see them. Seemingly, *macho* stories, as I interpret them, often indicate a perceived desire to live up to this image. I have divided this Section into three story types, each in my opinion, is representative of the personal characteristics that many interviewees said made them feel 'aggressive,' 'tough' and 'hard.' It appears that they are mainly used as adjectives, first used to describe the Regiment's fighting prowess in battle during the 1939-1945 conflict. However, they have survived and are, I observed, still used interchangeably in the narratives of modern Paratroopers. I also consider them to be enduring qualities which many interviewees say they had (and still have) to live up to. All the stories I use inevitably implicate other characteristics already mentioned.

7.5.1 Aggressive

By 'aggressive' I mean being overly confident, self-assertive and forceful. In this type of story I present data on what Bridson (1989) claimed: "gives British Paras the drive and fighting power that have taken them to victory all over the world. ...He has to show aggression" (p. 9). There are two sides to being 'aggressive' emergent from the

transcripts, and both, I believe, encourage Paras to see themselves as distinct from non-Airborne soldiers. The first is our training, as presented in the *difference* (7.3. Chapter 7) stories above. A typical answer to my question: *'Were you aggressive at the end of your training?* [was] *"...Yeah, oh yeah, very aggressive"'* [22: 46 – 47]. This appears to be channelled by the Regiment towards conventional war fighting, but, as I realised, the amount of 'aggression' needed just to get through Basic Training, I believe, makes them *behave* differently as compared to non-Airborne soldiers. According to one 3 Para Officer: "Our troops are more aggressive than any other troops, and it all boils down to the training and the type of guy needed to pass [it]. We find that the aggression amongst our blokes is very high; they are very aggressive" (Bridson, 1989, p. 11).

Second, a perception outsiders appear to have of Paratroopers 'aggressive' behaviour (as Paras believe), is usually a partially negative one. This 2 Para Officer gave me a possible explanation: *'The Falklands War, where they were, eh, ferociously aggressive and magnanimous. There was almost that translation of the Paras ...on to Civvy Street. ...They [the Paras] didn't like that at all. But all [outsiders] see is ...aggressive'* [63: 636 – 638]. I realised that on one level, positive 'aggression' is something considered by many interviewees to be necessary to fight in *combat* successfully, and this, I think, has links to being 'ready for anything.' However, on another, this translation, seemingly, is not reserved solely for the battlefield. This perception is something with which many of my interviewees agreed on. I chose this next story because it focuses on what I feel to be pertinent to the first of these two types of 'aggression.' There is nurture as well as nature, as this ex 2 Para Corporal explained:

> 37: 10 I remember ...getting off the train at Aldershot, and ...the Sergeant was there with a big red beret on, and I thought 'that's it, I'm gonna wear this one of these days.' And I was prepared for every diabolical thing they were gonna do to me. ...Right from day one, they didn't want you to join their Regiment. ...But the more they did the more we were determined to get through, and even now when you reflect back on it, it's still ...surreal in many ways. ...You also remember the good bits about the hard bits, or you can remember, this sounds subjective now over the years, ...in a different light. But it was so

> bloody painful to go through at the time. You know, the aggression games in particular. ...I'd never had a fight that I could think of and yet ...I just turned into an animal, a sort of, within a month I'd had more fights than I'd had in the whole of my life. And ...aggression games where you sort [of] ...well it was just bloody brutality. Everybody formed a circle and the two biggest fought the two smallest, and if you didn't fight them back, you were a cowardly bastard. You can look back and smile now but at the time it wasn't laughable. 27

As this story indicates, it is in Basic Training, that Paras learn to fight, learn to be belligerent in everything they do. However, there is the suggestion that 'aggression' does sometimes *'spill over into whichever community we are in'* [58: 548]. This TA Major suggested it was because: *'it had got a lot to do with the esprit de corp., ...With why the Parachute Regiment is so good, why we look after one another, and why we are so aggressive in battle. 'Cos we will look after one another'* [53: 525 – 527]. The Officer made an allusion to the feeling of 'brotherhood' and his perceived relationship to an apparent culture of 'aggression.' But it seems the Regiment has a wider audience, the public in general, and that there are too many: *'people who don't know anything about it, [who] form an opinion. ...That Paratroopers are sort of, you know, all aggressive, getting into fights, all the rest of it'* [62: 473 – 474]. This aspect of being 'aggressive' in my opinion, appears to be the bane of a Paratrooper's life. This narrative from a serving Private in 3 Para, I feel shows this to be the case, and I think it offers a good explanation of what I interpret to be an almost schizophrenic dichotomy, as expressed by some interviewees:

> 58: 542 We do have eh, maybe do have [a] reputation as being a bit rowdy now and again and a bit troublesome. But at the end of the day we are soldiers, aren't we? So, we, we're built to be aggressive, we are built to go on operations and do the job and get stuck in there. So every now and then if an incident occurs, with one of our soldiers being too aggressive towards somebody that they shouldn't be, ...that can be expected now and again, if you like. I know it shouldn't be done, but at the end of the day it could be expected 'cos ...we're built to be aggressive soldiers and get our job done. And every now and then that can spill over to whichever community we are in. But we carry a job to go in and get the job done and we're professional. 549

In summary, it appears that there are two sides to being 'aggressive' in the Regiment. On one level Paras say they need to be belligerent to do their job, and it can be argued

that down the years this has indeed been the case. It is believed by Paras to set themselves apart from the Infantry, and the Army in general. This 'aggression,' I understand, has a tendency to frequently spill out of contained environments, due mostly to the nature and nurture processes of Basic Training. This appears to ensure that Paras, when required, have enough 'aggression' to literally fix bayonets and charge, as a young 2nd Lt said of his own Platoon: *'Who would you rather have going and sticking a bayonet in someone, than these sort of people?'* [57: 342 – 343]. Being 'aggressive' in my opinion, is just one corner of an interdependent triangle of *macho* stories. The next type of story presents another perceived image and reputation concern, being 'tough.'

7.5.2 Tough guys

There were many suggestions and interpretations regarding what being 'tough' means to the Paras I interviewed. However, by being a 'tough' I mean being able to withstand and endure hardship. Like 'determination' and 'resilience,' being 'aggressive' and a 'tough guy' appear to go together. I chose this label because the word itself features in many transcripts, despite there being few actual stories and story extracts where being a 'tough guy' can be interpreted to be a central feature (the same applies to the 'hardman' type of story, described below) and this may have been because I did not specifically probe for narratives concerning this aspect of image and reputation in the Regiment. It appears that being a 'tough guy' has two important features my interviewees consider to be distinctive characteristics of themselves and their Regiment. First, I have previously described the training as being brutal, and getting through it makes some Paras believe they are 'tough.' Second, there is an indication of a broadly held perception, both inside and outside the Regiment that just by being in the Paras, you are 'tough.' For example, many of the Paras I interviewed, like this former Lance Corporal, I feel, linked 'toughness' directly to being *different* and indirectly, to Paras' identity: *'With regards to ...not only physical toughness but mental toughness. ...We share that bond. There is no other regiment or unit can go through [Depot] and that's why we, we're a unique bunch*

of guys' [24: 107 – 109]. This comment, I think suggests that one has to be 'tough' on two counts to get through Basic Training. Additionally, the type of person that makes it as far as day one of Basic Training already has had a taste of it during the recruitment, assessment and selection process that leads to enlistment (or a Commission) in the Paras. I myself was warned several times, at nearly every stage, that it would be 'tough.' This Sergeant admitted it was something his Recruits had considered before joining: *'The guys that want to join the Reg, they know it's going to be hard. And they know it's going to be tough and so we don't by and large attract people who are sort of like couch potatoes'* [59: 360 – 362]. The story below from a TA Para was given in response to my question about the 'aggressiveness' of Paras:

> 44: 49 *'Do you think that comes from ...the training, or the calibre of the person?*
> I would say ...a little bit of both. Ehm, I don't know the statistics that if, if you put thirty blokes in for 'P' Company, how many would pass, but ehm, it wouldn't be many. And I think, like I said before, it's definitely ...the tough training, 'cos not, not a lot of people can pass 'P' Company. ...Twenty five thousand passed 'P' Company, like in fifty years, it just shows how tough it is. And I don't think people, people going in blind thinking 'yeah, it cannot be that tough' but it is actually very, very difficult. I mean, I went in and I used to be a fit lad, I could do Triathlon and things like that. And the fitness you need for 'P' Company is unbelievably different because I've, you know, mental toughness, upper body strength. Ehm, and you've just got to be physically fit or as I say, mental toughness is probably up there with it, definitely. 58

The other side of being 'tough' is (as many interviewees seem to believe) the outsider's perceived view of themselves. Most British soldiers are arguably 'tough,' but why is it *different* in the Parachute Regiment? One author used it as an adjective in the title of his book: 'The Paras: The Inside story of Britain's Toughest Regiment' (Parker, 2002), suggesting that it is a widely held perception. Nevertheless, internally, it appears to be a qualified truism. This ex 2 Para soldier confessed how he originally felt about signing on: *'I'd never really thought I was Parachute Regiment calibre. And I looked around and I thought, "well, I can be as robust and tough as any of the guys that seem to be joining"'* [15: 20 – 22]. Additionally, being a 'tough guy' is, in my opinion also an enduring characteristic, one that my predecessors appear to have understood well. This

war veteran was able to provide a link, right back to the beginning. He was originally an Engineer and volunteered for the Paras because: *'They are tough, hard fighting, well trained men. The best ...soldiers in the world. And so that's eh, when I left the Royal Engineers to be trained for the Parachute Regiment'* [36: 11 – 13].

Yet, even though the Regiment itself is perceived by many of my interviewees as being 'tough,' some realised it was as a result of their personal 'determination' and 'resilience' that they realised just how hard and 'tough' they were. The next extract comes from an ex-3 Para soldier. He gave me his 'hard luck in Basic Training' story. I think it is a good example of one definition of 'toughness' in the Regiment, the ability to handle pain. He'd been backsquadded in the 'factory' after breaking a leg parachuting:

> 1: 125 'I had a spiral fracture on me ...fibula I think it was. On the outside bone in the ankle and I mean so there is no way I could, me leg just went sort of ...blew up. And the crazy thing is ...its funny how I suppose how tough you are at the time cos ...there's no way you'd be putting any sort of weight on that at all. But ...of course your trying to hide the pain cos you don't want to leave your mates who are gonna pass out with me.' 130

For me, the narrator demonstrates that being 'tough' is a label often attributed to the Paratrooper irrespective of whether or not he actually thinks he is. I noted that Paras typically tend to play it down but accept the accolade anyway. The last story type in this category completes my *macho* stories and presents another what I consider to be a similar characteristic, being 'hard.'

7.5.3 The hardman

Here, I address the perceived 'hardman' self-conception and construed external image that Paras appear to believe others see themselves as and (apparently) often attribute to the personage of other Paras. By being 'hard' I mean unyielding to *pressure*. I chose to title the Section as such because there are many references to the training being 'hard' in the transcripts, and as with the 'tough guy' image above, again, by default, passing Basic Training is believed to make you 'hard,' and therefore, *different* from soldiers in

other units. For example, a common response to my probes on Basic Training, was this kind of boast by a Falklands veteran: *'Ehm ..I felt hard as nails ..I felt like ehm, I could take the world on'* [2: 42]. There are two aspects to being 'hard' in the Paras that emerged from the transcripts. The first concerns the soldiers and what I believe they perceive as the main difference between them and other Infantrymen. A Lt Col made this comparison: *'Our individual Toms were harder and you know faster, and leaner and meaner and all the rest of it'* [42: 522 – 523]. The second concerns the interviewees' opinions of what they interpret a 'hardman' to actually be. This enthusiastic comment comes from a serving Corporal: *'We are the hardest, nastiest, ...dirtiest bastards. But if you want a job done, and done ...properly and quickly, we will go in there and do if for you'* [69: 648 – 469]. I feel he speaks for many of my interviewees because it appears to reflect the Regiment's position on Spearhead and at the top of the ORBAT. Again the measure seems to be in comparing how Paras and 'other units' work.

Additionally, there are, for some, real 'hard' men that they believe stand out. For example: *'Taff, ...was one of the hardest blokes in the Platoon and for some reason he took me under his wing'* [12: 118 – 119], was not untypical of what was said about these soldiers. In the Paras, many of them appear to be regarded as inspirational (by this I mean those who display knowledge and skills above and beyond the perceived norm) and personally display many of the individual traits I describe in *qualities* stories (8.4, Chapter 8). Here, my focus is on image. I feel this extract, from a former 2 Para soldier, puts it more succinctly:

> 15: 42 There were a particular guy there, from 3 Para, Sarn't Major. He was a very hard man. ...But for some reason he was the ultimate Paratrooper. He was a very hard man, he looked a real Paratrooper, he was, sort of had this influence. ...I had this great admiration for these men and really wanted to be like them. 45

Although there are instances in the transcripts concerning exceptional cases that attract the compliment, acting the 'hardman' appears to be frowned upon in the Regiment. A

Corporal from the 1960s remembered at the beginning of Basic Training: *'We was told, "...any arseing about ...and you are out [of the Regiment], on your arse." That was a warning. ...We knew what he meant, you know, anything "I'm a Para, and I'm hard"'*[5: 176 – 178]. Finally, in the last story of this Chapter, I return to 'fighting,' in my opinion, another central theme common across the generations. I chose this story because I think it is an expression of just how 'hard' some Paras are. For me, it shows that through a perceived hegemony I consider to be inherent in the feeling of belonging to a 'brotherhood' these men are capable of turning to each other to sort out overly 'aggressive' colleagues who are 'acting hard:'

> 22: 523 There was a bloke, [a] Geordie, was a right hard case, nice bloke though. And there was ...a lad from Birmingham come and he was a new Recruit. And he was a big strapping lad and was bullying everybody. He was coming in and kick[ing] people, bullying. He was pushing into the front of queues in the NAAFI, all that. This night in the jungle, ...we were getting a bit of a party in the jungle, with a fire. And Geordie just called [him]out, said he was going to fight him. And they started fighting and we was all just sat around watching, and the Yank [an American Major on secondment] said to the Sergeant Major 'aren't you going to stop this?' And he said, 'no, I'm not stopping it.' And it lasted for about, it was like watching a fight out of a cowboy film. Rolling around in the shit, and kicking hell out of each other. And it finished, it seemed to last for ever, whereas punch-ups are usually over in seconds, a couple of punches, a bit of a roll, bang, bang and it's usually over. This went on and at the end of it, ...that was the end of the bullying, was that like. 538

In summary, *macho* stories appear to have as many features as there were these types of stories and extracts. However, as I interpret it, this particular one carries a lesson - bullying will be met with violence. The Paras I interviewed tended to play it down when they did talk about themselves being 'aggressive,' 'tough' or 'hard,' whereas, some pointed to examples of other Paras and situations that they indicate attract these terms. Outside the Regiment, as mentioned, there are titles of books about the Paras that reinforce this ideal, and I think this is what many of my interviewees believe makes them appear and feel *distinct*, and a *different* calibre of soldier from those who serve in, for example, the Infantry.

7.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have presented my data on three broad categories of distinctive stories I termed *difference*, *dress* and *macho*. *Difference* stories are focused mainly on the perceived benchmark of the Army in general, especially the Infantry. Paras are trained in-house by their own kind and this starts in the 'factory' which is described as a 'tough and brutal regime.' A generation gap seems to have opened up over definitions of what the interviewees say they believe a Paratrooper to be. It appears that amongst modern Paras, Airborne Support units are no longer considered 'Paratroopers' because they have not been trained by the Parachute Regiment. Two distinct tests of character and endurance are also believed by Paras to make them distinct, this time from the wider Army. One is ''P' Company,' which is a test of stamina and endurance that has to be passed, similarly, 'parachuting' (which is not done by the Army in general). Additionally, Paratroopers appear to use 'other units' as a relevant comparator. Many Paras appear to believe that they are better soldiers, because most interviewees say they have worked with them at some point in their service and have personally witnessed their standards.

Just as important to perceived *differences*, in *dress* stories I introduced five forms of clothing and symbols that the Paras I interviewed believe to be important to their perceived *difference* as represented by visual aspects of their *dress* and which apparently makes them feel *different*. Feeling *different*, it appears, is also (in my opinion) a side effect of the 'in-house' training whereby some Paras say because they have been trained *differently* they are *different*. The 'red beret' has two sides to wearing it, one, the distinct colour, and two, there are narratives about the fantasy (and reality) of fighting a battle wearing it. The wings or 'badge of courage' seem to be just as important although some interviewees consider their wings more important than their beret because they believe their wings to be more symbolic of being a 'Paratrooper,' and therefore, distinct (and vice-versa). 'Para Smocks' and 'DZ flashes and Lanyards' are items of clothing

arguably unique to the Regiment in that the all important DZ flash colour is used for identification purposes on the Drop Zone (DZ), but these items too are considered important to a Para's personal interpretation of what makes him distinct. There is an issue about 'medals,' in that Paras tend to regard themselves as *different* (from other units) because they believe they are awarded more campaign 'medals' than their Infantry counterparts. My analysis ended with a review of the stories and story extracts concerning what I termed the 'Para Reg brand.' This 'brand' appears to serve the same primary functions as identity constructs as 'official' *dress* and attire in that displaying the 'brand' advertises who and what Paras are. I also recorded several references to the existence of frauds and the consequences of imitating and impersonating Paratroopers. The point of distinction being that apparently, Paras feel they do not need to impersonate other soldiers. In addition, items such as 'T shirts' and 'tattoos' can also be used to commemorate particular events and gatherings, but tattooing can often be a communal exercise and a personal choice, whereas messages in T shirts are, in my experience, often subliminal and more event oriented and often laced with humour.

The last Section, *macho* stories, concerns the 'aggressive,' 'tough guy,' 'hardman' image and I interpret them to be three points of a triangle of attributes and characteristics that Paras believe they need to have, or be, to live up to in their construed external image and reputation. There are, it seems, two features of being 'aggressive.' In the first instance, 'aggression' is considered necessary to get through Basic Training and to fight in a war and there appears to be a preoccupation with what the public think of Paras, as individuals and as an organisation. The 'tough guy' and 'hardman' stories have two interconnected loci. Both appear to focus on Basic Training and by default there seems to be a broad perception that Paras must be 'tough' and 'hard,' and 'if I am one, then I must be too.' Also, 'aggressive' and 'tough guy' stories seem to feed into the 'hardman' image which tends to be descriptive and indicative of a perceived ideal of the ultimate Paratrooper. However, there appears to be a tendency to play down acting the 'hardman'

as an individual and point to other soldiers in the Regiment as more worthy of these labels.

There were also other significant themes emergent in the transcripts that are not included in this analysis, for example, I mentioned 'Staple Belts' but we also wear our uniforms and carry our kit differently. The Army carries standard issue packs, Paras carry Bergens (Daysacks). Subsequently, I recorded many 'allez' stories about 'looking good' in all this *different* 'switched on' kit. Direct comparisons with 'Craphats' also features in the transcripts as do complaints about their standards of 'professionalism,' and their 'soldiering' that is perceived and witnessed by many to be *different* and 'inferior.' The next Chapter presents my analysis of the last feature of Albert and Whetten's definition, the stories that Paratroopers told me about the enduring characteristics of the Parachute Regiment.

Chapter 8

Enduring stories

The Flowers of the Forest drifted down
From that barren crest
Rifles crashed out one last salute
As those Paras were lain to rest

Some had died on the heather,
Some more upon the heath,
They could not see their comrades
Whose hearts were filled with grief.

But those few young men with berets red,
Performed a feat of arms undreamed,
For although the odds were three to one,
They took and held Goose Green.

Discipline, tradition, comradeship,
To do their duty without fuss.
To uphold the Paras honour,
For the red beret and Pegasus.

Dennis Capper (Poems from Pegasus)

8.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I present stories and story extracts I interpret to be representative of the third element of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition, enduring characteristics. These are narratives in which the interviewees frequently referenced identity constructs that they say they believe to be features of the Parachute Regiment since its formalisation under the British Army Regimental system on 1st August 1942 (geocities.com/heartland). My analysis is another self-reflexive presentation divided into in three *categories*, *tradition*, *qualities*, and *tragedy*. For each, I explain why I chose the story and my reasoning behind the headings I use. Each story type also contains other elements of story categories previously presented, as they are, in my opinion, interdependent (as well as independent) identity features in the Parachute Regiment.

8.2 Enduring stories

Enduring stories are divided into three broad themes that I consider to be enduring about the Regiment – *traditions*, the *qualities* and *tragedy* stories. The first *category* presents what was said about the *traditions* that appear to be the most central to the Regiment. These types of story and extracts, I feel, tend to focus on the 'standards' of soldiering Paras aspire to and 'teaching and learning,' seems to be based on the Regiment's 'history,' which I think is fundamental to the process of maintaining an up to date skills and knowledge base. I interpret many of these narratives to be directly related to the *pressure* to be 'ready for anything.' I think this helps explain why most Paras claim to be part of an 'elite,' and this is, seemingly, underpinned by the special place that 'pride and honour' stories appear to occupy as vehicle by which identity is idealised and subsequently formalised.

In the second group of stories, I focus on the enduring *qualities* stories that the Paras I interviewed told me. The sub-category, 'type of person,' includes stories about what was said about the *qualities* perceived to be needed by Paras over the years to do their job. A significant part of this seems to be displaying personal, 'Airborne initiative' which I consider to be a nurtured philosophy and skill handed down from one generation to the other. I have already mentioned that Parachute Regiment Recruits are generally thought by the Recruiting Centres to be more intelligent than their contemporaries in other Infantry units, and indeed, it appears that being encouraged to learn and think, to use one's 'initiative' independently, in my opinion, is both a central and enduring theme.

In the final Section I turn to *tragedy* stories. The core competency of the Regiment is to parachute into battle, a daunting prospect (and a reality for most pre-1956 Paras). Chapter 6 presented *combat* stories, in which I suggest that conventional fighting in the field is still a major concern for modern Paras, and that all other activities seem to be a spin-off from the preparation for it. For example, being 'ready for anything' (6.4.4,

Chapter 6). Chapter 7 expanded this theme through the apparent distinction Paras make of themselves by wearing more campaign (and gallantry) 'medals' (7.4.4, Chapter 7) than their perceived benchmark, the Infantry. As a result of engaging in active service and parachuting, it appears that *tragedy* is no stranger to most Paras. Some interviewees told me tales about coping with the consequences of tragic events. The harsh reality, in my experience is that we all have to prepare for, and deal with, the prospect of 'injury and maiming' that can leave an individual with permanent disfigurement. These dark tales are, I feel, enduring, but nowhere near as harrowing as some of the stories about the 'deaths' of fellow Paratroopers. The Regiment was born in conflict, cut its teeth in battle, and I believe its soldiers still strive to live up to the same 'standards' of the first Airborne warriors. I also feel that *tragic* stories at the end of my Chapters on central, distinct and enduring stories, are a poignant reminder that this is an organisation in which there appears to be a higher chance you can be maimed for life and even die for your salary than in most other British military units.

8.3. Tradition stories

The stories here are oriented around what I interpret to be the maintenance of *traditions* in the Regiment. By *tradition* I mean the handing down of an established practice or custom. The 'standards' a Paratrooper aspires to are first encountered and realised during Basic Training but this seems to be just a minimum requirement. Apparently, the real training to do the job occurs in Battalion where the soldier enters a culture of continuous 'teaching and learning.' In this way, the passing down of skills and knowledge is, in my opinion, crucial to maintaining a perceived reputation for being an 'elite' organisation, a process begun "by Winston Churchill in his June 22 1940 request for 5000 parachute-trained troops" (Reynolds, 1998, p.3). These early soldiers knew they were volunteering for a specialist unit based on the Commando ethos (4.2.1 Chapter 4), and were therefore, *'special'* [10: 234]. Their ways appear to have evolved into a blueprint for the idealisation of the Paratrooper, and in my interpretation, their

ethos has been a consistent factor, demonstrated, I feel, by the Regiment's 'history.' Their feats of soldiering and reputation for completing the job, no matter what, means that modern Paras have a *tradition* to live up to. This, it seems, is in part, responsible for the Regiment's constant pursuit of excellence in the field. Most of the Paras I interviewed appeared to have absorbed this notion, but not all Paras have experienced a full scale war. As a consequence (excepting my contemporaries in 2 and 3 Para), I consider that 'pride and honour' stories to be often more symbolic of an ideal, rather than founded on real experience.

8.3.1 Standards

By 'standards' I mean the level of competence in all aspects of soldiering set by the volunteers who first formed the Regiment. The 'standards' of soldiering in the Regiment, as Paras believe, sets them apart from the Infantry and it appears that they have hardly altered over the years, even when changes in structure and new technology were introduced. This story type is an important identity construct because, as I experienced, from the beginning of Basic Training, a Paratrooper is introduced to the 'standards' against which he may be judged throughout his career. According to one Late Entry Major: *'If you look at the standards, it was really the RSMs. ...When they walked, the ground shook. Men trembled. Commanding Officers got out the bleeding road. ...In the old days ...they didn't give a fuck for anybody because they were the man'* [53: 42 – 49]. In Chapter 6 I introduced *pressure* stories where 'ready for anything' (6.4.5) stories suggest much of a Para's working life is taken up in personal preparation for *combat*. In this dialogue with a 4 Para C/Sgt, the enduring nature of keeping up to standard appears to inflate the demands on an individual:

> 10: 234 I felt that we were special. In fact, I didn't feel it, I knew we were and I still do feel that.
> *Where did you get that feeling from?*
> From the standard of training. ...There was a big difference, cos you know what you've gone through. And you know what they've been through. You know that if there is going to be a tab, eh, we can do it, and we can do it faster. And we'll carry more weight.

Do you think it was ...a feeling of excellence or something like that?
Yes, definitely. ...That was it, we're better. A feeling of excellence, that's it. It is a feeling, a standard, a high standard, a very high standard that we have achieved.
And you personally?
I personally felt we achieved it and we can always achieve more. But the thing is, we are always under the pressure to keep it up. 248

I chose the above story because of the links to the way Paras say they are trained. Once the minimum requirements are met (i.e., Passing Out), it seems to be up to the soldier to ensure that his own interpretation of these 'standards' are maintained: *'The blokes make sure they understand what is required. ...[They] won't accept sloppy standards. . ..Won't lower the benchmark'* [60: 273 – 275]. This type of comment by a 2 Para Sergeant is, I observed, repeated in many interviews. It seems that since the beginning, peer pressure has been responsible for the 'Foucauldian' self-policing, in which Paras appear to be simultaneously guard and prisoner. I believe this form of mutual self surveillance helps keep Paras at peak performance levels.

While this attitude seems to be enduring, things do change over time and the Regiment must also evolve as equipment and technologies are upgraded. But what about the soldiers who serve? This Sergeant noted: *'The overall standard, eh, physically is the same, if not better, from a phys point of view. ...Mentally, things have ...had to change'* [59: 246 – 247]. Later in his interview, he suggested that previous generations were hardier than his, due to their harsher social conditions and limited technology available in their youth. For example, this former 1 Para Tom told me he was a miner before he joined up in 1962: *'I was fit as far as kneeling down and shovelling and eh, ehm, well lifting heavy boulders, things like, I was used to it, being in the pit'* [18: 129 – 131]. In my opinion, modern Paras may not be as 'tough' as their forebears but they still seem to aspire to higher 'standards' particularly in their soldiering skills than most of the Infantry. As a result, I interpret high 'standards' of soldering to be an enduring characteristic of the Parachute Regiment.

As the Infantry appears to be used as a significant referent by which the interviewees measure their *difference* (7.3, Chapter 7), I realised these 'other units' were used for the same purpose in many 'standards' stories. This observation by a Falklands Veteran is no exception, and, I think it carries another reference to what I mean by 'self-policing:' *'We are Airborne. We do things faster, for longer, and harder. Everything is more and more ...than the rest of the British Army and that's the standard which is, is fucking hard to keep. Cos I found it hard to keep myself'* [31: 178 – 180]. I chose this next story because I feel it alludes to the kind of changes I mentioned. However, I think that this Corporal's narrative demonstrates that 'standards' are still being met, and are consistently higher than in other regiments, as apparently they have always been:

> 66: 294 I was talking to someone in the cookhouse yesterday and he said ...the standard of Recruits lately, has been higher. ...They [MoD] chopped the course to twenty two weeks, same as the Hats. ...We actually spend less time in the field now as a Hat, because of 'P' Company. ...But still, it's eh, Para Reg Recruits are still much higher. In a different league than the other lots. Even the Guards, even though they think they are just below, they're not. 'Cos I was taking Hats [as an Instructor] as well as Para Reg. ...Our Joes at week seventeen will do a ten miler, 'P' Company, one hour fifty. ...At week twenty, Hats will do [an] eight miler, two hours, and they won't need to pass it. [If] they fail it, they will still get pushed on to Battalion anyway. ...That's just the difference. ...[With Para Recruits] everything gets done spark, there is no answering back. ...The course and the lessons and the lesson plans are given and ...there are a few lessons they have to pass, but we will grade them anyway. We're the only people that do that. 313

In this Section I have indicated that the original 'standards' set were believed by Paras to have been consistently met down the years, even in the face of changes. In my opinion if 'standards' have changed, they have changed for the better. 'Standards' may have evolved to meet modern demands, yet some Paras maintain that because they consistently uphold them, they are superior soldiers compared to the Infantry, and that this appears to be because of Basic Training. The next set of stories concerns a mechanism by which this continuity appears to be achieved.

8.3.2 Teaching and learning

> *66: 50 What kind of things did they do to motivate you then?*
> Ehm, pain assisted learning. It was ...corridor sessions, that sort of...

Pain assisted lessons?
Learning, yeah?
[Laughing...]
I know, yeah!!
Where did that come from?
Well, these eh, buzz words of encouragement and...
In other words, beasting?
Aye.59

For many of the Paras I interviewed, the above dialogue, with a Corporal in the Recruitment Team (based at RHQ), was said to be typical of their introduction to the methods applied in the 'factory' to 'teach' and reinforce 'learning.' By 'teaching' I mean to enable a soldier to do something by instruction and training, and by 'learning,' gaining knowledge and skill by experience or being taught. The *pain assisted* [66: 51] aspect of learning, as I remember, eases off when Recruits go on their jumps course. Besides, I recall that Toms will not stand for it in Battalion. I interpret this 'teaching and learning' to refer to a process similar to 'sitting next to Nellie' (by this I mean where knowledge is handed down from soldier to soldier, generation to generation). This quote from a serving Private, just out of the 'factory,' captures what I mean:

> 58: 470 Things get passed down. ...The younger Toms start learning ...the ways of ...the older Toms. ...Then the younger Toms, as they have ...picked up a few things, somebody else will come up under him and start learning what he's learning. ...It's a knock-on effect. ...All the skills and drills ...gets passed down, keeps a good tradition within, in them. That's what keeps us such ...a good Battalion and a good Regiment. 478

Apparently, this is what 'teaching and learning' in the Paras is all about, and why I chose to include it as an enduring story type. The stories (above) on 'standards' suggest that they are learned and adopted in Basic Training. However, as this former Para said, like a number of interviewees, when you arrive in Battalion: *'What you found was, although you'd done your training and you'd passed ...you had to relearn all over again. ...The training manual went out the window, the Battalion had their way of doing things. ...You learnt more off the other soldiers, that were around you, how to do things'* [35: 128 – 132]. An ex-Sergeant Major who served in the 1950s and 1960s told me the story below. I chose it because in describing the 'teaching and learning' process he provides a bridge to what I consider to be another enduring aspect:

20: 109 I was looking forward to going to the Battalion, ...when you start training again. ...You are only a Recruit really, as far as that's concerned. Eh, you are in along with some of the old sweats then. Some of these fellows ...served during the war ...And eh, the training was, was hard work but at the same time, the playing was equally as good. Work hard, play hard ...that was it. I enjoyed that. And then you went on to do whatever specialist training you were going to do. If you were going to do Machine Gunner or Mortarman or an Anti-tank man or whatever.
How long did that process take?
Eh, probably about three or four months. ...They used to run cadres and you, part of it was learning different things. Signals, what have you. And if you've got to specialise and some people went to the MT Platoon and be drivers. Some went to Anti-tanks, Mortars, Machineguns, Signals and all areas. But ...I found it interesting but sometimes ...you tend to think 'what have I let myself in for here?' But, that's a decision, you know. ...I knew that, ...you are taught ...that's what is going to happen. ...You're never going to go to the Battalion and start at the top, you are down to the bottom, you are down to, back to the basics again. If you had been through Basic Training then you can advance ...from there. I mean [National Service training] they don't teach you all that much. ...You can do it. Well you can fire a rifle and what have you, you can bull your boots. Press your slacks or whatever. ...But you have got to get into the soldiering bit of it. Go out and do Section attacks and Platoon attacks and all this and that. 133

The story starts with a reference to specialist training. It seems that this begins almost immediately upon arrival in Battalion: *'There was a lot of ...cross training when we went in. Learning different weapons systems ...how to drive tanks and everything. As Toms!'* [17: 488 – 490]. Everyone seems to be involved in both 'teaching and learning' because, as I believe, it has a central role in the 'ready for anything' ethos. By ensuring everyone knows what to do and that they are continually improving their skills and gaining knowledge, Paras appear to keep their *combat* readiness as up-to-date as possible. For example, this 2nd Lt, serving in South Armagh explained how he learned about his tactical area of responsibility (TAOR). Interestingly, the teaching was done by a Private:

57: 314 [Take] a Senior Tom ...sit him down and say '...talk to me about the place. ...Show me a good route.' And we'd do that. ...It was just a matter of listening to what they had to offer ...then ...use a bit more ...of [my] own brain ...and knowledge. ...That is still happening now. ...I still need to do that ...but I can afford to put a bit more of my own input in. The more ...we go away, the more I learned from watching them ...and just doing the job. 323

I think that this extract demonstrates that rank is no barrier to 'teaching and learning.' Many other interviewees related stories about this phenomenon. For example, this Officer, who became a Battalion Commander, had a different experience. His narrative, I feel, reveals an unofficial rite of passage, one in which most Officers learn when and how to become leaders in the Paras: *'My ...Platoon Sergeant fully understands that I didn't have a clue what I was doing, and I was never allowed in front of soldiers without being briefed by him. ...He was the guy that taught me. ...Officers are ultimately selected by the NCOs of the Regiment'* [42: 115 – 125].

Additionally several stories and story extracts about 'teaching and learning,' apart from soldiering skills appear to focus on the day-to-day functions of life in the Paras, as this 2 Para Platoon Commander told me: *'Toms, ...NCOs, ...help you constantly. ...Whoever is on that duty is so experienced within that, and can tell you whatever you need to know. ...I'm still learning now, I'm sure I will still learn. ...Everyone learns from each other'* [62: 325 – 338]. Even Senior NCOs told me stories about 'learning.' According to a Late Entry Major with 37 Years in the Regiment: *'You learn from your peers in the Sergeants Mess. ...The learning process is still going on'* [53: 356 – 357].

In summary, 'teaching and learning' stories, I think, show that there is, and has been since inception, a culture of seeking and gaining knowledge about the job on behalf of both the individual and the organisation. This appears to be transferred from soldier to soldier irrespective of rank or authority. In my experience, if anyone finds a better way of doing something, it is disseminated to others for the good of the Regiment. Alternatively, if no one has a particular skill, someone is sent to get it and they pass it on to others. This culture, started during the war years, appears to be *enduring* and still observable in those serving in 2005.

8.3.3 History

In what I interpret to be part of a process of indoctrination and as happened to me, a Recruit is systematically taught the 'history' of the Regiment. By 'history' I mean a continuous chronological record of events in the Parachute Regiment. It appears that central to creating a new identity as a Paratrooper, the 'history' is deliberately instilled in Recruits from the beginning of their training: *'Originally it's from the Depot itself what they breed into you, ...the whole history of the Regiment'* [11: 255 – 256]. There is, I think a purpose to this, as this former Sergeant recalled: *'You learnt the Regimental history and that was ...we were better than anybody else, and nobody was gonna take that away from us'* [38: 245 – 247]. It seems that the intention is to make one feel special and to remind the soldier (in my opinion) of his obligations to live up to his forebears 'standards' and reputation and this, as I observed, is still a feature of modern Paras. This young soldier recalled his experience on active service in Kosovo: *'Eh, half way through a patrol they would say "Battle Honours?"'* [4: 139 – 140]. Furthermore, because so much 'history' was made during the Second World War, emulation of that generation's achievements appears to be a constant and *enduring* preoccupation of Paras. It appears that some post-war Paras only learned about and started to identify with the 'history' of the Regiment (often via *'pain assisted learning'* [66: 51]) during Basic Training. For example: *'the history, I only knew more about the history when I joined'* [54: 45]. But for others, learning the 'history' seems to be a significant *pre-identification* (9.3, Chapter 9) feature of their decision to enlist: *'I remember reading the first few pages [about] the raid on Bruneval. ...I just, you know, that was just the badge of approval'* [68: 59]. I also realised that the 'history' of the Regiment is perceived to be a major source of 'pride,' as this former TA soldier said: *'You get, your sense of pride, your comradeship, ...a sense of well being. ...It brings a sense of, well it's hard to explain again, ...mainly it's pride for the short history. ...It's got more battle honours and eh, ...recognition than any other bloody Regiment in the Army'* [70: 483 – 485]. I feel the story below conveys the same message and in my opinion, demonstrates that

this 'history' can be a powerful recruiting medium for the 'type of person' (8.4.1, below) that tends to join the Paras. I think this 2 Para Platoon Commander summed up this feeling for 'history' in his observation:

> 63: 687 It is a Regiment which, although it has a short period of history, has always proved that you can squeeze a hell of a lot in to all environments and therefore attracts those flexible in mind and body. It attracts those, before I mention Parachuting, [with] a courage beyond most, if not all of other Regiments in the Army. And that has proved by its history. Yet, it has developed with society and therefore is adaptable to it. It is professional war fighting, as it's predecessors did in the Second World War as well as in the Falklands. To name but two. As it is to taking on responsibility of the Twenty First Century and that one minute we could be war fighting, the next minute we will take the helmet off and put the beret on, on peace support. Exactly what 1 and 3 Para did in, in Iraq [in 2003]. 694

Second, but I think more significantly, there appears to be what I interpret as a palpable desire among many Recruits to live up to a heroic idealism as described in these type of 'history' narratives. This extract from a former 1 Para Private who served in the 1950s indicates why I think these stories are *enduring*. In his opinion it is: *'because of our training, we can still show the excellence ...our forefathers showed ...in the wartime. We know we can do it, we showed it on the Suez, we showed it on the Falklands, we showed it in Sierra Leone'* [29: 1287 – 1289]. He is not alone, the 'history' appears to have the same effect on modern Paras, as this short exchange with a serving Platoon Sergeant in 2 Para illustrates:

> 60: 518 [We were] jumping into Egypt. The first Parachute Regiment soldiers to jump into Egypt from the Suez. ...Very moving because we know the blokes fought in North Africa and a lot of history made ...for this Regiment and that was a very proud moment.
> *So you are relating the history very much as part of yourself?*
> Yeah.
> *And you are part of this extension of that history?*
> I hope so ...I hope to carry on the name and keep it held as high as it is.
> 526

I noted that many more interviewees appeared to have this apparent desire, to not only emulate their forebears, but to write their own name into the annals of the Regiment's 'history.' Stories and story extracts about the 'history' of the Parachute Regiment are, in my opinion, associated with expressions of 'elitism' (the next type of story), because,

seemingly, it is down to: *'the tightness, the ethos, the history, the fact that we are the best'* [69: 420]. 'Pride' (below) and 'history,' as far as my interpretation of the terms are concerned, are intertwined. An ex-Marine, who enlisted in 4 Para, appeared to agree about this perceived desire to live up to: *'a proud history. So whenever you are training, ...obviously you are being as professional as you can. But there is still that, the history ...the lads who have wore the red beret before you, [and] trying to keep ...that good name going'* [55: 255 – 258].

Seemingly, another concern is the actual making of 'history.' In this instance, the narrator did nothing but tell stories about the Second World War in his interview, but it was a comment he made at the end of the extract: *'this is all the details you never hear'* [34: 304], that I feel made it special. In the transcripts there were many more stories and extracts (like this one) that are claimed to have never been related in published narratives. Such stories are in my opinion, exactly what younger soldiers want to hear at reunions. I consider this one to be typical. It came from an Arnhem Veteran (one of the original history makers):

> 34: 293 'We were ...on [a] main road, we got, there, were a brick yard, and he [the Platoon Sergeant] said ...to me 'you'll have to join a Rifle Company, another Rifle Company.' Then he said 'you with them? You're on all round protection!' [This was] where we were. I said 'what about this ammunition?' I still had a big box of ammunition on me back, still running about with it, true. He says 'well you can dump that.' Anyway, I thought 'well, we might need it.' Anyway, when after ...he said 'we'll have to move,' they moved. And all Officers and all Sergeants, they all went first. They went running up, ...and down towards the hospital, and then that's where Jerry were waiting for them. Just mowed them all down, and yeah, course I got up to [go] and after like, we were behind [enemy lines], he went to pull us in for our protection. Pulled us in, and we walked up, marched up there. And that's when I got shot, just outside the ...museum. Now, the wall at back of there, just outside ...dumped the ammunition. ...This is all the little details that you never hear, and never read in the official history' 304

As mentioned, I think 'history' stories have another aspect, that of making the individual feel *'special'* [10: 234]. Like I recorded in so many narratives, this Private suggests a connection to the next story type, 'elitism': *'I want to be a part of this Regiment because*

we have a history you know second to none. We got to prove nothing to nobody' [68: 464 – 465)].

8.3.4 Élitism

By 'elitism,' I refer to the *enduring* nature of two core themes where interviewees talked about themselves and their Regiment as being 'elite.' 'Elitism' here means the perceived advocacy and dominance of the Regiment over other Infantry units. In the first instance, many Paras from all generations, like the one in the previous Section, (as I interpret it) bragged that: *'we got nothing to prove to nobody.'* [68: 465]. I believe this means that generally, Paras say they feel they are superior soldiers. For example: *'We were the elite. We were above them. They were the Craphats and you just strut around in your smock and denims and your red beret and ...you were above them'* [38: 241 – 242]. In the second, 'elitism' appears to be a sense of belonging to something special, a feature of the *bonding* (6.5, Chapter 6) stories. For example: *'We've had to work for this beret. ...It's a very elite club, and yet, ... people might say we're just being elitist'* [11: 288 – 290]. Many other interviewees claimed that earning their beret was, in my opinion, symbolic of their perceived 'elite' status. It seems this is linked to what they have endured to become a Paratrooper and accordingly, Paras appear to identify strongly with each other and their Regiment. Perhaps this is why Paras consider themselves to be 'elite' soldiers. For example, those who had served in the Second World War said it, I related directly to it when I was in, and, as this TA Private, serving in 2003 also said it: *'Everyone's got this, you know, idea that ...we are elite. We are above the, the other guys, we've all gone ...the extra mile to get here'* [50: 544 – 545].

Furthermore, the transcripts are also full of comments about what I interpreted to be the dominance of the Regiment over other units in terms of soldiering skills. Like 'history' it also appears that the Regiment's reputation as an 'elite' unit also plays a major role in the recruitment process, as this former 3 Para soldier said: *'I knew that they were an elite*

force' [12: 2 – 3]. This retired 2 Para NCO told me he had joined up because of what he had read: *'It [the Regiment] hadn't been going long. But ...it was like a kind of special, elite, type of force. ...On its own, within the British Army'* [13: 4 – 5]. The first story I selected, I feel, focuses on what appears to be a palpable superiority complex my interviewees indicate they have. I think that this Falklands Veteran's words highlight this phenomenon:

> 26: 213 I was quite new to Battalion, but there was always the thing of like, the Hats. They weren't as good as us, they couldn't do what we did ...on exercise. ...They just couldn't keep up. They couldn't do what we did. ...It was a case of ...we don't need anyone else. We just need ourselves, need our mates. ...Because you felt fitter, you felt as though you could do the job far, far superior to them. I mean there is a bit of arrogance really I suppose. ...The fact that you know, these couldn't pass 'P' Company. Well, most of them couldn't anyway.
> *So, for you it was a feeling of ...elitism?*
> Yeah, oh definitely so. ...Being part of the best. It's, ...without meaning to sound too disrespectful to the Marines, they are thought of ...as the best at what they did, but I felt we were far superior to them. Really did. There again, maybe a bit of elitism, I've got nothing to back that. It's just they made you think, 'nah, they ain't as good as us.' But if it come to it ...you'd want to prove it. ...There is no way they'd beat you on a tab. ...No way they'd beat you at stripping a GPMG down and putting it together again, blindfolded. It just ...wouldn't ...happen. 241

Apart from displaying a strong belief that the Regiment is better than the rest, the story alludes to other story types (already introduced) surrounding this perceived feeling of 'elitism' (e.g., 'standards,' ''P' Company,' 'other units') and in my opinion, provides a glimpse of why the Regiment has an apparent superiority complex. In think Bridson (1989) gave a good explanation. He suggests that:

> "The Parachute Regiment places great emphasis on professionalism, at all levels. It has no monopoly on this quality – the British Army as a whole is one of the most professional in the world and in any other army, the British Line Infantry battalions would be considered elite" (p.13).

I interpret the *enduring* features here to mean that Paras believe that they are trained to be the best and have a 'history' to prove it. As is well documented in the secondary data I analysed (e.g., Bridson, 1989; Hilton, 1983; theparachute-regiment.com), the Regiment sets 'standards' of soldiering that are, and have been, consistently demonstrated to be of a higher quality than witnessed in 'other units.' This contemporary of mine, I feel,

captures the essence of this type of story when he said: *'You are Parachute Regiment, you know that you are the best. ...All these others seem to look up to you, like you are almost like Gods. ...That's the way they actually look at you. ...They've got this deep subconscious desire to be Paras themselves. ...Yet, they never really had what it takes'* [15: 348 – 354]. Part of the equation, is perhaps that 'elitism' is also connected to the *pressure* to be 'ready for anything' (6.4, 6.4.5, Chapter 6), for example: *'It is a lot of pressure that goes with ...[being] the elite force of Britain, really'* [3: 344 – 345]. In addition, by remaining at the top of the ORBAT, a clear statement of what I interpret to be status is being made by Army Chiefs of Staff on behalf of the Regiment.

Another emergent theme appears to be that the interpretation of 'elitism,' as Paras appear to understand it can be a powerful motivator when interacting with other soldiers on training and education courses. I'd just asked this Corporal what he liked about the Regiment:

> 67: 390 'What do I like about it? Eh ...it's that elitism, ...that little bit extra. Ehm, I mean, every Infantry unit can probably jump in and out of each other's shoes. Ehm, a lot of them go away and do Mechanised Courses for ...a few years and become Mechanised Battalions, or whatever. We can jump in on their jobs. [It's] not a problem and we would probably be better at it than them just because ...you need to be better. You go away on courses, ...and you meet these other units. ...I don't think I have been on a course where every single Para Reg guy on [it] hasn't come in the top ten percent. ...You've got to produce the goods because you have got to be different.' 397

Again, comparison with 'other units' surfaces. Apart from the allusion to being *different*, I consider that 'elitism' as a theme spreads across many more story types, and I address what I interpret to be a significant element that I think is juxtaposed with 'elitism.' For example: *'It's the pride in being part ..of such a world renowned fighting force. An elite, an elite top fighting force that I was once proud, you know once part of'* [3: 325 – 326].

8.3.5 Pride and honour

My suggestion here is that the concepts of 'elitism' and 'pride and honour' go together and appear to be used interchangeably by the Paras I interviewed. By 'pride' I mean a

feeling of elation and satisfaction at personal and collective achievements and 'honour' I translate to be a privilege and special right to be a Paratrooper. There are two distinct features I consider to be associated with 'pride and honour' stories and story extracts. The first, in my analysis of the transcripts relates to the individual's perceptions: *'Once you are there, awesome. ...An honour really. ...It's a unique experience. ...You are a Paratrooper, ...part of the Regiment ...A really good feeling'* [62: 610 – 623]. Secondly, as with 'elitism,' the focus may shift to the feeling of being part of a collective. A Captain in 4 Para made this observation:

> 49: 180 I'd say the pride in Para Reg ...far outweighed, the pride in the Guards. ...Ehm, and I bet you they thought exactly the same as what we were thinking. However because we were Airborne, I think our pride jumped a level. Certainly when it comes to sort of like ...fitness and soldiering. Because ...their pride came in dressing up in smart uniforms and marching. Ours would be putting a Bergen on and tabbing. 187

Once more, the comparator is said to be 'another unit.' I made the observation that many interviewees seem to attribute this 'pride' to the Regiment's 'history.' I chose to include this next story here, before I address individual and collective 'pride and honour stories,' because I think the Officer was being typical in his linking of the Regiment's past exploits to his apparent desire to engage in *combat* (6.3.1, Chapter 6):

> 63: 553 It's a great honour though. It's ehm, a Regiment which is not particularly old compared to some of the regiments in the British Army which is steeped in, in tradition and achievement. Therefore, the pride of being part of that, and the honour of being part of that is enormous. But it is matched with the responsibility to fulfil the traditions of the Regiment. And take them on, eh, into whatever ...2 Para needs to do next. And [in] a world where operational deployments, ...when terrorism is as it is. ...There is always a chance that ...a Parachute Regiment Battalion will be deployed. And I think that is the case, ehm, as it stands. Certainly, ...the Regiment has done five or six operational tours, ...including Northern Ireland, in the last four or five years. And if that continues in the same vein, then the responsibility which I have said, to ...match that, the achievements of my predecessors, ..is clearly a very exciting prospect. 564

Many Paras also told me their stories about their 'pride' in themselves. This 2 Para Platoon Sergeant, having just been appointed, said: *'I feel proud to be looking after thirty blokes. ...[To] be able to help them get on and that is what I am looking forward to now. Making sure they are ready to go anywhere. "...Utrinque Paratus," we are*

ready for anything and we will take anything that comes' [60: 666 – 669]. He mentions his hopes for doing the job and ensuring his charges are constantly primed for action, and I interpret this to be an *enduring* characteristic in the Regiment. But even day-to-day tasks seems to involve a degree of individual 'pride.' The same Captain who compared the Regiment to the Guards, had this to say about his promotion to Colour Sergeant:

> 49: 233 You still had pride in the job. ...All you were really was a storeman. The good point for ...the Colourman was ...trying to get the best for the Company. ...So if you went on the ranges and the brews were shite, ...it was your fucking fault. So I used to make my blokes, when they went to the kitchen, ...taste it first. Then ...if on the ranges they [the Toms] didn't like it, ...they got a fucking ladle over their head. ...That's ...the type of pride from ...Platoon Sergeant to a Colourman. ...You've got to change your whole ...way of thinking. ...You've got to come out of the training mode into a providing mode. 245

The second source of this feeling of 'pride' comes from the soldiers themselves. This appears to have two dimensions. One, I think, is due to a perceived *pressure* to perform and uphold the reputation of the Regiment. I noted that there are echoes of *'you can't hide'* [42: 76] in many narratives like this former 3 Para soldier's: *'It was just a matter of pride. ...If you was in the last ...mile of your ten miler, ...on your chinstraps. ...You had to present your best face. There was certain amount of pressure on you. But it was self imposed, you just wanted to uphold this reputation for being the best'* [12: 151 – 155]. The other side of 'pride and honour' stories and extracts are, in my opinion, more emotional in nature. Here, a young Paratrooper with several operations under his belt expresses his interpretation of the Falklands war, and how he related to it twenty years later: *'It's the pride in being part ...of such a world renowned fighting force. ...So many hundred people out of ...many millions ...in Britain, fought ...nearly 8000 miles away, and overcome a lot of adversity and actually pulled through and won. Won through well'* [4: 331 – 333]. Incidentally, I feel he displays an attitude, similar to my own when I was a young Tom, reflecting on those who have created our 'history.'

It appears that 'pride and honour' stories have conceptual links to other story types and identity constructs (e.g., 'combat,' 'elitism,' 'standards,' 'other units,' 'bonding' and

'brotherhood'). This dialogue, with a friend, an amputee, I think sums it up. Of all the extracts I could have used, for me, none describes what I consider to be the real core of this 'pride' (and honour) so succinctly. It was also a reminder to me of the darker aspects of interviewing Paratroopers. Sometimes it got very emotional - for both of us:

> 12: 347 I can remember loads, [but] that's all I can remember. ...I mean ...the biggest memory I've got is, I said earlier, is the Falklands. And I think, when I think back, that was. I was just so proud of the blokes. ...Oh, fuck, you've gone and made me cry now...
> *It's okay, ...I'll put the tape off, yeah?* [Interview terminated] 350

8.4 Qualities stories

My aim in this category of stories is to shed light on another significant identity construct, the image the Paras I interviewed say they believe themselves (and others) have of themselves. By a *quality*, I mean a distinctive attribute, characteristic or trait considered by an individual to be relative to himself. In my opinion the *qualities* of the individual I describe here, are desired by the Regiment and subsequently appear to be an *enduring* characteristic of both individuals and their Regiment. The first type of stories and story extracts concern the 'type of person' that I interpret to be what the Regiment wants and selects, and has done since its inception. Bridson (1989, p.13) stated that: "the Paratrooper must be self-reliant when he fights," adding, "there are reasons why the ...Regiment demands a high standard of its soldiers, [but] to get the right kind of person with all these qualities is a difficult task" (p.13). I consider 'getting the right person' to be juxtaposed with the *macho* stories (7.5, Chapter 7: i.e., 'aggressive,' 'tough guy' and 'hardman'). In addition, I think that a significant *enduring* criterion often broached in the interviews is developing what I understand to be 'Airborne initiative.' For example, a TA Corporal said: *'As a Tom you are not qualified to lead but you are taught to use your initiative and you are always watching to learn how it's done anyway. So a Senior Tom will know how it's done'* [52: 581 – 582]. Apparently, the Regiment deliberately Recruits soldiers displaying above average intelligence, officially confirmed by their GTI scores, as this Sergeant pointed out: *'ours are higher, you actually get slightly*

higher index than everyone else, than the normal Infantry' [59: 359 - 360]. Additionally, 'Airborne initiative' stories feature what I interpret to be a form one-upmanship (known in the Paras by the colloquialism *coursemanship*), a perceived obligation to perform in front of other soldiers.

8.4.1 Type of person

By 'type of person' I mean a person with the right *qualities* to be able to carry out given tasks, often under arduous conditions as determined by the Regiment from time to time. In 6.4, Chapter 6, I indicated that 'resilience' and 'determination' are believed to be *qualities* that a Paratrooper needs to do the job. But, there appears to be a 'type of person' with certain *qualities* that the Regiment has always wanted. In my opinion, the views expressed by those that I interviewed are varied on the subject. For example, from a Platoon Commander's perspective: *'It is a Regiment which ...attracts those flexible in mind and body. ...A courage beyond most'* [63: 699 – 703]. What I think is noticeable by its absence from the transcripts is any clear description of what the typical Paratrooper looks (or should look) like. I recorded many different idealisations of men who, in the mind of the interviewee, appear to be the *'ultimate Paratrooper'* [15: 43] and I interpret these references to be an idea of someone who is capable of inspiring others by demonstrating and displaying the *qualities* believed to be prototypical of the perception of the 'ideal' Paratrooper. This I feel includes what the Officer above alludes to as being 'flexible and adaptable.' Another apparent desired aspect of the 'type of person' (as I understand the Regiment's recruiting criteria) is someone who claims to be: *'Prepared to die should I have been asked to do anything that required me to put my life on the line'* [8: 175 –176]. In my opinion, the Regiment appears to want someone who is prepared to die and will not hesitate when bullets start flying. For example, this TA soldier, called up to serve with 3 Para in Iraq in 2003, typically commented that his training took over:

> 52: 690 Coming under fire for the first time. The only thing about that, is that you wondered, everybody wonders. ...Will I do what I am trained for?
> *Did you feel that the training took over?*
> ...Without a shadow of a doubt. You ...only realise that after the event, you don't even think about it. ...You have to be able to detach yourself from a personal point of view to what's happening. And it's only after ...you then start to think about the possibilities, what could have ...might have happened. ...A very conscious and ...vivid ...experience. But ...one thing that was totally absent, was any sense of hesitation. 709

For me, the story illustrates what many interviewees say they have experienced, and suggests that Paras thought the 'type of person' who becomes a Paratrooper does not hesitate under fire. Yet, many interviewees assured me that the same 'type of person' was turning up in 2005, as had volunteered in 1941. I chose this former 2 Para soldier's story because he specifically alludes to the *enduring* nature of the 'type of person' and also comments on what appears to be an ever-present '*spirit*' [32: 600]:

> 32: 596 Yesterday we went, went to a [Paras] funeral. ...And the priest, ...says 'that as a soldier, you have your emblems, you have your colours, you have various things.' And I mean, that's part of it, but it's not the spirit of it. I mean those are sort of like the ...the decorative bits. ...Bits of tinsel and jazz that you stick on to things. But the Parachute Regiment ...is all about its people. I mean whew, the spirit, ...the guys that you will be interviewing. ...They will be from 1940 right through to guys that are doing 'P' Company right now. And these guys have all got the same spirit, all the way through the Regiment. And ...of course, will be saying exactly the same as, as I'm saying. 604

Other interviewees recorded similar narratives. A Sergeant in 2 Para told me about a new intake into the Battalion, some of whom had just arrived in his Platoon. They were: '*Still the same mentality. ...Over all, the attitude is still the same. ...Still Paratroopers. ...Still indoctrinated. ...You are a robot, and you done what you was told. ...They are still the same blokes coming through*' [60: 245 – 252]. Indeed, most interviewees seemed to agree that the same 'type of person' has always been drawn to, and encouraged to join the Regiment over its first 60 years. The next quote, I think, underlines an opinion shared by many Paras. Apparently, the process of becoming a Paratrooper is never ending, and the 'type of person' is constantly trying to demonstrate to others he is still up to 'standard': '*To the last years of your Army life, ...you are still trying to prove yourself a Para. Because you have got to take the Regiment into the future. ...And the*

way that you do [that] is ...the Para Reg way. Which is hard to define' [60: 245 – 265]. Finally, I chose this story because the same Sergeant talked about the importance of selecting Recruits who demonstrate an enterprising attitude to soldiering, in that they display what is described as 'initiative,' the next story type.

> 60: 253 I'd rather have ten triers than a hundred men that just do their little bit and crack up. If a bloke's trying, it shows me he wants to be there. Whereas that somebody [who] ...could do better, but doesn't put the effort in, I'd rather have the trier any day because at least he wants to do it right. And I'd say a bloke with ...a bit more something about him, just got that little spark of confidence, that isn't, eh, necessarily being necky. But he knows the blokes on the ground. 'Although this is happening, I know what I need to do.' And a bloke that will even, just pick up and go, should I fall by the wayside. Should I die, that bloke will lead. At least stand up and go do what he has been told what to do. Without worrying who's left and right, knowing somebody will be there. Aye, it's the bloke with that little bit initiative, that little bit of spark. 261

8.4.2 Airborne initiative

Being 'ready for anything' (6.4.5, Chapter 6) according to Bridson (1989, p.9), means: "The Regiment must at all times be flexible and every member must ...be able to adapt instantly to the situation. ...To do this requires intelligence and initiative ...from the Toms as well." I originally titled this type of story 'flexibility' and 'versatility,' but feel that a more inclusive title is required. By 'Airborne initiative' I mean the ability to initiate things and demonstrate enterprise in problem solving in the Parachute Regiment. The 'type of person' wanted also appears to be one who can act on their own 'initiative.' Many stories seem to implicate this idea and I decided to include it as an *enduring* story type in its own right. An aspect of these stories appears to be oriented around one-upmanship (coursemanship) and cheating. This story is from a training exercise pre-D-Day in 1944. The narrator, a war Veteran, I feel, gives a clear example of what I mean by 'Airborne initiative:'

> 28: 762 Yeah. One section starts off, quarter of an hour later, the next Section. They'd be like, using your initiative. You had to make, make your way to one point, you had the map reference. Right, so eh, you're going down the Lane, and we see this ...tractor come down with a trailer on the back. Anyway, [we] pulled him up, like. And he [a Tom] said '...this village, like.' '...Yeah,' [the farmer] said, '...jump in the back.'

We jumped in the back, he took it down so far to this gate. He said 'see that tower over there?' (at the Church Spire, like). He said 'if you cut across the field there, you go straight to a gate right opposite the Church.' Well that's, that's where our, our map reference was. And I used, 'cos I, I weren't too bad at map reading, see. So I thought we used to, anyway, all of a sudden he [the umpire at the gate] says eh 'you're quick!' So we, we was No.2 Section. We was there before No.1 Section! Anyway, you was using your initiative, got the tractor, like. Of course when we passed [No.1] Section going down the road, we all laid down in the trailer, we got down [and hid]. 772

Many interviewees recalled what I believe to be a sense of satisfaction from similar situations. Interestingly, (and as I have done myself) when caught cheating, one way out can be, paradoxically, to turn it round and say: "Just using my Airborne initiative, Sir." Apparently, Paras have used their initiative in this way since the first volunteers signed up, it was part of the Army Commando ethos and philosophy (4.2.1, Chapter 4). This includes a requirement for soldiers to act on their own on dangerous and difficult operations, often behind enemy lines with few resources. This 'can do' ethic, I believe, has been inherited by the Regiment from these Commandos and may be a factor in promotion decisions. It appears that the crows who are promoted first, usually score high in their problem solving abilities in Basic Training. But I observed there is nurture as well as nature. It seems this is part of the job description for many interviewees. Being taught that you can bring your own solutions to the problem, was apparently, as an ex-TA soldier argued: *'what you call the Airborne initiative.'* [41: 58]. I chose this story as I think it provides a convenient link to the next category of stories:

11: 214 They always tell us use the Airborne initiative from day one...
What do you mean ...by Airborne initiative?
That you are taught to think for yourself. ...What happens if your Platoon Commander, your Sergeant and your Corporal all get killed? Someone has got to take the initiative and lead from the front and ...take a grip of the situation. ...Find whatever way. There was never a problem that you could not solve if you were Airborne. You could always find a way round [it]. ...That was the spirit of the Regiment, we do not believe in defeat. We do not believe it was impossible what could not be done. The whole emphasis of the Parachute Regiment was it will be done. It can be done. And if it means that out of an eight man Section there's only two of you left, you will still carry out that mission. ...There were many instances. ...Especially at Goose Green. ...Jim XXXXX [a Lieutenant] went forward with a Corporal to take a surrender of an Argentinean position with a white flag in the midst of battle. No one knows exactly how it happened but they were gunned down with that

> white flag. Two young private soldiers ...were literally pinned down on their own. [The] Corporal actually tried to go forward and he was killed instantly. Two young soldiers ...manned a GPMG machine gun and held the Section together. ...They literally were totally exposed in the open, with no back up, with no support. And they just put down firepower, ...just kept that gun going to get the other lads who were trapped and wounded out of that position. And that is an example of Airborne initiative. ...They weren't waiting for orders from the Sergeant or Corporal to do this. They realised what was happening and just went ...straight in and did the job. 254

This is what I consider to be a good example of what is described in many story types (e.g., 'courage' (and selflessness), 'resilience,' 'initiative,' 'tragedy' and 'death'). I think the story also contains much of the *enduring* nature of a Paratrooper's identity, but I decided to end this Section with a comment from a former TA Pathfinder. These units have an autonomous and specialist role within the Regiment that requires its soldiers to pass initiative tests during their stringent selection, and demands they be 'flexible and versatile:' *'Well, you knew it had to be done and that's it. So you just went and did it. Plus they encouraged in the Platoon to work on your initiative if and when needed'* [70: 370 - 371].

8.5 Tragedy stories

In this final category of stories in this Chapter I address *tragedy*, what I interpret to be the dark side of the Regiment's story and another *enduring* characteristic. By *tragedy* I mean distressing circumstances brought about by serious injury and/or death. Being a soldier in the Paras, in my experience, is not without its risks. Apart from the obvious dangers inherent in the job (e.g., active service and parachuting), many interviewees also told me about accidents they claimed to have been had been injured in, for example: *'I got burned ...out in Belize. ...I was eh, incapacitated for quite a long time. Ehm, I was in a right bad way'* [3: 265 – 267]. However, it appears that few die as a result of accidents, but fatalities do happen, like this one, witnessed in 1964: *'He got killed in a plane crash ...when he went for his parachute training. ...The tail dropped off and it [the plane] went in and they all got killed'* [22: 122 128]. The first story type addresses issues surrounding what I term 'injury and maiming' and in the second, the 'death' of

Paratroopers. In particular, my focus is on the actual loss of life due to *combat*. Many Paras, it seems, have lived with the prospect of injury or death since the first volunteers jumped into Bruneval in 1942 (4.2.3, Chapter 4). In fact, it can be argued that the statistics began in at No. 1 Parachute School, during the first trials at Ringway, Manchester: "when on 25 July, 1940 ...a driver with the Royal Army Service Corps ...was killed. ...His jump was only the 136th since Ringway had opened" (Reynolds, 1990, p.9). In the transcripts, there seems to be a natural watershed in the Regiment's 'history.' For those who had served during the war years, injury and death have been documented to be ever present (4.2, Chapter 4). Whereas, most post-war Paras appear to have their 'tragedies' on a greatly reduced, but nevertheless significant scale when compared with the Infantry. I divided the stories I considered to be significant on 'injuries and maiming' into three related parts for presentation: parachuting injuries; wounding as a result of active service; and the impact 'injury and maiming' can have on an individual's service. Although the ratio of 'injuries' to 'deaths' is statistically higher (8.5.1, below), nevertheless, there are many horrific accounts narrated by interviewees who have witnessed the 'death' of a fellow Paratrooper. In my opinion, 'death' stories have two distinct loci of experience for the narrator. For some it is considered to be a remote experience, it happens to somebody not closely associated. But for others it has happened to a close friend and is, I know, a deeply personal feeling of loss. Furthermore, there is a glimpse of another *enduring* characteristic, the black or 'sick' humour which seems to have evolved in the Regiment. Perhaps this acts as a coping mechanism.

8.5.1 Injury and maiming

By 'injury and maiming' I mean physical harm or damage that results in mutilation and/or crippling. In my opinion, the prospect of being 'injured and maimed' appears to be an *enduring* theme. My research indicates that all generations of Paras have witnessed and some Paras have suffered (sometimes horrific) injuries. Three themes emerged from the transcripts concerning 'injury and maiming:' parachuting accidents;

the result of engaging an enemy (contact); and the impact on the individual. I also noted many references by interviewees who have fought in full scale battles to soldiers being wounded. For example: *'The MT Officer, he was ex-Arnhem fellow, got wounded badly at Arnhem'* [19: 158 – 159]. Yet, as the published history also records, many more were maimed on the many Internal Securities duties carried out since 1945, for example: "In 1992 the 3rd Battalion was ...in East Tyrone. ...A foot patrol was caught in a booby-trap bomb. ...[A] Paratrooper took the full blast of the explosion – he lost both legs" (Reynolds, 1998, p.197).

Parachuting is, in my experience, hazardous enough, never mind being shot at in the process (6.4.4, Chapter 6). Many parachuting stories concern men who have been scarred for life as a result of their close shaves and bad landings. A former L/Cpl rolled up his sleeve as he told me: *'I've got a nasty scar on my right arm, I had a bad parachuting accident on Salisbury Plain'* [15: 425 – 425]. An interview with an APJI offered me an opportunity to probe a vastly experienced instructor for some stats on the ratio of injuries to jumps:

> 53: 272 *What is the percentage per jumps to injuries?*
> ...About five, between three and five percent [of jumps made] on, on a whole.
> *That's just like arms, legs...*
> Arms, legs, knocks, backs, bruises, yeah.
> *So every time there is a jump, for every hundred men going out between three and five...*
> Three, three and five yeah.
> *...What about the death rate?*
> ...I've only seen one death. ...That was a Yank and I was on the DZ when that happened. When he got an air steal at seventy feet and the other fell, well no, Jimmy ...landed on his chest. ...Killed him. Cos he got the same air steal and landed on his chest and [crushed] his heart. That's what killed him. 284

The following story, I feel, describes a typical parachuting accident, one of the *three to five percent'* [53: 273]. This soldier had a 'blown periphery' (Glossary, p.1) and hit the ground hard. Although he laughed about it, peeping beyond the 'black' humour and

bravado gives an insight into the kind of thoughts that can flick through a Paras mind before he jumps. This time it nearly happened:

> 47: 569 I actually hit the deck ...knocked all the wind out of me and I just lay there. Eh, waited till the ambulance fucking arrived [laughing]. ...I was not going to move at all. It was in your mind, 'don't budge.' And then, you know, wait until somebody comes. The Medic came. He said 'are you hurt?' And I went, right, 'I don't know.' ...He said 'well you ploughed into the deck at like thirty five mile an hour. Basically you should be broken from the tip of your toe all the way up to your head,' like. 'Oh, thanks a lot for that information!' But all I got was badly bruised which ...is no problem. But I actually lay there thinking, thought I was actually dying, you know, when your life is ebbing away? 576

Another type of personal 'injury' stories appear to be related to *combat* (6.3, Chapter 6). There are two kinds of 'injury and maiming' stories that I consider to be enduring in the Regiment. The first, I describe as 'remote' (see below). For example, a soldier who served in 2 Para in the 1980s said: *'Well, I ...never lost anybody in an armed conflict. I had a mate blown up and that was a culture shock. ...Cos he lived across the road from me in Ireland'* [13: 553 – 554]. This kind of experience, witnessing injuries to another Para, I think is an example of a 'remote' *tragic* event because it happens to someone else casually known to the narrator. This 3 Para Falklands Veteran's story is one of many horrific personal accounts:

> 12: 293 I've got a few scars. ...Obviously from me ...wounds so I've eh, I've ...what, you want the details?
> *Yeah...*
> One here, I've got me amputation so that's scarred and ehm, this leg. Let me show you [other leg] ...It's the shrapnel, came through it. ...It was the equivalent of a Milan [Anti-tank missile]. ...It landed right there. ...Straight through there. That, that was actually complete, but that was a big fuck off hole through there, it went straight through and out there. And that was, it was broken from there to there, just like, you know, an eggshell. This went though like, from there to there. ...This was too [pulls up his shirt]. ...Me back healed up on its own. Over a long time. But now you can see, you can see the [shin] bone in there. That used to get packed with yards and yards of dressing that was literally, that big [tennis ball size]. Just like a hole, down to the bone and there was a bit of bone missing. But they ...had to cut the muscle until it was flat. So they cut me calf muscle, flapped it out to cover the hole up. They're the main scars. I've got [others] from the pins that they used. 306

Another amputee received his injuries in a 'contact.' This 1 Para Cyprus veteran explained why he cut short what was supposed to be a twenty-two year career after just

30 months service: *'The only reason I came out early was the fact that I'd been blown up. Now I was blown up, so I got a leg missing, I got other bits and I got other pieces [shrapnel wounds]'* [29: 797 – 797]. However, he never explained his reasons for leaving. The previous storyteller gives what I consider to be a possible explanation:

> 12: 199 *Why did you leave the Regiment?*
> ...I was injured in the Falklands. I was offered the opportunity to stay in but I didn't want to spend my time as a storeman or clerk, or going down the museum at the Depot. Not for me. I was twenty years old, no rank, no courses, no union representation, no rank potential. You might have got Lance Jack out of pity, know what I mean? But I wasn't stopping there. Can I just say, it wasn't so much the lack of prospects, it was the fact that I wasn't stopping, watching the blokes running around...
> *You wanted to be part of it?*
> Yeah, I, there was no way I would stop. I mean, all through me career I'd wanted to be a sort of Paratrooper figure. And whilst in name that would have been right, it wouldn't have been. I wasn't a fucking storeman or something, there was no way I was going to be a storeman [a job usually undertaken when a soldier is injured or downgraded, considered by many to be an ignominy]. I just felt it was better for me to get out. ...I had more prospect long term in civvie street and I just didn't want that fucking life, so ...it didn't mean enough to me. I wasn't a Para Reg bloke anymore. ...I was, in the sense that I would always have been a part, you know, I wouldn't have been thrown out, as far as I know. But I wouldn't have been, in my own mind, a Paratrooper as a fucking storeman or something. So I decided to get out. 212

I feel the story is a good example of the *pressure* to be 'ready for anything' (6.4.5) and to be part of a 'brotherhood' (6.5.6, both Chapter 6). The understanding that he could not take part in the day to day activities was, I think, the real *tragedy*. This also seems to apply to parachuting injuries, particularly when an individual is downgraded. For example, this retired Para told me what happened to the former L/Cpl who showed me the scar from a parachuting accident (above): *'He had a bad parachuting accident and he got given all the crap jobs to do and everything like'* [3: 293 – 294].

I chose the next story for two reasons. The first is that the I feel graphic details reflect the degree of personal loss felt by one 'injured' individual, and I think, provides the anti-myth of a 'glorious' death in battle. I consider it to be a brutal reflection of how being a member of this organisation can completely change a life, something in my opinion that

is *enduring* that emerged from the data. Second, for me, it is an excellent example of what 'brotherhood' can mean, at least for one Paratrooper but I feel he represents the sentiments of many. I was there when he was shot, and helped treat and evacuate him:

> 26: Yeah I was shot in the head. ...[I] was in quite a bad way but it's not until you talk to the guys who treated you, you realise how lucky I am to be here and talk normally ...The story goes ...I was shot quite early on in the battle for Darwin. I was actually on ...an isolated piece of ground and the guys couldn't get to me, I think it was four or five hours. ...I didn't think I was conscious but apparently I was. ...I don't know how long it was before the choppers could get to us [14 hours!]. ...I was then cas-evaced to Ajax Bay [field hospital], and actually spoke to one of the surgeons. ...And he said they left us till last on the stretcher, cos they just didn't think I was going to live. In fact, going back a step, even at ...Goose Green. ...One of the medic guys was just going to inject morphine into my brain, to put me out of my misery. It gives you just a little idea of, of I was in quite a bad way. ...And there I was laying there ...on this stretcher, my brains were hanging down out the back of my neck, on to [it]. The Doc came along, saw a little bullet still lodged in me head, took it out. ...Gently picked up, cupped his hands around the hole in my head, picked up my brains gently ...and plopped them back into the skull, put a dressing around it, put one big stitch ...hold it in place. Then I was ...cas-evaced to the Uganda [hospital ship] ...I was totally blind when I was first shot. ...Don't remember seeing anything. Came back to the UK, ehm, had an operation. When they took all that muck out me head. I've got a little bit vision back then which was clear. So no, it's quite ehm, it's difficult to explain but it, the injury was that severe. And then to come through it and then be back with the guys, was just like full circle again.

All the contributions here came from Paras who have survived their accidents and injuries. However, I leave the last word to a Corporal who served in the many Internal Securities operations of the1960s and 1970s. He summed up his active service: *'Yeah, I ehm, I've been shot and blown up and, ehm all sort of things. ...Yeah, I've broken both legs, I've got, ehm, gunshot wound, here, in my leg. I was knifed in me stomach'* [37: 283 – 284].

8.5.2 Death

In this last story type of the Chapter, I turn to the subject of 'death,' an ever-present possibility for a serving Paratrooper since the Regiment's inception (4.2, Chapter 4). By 'death,' here I mean the process of being killed as a result of serving in the Parachute Regiment. I divided this category into what I interpret to be three interconnected and

enduring themes: those who are touched by it; the experience of it happening (to someone else); and coping and dealing with it in the aftermath. Beyond the ethical consideration (and restrictions under the Official Secrets Act, Appendix 8), I made no attempt to elicit any stories or story extracts about soldiers being killed, and in particular, engaging in the act of killing. I restricted my questions and probing into, what I acknowledge to be volunteered as part of a story. My concern here is with the 'deaths' of soldiers *within* the Regiment, and I ignored any other references recorded in the transcripts. It may be argued that Paras have taken many casualties down the years since the end of the Second World War (4.2.6, Chapter 4). This could have been a *distinctive* characteristic story type in comparison with statistics from other regiments. However, I feel 'death' although being in my opinion a sensitive issue in the Regiment, I should include it here as an *enduring* story type. My reason for this is that in my six years of service (1976 – 1982), over 60 Paras were killed as a result of active service, and several more through accidents. For example, this next soldier arrived in 2 Para, his Passing Out Parade abandoned due to a call for reinforcements. History records that sixteen of the eighteen soldiers murdered by the IRA, on August 27th 1979 (4.2.6, Chapter 4; Chapter 5, Tam's story), were from 2 Para: *'I came to Battalion just after Warrenpoint. ...The carnage ...was so terrible, it was felt throughout, travelled round the Regiment. Certainly felt it in Depot'* [32: 178 – 183]. In addition, almost all of the Paras interviewed in this research indicated that when it does happen, the whole Regiment, PRA included, is affected. I was often told it feels like losing a member of the family. The transcripts also record many similar responses to these *tragedies*. But to me the words of this retired Major with thirty years experience are very poignant. I think he speaks for many of us who have served in the Parachute Regiment:

> 25: 411 The only thing I would say about being ...in the Parachute Regiment was that, because of the peculiar role that the Regiment has in peace and in war, there's very few of us that haven't been touched by the loss of a very close friend. ...I think other people can serve in the Army, go through their whole service, the whole twenty-two years without ever having experienced the loss of a very good friend. Where I know, and all my contemporaries, you know, obviously, that I think we

> have all been touched by, ehm, this loss of what we can say are very close and dear friends. Ehm, throughout service. And I think that's it's another, ...aspect of what has forged the Regiment into what it is, eh, whereas we can say, in peace or war, we are facing up to danger. 418

The next story gives an account of the desolation one serving Sergeant Major felt when he arrived in 3 Para as a Recruit. I chose this extended extract because I feel it brings meaning to the Officer's words above and reinforces what I mean by the quote; *'It travelled round the Regiment'* [32: 183], made earlier. Even where there is no personal contact between those that were killed, as this soldier describes, the feeling of loss can be palpable:

> 46: 158 I remember on the ...the Monday morning. ...We got on the four tonners just to drive across the road [Depot to 3 Para, Aldershot]. I think we had loads of baggage ...and they just dumped us [at] the Guardroom and drove off. And the Adjutant came down, [and] the RSM. And we were taken ...to the eh, conference room, put round a big table. And then the Adjutant came in and told you which Company you were going to. And then, eh, we were taken down to B Company block and at that time, even though it was [19]83, so it was like, a few months after the Falklands. I remember being taken into 6 Platoon floor, the ground floor. We were taken into half of the eight man room, and it was all emptied because they had all been killed on Mount Longdon [Falklands]. And the bloke who'd been, I can't remember who, ...put us into our rooms and he told us '...right, that's your bed space and it used to be some, (you know, whoever) ...he was killed on Longdon.' ...And I just remember sitting on the bed thinking '...fucking hell, they are all dead.' Eh, so it was a strange feeling. And I remember a lot of people, obviously 6 Platoon got decimated on Longdon, so there won't be many people in 6 Platoon at all. And I thought, '...is this an omen or something?' you know. 'I've been sent to the Platoon that had been slaughtered in the Falklands.' But, yeah, it, it was really quiet so it's not how I expected it really. Because like I said, a lot of them had, were killed down South. So eh, it was quiet, not many people there, and the ones that were there, were really quiet. Because of the, the experiences they had down there. 174

To provide an insight into, and some evidence that 'death' stories are, as I claim, *enduring* in the Regiment, I selected six extracts from Paras who have served in different decades. A member of 22 Independent (Pathfinders) Company told me about a *tragedy* he witnessed in Athens in 1945, in what he called a *'dirty war'* [30: 1123]: *'We had a smashing Officer....Eh, he got killed in Greece'* [30: 868 – 869]. This soldier spent several years in the SAS before returning to 3 Para. He was at Suez in 1956: *'We were jumping from Valettas [twin fuselage aircraft]. ...And eh, that was the last time I seen*

him then, in the aircraft. 'Cos he got killed, he got out of his 'chute, went twenty yards and mortar bomb landed at his feet. 'Cos ...we was under heavy fire, obviously' [7: 154 – 156)]. In the 1960s there were many emergency tours in and around the Middle East. This ex 1 Para Tom survived a contact, but in another incident, one of the dead was his friend: *'We had ...a parade in Aldershot. Ehm, with the eh, lads who had been killed in, in Aden. We lost three lads in Aden'* [17: 417 – 418]. I, too, know what it felt like to lose close friends (Chapter 5, Tam's story). Many Paras were killed in Northern Ireland, where by 2003, 52 Paras had made what I consider to be the ultimate sacrifice (www.parachute-regiment.com). Three of my friends were killed and two seriously injured (burns) at Warrenpoint in 1979. It is permanently etched in my memory. As previously mentioned, it was an experience many other interviewees seem to relate to. It was the 1980s that saw the Regiment fight in the first 'all arms' conflict since 1945 in the Falklands. 65 Paras were killed in action and this contemporary of mine in 2 Para had this experience of the 'death' of his Platoon Commander: *'Even though the Platoon Commander was dead, saying stuff like "sorry Boss, I've got to do this to you, take your watch off now"'* [35: 407 - 408]. Finally, references to 'death' was also significant the transcripts of those who served in the 1990s. This 3 Para sniper told me one of his most vivid memories was: *'When my three mates got killed in Northern Ireland. Blown up at Mayo Ridge. That was pretty bad because that was a huge bomb as well. And it basically blew them completely apart'* [69: 495 – 496].

How, then, do Paras themselves cope with *tragedy*? The answer, in part, is what I interpret to be a form of 'black' or 'sick' humour. As macabre as it is, it appears to have its place, as this 2 Para Sergeant explains:

> 553 Nothing has changed. ...Blokes ...deal with anything by laughing and making a joke out of it, no matter how shit it is. Even when blokes die.
> *557Do you think that is a coping mechanism?*
> I think it is. ...If they ...see you laughing about it, they might think 'he's sick.' ...But, it is only a way of getting them through and getting the job done. ...The blokes will rip the piss out of you, no matter what rank you are, from the Colonel down. 563

The last story I selected I feel provides a glimpse of what I mean by the humour being 'sick.' There are many such storytelling events in the transcripts, a few of which led to me and their narrator giggling like Toms again. However, I selected this one, from a former 2 Para Sergeant Major, because of its apparent innocence and as an example of classic military humour:

> 20: 534 We had two Padres at Borneo. One was the Roman Catholic Padre and the other one was eh, Church of England. And eh, on the air, over the radio they were referred to as Halo one and Halo two. But eh, when the attack at Planam Mapu [Borneo, 1964], I have to say that they had to go over these ...ehm, over these two [Paras] that were killed. And they said to, afterwards to Father XXXXXX, 'how did you know which one was which religion?' And he said 'well I knew one of them was a Catholic because he was wearing Celtic socks [laughing] ...That was his answer to that! 541

To close and end my data presentation in this Chapter on what I believe to be *enduring* characteristics, I feel these words of one former Para are very poignant. As part of my investigation into how these men cope with so much *tragedy*, I asked several interviewees how they felt about religion. This is his considered, yet, in my opinion, moving response: *'If there was a God, why did he put us through that? Why couldn't there have been another way to deal with it? Why? The young lad who died in my arms [at Goose Green], ...why couldn't have God have saved his life? If there is this God?* [11: 514 – 517]. Incidentally, his father was a Church of England Minister.

8.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter I presented my analysis of *enduring* stories. The first category, *tradition*, suggest the 'standards' that were set in the beginning of the Regiment are still being met by modern Paras. These 'standards' appear to be underpinned by a culture of 'teaching and learning,' which I interpret to mean the handing down from soldier to soldier (irrespective of rank/seniority) of skills and knowledge with the focus on nurture, rather than on nature. The 'history' of the Regiment, as an *enduring* story is also included. This is because in my opinion, most Paras learn it in Basic Training, some say they already know it before they enlist, but I consider the 'history' to be a powerful motivating force

in a 'never-ending' search for full identity as an 'idealised' interpretation of what a 'Paratrooper' is. The 'history' seems to feed a feeling of 'elitism' which appears to be a positive force in the Regiment and has been since the first Commandos volunteered in 1940. There were two themes I observed in 'elitism' narratives, one concerns a 'sense of belonging' to something 'special' and the other, I interpret to be a perception of dominance over other soldiers. 'Elitism' also seems to be supported, in part, by the fact that many of the interviewees expressed what they described as a 'pride and honour' in both themselves, and the Regiment.

The second category of *enduring* stories that emerged from my analysis I termed, *qualities* stories, in which I explore perceived connections to the *distinctive* attributes of *macho* stories (7.5, Chapter 7). These juxtaposed the 'type of person' That I understand to be wanted by the Regiment, one that also displays 'Airborne initiative.' The 'type of person' appears not to hesitate under fire and be 'ready for anything' (6.4.5, Chapter 6) and is still arriving for Basic Training in 2005, just as they did in the early days during the Second World War. That 'type of person' appears to be required to demonstrate problem solving capabilities and be willing to participate in a 'can do' culture. Another feature of these 'Airborne initiative' stories is what I interpret to be to one-upmanship and rule breaking.

The third category, *tragedy* stories examines the darker side of serving in the Parachute Regiment. I recorded two types of what I consider to be *tragedies*. The first, 'injury and maiming' investigates the *enduring* nature of injuries often inflicted as a result of parachuting, and other accidents including being wounded in active service. It appears there were occasions where the impact of being 'maimed' can bring a career to a sudden end. In narratives concerning the 'death' of Paratroopers, three issues emerged from the data surrounding this type of *tragedy*. The most frequent references were made by those who said they were connected to the 'death' of another Para, as a member of the

'brotherhood' (6.5.6, Chapter 6) and had experienced it what I termed 'remotely.' Many Paras also claimed to have been witnesses to the 'death' of close friends, and their stories are also concerned with dealing and coping with the aftermath, often through the use of what I interpret to be 'black' humour.

There were other categories of *enduring* themes I considered for this Chapter, for example, the Regimental March, *Ride of the Valkyries*, appeared to provoke what I consider to be a source of intense identification amongst many of the Paras I interviewed. 'Black' humour could have been a *central*, or an *enduring* story type as it seemed to occur in nearly every interview (often not recorded on tape), during warm up and especially warm down sessions before and after interviews. However, 'black' humour is not exclusive to the Paras as it appears to be, in my experience, characteristic of the British Military in general. I could have selected themes such as 'scars and scarring,' in the same light as minor injuries, as there are several good narratives on being 'scarred' for life due to service in the Regiment. Attending funerals of dead Paras was another notable theme, but these are I noted, mostly connected to questions about attitudes to religion.

In conclusion, I hope I have shown in these three Chapters that storytelling in the Regiment serves more than a social function. Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity, has in my opinion, proved to be a satisfactory vehicle with which to organise into categories and themes issues (identity constructs) Paras say they believed are central, distinct and enduring about their identity as Paratroopers and members of the Regiment. The next Chapter presents their stories on identification themes.

Chapter 9

Identification stories

'Paras never die, they only go to hell and re-org.' Anon.

9.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I focus on the processes of *identification* in the Parachute Regiment using Elsbach's (1999) Expanded Model of Organisational Identification. I have divided the data into two broad categories of stories and story extracts I consider to be related to perceptions of cognitive connectedness between Paratroopers and their Regiment. These are 'strong' *identification* and 'weak' *identification.* 'Strong' stories are organised into three temporal themes: *pre, active* and *retro identification.* Similarly, 'weak' stories, are organised under three category headings: *dis, schizo,* and *neutral-identification.* In each case I cite my reason for choosing the story o9r extract and explain its relevance to the Chapter. Finally, a conclusion draws the various themes together.

9.2 Strong identification stories

According to Elsbach (1999), in terms of positive *identification,* there should be a sense of 'active connection' between the Paratrooper and the Regiment and, in addition, a 'positive relational categorisation' of oneself and the Regiment. In my research I observed three distinct phases of 'strong' *identification* stories that I interpret to be stages of cognitive connectedness with the organisation. In the first instance, before an interviewee can actually claim to be a Paratrooper, he appears to enter a phase I termed *pre-identification.* By this I mean when a 'Potential Recruit' may be influenced by an external agency and begins to *identify* with the Regiment, often as many interviewees appear to believe, before realising what they are letting themselves in for. For example: *'I said ...I'd like to do this Paras thing and this guy in the [recruitment] office ...I'll never forget what he said, he said "what? Shit and bullets?"'* [1: 25 – 27]. Some interviewees said they felt they were influenced through their blood ties and others

through close friends with some form of connection to the Paras, as this Lt Colonel recalled: *'from my first earliest sensible memories as a five year old, ...I have either been a child of the Regiment or serving in the Regiment's ranks. So my first impressions were formed by attending Airborne Forces Day ...and just growing up with the tribe. It is in effect, a family'* [42: 7 – 11]. Others, it seems, may start to *identify* with former Paras they meet in social and work environments: *'I worked with a guy, ...he'd just left 3 Para and he came to work with me and he told me all about the Parachute Regiment'* [37: 3 – 4]. There are those who claim to have *identified* with the Regiment through its 'history and reputation' before they enlisted: *'I picked up this book at a jumble sale and it was a Para Reg one and I was like that, fucking hell!'* [4: 4]. Finally, some interviewees informed me they only started to *identify* during the Army recruitment process: *'I wanted to be a soldier before I wanted to be a Paratrooper'* [43: 4].

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What I termed *active identification* stories and story extracts are, in my opinion common. By *active identification* I mean a process whereby some form of cognitive connection is perceived by individuals to exist between themself and the Regiment. For example, *'I felt that I was a Paratrooper when ...I'd come back from Brize Norton, when I'd got me wings'* [23: 540]. It seems to be an incremental process, an individual perception as to when *pre-identification* changes to *active* and this I think is different to the 'official' symbolic nature of staged ceremonies. However, I did record instances of both forms of cognitive connectedness in the transcripts. Several interviewees also mention what I interpret to be their perceived attachment to the 'brotherhood' (6.5.6) made in many references to their feelings of belonging and seeking 'acceptance' (6.5.1, both Chapter 6): *'You felt great because you, you became a member of a family'* [54: 118]. There are also stories and extracts about what I consider to be a sense of active connection to the organisation in narratives about upholding the name of the Regiment and having a perceived active association with it: *'You've got to be Para Reg, you've got to show them you are better, ...and all the way along you find they are trying to under,*

undermine you' [22: 613 – 615]. *Retro-identification* stories, in my opinion, appear to concentrate on one of two forms of regret reported in the transcripts. By *retro* I mean a process of reminiscing, in which an individual reflects back to past events, feelings and experiences. These type of stories and story extracts appear to reinforce a *post-facto* sense of active connection to the Regiment, as this former Sergeant Major said: *'Sometime afterwards I wish I had of stayed on, really'* [20: 421]. There are two *retro* themes that emergent from the data. The first I interpret to be oriented towards a perceived trauma, apparently triggered by actually leaving and circumstances surrounding the decision to leave the Regiment. For example, as this RSM parodied, he would: *'commit suicide [laughing...]. I don't know! I'm dreading it though'* [43: 484]. The second are what I consider to be representations of what I believe to be nostalgic *retro-identification* concerns, principally relating to missing the feeling of belonging: *'I'm envious. I wish I was back in there with them, yeah, I really do'* [38: 400 – 401].

9.3 Pre-identification stories

These stories concern some of what I consider to be the earliest indicators of an individual's active sense of cognitive connectedness with the Parachute Regiment. It appears that there are three main types of stories which may involve a sense of connectedness *pre-identification.* These types of story, I noted, are primarily about *identification* before enlistment. The first group are narrated by Paras who said they had blood ties to the Regiment, for example, an ex 3 Para Corporal told me he joined because: *'me brother was in it. ...But ...he never talked about it because I hadn't seen him since he joined up'* [7: 2 – 3]. Occasionally, because a blood relative had been killed whilst serving, seeking revenge may have contributed to what I interpret to be a deep emotional relational categorisation of oneself and the Regiment. A former Sergeant, whose own son left 1 Para in 2003 told me: *'One of the main reasons for me actually going into the Paras, because of the way my father was killed and whatever, and eh, you could say it's a revenge thing'* [38: 11 – 12]. A similar form of *identification* to blood

relatives appears to occur through having contact with a member of the Regiment through friendship ties. For example, this ex-Para mentioned his girlfriend: *'At one time she had three brothers in the Parachute Regiment. But anyway, well eh, they were the first influence on me'* [15: 18 – 19]. I think this type of comment may be indicative of a state of *pre-identification* in the individual (as a potential member of the organisation).

The second group of stories I transcribed are mainly concerned with interviewees' encounters with former Paras. This form of *pre-identification* seems to be typically a positive relational categorisation with a perceived 'role model' that the 'Potential Recruit' comes into contact with. For example, this soldier remembered when he was first influenced: *'[A] lad that I, I hadn't seen since school, and he told me all about it and I thought 'I'll give it a crack' you know'* [40: 17 – 18]. In my opinion, some of these stories allude to storytelling events where a similar form of *identification* appears to happen, this time, in relation to the Regiment, rather than through an individual. This Officer lived near Aldershot as a child: *'I was born in Farnborough in Hampshire, so eh, ...it was very much in my eh, sort of consciousness, daily'* [9: 2 – 3]. A third group appear to have started to *identify* with the 'history and reputation' of the Regiment as an 'elite' fighting force and wanted to be part of it. It seems these stories are told because the individual feels an early sense of connectedness with the Regiment, as happened to this former 1 Para Tom. He had watched a film and started to identify with the hero: *'I saw The Red Beret as a lad, eh which was quite impressive. ...The Red Beret. Yeah, Alan Ladd'* [17: 2 – 6].

9.3.1 Blood ties and close friends stories

These stories and story extracts come from interviewees that have or had a close friend and/or relative who either served or was still serving in the Regiment. I consider these to be examples of *pre-identification* because the individual has, at the time of enlistment, already started to *identify* with the Regiment through his family ties to a father or

brother/s or close friendships with other Paras. The Regiment was formed during the Second World War (4.2, Chapter 4) and had no history and tradition of its own through which father could influence son to emulate his achievement and service as appears to be the case in traditional county regiments in the British Army (e.g., the Cheshire Regiment). Nevertheless, in my experience some sons do follow their fathers. Indeed, there were several fathers and sons serving together in the Regiment in my time. I think this Officer's comment is a good example of this phenomenon: *'I was born in ...Aldershot, the heart of the Parachute Regiment, the son of a Parachute Regiment Officer'* [42: 5 – 6]. I chose this next story because the Corporal suggests a similar sense of active connection from an early age, through his being the son of a Para. I think this is different from the way brothers feel about their sibling being in the Regiment. Brothers appear to influence others at a much more mature age, whereas for the son (as with the Officer above), *pre-identification* may start in childhood:

> 52: 2 Ehm, well my understanding of the Parachute Regiment is basically my dad was in 2 Para from 1958 to 1971 and I was born in Aldershot ...in 1966. ...Basically, I was sort of inculcated with, the Parachute Regiment this, Hats like that. Guns. ...Plus me God Parents both were part of the Parachute Regiment and [I] still keep in touch with his friends. ...I think if you'd have cut him down the middle he'd have the Parachute Regiment running through him like ...Blackpool rock. He came out the Army and ...he was never quite the same after that. ...Regretted it very soon afterwards. ...It influenced every aspect of his life. He was the Parachute Regiment in terms of his attitude to everything that he did. He went through everything on one hundred and ten percent. ...It inspired me in a sense ...to emulate him in a way. Ehm, I remember when I went down to Brize Norton. ...The first jump that I did, standing there thinking ...more than thirty years before I did it, me dad had done it. And it, that was quite a, quite a moment. ...It were only momentary till I jumped out. But ...it did occur to me, ...I was following in me dad's footsteps. 24

The implication here, I feel is that he so actively *identified* with his father that he felt 'inspired' to 'emulate' him, and did. Interestingly, I interviewed one former Para whose father *and* son also served in the Regiment, the only instance I could find in my research. This former Sergeant, as mentioned, joined to avenge his father in Aden, and served with his own son: *'And it's passing on to the family now, my son's Airborne.*

He's 1 Para, he's in the Mortar Platoon where I was. I taught the lads that are now his Sergeant. So it's there, you know what I mean, so it carries on' [38: 264 – 266].

More commonly, it seems that many brothers follow each other into the Paras. This Sergeant Major was the second of three brothers to serve simultaneously in 3 Para. Interestingly, he explains the allocation of a system in which blood relatives can 'claim' each other for a particular Battalion: *'Yeah, ehm, my brother claimed me. Basically, you saw the OC and that. ...I was claimed basically, eh, so I knew ...I would ehm, go to 3 Para'* [46: 133 – 136]. But for some, as mentioned, *tragedy* may initiate a sense of active connection. Like fathers and sons, some lost brothers and for these men too the Regiment appears to be a vehicle through which the individual can seek revenge. This Arnhem Veteran's story is a good example. He was the youngest of four brothers, one of whom was killed and another wounded and missing in action. He was too young at the time to enlist and had to wait until 1944:

> 28: 77 I lost my eldest brother, got killed in 1940. ...And within a month, my brother Bert went in. ...And my other brother, Alfie, he joined up. ...He thought there is no way he is going to stay at home while his younger brothers go in the Forces. So he hummed and hawed ...in the end and he joined up and he got badly wounded in the desert in 1942. And missing presumed killed for six months. And I seen my mother and I thought, 'that's it!' ...So I, I joined the Army. Although, I would have been called up eventually, then my mother went potty. ...Well, I just thought ...I just wanted to get there [into action] quicker. ...And as soon as I put that red beret on, I knew I'd made the right choice. 92

Finally, it also emerged that, similar to blood ties relationships, there are what I consider to be a significant number of stories that suggest a similar form of *pre-identification* also exists between close friends. In observed that some Paras may often sign up and subsequently serve together. This interviewee said exactly what I mean. He ended up in 1 Para and his mate went to 2, having followed him through Basic Training (in the subsequent Recruit intake):

> 4: 2 We decided to join the Army cos we were sick of college ...and eh we ...got all these leaflets. ...And then I researched it and I just got loads more books from the library and that. Eh, and then thought, 'right were

going to eh, we're going to Para Reg,' like. And then spoke to [my] mate and he says, 'fuck it then, we'll go for Para Reg.' 7

The next group of stories concern what I interpret to be the influence of other individuals, acting as representatives of the Regiment.

9.3.2 Encounters stories

These stories and story extracts are told by those who claim they did not have any ties to the Regiment at the time of their recruitment into the Army. Some said they heard about the Regiment from ex-Paras they met, often at work, or were influenced (as I was) by 'encountering' Paras during the decision making process to enlist as a soldier. For me, this retired 2 Para NCO puts it very succinctly. I think he demonstrates a common *pre-identification* theme whereby the 'Potential Recruit' appears to form a positive relational categorisation of himself with the storyteller who acts as a 'representative' of the Regiment: *'The more he made of it, so romantic you know, the red beret, the wings ...all this business. And eh, within 6 months I'd bloody signed up to join the Parachute Regiment'* [37: 3 - 4]. I chose this next story because in my opinion, it provides an insight into this form of 'strong' *identification* between Paras and their Regiment. In this RSM's recruitment story, I feel he illustrates what I consider to be an instant sense of connectedness with an individual who (for him) characterised the organisation:

43: 21 I just wanted to join the Army. So I turned up at the Recruiting Centre. ...This six foot two Guardsman came out to interview us. And ...he was huge and at that age, I was very impressionable. So he said '...well, why don't you join the Guards?' ...So I went 'I want to look like him.' I went, 'yeah, put me down for the Guards.' ...So, cut a long story short, I did all me entry tests and me medicals etc, etc and I had to go for a final interview. ...This is the good bit about it for me, or I'd have never been here! This five foot, if not four foot bloke come out the interviews. Compared to the Guardsman, he was rather scruffy. But there was something about him. He had an air about him (and obviously, he was Para Reg). So he gets us in, he's got me file, and he went 'what do you want to join the Guards for?' Now I didn't really want to say I want to look like that monster down the bottom of the corridor! But that's why I was joining the Guards, I wanted to look like that man. ...And he went, 'basically that wanker down the corridor has been speaking to you, hasn't he?' And I'm thinking, 'you don't want to talk too loud. Maybe he'll come and smack you all over.' Getting to, to the meat of it, he dives out this ...interview now, and he is slating this bloke down the corridor.

> ...I can see him and he is calling him (...you know, the words 'Craphat' must have come out). ...And I thought, 'any minute now, monster is going to stick it all over this bloke.' And he never did! He walked off, in fact. So when this lad come back in, me first thing was 'what are you in?' And he went 'I'm in the Parachute Regiment.' I went 'change Guards! I want the Parachute Regiment!' And that's why I joined Para Reg. 'Cos of that one individual. 54

9.3.3 History and reputation stories

Another *pre-identification* theme that many interviewees mentioned was the attraction to the 'history and reputation' of the Regiment. I interpreted this to be a sense of active connection which can also attract the 'Potential Recruit.' It seems that *pre-identification* of this kind is very strong in the individual, in that a powerful desire to belong has taken root before actual contact with representatives of the regiment takes place. For example: *'I'd read a few books about it before going in. A few stories from eh, Borneo, Malaysia and that sort of thing. Ehm, seeing that film, The Red Berets. ...So eh, you know, I understood basically what it was about'* [23: 15 – 17]. Some, it appears, are influenced by the Regiment's 'reputation' in addition to its 'history.' This former Corporal already had a longing to be a soldier, and never considered the Paras, until:

> 15: 2 I was about sixteen. ...There was a display, [at] the Army Careers Office and ehm, it was actually featuring the Parachute Regiment. ...It had a red beret and eh, a Dennison smock. ...But there were lots of interesting pictures, you know, of Paratroopers in Aden, and Kenya and Malaya and the heading was 'Are you man enough and proud enough to wear this uniform?' ...Basically from boyhood I always wanted to be a soldier, but I'd never really thought I was Parachute Regiment calibre. 22

For others, it seems that during their recruitment process, once the individual finds out about the Paras, a similar sense of active connection begins. I chose a friend's story because it emerged as a time when many of my interviewees took their decision to (try to) become a Paratrooper. He was at an Army Recruitment Centre, having signed up for nine years in the Infantry:

> 31: 29 I were watching this program about the Infantry ...about this and that and the other. And then it went 'the Parachute Regiment, the training is hard, at Aldershot.' And that were it, three seconds. ...It caught me attention easily. Why just the three seconds about this? What's so, what's so, you know, why don't they talk about it as much as all the rest

> of the other items? You could join the Guards and do this, and you could join this, you could join the Royal Engineers and that. But 'the Parachute Regiment, the training is tough,' bumf! finished. So when I went there [unit allocation interview], I asked for the Parachute Regiment. 35

The next Section presents my analysis of another group of *identification* stories, *active identification.*

9.4 Active identification stories

Despite being influenced by media and recruitment paraphernalia, some interviewees said they did not encounter representatives of the Regiment until after their recruitment. It appears that a sense of *active identification* begins when they first come into contact with serving members of the Regiment. At this stage, a positive relational categorisation of oneself and the organisation already exists because as a Recruit, an individual was officially a member of the Regiment (or had transferred to All Arms 'P' Company, Depot the Parachute Regiment). As one former Para put it:

> 37: 10 I wanted to join the Parachute Regiment. ...I got to go down to Aldershot and be a Paratrooper, and eh, I did. I remember going down there and getting off the train ...the Sergeant was there with a big red beret on, and I thought 'that's it! I'm gonna wear this one of these days.' 12

It seems that actual arrival at Basic Training establishments is when many first realise a sense of cognitive connectedness with the Regiment. I divided the *active identification* stories and story extracts I found into three groups. The first concern stories relating to *identification* with individual 'role models.' By 'role model' I mean a soldier that the individual judges to be the epitome of a Paratrooper. For example, in an almost mirror copy of the above comment: *'Down to Aldershot, off the train, and there he is, on the platform. Your idol. ...With his red beret, his wings and his smock, screaming at you'* [38: 37 – 39]. Another group, it emerged, is *identification* with the 'brotherhood' 96.5.6, Chapter 6). This appears to reinforce a sense of active connectedness. For example, this former NCO told me how he felt after a year away from the Regiment: *'Seeing the guys again. I don't know what happened ...it brings back that bond, and that sense of pride and that sense of belonging. I think that's important'* [24: 283 – 284]. Stories upholding

the Regiment's reputation seem to reinforce this sense of active connectedness, as a Sergeant did when he represented the Paras on an Education Course: *'I actually made sure on that course that I gave everything I could. [I] joined in all the discussions, and did everything I could to change everybody's idea of what a Paratrooper was'* [59: 243 – 425].

9.4.1 Role models stories

A growing sense of a positive relational categorisation of oneself and individuals in the Regiment appears to evolve as the Recruit progresses through Basic Training. A feature of this form of 'strong' *identification* is, I observed that it often continues long after service, for example: *'Some of the most influential ...people I met in my life were my NCOs, particularly in the Depot. And when I got to the Battalion, the Junior NCOs and the Sergeants'* [29: 1004 – 1006]. This comment by a former 2 Para Tom is what I consider to be typical of what I mean. He appears to have created role models: *'There was ...a Full Screw ...and Officer. ...I thought to myself, "I've got to try and emulate them two"'* [31: 597 – 599]. Even after many years, for most interviewees, there seems to be a positive relational categorisation of oneself with outstanding individuals met during service. This former 3 Para soldier recalled:

> 1: 376 ...I look back and see my life and I've got to say I've seen leaders in the Paras that I've never, ever seen in civvie life. ...There was a number of people that I know that were born leaders ...that I met ...in the Paras. ...That you can say, God, you listen to ...and you know nearly everything he said was nearly bloody right, you know what I mean. You meet certain characters in the Paras and that's what you miss. There's no shadow about it. ...This, special type of person, because occasionally there's an exceptional one that you think God, you all look up to him. ...And there was a number of people that I met in the Regiment that, just think 'cor blimey,' they are just some person. ...It's like an aura almost. ...You don't get the same type of person in civvie life as you do in the Paras. 392

The story suggests that certain individuals draw more attention than others. This, I feel relates to a perception of the 'ideal' Paratrooper in the mind of the interviewee and subsequently appears to contribute to his sense of active *identification* with those he

considers to be 'role models.' For example: *'I had an eh, Sergeant ...an instructor. ...And he just looked that allez, you know, Yeah, fucking beret on and all the rest of it'* [12: 2 - 4]. It seems that for some, adulation can give way to what I interpret to be emulation as the soldier becomes accepted by his peers in Battalion. As in the above story, it seems that the focus can shift to those who are 'role models' with perceived positive attributes surrounding issues such as experience and leadership. This TA Major said he *identified* most with Parachute Regiment Officers like himself: *'I had many heroes in the Parachute Regiment. ...I felt that the real star men in the Parachute Regiment were those that could speak to the soldiers. Those that couldn't, I never had much time for'* [25: 160 – 165].

For others, apparently, it is in relation to the *qualities* (8.4, Chapter 7) stories, that their strong sense of active connection with individual 'role models' can occur. For this Aden veteran, I think it borders on hero worship: *'He ...jumped into El-Gamil [(1956), and] was telling us these stories about the Suez. ...[You] couldn't ask for a better Sergeant in Recruit Company. ...He was brilliant'* [17: 324 – 326]. This feature of 'strong' *identification* I consider to be a common theme in many interviews. The same soldier described by the Aden Veteran was still serving nearly twenty years later, as a contemporary of mine recalled: *'Major XXXX, ...was God, yeah. He was the man who bloody set off as a Private Soldier and came all the way, right through, to command a Rifle Company. I mean that man is just, he's awesome. He's, just everything he did. ...He couldn't have done more, he was such a soldier'* [32: 233 – 236]. Finally, I chose this extract from a former Sergeant's *combat* (6.3, Chapter 6) story because I think it is a good example of what I mean by this form of active *identification* in the Regiment:

> 38: 254 I heard a story from one of my colleagues. When A Company [2 Para] got hit on Darwin hill ...the Adjutant, as they were running up the hill, he shouted, 'come on lads, remember Arnhem!' And right after that he got shot [and killed]. ...The spirit was there. I loved that man, I really admired that fellow. ...Came there as a Captain. ...You would follow him anywhere. ...He was absolutely brilliant. 260

Identification with 'role models' then, is in my opinion an *enduring* theme recorded in many narratives because: *'you focused on one [of] them and say "I want to be like you." ...If he's good, I want to be like that'* [22: 310 – 311]. In the next group of active *identification* stories I expand this theme of *identification* with the individual to the collective.

9.4.2 Brotherhood stories

There are many transcribed stories and story extracts about interviewees' *identification* with their 'brother' Paratroopers, indeed, I dedicated a whole category to it as part of the *bonding* (6.5, Chapter 6) process that seems to be so central to these Paras' identity constructs. Here, my concern is with an apparent sense of 'strong' *identification* with the Regiment and PRA as a perceived 'brotherhood.' By this, I mean identifying with others as part of a 'family.' I think this group of stories broadens the scope of this form of *identification* to reflect a wider form of cognitive connectedness to the Regiment. For example, this old timer, remembered after his last training jump: *'I joined the Brotherhood, I had me little badge and everything, you know, the Airborne badge'* [19: 425]. However, it appears that for most, a significant moment when a positive relational categorisation can occur is at their Passing Out Parade. I chose this extract from a TA Colour Sergeant because in my opinion, he was able to articulate his *identification* with his ideal 'role model' which then appears to widen to embrace all the Airborne 'brotherhood:'

> 40: 38 To get through to the end of it [and Pass Out] and get a red beret ...that was the aim. To be like the rest of the blokes in the Company. And you were taken into the fold then. 'Cos as a Recruit you were a nothing, and then all of a sudden when you've seen that bloke you wanted to be him, you wanted to emulate him. And once you got your red beret, that was it. ...Everybody bought you a drink and brought you into this brotherhood. 43

The next extract relates to what I believe to be another aspect to Paras' apparent 'strong' *identification* with the 'brotherhood.' Many interviewees mentioned a progression that appears to start with seeking and ends with ultimately gaining 'acceptance' (6.4.1,

Chapter 6). I think that part of this process involves maintaining a perception of positive relation categorisation. Here, this TA Private shows how important this form of *identification* is to his sense of belonging in what he terms the 'Airborne family:'

> 51: 491 It's a belonging feeling to be honest with you. ...I feel like I, I'm used here, I am vital. Like today, I am doing a stand on me own showing [new] guys what it's all about. I can do that now. I wouldn't have had the confidence to do that before and that's just being part of the family. ...I know now when I come here, they look at me as though I, I can do something and I am vital to them and I feel vital now. So I feel like I, I belong to [an] Airborne family. 497

The culmination of this feeling of belonging, it seems, does not end with the termination of service (below, 9.5 *retro-identification* stories). *Identification* with the 'brotherhood' (and the Regiment), I believe, that it becomes stronger the more time a Paratrooper serves in the Regiment. For example, after 28 years, as this LE Officer said: *'Ehm, ...you are all part of one big special club, as, as a Paratrooper. And the ...ethos and brotherhood you get when you first join. And to me it has stayed with me all the way through'* [49: 453 – 454].

9.4.3 Reputation stories

The last group of what I consider to be *active identification* stories appear to relate to another significant identity construct and an active form of cognitive connectedness with the Regiment. A strong sense of belonging it seems can be triggered by *identification* with the positive aspects of the organisation's 'reputation.' I interpret this to be either a relational categorisation: *'You are in the Recruiting Team, you are out in the public. Ehm, people look at you differently. 'Oh, look! There's the Paras!'* [67: 571 – 572], or an active sense of connection: *'You just wanted to uphold this reputation for being the best'* [12: 148 – 149]. I chose this short story from a serving Tom because I feel he gives an appropriate description of what I mean by this form of strong relational categorisation. He told me about manning a recruitment stand on behalf of the Regiment:

> 68: I'll tell you what, it gives you a hardon. It bloody does, you know. It does. Like I said, it's just the people admiring you and just standing there and ...it's the most recognised beret in the world. ...That's why every Airborne unit in the world has got the maroon machine. That's why, it tells you, okay, 'we are the maroon machine.' And look at it now! It has spread right across the world. ...I tell you what, ...I am on cloud nine. And there is nobody, the rest of them [other regiments] are somewhere at the back. 514

Another member of the Recruiting Team told me the next story. He too, in my opinion describes how he felt whilst representing the Regiment in public at recruiting events (sponsored by the Army). I think he attributes the Team's behaviour to their witnessing of public reactions upon encountering members of the Regiment. I interpret this story to be, in part, due to the Regiment's 'reputation,' which appears to give him a strong sense of a relational categorisation of himself as a Paratrooper. I had just asked what it was like at a typical event:

> 67: 575 You sit there and to be honest, you don't even have to ehm, I mean, you see the rest of them walking ...in. Eh, Guardsmen's Uniforms, Household Cavalry in shiny hats and things. Ehm, but we don't have to do that. We just sit there ...and the public come to us. ...You would think that you'd have to make an effort. But for some reason, because, you know we, well, we are up there. We are better than the rest of them, the public know ...through, obviously, press coverage [and] all the rest of it. They come to us. ...Whereas the, the other teams seem to be a bit full on, you know. 'Come! come and join my unit, come and join the unit!' And like, they are begging the public. ...But when you are walking round, and you have got your beret on, you have got your uniform on, ...you can walk through some of these shows, and people turn, turn their heads to look at your beret. Eh, and you think, 'yeah, ha, ha, look at me!' 585

Finally, there were several stories in the transcripts which I considered to be about upholding the 'reputation' of the Parachute Regiment which I think reinforces a strong sense of active connection in the individual. I feel the soldier speaks for many interviewees when he describes the effect on him of being in public and *identifying* with the Regiment:

> 68: 600 We have done so much and we have strived to [live up to]...the reputation of the Regiment. ...When people look ...[at] the Parachute Regiment, yeah, the dogs bollocks. ...And we are. ...I think they love us. ...I haven't come across people with bad feelings [or] said anything bad about us, you know they just love us. ...And I have seen it at so many shows. So many bloody shows like, you know, as soon as we turn up, that's it forget everyone else! The Paras are here! As soon as that tower goes up, whew, the queues, oh my God! And it's because of our

reputation. It's, they know who we are. They know we work hard, we strive hard. To do the best, to do the right thing, and we always do. 617

There is a third group of 'strong' *identification* stories and story extracts that emerged from the transcripts. There were soldiers whose time was up and could no longer serve, and appeared to hold a strong, albeit in my opinion, *retrospective* sense of *identification* with the Regiment.

9.5 Retro-Identification stories

The two previous Sections (9.3 and 9.4, above) address *pre* and *active* stages of *identification* within the Parachute Regiment. I termed the stories here *retro-identification* to continue the temporal theme of 'strong' *identification* into beyond service in the Regiment. By *retro*, I mean narratives looking back at the end (or impending end) of service in which the interviewee appears to maintain a strong positive cognitive connectedness with both individuals and the Regiment. There are two groups of such stories and extracts I considered significant, the first relates to issues surrounding leaving service. Some Paras come to the end of their service and it seems they simply do not want to leave: *'Well I left it because eh, me twenty-two years was up'* [20: 415]. Some said they were dismissed, as happened to this former Private: *'I had no option. I ended up in front of the ...new CO. I didn't say a word. ...Out of the Army. ...Slung his pen down ...slammed me up. ...I ended up in eh, Aldershot nick for a week'* [31: 282 – 284]. I also recorded what I interpret to be a palpable feeling of trauma reported (by some) felt at the point of leaving, which appears to provoke an emotional response in the individual. For example, a former 2 Para NCO told me: *'The day I handed my kit in and left ...I cried my bloody eyes out. Yeah, I sometimes think ...was it a mistake to do that?'* [24: 239 – 242].

Another group of *retro-identification* stories told by former Paras, I believe relate to a sense of 'remorse,' representative of their continuing sense of active connectedness with the Parachute Regiment. By 'remorse; I mean deep regret over an action or decision that

had an undesirable outcome. For example, this soldier expressed regret at his decision to leave: *'I thought well, if I'm going to stay in ...the Parachute Regiment, I wanted to be able to stay and do it wholeheartedly. ...I didn't feel I was able to ...because the pressures on the family business. And it's one of the big regrets in me life'* [14: 361 – 370]. Additionally, there are some who apparently miss the 'brotherhood' and sense of belonging to a 'family:' *'I have two brothers. I'm not as close to them as I am to the Paratroopers that I've served with'* [37: 307 – 308].

9.5.1 Leaving stories

There are what I consider to be three types of leaving stories and story extracts in the transcripts narrated by those who had retired. The first group, though not strictly *retro*, as I define this term, concern serving soldiers on the brink of the end of their service, who voice what I interpret to be a perceived sense of *active identification.* I include them here because I feel that exploring the feelings of those who are about to leave may shed some light on why this form of strong relational categorisation appears to be, in my opinion a reason the PRA is so well attended. For some interviewees, there is, what I understand to be a growing sense of despondency over having to leave. In my opinion, this may be in part responsible for the 'tears' shed by some at the point of severance (9.5.2, below). For example, this Senior Major expresses his concern that although his military career was not over, end of his service in the Regiment was looming. I chose this story because he explains his options, as well as describing the career path open to LE Officers. Fortunately, (for him) he was later promoted to Lt Colonel and stayed in the Regiment:

> *9: 160 What do you think you'll do when you leave?*
> ...It's a few years away ehm, I think. Well, I mean, I could be in ...for another ...fifteen years. ...Yeah, if I want. Ehm, it would appear not in the Parachute Regiment certainly. I mean, ...you are still part of the Regiment, you'd served with them and that's the important, ...that's the thing. That's the great thing about being, having gone up through the ranks and being an LE Officer. You serve all the time in the Regiment. You know you'd be a MTO or the Family [Officer] ...You become QM Tech and you become the QM, OC Headquarters Company, there is

> Regimental existence all the way up to the age of fifty. Whereas for an Officer, if you don't command a Parachute Battalion, that's fucking it. At thirty nine, you ain't going back. Once you've been the 2iC, that's the great sadness, you know and you're then sort of in the flotsam of the rest of the British Army, sort of floating from coast to coast really. 173

However, some of my interviewees had little time to think about leaving as they claim to have been dismissed, as happened to this Falklands veteran: *'I got kicked out. ...Eighteen months afterwards, I was getting affected in, in, it affected me in a big way. Ehm, I couldn't sleep at nights, thinking about it. What have I done? What's happened?'* [56: 535 – 538]. The narrator eventually re-enlisted and became a Sergeant Major. Here, I use the rest of his story because in my opinion, it demonstrates (for this individual) what appears to be a strong active connection to the Regiment. So much so, he found a backdoor route back into the fold:

> 56: 530 I got kicked out unfairly, really. And ehm, ...I was lucky to get in here [4 Para]. But it just goes to show if they accepted me in here, I've proved me point since. ...I proved that, I mean, you can't be a dickhead ...to get to a Sergeant Major. ...But there is another lad who got kicked out with me. ...And we have both made Company Sergeant Major after both being kicked out. ...I used to go to Airborne Forces day every year and I were down there, bumped into Geordie. [He] had been kicked out a few months after me and I was talking to him and ...he said, 'I'm back in 2 Para.' I said 'how did you do that?' He said '...well I joined 4 Para and then went on an S Type to 2 Para.' ...So to then actually come to 4 Para, ...I can't explain how it lifted it off me, to actually get wet and cold again, jump out of aeroplanes. ...But to actually get that beret on and, and start doing it all again. 548

Finally, I was told by some serving soldiers, about their trauma at having to leave the Regiment at the end of their service, as this Sergeant Major complained: *'I've still got so much to offer the Army. I am fit, I can still parachute. ...Phew, I'm just kicked out basically after twenty two years. For, for no reason really ...I don't know what I'm going to do. I really would like to stay in connection with the Army in some way'* [46: 667 – 669]. I selected the story below because I feel it is an excellent example of a form of anxiety I believe to be connected to a strong sense of cognitive connectedness. In this instance I feel it is triggered by the impending end of service. Significantly, the soldier did not want to leave and I think it shows just how 'strong' *identification* with the Regiment can be. This former 2 Para soldier never recovered from a bad parachuting

injury, was downgraded, and could not extend his contract. Therefore, he was forced to leave and was, it seems, traumatised by the separation:

> 15: 143 I didn't want to leave the Army at all, you know. I wanted to stay in the Parachute Regiment till I was 65 if it was possible. ...Yeah, there is no, there is no substitute for it. But the thing is, the pain of having to leave. I mean, I sobbed like a child when I drove me, my car out of the gates at Ternhill [Shropshire] for the last time. ...And you know, I had to pull into a lay-by down the road because I was shaking and crying. ...The pain of leaving was actually unbearable and that journey home, that final journey from leaving everybody was just too much for me. And I actually eh, had a month's terminal leave and ...I had to be on, on eh Rear Party, at the time at Ternhill Barracks. And the Battalion was preparing to go out to Belize and I just could not leave it at that. I'd accumulated quite a store of kit of my own at home, eh, jungle kit, partly. I had nearly a full set of it and I'd asked the eh, the Commander of Rear Party if I should actually spend my terminal leave out in Belize. And he said, 'no you can't.' I said, 'look, I've got another three month resettlement course, and a month's terminal leave. Can I forego all this and go serve with the boys out in Belize till the last day I have in the Army?' And he said 'no, it wasn't possible, ...you're needed here on Rear Party.' So, as a good soldier, as a well disciplined soldier ...I never strayed off the beaten track ...never caused much trouble to anybody. But, I just couldn't leave it. I was so heartbroken I had to leave. So what I did, I packed up all my jungle kit, put it in a Bergen and eh, what money I had, I eh, bought a one way ticket flight out to Belize. And eh, I turned up at the camp gates. 162

I also noted that strong *identification* constructs, in my opinion is a feature of the transcripts of former Paras who have the luxury of a true *retrospective* position because they had retired. The final story type of 'strong' *identification* stories takes what I interpret to be a 'nostalgic' perspective.

9.5.2 Nostalgic stories

This last group of *retro-identification* stories considers on what I termed 'nostalgia.' I believe these narratives to be indicative of a sense of 'strong' *identification*. By 'nostalgia' I mean a sentimental yearning for the past. This involves those interviewees who have left service and are reflecting back with an apparent sense of regret. For example: *'I cried. I mean it, it was unbelievable. ...It was like, ..I can't explain it, can I? I've left my family'* [24: 245 – 246]. Most 'nostalgic' stories, however, seem to be concerned with missing the 'brotherhood,' as this interviewee reminisced: *'the old*

Brotherhood thing kicks in. ...Eh, even though you've gone, been gone a long time. Everybody is still brothers' [22: 453 – 454]. Others, appear to express their affection after leaving, for example: *'I didn't leave because I didn't like the Regiment ...I loved it. ...but ...I wanted to get out young. ...And I love the Reg to bits, but you know, for me I want to get out and it was never a career thing in there'* [4: 349 – 355]. I chose this next story by a Lance Corporal who had served 13 years, but I think he speaks for myself and many other married Paras. I'd just asked him why he left:

> 13: 406 I'd had enough, I just wanted to see my kids grow up because I'd seen so many marriages fall by the wayside. ...But as a soldier, when the time comes, for you to move on to wherever, the blokes are going to follow the unit. It doesn't matter how much they loved their wife or their kids, they are going to go ...with their brothers. ...Regardless if it's Ireland, Belize, ...Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, they are going to go. But if ...the wife's closed up her heels? 'I'm not going!' Hubby signs up for PVR and it's a waste of a good man. He doesn't want to get out, but he does. He does because he thinks he did the right thing at the right time. In years to come it doesn't work out. Because like ...myself, I turned round and said 'well, if I had stayed in would I be any happier than I am now?'...It isn't ...a bed of roses, every day a happy go lucky every day of the year. ...But on the other hand, you do miss, the old saying, 'work hard play hard.' 419

In the above story, in addition to the marriage theme, there is, in my opinion, an indication of the impact the end of service can have on some Paratroopers. *Identification* with the 'brotherhood' seems to be the most common response to my probing for my interviewees' leaving stories amongst retired Paras. This, I understand, is on the basis of a sense of 'strong' *retro-identification* where, as this Officer admits: '*Ehm, I don't think I'm going to leave, am I?* [9: 191]. I interpret this to mean that once a Paratrooper, always a Paratrooper. A noticeable feature of this phenomenon, I think, is that many still attend PRA meetings because, as this former Major said: *'Ah,[I'm] ...still personally in love with it. ...All my close friends are ehm, people I've served with or people I've got to know in eh, in the Parachute Regiment Association. They are the type of people I like to mix with'* [25: 256 – 258]. Additionally, I was often told that a possible reason could be because: *'You are taught day one in Depot, that the Regiment is your life. Everything else, all that matters, you forget everything. But you never forget the Brotherhood of the*

Regiment' [11: 340 – 342]. The next story, I think, is a good example of what I mean by this type of 'nostalgia.' I chose it to follow up this Falklands veteran's account of his 'injuries' in the final story of 8.5.1, Chapter 8. I think it demonstrates a very 'strong' *identification* with the 'brotherhood,' and he shows that through this form of *retro-identification* (in circumstances that the PRA provides), he is still able to feel a sense of active connection and maintain a positive relational categorisation with the Regiment:

> 26: 350 Eh, I think maybe a part of me has been covered over for a little while and now the dust has been swept away. ...That part of me ...that was the Para Reg, being part of the guys again. ...Is back on form if you like. It's restored. But it's also restored now that there is still my family as well. So now I'm combining the two, which is, again is important. ...I had lots of support from my family when I was injured. Whereas now, they are supporting me with doing this, being back with the guys. So it's, ...it's gone complete circle. ...And being, with the guys, I mean, since then, we've, we're all in touch with each other again now. And it's ...absolute madness, it's like being kids again. Yeah, it really is. ...In a way it's like the old saying really, 'Paratroopers never die, they go to hell and regroup.' 359

9.6 Weak identification stories

The second part of this Chapter concerns Elsbach's (1999) categories of 'weak' *identification*. I have divided my analysis into three *categories*: *disidentification*; *schizo-identification* and *neutral-identification*. All the narratives I selected relate to perceived negative and neutral relationships between the interviewees and the Regiment. Additionally, many instances of dissatisfaction are reported, but I consider them to be petty because they focus on what I interpret to be trivial everyday issues. For example: *'The only thing I disliked is ...area cleaning. Fucking hated it. Every morning, seven at the dot, get up, area cleaning'* [24: 179 – 180]. There are some *disidentification* stories and story extracts that I feel include both forms of Elsbach's (1999) negative cognitive connectedness. In these I observed that apparently a sense of active separation can exist between the Paratrooper and Regiment. What I mean by *disidentification* is for example, where (as many full-timers said) TA Paras are part-timers, therefore, they are not the *'real deal'* [69: 451] and this can, I believe, cause a negative relational categorisation of the individual and the Regiment. In this dialogue, as a result of the full time/part time

relationship, this Para, who had signed up on an 'S' type engagement, believes he has a negative image of himself as a result of being constantly ribbed by his mates in 1 Para:

> *33: 204 What, what's a STAB?*
> Stupid TA Bastard!
> *I'm sorry, I just find that funny...*
> And when you are over weight, you are called a fat STAB
> *[laughing...]*
> Fat STAB... [sings batman theme]. 209

Schizo-identification (simultaneous *identification* and *disidentification*) stories, in my opinion tend to be oriented towards what I interpret to be a feeling of uncertainty over an individual's perceived identity as a Paratrooper. For example, this Officer describes how he felt on arrival in Aldershot: *'We wore ...a beret from commissioning. Although we hadn't done 'P' Company. ...Because we were commissioned into the Battalion, we wore the beret. ...Something which some of us felt was ...a bit presumptuous'* [63: 169 – 176]. Finally, *neutral-identification* stories address situations where interviewees appear to have been, or felt they were, unable to neither *disidentify* nor *identify* with the Regiment. For example, this former 2 Para Tom, I feel, demonstrates what I mean by this form of 'weak' *identification*: *'It was the fact that we were going back to Ireland again. ...I wanted to try something else. ...I was 24 at the time and I thought, 'well I can get out and have another career''* [23: 331 – 333].

9.6.1 Disidentification

Some stories and story extracts emerged in which some interviewees express what I interpret to be a self-perception that Elsbach (1999) refers to as *disidentification*, i.e., a sense of active separation of a Paratrooper's identity with the that of the Regiment. This was particularly salient in TA soldiers. For example: *'When I take this uniform off, I then become plain Mr Tim XXXXXXX. And I will not address people by their rank and I will not allow them to address me by my rank because I am civilian under those circumstances'* [52: 573 – 575]. Additionally, amongst those who married whilst serving, several record what I consider to be a negative relational categorisation of the

individual and the Regiment, simply because they believed the Regiment's activities took them away from home too often, as this former Para complained: *'to me, married life is married life and it's not Army life, you can't mix the two'* [17: 341 – 342].

I chose this next short story because I think it demonstrates both aspects of what I mean by these apparent *disidentification* self-perceptions held by some interviewees. The soldier served in 2 Para in the early 1960s and also had a spell as an Instructor at Depot Para (Aldershot). The sense of negative relational categorisation he appears to have, I understand, is in reference to the way the Regiment was perceived to be conducting its affairs. Similarly, I think there is the same 'weak' *identification* construct implicit in the soldier's reaction to the behaviour of a Senior NCO, who is attributed with being a representative of the Regiment:

> 5: 315 He had us out doing Spring Detail, which the Guards do. ...That's not the Paras! ...But it went a bit over the top. If I wanted to be a fucking chocolate soldier I'd of gone in [the Guards]. ...He started bringing the bullshit [of National Service] back by painting the fucking showers. The red, the white tapes and things like that. ...And he were getting fucking flack from the old Sergeants in the mess. We got to know about this. Everything was painted lines and everything else. ...He brought that on himself. And he were a fucking crow! He were about 18 months below me! 333

The above extract, I feel, highlights another *disidentification* theme that emerged from the data and is echoed by many other interviewees. In particular, as a friend of mine complained: *'I didn't like the bullshit side of things'* [23: 317]. I understand 'bullshit' to mean, for example, cleaning personal kit and barracks, foot drill, parades and ceremonies. This seems to be because, Paras often say they believe themselves to be 'elite' troops and (like the SAS) feel that there is no need to over-do their inherited tradition of performing in military ceremonies (e.g., public duties etc). For example: *'I remember on this parade at Aldershot. We were shite at marching. ...When I think about it, the line was going all over the place'* [1: 347 – 345]. Barrackroom and kit inspections appear to be especially despised: *'Locker inspections, eh? Lockers on the Parade Square. Ehm, fitness in the NBC block, all of that and all that stuff'* [44: 83 - 84]. This

is perhaps because many Paras claim to be in the Regiment to fight wars, not march up and down like Guardsmen. This former 2 Para Tom told me the story below. I chose it because it starts with the 'bullshit' theme, but I think he makes an excellent analogy, indicative of an awareness of an attempt to change an important negative aspect of the Regiment's image that so many interviewees appear to actively *disidentify* with: *'That almost gorilla with a machine gun ...that civvies ...look at you as'* [59: 212 – 213]. This is an image I observed to be believed by Paras to have been created by the media and seems to be considered by many interviewees to be unjustifiable. This assumed media image also appears to provoke a sense of active separation from the Regiment (although some may have secretly cherished it). Additionally, in my experience, many of my interviewees identify with the 'aggressive,' 'tough guy,' 'hardman' image described in the *macho* stories (7.5, Chapter 7). The next story, apart from reinforcing the message about 'bullshit' I think it specifically addresses a fundamental problem that I understand to be at the root of this perceived negative relational categorisation. I had just asked the narrator what he disliked about the Regiment:

> 2: 188 ...Bullshit! ...If we weren't in [Northern] Ireland or on exercise or anything, I didn't like being in camp. ...I was always in nick ...for drunkenness and fighting. So some people say, 'oh, you must have been a bad soldier, no self discipline.' But when we come round to doing our job we could do it. But you had so many Officers that ...didn't like you drinking. ...You can't make ...lions into lambs, and lambs into lions. And we were lions, we were young lions. ...We'd fight anybody and then they tried to make us into lambs while we was in camp and they couldn't do it. So, ...they used to ...to doing what things to keep us out [of] the way. But mainly it was all RP's and showcleans and things like that. 195

Even though there appears to be what I consider to be a culture of 'aggressive' behaviour encouraged in the Regiment, I noted a significant number of transcripts indicate a sense of disassociation from those who, many claim, bully and beast Recruits and crows. This incident (apparently) was witnessed by a 4 Para Colour Sergeant when he was a young soldier, and I think it is a good example of what I mean: *'I remember one of the blokes being pulled over the table and being burned with an iron. I mean, the bloke [who did it] got kicked out'* [56: 288 – 289]. Nevertheless, many interviewees who

say they have experience of it seem to actively *disidentify* by making an active separation from those who undertake such acts This Major voiced his personal disassociation with this kind of behaviour:

> 9: 99 I don't like thuggery. I don't like those in the Regiment who believe that there's a passage in thuggery because they are in the Parachute Regiment. Because to me it doesn't fit at all. I like the ...aggressive eh, confidence and everything else that comes from it. But downright thuggery and those that wanted that are in the wrong business. In my opinion. I don't think it's what our forebears in the Second world War would have expected of the Regiment, fifty years on. ...And even when you're a Depot Platoon Commander, you don't expect to see it in the Regiment. You don't know any different and you think it's part and parcel, part and parcel and play. It's not on, it's not on. You know our forebears went through it. ...But that passage, you've got to be tough, be able to handle yourself. ...They want to see what you're like and have a good scrap and the rest of it, come on, you've got to fucking do this. ...Downright thuggery, you know and that sort of fucking bullying type stuff, I just ...don't like that. 112

Furthermore, some interviewees indicate what I interpret to be underhand activity and behaviour and associate it with a perceived abuse of power which in my experience can provoke episodes of *disidentification*. One Sergeant Major told me about an RSM who in his opinion was disliked due to what the soldier believed to be extreme behaviour: *'The people in Command ...were fucking idiots. ...They didn't have a clue how to run a Battalion. And the RSM? That Mess was a joke. I hated going in it. There was no atmosphere'* [46: 380 – 386]. This next former Para told me a story about another aspect of deviant behaviour. He disassociated himself by placing the central character of the plot in a negative relational categorisation of what I interpret to be a representation of an undesirable stereotype:

> 13: 362 This guy was made up to Sergeant and there was a guy who just got bust [to Private]. He [the Sergeant] goes, 'better off being an Airborne Tom.' I left my full pint in the George and I walked in and I looked at him. ...I felt like saying, 'how dare, can you ...make somebody's career in a pub! How can you say what he is and what he isn't going to be?' And that threw me. That made me look at them [Senior NCOs] in a different light. Because it was this 'I'm now in the Mess, fuck all yous, I will go where I want to go. And I will use whoever to get where it takes me.' And that was very, very disheartening in a sense, because the way it had come from. And what you believed in as a Tom and a Junior NCO, all these rights that go by the wayside. It was now: 'I'm now in the Mess and I will do what I need to do and where I need to go.' That hurt me. 370

There are also several 'weak' *identification* references emergent in the transcripts that I considered to be associated with a perceived sense of *disidentification* with Officers. This appears to be a concern of soldiers who had enlisted, as opposed to those who had been Commissioned into the Regiment. Most of these references, I noted, come from former Paras who served before the 1980s. I think this phenomenon has its roots in the British Class system and is, I believe representative of society in general. That said, I chose this short story from a Colour Sergeant who served in four decades from the 1970s. His story is about one particular posting where he claimed morale sank because of what he perceived to be a hierarchy dominated by Senior Officers with traditional class values. Apparently, this kind of attitude can cause a lot of resentment and significantly, the story reminded me of a time when dozens of soldiers went AWOL – and handed themselves in to 1 and 3 Para to get away from the regime in 2 Para. All because:

> 10: 380 Officers wanted to sit up there in their little ivory tower and ...make themselves feel that much above you. And you were just a common nothing down there. Don't get me wrong, there was the odd good Officer. ...But there was an awful lot of arseholes around in them days. ...Particularly in Berlin. And we had to put up with all kinds of shit. Things have changed a lot now. 386

The class divide, it seems, also exists in the Officers Mess between some Late Entry Officers and Commissioned Officers. Although they work together and hold the same rank, I was informed they may *disidentify* with each other due to their social status. This Late Entry Major made this observation: *'There is two Officers Messes. If you go in, ...one end of the bar you'll have the proper Officers. At the other end of the bar you'll have the LE Officers. ...Like meself. ...Don't know why, but it's always the same'* [53: 393 – 396]. This form of 'weak' *identification* appears to be echoed by a Commissioned Officer who served in the 1950s until the 1980s: *'I became a Major in the TA. ...I didn't have the ehm, background that many Officers did have. ...I didn't come from an old Army family, eh as many of my peers did. Ehm, and I felt possibly ...this did ehm, affect*

my relationships with [them]' [25: 169 – 172)]. A 1 Para Private who served in the 1960s had this story to get off his chest about his disillusionment over a class issue he believed to be deeply affecting morale in his Battalion. I chose his story because I feel it gives an insight into some of the issues surrounding class that can trigger periods of what I interpret to be a perception of an active sense of separation by the individual from the kind of attitude and behaviour he describes:

> 18: 313 In our Regiment, I don't know when you were in, you couldn't get batmen. Nobody would bat for anybody. ...In other regiments at the time, Officers had a batman. ...Yeah, and nobody would do it. ...High ranking Officers, like the Colonel, people like that, they got their batman ...who probably went through their service with them. ...Anyway, what they did in England, ...you got your Standing Orders at the weekend for the, the following week, and they had to put men up to ...being batmen. That's the only way they could do it. You was ordered to report to so and so's room, or Major so and so's room. ...And eh, it got to be ehm, ...well not quite a mutiny but near on. People were saying it was wrong. Ordinary men to eh, to do something they don't want to do. As far as I mean, it's not like an order in action or anything like that. It's telling a man to clean another man's boots. Which really isn't, you know, the thing. ...But I got dragged over the coals ...for inciting a mutiny. 333

But to be fair, as a Colour Sergeant commented: *'things have changed a lot'* [10: 369 – 370], and in their defence, this Commanding Officer has this to say about the modern Parachute Regiment: *'There is the class structure by rank if you know what I mean. [But] it's much more egalitarian and always has been in the Regiment'* [42: 482 – 483]. Personally, I feel that class, is an issue that can contribute to an individual's perceptions of a sense of active separation between Officers and enlisted men, but this appears to be consigned to the past.

In what I understand to be periods of low morale, it seems that this perception may trigger a sense of active separation. Apparently, when morale is considered to be low, it appears that identity crises are more salient in the individual, particularly amongst the rank and file. Several interviewees told me stories concerning incidents when they felt low morale had affected their sense of cognitive connectedness to the organisation. There appears to be a perception of an active sense of separation between the individual

and the Regiment when circumstances are as such. This 1960s NCO remembered one such incident in Cyprus. He said his Battalion had worked non-stop since they set foot on the island some six weeks before: *'You'd been out perhaps forty-eight hours. ...Come back and you've got to do other duties! ...It got to such a stage where the morale, people were hoping ...a truck would turn over, to put them in hospital. ...You could hear them, "I wish this ...would turn over," because ...they didn't want to go back in camp'* [21: 379 – 382]. The story did not finish there. Such was his apparent bitterness at their treatment, the same soldier went on to say:

> 21: 478 But there was one, one soldier, when, when the morale was low in the Battalion. ...He'd had a few beers etcetera. And he had this tattoo with the red beret and he actually got a knife and cut the red beret off it! ...But I'd have liked to see him do it when he was sober! He ...cut this red beret off, or whatever. And if I could see him now, I'd [say] 'did you ever regret cutting the red beret off?' Because obviously you're morale is not always down.' 482

The next story deals with low morale during the reconstruction of the Regiment in the aftermath of the Falklands War. I recorded what I consider to be much confusion and some indication of a sense of resentment in the transcripts of interviewees who served during this period. This veteran describes just how deep a trough he thought 2 Para was in:

> 11: 296 The whole morale of the Battalion just went downhill over the space of a year. They were getting block inspections once a week which were never known. ...There were silly parades, there were all sorts. They were just messing the whole lads about. I've never known so many people wanting to transfer out. They were just trying to get postings anywhere just to get out of the Battalion because the morale had gone from such a high. 300

It appears that what I interpret to be professional jealousy was responsible for incidences of *disidentification* between those in 2 and 3 Para who fought in the Falklands and other Paras who missed out due to other duties (particularly 1 Para who were in Belfast at the time). In my opinion, this is completely understandable when the *combat* (6.3, Chapter 6) and 'medals' (7.1.4, Chapter 7) stories are taken into consideration. For example, this Colour Sergeant remembered one instance: *'[The] RSM, like, ...clearly was not happy that there was a Tom ...who had ...a South Atlantic Medal. And he was an RSM from 1*

Para. He hated me with a vengeance' [56: 616 – 618]. Another aspect of low morale appears to feature the individual and his personal relationships with the organisation. Some of the soldiers I interviewed have injuries and as a result, report what I consider to be a negative relational categorisation of themself and the Regiment. Their perceptions seem to be, if a Paratrooper does not feel he is able to do the job (as a result of his injuries), he does not wish to serve in an unwanted role such as Company Clerk or Storeman (8.5.1., Chapter 8). For one of my interviewees, watching the wounded being discharged appeared to cause palpable resentment, as recalled in this dialogue:

> 11: 319 Another one that annoyed so many of the lads were, ...some of the lads were wounded. Some quite seriously. Some people had lost legs and that. They could still actually been kept in the Battalion, given admin jobs like stores, or given them a job. We were promised that all the lads who were wounded ...would not be kicked out of the Battalion. When we went on the six weeks leave, by the time we'd come back, they'd discharged most of them. They betrayed their own lads. Okay a lad might have lost an arm, he could still work in the stores, get Army pay.
> *...Who is they?*
> The Ministry of Defence I have to say. They just did not want young Recruits coming [up to Battalion], it was not a good advertisement for joining the Army to see disfigured men. 329

In these extreme cases, it seems that *disidentification* through a negative categorisation may be absolute and can involve no consultation with the individual. Additionally, there are instances where, as a result of an accident, in my opinion, the same feeling of antipathy towards alternative employment in the Regiment may be perceived, as this friend bemoaned: *'I got burned ...I was ...incapacitated for quite a long time. [I was] ...in a right bad way. And ...as far as assistance goes ...I didn't get much at all. ...It was more of the system than the actual Regiment'* [3: 269 - 281]. I interpret this to mean that he is unwilling to lay the blame on the Regiment for an apparent lack of support and I consider this to be an example of a negative relational categorisation that is relatively typical of this type of complaint. As appears to be the case in the story above, medical discharge is out of the Regiment's jurisdiction. Senior management are obliged to follow MoD guidelines.

It also emerged that there are occasions where being in what an individual considers to be the wrong job can provoke an active sense of separation. For example, even though moved to tears by doing so, this ex-Paratrooper left because: *'My last year was at Sandhurst. ...I couldn't stand it, and that was it'* [24: 234 – 235]. Yet, as soon as he did, he told me he regretted it. In the story below, this former Para's complaint seems to be that he was given too much responsibility and apparently, his workload caused him to leave the Regiment. Interestingly, in the lead up to the story, I was informed it was the *pressure* of being 'ready for anything' that he thought contributed to what I understand to be a lack of sympathy. In other words, double edged *qualities* such as 'determination' and 'resilience' (6.4.3, Chapter 6) may sometimes be, as I remember, used negatively to coerce individuals to accept their status and situation:

> 21: 390 I was ...the Corporal of a Platoon without a Sergeant, without an Officer. ...The Platoon twice was late on parade, ...when I wasn't there. ...The Sergeant Major then charged me with ...[being] late on parade. ...To be told it was my responsibility when I'd already left an hour earlier ...to do this. ...This happened two or three times. ...I felt that that particular Sergeant Major ...was probably under stress and ...needed a whipping boy. And I seemed to be it. And ...I was in that stage of do I sign on, or do I go out? ...I'm blaming meself ...because of the frame of mind I was in then. 411

Although he appears to express regret, I feel he speaks for many of my interviewees as there are, as I experienced, times when the *pressure* becomes too much. For a few, a sense of active separation escalates to total disillusionment, and occasionally, premature discharge (Chapter 5, Tam's story). The next story concerns different circumstances but this time it is claimed to be because of a period of reorganisation. This Falklands Veteran describes how his perceived low morale affected him:

> 32: 373 We were battle hardened, battle trained. The guys would have done anything for anybody and we worked at such a peak of efficiency. I signed on for another three years thinking it was going to get, stay as it was. But I don't know what happened. When we got back to Aldershot it was like people wanted to wreck the Battalion. It was strange. ...Guys that you thought would encourage you to stay in, they wanted you to leave. It, it was like, I remember this, the new [CO] coming in. And he says, he says 'right, ...whoever doesn't want to be in this Battalion can go.' And he says 'come, if you want to get out of this Battalion, come and stand outside ...my office after this parade.' And there was this queue down the steps. There was a big bunch of blokes trying to join

> this queue and they had to call the RSM in and march them all. You, you were having guys coming back from Depot who hadn't been in the [Falklands]. And because you had the South Atlantic Medal, it was like, 'I haven't got one, [and] I'm a Sergeant.' You felt like you were almost a spectator, guys turning up and belittling your performance. And coming back, I remember coming back and getting me medals on. ...And some guy going '...we've had it rough over here on rear party!' You know! All that, and I thought, 'oh fuck, I know what's going to happen.' And you could almost, you could feel it. 385

Promotion, it seems can place a Paratrooper in a job that may give rise to a negative relational categorisation of himself and the Regiment. This 4 Para Colour Sergeant had this to say about his new position: *'Ehm CQMS, I didn't really want to do that. ...When you say 'oh I am the Colourman, I am the storeman,' ...people think ...welfare and not warfare any more'* [56: 709 – 711]. Coincidentally, his boss, the Company Sergeant Major said the same about when he was doing the job in the 3rd Battalion:

> 46: 309 I ...didn't enjoy Colour Sergeant. Being in the stores, that was just, did my head in. I don't know, I haven't met anybody who enjoyed being CQMS. Particularly, I, I was Headquarter Company, as well in 3 Para. And it was when we were AMF, so we had a normal store, plus your arctic store and it was just complete, a nightmare. The QMs kept dicking me because I was Headquarters Company. So they thought I was their personal CQMS. And the time I was just sat in that office thinking 'what have I done to deserve this?' It was crap. 315

Finally, it appears that there are occasional problems when a perceived conflict between a soldier's family life and the many tours of duty may be responsible for temporary episodes of a negative relational categorisation in the individual. Some interviewees said that they were away from home too often in their service. I think is a consequence of the Regiment's obligation to have a Battalion permanently on Spearhead (AMF) and relative to the Regiment's position at the top of the ORBAT. This appears to cause a dilemma in the individual, principally because, in my opinion too many tours of duty may trigger a clash between a soldier's career and his married life. It seems that for some it is a personal decision whether to quit over the issue. Yet, others appear to be able to make adjustments. This young Lieutenant puts it into context for the modern Para: *'[In] the last two or three years. Operation after operation ...the married guys. ...I don't know how any of the relationships ...with their wives have, have managed to last*

...with them being away for so long' [67: 439 – 441]. There are also what I consider to be signs of a perceived active separation between single and married soldiers over the allocation of daily duties such as Guard Duty, Company Orderly Sergeant (a Junior NCO) and Battalion Orderly Sergeant (a Senior NCO). As was recorded in the transcripts this can result in what I interpret to be conflicts of interests, and in extreme cases, *disidentification* with the Regiment. For example: *'When it came to the duties ...there was never a lot of fairness. ...It was mainly the live in soldier or the live in NCO [who did them]. ...It created quite a bit of ...animosity between ...the married pad and the living in soldier'* [21: 356 – 358].

9.6.2 Schizo-identification

Schizo-identification here refers to stories concerning simultaneous *identification* and *disidentification* with the Regiment. These emerged from my analysis of the transcripts and I feel most of these types of stories and story extracts are linked to perceived and actual status. For example, in 7.3 and 7.4, Chapter 7, several interviewees report a self-perception of themself being in a state of limbo (in between 'P' Company and their jumps course), considering themselves to be neither a Recruit nor a Tom in Battalion. I believe this to be a case of *schizo-identification* because, once in Battalion, fully fledged Paratroopers *disidentify* as a Recruit but *identify* as a Tom, even whilst waiting to be 'accepted.' Many interviewees appear to acknowledge what I interpret to be a positive relational categorisation dilemma, as this 4 Para Colour Sergeant told me: *'Your ...in Depot as God. "...He's a Paratrooper now." To then go ...to Battalion, to then be like a day one week one Recruit all over again'* [56: 121 – 123]. Alternatively a similar *schizo-identity* crisis appears to be experienced by Officer Cadets and Potential Officers (they receive their basic training at Sandhurst). Seemingly, their concerns focus on rites of passage, particularly their wearing of a red beret without having completed 'P' Company. For example, a 2 Para Platoon Commander expressed his reservation about doing so, and I feel he speaks for other Officers' apparent resentment because they *have*

to wear one. He related this story about when he went on a familiarisation exercise whilst a Cadet at Sandhurst, sponsored by 2 Para:

> 62: 73 We first visited the Battalion ...and were told to wear it [beret]. But it still ...wasn't right because we hadn't done any tests. [It] ...didn't feel right either. The men would be saying, '...what the fuck are you wearing that for? ...You haven't done anything yet.' Still haven't done anything now! But it still feels right to have it on. 80

His point is, in my opinion, as another Officer reflected on his experience as a young subaltern:

> 9: 44 You wear the red beret as soon as you arrive at the Depot ...[for] 'P' Company. ...You have to have a Regimental head dress, you can't go around with a Sandhurst head dress 'cos you've left. ...The Regiment has to take ownership of you. ...You're given a red beret on sufferance. Before you've even done 'P' Company and passed it. ...You've got a tremendous amount of guilt about wearing it ...around the Depot. 51

The transcripts contain what I consider to be another *schizo-identification* theme I termed 'inter-unit rivalry.' I interpret this in the Regiment to mean when a Paratrooper *identifies* with his Company/Battalion and actively *disidentifies* with other elements of the Regiment. This is, I believe, the sub-culture level within the organisation that most interviewees significantly *identify* with. Although not originally part of my semi-structured interview schedule, there are a significant number of references to a perceived rivalry that I consider to be an active sense of separation from the Regiment in favour of *identification* with one's own Company/Battalion. This story, from a 2 Para Tom, I feel, echoes the 'craving for combat' (6.3.1, Chapter 6) and 'teaching and learning' (8.3.2, Chapter 8) ethos, but I selected it primarily because, to me, it describes what I think 'inter-unit rivalry' means to many of those I interviewed:

> 58: 504 Friendly rivalry. ...Like I've just said, yeah, I believe 2 Para has been in the best, most operations. ...3 Para will probably argue they have been in Iraq, and then 2 Para will argue about, I don't know, Afghanistan, Macedonia. ...Just petty arguing and stuff but it, it builds a good rivalry because it makes you want to be better than the others. Makes you want to go out on operations. ...3 Para will be pushing for operations, 2 Para will, and everybody is trying to get ahead in the game. Everybody is trying to be better than the other ones. So if 3 Para did something that was really good, 2 Para would pick up on it, do that, and try and do something better. And then 3 Para picks up on 2 Para and ...it just makes you better each time. ...You have got to have somebody to compete with at the end of the day, otherwise you won't get any better. If

we didn't have anybody to compete with we'd probably just sit back and rest on our laurels and some other regiment would come up and nip us in the bud. ...But that won't happen because we always we've got this inter-rivalry within the Regiment. Of 1, 2 and 3 [Para], they always compete with each other to see who is the best. 518

However, in my opinion, when it comes to *identification* with the Regiment as a unit, Paras are all as capable of doing the job as each other. I chose the next story from a former Territorial because he explains why. Although he talks about the inter-Company relationship in the TA, which I judge to be representative of what I mean by *schizo-identification* in the Regular Battalions, it is set against a background of reorganisation of the TA after the disbandment of 144 Para Brigade (V) (4.2.7, Chapter 4). This process involves soldiers encountering Paras from all over the country, most of whom apparently still *identify* strongly with their defunct Battalions, and subsequently, appear to continue their rivalry and disassociation at Company level. But, as I observed when they come together as 4 Para, they *identify* strongly with each other:

14: 209 The Battalion ...came from all over. ...I think from the aspect of the training, they had to obviously train in their own Companies and then on the occasion we could get together as a Battalion. ...I think the training was, was a carbon copy. Each Company trained to the same measures, to the same standards, trained in the same subjects. So that when the four Companies came together, you could actually mingle, mix and match. And everybody could like take ten out of one Company and put them in another and take ten out of another Company and put them into somewhere else. And everybody would be able to function. I found that the training was uniform across the board, the standards were uniform across the board. And when the Battalion came together, they knitted really well. 217

The following dialogue starts as what I consider to be a typical exchange (Battalion rivalry), I chose it because I think it also provides an excellent example of being in 'limbo,' when an individual is in between Recruit Company and Battalion. This former 3 Para Lance Corporal had just told me how he felt when he was informed he was going to 3 Para, shortly before his Passing Out Parade. I was teasing him over his enthusiasm for that particular Battalion:

1: 157 *You've got to bear in mind that 2 Para looked at you lot and said that you were gungie 3!*

> I know, but we were the best looking. ...We were far more handsome. We were far more ...we were far more intelligent. We were better looking and ehm, ...no. ...The thing about Battalion though ...and I think it must be the same for everyone. You've just done all that training, and you've Passed Out and you think you're the fucking bees-knees. ...Of course, you go to Battalion and everyone else has done it before. Everyone else has been there and done it and got far more experience than you've got. You're the bottom of ...you've just started. You've come from the top at ...Depot Para and you go to Battalion and of course you're having to fucking carry people's weapons to the fucking gun place to get 'em cleaned. And people say 'go to the NAAFI for me,' and all that. ...You realise how little you know. You know ...quite ...a reasonable amount. But you've got to remember, you've only been a soldier for six months. And even though the training is incredibly intense, you start, you start at the bottom again. 168

The story also alludes to an unofficial status I interpret to be the 'crow factor.' I think this gave rise to similar feelings some interviewees claim they experienced whilst in 'limbo.' This former 1 Para Private had just arrived in Battalion and was sent straight to Kosovo on active service. He appears to have experienced a sense of active separation with his own Multiple (an 8-16 man fighting patrol), due to what I understand to be 'bullying' and 'crow beasting,' yet, he seemed to want a positive relational categorisation with other teams:

> 4: 123 It was just sort of the power thing with some of them. ...Nasty for the sake of it, they weren't helpful ...I can remember coming in from patrol one day. ...The dust is horrendous ...and you sweat fucking loads. I had the LSW [Light Support Weapon or Machine Gun]. ...As well as stripping that down three ...times a day, making brews, stagging on longer than I should ...doing extra stags. ...It was really depressing. ...I was looking at all the other guys ...having a laugh with their teams. ...And I thought, 'this is shit.' 144

Another issue recorded in the transcripts concerns the Territorial soldiers' status in what may be to some a strong form of negative relational categorisation over an individual's perceived identity as a 'proper' Paratrooper. It appears that Regulars and Territorials have valid claims to perceptions of an active sense of connectedness with the Regiment whilst simultaneously holding a negative relational categorisation of each other. For example, this TA soldier was comparing 4 Para to the Regulars: *'I think it's unfair that we get called TA. And the Dad's Army stigma is attached to that, sometimes. It's a knockdown. I could knock fuck out of people for saying things like that'* [51: 231 – 233].

I consider the next story extract to be a good example of what I mean by *schizo-identification*. For one soldier, these two identities seem to often converge and in my opinion he appears to be switching between two identities. I chose this extract mainly because the Colour Sergeant was in 2 Para and served 15 years in the TA:

> 56: 591 When people hit me with the TA bit, I then put them right about [it]. You know, when they try and take the pee. Like being a Saturday and Sunday, throw the SAS at you, the Saturdays and Sundays. ...Yeah, and STABs! [*'Stupid TA Bastard!'* 33: 206] Then I'll start putting them to rights. I say [what] I've done. ...Like, I did two years as Recruit Staff eh, here [4 Para]. And, ehm, ex-Regulars like, slagging the TA, not knowing that I was an ex-Regular. With some of these people [ex-Regulars] not knowing their Section Battle Drills! Not knowing basic soldiering skills! Ehm, and I put these people right. 598

It seems that for some full-time Paras who encounter their TA counterparts, a myth may be dispelled. I my opinion there is a misperception (in the Regulars) about the strength of *identification* their TA brothers have with them. Apparently, (in my reading of the transcripts), the Regulars are more likely to *disidentify* with 4 Para. For the 4 Para soldiers who were called up to serve with 1 and 3 Para in Iraq in 2003, resorting to 'coursemanship' appears to have been a valid strategy to help them gain a perception of full recognition. Many TA Paras recorded how they sought to prove that (and appear to believe), they are just as capable and 'ready for anything.' This Corporal said this about his 'P' Company experience: *'I like to say, we did it with the Regulars. And ...that, I can say honestly, 4 Para, ...TA lads was better. As good as, if not better. ...We beat them on the log, we knocked fuck out of them on the milling. I was put in the milling three times and had knock outs three times'* [51: 102 – 105]. Another group of stories and story extracts concern what I feel are allusions to 'standards' (8.3.1, Chapter 8). For example, a former 3 Para NCO, serving as a TA soldier, backs up a perception that all Paras are capable of being able to: *'mix and match'* [14: 213]. He had this to say:

> 44: 33 [I] always said when I was in, in the Regulars, that I would never join a TA unit, ehm cos it was sort of frowned upon. TA units eh, and the Regulars. But ...I was surprised at how professional ...4 Para was actually. Ehm, I think they've got, well it just shows. A lot of them are away to the Gulf [Iraq]. Ehm, and the feedback that we've been getting, they've been doing a good job! 37

The Corporal is referring to the war in Iraq in 2003 when 189 soldiers from 4 Para were called up (4.2.7, Chapter 4) and went on operations with 1 and 3 Para. The dialogue below is in my opinion typical of what I mean by being capable of 'mixing and matching.' This 3 Para Corporal told me why he thought this might be the case:

> 69: 437 *You saw some of 4 Para out in Iraq?*
> Yeah.
> *What were they like?*
> They were alright actually, the ones we had. They were up to speed and you, you can't knock them. Even though you call them STABs and that, you are allowed to, because we, like, used to say, 'you are whinging [STABs].' And with ...the real deal, and they are not slagged off, getting called plastic Paratroopers and that. But some of them were better than, some of the Toms here. But then that's [the Reg], I think. 444

The media appear to be the focus of some attention in the transcripts. A *schizo-identification* theme as I see it is in part due to the perceived treatment that the Regiment is given by the media. By this I mean 'good guys, bad guys.' This former TA Para suggests this phenomenon may be because: *'It all depends what sort of press they get. When we do a good job, you are the best stuff since fucking sliced bread. If you hear something like a punch up in Aldershot or something like that, and Paratroopers are involved, then you are the biggest bunch of bastards under the sun. It's eh, two sided'* [70: 571 – 574]. On one side of the coin, it seems that being a hero is acceptable. I interpret this to be a feature of what I consider to be a powerful iconic symbolism of the 'ideal' (or proper) Paratrooper (9.4.1, above). And, this may be partly responsible for some feelings of 'strong' *identification* with that particular image as portrayed in the media. Additionally, in my experience, most Paras say they want to become real heroes (6.3, Chapter 6). Some do, as Reynolds (1990, p. 91) wrote: "Sergeant Ian McKay of 3 Para, charged an enemy machine gun post which had been pinning down his comrades, and pressed home his attack," (for which he was awarded a posthumous VC). But there are many references in the transcripts in which some interviewees apparently sought to distance themself from a perceived negative image of the 'thug' (not to be confused with *'downright thuggery'* [9: 111]) as they believed is portrayed in the media. In my opinion, many consider it an insult to the honour and reputation of our forebears to

behave as such. I think that this kind of behaviour is partly responsible for a perceived sense of active *disidentification* with what I understand to be an undesired image of the Paratrooper as a 'thug in a red beret.' I chose this next story because I feel the serving 2 Para Sergeant speaks for many of us. I think he spells out which side of the double-edged media sword he aspires to. He also gives, I believe, a glimpse of at what it took for him and his contemporaries to achieve it:

> 59: 690 Ehm, at the moment [2003], ...we are held in high esteem with the public. Again, we deliver. We are always in ...every operation, almost. Eh, and in the end we deliver. And ...the public like seeing us. You know, the papers love reporting on us. Eh, and that's a double edged sword. That the guys have pretty much kept themselves out of the shit. ...Eh that, by and large yeah, we've kept out of trouble. We are in favour with the press which is [a] good place to be. Great for recruiting because we are over subscribed at the moment. 695

However, one glance through the transcripts and the abundance of 'fighting' stories (6.5.5, Chapter 6) suggest there may be a great deal of substance to the media's apparent negative image. For example, this Lieutenant pointed out there are notorious books on the subject: *'Things like Green Eyed Boys and all that sort of stuff. ... Well the rest of the world don't really know that'* [57: 513 – 516]. Perhaps this form of organisational *schizo-identification* in the Parachute Regiment is just a smokescreen to cover for the overt 'aggressiveness' (7.5.1, Chapter 7)of the soldiers themselves. The next and final Section concerns the last group of 'weak' *identification* stories, *neutral-identification.*

9.6.3 Neutral-identification

The stories and story extracts I consider here are, as Elsbach (1999, p.183) suggests is often the case: "obscure and hard to locate." By *neutral-identification* I mean instances of what I understand to be explicit absences of perceptions of *identification* and *disidentification*, but these are mostly about what I consider to be petty individual issues, like taking up the option to be tattooed. For example: *'Para tattoos? ...No it didn't bother me one way or the other'* [20: 509]. One possible reason for a reported state of neutrality is suggested by a Late Entry Officer: *'Those people who ...signed on for only*

three years, probably never fitted in properly. ...They were already in the frame of mind they were only there for three years so they are not really bothered about making friends or fitting in' [49: 141 – 145]. I think he means that some individuals never fully *identify* with the Regiment for reasons known only to themselves (and since they did not identify, they can not disidentify) and were *neutral* from the start. This former Corporal told me his story about when he got to the end of Basic Training:

> 5: 297 I know a couple of guys, that had done the 'P' [Company] course, that'd done the Para course and then said, 'oh, it's not for me.' And bought out [PVR]. ...That's what I'm saying, that's up to each and every individual. They said 'oh, I can't be doing with this.' ...And they went out ...One was a eh, Colonial ...Rhodesian, ah, yeah, Rhodesian. He went back because, well, the reason why, he'd done the challenge, and accepted the banter. But he missed his own life, because he used to run about in Rhodesia like, ...tracking and things like that. ...And he missed it you see, and his lads. But he'd got talking and read books about the Paras, and he'd got to prove it. So in a way, he proved himself. But instead of ...following on his service ...to go back to his Rhodesia. ...That's one reason he gave anyway. 309

Another cluster of stories appears to be centred round being in 'limbo.' I consider this to be a case of neither *identifying*, nor *disidentifying* because one *couldn't*. What I mean by this is a direct consequence of passing 'P' Company and waiting to jump. This, I think, is similar to the type *schizo-identity* experienced by Officers due to their reported embarrassment at their premature wearing of the beret. But I think this is different to what I describe above as being in 'limbo,' because not being 'fully fledged' (with wings but not yet accepted in Battalion) gives no claim to full identity as a Paratrooper. Whereas, the Officer had already been Commissioned into the Regiment, as happened to his colleague: *'More than 10 people expressed a first choice view, they wanted to go to the Regiment. ...And two of us were offered commissions'* [42: 41 – 42]. Yet, it seems that a Recruit can not claim the same full positive relational categorisation of himself and the Regiment until he has jumped. Even though, by being a Recruit and passing 'P' Company, he has a (limited) sense of active connection, he can neither *identify* nor *disidentify*. I chose this story from a young TA Recruit who clearly demonstrates this form of what I consider to be 'weak' *identification*:

> 50: 271 I haven't been able to get my jumps course. ...I went down to Chilwell [Nottingham] to help mobilise everyone for, for a week. Ehm, had me beret on but I didn't have my wings on and that does piss me off. You know, having to walk round ...and you know, wearing your Para smock, DZ flash on. But you haven't got your wings. ...[I] really do feel gutted I haven't been able to get my wings. Ehm, but that, that's another thing which is just going to, I feel is just going to drive me out the plane. ...And I want, if I am going to go out there and I'm going to say ehm, 'what unit are you from?' '4 Para!' I want to be able to wear me wings, you know, and have my Para smock with my wings on. ...Then they'll see me as a proper fully qualified Para, rather than, oh yeah, he's just done 'P' Company. 284

In the next group of stories, some interviewees indicate that they enter a state of *neutral-identification* due to what I interpret to be 'identity burnout' and social pressures from outside the Regiment: *'I'd had enough and I thought ...I can stay in and do twenty-two years, or do something in civvy street whilst I'm young enough'* [24: 235 – 237]. Other social identities, it appears, begin to replace the Paratrooper identity, and this may trigger a state of *neutral-identification*. I chose this next story to demonstrate a phenomenon that I think relates to a state of *neutral-identification* because, as this former 2 Para soldier said, he had 'burnt out' his ability to identify with the Regiment. I feel this is a good example of the price that can be paid by some to achieve their perceived obligation to be constantly 'ready for anything' (6.4.5, Chapter 6). He told me about the lead up to and how he felt when eventually dismissed from service:

> 31: 287 Relieved. ...I was relieved, it was a burden off me shoulder. The burden was keeping up. Just keeping up, mentally ...not physically. ...Because, you know, mental and being physical at the same time, you need both to be strong. Yeah, and I was feeling it badly. The [Regiment] tried. Put me in the stores, and I went back to flipping playing around with the Battalion, you know, back in with the gun in hand. ...Giving me a few little options, you know, not like dead out in front of me face but, ...you understand. ...But I didn't take it up. The reason I didn't take it up is because I couldn't click on. I didn't click on because I were knackered. I was wanting stimulation. ...I'd burnt me stimulation fucking gland out there. ...I wanted stimulation, but I tried to motor it meself, but I didn't have none. ...Yeah, and I were waiting for this to happen, all the way after the Falklands. Like get back in line, come on, fucking every, everything to go for. ...Ah, bollocks. 299

The issues surrounding *neutral-identification*, I think, are mostly due to reactions to a perceived individual (rather than organisational) sense of weak cognitive connectedness I feel exists between Paratroopers and their Regiment. This seems to be consistent with

the actual status (e.g., Recruit/Potential Officer) of the soldier, in terms of their self-perception of themselves as fully qualified members of the Parachute Regiment.

9.7 Conclusion

The first part of this Chapter concerns my analysis of Elsbach's (1999) definition of organisational identification (as a form of cognitive connectedness). There are three categories of stories with a temporal theme suggesting stages of 'strong' *identification* I termed *pre*, *active* and *retro-identification*. I found that there is a period of *pre-identification* when the potential Paratrooper enters into a phase of cognitive connectedness with individuals as representatives of the organisation in stories about 'blood ties,' 'close friends' and 'encounters' with ex-Paratroopers. A pattern of *pre-identification* with the Regiment emerged as a result of some interviewees finding out about the Paras through learning about the Regiment's 'history and reputation' before enlistment. Furthermore, during the recruitment process to the Army, some potential Paras had their first 'encounter' with the Regiment, and on occasion 'met a representative' of the organisation during the recruitment process. *Active identification* refers to when the potential Paratrooper *identifies*, in the true sense of being a serving member of the Regiment. These stories are focused on a positive relational categorisation of self with both the individual, through 'role models,' which includes 'hero worship' and attachment to the 'brotherhood' stories. *Active identification* with the organisation appears in several stories about 'upholding the reputation' of the Parachute Regiment, particularly in public. The final Section of 'strong' *identification* stories is concerned mainly with a *retrospective* look back at how it felt to be part of the Regiment. There are two groups of these narratives I transcribed and both relate to feelings of regret. The first considers the effects of leaving service (versus the claim that you never leave). Many described this as a traumatic experience provoked by the looming end of service for the serving Paras, including 'time up' and 'dismissal' issues. Finally, there are instances of *retro-identification* stories which I termed 'nostalgic'

(because a sense of regret is palpable to the individual). Many retired Paratroopers told me that they attended the PRA which provides a venue in which some of the 'pain of leaving' is eased, and I was also told the main reasons are that they still want to be with their 'brothers' because they were missing the 'family.'

The second part of the Chapter presents my analysis of 'weak' (or negative) *identification* stories. In contrast to positive and 'strong' *identification*, these types of narratives tend to be less common and cover a wider range of concerns. Most comments appear to be about petty issues, but there is a suggestion of an active sense of separation and a negative relational categorisation of Paratroopers and their organisation. The major concerns of *disidentification* stories are clustered around 'bullshit,' 'bullying' and 'thuggery.' I found the interviewees, in the main, actively sought to 'distance' themselves from any guilty party. A minor theme that ran through some of these type of stories, particularly from those who served before the 1980s, concerns 'class,' but there is also the suggestion that this has been (as at 2005) consigned to the past. Episodes of *disidentification* are also recorded during periods of low morale and there are many stories in which the interviewees appear to distance themselves from repressive regimes. These may be in part responsible for the demise and subsequent termination of a soldier's career. Being 'injured' can cause some negative relational categorisations to end in the Paratrooper's 'discharge,' and on occasion, particularly amongst the Senior NCOs, being in the 'wrong job' can have a demoralising effect. Lastly, a few interviewees who were 'married' during their service, mention that their dilemma over the many postings away from home caused 'resentment and social problems.' For some, that too, ended with premature discharge.

Schizo-identification trends emerged from the transcripts which suggest there are occasions when an interviewee simultaneously experiences 'strong' and 'weak' perceptions of *identification* with the Regiment. For Officers this appears to be when

they are 'ordered' to wear their red beret on 'sufferance' and in the face of 'hostility' from the enlisted men. This may initiate a negative relational categorisation of themselves whilst maintaining a sense of active connection with the Regiment because they have been 'Commissioned' into it. Yet, for 'enlisted' men there is a similar scenario reported, between becoming 'fully-fledged' and 'accepted' in Battalion as a Tom, because they officially 'belong,' but do not feel 'part' of it. However, when it comes to relations between the full time Paratrooper and his TA counterpart there are differences in strength of *identification* with each other. Similar to the stories on 'inter-unit rivalry,' it appears these perceptions can be changed when the two kinds of serving Paras (Regulars and TA) join forces and work together. It seems that the TA are 're-evaluated' and their 'status' as *'STABs'* [56: 561] is replaced by full 'acceptance.' *Neutral-identification* stories appear to be mostly concerned with Recruits' 'status' when they are in between ''P' Company' and their 'jumps course,' as means they can neither *identify* nor *disidentify*. Finally, there are instances where *neutral-identification* happens because a Paratrooper has 'had enough' and is waiting for a 'discharge' date. This can often be due to 'identity burn-out' from the *pressure* to be constantly 'ready for anything.'

Chapter 10

Discussion: The end of my beginning

'It's clear that I am an instrument of my inquiry: and the inquiry is inseparable from who I am' (Louis, 1991, p.356).

10.1 Introduction

This Chapter draws together many ideas that emerged from the analysis and presentation of my data in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. I organised my findings into four readings: autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000); narcissism (Brown, 1997); psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995); and dress and identity (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). These look at issues of identity and identification in the Parachute Regiment, as revealed through the stories and story extracts of the preceding five Chapters. In Section, 10.2 'I' look at two 'Me's' (McAdams, 1996a) in a reflexive analysis (Humphreys, 2005ab) of the autoethnographic approach I took (Ellis, 1991, 1993, 1998; Ellis and Berger, 2002; Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). I feel that because of my insider perspective, autoethnography offered me an opportunity to bring my experiences into this thesis and analyse how I narrate my own identity as a Paratrooper. I also became aware that a similar process was happening as I began to construct an identity as an academic. The reading examines my own story (Chapter 5) and its contribution to this research through a re-evaluation of my identities as a Paratrooper and an academic. I chose the other three readings because I feel that by being a 'narcissist' (Brown, 1997) my 'ego' (Freud, 1916/1961) is tuned to aspects about my image (Dutton et al., 1994) and reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990) (as a Paratrooper). I base this on an instance of a period of low morale I personally experienced due to what I now understand to be a 'violation' of what Paras believed to be their 'psychological contract' (Rousseau, 1995) with the Regiment. This incident was over issues associated with their 'dress and identity' (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; cf., construed internal image, Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). My point here is that there appears to be conceptual links between narcissism, dress and identity

(image) and psychological contracting. Part of this processes involves the notion of myself as 'narcissist,' which leads directly to the second reading, 10.3, on narcissism in the Parachute Regiment, using Brown's (1997) five mechanisms of: denial; rationalisation; self-aggrandisement; attributional egotism; sense of entitlement, and what Brown (1997) described as anxiety (what the defences defend against). Section 10.4 evaluates the positive and negative relational categorisations (Elsbach, 1999) that Paras have with their Regiment in terms of 'relational' and 'transactional' psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995). Both 'transactional' and 'relational' contracts can become (and remain) 'balanced' (Rousseau, 2000) when the four precursors to psychological contracting: socialisation; inducements; trust; and status, and the four reciprocal conditions: organisational commitment; stability; loyalty; and turnover intentions are mutually satisfied (Irving and Bobocel, 2002). Negative consequences, of mistrust, uncertainty and erosion (Rousseau, 2000) associated with breaches (Epitropaki, 2003) and violations (Rousseau, 2000) are also reviewed. Finally, in Section 10.5, issues centred on dress and identity (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997) are explored through the symbolism (Frost and Morgan, 1983; Gagliardi, 1990) inherent in the forms of official dress and attire and insignia (Burton, 1998) and unofficial 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5, Chapter 7) worn by Paras both in and out of uniform. Finally, in conclusion I indicate other significant readings that could have been constructed from my analysis of my data and I revisit the salient points to arise from the four readings.

10.2 Putting the 'auto' in ethnography

Here, I examine what I believe to be my identity constructs as a Paratrooper and an academic as I imagine myself to be. These are what I consider to be salient fragments of two members of my 'parliament of selves' (Mead, 1934) and were emergent by analysing the autoethnographic approach (Humphreys, 2005a,b) I took to conduct this research. I have divided this Section into two separate but closely linked parts. The first, 10.2.1, discusses issues of representation (Holt, 2003), credibility (Humphreys, 2005a)

and the claim that autoethnography is an exercise in self-indulgence (Coffey, 1999). The second, 10.2.2, reviews the associated issues of identity and self-discovery and creative self-authorship (Humphreys et al., 2003) and writing myself into this research (Ellis and Bochner (2000).

10.2.1 Representation, credibility and narcissism

In this thesis, I have written a "story about the process of conducting research ...[In which] the crisis of representation refers to ...how researchers write and present the social world" (Holt, 2003, p.4, cf., Richardson, 1995). The criteria used to judge autoethnography should not necessarily be the same as the traditional criteria used to judge other qualitative research (e.g., Garratt and Hodkinson, 1999; Sparkes, 2000). Because "there is no way of eliminating consciousness from ...our activities in the field" (Nowak, 2000, p.129), I used what Holt (2003, p. 12) refers to as "reflexive techniques that examine the sensitivity of the researcher to the particular subculture under investigation [which] may provide constructive approaches to validity in autoethnography." Autoethnography is not necessarily limited to stories of the self because people do not accumulate their experiences in a social vacuum (Stanley, 1993), and because my story cannot be written without the 'Other' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Ellis and Berger, 2002; Humphreys et al., 2003). Furthermore, as Coffey (1999) highlighted, in justifying autoethnography as 'proper research,' it should be noted that (auto)ethnographers have acted autobiographically (e.g., Ellis, 1991, 1993, 1998; Reed-Danahay, 2001; Watson, 1995, 2001).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1994, p.258) have stated that "there is no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnography and any given theoretical perspective ...this has produced a highly complex and contentious discursive field." In Chapter 3, I laid out the epistemology and ontology underpinning this thesis. But for me, in the process of writing up, my concerns about representation changed. I was no longer preoccupied with

how I did it, or 'what is the best methodology?' rather, 'how convincing is *my* narrative?' As Hammersley and Atkinson, (1994) have suggested:

> "narrative forms are used to convey accounts of social action and causation. Likewise, the 'characters' or actors in the account are assembled out of narrative and descriptive fragments. Hence, ethnographers [me as researcher] use their 'literary' competence to reconstruct social action and social actors [the researched]" (p.256).

The issues I am concerned with here are credible representation (e.g., Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Walford, 2004) and narcissism (Brown, 1997; Holt 2003; Sparks, 2000, 2002), or, as Coffey (1999, p.132) suggests, that those who conduct autoethnography are "in danger of gross self-indulgence." Also, what are the strengths and weaknesses involved in this form of "participant observation [that involves] representation of 'Self' and 'Other'?" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994, p.254). That said, in my defence, my original claim in Chapter 3 still stands, as I found that "it is not possible to write a text that does not bear the traces of the author" (Lincoln and Denzin, 1998, p.413). But this text is overtly full of the author as seen in my overall contribution to this research in terms of my stories and adoption and use of Hatch's (1996) omniscient viewpoint from which I make my voice (Hazen, 1993) clear.

A significant part of this process involved me "entering into firsthand interaction with people in their everyday lives, [because] ethnographers can reach a better understanding ...of their subjects than they can by using any other method" (Tedlock, 2000 p.470). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also suggest that all social research is a form of 'participant observation,' but the "oxymoron, *participant observation* implies simultaneous emotional involvement and objective detachment" (Tedlock, 2000, p.465). Yet, according to Reed-Danahay (1997), expression of personal experiences and emotions are the 'essence of autoethnographic writing.' Similarly, Richardson (1995, 2000) has suggested that ethnography can be evaluated by questions like 'did the paper have an emotional impact?' So how does this sit with my self-representative (or auto) ethnography when I am emotionally 'improvising with the other' (Humphreys et al.,

2003) in creating this text as researcher and researched, whilst making no claim or attempt to be objective? The main reason is that objectivity is impossible (Hatch, 1996) another is that I could not be objective as "what may be at the core of ...objective ideology is the rule of *emotional detachment*. ...[This] keeps one from 'going native,' a danger ...warned against" (Lerum, 2001, p.472). But *I am* a native (Watson, 2001) and emotionally *attached* to the 'Other' (Ellis, 1998). Besides, methodologies like

> "autoethnographies have emerged in which the culture of the writer's own group is textualised. Such writings often offer a passionate, emotional voice ...and thus obliterate the customary and ordinary ...distinction between the researcher and the researched" (Van Maanen 1995, p.9/10).

In addition, like Humphreys et al's., (2003) Jazz musicians, we (Paras) improvise our stories in a performance in which, if any of us tells a tall story (to one of the tribe), it is like Jazz musicians 'playing out of key.' What I have done with my story is given one possible performance, a 'solo improvisation' (Humphreys et al., 2003) or one "interpretation of my life story, in which I attempt to engage the audience both intellectually and emotionally as I relive particular experiences" (Varner, 2000, p.456).

"Resilience and conviction are required to pursue this [autoethnographic] methodology" (Holt, 2003, p.19) and I feel that our (Paras) stories (or songs, (Humphreys et al., 2003)) in Chapter 6 reflect this. My "'*quality of analyses*' ...providing evidence of '*saturation of data*' and '*trustworthiness*'" (Holt, 2003, p. 8) are measures of credibility (e.g., Humphreys, 2005a). It is not just the narrative coherence and fidelity (Fisher, 1985a) of my story, or sensemaking (Weick, 1979, 1995), it is my analysis of Paras' perceived reality that will be the final arbiter in terms of representation (Holt, 2003). I had also to overcome issues of 'rigour' raised by, for example, Eisenhardt (1991) and Holt's (2003) 'reviewers,' to challenge accepted views about silent authorship, where my voice should not be included in my presentation of my findings, for in objectivity, "the proper voice is no voice at all" (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997, p.194). But, in seeking to make the type of generalisations outlined by Charmaz (2000), "how could someone else replicate work

based on [my] personal experiences?" (Holt, 2003, p.10). And why did I not use "systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build ...[a] theoretical framework that explain[s] the collected data" (Charmaz, 2000, p.509)? Richardson (2000) provided five criteria that I considered satisfactory justifications as alternatives to positivist "claims to authorship, authority, truth, validity, and reliability" (p.254):

> "*Substantive contribution*: does this piece contribute to ...understanding of social life; *Aesthetic merit*: does this piece succeed aesthetically [and] ...invite interpretive responses; *Reflexivity*: how did [I] come to write this text, how was the information gathered; *Impact*: does this affect me emotionally, intellectually, generate new questions; *Expresses a reality*: does this text [relate to] ...lived-experience, does it seem – a credible account of a cultural, social, individual or communal sense of real" (Richardson, 2000, p.254).

Another concern that deals with these issues came to the surface as I analysed my pilot study – 'voice' (Hazen, 1993) or 'reflexivity' as an ethnographer (e.g., Humphreys, 2005a). Conducting a pilot study and writing my story in Chapter 5 was cathartic in helping me find my voice, both as a Paratrooper and academic, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain:

> "I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life [mine], I hope to understand a way of life [the other]" (p.737).

If this is true, my voice does have a central role in this story. I sincerely believe it did help me to understand more about my identities as a Paratrooper and as an academic (Humphreys et al., 2003; Humphreys, 2005), and equip myself better to interpret our (Paras') stories. Ellis (1995) has argued that a story can be considered valid if it evokes in the reader a feeling that the experience is authentic, believable and possible. By telling my story, I can "vicariously bring you closer to the research subjects [me and my interviewees]" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.751). Additionally, according to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), temporality is linked to voice. "The question of who speaks in a text becomes important as we, and the stories we tell of our experience change over

time" (p.424). I found this to be the case. If I had told a story about my service whilst I was serving, it would not be the same as the one I would have told just before I started this research, and certainly not the story I eventually told in Chapter 5.

That is not to say that what I have written is fiction (Czarniawska, 1998). Rather, it is a literary representation, a co-authored story by myself and the 'Other' (Athens, 1994; Humphreys et al., 2003) that tells you what *we* feel it is like to be a Paratrooper. As a result of the reflexive process, I can write about myself as a Paratrooper with academic eyes (Humphreys 2005b) and bring my "own taken-for-granted understandings of the social world under scrutiny" (Van Maanen, 1979, p.547). My story is just as valid for this research as my interviewees (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) because I know the 'social world' of my tribe (Malinowski, 1953). My voice dictated how I used my experience to "look more deeply at self-other interactions" (Holt, 2003, p.2) and the voices of my interviewees provided the bulk of the data from which I extracted 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), and as an academic, used to "try to tell good stories" (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991, p.618).

10.2.2 Issues of identity

The first 'test' for me post-data analysis and write-up was to consider the impact on myself of conducting an ethnography among my tribe, the Parachute Regiment (e.g., Irwin, 2002). If "ethnography ...is a means of self-discovery and creative self-authorship" (Humphreys et al., 2003, p.7), what has the process of researching my own tribe and writing myself into the story (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) done to me? As I approached the field at the beginning of data collection, I knew that because I am "researcher as subject" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.733), my thesis would have to be "written in the first person and feature dialogue, emotion, self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture" (Holt, 2003, p.2; cf., Ellis and Bochner, 2000). I was also aware that I was researching my own

identity as a Paratrooper. That is, I was subjectively researching my 'lived experience' (Ellis and Flaherty 1992) and forming an identity as an 'academic' (Humphreys, 2005b). These two issues needed addressing before I could begin to bring my story to a conclusion and present my findings. So with the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences in mind (Czarniawska, 1998), here is my twist in the plot, or, how writing my story has changed me.

I now understand that the process of my becoming an academic is as much a journey of self-discovery as was the experience of composing my own story as a Paratrooper and placing it within the overall narrative of the thesis (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). As an ethnographer seeking 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), and having returned to my tribe to collect data, I was worried that I would be rejected as an academic by both my peers and formally by the Regiment. In retrospect, apart from logistical problems, described in Chapter 3, access to the Regiment was straightforward. When I introduced myself and the research, I was treated with what I understood to be affection and respect by the then Regimental Colonel. He was a Lieutenant when I served, but only a partially remembered face as I sat in his office. Now I was doing a PhD, he acknowledged my academic achievement as a reflection on the Regiment. Months later, whilst conducting the interviews, as the new CO of 4 Para, he told me my success story (as an academic) "showed the world we're not the thick thugs, they [the media] make us out to be" (Fieldnote, 4 Para visit). I realised I had changed, I had a new identity that fostered respect from a senior member of the Regiment. Ironically, I used to fear Officers, and now a Lt Colonel (as I interpreted his actions and words) appeared to be respecting me.

Those few days, being in the Battalion lines, were an intense emotional experience. I was identifying and interacting with 'the Other,' and as a veteran, had to "improvise my performance" (Humphreys, et al., 2003, p11), adapt to a new melody and sing along with the attention and curiosity my visit attracted. It felt like I had been on extended

leave, even though twenty years separated me from them. I had come home and everything about me as a Paratrooper resurfaced. Walking through the gate felt like putting on a favourite old overcoat. You miss it, are comfortable without it, but when you put it on, somehow it feels like you never took it off. I was being recognised, identified with as a member of the tribe, and the narcissist in me soaked it up.

However, I also encountered conflicting identity problems, both as a Para and academic, when prospecting for interviewees amongst the PRA. One of my 'subjective judgements as an ethnographer' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) is that most Paras do not like outsiders poking into their private affairs. Often our words and actions are misrepresented in the process of publication. As part of my autoethnographic 'self-reflexivity' (Humphreys 2005a), I wish to narrate a personal experience in order to justify my subjective judgement and demonstrate my integrity and the authority of this thesis (e.g., Holt, 2003). My former wife kept many of the British newspaper extracts published during the Falklands war and when I read them upon my return, I was shocked and disgusted at the distortion of facts and blatant propaganda, both in the reporting of events and editorial discussion. Additionally, when both the BBC and ITV approached me for interviews, 20 years later, I demanded reassurances that my words would not be twisted in the editorial process. Therefore, I was not surprised by so many refusals and respectful declinations, mainly due to an apparent suspicion of my motives - as an academic. As Paras we can talk shop all day, but the moment my research or a tape recorder was mentioned, that was the end of the conversation. Of course, there is the Official Secrets Act, 1989, a legal restriction, but I felt that their silence was more related to the sensitive nature of us being history makers, and how I potentially stood to gain from their given for free stories.

According to Humphreys et al., (2003), ethnography is a process of learning about the self. I realised things about myself as a Paratrooper that gave me empathy with my

interviewees (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) that I drew on during data collection. Like me, many interviewees had deep emotional and personal problems related to their service that they were not prepared to record on tape. Another reason so many refused an interview. As a member of the tribe I was accepted, yet, even when "the researcher is known to be a researcher by all those being studied" (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, p.249), and trust and rapport had been established (Silverman, 2001), some still declined. The apparent schizophrenic nature of media stories about Paras (9.6.2, Chapter 9) provides an outsider with an insight into this phenomenon. As mentioned, our words and actions are often taken out of context and we don't like it when people misrepresent us and express what I interpreted to be their disgust. Similarly, many Paras who have written about the Regiment have been shunned because they have distorted facts and made false claims in their stories. To knowingly publish falsehoods appears to be regarded with contempt in the Regiment. Nevertheless, as an insider (with the all important medals) and as a brother Paratrooper, coupled with the assurances I gave as part of my interview schedule, doors were opened, that for an outsider (academic) would, in my experience have been kept firmly shut. Being a Paratrooper, I realised our mutual trust was instrumental for some in overcoming their initial suspicion about my identity and intentions as an academic. The example I gave in Chapter 3, where I became the interviewee, was specifically included to demonstrate this aspect. However, as honesty is part of my credibility as researcher and ultimately this thesis, some interviewees simply responded out of their love and respect for me, as I would have for them.

Until now, I have kept some very personal details out of my story. For instance, my battle against my conscience when it came to pulling the trigger. This thesis is not the place I wish to discuss my personal morality. However, as part of the reflexive process involved in autoethnography (Humphreys, 2005ab), in revisiting the history of the Regiment and speaking about *combat*, for the first time since I left the Army, I have

become very aware of the shocking things I have done to other human beings. It is not a pleasant feeling. This awareness has affected how I see the Regiment as an academic – it is a ruthless killing machine. I was naive, young, wild and free. I had no conscience save the love for my brothers in arms. War seemed a blessing when it loomed on the horizon and the zeal that I and many of my contemporaries went into battle with was drawn from notions of heroic idealism (6.3.1, Chapter 6) and tradition (8.3, Chapter 8). Our stories of personal loss and trauma have shattered that illusion. I used to think we were heroes, and our stories do suggest that that is a central part of our identity (6.3, Chapter 6). Now, with the benefit of an education, as an academic conducting this research, I see another set of stories.

Our history has fuelled thousands of heroic narratives, some recorded in print and on film. Its 'voice' talks of courage, selflessness, sacrifice, but now all I see is propaganda, politics and puppet masters with us, the puppets. Many of us appeared to be naive and willing, with all compassion for others stripped away and replaced by what I interpret to be fanaticism, and goaded into killing by a brutal regime. We, as Paratroopers are nothing more than an instrument used by politicians since our inception to bludgeon or surgically remove barriers and problems to policy, none of it our creation. Through this process of self-discovery (Ellis, 1991) my conscience has learned anger and rage. My anger is for our innocence, stolen down the generations in a hail of shrapnel and bullets on behalf of someone far removed from our lives. I am enraged at the way some Paratroopers (and other soldiers) have been discarded into civvy street and abandoned, whilst power was traded on the backs of our efforts.

As an autoethnographer, writing myself into the story (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Humphreys et al., 2003; Humphreys 2005) did my research change me as a Paratrooper? Yes, unequivocally. I still identify strongly with the myths surrounding the Regiment, the tough, determined hero who can overcome adversity. I still identify with all the

positive aspects that came out of the data analysis and love to show the world how good Paras are at whatever they take on. Yet, I accept that there is a negative and dark side to this identity. It is one that can keep me awake at night, more than it ever did before as a result of this research process, one that draws me closer to those I fought with. It is also an identity that must remain hidden, lest people label me as the brutal thug whose image and reputation the media loves to sully when it suits their agenda. Before this research I was a proud Paratrooper, just one of the lads. I did not care what anybody thought about me and the Regiment, I knew different. At the end of it I am still a Paratrooper, albeit ambivalent about who I am as a Paratrooper. Hero or thug? I guess it depends on who I am talking to and what they know about the Paras.

And so I'm becoming an academic. How has this changed my identity? To finish this thesis, I have had to fight my own personal demons, aided in part through the therapeutic value in telling my own story (Ellis, 1991, 1993). As Ellis and Bochner (2000, p.754) put it, "therapy might not be the major objective in [my] research, [but] it often is a useful result of good writing." As an academic, I really started to identify with my colleagues at Nottingham University when I started the writing up process. Metaphorically, successfully completing my transfer panel was like the day I passed 'P' Company. I felt as though I had passed the big test set by my peers. But, I still had to complete the thesis (finish Basic Training) and graduate with a PhD (Pass Out of The Depot). The process feels the same. I remember thinking as I walked away from the panel, 'nothing can stop me now, except myself.' On both occasions, the sentiment was the same – 'these people think I'm good enough to become one of them, I can really do this!' And so, I edited our stories into this thesis, and our voices have helped me to become an academic. The one over-riding concern I had before I started to write up, was how can I publish and do the Regiment and its soldiers justice? How can I let my interviewees know I am not exploiting them for my gain in my new identity as an academic? The solution, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggests is to 'write myself into

the story,' become one of the 'polyphonic voices' (Hazen, 1993), "blending self with the other" (Humphreys, et al., 2003, p.9), whilst paradoxically revealing and taking responsibility for my story (Rhodes and Brown, 2003).

Finally, one theme which I have already mentioned that surfaced and transposed issues of autoethnographic representation and identity for me was narcissism (below). Here, any charges of narcissism and related criticisms function to reinforce ethnographic orthodoxy and resist change (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). I am standing my ground and putting the 'auto' in ethnography. I don't mind the potential criticism of 'voyeurism' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.749). After all, Paras are narcissists (Brown, 1997).

10.3 Narcissism

As I wrote the previous Section, I was struck by the claim that conducting an autoethnography can be interpreted as an exercise in 'narcissism' (e.g., Holt, 2003). By narcissism, I mean a personality construct (Foster et al., 2003) that Carr (1994, 1999) has defined as that which "is commonly used ...to refer to an individual who is overly preoccupied with themselves or their own interests" (Carr, 1999, p.1). Narcissistically discussing my identity as a Paratrooper from an academic perspective, is arguably self-indulgent (e.g., Coffey, 1999). This has led me to acknowledge that *my* story of *both* my identities in this thesis can be viewed as an exercise in narcissism. After all, as Alford (1988, p. 27) has pointed out "narcissism is never overcome, but re-channelled because it represents an especially complete and profound mode of ratification, and man is loathe to abandon a pleasure once experienced." Perhaps this helps to explain the stories of tears at the gate upon departure from service (9.5, Chapter 9). But what about *our* story of our Regiment? Do our 'polyphonic voices' (Hazen, 1993) create a narcissistic organisation? In this reading two questions have dominated my thinking. Are Paras narcissists (Brown, 1997)? And is the organisation narcissistic (Schwartz, 1987)? In order to address these issues I have split this Section into two parts. The first considers

me as a typical narcissistic Paratrooper (I may also be a narcissistic academic but I feel it is too early in my career to judge) and the second adopts Brown's (1997) explanation of narcissism in organisations. Brown (1997) listed five defences against anxiety which aid "individual and social processes of self-esteem regulation" (p.643), that form the theoretical platform employed in this Section: denial; rationalisation; self-aggrandisement; attributional egotism; and sense of entitlement (Brown, 1997).

10.3.1 Narcissism and me

In analysing what I reflexively bring to this discussion, a starting point is that "content analysis of ...autobiographies of those whose lives are identified closely with particular organisations, as well as corporate sponsored histories ...may be useful sources of information in the investigation of narcissism in organisations" (Brown, 1997, p.672). I consider Chapters 4 and 5 have provided solid foundations for Brown's (1997) argument. I also agree with Alford (1988), that "narcissism may serve as a stimulus for the achievement of the highest ideals. For in striving to realise socially valued ideals, the ego moves closer to being one with its own ego ideal" (p.27). This may explain what Dukerich, et al., (1998) refer to as 'focused-identification' where "the identity of the organisation replaces self, and little of the self is left ...there is only the collective" (Dukerich, et al., 1998, p.246; cf., Schwartz, 1987, p.59). Some researchers suggest that individuals have a need to maintain a positive sense of self, and they engage in ego-defensive behaviour in order to preserve self-esteem (Banaji and Prentice, 1994; Emmons, 1984; Erez and Earley, 1993; Raskin et al., 1991). My *tradition* (8.3) and *qualities* stories (8.4, both Chapter 8) show where my own personal 'ego-ideals' (Alford, 1988) and standards as a Paratrooper were 'learned' and that these were set and are *enduring* in our Regiment. I'm learning new ideals now, ones that draw on my identity as a Para and are bringing me closer to a new ego-ideal as an academic.

10.3.2. Organisational narcissism

According to Brown (1997, p.649), "groups and organisations are not literally narcissistic entities, but they behave in ways that are ...analogous to the behaviour exhibited by narcissistic individuals." And because "the ego ideal opens up an important avenue for the understanding of group psychology" (Freud, 1914/1984, p. 96), by understanding Paras as narcissists, their behaviours collectively point to the organisation itself being narcissistic. Schwartz (1987) suggests that:

> "From the standpoint of the theory of the organisational ideal, the basic problem that gives rise to the narcissistic fantasy which may structure the organisation ...is not a psychological problem, or a sociological problem: it is an existential problem. Existential problems are never solved; the best one can do is live with them" (p. 67).

Furthermore, the Regiment as a narcissistic organisation depends on the strength of Paras projective and introjective identifications (Dukerich et al., 1998; cf., Elsbach, 1999). And "if these identifications are continually reinforced through various forms of gratification, the sense of a created identity can be so strong that the prohibitive aspect of the super ego [Freud, 1916/1961] may be disregarded" (Carr, 1999, p.4), as Schwartz (1987) recorded happened in NASA. In other words, "in becoming a member of the group, the individual may put to one side their ego-ideal and substitute the group ideal" (Carr, 2003, p.3). Therefore, because "the theory of narcissism most usually is applied at the level of the individual [as I have shown by revealing my own narcissistic tendencies], it can also be usefully employed to inform our understanding of group and organisational behaviour" (Brown, 1997, p.643). This phenomenon can be seen particularly in the many stories involving 'rites of passage' (Schein, 1985), such as 'P' Company, the Basic Parachute Course and Passing Out of Basic Training. Personally, as an individual, throughout training I gradually began to adopt the attitudes and behaviours of members of the Regiment and adopted its ideals as my own. I also understand what Dukerich et al., (1998) mean by 'focused-identification' and this in part may explain why most Paras appear to dress prototypically (see below, 10.4).

The working definition of organisational narcissism that I used here is collective narcissism or 'ethnocentrism' (e.g., Rothbart, 1993), meaning the tendency to view our own group as the standard by which other groups are judged. More specifically, as far as the Regiment is concerned:

> "A differentiation that arises between ourselves, the we-group (ingroup), and everyone else (outgroup). The ingroup [the Regiment], in a relation of peace, order, commitment to duty and to values see themselves as best. Thus ethnocentrism denotes the view that one's own ingroup is the point of emulation. ...Therefore [the Regiment] nourishes its own pride, vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and potentially looks with contempt on outgroups (Sumner, 1906, p.12/13).

This way of thinking about organisational narcissism suggests that the Regiment displays a form of xenophobia or 'malign ethnocentrism' (Matsumoto, 2000). In other words, the "inability to go beyond values and perceptual filters. [The] chosen people syndrome with belligerent conceitedness" (Van der Dennen, 1987). Perhaps this explains the Regiment's attitude to civvies and the rest of the Army (e.g., 'other units' 7.3, Chapter 7; 'elitism,' 8.3.4, Chapter 8; and 'reputation' stories, 9.4, Chapter 9).

Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison processes addresses the issue of self-esteem in organisations and according to Brown (1997, p. 651), "self-esteem is an important theme or organising principle structuring organisational life." For example, Blau (1955) described how individuals who are socially integrated, secure and derive satisfaction from their work tend to exert greater effort. This, I think, can be clearly seen in the 'elitism' (8.3.4) and 'pride and honour' (8.3.5, both Chapter 8) stories. If the Regiment has a high opinion of itself, how does this translate into Brown's (1997, p.644) five "narcissistic tendencies of ...organisations?"

Denial refers to "an unconsciously deployed means of coping with what would otherwise be intolerable conflict, anxiety and emotional distress" (Laughlin, 1970, p.57). The suggestion is that organisational members can conceal or deny disagreeable truths in an unconscious and self-deceptive attempt to preserve self-esteem (e.g., Staw et al.,

1983). This can be seen in the 'reputation' stories (9.4.3, Chapter 9), where individuals appear to exhibit sensitivity to external reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Fombrun and Zajac, 1987), which needed to be preserved and enhanced by demonstrating excellence. Abrahamson and Park (1994) found that corporate Officers will try to hide negative organisational outcomes, while Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) suggest people will 'suppress information.' A notable example can be found in the *tragedy* stories (8.5, Chapter 8) where we were apparently misinformed regarding what would happen to the wounded soldiers on their return from the Falklands war. I also observed that myths are often created and used to deny errors and responsibilities (Gabriel, 1991; Kets de Vries and Miller, 1985). One myth I can shatter here is of a glorious end in battle (see *tragedy* stories, 8.5, Chapter 8). Death is not glorious. But the myth is so powerful it seems to be used to cover up and deny the ruination of lives by promoting narratives of 'courage' (6.3.3, Chapter 6) and an associated assumed heroism.

Rationalisation is an attempt to develop plausible and acceptable justifications for "motives and actions in an attempt to maintain a sense of self" (Laughlin, 1970, p.251). Yet, rationalisation can also be a feature of group behaviour (e.g., Janis, 1972), or in order to enhance 'organisational legitimacy,' (Pfeffer, 1981), a collective group offering rationalisations for organisational structures and behaviours. I interpret this through the motto, or, 'grand narrative' (Cuff et al., 1998) of the Regiment, '*Utrinque Paratus*' ('ready for anything' 6.4.5, Chapter 6). This can be seen in Douglas's (1987) claim that rationalisations "highlight and obscure events, control memory, provide categories for thought, set the terms for self-knowledge, and fix identities" (p.69). This certainly applies to some of the processes undergone in Basic Training where the Regiment's history is constantly referred to, often, reinforced by *'pain assisted learning'* [66: 51] techniques. This, seemingly, translates into the message that we are the best, in attempts to rationalise our claim to uniqueness in our stories (Martin et al., 1983). This way of managing our "group self-esteem" (Brown, 1997, p.656) or 'ideologies,' appears to be

supported by our 'ceremonies and selection devices' (Starbuck, 1983) where identity as a 'Paratrooper' is seen to be 'officially' conferred on the soldier in stages.

Self-aggrandisement refers to "the tendency of an individual to over-estimate his ...merits and accomplishments" (Brown, 1997, p.657), often accompanied by 'extreme self-absorption, exhibitionism, claims to uniqueness and a sense of invulnerability' (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, 1986). According to Brown (1997, p.658), "in organisations there is a tendency of groups to use myth and humour to exaggerate their sense of self-worth," (e.g., Filby and Willmott, 1988). I think an excellent example of this can be seen in the facsimile of the tattoo, *On the Eighth Day* (see Appendix 7). Janis (1972) suggested organisation members have 'fantasies of unlimited ability during times of stress,' and these are reflected in the *pressure* stories (6.4, Chapter 6). Paras also appear to like to engage in exhibitionist ceremonies (Trice and Beyer, 1984, 1993) (see, for example, *dress* stories, 7.4, Chapter 7). Finally, the Regiment has developed special languages and symbols that emphasise uniqueness (Blau, 1955) as the glossary for this thesis, I feel, makes clear.

Attributional egotism refers to the tendency for agents to "offer self serving explanations for events, attributing favourable outcomes to their own efforts and unfavourable outcomes to external factors" (Brown, 1997, p.660; cf.,, Bradley, 1978; Schlenker 1980). Martin et al., (1983) found that organisational stories provide a vehicle for these explanations, which preserve individual reputations and self-esteem. As I myself experienced, this form of narcissistic behaviour appears to be prevalent when the Regiment makes mistakes and blames someone or something else, rather than confront its own fallibility (Schwartz, 1987). Alternatively, favourable outcomes seem to underpin our 'elitism' and 'pride and honour' stories (both 8.3, Chapter 8). In addition, Brown (1997) has suggested that "individuals operating in groups and organisations are prone to egotistic attribution for both information-processing and self-preservation

reasons" (p.661; cf.„ Schwartz, 1987, p.59). The 'teaching and learning' stories (8.3.2, Chapter 8), I feel, demonstrates an active process of dissemination of knowledge and pursuit of new and better ways of doing things in the Regiment. This is apparently aimed at keeping the soldiers, and, therefore, the Regiment, constantly 'ready for anything' (6.4.5, Chapter 6) and enhancing its capacity to perform.

Sense of entitlement, according to Rhodewalt and Morf (1995), is "often accompanied by a tendency toward exploitiveness and a lack of empathy with the feelings of others" (p.1 - 2). Brown (1997) suggests that a sense of entitlement "expressed in the form of self-confidence makes people more persuasive and thus better able to fulfil a leadership role" (p.661). Of all Brown's (1997) criteria for collective narcissism, I think that this form of organisational narcissistic behaviour is most salient in the Parachute Regiment. The apparent negative attitude to 'other units' (7.3.4, Chapter 7), the referent by which Paras measure their competence is indicative of this phenomenon. It appears that we were conditioned to believe that we are the best, and prove it to ourselves by passing the 'tests,' (4.3.2, Chapter 4) and serving in a Parachute Battalion can offer us (as narcissists) more opportunities to 'live the fantasy' (Schwartz, 1987). I think that because we often put our lives on the line, our stories are littered with references to what in my opinion can be translated as the Regiment's 'God given right' to have the best equipment, training, and new Recruits.

Finally, In terms of Brown's (1997) five ego-defences "the narcissistic personality is characterised by a sense of anxiety which stems from a dependence on others to validate self-esteem" (p.662). Watson's (2001) ethnography of managers suggests that they (managers) are perennially seeking to maintain their concept of self and to maintain their self-esteem. The stories told by some of the Officers I interviewed, (as I interpret them) point to their apparent insecurity as Subalterns, and anxiety about 'acceptance' (6.5.1) and the *pressure* to perform (6.4, both Chapter 6) notably, the admission that *'Officers*

are ultimately selected by the NCOs of the Regiment' [42: 125]. But the organisation itself seems to display its own defences against anxieties, particularly what I consider to be an 'anomic' (Durkheim, 1912) reaction to the negative media image that appears to be a cause of the *schizo-identification* processes I outlined in Chapter 9. Another aspect I observed was Hill's (1981, p.90) "creation of a shared moral order," which I think is manifest in the *bonding* stories of 'camaraderie and friendship,' and 'brotherhood' (all 6.5, Chapter 6), which may help to build a sense of common purpose and co-operative relationships (Barnard, 1938). This seemingly has become part of the Regiment's organisational culture (Schein, 1985) as seen in *identification* with the 'brotherhood' (9.4.2, Chapter 9) and may help deal with anxieties (e.g., personality disorders and dysfunctional behaviour) the Regiment itself might create as a result of its narcissistic tendencies.

The 'ego-defence' mechanisms outlined by Brown (1997): denial; rationalisation; attributional egotism; sense of entitlement; and ego aggrandisement (p.643), provided me with what I consider to be a valuable 'lens' with which to view narcissism in the Parachute Regiment. I feel that there are echoes of the kind of culture that Schwartz (1987) described in NASA, however, in the Parachute Regiment, there are mechanisms that appear to help prevent this kind of narcissistic culture from triggering disasters, as happened with the Space Shuttle, Challenger (Schwartz, 1987). This I think, is attributable mainly to the soldiers subconscious awareness that narcissistic behaviour, if unchecked can lead to the behaviour Schwartz (1987) outlined. One significant way in which this is done is through the 'Panopticon like qualities' (Thornborrow and Brown, 2005) I observed in the Regiment, "in which each individual figured as both prisoner and guard, evaluated and evaluator ...mutually reinforcing surveillance and control" (p.1), as suggested by the inference behind the quote: *'Officers are ultimately selected by the NCOs'* [42: 125].

10.4 Psychological contracts

This reading addresses psychological contracts (Irving and Bobocel, 2002; Rousseau, 1995; Schein, 1978), which I interpret to be an important psychodynamic relationship between individuals and the organisation. By psychological contracts I mean that it "implies *mutuality* and *reciprocity* based on perceptions" (Smithson and Lewis, p.2; cf., Watson, 2001, p.61) of "fairness and good faith" (Epitropaki, 2003, p.1) between Paratroopers and their Regiment. It appears that any perceived change in the relationship can affect an individual's strength of *identification* (Elsbach, 1999) with the Regiment. I consider psychological contracts to be closely linked to the positive and negative relational categorisations my interviewees highlight in their 'strong' and 'weak' *identification* stories of Chapter 9. I think the notion is present in varying degrees in most story *categories* and 'types' I have used in this research. This means that accounts (e.g., Scott and Lyman, 1968) in which the psychological contract is either explicit or implicit (Rousseau, 1995), whether a positive relational categorisation of the self and organisation (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1992, 1995), or a negative one (e.g., Crouter 1984), will, in part, indicate a Paratrooper's perception of whether or not the Regiment is meeting its obligations. Smithson and Lewis (2005, p.2) suggest there are four pointers to psychological contracting: incorporation of beliefs, values and expectations; implication of a sense of fairness and good faith; they are dynamic and shifting; and individual perceptions of individuals in the same job. I also identified four factors that I perceive to be related to the psychological contracts that appear to exist between my interviewees and the Regiment: organisational socialisation (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992); inducements (Rousseau, 1990; Porter et al., 1998) trust (Robinson, 1996; Morrison and Robinson, 1997); and status (Handy, 1980). These, I interpret to be significant to Paratroopers' staged processes of cognitive connectedness to the Regiment (Dukerich et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999). In addition, there are three related reciprocal conditions that can affect the strength of *identification* (Elsbach, 1999): organisational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991, 1997; Millward and

Hopkins, 1998); turnover intentions (Rousseau, 1995); stability (Rousseau, 2000); and loyalty (Alvesson, 2000). In 10.4.2, the negative consequences of contract breach (; Lester, et al., 2001; Robinson, 1996) and violations (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Smithson and Lewis, 2005) are discussed, particularly their relationship to Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification.

10.4.1 Precursors of psychological contracts

Precursors here mean the processes in the Regiment that involve a formalised incremental system of moving Recruits from organisational outsiders to insiders. These I interpret as signals that the Regiment is making an investment in the soldiers, which may result in a perceived need to reciprocate (Guest, 1998b). Reciprocation, I observed, is learned in Basic Training and is embedded in the many *difference* (7.3) and *dress* stories (7.4, both Chapter 7). Here, I consider four conditional factors of transactional and relational identification, based on the work of Irving and Bobocel (2002): socialisation; inducements; trust; and status.

In my opinion, these precursors can be observed in the processes of socialisation which in this thesis refers to the stages by which Recruits become fully-fledged Paratroopers (e.g., Irwin, 2002; Kirke, 2000; 2003; Van Maanen, 1973). This involves "the learning of a cultural perspective ...[i.e.,] a perspective for interpreting one's experiences in a given sphere in the work world" (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p.212). Because more formal socialisation is likely to "increase the extent to which the organisation's values are learned and internalised, it is also likely ...[to] lead to the development of a relational contract" (Irving and Bobocel, 2002, p.2). Stories about the 'factory' (7.3.1, Chapter 7), 'acceptance' (6.4.1, Chapter 6), 'teaching and learning' (8.3.2, Chapter 8), and *pre-identification* (9.3, Chapter 9) appear to be symptomatic of the processes of socialisation in the Regiment.

According to Irving and Bobocel (2002, p.7), "rewards and recognition may be important features of a relational contract ...[along with] development and challenge inducements." I interpret inducements to mean an exchange relation that suggests a *quid pro quo* approach to psychological contracting in which the Regiment provides obligations commensurate with what Paras perceive their Regiment to be offering them (Rousseau, 1995). Inducements here, are based on Paras' perceptions of, and not on what promises or incentives they believe the Regiment has offered them (Porter et al., 1998). Inducements are, in my opinion, strongly featured in *difference* (7.3, Chapter 7), and *dress* (7.4, Chapter 7) and *pressure* (6.4, Chapter 6) stories.

Robinson and Morrison (2000) found formal socialisation is linked to trust, but in relation to psychological contracts in the Regiment, by trust, I mean a critical component of stable social relationships (Blau, 1964; Lewis and Weingart, 1985). Robinson (1996) argues that when higher levels of initial trust in one's employer decrease, the more likelihood a perception of a psychological contract breach (10.4.3, below). Conversely, Morrison and Robertson (1997) suggest that lower initial trust brings an increase in 'vigilance,' as I witnessed in 2 Para in Berlin when the 'regime' was full of *'Officers that were so pompous, senior ranks that thought they knew everything'* [10: 356]. Yet, "initial trust moderates the relationship between promises made by the organisation and the form of perceived contract" (Irving and Bobocel, 2002, p.3). 'Trust' (6.5.3) and 'camaraderie and friendship' (6.5.2, both Chapter 6) stories indicate that trust appears to be regarded as more of a relationship *between* Paratroopers. But 'parachuting' (7.3.3, Chapter 7), 'contact' (6.3.2), 'courage' (6.3.3) and 'conquering fear' (6.4.4) stories all suggest there is huge trust in the Regiment as an organisation and in my experience, the RAF who provide the facilities for parachuting and for anyone who is perceived to be part of the 'brotherhood' (6.5.6, all Chapter 6).

By status (Handy, 1980), I mean seniority and tenure that are related to higher attachment to the job and organisation because they are more likely to lead to jobs with greater autonomy and intrinsic rewards (e.g., Kanter, 1977). Status also appears to be linked to commitment or 'norms of reciprocity' (Gouldner, 1961) and promotes a high commitment to work (Kunda, 1992). Status seems to have more affect on soldiers who have achieved senior ranks and, I think, demonstrates that Paras with a more permanent status are likely to perceive themselves as having a 'relational contract' (Rousseau, 1990). Whereas Recruits and who sign up for three years along with individuals with part-time status (4 Para) are more likely to perceive a 'transactional relationship' (Irving and Bobocel, 2002). For example, *'those people who ...signed on for only three years, probably never fitted in properly anyway'* [10: 138-139]. In some narratives from part-time TA Paras, I observed they tend to refute the 'transactional relationship' argument, as I realised that they can display as much commitment to 4 Para as do their Regular counterparts to their own Battalions, as was recorded in some *disidentification* stories (9.6.1 Chapter 9).

When these factors (or precursors) are in place and both 'relational' and 'transactional' (Rousseau, 1995) positive relational categorisations between the Paratrooper and Regiment appear to be satisfied, a 'balanced' (Rousseau, 2000), or 'implied' (Watson, 2001) psychological contract can be said to exist. Within the Regiment this apparently gives rise to an internally team-oriented culture conducive to continuous learning and innovation, for example, 'ready for anything' (6.4.5), 'trust' (6.5.3, both Chapter 6), 'teaching and learning' (8.3.2, Chapter 8). I also observed amongst the more senior members of the Regiment, there is scope to renegotiate existing contracts to maintain this 'balance' (e.g., signing on again/promotions/internal transfers) of their 'work orientation' (Watson, 2001). These contracts also seem to offer a broader scope for contribution by the Paratrooper, and participation in daily life is expected by the Regiment (Rousseau 1995). This is apparent in *traditions* (8.3, Chapter 8) as well as

being prominent in nearly all the *pressure* (6.3, Chapter 6) stories. A further aspect of 'balanced' contracts is dynamic performance (Rousseau, 1995). This I interpreted to mean where Paratroopers are 'obligated' to successfully perform new and demanding goals which can change repeatedly (Rousseau, 2000). This seems to help the Regiment maintain its optimum performance levels. Again I think that *tradition* (8.3, Chapter 8) and *pressure* (6.4. Chapter 6) stories indicate what I mean by this 'obligation' which, when 'balanced' may continue throughout Paras' careers. In reciprocation, the Regiment appears to be committed to promote continuous 'teaching and learning' (8.3.2, Chapter 8) and to "help individuals successfully execute escalating performance requirements" (Rousseau, 2000, p. 4).

10.4.2 Psychological contracts, Paras and the Regiment

Here I focus on the mutual employment relationship between Paratrooper and the Regiment (see appendix 6). For example, 'transactional' contracts in the Regiment can be "an indication that the employment relationship will be short-term in nature ...[and] we would expect that such individuals would have low levels of active commitment" (Irving and Bobocel, 2002, p.3) (see status, above). This may be because, Paras who perceive that they have a 'relational' contract "exhibit higher levels of affective commitment ...than individuals who perceive they have a transactional contract" (Irving and Bobocel, 2002, p.4). I found this to be a feature in many transcripts with PRA interviewees as most who attend regularly had served upwards of six years. I feel I can reasonably argue that the fact they attend PRA meetings is an indication of their personal lifelong commitment and that my autoethnography reading (10.2, above) is such an example. There are four such reciprocal conditions: organisational commitment; turnover intentions; stability; and loyalty (Irving and Bobocel, 2002).

Organisational commitment (or "general understandings about mutuality and fairness" (Alvesson, 2000, p.1104) appears to be developed as a result of on the job experiences

and has been demonstrated to be one of the strongest predictors of affective commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer, et al., 1993; Meyer and Allen, 1991, 1997). Millward and Hopkins (1998) linked 'high affective commitment' to high felt obligations. I feel this is reflected in the *tradition* (8.3, Chapter 8) stories. 'Relational' contracts involve an emotional involvement and most interviewees appear to have developed an identification with, and internalised the values of, the Regiment (Rousseau, 1995). In addition, Irving and Bobocel (2002) suggest that "individuals who form a relational contract ...would also have high levels of active commitment" (p.3), and this, I think is reflected in the *pressure* (6.4, Chapter 6) and *tradition* (8.3) stories, particularly as exemplified in my interviewees' *tragedy* (8.5, both Chapter 8) stories. For example, as one interviewee said, he was *'prepared to die'* [8: 167] for the Regiment (and each other).

A feature of organisational commitment is turnover intentions and Rousseau (1990) found that those who perceived 'relational' components of psychological contracts intended to stay with their organisation longer. These "investments involve a high level of interdependence and barriers to exit" (Rousseau, 1990 p.92). I observed that this process appears to involve considerable investment in each other on the part of the Regiment and Paratrooper. There are, what I interpret to be numerous examples of this in the *retro-identification* (9.5, Chapter 9) stories. According to Kunda (1992) and Wallace (1995) there is not necessarily a 'conflict between organisational commitment, job satisfaction or turnover,' but work involvement generally is related to a 'stronger organisational commitment' (Brooke et al., 1988). ''P' Company' (7.3.2, Chapter 7) and particularly *pressure* (6.4, Chapter 6) stories appear to demonstrate this phenomenon. Additionally, according to Marks and Scholarios (2001), "identity and skills increase along with progress in the organisation ...commitment develop[s] ...as a result of feelings of trust and fair treatment from the organisation" (p.16). I think that 'acceptance' (6.5.1, Chapter 6) and 'teaching and learning' (8.3.2, Chapter 8) stories are

good examples. Individuals "are more likely to leave the organisation (or at least be looking to leave), given the turnover intention in the short term focus of transactional contracts" (Irving and Bobocel, 2002, p.8). A significant portion of *retro-identification* stories (9.5, Chapter 9) involve the termination of the 'transactional' contract. Yet, in my opinion, despite strong 'relational' contracts, when end of service comes, there is only the PRA.

Stability (by this I mean the quality or state of being stable) seems to be affected by the 'transactional' more than the 'relational' contract, particularly when a Paratrooper has to make career decisions. If the soldier signs on again, he is obliged to remain with the Regiment for that time. He has to do what is required to keep the job because the Regiment has "committed to offering stable wages and long-term employment" (Rousseau, 2000, p.2). In return, he has to remain 'ready for anything' (6.4.5) and handle the *pressure* (6.4, both Chapter 6) for as long as he extends the 'transactional' contract. Finally, loyalty (e.g., Alvesson, 2000) appears to be reflected more in the 'relational' contract than the 'transactional' (e.g., *bonding*, 6.5, Chapter 6; and *active-identification*, 9.4, Chapter 9 stories). The Paratrooper it seems is obliged to support the Regiment and manifest loyalty and commitment to the organisation's needs and interests (for example, the 'coursemanship' story in 'reputation' 9.4.3, Chapter 9 stories). There is also a requirement to be a good organisational citizen (e.g., Rousseau, 2000). This, I feel, is also a feature of *bonding* stories (6.5, Chapter 6), and the Regiment appears to be committed to supporting the well-being and interests of the soldiers and their families (e.g., every Battalion has a Families Officer).

10.4.3 Negative consequences of psychological contract violation

Cavanagh and Noe (1999), Guest and Conway (1998), and Robinson and Rousseau (1994) have all linked positive employee perceptions of relations with management to job satisfaction, commitment and turnover. Here, what I mean by negative consequences

are the perceptions of organisational injustice (Epitropaki, 2003), focused on the 'weak' *identification* features of Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification: *disidentification*; *schizo-identification*; *neutral-identification*. According to Rousseau, 2000), there are three reciprocal conditions of negative consequences: mistrust; uncertainty; and erosion. These I interpret to be congruent with the ways in which Paras determine that they have been treated unfairly by the Regiment/MoD (9.6, Chapter 9). There are some stories about the Regiment/MoD 'breaching' (e.g., Gakovic and Tetrick, 2003; Kickul, 2001; Kickul et al., 2001; Robinson, 1995; Robinson and Morrison, 1995, 2000; Turnley, 2002) 'implied' contracts (Watson, 2001), or, 'violating' (e.g., Marks and Scholarios, 2001; Turnley and Feldman, 1998; 1999) them. For example: *[The MoD] took the smocks of us. There was near anarchy ...Next thing, guys were saying, "what do you want us to do? Wear fucking black berets? And a lot of them went AWOL in protest'* [4: 307 – 309]. A significant 'violation' appears to be when the Regiment/MoD are perceived to be guilty of "breaking their promises [and being] ...less likely to be seen as embodying desirable attributes" (Epitropaki, 2003, p.1). For example, '*We were promised that all the lads who were wounded as long as they lived would not be kicked out. ...When we went on the six weeks leave, by the time we'd come back[the MoD had] discharged most of them. They betrayed their own lads'* [11: 322 – 324].

A 'breach,' or contract 'violation' appears to occur when a Para experiences a discrepancy between the fulfilment of the Regiment's obligations and promises (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Both in-role and extra-role work performance is negatively impacted by psychological contract breach (Turnley, 2002), and this can lead to what Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) termed 'job strain' or "experience of emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction" (p.235). It seems that this phenomenon can signal the end of a career, as I interpreted in stories about the downside of the *pressure* (6.4, Chapter 6) stories and the image portrayed in the *macho* (7.5, Chapter 7) stories. In

addition, "the degree of negative spillover [Stains, 1980] from ...work-to-nonwork life is influenced by ...perceptions of trust and fair treatment which, in turn, [have] ...implications for organisational commitment and intention to remain in the organisation" (Marks and Scholarios, 2001, p.1). In the *retro-identification* (9.5, Chapter 9) stories, this appears to be the case in which many interviewees, particularly married Paras, complained that they would often *'pick me kit up and come back six months later'* [20: 404]. Yet, significantly, the same phenomenon is also observed in modern Paras, for example, *'and another ...day I was sort of packed up and gone. ...I was a single bloke at the time which was fine I can do that but you know, I am married now'* [59: 178-179].

Psychological contract 'violations' are "thought to lead to feelings of anger, betrayal and resentment [which] leads to decreased employee motivation, dissatisfaction, loss of loyalty and exit from the organisation" (Marks and Scholarios, 2001, p.4). Robinson and Morrison (2000) suggest that trust is negatively related with perceived contract violation. By 'violations' in the Regiment I mean an apparent congruence between the 'weak' *identification* (Elsbach, 1999) and transitional psychological contract violations (Rousseau, 2000). This appears to be when a Paratrooper believes that the Regiment/MoD sends inconsistent and mixed signals regarding its intentions and there is mistrust (as demonstrated above where the MoD: *'betrayed their own lads'* [11: 322 – 324]). In addition, some interviewees believe the Regiment can withhold important information and can mistrust its soldiers (Rousseau, 2000). This seems to be a feature of 'weak' *identification* (9.6, Chapter 9) stories, for example, narratives concerning 'low moral.' 'Uncertainty' too often caused 'violations' (Rousseau, 2000). This I interpret to mean where the Paratrooper appears to be unsure of the nature of his own 'obligations' to the Regiment, and where the Regiment is perceived as 'uncertain' regarding future commitments to the Paratrooper (Rousseau, 2000). For example as happened in the 'identity burnout' *disidentification* story (9.6.1, Chapter 9). Finally, by psychological

contract 'erosion' I mean where the Paratrooper expects to receive fewer returns from his contributions to the Regiment, compared to the past and anticipates continuing decline in the future (Rousseau, 2000). A good example, I think, are the 'injury and maiming' stories (8.5, Chapter 8) where interviewees said they could not continue because of their amputations.

To conclude, the psychological contract relationships between Paratrooper and the Parachute Regiment appears to affect the positive and negative relational categorisations (Dukerich et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999) perceived by individual Paratroopers. Narratives concerning contracts seemed to be pervasive in just about every category of story that emerged in this thesis. Psychological contracts can be either 'transactional,' 'relational' or 'balanced' (Rousseau, 1995, 2000; Watson, 2001) and there are four conditional factors that affected the strength of *identification* (Elsbach, 1999): socialisation; inducements; trust; and status (Irving and Bobocel, 2002). In addition there are four reciprocal conditions: organisational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991, 1997); turnover intentions (Kunda, 1992; Wallace, 1995); stability (Rousseau, 2000); and loyalty (Alvesson, 2000). These can be negative or positive and result in both negative and positive relational categorisations between the Para and Regiment (Dukerich, et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999). There are 'breaches' (Marks and Scholarios, 2001) and 'violations' (Robinson and Morrison, 2000) due to 'uncertainty,' 'mistrust,' and 'erosion' (Rousseau, 2000) that may severely damage a career, and in some cases lead to discharge.

10.5 Organisational dress, symbolism and identity

Many commentators have discussed how dress constitutes identity (e.g., Davis, 1992; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Lurie, 1981; de Marley, 1986; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993; Squire, 1974). In this reading, I discuss the "key role that attire can play in continuing processes of collective identity construction" (Humphreys and

Brown, 2002, p.927). What I mean here by dress and symbolism in the Parachute Regiment is the convergence of these perceived identity constructs in the sentiment that 'you are not a Para until you are dressed as one.' I observed this phenomenon often spills over into off duty periods when the wearing of 'civvies' appears to reinforce the individual's perceived need to affiliate to the organisation (Glynn, 1998). This I think is inherent in the symbolism of wearing Parachute Regiment artifacts and insignia (Hatch, 1993) and dressing prototypically in contemporary fashion (by this I mean mirroring the wearing of official uniforms whilst off duty). For example, Paras identify with each other and the Regiment by wearing what I termed the 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5, Chapter 7: logos; facsimiles of insignia; tattoos; and specific civilian dress codes). Here, I interpret dress to be a significant symbol of what is held by Paras to be central, distinct and enduring about their Regiment (Albert and Whetten, 1985), and about themselves (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) and I draw mainly on interviewees' stories that concern issues surrounding dress and attire, both official and unofficial.

I divided this reading into two interconnected themes. First, a Section on dress and organisational symbolism examines some Paratroopers' needs for organisational affiliation (Glynn, 1998), expressed by display of the 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5, Chapter 7) and how dress can be used to maintain perceived organisational boundaries (Aldrich, 1999). Second, I consider how a Paratrooper has status and identity conferred in stages through ceremonies, rites of passage and rituals (Trice and Beyer, 1984, 1993) that involve the official handing over of items of dress and insignia. In other words, I interpret dress as that which symbolically reflects issues that refer to the question of 'who am I' (Albert, 1998a).

10.5.1 Dress and organisational symbolism in the Parachute Regiment

By 'dress and organisational symbolism' I mean semiotics, the symbolism of signs and artifacts (Aaker and Myers, 1987; Swartz, 1983) inherent in the clothing, insignia, and attire worn by organisational members. Key to this is the process of interpretation because "without observation and interpretation, symbolism is meaningless" (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, p.11). My reflexivity, I believe was a significant aid to interpreting the semiotics underpinning identity constructs in the unique dress and insignia many Paras say they believe makes them *different* (7.3, Chapter 7). Humphreys and Brown (2002) proposed that "one potentially important symbolic means by which groups seek to undermine, defend and champion their preferred organisational identity narrative is dress" (p.929). According to some researchers, the military uniform is a form of clothing with a particular symbolism and a long history and tradition (Pfanner, 2004; Winslow, 1999). I interpret Pfanner (2004) to mean that in the Parachute Regiment, the uniform symbolises hegemony as it:

> "reflects order and discipline, and calls for subordination by displaying a variety of insignia, including badges that indicate rank and emphasise the hierarchical structure. ...It also calls for respect and fear and symbolises strength and power: it includes features designed ...to enhance the soldiers' stature in the eyes of comrades, civilians and the enemy. Finally, it helps create an identity of appearance and an *esprit de corps* and is thereby conducive to the bonding process" (p.94).

It appears that wearing Parachute Regiment uniform and insignia helps to *bond* (6.5, Chapter 6) soldiers together and subsume the individual into the collective identity of the Regiment, to "the point of using symbolism to create desired identities" (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, p.10; cf., Aaker, 1994; Avraham and First, 2003; Hirschman, 2003;) As Lurie (1981, p.18) stated, "no matter what sort of uniform it is – military, civil or religious ...to put on such livery is to give up one's right to act as an individual." I consider this to be congruent with Dukerich et al's., (1998) focused-identification (9.2, Chapter 9). Yet, interestingly, a great deal of time and effort appears to be spent 'individualising' dress and kit (10.4.2 below). Here, I am concerned with what my interviewees consider to be *distinctive* about their organisational attire (Albert and

Whetten, 1985) in relation to their identity constructs and why they 'dress as symbolic' (e.g., Burton, 1998; Trice and Beyer, 1984; 1993) of that distinction. In other words, to explore the links that affect the social values that are "associated with a high need for affiliation and group identification and conformity" (Rose et al., 1994, p.1501, cf., Glynn, 1998).

According to Trice and Beyer (1993, p.86), organisational symbols are "specific cultural forms," and "dress is a symbol of a concept related to an organisation's culture: organisational identity" (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997, p.864, cf., Hatch, 1993). That said, British Army and Commonwealth enlisted soldiers share similar enculturation and socialisation processes (Irwin, 1993, 2002; Kirke, 2003; Winslow, 1999) in which they learn and adopt their 'tribe's' history, customs and traditions (Geertz, 1973; Malinowski, 1953). In addition, cultural artifacts (Schein, 1985) highlight the distinctiveness of each military unit, which "is also marked by unique regimental insignia such as shoulder badges, buttons, buckles, colours of kit and distinctive tailoring of uniform, headgear and mess dress" (Winslow, 1999, p.6).

Many narratives emerged concerning the various rituals and rites of passage in which these symbolic items of dress and insignia are conferred upon the individual by the Regiment, thereby bestowing identity in stages (Chapter 5, Tam's story). In this Section I consider five stages of symbolic identification, manifest in the conferring of status and identity through permission to wear, officially, the: 'red beret;' 'badge of courage;' 'DZ flash and Lanyard;' and 'medals' stories (all 7.4, Chapter 7), and unofficially, 'Allez gear' (6.4.1, Chapter 6), and the 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5 Chapter 7) stories. The stories on *bonding* (6.5, Chapter 6), *difference* (7.3, Chapter 7), and *traditions* (8.3, Chapter 8), I feel, demonstrate this to be the case.

The first hurdle is earning the 'red beret' (7.4.1, Chapter 7), a sign that identity is being bestowed on you is when: *'you pass 'P' Company and you have every right to wear it ...and then you get that tremendous feeling of ...achievement and this huge sense of corporate identity straight away'* [9: 52-54]. Another major concern is having the right to wear the 'badge of courage' (7.4.2, Chapter 7). In a similar vein, when appointed to a Parachute Battalion, the right to wear a 'DZ Flash and Lanyard' (7.4.3, Chapter 7) is granted, usually as part of a ceremony involving the individual 'Passing Out' at the end of Basic Training. The same feeling, as I interpret it is (unofficially) manifest in the wearing of 'medals' (7.4.4, Chapter 7). That said, the wearing of 'medals' is, I noted, deemed to be crucial for internal recognition and consummation of identity as a 'proper' or 'real' Paratrooper.

One can wear all of the above indicators of status and identity, and to the outsider it may appear that the soldier is dressed as what they understand to be a Paratrooper (e.g., red beret, wings, medals). But apparently there is an issue of dress that means you have finally arrived. Unofficially, once a soldier is accepted by his peers (irrespective of medals), he is allowed to 'customise' his personal kit to make it 'Allez' or 'cool.' My point is that many interviewees told me that once 'accepted' (6.5.1, Chapter 6), one is allowed to create an 'individual identity' in what I consider to be an attempt to deviate from the prototypicality inherent in dressing in similar uniforms. This appears to be achieved by personalising beret, facial hair, equipment, weapons and clothing, all under the guise of making it/you more 'professional.' As a soldier becomes (arguably) more 'accepted,' this permitted customisation appears to encourage individuality or, at least, an attempt to stand out from the crowd, as this soldier told me, reflecting the attitude to issued dress items in C Company, 1 Para in the late 1990s: *'some of us would have jungles on. ...You'd look different with your sideburns, overhangs, you'd carry yourself better'* [4: 174-175]. Identity it seems can also be expressed through the display of tattoos, for example: *'we've all got eh, a tattoo that says "Crew of 82"* [2: 180].

Sometimes these have gang-like qualities in which "tattoos [a]re not imposed ...but chosen ...as a means of self-identification, and, often, a symbol of belonging" (http:/shutitdown.net), as this Paratrooper said: *'I've got the tattoo on my arm ...got stamped like everyone does'* [67: 500-501]. I consider these as intimate and symbolic 'tribal' or 'gang-like' connections between a Para's dress and identity that, can occasionally, as some researchers suggest, create the perception that the self does not exist independently of the attire worn (e.g., Negrin, 1999; Silverman, 1986; cf., Dukerich et al., 1999, p.246). Conversely, perceptions of identity as a 'real' Paratrooper can be weakened if an important item of dress and insignia is missing and status is not conferred. Yet, paradoxically, it appears that a need to affiliate (Glynn, 1998) can increase dramatically by its absence. For example:

> 'Everyone else has got their NI medal and you felt and you knew you were going to be there two years before you went to Ireland and you hated getting in your Number 2s because you didn't have that gong. You didn't have it on you and you felt that there was something missing, you weren't a complete Paratrooper' [40: 669-672].

10.5.2 Dress and organisational identity

In the Parachute Regiment, dress and insignia appear to be 'context specific' (Trice and Beyer, 1993) and meaning is interpreted by individuals, both independently and directly from the norms and behavioural codes associated with wearing a particular uniform (Kirke, 2003). For example, different behaviours associated with the wearing of different uniforms, insignia and badges define group membership boundaries (Aldrich, 1999). This is consistent with Humphreys and Brown's (2002, p. 931) suggestion that "dress can be traced to claims that it can legitimate the terrain of the powerful, signal and disguise status differences." Conversely some scholars argue that dress can help re-establish communion, and foster integration (e.g., Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Rosen, 1985). Others record a relationship between conflicting identity narratives and dress, but these tend to be associated with issues of changes to uniforms, primarily affecting the soldier's image of himself (Collins, 1989) and function (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997), where

dress demonstrates membership, or, at least a kind of 'ethnic self-identity' (Crane et al., 2004). This appears to be accomplished through a process of affiliating with the Regiment.

According to Kirke (2003) military people are identified by, and identify with their uniforms and the institutional rules associated with wearing the organisation's uniform makes their status visible. This I understand is accomplished "through rank and mustering. [As] it gives [Paras] a sense of belonging to their particular [Regiment] ...but also to particular subgroups [Battalion, Company, Platoon]. ...Uniform binds people together [and] ...signifies affiliation to a specific group, but also rivalry between groups" (van Wijk, 2003, p.1). In the Paras, this aspect of identification through dress is, I noted, embedded in many 'inter-unit rivalry' and 'coursemanship' stories (see Chapter 11, Conclusion). It appears that Paras tend to focus on the *differences* considered symbolic in the colours of the many 'DZ flashes and Lanyards' (7.4.3, Chapter 7; and Glossary, p.5) which each sub-unit adopts as it's own. My argument here is that within the Regiment, *dress* stories (7.4, Chapter 7) appear to be a declaration of 'who we are' (Pratt, 1998), as a Battalion (Company or Platoon) and the DZ flash colours are used for 'boundary' maintenance (Aldrich, 1999). This statement of 'who we are,' I consider to be prominent in narratives in *dress* (7.4, Chapter 7) stories, in which many interviewees reveal how they also distinguish themselves from each other when in uniform and more importantly, from the rest of the Army by customising their equipment and dress to make it 'allez.'

Furthermore, I have suggested that my interviewees indicate through their *dress* stories you 'are not a Paratrooper until you are dressed as one.' Yet, even when changed from uniform into 'civvies' Paras appear to express a 'need for affiliation' (Glynn, 1998) with each other and the Regiment. For example, when a Paratrooper takes off his: *'baggy green skin. ...You're still there, not always in a Para Reg beret, but you're here, being*

Para Reg' [10: 441-442]. I interpret this to mean that a perceived 'need for organisational identification' (nOID) (Glynn, 1998) is so strong that, as I observed in my service, when dressed in civvies, many Paras tend to dress prototypically (for my generation, this was jeans, sweatshirt and desert boots, affectionately referred to as our 'No.3 Dress'). This phenomenon also includes wearing and displaying the 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5, Chapter 7) in the form of reproduction logos and symbols and messages (and/or visible tattoos) and in addition to identifying with the Regiment, these appear to be used to identify members of the Regiment, past and present.

Dress also appears to be important to Paratroopers' identities in terms of their 'construed internal image' (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). I mentioned that I experienced a period of low morale in the Regiment and that this was over issues of image associated with dress (Berlin, 1977, 2 Para had to hand in their 'Dennison Smocks' (7.4.3 Chapter 7). I have also indicated that I interpret symbolism in Paras' dress to be considered an important statement of 'who we are' (Albert et al., 1998a) and that (apparently) being narcissists, Paras adopt 'ego-defences' (Brown, 1997) to defend against anxieties. Here, I suggest that there are conceptual links to *dress* through anxieties associated with perceived 'violations' (Marks and Scholarios, 2001), of the 'relational' psychological contract. When this kind of attitude is compared to Paras' 'construed external image' (Dukerich et al., 1994), I feel that there is a basis for the 'narcissist' to entertain negative relational categorisations (Elsbach, 1999) of himself and the Regiment, due to incidents where some interviewees complained about forced changes to *dress* (9.6.1, Chapter 9).

In this Section I have addressed some of what I consider to be critical identity constructs inherent in the narratives concerning the symbolism inherent in the wearing of official *dress* (7.4, Chapter 7; cf., Humphreys and Brown, 2002) particularly in the unofficial 'Para Reg brand' (7.4.5, Chapter 7). It appears that identity is conferred on the Paratrooper in stages, bestowed through the awarding of items of dress and insignia

(e.g., red beret, wings, DZ flash and Lanyard, medals). Each signifies that a rite of passage (e.g., 'P' Company, Basic Parachute Course, Passing Out Parade) has been passed. Unofficially, the 'Para Reg Brand' is used to address a perceived need to identify with the Regiment (Glynn, 1998), even when off duty. Apparently, some of the reasons given for doing this is self policing, or, 'boundary maintenance' (Aldrich, 1999) and seeking 'organisational legitimacy' (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) and attempting to impose *differences* (7.3) between units in the Regiment but more generally the focus is on 'other units' (7.3.4, both Chapter 7). However, in my opinion, two main messages emerge from my analysis of the transcripts. One is that you are 'not a Paratrooper until you are dressed as one,' and the second, psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995) and positive relational categorisations (Elsbach, 1999) of 'self' and 'organisation' are associated with 'construed internal image' (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). These it seems can be damaged by perceived 'violations' (Marks and Scholarios, 2001) of the assumed right to wear customised clothing. This, I feel helps explain the high value Paras place on wearing and being seen to wear their 'distinct' attire and 'brand.'

10.6 Conclusion

In this discussion Chapter I have constructed four readings that I consider to be a useful theoretical analysis of my data as presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in this thesis. In 10. 2, I revisited issues of representation and credibility that I raised in Chapter 3, Methodology, and explored this research as an exercise in narcissism. I have indicated that both of my identities (as a Paratrooper and an academic) have changed as a result of me placing myself, reflexively, in this story of identity and identification in the Parachute Regiment. I now feel I identify less as a Para and more as an academic. This, I claim to have experienced as a result of the self-reflexive and therapeutic nature of conducting autoethnographic research. I do not refute the claim of narcissism, rather, I have shown how this 'personality construct' (Carr, 1994) can be a positive force, and, how it can assist greatly with matters of what I consider to be credibility and plausibility

in conducting autoethnographic research. This led me to consider narcissism *per se* in the Parachute Regiment in my second reading, and I found that using Brown's (1997) five ego-defences against anxiety inherent in "individual and social processes of self-esteem regulation" (p.643): denial; rationalisation; self-aggrandisement; attributional egotism; sense of entitlement; also shows that narcissism in the Parachute Regiment is principally an exercise in what I term 'identity maintenance.' I found these type of constructs reinforce the strength of individual and collective identity and identification between Paratroopers and their Regiment. As Brown (1997) highlights, narcissists tend to display anxieties, and in my reading of psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995), I was able to show there are 'weak' *identification* constructs (Elsbach, 1999) through my interpretation of four precursors to psychological contracts (organisational socialisation; inducements; trust; and status (Irving and Bobocel, 2002)). 'Transactional' and 'relational contracts,' when 'balanced' or 'implied' help maintain positive identification through positive relational categorisations (Elsbach, 1999) of Paratroopers and their Regiment. These are sustained by four reciprocal conditions that can affect the strength of *identification* (Elsbach, 1999) (organisational commitment; loyalty; stability; and turnover intentions (Rousseau, 1995, 2000)). Yet, when the 'balance' is disturbed by negative consequences, such as 'breaches' (Robinson, 1995) and 'contract' violations (Marks and Scholarios, 2001), identification becomes weakened and soldiers can end up with damaged careers and discharge. The final reading is my analysis of issues in which dress and identity are assessed through Paras need to identify with their Regiment (Glynn, 1998) through symbolism inherent in the rites of passage (Trice and Beyer, 1993) associated with the Regiment handing out items of dress and insignia at various ceremonies (Kirke, 2003). This is done in stages, either through the wearing of official forms of dress and insignia: 'red beret;' badge of courage;' 'DZ flashes and Lanyards;' and 'medals' and unofficially through displaying the 'Para Reg brand.' Once a soldier had established his identity and been peer reviewed, he is 'allowed' to personalise his dress, facial hair and equipment. In addition, in my opinion, so strong is the symbolism

inherent in the 'Para Reg brand' that many Paras dress prototypically whilst in civvies in order to communicate who they were when off duty and on leave. The 'construed internal image' (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991) Paras have of themselves which I interpreted to be conceptual identification links between narcissism, psychological contracts and dress and identity, indicates that image and reputation appear to be an important identity constructs in the Parachute Regiment.

Finally, there were other readings that I could have constructed using this research. For example, issues of organisational hegemony (Boje, et al., 1999) and power and control (Foucault, 1978) emerged in the transcripts. These are well documented in the military literature, particularly on issues of control and discipline through dress and insignia (e.g., Pfanner, 2004). However, a Foucauldian reading could also have been constructed in reference to psychological contracts and identification as excessive power and control is a feature of many stories about the 'factory' 'crow beasting' and 'discipline and punishment.' Boyce, (1996) suggested organisational stories are "used to develop and sustain corporate culture" (p.10) and other identity constructs may have emerged by constructing a reading of conceptual links between organisational culture, symbolism and identity (Hatch, 1993), particularly in the symbolism inherent in the 'artifacts' of dress and insignia worn by Paratroopers. A useful exercise, I think, would have been exploring in more detail issues in a reading of literary theory, particularly how plots, characterisation and temporal continuity and the genre of fiction help organisation theorists to 'bridge the genres of creative writing' (Watson, 2000). Paras, I believe, construct their narratives using 'fictive imagination' (Kearney, 1995), but I only used these notions as an aid to sensemaking in Paras' stories and story extracts during data analysis. In my defence, word limitation forced me to make the choices I did and so I followed Picasso's advice and 'abandoned the research.'

Chapter 11

Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This Chapter draws together many salient themes that emerged as a result of carrying out this research into stories and storytelling in the Parachute Regiment. First, I provide a summary of the findings of each Chapter. This is followed by an appraisal of my contributions to the linguistic turn in the social sciences and to research into identity and identification in organisations, with an emphasis on the advantages of using a narratological approach. This is followed by a brief review of the limitations of the research and recommendations for future studies.

11.2 Summary of the thesis

This thesis is an exercise in social constructionism (Berger and Luckman, 1967) and is framed within the 'linguistic' turn in the social sciences (Deetz, 2003), in particular the 'narrative turn' (Czarniawska, 1998). The research is interdisciplinary (McAdams, 1996a Watson, 1997) and focuses on narrative approaches (e.g., Boje 2001) to collate and analyse organisational stories (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976) and story fragments (Boje, 1991). The literature on identity focused on the Jamesian (1963) 'I' and 'me' aspects of personality and how personality theorists (e.g., Freud, 1961) and early psychologists' notions of self (Erikson, 1968) led to the understanding of the self as a social construction (Gergen, 1985, 2001). The methodology adopted in this research is based on a phenomenological (Husserl, 1931) interpretive perspective, borrows from a narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984, 1985b), and seeks to interpret qualitative data (Silverman, 2001). It is an autoethnographic representation (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) of myself as an academic and a soldier serving in the Parachute Regiment. Two of my

narrative identities emerged via my interpretations of mine and other Paratroopers stories, using a narratological approach to extract social identity constructs (Brown, 2001).

To be a participant in the research, interviewees had to have been trained by the Regiment. Their stories provided the primary data for the research. Secondary data included cultural artifacts, official and unofficial, as well as a variety of multimedia publications. A pilot study provided a critical assessment of the methodology, in which lessons learned were employed to improve the quality of the main data collection, analysis and presentation. Chapter 4 introduced the organisation at the centre of this research, and provided a summary of it's history from 1940 to 2005 and a review of its formal command structures. A brief introduction to the Territorials, 4 Para (V), and the PRA, two significant parts of the organisation was also presented. The making of a Paratrooper, revealed that successful completion of two tests, 'P' Company and the Basic Parachute Course, were the basic minimum requirement to enter the Regiment. This was followed by a précis of the distinct forms of dress and symbols worn by Paras. My own story, given in Chapter 5, followed my route through the training and experiences that a typical Paratrooper underwent. It also provided a background for the opportunities that led me into becoming an academic and conducting this research.

In Chapters 6 - 8 I presented my data using Albert and Whetten's (1985) identity definition as a framework. In the first category of stories in Chapter 6, *combat*, I showed that the desire for, and coming under effective enemy fire, influenced a 'craving for combat' on two counts: 1) the longing to actually engage in an exchange of fire; and 2) the wish to take part in an heroic action. Two further outcomes emerged: stories of 'contacts' and 'courage.' *Combat* was generally said to be a brutal experience, as opposed to a fantasy nurtured through the narrativisation of the notion of romantic and epic idealised heroes. *Pressure* stories, explored the relationships between continually

being able to do the job and maintaining the minimum standards of 'physical fitness.' This required 'determination' and 'resilience.' Every Para had to 'conquer fear' and a central concern was that Paras strove to be 'ready for anything.' *Bonding* stories were also central and 'acceptance' and 'camaraderie and friendship,' stories were built on a 'trust' learned during Basic Training. Without 'trust,' Paratroopers would not be prepared to carry out the tasks that were expected of them. When Paras went 'drinking' they sometimes ended up 'fighting,' often amongst themselves. *Bonding* and mutual respect could be lifelong, and every Paratrooper was automatically made a member of the 'brotherhood' upon completion of their Basic Parachute Course.

Chapter 7 defined distinctive stories I termed *difference*, *dress* and *macho*. *Difference* stories focused mainly on using the Army in general, especially the Infantry as a benchmark of the quality that Paras were to exceed. Two distinct tests of character and endurance: ''P' Company,' which had to be passed; and 'parachuting,' underpinned this perception. One significant aspect was that Paras considered themselves to be better soldiers. In *dress* stories I looked at five items of clothing and inherent symbolism that Paras suggested were important to them. The 'red beret' and wings or 'badge of courage' were most important (although some considered their wings more important than the beret), because they are apparently considered more symbolic of being a 'Paratrooper.' 'Para Smocks' and 'DZ flashes and Lanyards' were items of clothing (arguably) unique to the Regiment. The award of 'medals' meant Paras tended to regard themselves as different because they were awarded them more frequently than their Infantry counterparts. The 'Para Reg brand,' both served the same primary functions as identity constructs, and advertised who and what Paras were whilst off duty. The 'aggressive,' 'tough guy,' 'hardman' image of the *macho* stories were three points of a triangle of attributes and characteristics that Paras said they needed to have, to live up to in their construed internal and external image and reputation. However, there was a

tendency to play this down as an individual and point to other Paras as more worthy of that identity.

In Chapter 8, enduring stories, *tradition*, suggested that Paras thought that the 'standards' that were set when the Regiment was first formed, were still being met. This was underpinned by a culture of 'teaching and learning,' in which skills and knowledge were handed down from soldier to soldier. I found 'history' to be a powerful motivating force in the Paras' search for full identity as 'proper' Paratroopers. 'History' provided a foundation for an 'elitism' which was also supported, in part, by the fact that many of the interviewees expressed a 'pride and honour' in both themselves, and the Regiment. *Qualities* stories explored connections to the distinctive attributes of *macho* stories. The 'type of person' did not hesitate under fire, and was still being recruited in 2005. That 'type of person' also demonstrated 'Airborne initiative,' learning and developing problem-solving capabilities. *Tragedy* stories delved into the darker side of being a Para. There were two types, 'injury and maiming' reported the enduring nature of injuries and there were occasions where the impact of being 'maimed' brought a career to a sudden end. Three issues emerged from stories about 'death'. Many Paras were witnesses to the death of close friends, and their stories were mostly about coping with the aftermath, especially through the use of 'black' humour.

Chapter 9 concerned my analysis of forms of cognitive connectedness (Elsbach, 1999). 'Strong' *identification* stories highlighted positive relational categorisations of the Paratrooper and Regiment and 'weak' *identification* stories the negative. There were three categories of stories with a temporal theme running through the 'strong' *identification* stories: *pre*; *active*; and *retro-identification*. In *pre-identification*, the potential Paratrooper entered into a phase of cognitive connectedness with individuals through blood ties, close friends and encounters with ex-Paratroopers. *Pre-identification* was the time when Paras learned the 'history and reputation' of the Regiment before

enlistment. Some had their first encounter with the Regiment during the recruitment process. *Active-identification* referred to instances where the Paratrooper identified as a member of the Regiment. These stories focused on a positive relational categorisation of self and upholding the Regiment's 'reputation,' particularly in public. *Retro-identification* took a retrospective look back at how it felt to be part of the Regiment. There were two important issues here, and both related to feelings of regret: the effects of leaving service (versus the claim that you never leave); and nostalgia (retired Paras still wanted to be with their brothers because they were missing the 'family'). 'Weak' (or negative) *identification* stories, were arranged in three categories of: *dis*, *schizo*; and *neutral identification*, in which there was evidence of an active sense of separation and a negative relational categorisation of the Paratrooper and his organisation. *Disidentification* stories were clustered around 'bullshit,' 'bullying and thuggery,' and 'low morale' and some interviewees distanced themselves from what they considered to be 'repressive regimes.' Being 'wounded' (or injured) often caused a negative relational categorisation that could end up with 'discharge.' Being placed in what an individual considered to be the 'wrong job' could have the same result. Interviewees who 'married' often had too many postings away from home for their liking. For some, that too, ended with premature discharge. *Schizo-identification* stories suggested that there were occasions where an interviewee simultaneously experienced 'strong' and 'weak' *identification* with the Regiment. *Neutral-identification* stories mostly concerned Recruits who were in between ''P' Company' and their 'jumps course,' as these were occasions where they could neither *identify* nor *disidentify*. They were times when Paratroopers could experience 'identity burn-out' from the *pressure* of being constantly 'ready for anything.'

In Chapter 10, Discussion, I conducted four readings of the data. First, I revisited the issues of representation and credibility that had been raised in the methodology Chapter. A criticism of the autoethnographic approach is that it may be an exercise in 'self-

indulgence' (Coffey, 1999), which I consider to be valid, as my voice is a part of this thesis. It may be that this is perceived as a weakness as my narcissistic tendencies may have resulted in my voice being too loud. This is something I cannot judge but I hold up the quality of my analysis and interpretation of the transcripts and my ability to 'fill in the gaps' between 'narrative fragments' (Gabriel, 2000). and 'terse stories' (Boje, 1991) as arbiter. Other criticisms concern issues of representation. Some scholars claim interpretive research (therefore autoethnography) is not 'objective' (e.g., Easton, 1992). In Chapter 2, I have argued (and hopefully demonstrated in my subsequent Chapters) that taking a 'rational world paradigm' (Fisher, 1987) is not a suitable ontological and epistemological methodology for eliciting identity constructs from stories and story extracts. In addition, because I took an autoethnographic approach to this research, using a 'narrative paradigm' (Fisher, 1984, 1985ab), I feel the quality of my interviews and interpretation of the transcripts benefited from my insider knowledge. I may have not been able to provide an analysis of the same depth and quality using the metaphor of an 'objective lens' as described by Gioia (1998).

I have indicated that both of my identities (as a Paratrooper and as an academic) have changed as a result of my reflexive position in this research. I now identify less as a Para and more as an academic. I feel that I now draw more from the positive aspect of being a Paratrooper than I ever did. I like the way in which I can be determined and resilient if I want to achieve my goals in life. One of them was to become an academic and as this identity has developed over the four years of this research, I have noticed changes in me. I have found a new way of communicating with people, taken a journey full of determination and resilience and achieved more than I hoped for. In 10.4, Chapter 10, I suggested narcissism could be a positive force. I feel that by being so, this has assisted me with conducting autoethnographic research. Using Brown's (1997) notion of ego-defences: denial; rationalisation; self-aggrandisement; attributional egotism; sense of entitlement; in defence of anxiety, I showed that narcissists in the Parachute Regiment

appeared to have reinforced narcissistic identity constructs in the Regiment. So much so that the Regiment itself displayed narcissistic tendencies, which in turn fed back to the identity of the individual in a virtuous circle. A reading of psychological contracts in the Parachute Regiment showed that Irving and Bobocel's (2002) four precursors to achieving a balanced psychological contract: organisational socialisation; inducements; trust; and status, helped form 'transactional' and 'relational' contracts (Rousseau, 1995). These, when 'balanced,' (Rousseau, 2000) or 'implied' (Watson, 2001) helped to maintain positive relational characterisations between Paras and their Regiment. In addition, the reading highlighted four reciprocal conditions (Rousseau, 2000) that were indicative of this perceived 'balanced' state of psychological contract: organisational commitment; loyalty; stability; and turnover intentions. Similarly (when 'balanced'), these reciprocal relationships also affected the strength of *identification*. Some negative consequences, such as contract 'breaches' (Robinson, 1995) and 'violations' (Marks and Scholarios, 2001), weakened *identification* and could also result in damaged careers and discharge. Issues of dress and identity were assessed through Paras' strongly perceived need to *identify* with their Regiment (Glynn, 1998). This was clearly enhanced in the individual through the symbolism inherent in the many rites of passage associated with the handing out dress and insignia in various stages. This was mostly done in ceremonies in which the: 'red beret;' 'badge of courage;' DZ flashes and Lanyards;' and 'medals' were handed out to the successful candidates. Unofficially, the same needs to identify encouraged the wearing of the 'Para Reg brand.' The symbolism inherent in this 'Para Reg brand' was also very strong and Paras tended to dress prototypically whilst in civvies.

11.3 Contribution to knowledge

I found that using an interpretive 'lens' (Gioia, 1998) with which to elucidate the social construction of organisational identities in the Parachute Regiment was a useful epistemological tool. Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity

as that which member's consider to be central, distinctive and enduring about their organisation was supported by the data from which these identity constructs emerged. Similarly, and in addition, the application of Elsbach's (1999) model of organisational identification enabled me to adequately conduct an empirical exploration of narrative issues related to identity and identification. There are few such studies, and I feel I have made a valuable contribution through this research. Hopefully, I have clearly demonstrated that stories and story extracts are a valuable medium through which to investigate organisational identity. This was significantly helped by the application of literary conventions (Currie, 1998). Both genre (Czarniawska, 1998) and emplotment, characterisation, and temporal continuity (Myrsiades, 1987) were important to my analysis in terms of contextualising themes in the transcripts. I employed the rules of writing fiction (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995) in writing "this piece of social science writing" (Watson, 2000, p. 59), and this helped me understand when a story was being told. This process involved me using my 'narrative imagination to fill in the gaps' (Dunne, 1995) between 'narrative fragments' (Barry, 1997) and to complete 'terse stories' (Boje, 1991) from interviewees' autobiographical accounts (Sims, 1993). By using the notions of emplotment, characterisation and temporal continuity I was able to make sense of the interviewees' narratives in terms of further contextualising them for identity constructs and subsequently to categorise them. As part of this process, I was also able to comprehend the storytelling event (Georges, 1969) *in situ* and thus interpret what the narrator was alluding to in their story. This was a crucial part of the interpretation process as I have shown throughout Chapters 6,7, 8 and 9, that central, distinct and enduring stories and story extracts can simultaneously contain elements of both Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition and Elsbach's (1999) model of identification. Autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) was an appropriate and valuable method of representation, one that ultimately helped me to translate the interviewees' stories into a narrative organisational identity (Czarniawska, 1998). My methodology, I feel, was consistent with modern narratological approaches to

researching identity in organisations (e.g., Humphreys and Brown, 2002). Therefore, I feel this research makes a contribution to the literature as an exercise in establishing the facility of this type of narratological approach to identity and identification in organisation studies and research (Brown, 2001).

Storytelling in the Regiment serves more than a social function (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1975). When considered as a whole, Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organisational identity proved to be a satisfactory vehicle with which to collate into themes and issues. Albert (1998a) highlighted perspectival problems with any metadefinition of organisational identity, nevertheless, Ashforth (1998b) described identification as a process of 'becoming' (as opposed to 'being' (e.g., Glynn, 1998)). This 'becoming' is consistent with Tajfel and Turner's (1985) Social Identity Theory. Albert and Whetten (1985) and Elsbach (1999) also proved to be adequate frameworks in which to organise the identity constructs elicited from narrative fragments in the transcripts. I also observed that organisational image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1999) and reputation (Fombrun and Shanley, 1996) appear to reciprocally affect each other. In my opinion, these constructs are inextricably linked to organisational identification (Dutton et al., 1994), and therefore, this research into collective identity would have been incomplete without studying them (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998).

In my reading of narcissism, I suggested that there was a virtuous circle that existed between the Paratrooper and Regiment. This may help explain why the emergence of the notion that narrative identity and organisational narrative identity share the same social constructions (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1996). In the reading on dress and identity, I suggested that identity was 'handed out' in stages by the Regiment. This demonstrates that narrative identities are constituted and reconstituted in, and over, time (Somers, 1994) and are existentially revealed through the narrative mediation of self-knowledge (Ricoeur, 1991). For example, 'I am a Paratrooper now, I must be, I am wearing the

uniform.' In addition, I found that Ricoeur's (1991) conceptualisation of *ipse* (selfhood) and *idem* (identity) are consistent with James' (1963) conceptualisation of the 'I' and 'me' relationship between self and identity. It appears that narrating identity shapes personal identity by revealing the durable character (e.g., Dunne, 1995) correlative to emplotment, temporally revealed through narrative, in conjunction with the 'Other' (Mead, 1934). The life story (McAdams, 1996a,b) or autobiographical genre (Sims, 1993) is also consistent with literary theory because lives, too, have a beginning, middle and end (Cox and Lyddon, 1997). If people have a sense of continuity in an ever changing life story, so too do organisations because they are the daily subjective creations of people (Evered, 1983). From this, I deduce that an organisational narrative identity is a psycho-social construction (McAdams, 1996a; Polkinghorne, 1996) interpreted by a narratological approach such as this into the organisation as an ongoing story (Czarniawska, 2004).

11.4 What is missing?

Importantly, this research is not an exercise in providing the literature on narrative identity with a 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This is because I am seeking to contribute to the literature on methodology and representation by demonstrating how this type of narratological approach (Brown, 2001) can be effective in terms of empirical research. This in effect means that this thesis is subject to my own reflexivity in deciding what to include and what to leave out. Another in-depth analysis may reveal a different story. I have shown throughout this thesis that my methodology was appropriate for me to elicit narrative identity constructs in the Parachute Regiment from some of its soldiers' narratives. The integrity of the research is, therefore, in the narrative coherence and fidelity of the thesis itself. There are no female Paratroopers (although the Regimental and Battalion HQs are staffed with women clerks). Women perform administration tasks and do not soldier with the men. Therefore, this research cannot be taken as symptomatic of organisations in general. Another glaring omission is

why did I not interview anyone who had failed to pass either of the two tests ('P' Company and Parachuting)? The reason is that I could not find anyone who would admit to failure! Those interviewees that did, all returned to try again and were obviously successful as they would not have met my necessary and sufficient conditions to be part of this research (3.3.1, Chapter 3), which paradoxically strengthens our claim to uniqueness.

In the process of analysing the transcripts and categorising stories, many more themes emerged than I had space to include here. Many story categories and types contained other interdependent as well as independent identity constructs, and many of the characteristics introduced here follow on throughout the stories in Chapters 6 - 9 and vice-versa. For example, other types of centrality stories emerged. Being 'special,' or 'unique;' the pursuit of 'excellence' in all that Paras do, 'coursemanship' or the pressure to beat other units at everything and 'black humour,' the dark but (often subversive) hilarious compensation for so much pain encountered in the Paras. There were also other themes that were not included in this analysis, for example, I mentioned Staple Belts (7.4, Chapter 7) but we also wore our uniforms and carried our kit differently than other soldiers in other units as in the many references to being 'allez.' By this I mean Paras consider themselves *different* from other soldiers. because the vast majority of Infantry units wear and use standard issue kit, but in the Paras, soldiers personalise theirs in order to be more professional in the field. The 'ready for anything' ethos and being 'professional' was often cited as the rationale for this. For example, the Army carried standard issue packs, Paras carried Bergens (Daysacks) because standard issue packs were not robust enough for carrying heavy weight over distances and more practically were considered unsuitable for packing into a parachute container. There were other 'allez' stories about looking good in all this different 'switched on' kit. Direct comparisons with 'Craphats' also featured as did complaints about their standards of 'professionalism,' and their 'soldiering' that were supposedly 'inferior.' There were

categories of enduring themes that I considered, for example, the 'Regimental March,' *Ride of the Valkyries*, a source of intense *identification* amongst many of the Paras I interviewed. For example, one interviewee put it on and started marching up and down his living room after our interview, many more verbalised the opening bars of the first score as soon as I mentioned it. Additionally, I could have said more about 'scars and scarring,' in the same light as (minor) 'injuries,' as there were several good narratives on being 'scarred' for life due to service in the Regiment. Finally, 'attending funerals' of dead Paras was a notable set of narratives, though these were mostly given in connection with questions about attitudes to 'religion.'

11.5 Recommendations for future research

This thesis has yielded a conference paper, Thornborrow and Brown (2005) which focuses on how individuals can construct aspired to identities. During my pilot study, I started to use McAdams (1996a) three level frame work to analyse the transcripts for psycho-social constructs before adopting Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition for presentation of the data and I feel this framework can be usefully implemented to present such data to see what it 'can and can not do' (McAdams, 1996b) in terms of a narratological approach to researching organisational identity constructs in stories. There is scope for future research into the story types indicated above. For example ideas such as 'black humour' and 'tattoos,' especially in terms of reinforcing identity. It is debatable as to whether another autoethnographic study of the Regiment would further illuminate how Paras construct their organisational identity through narratives. A major strength of this thesis is my methodology. I have shown that an autoethnographic approach can, and does, provide the researcher with a unique insight into their organisation (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). By adopting an autoethnographic approach (Humphreys 2005a), I was able to ask myself at the beginning of this research, 'what is it about me, that makes me identify so strongly with an organisation I retired from in 1982?' This allowed me to construct appropriate questions for the semi-structured

interviews. My own experiences in the Regiment, I maintain, allowed me a deeper insight and understanding of the research organisation, simply because I am so familiar with it. On the other hand, it may have blinded me. The main strength of this research is that as an insider and 'brother,' I already had the trust of those men and was able to gain access to an organisation that other researchers may have experienced more difficulty obtaining. This, I feel, makes this thesis more valuable, in that my research may be a catalyst for follow up research into, for example the processes of socialisation (Kirke, 2003; Van Maanen, 1973, 1979) in the Regiment. More research using the same data set could be initiated into the apparent links between narcissism, dress, psychological contracts and identity that emerged in Chapter 10. This may reveal other interesting identity and identification constructs in organisations. I mentioned in my conclusion to my discussion Chapter (10) two other significant readings that I omitted due to word limit. Here I return to these issues of hegemony, power, authority and control (Boje, et al., 1999), and literary theory (Currie, 1998) and suggest that these would be ideal candidates for follow up research publications using a narratological approach (Brown, 2001) to analysing the same data set. This thesis, I believe makes a contribution to the literature on narrative approaches to identity in organisations and was made by me simultaneously studying myself. I found that I was identifying both as a Para and potential academic and my personal feelings and emotions (Ellis, 1991, 1993) drove this research in a positive direction. As Watson (2001) says (I hope), this has allowed me to write with imagination, flair, creativity and an aesthetic sense. Future researchers, adopting a narratological approach to identity in organisations, should take confidence from my efforts

11.6 Conclusion

This Chapter brings to a conclusion all that I have told in my story of how I conceived, constructed, carried out and reported my research into identity in my tribe, the Parachute Regiment, featuring me, Thomas Thornborrow, as the narrator. I have sequentially

outlined the major points in each Chapter, evaluated their (and my) contribution to the linguistic turn in the social sciences, and similarly, my contribution to research into the construction of narrative identities and identification in organisations. I confessed what I could have done and what I missed out that I felt was also significant, and finally, have made some recommendations for future research.

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