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Gender & Diversity in the British Army's campaigns to recruit a 'new' generation

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Wien, 08.02.2021

Lilian Häge 

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1. Introduction

Where do we look to understand how the military constructs itself and in turn shapes how society is ordered? Sometimes looking can be taken quite literal: annually at the beginning of January, the British Army launches its campaign to recruit new personnel, spending millions on marketing and advertising. Posters, imagery and video clips are released along other materials to establish the British Army visually as a brand and influence young people's decision-making in favour of a military career.¹ Through recruitment advertisements, the military can repackage its identity and market it off to consumers, representing an occupation essentially structured around violence as not only another but the *best* career on the market. Meanwhile, on an analytical level, taking a closer look at the polished packaging of recruitment advertisements can offer valuable insights into military practices and ideals that continue to shape society in terms of gender, diversity, belonging and national identity even beyond the military context. What kind of imagery does the British Army use in its campaigns? Who is depicted in those images, and what messages about the Army and being a soldier are conveyed to potential recruits? How does the military communicate its message visually to a civil audience to spark interest in a military career? And how do these images go with the time to appeal to new generations with changing ideals?

What I will do in the thesis at hand is take the literal closer look at the campaigns of 2019 and 2020 with a focus on gender and diversity. Through a visual approach, I will discuss representations of soldiering bodies, highlighting changes as well as consistencies, and what that reveals about how the military seeks to create continued relevancy for itself within society. When the British Army launched its recruitment campaign in 2019 using the slogan *Your Army needs You*, the posters were controversially debated. Using portraits of soldiers of different genders and with diverse ethnic backgrounds, the framing phrases appealed to 'Snowflakes', 'Phone Zombies', 'Selfie Addicts' or 'Me Me Me Millennials'. Then the insults meant to describe a self-obsessed and overly sensitive generation of young people were flipped on their head through a positive attribute. Every insult was paired with a quality that was meant

¹ See Louise, Rhianna/ Sangster, Emma. 2019. *Selling the Military: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Recruitment Marketing in the UK*. Report. London: ForcesWatch/ MedAct. p.12. Across all three military services in the UK, £27 million are spent on recruitment each year. The production of the Army's 2018 campaign This is belonging amounted to £1.6 million for adverts and associated content.

to reclaim the phrase and turn it into a characteristic of good soldiering. One of the creative heads at the *Karmarama* PR agency which has been developing the recent recruitment advertisements said about the campaign's aim that they were not afraid of backlash, but instead that "our job [is to] create a massive amount of noise"². Indeed, the campaign sparked a controversy and received backlash in the media. It was called an "assault on modern masculinity"³, and the Scots Guardsman, whose image was used on the 'Snowflake' poster, threatened to leave the Army after reportedly receiving ridicule and harassment⁴. Shortly after the campaign was revealed, the posters were heatedly debated online,⁵ and memes appeared on Social Media, mocking the slogans by replacing them, with one example reading "Any F***er, your Army needs you – We're desperate"⁶. The "massive amount of noise" seemed to work. Numbers later revealed that the campaign drew the highest recruitment numbers since the Army outsourced to the recruitment firm *Capita* in 2012, with a plus of 1000 recruits in the first quarter compared to 2018.⁷ The 2020 campaign – released the same month the UK left the European Union – then seemed to echo this "success" in total numbers with the highest number of applicants in a single day only four days after the campaign launched and reaching its recruitment target by March of 2020.⁸ According to the private recruiting firm *Capita*, the

² Adam Kean, *Karmarama*, cited in: Contagious. 16.01.2020. "Why Army recruitment ads chase snowflakes not thrill-seekers". In: *Contagious/ Insight& Strategy*. <https://www.contagious.com/news-and-views/army-confidence-campaign-drives-record-recruitment-contagious-insight-strategy>. Accessed: 15.11.2020.

³ Stewart, Rebecca. 20.03.2019. „Those British Army 'Snowflake' ads have encouraged the most new recruits in years". In: *The Drum*. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/03/20/those-british-army-snowflake-ads-have-encouraged-the-most-new-recruits-years>. Accessed: 24.10.2020.

⁴ See Drewett, Zoe. 06.01.2019. „Soldier 'to quit Army' after his face is used in snowflake advert". In: *Metro*. <https://metro.co.uk/2019/01/06/soldier-quit-army-face-used-snowflake-advert-8314549/>. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

⁵ See O'Loughlin, Kit. 12.01.2019. "The British Army's recent recruitment advert is embarrassingly out of touch". In: *The Oxford Student*. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2019/01/12/the-british-armysrecent-recruitment-advert-is-embarrassingly-out-of-touch/>. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

⁶ Mailonline Reporter. 04.01.2019. "Any f*****, we're desperate!': Furious soldiers take aim at Army's new £1.5m recruitment drive calling on Snowflakes and Phone Zombies". In: *Daily Mail UK*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6557031/Soldiers-aim-Armys-new-recruitment-drivecalling-Snowflakes-sign-up.html>. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

⁷ See Stewart. 20.03.2019.

⁸ See Watson, Imogen. 01.07.2020. „British Army campaign attracts record recruits, reaching annual target by March". In: *The Drum*. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/07/01/british-army-campaign-attracts-record-recruits-reaching-annual-target-march>. Accessed: 16.11.2020. However, given the Covid-19 Pandemic one should be very careful to ascribe these numbers to any sort of advertising.

campaign received 310 pieces of international media coverage in the first month alone⁹, an indicator to the reach the Army's message can create outside of military circles.

The *Army Confidence* campaign of 2020, launched the same month as the UK exited the EU, visually stands out against the previous campaigns in depicting fragmented body parts that apparently have nothing to do with the military, but everything with harmful beauty and body ideals in society. Although soon overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic which quickly changed the recruitment message, I argue that this seemingly divergent campaign has the potential to reveal even more about the juxtaposition between military and civil society and the way that is communicated through the body.

Without further specific research into the recruitment process itself and contributing factors like Brexit insecurity and in 2020, anxiety about the future in a global pandemic, it would be premature to interpret increasing numbers in applications as a direct consequence of successful advertising, but the point of the thesis at hand is not to assess either campaign in terms of success. Recruitment is here not simply understood as the process by which the Army makes sure that it remains functional by acquiring the needed 'manpower'. It is also regarded as the process by which the military constitutes itself through defining who can be a soldier and thus, a protector of the state, and by communicating itself to civil society. The underlying argument is that recruitment campaigns provide an interface between the military and civil society and thus have the potential to reveal important insights into how the military constructs itself. Looking at the campaigns of recent years, what are some of the findings? While the British Army chose to retain its slogan "Be the Best" despite the motto being more and more critiqued as "dated, elitist and non-inclusive"¹⁰, recruitment campaigns have seemingly shifted strongly in their message towards a more diverse, inclusive representation of Army life. In 2018, the Army's *This is belonging* campaign created a controversy around the military "bowing to political correctness"¹¹, with the campaign's focus being on diversity regarding gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and faith. Animated video advertisements

⁹ See Capita. 08.10.2020. „Capita and the British Army winning together“. In: *Capita*. <https://www.capita.com/our-thinking/capita-and-british-army-winning-together>. Accessed: 15.01.2021.

¹⁰ Beale, Jonathan. 10.01.2018. „New Army recruitment adverts 'won't appeal to new soldiers'“. In: *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42629529>. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

¹¹ Weaver, Matthew. 10.01.2018. „Army accused of political correctness in recruitment campaign“. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jan/10/army-accused-of-politicalcorrectness-in-recruitment-campaign>. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

featured voice-overs of soldiers positively answering questions that diverted from the traditional military messaging, such as “Can I be gay in the army?”; “What if I get emotional in the army?”; “Can I practise my faith in the army?”; or “Do I have to be a superhero to join the army?”.¹² Confronted with critique claiming the Army had gone soft and failed to address its traditional audiences, the refutation was that target audiences had evolved with changing demographics within society. Traditionally, the British Army largely relied on White, (cis-gender¹³ and heterosexual) male recruits between the ages of 16-25. Yet the steady decline of those potential recruits and a mix of external pressure to conform to European Union human rights standards and equality, plus the Army’s drive to be seen as a modern, open, and diverse institution, have led to intensified recruitment of so-called ‘non-traditional’ groups. The goal is to represent the Army as an inclusive employer who has something to offer.¹⁴ A special focus is here on women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)¹⁵, with a 2015 Strategic Defence Review setting the goal to “increase female personnel to 15% of total intake by 2020, and BAME personnel to at least 10%, with an eventual target to 20%”¹⁶.

To do so, the Army committed a budget of £1.3 billion over ten years to recruitment, entering into a £495 million contract with the recruiting firm *Capita* in 2012, spending millions annually on increasingly sophisticated advertising and marketing campaigns.¹⁷ These use traditional as well as new media to market the Army as a desirable and unique employer to an

¹² See Weaver. 10.01.2018.

¹³ Identifying with the gender ascribed at birth.

¹⁴ See Contagious. 16.01.2020.

¹⁵ BAME is an abbreviation most commonly used in the UK to refer to people who are not White. See BAME, in: Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bame>. Accessed: 15.01.2021. The term is widely used by institutions, the media and others, and it is the term the British Army uses to describe anyone who is not regarded as White. It is however important to point out that the term is contested and a foreign appellation which conflates highly diverse backgrounds and experiences. It puts a focus on skin colour that creates a binary between White and anything “other than” White, centring Whiteness as the norm. See Bunglawala, Zamila. 08.07.2019. “Please, don’t call me BAME or BME!”. In: Civil Service/ Gov.UK. <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2019/07/08/please-dont-call-me-bame-or-bme/>. Accessed: 15.01.2021. Other terms are BME (Black and Minority Ethnic), non-White (a term that is highly controversial and which I will only use to highlight instances in which a clear dichotomy between Whiteness and anything “other than” is established to make this binary visible) and BIPOC, BPOC or POC, which stand for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. I will generally follow the suggestions by Bunglawala.

¹⁶ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.11.

¹⁷ See Committee of Public Accounts. 2019. *Capita’s contracts with the Ministry of Defence*. Eightieth Report of Session 2017–19. House of Commons. In: Publications/ Parliament.uk. PDF: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1736/1736.pdf>. Retrieved: 19.01.2021.

audience as young as 15 years old.¹⁸ Often far from the realities of military life, violence and war, these campaigns have garnered more attention within academic discourses. Branding war and the use of force as a desirable career option that is self-fulfilling and furthers individual development is often critiqued for “deception and for stoking up nationalism and militarism”¹⁹. Louise and Sangster (2019) for example argue that in the previous campaign of 2018, Army life is put on a pedestal compared to civilian life, which in turn is presented as having no prospects.²⁰ Furthermore, the authors find that “[t]he Army’s high-profile launches suggest not only a willingness to push boundaries, and even to court controversy, but also to have an influence in society that is far wider than the recruitment target audience”²¹. Gender and diversity have become two of the main pillars that carry the Army’s message, but the message is not restricted to the military. Duncanson (2015), following a long tradition of feminist scholars, for example, points out that “[c]onstrutions of masculinity and femininity in the military context arguably shape the entire gender order”²². And with regard to diversity, Manchanda and Higate (2019) not only see the positive message and appeal of the campaigns, drawing in people “from all sections of British society, and in a time of rising Islamophobia, misogyny, homophobia and hate crime, [presenting] the Army as a truly diverse and cosmopolitan force”²³; but the authors also point to the dangers of the campaigns glossing over persisting problems of sexism and racism.²⁴

In addition to focusing more on recruitment campaigns to understand military constructions and processes of militarisation, the visual aspect of military messaging has received increased attention. Visuality has become an important denominator in military and security studies. “[T]he visual is absolutely central to the issues that define and drive security [...]

¹⁸ See Contagious. 16.01.2020; and Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.12. Channels for advertisement include traditional media like print, radio, television, billboards and posters; new media like social media, podcasts, YouTube, digital displays etc.; as well as partnerships with brands and personal contact campaigns in schools, sports events and the like. See Contagious. 16.01.2020.

¹⁹ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.7.

²⁰ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.22.

²¹ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.4.

²² Duncanson, Claire. 2015. “Hegemonic Masculinity and the Possibility of Change in Gender Relations”. In: *Men and Masculinities*, Vol.18/2. p.231–248. p.232.

²³ Manchanda, Nivi/ Higate, Paul. 2019. „Colour, gender, religion: there’s more than political correctness to the new British Army recruitment campaign”. Contribution in: Louise/ Sangster. *Selling the Military: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Recruitment Marketing in the UK*. Report. London: ForcesWatch/ MedAct. p.30-31. p.30.

²⁴ See Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.31.

Every aspect of security, from terrorist attacks to civil wars and border controls, contains visual dimensions, which, in turn, inevitably become political. [...] They reach from the state level to the everyday and cover all visual dimensions”²⁵. Recruitment advertising is one of these dimensions. Here, the style has more and more adapted to methods and narrative styles used in film and entertainment, to create affinity with the featured ‘hero’ (real or constructed), thus putting more focus on the individual and the way they are represented.²⁶ With the focus on recruiting a more diverse pool of potential soldiers, the question arises how ‘traditional’ ideals like military masculinity are represented, and how the focus on a more diverse audience has transformed these representations to include ‘new’ representations of the potential soldier. A more in-depth analysis of the visual aspects of the recruitment campaigns can reveal how more diverse representations are put to use to communicate the military as a progressive institution, how these representations in turn shape images of masculinity, femininity and diversity, and how the Army constructs itself in opposition to society.

1.1. Research Interest and Research Questions

I first came across the British Army’s recruitment campaign while listening to a podcast in January of 2019, where the new campaign was discussed for its controversy. Research on the subject for a course paper on image construction quickly showed how widely debated and medially received the *Your Army Needs You* campaign was in the UK, and what an impact the military advertisements seemed to have within wider society. It became clear that the imagery had a lot to reveal about the Army in various contexts. This prompted me one year later when choosing a subject for my thesis research coincided with the release of the next campaign, to want to take a closer look at both campaigns and see how the messaging was evolving. After having featured portrays of real-life soldiers in uniform one year, followed by the choice to feature fragmented, un-uniformed, bare-skinned body parts the next year, a comparison of both campaigns promised new insights into old, and yet timely questions.

²⁵ Bleiker, Roland. 2018. “Visual security: Patterns and prospects”. In: Vuori, Juha A/ Saugmann Andersen, Rune (Ed.). *Visual Security Studies, Visual Security Studies*. London/ New York: Routledge. p.189-200. p.189.

²⁶ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.15.

The research ties into questions left open from earlier analyses of British recruitment campaigns of previous years, predating 2019. Two aspects are highlighted that provide an important lens and the framework for analysing the recent campaigns of 2019 and 2020: military masculinity, and diversity. The thesis takes findings that suggest changing conceptions of military masculinities²⁷, broadening them to include emerging constructions of military femininities, and combines them with concerns over stereotyping of diversity²⁸ as a starting point to analyse how the British Army seeks to recruit a 'new' generation. Taking both, the gender, and diversity aspect of earlier findings into account, I want to follow up on these arguments from a visual studies perspective.

Taking a first look at the campaign posters, it seems that depicting more diverse men and women continues to play an important part in the Army's messaging. Both campaigns feature bodies in some form or another to communicate their message. It seems to me that gender and diversity cannot be separated in how the Army constructs 'new' types of soldiers, which makes an approach that considers the intersectionality of 'difference' necessary. All the various concepts come together in the body. Henry (2017) suggests to "probe deeper into what militarised masculinities look like and how they come into being"²⁹. I want to follow that on-set and use visual context analysis to deduct how ideas of (military) masculinity, femininity and diversity are projected onto the bodies displayed in the British Army's advertisement campaigns of 2019 and 2020 and negotiated with the backdrop of military recruitment to create relevance for the Army. Thus, I have formulated three research questions to guide me through the analysis of depictions of the (soldiering) body in the current recruitment drive:

- I. How does the British Army represent the soldiering body in their latest recruitment campaigns (2019/2020) in terms of gender and diversity?
- II. How are constructs of military masculinity, femininity and diversity mapped onto the body?

²⁷ See Jester, Natalie. 2019. "Army Recruitment Video Advertisements in the US and UK since 2002: Challenging Ideals of Hegemonic Military Masculinity?". In: *Media, War and Conflict*. Sage Publications. p.1-18. p.14.

²⁸ See Lousie/ Sangster. 2019. p.4.

²⁹ Henry, Marsha. 2017. "Problematizing Military Masculinity, Intersectionality and Male Vulnerability in Feminist Critical Military Studies". In: *Critical Military Studies* Vol.3/ 2. London/ New York: Routledge. p.182-199. Retrieved: LSE Research Online. PDF: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/79648/>. 01.10.20. p.13. [The LSE PDF does not show the page number; therefore, pages are cited as counted in the PDF document].

- III. How are thus ideas of military masculinity, femininity and diversity adapted, transformed, or challenged to recruit a new generation of soldiers? How do these ideals in turn reflect on civil society and create continued relevancy for the military?

1.2.State of the art

Two of the most recent works on the British Army's recruitment campaigns which I have previously referenced as relevant starting points are those of Jester (2019) and Louise and Sangster (2019). In her analysis of recruitment campaigns between 2002 and 2018, Jester discusses changes in the construction and representation of military masculinity in the British Army. She concludes that the so-called 'recruitment crisis' has made way for more diverse constructions of gender which do not neatly conform to hegemonic masculinity, depicting the Army as an inclusive team in which women and servicemembers of Colour are equal to the traditional White, male soldier.³⁰ With regard to prospective campaigns, thus offering a starting point for the thesis at hand, she notes that "[i]t will be interesting, therefore, to see if the British Army continues to offer a challenge to hegemonic masculine ideals, or whether it will revert to the more hegemonically masculine representations within their earlier advertisements"³¹. Diversity is more in-depth discussed in the second relevant study by Louise and Sangster (2019), *Selling the military*, which offers a comprehensive analysis of contemporary military marketing practices in the UK. In it, the authors voice their concern of tokenism and stereotyping of diversity within British recruitment campaigns.³² This notion is echoed in a contribution by Manchanda and Higate (2019), who point to the dangers of the more diverse marketing campaigns simply glossing over persisting sexism and racism in the Army.³³ Furthermore, *Selling the military* finds that the volitionally controversial campaigns suggest an attempt to exert an influence within society that exceeds the recruitment goal.³⁴ In the previous campaign of 2018, the study's authors observe that Army life is constructed as superior to civilian life, another important finding I will follow up on.³⁵

³⁰ See Jester. 2019. p.14.

³¹ Jester. 2019. p.14.

³² See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.4.

³³ See Manchanda/ Higate. 2015. p.31.

³⁴ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.4.

³⁵ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.22.

Although visual analysis within Military and Security Studies represents a comparably new field, Vuori and Andersen (2018) argue in their anthology *Visual Security Studies* that visuality has become an important denominator in understanding military and security practices.³⁶ The anthology offers insights into how visual methods can be used in various fields of Security Studies, an approach on which this thesis is based on. The underlying practices of recruitment and the surrounding discourse have already received more attention, with an important discussion of recruitment messages in Sweden and the UK by Strand and Berndtsson (2015). The authors find that All-Volunteer-Forces (AVF) like the British Army position themselves as an employer brand offering a career of personal and professional growth, and thus refer to the recruitment process as recruiting “enterprising soldiers”³⁷. They argue that recruiting the ‘enterprising soldier’ needs to be seen as “an expression of power and politics”³⁸, an argument underlying this thesis. Furthermore, recent findings from similar analyses of recruitment and advertising campaigns in other countries pose insightful reference points, for example, Strand/Kehl (2019, Sweden) and Edgar et al (2019, Canada). Especially Strand and Kehl take a similar approach with regard to the Swedish Armed Force’s recruitment campaigns with a focus on gender and sexuality that provides valuable findings and comparison.

For the broader context of military masculinities, femininities and diversity, the thesis at hand can draw on a substantial body of literature. Discourses on gender and the recruitment and integration of women into the British Army are for example discussed by Woodward/Winter (2004, 2007), Brown (2007) and Duncanson/ Woodward (2016). The overall emerging picture is one in which a rhetoric of equality and progressiveness co-exists with ideas of gender difference and an only gradual integration of women into previously male-exclusive spheres like combat roles.³⁹ Connected to this is the central concept of hegemonic (military) masculinity, coined and discussed in-depth by Connell (2005). Much discussed, the focus in

³⁶ Bleiker. 2018. p.189.

³⁷ Strand, Sanna/ Berndtsson, Joakim. 2015. “Recruiting the ‘Enterprising Soldier’: Military Recruitment Discourses in Sweden and the United Kingdom”. In: *Critical Military Studies*, Vol.1/3. London/ New York: Routledge. p.233–248.

³⁸ See Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.245.

³⁹ See e.g. Woodward, Rachel/ Duncanson, Claire. 2016. “Gendered Divisions of Military Labour in the British Armed Forces”. In: *Defence Studies*. Taylor&Francis. DOI: 10.1080/14702436.2016.1180958. p.21f; Brown, Melissa Tracey. 2007. *Enlisting Masculinity: Gender and the Recruitment of the All-Volunteer Force*. Dissertation. New Brunswick, NJ: University of New Jersey. p.282f.

recent years has however shifted in favour of 'new' and more diverse and complex masculinities, as well as femininities. Relevant are here, for example, Belkin/ Carver (2012), Stachowitsch (2013), Bulmer (2013), Duncanson (2015), Ombati (2015), Chisholm/ Tidy (2017) and Myrntinen (2019). And lastly, with regard to diversity specifically in the British Army, the thesis can build on the works of authors like Heggie (2003) and Vickers (2013) for a discussion of sexuality and the integration of LGBTQ+ soldiers into the forces; and notably on Ware (2012, 2017) for a discussion of military migrants, ethnic and other minorities.

1.3.Overview

In the first part of the thesis, I will discuss aspects of the history of military integration in Britain as well as current recruitment practices to establish the historic and political context relevant to understanding the power structures in which the campaigns are embedded in. This includes the general integration of women and religious and ethnic minorities, and the open integration of LGBTQ+ persons against the background of the so-called 'recruitment crisis'. In the following part, I will establish the theoretical framework and discuss the concepts relevant to the analysis, namely military masculinity, femininity, and diversity, as well as concepts regarding the construction of the (military) body. I then turn to the empirical analysis of the 2019/2020 recruitment campaigns, first by addressing the method of visual context analysis and illustrating how I have analysed the material, before introducing the advertisement material that is the basis for this thesis. The recruitment posters are in the first, pre-iconographic step described in detail, which provides the basis for the following visual analysis through the lens of gender, diversity and the (military) body as overarching categories. Subsequently, the findings are discussed both in relation to the wider recruitment context, as well as the discourse surrounding the recruitment and representation of military masculinities, femininities, and diversity. The conclusion is followed by an outlook that broadens the perspective to include Brexit as well as additional campaign material that was released to address the Covid-19 pandemic, which was ongoing at the point of writing.

Context: The British Army and Recruitment

2. Recruitment: the language of crisis and career

“Militaries can have a hard time getting all the ‘manpower’ they think they need. This fact may come as a surprise. It is surprising to those who imagine that all men, at all times, naturally want to soldier”⁴⁰ – Enloe (2000)

With the end of conscription and the shift to an All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the British Army finds itself in the position of having to compete with civic careers to fill its ranks, and often failing to reach the numbers – as Enloe puts it – “they think they need”⁴¹. Her choice of language is indicative of a much larger discourse than recruiting enough servicemembers to remain functional. It points to the very way a state conceptualizes national security and the role of its military. Faced with persisting difficulties to recruit sufficient numbers – however ‘sufficient’ is conceptualized – an alternative to upping the budget and intensifying the recruitment drive through extensive measures could be to entirely rethink security and downsize the armed forces.⁴² Instead, in case of the British Army, the language of security is employed to create the narrative of a recruitment ‘crisis’ – a term which in itself would legitimize a military solution and exceptional measures. These measures then include taking the oppositional approach to downsizing by instead extending the pool of potential recruits and using power dynamics to continuously create military life as desirable and the military as relevant. As Enloe points out, common strategies to continue filling the ranks are the recruitment of women, minority ethnicities and marginalized groups. To achieve this, constructions of ‘full’ citizenship, identity, belonging, masculinity and femininity are deployed.⁴³ The language of the ‘crisis’ can even be used to enlist – by force, but also much more subtly through manipulation or socialisation – child soldiers.⁴⁴ In the case of the British Army, this means that despite continued criticism, recruitment age remains at 16 years old.

⁴⁰ Enloe, Cynthia. 2000. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p.235.

⁴¹ Enloe. 2000. p.235.

⁴² See Enloe. 2000. p.241.

⁴³ See Enloe. 2000. p.237f.

⁴⁴ See Enloe. 2000. p.242.

If the military wants to reach enough civilians to fill its ranks, it must have an outreach within society. Strand and Berndtsson (2015) argue that given the power structures of the nation-state trying to align the apparently personal career choices of young people with its political agenda, enlistment should not be understood as personal and voluntary decision, but “as an expression of power and politics, a technique of government rather than a removal of governance”⁴⁵. Thus, recruitment and the way the military constitutes itself in its advertisement campaigns is an inherently political question embedded in multiple power dynamics ranging from imaginations of gender to constructions of ‘race’, and colonialism. To comprehensively analyse the British Army’s campaigns, it is necessary to discuss the various power structures the Army historically has and continues to operate in. As will be shown throughout this section, qualifications around military service are often framed around citizenship and belonging, and capacity to serve, like able-bodiedness.⁴⁶

Despite constructions of the Army being a UK employer just like any other (although superior), the recruitment process essentially allows for discrimination that would not be sanctioned in other fields of employment. Gender-based exclusion has only in recent years been overturned, with the Army opening all roles to women as late as 2018.⁴⁷ While in light of the so-called recruitment crisis many discriminatory barriers to military roles have been removed or dismantled, one central grounds for exclusion remains that is central to the discussion of soldiering bodies: physical or mental impairment or disability. The Armed Forces are the only employer to persistently remain exempt from the Disability Discrimination Act.⁴⁸ Essentially, the recruitment process is a physical selection system not only based on various tests but relying on a pre-existing set of assumptions about who can and cannot pass this process. Tendencies have been towards shaping the recruitment process as supposedly gender-neutral and job-related⁴⁹, but as the following sections will show, that is not necessarily the case. Additionally, some bodies and body types are a priori excluded from the selection

⁴⁵ Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.245.

⁴⁶ See Teaiwa, Teresia K. 2014. “Same Sex, Different Armies: Sexual Minority Invisibility among Fijians in the Fiji Military Forces and British Army”. In: Besnier, Niko/ Alexeyeff, Kalissa (Ed.). *Gender on the Edge: Transgender, Gay, and Other Pacific Islanders*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. p.266–292. p.274.

⁴⁷ National Army Museum, c). No date. “Fit to fight: Women in the Army today”. In: *National Army Museum*. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/fit-fight-women-army-today>. Accessed: 09.07.2020.

⁴⁸ See National Army Museum, d). No date. “Equality and the Army”. In: *National Army Museum*. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/equality-and-army>. Accessed: 09.07.2020.

⁴⁹ See Ware, Vron. 2012. *Military Migrants: Fighting for YOUR country*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. p.42.

process. Hence, “military recruitment strategies can be seen to play an important role in shaping the politics of citizenship and the definition of the political community”⁵⁰. Ideas about soldiering are strongly generated in the recruitment process and are built on intertwining factors like historical events, policies and law, personal experience, and quite importantly for this thesis, media representation.⁵¹ “As a consequence, recruitment into the armed forces is a supremely social issue as well as an intensely political one, and the line between military and civilian spheres is revealed as an unpredictable and unstable fissure”⁵².

2.1. Hitting the target

In the span of one year between 2018 and 2019, reportedly 15.120 servicemembers left their job with the forces before the end of their contract.⁵³ “Ongoing issues with harassment, bullying and discrimination continue to undermine the retention of women and other minority personnel in particular”⁵⁴. Recent years show that there has been a shortfall in recruitment numbers that has continuously been growing since 2015. In January of 2019, the infantry had registered 13.300 personnel, a shortfall of 17% to its target number of 15.940 which in some units reached up to 42%.⁵⁵

Enlistment into the military has long been seen as a process that “turns boys into men”⁵⁶, a logic that ascribes the military transformative power. As surveys have shown, the Army mostly draws its non-officer recruits from young people from poorer communities with lower educational attainments, which introduces ‘class’ as a further aspect of military recruitment.⁵⁷ Basham (2016) argues that “[b]y reinforcing the military as a site of opportunity – in

⁵⁰ Ware. 2012. p.5f.

⁵¹ See Ware. 2012. p.5.

⁵² Ware. 2012. p.5.

⁵³ See Kennart, Matt/ Glenton, Joe. 13.05.2020. „The British Armed Forces are using Covid-19 to solve a recruitment crisis and to heal their damaged reputation”. In: *Declassified, The Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-13-the-british-armed-forces-are-using-covid-19-to-solve-a-recruitment-crisis-and-to-heal-their-damaged-reputation/>. Accessed: 04.09.2020.

⁵⁴ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.11.

⁵⁵ See Perraudin, Frances. 09.08.2019. “UK army combat units 40% below strength as recruitment plummets”. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/09/uk-army-combat-units-40-below-strength-as-recruitment-plummets>. Accessed: 03.09.2020.

⁵⁶ Basham, Victoria. 2016b. “Raising an Army: The Geopolitics of Militarizing the Lives of Working-Class Boys in an Age of Austerity”. In: *International Political Sociology* Vol.10/3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.258–274. p.263.

⁵⁷ See Gee, David. 2007. Informed Choice? Armed Forces recruitment practice in the United Kingdom. Report, www.informedchoice.org.uk. PDF: https://www.wikispooks.com/w/images/9/9f/Informed_Choice.pdf. Retrieved: 04.09.2020. p.15.

some cases the *only* site [the military] may ensure that the most vulnerable, and often least politically enfranchised, continue to fight and die in disproportionate numbers. [...] society's least productive can be made productive by war"⁵⁸. Additionally, a trend to target especially teenagers, even those below recruitment age, has long been noted and extends to schools as sites of military socialisation.⁵⁹ The British Army is the only army in Europe to routinely recruit minors with recruitment age being 16, although potential recruits may apply at the age of 15 years and 7 months to enable them to successfully enlist as early as possible. More than one-fifth of recruits are in fact below the age of 18 and not even allowed to vote yet.⁶⁰ A contract signed with the Army is however legally binding for up to six years, until the age of 22.⁶¹ A 2016 report by *MedAct* concludes that "military recruitment is concentrated among 16 and 17 year olds who may be particularly vulnerable to marketing techniques and materials that glamorise war, and fall short of being comprehensively truthful about life in the military"⁶². It goes on to say that "the current practices [contradict] both legal and moral imperatives around consent, and [present] serious health concerns"⁶³. Although the Army has claimed to target all backgrounds, documents analysed by the organization *Child Soldier International* show that the target audience is 16 to 24-year olds specifically from the three lowest social and economic groups (called C2DEs). "At that age adolescents are primed into risk-taking behaviour, into wanting to prove themselves as a man, into wanting to establish an identity, a sense of belonging, which is really played upon in the current advertising campaign. [...] The marketing strategy very cynically takes advantage of that"⁶⁴. Given the impact of visuality on younger, Social Media prone generations, this makes a visual approach to military advertising all the more important.

⁵⁸ Basham. 2016b. p.261. Italics in original.

⁵⁹ See Gee. 2007. p.2.

⁶⁰ See Louise, Rhianna/ Hunter, Christina/ Zlotowitz, Sally. 2016. *The Recruitment of Children by the UK Armed Forces: A Critique from Health Professionals*. Report. London: MedAct. PDF: https://www.medact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/medact_childrecruitment_17-oct_WEB.pdf. Re-trieved:08.09.2020.

⁶¹ See Lousie et al. 2016. p.6.

⁶² Louise et al. 2016. p.4.

⁶³ Louise et al. 2016. p.14. Those recruited under the age of 18 often end up in the lowest ranks and are approximately 50% more likely to die in deployment than those recruited as adults. See Basham. 2016b. p.267.

⁶⁴ Rachel Taylor, director of programme at *Child Soldier International*, cited in: Morris, Steven. 09.07.2017. "British army is targeting working-class young people, report shows". In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/09/british-army-is-targeting-working-class-young-people-report-shows>. Accessed: 08.09.2020. Several reports over the last decades have contributed to a body of work addressing the dangers of (military) advertisement on adolescents in-depth, See e.g. Gee (2007), Louise et al (2016), Louise/ Sangster (2019).

In 2012, the MoD signed a ten-year contract with the firm Capita Business Services Ltd (*Capita*) for £495 million, “to secure its expertise in recruitment and marketing”⁶⁵. Numbers referenced by the MoD seem to suggest that the recruitment campaign of 2019 was successful in drawing in more recruits, as by the end of March 2020 the MoD claimed that over 100.000 people had applied to join the Army since April 2019, which would represent a 5% rise to the previous year.⁶⁶ Yet, research has also shown that over 47% will drop out of the process before ever enlisting, and only one-third of recruits name advertisement as a motivation to enlist.⁶⁷ The actual success of campaigns is however secondary to this thesis compared to the wide interest and audience they generate.

2.2. “Corporate Warriors” and “enterprising soldiers”

As previously mentioned, in the recruitment message, potential dreams of self-fulfilment are aligned with the agenda of the nation-state in the project of the ‘enterprising soldier’.⁶⁸ The Army positions itself as a top employer turning civilians not only into soldiers but into desirable and superior employees. Military service is presented as an opportunity to grow as an individual and a stepping-stone for a successful career. “In accordance with consumer market logic, the purpose of the advertisements and campaigns invested in by armed forces and other ‘employer brands’ is not to sell products; it is to sell the dreams of the consumers”⁶⁹. The goal is to create a simple, yet strong brand identity which often enough is far from realistic.⁷⁰ In short, the Army becomes a brand that markets itself to consumers and treats potential recruits as such. However, as Banet-Weiser (2012) argues, branding in the contemporary context is as much about culture as it is about economics.⁷¹ Brands become stories in which the consumer can position themselves as the central character; they become more a

⁶⁵ Syal, Rajeev. 14.12.2018. “£495m contract led to army recruitment shortfalls, auditors find”. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/14/495m-contract-led-to-army-recruitment-shortfalls-auditors-find>. Accessed: 04.09.2020.

⁶⁶ See Kennart/ Glenton. 13.05.2020.

⁶⁷ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.18.

⁶⁸ See Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.245.

⁶⁹ Bailey, Beth. 2007. “The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force”. In: *The Journal of American History*, Vol.94/1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.47–74. p.68.

⁷⁰ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.12.

⁷¹ See Banet-Weiser, Sarah. 2012. *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in Brand Culture*. New York: New York University Press. p.4.

cultural phenomenon instead of an economic strategy.⁷² “In this context, neo-liberal market rationality and enterprise culture make a military career – and with it, the potential use of lethal force – appear rational and desirable to young individuals, as soldiering is rendered self-fulfilling”⁷³. Strand and Berndtsson (2015) thus argue that recruiting the “enterprising soldier” is not simply a personal and voluntary career choice, but “an expression of power and politics”⁷⁴. Alongside the identity of the ‘enterprising soldier’, another focus is on the identity as warrior. In earlier analyses of British recruitment campaigns, language is used that positions the Army as a war-fighting army and offers an “exciting” and “adventurous” career around this narrative.⁷⁵ The authors conclude that “[t]he fact that military careers are sold to young individuals using a rhetoric in which war and violence are seen as part of a process of self-fulfilment, self-enterprise, and personal growth, is highly problematic”⁷⁶. They identify advertisement as an essential tool in recruiting the ‘enterprising soldier’.

2.3. Marketing the military

Military advertising is quite unique to the representation of a state, as it allows the state to market itself to citizens as consumers through advertising. “[I]t is also an occasion when government agencies and the private sector work together in creating advertising that is steeped in ideas about masculinity and femininity”⁷⁷. When conscription ended in the early 60s, the British government appointed the former Managing Director of *Schweppes*, Sir Frederic Hopper to review recruiting strategies and develop the Army as a brand. He was tasked to “correct public impressions of the military as a ‘refuge for the unsuccessful’, a task that would involve an extensive campaign of public relations and advertising that promoted the military ‘way of life’”⁷⁸. He set out to use storytelling in advertisement to construct a “soldier’s life” as a desirable career choice, trumping civilian life and at the same time constructing ex-service-members as preferable employees over civilians.⁷⁹ The marketing strategy of the

⁷² See Banet-Weiser. 2012. p.4.

⁷³ Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.241.

⁷⁴ See Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.245.

⁷⁵ See Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.244f.

⁷⁶ Strand/ Berndtsson. 2015. p.245.

⁷⁷ See Brown. 2012. p.154.

⁷⁸ Hopper, cited in: Maartens, Brendan. 2019. “Modernizing the Military: Promoting a New ‘Brand Image’ of the British Army, Navy, and Air Force in the Post-National Service Era, 1957–63”. In: *War in History*, Vol.26/3. Sage Publications. p.406–429. p.413.

⁷⁹ See Maartens. 2019. p.413.

enterprising soldier was born. However, what is now called ‘advertising’ used to be mostly subsumed under the term ‘propaganda’. “Yet contemporary military recruitment advertising campaigns are not readily referred to as propaganda. While military marketing has changed in many ways since world war one, in many others it is similar”⁸⁰. Mostly, the Army has moved away from depicting direct combat scenarios, and even stipulated in a brief for the 2018 advertisement campaign that “the adverts must not take place around ‘military/combat/forces films’ in cinemas, suggesting that it is keen to control how the messaging about war and state-led armed violence is understood”⁸¹. Mediatization of the military is an essential component to advertising for the Army, as it shapes public opinion and serves as a bridge between the closed-off institution and society. To achieve its interests, the military has adopted a communication strategy that subscribes to media logic and seeks to influence audiences through mediatized messages.⁸² Thus, advertising for the British Army needs to be analysed against the background of this intentional strategy of communicating through and with the media: “the military consciously and purposefully organize their activities with the needs of the media in mind so as to influence the media–polity–military relationship to their advantage”⁸³. To understand how thought-through and tailored the *Karmarama* adverts of the campaigns discussed in this thesis are, it is worth citing a longer passage from the agency’s approach:

“Karmarama’s strategists took a data sample of previously successful recruits and matched this into their Continuum datapool [...] From there, tech experts used neuro-linguistics to model their interests and behaviours. A unique algorithm scraped social profiles of soldiers and matched the time stamps of their interaction with the Army to what they were doing on social [Media]. This revealed distinct barriers and motivations and, crucially, provided social behavioural triggers [optimizing] targeting [...]. Their creative strategists then used psychological studies and qualitative interviews to identify a universal emotion broad enough to be eventually tailored to the drivers now identified”⁸⁴.

⁸⁰ Lousie/ Sangster. 2019. p.7.

⁸¹ Lousie/ Sangster. 2019. p.29.

⁸² See Maltby, Sarah. 2012. “The Mediatization of the Military”. In: *Media, War and Conflict*, Vol.5/3. Sage Publications. p.255-268. p.258.

⁸³ Maltby. 2012. p.266.

⁸⁴ Karmarama, cited in: Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.16.

These “universal emotions” underlying the recent campaigns can be summarized as a desire to belong, and insecurities like a lack of confidence.⁸⁵

2.3.1. Earlier Campaigns

The Army’s slogan “Be the Best” has been used since a major campaign that was created by a PR firm in the ’90s, which portrayed soldiers “as competent and caring professionals, and [emphasized] the usefulness of Army skills, and over the years, they have shifted from portraying martial to civilian contexts”⁸⁶. What prevails in the campaign adverts of the ’90s is a message of “[m]ilitarized action and challenge [...] combined with the idea of professional competence and the use of technology. [...] Officers and soldiers are decision-makers and professionals, making a difference in the world”⁸⁷. Brown (2007) notes that around 2000, the Army begins to focus on personal development and self-fulfilment while “also acknowledging the modern economic reality that young people no longer expect or want a job for life, but want to be able to take their skills with them”⁸⁸. Following a 1997 report that found evidence of widespread racism in the forces, inclusivity of ethnic minorities becomes a focal point. The 1998 ad then used the iconic Lord Kitchener template but instead featured Black and service-members of Colour. The posters were accompanied by a two-page print ad: “On the first page of the two-page print ad which ran in publications aimed at minorities, a white soldier appears above the words ‘In today’s Army, Blacks and Asians get called all sorts of things.’ On the next page, the same soldier is saluting, and the text reads, ‘Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Colonel’”⁸⁹. The ad clearly plays with racist microaggressions people of minority ethnics might experience on a daily basis.

For the British Army recruitment campaigns between 2002 and 2018, Jester (2019) offers an analysis focusing around depictions of masculinity. She finds that while risk-taking and aggressive constructions of soldiering focused around combat and physical strength are still present in earlier campaigns (approximately until 2014), later campaigns, especially the *This is belonging* campaigns of 2017 and 2018, do not focus on risk-taking but instead heavily on

⁸⁵ See Contagious. 16.01.2020.

⁸⁶ Brown. 2007. p.267.

⁸⁷ Brown. 2007. p.267f.

⁸⁸ Brown. 2007. p.270.

⁸⁹ Brown. 2007. p.277.

inclusivity.⁹⁰ Jester further finds that only with this turn towards inclusivity are women not depicted in gendered and subordinate roles within the campaigns, with only very recent advertisements constructing women and servicemembers of Colour as equal to White soldiers.⁹¹ She concludes that these representations construct the Army as “a place in which traditionally oppressed groups will not be held back but can thrive. As a result [...] the army comes to be constructed as progressive”⁹².

The campaigns predating this thesis have essentially focused around three main messages: self-fulfilment; belonging and camaraderie; and depoliticising of the very purpose of the military.⁹³ Regarding the first two messages, the Army has continuously constructed itself as being the only way to truly reach both. “The 2018 animations which addressed potential concerns for female, gay or Muslim recruits depict a similarly binary view of civil and military worlds, setting them up in opposition to each other and putting the military on a pedestal compared to civilian life”⁹⁴. Interestingly, women are however mostly absent from the accompanying films. Analysing the 2018 campaign, Louise and Sangster (2019) find that “[d]espite attempts to move away from gender stereotypes, the trope that the military ‘makes a man of you’ is still subtly echoed [...] it also rather clumsily reinforces gender stereotypes”⁹⁵. Furthermore, the authors find that diversity is tokenized, with simplistic and stereotypical depictions of for example religious minorities, that reinforce the idea that they will not have a place in civil society.⁹⁶ It becomes clear that the highly sophisticated form of advertisement deployed by the British Army carries quite a potential for manipulation, especially when it comes to adolescents and young adults and is embedded in power structures that reach far beyond the military, often into the civil sphere.

What this section could show is that military advertising is not only reliant on trying to understand social orders but that it ideally tries to shape them in a way that keeps the military relevant. The following section will now consider the historic perspective to show how power

⁹⁰ See Jester. 2019. p.7f.

⁹¹ See Jester. 2019. p.11.

⁹² Jester. 2019. p.13.

⁹³ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.13.

⁹⁴ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.22.

⁹⁵ Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.24.

⁹⁶ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.25.

relations have shaped the contemporary Army and to illustrate the area of contention more diverse recruitment of women, LGBTQ+ persons and ethnic and other minorities operates in.

3. Power structures past and present: Integration into the Army

At the beginning of the century, Noakes (2006) notes that “[t]he British army remains a deeply conservative institution”⁹⁷, with high levels of sexual harassment and bullying and a ‘macho’ culture which champions “unquestioning obedience and aggression believed to be essential for combat effectiveness”⁹⁸. Yet, 15 years later, the institution appeals to allegedly overly emotional “Snowflakes” and their “compassion”, has opened all roles including combat roles to women and lets its soldiers march in Pride Parades wearing their uniform.⁹⁹

While the change might seem drastic, the question is how deeply it was able to reach into the military institution and if, at all, military culture and power structures have undergone tangible transformations reflective of the presented image. As I have shown in the previous section, the construction of ‘recruitment in crisis’ allows for certain measures to be taken to guarantee the military institution to persist, while advertisement creates the image of a desirable career. I argue that both are dependent on the military’s ability to shape society’s notion of itself in terms of citizenship, gender order and norms, and identity, and are deeply embedded in constructions of masculinity and ‘race’ as well as the continuities of colonialism. In short, how the military constructs itself through advertisement is not merely a question of marketing, but a question of power. In the following section, I will discuss the dynamics past and present relevant to understanding the context in which the campaigns of 2019 and 2020 operate in. Given the visual approach, the context of the ‘bigger picture’ is necessary to fully appreciate how the military’s message is visually communicated even through seemingly trifling aspects of an image and placed into the wider discourse.

⁹⁷ Noakes, Lucy. 2006. *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907-1948*. London: Routledge. xi.

⁹⁸ Noakes. 2006. xi.

⁹⁹ Kiesel, Ryan. 28.07.2009. “Gay soldier becomes Armed Forces’ magazine’s first homosexual pin-up”. In: *The Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1202651/Gay-soldier-Armed-Forces-magazines-homosexual-pin-up.html>. Accessed: 29.07.2020.

3.1. Banned from battle: Women in the British Army

Women's inclusion into all spheres of the military remains contested. "There seems to be a continual use of historical and archaic ideologies today to overshadow women's achievements and capabilities [often used] detrimentally to women's public image and acceptance as soldiers in the modern military"¹⁰⁰. While there are examples of iconic female warriors and military women – the legendary Celtic queen Boudicca or Queen Elizabeth I for instance¹⁰¹ – the historic or mythological examples often hold clear consequences for women who take up arms: "[a]gain and again, [they] are punished by rape, defeat, humiliation and death"¹⁰². The relationship between women and the military is still strongly shaped by sexual harassment within the forces, a disproportionate effect of conflict on women, as well as the impact colonialism had on women's liberation.¹⁰³ Although war has long been seen as an inherently male domain, with "combat the most masculine of all aspects of war"¹⁰⁴, women were never far from the battlefields. But they remained mostly unacknowledged, framed in gendered ways, or were simply ignored.¹⁰⁵ Historically, women associated with the military were often dubbed 'camp followers' and frequently suspected to be prostitutes.¹⁰⁶ They fulfilled a multitude of functions vital to the military infrastructure, mostly in the realm of nursing and nurturing¹⁰⁷, but predominantly conforming with societal gender norms¹⁰⁸. Yet, this portrayal easily renders women's involvement in conflict settings, gendered or not, invisible. Making the long-standing and vital involvement of women in the functioning of the armed forces visible thus challenges the notion of the military as a historically exclusively male

¹⁰⁰ Smith, Angela Clare. 2006. *Women in the British military: A history of women's entry into the official British military forces and an analysis of ideologies and their effects on women's acceptance within today's British military*. Paper presented at the UK Postgraduate Conference in Gender Studies, 21–22 June 2006, University of Leeds. p.4.

¹⁰¹ See Smith. 2006. p.5.

¹⁰² Noakes. 2006. p.2.

¹⁰³ See Burke, Aoife. 04.09.2020. "Women and the Military: Harmful 'Feminist' Recruitment and Whitmore". In: *Stand*. <https://stand.ie/women-military-british-army-harmful-recruitment-whitmore/>. Accessed: 17.10.2020.

¹⁰⁴ Noakes. 2006. x.

¹⁰⁵ See Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret. 2012. *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.1.

¹⁰⁶ See Hacker/ Vining. 2012. p.5.

¹⁰⁷ See National Army Museum, a). No date. "A Timeline of Women in the Army". In: *National Army Museum*. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/timeline-women-army>. Accessed: 26.05.2020.

¹⁰⁸ See Lynn, John A. II. 2012. "Essential Women, necessary Wives, and exemplary Soldiers: The Military Reality and Cultural Representation of Women's Military Participation (1600–1815)". In: Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret (Ed.). *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.93-136. p.110.

domain and instead allows to rather centre constructions of (military) masculinity as explanatory of the make-up of the contemporary Army.

Despite the long-standing exclusion of women from direct combat, there have always been women who fought alongside men, or even officially joined the military in the capacity of soldiers – even if mostly disguised as men.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note these historic, cross-dressing female soldiers since they have played an important role in the construction of masculinity.¹¹⁰ Drawing upon Judith Halberstam's concept of "female masculinity"¹¹¹, Bowen (2004) argues "that far from reifying male masculinity or serving simply as a 'proxy' for the heroism of male soldiers, the female heroine possesses her own brand of female masculinity that she uses in order to cajole other male characters [...] into being 'real men'"¹¹². Historically, the exceptional female soldier is used to refashion and embody British identity.¹¹³ This precedent of soldiering women who were on one hand integrated into the military narrative while simultaneously used to further the nation-state's agenda in crisis poses an important reference point for representations of women in the Army today.

However, the most common representation of women in the military context is the virtuous army nurse, which finds its epitome in Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), 'The Lady with the Lamp', who became almost legendary as the founder of modern nursing.¹¹⁴ Notably, it was her iconic character that was used in a follow-up video to the original recruitment campaign at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to represent the Army's efforts in the medical field, with part of the campaign focusing around soldiers helping to build several 'Nightingale' hospitals to support the National Health Service.¹¹⁵ It was also military nursing that first allowed women to become uniformed and fully integrated members of the military.¹¹⁶ With the

¹⁰⁹ See Ailes, Mary Elizabeth. 2012. "Camp Followers, Sutlers, and Soldier's Wives: Women in Early Modern Armies (c. 1450-c. 1650)". In: Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret (Ed.). *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.61-91. p.80.

¹¹⁰ See Bowen, Scarlet. 2004. "'The Real Soul of a Man in Her Breast': Popular Opposition and British Nationalism in Memoirs of Female Soldiers, 1740-1750," In: *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 28/3. Durham: Duke University Press. p.20-45. p.26.

¹¹¹ Bowen explains this concept as follows: "[...] that is, the construction of a masculinity that is detached from the biological male body", Bowen. 2004. p.26.

¹¹² Bowen. 2004. p.26.

¹¹³ See Bowen. 2004. p.22.

¹¹⁴ See Hacker, Barton. 2012. "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The changing status of military women (c. 1815-c.1914)". In: Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret (Ed.). *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.137-187. p.142f.

¹¹⁵ See Watson. 01.07.2020.

¹¹⁶ See Hacker. 2012. p.163.

outbreak of the First World War, women lobbied to form their own uniformed¹¹⁷ services to assist the war effort, which resulted in a multitude of organizations, most prominently the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC, founded 1916). With the entrance of women into the military service in 'supporting' roles, conceptions of citizenship and gendered roles during wartime were challenged.¹¹⁸ Wartime service had become a strong argument for women's suffrage and equal rights.¹¹⁹ It was seen as "proof of women's equality and their fulfillment of the obligations of citizenship"¹²⁰. The link between gender equality and military service remains an important line of argument which however divides feminist discourse.

While during the First World War the concept of the 'home front' had become an important means of mobilization, the Second World War completely erased the distinction between 'home' and 'front'. Civilians were as much on the frontlines as soldiers.¹²¹ That meant that women were no longer separable from the battlefield. The entrance of women into more military roles challenged the very idea of what constitutes the 'soldier' and 'soldiering'. "All military personnel may consider themselves 'soldiers' but their roles may be far removed (both males and females) from the business of 'soldiering,' as it is often perceived"¹²². Vining (2012) notes that women's military organizations – the largest being the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)¹²³ with some 222.000 women enrolled in 1941¹²⁴ – were often subjected to extensive slandering campaigns to sustain the Army as a male domain.¹²⁵

It took until 1992 for the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC)¹²⁶, founded after the end of the Second World War, to be disbanded and women to be fully integrated into non-combatant

¹¹⁷ The distinction of uniformed service is of significance here. Uniforms for women would serve "as a highly visible marker of their fuller roles as citizens, an appreciated change from their previous exclusion or relegation to underpaid and little acknowledged wartime work", Vining, Margaret. 2012. "Women join the Armed Forces: The Transformation of Women's Military Work in World War II and After (1939-1947)". In: Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret (Ed.). *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.233-289. p.250.

¹¹⁸ Jensen, Kimberley. 2012. "Volunteers, Auxiliaries and Women's Mobilization: The First World War and Beyond (1914-1939)". In: Hacker, Barton/ Vining, Margaret (Ed.). *A Companion to Women's Military History*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill. p.189-231. p.189.

¹¹⁹ See Jensen. 2012. p.190.

¹²⁰ Jensen. 2012. p.193.

¹²¹ See Vining. 2012. p.233.

¹²² Smith. 2006.p.4.

¹²³ The ATS followed the WAAC as an umbrella organization for women's military services.

¹²⁴ See Vining. 2012. p.248.

¹²⁵ See Vining. 2012. p.248.

¹²⁶ See National Army Museum, b). No date. "Women's work?". In: *National Army Museum*. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/womens-work>. Accessed: 09.07.2020. The WRAC replaced the ATS and included all women serving in the Army, except for medical positions.

roles of the British Army, and again until 2018 for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to lift the ban and allow women into combat roles.¹²⁷ However, it should have become clear by now that what constitutes the 'front' and 'combat', are both highly dependent on gendered assumptions of war and soldiering. De facto women not only served on the 'front' before the Army opened all roles, but they also died – and killed – there, too. Between 2001 and 2014, nine female servicemembers were killed in action in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹²⁸ And in 2008, ten years before women would officially be allowed into combat settings, Sergeant Chantelle Taylor, combat medic of the Army's Medical Corps, became the first (acknowledged) British female soldier to kill an adverse combatant.¹²⁹ While it is important to note that in the official statements by the MoD there was no distinction made between male and female soldiers killed in action, the media coverage shows a very gendered representation of female soldiers. "The coverage stripped away the women's professional identity by emphasising their identity as women. The invocation of gender roles and feminine attributes in the coverage framed the women soldiers essentially as women and not as soldiers"¹³⁰. The question of whether there is a distinction being made between *women as soldiers* and soldiers is an important lead for the visual analysis.

One example that demonstrates the discourse of why women were excluded from direct combat roles within the British military is that of Major Philippa Tattersall. Although she was the first woman to pass the "notoriously gruelling, nine-week long training course [...] widely recognised as one of the most demanding military training courses in the world"¹³¹ in 2002 as one of only 45% of recruits who make it on average¹³², she was still excluded from direct combat. While she obviously did not lack the necessary physical strength, the argument quickly changed from physical fitness to gender in general, with women seen as "a disruptive influence on the team"¹³³. This line of argument was reflected in the general decision of

¹²⁷ See National Army Museum, c). "Fit to fight: Women in the Army today". Non-combat roles means that women were restricted to support roles and medical positions – much like throughout history.

¹²⁸ See National Army Museum, c). "Fit to fight: Women in the Army today".

¹²⁹ See National Army Museum, c). "Fit to fight: Women in the Army today".

¹³⁰ Ette, Mercy. 2013. "Gendered Frontlines: British Press Coverage of Women Soldiers Killed in Iraq," In: *Media, War and Conflict*, Vol.6/3. Sage Publications. p.249-262. p.258.

¹³¹ Noakes. 2006. p.1.

¹³² See Noakes. 2006. p.1.

¹³³ The Guardian. 31.05.2002. "Captain Philippa Joins the Commando Elite". In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/may/31/military>. Accessed 23.04.2020.

former Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon in 2002 to continue excluding women from the front lines, stating that “[u]nder the conditions of a high intensity, close-quarter battle, group cohesion becomes of much greater significance to team performance and, in such an environment, failure can have far-reaching and grave consequences. To admit women, therefore, would involve a risk without any offsetting gains in terms of combat effectiveness”¹³⁴. It was argued that combat was a scenario that could not be trialled and, therefore, sending mixed-gender units to the frontlines an “irresponsible experiment”¹³⁵. The media coverage on Major Tattersall highlights these deeply gendered representations of soldiers, with “the female officer, in charge of men, [being] seen as transgressive and ‘unnatural’; woman out of place”¹³⁶. It becomes clear that even – or especially – with the full integration of women into all Army roles, many issues remain, one of them the question if the inclusion has failed to challenge the inherently patriarchal nature of the military and the notion of war as inevitable.¹³⁷ “Within the women’s movement, feminists were divided about women’s participation in the military. Liberal feminists saw it as a necessary step toward equality, a question of equal access to jobs and equal citizenship rights and responsibilities. Radical feminists saw the violence, sexism, and hierarchy of the military as irredeemable and believed that feminists should work on dismantling military structures, not joining them”¹³⁸. As of 2020, the British

¹³⁴ Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon, cited in: BBC News. 22.05.2002. “Combat Ban for Women Stays”. In: *BBC News*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/2002661.stm. Accessed 23.04.2020.

¹³⁵ BBC News. 22.05.2002. UK legislation specifically allowed for this discrimination on the basis of sex: the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act (still in effect in 2002) explicitly does not apply to “(a) the naval, military or air forces of the Crown, or (b) any women’s service administered by the Defence Council. See §85 (4), Application to Crown. Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as enacted). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/65/enacted>. Accessed: 23.04.2020.

The Sex Discrimination Act was repealed in 2010 by the Equality Act, yet the exception that allowed for discrimination against women in the armed forces was retained. See Equality Now. (no date). “UK - Revised Employment Policy for Women in the Army: Effect on the Royal Marines and Equality Act 2010”. In: *Equality Now*.

https://www.equalitynow.org/uk_revised_employment_policy_for_women_in_the_army_effect_on_the_royal_marines_and_equality_act_2010. Accessed 23.04.2020. The legislation that provides for this continued grounds for discrimination against women is schedule 9, §4 (1), (2), Armed Forces; of the 2010 Equality Act: “(1) A person does not contravene section 39(1)(a) or (c) or (2)(b) by applying in relation to service in the armed forces a relevant requirement if the person shows that the application is a proportionate means of ensuring the combat effectiveness of the armed forces. (2) A relevant requirement is— (a) a requirement to be a man”, (latest available version, 02/12/2019). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/9>.

¹³⁶ Noakes. 2006. xi.

¹³⁷ See Smith. 2006. p.2.

¹³⁸ Brown, Melissa T. 2012. “‘A Woman in the Army Is Still a Woman’: Representations of Women in US Military Recruiting Advertisements for the All-Volunteer Force”. In: *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, Vol.33/2. Routledge. p.151–175. p.152.

Army employs approximately 13.000 women¹³⁹, which means that women make up about 10% of total personnel – a number that has hardly changed over the last 15 years.¹⁴⁰ Although all roles are now open to women, Woodward and Duncanson (2016) point out that roles within the military often remain highly gendered, a reflection of the gendering of labour in society.¹⁴¹ It remains to be seen in which ways this might change in the longer term with the inclusion of women into all military roles. In addition to gender-based discrimination, incidents of sexual harassment occur with a frequency that has one in ten women reporting having been subjected to one or both of the above.¹⁴²

The way women are represented is indicative of the way masculinity is constructed within the military and I argue that it can point to the narrative of integration. Are women represented in supporting roles or even typically nurturing roles like medics or in peacekeeping missions? Do they carry markers of femininity to distinguish between soldiers and *female* soldiers? How is gender retained and symbolized in military settings? The nuance of representation cannot be fully assessed without a comprehensive understanding of the history and discourses surrounding women's military integration.

3.2. “Straightening them out”? LGBTQ+ in the Army

Heterosexuality is a central aspect of masculinity around which the military is ordered. While some forms of transgressive behaviour were not necessarily deemed unacceptable in military history, with cross-dressing female soldiers even making for a celebrated literary genre in the 17th and 18th century¹⁴³, open displays of “deviant” sexualities could come with quite serious consequences. Military law outlawed homosexuality¹⁴⁴ by “the key phrase ‘disgraceful conduct of a cruel, indecent, or unnatural kind’”¹⁴⁵. Punishment could rank from two years

¹³⁹ See The Army. 2020. “Women in the Army”. In: *Army.mod.uk*. <https://apply.army.mod.uk/what-we-offer/what-we-stand-for/women-in-the-army#>. Accessed: 08.07.2020.

¹⁴⁰ See Woodward/ Duncanson. 2016. p.2.

¹⁴¹ See Woodward/ Duncanson. 2016. p.21f.

¹⁴² See Woodward/ Duncanson. 2016. p.6.

¹⁴³ See Lynn. 2012. p.125.

¹⁴⁴ Specifically with the Army Act of 1879 and the Regulation of the Forces Act of 1881, see Vickers, Emma. 2013. *Queen and Country: Same-Sex Desire in the British Armed Forces, 1939-45*. Manchester/ New York: Manchester University Press. p.105. Homosexuality then exclusively referred to same-sex relations between men.

¹⁴⁵ Vickers. 2013. p.105.

in prison for “gross indecency” to a life sentence for “buggery”.¹⁴⁶ It is difficult to historically trace homosexuality in the military, as instances often remained unrecorded or simply recorded as “indecency” along with other offences¹⁴⁷, and soldiers would have hidden their sexual orientation, as homosexuality wasn’t decriminalised until 1967.¹⁴⁸ In general, it seems that for example during the recruitment process for both World Wars (in which able bodies were desperately needed) not much attention was paid to sexuality, with the underlying sentiment that the military would “straighten out” any ‘effeminacy’ or ‘queerness’.¹⁴⁹ Vickers (2013) concludes that homosexuality in the British Army during the Second World War was mainly approached with pragmatism, as with the war effort “the luxury of being able to exclude those that were judged to desire members of their own sex was simply not an option [...] The presence of men and women discovered to be committing homosex only became problematic if those activities were deemed to be detrimental to discipline and military efficiency”¹⁵⁰. Punishment then still depended on factors like queer¹⁵¹ visibility or seniority and could be significantly less if the person in question was deemed a “good fellow”, meaning a soldier “valuable” to the unit.¹⁵² This attitude changed somewhat after the end of the war and was replaced with the post-war reconstruction and consolidation of society which “[singled-out] the queer man as the main source of social disruption”¹⁵³. The climate for queer people changed from pragmatic laissez-faire attitudes during the years of war to one of increasing arrests, prosecution, and general fear for LGBTQ+ persons. It becomes clear that with the imminent threat of war gone, society and especially the military structured around stricter notions of masculinity which unambiguously equated military masculinity with heterosexuality.

¹⁴⁶ See Vickers. 2013. p.106.

¹⁴⁷ See Vickers. 2013. p.107. Vickers also notes that homosexual acts were not necessarily punished by the Army, but if a Civilian was involved, cases were often referred to Civilian courts, thus leaving no record with the Army. See *ibid.* p.115f.

¹⁴⁸ See National Army Museum, d). “Equality and the Army”.

¹⁴⁹ See Vickers. 2013. p.42.

¹⁵⁰ Vickers. 2013. p.152.

¹⁵¹ The term ‘queer’ has since been reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community and will therefor be used, but the (military) history of the word should not be forgotten.

¹⁵² See Vickers. 2013. p.152. However, if punitive measures were taken against servicemembers who were found to be homosexual, those punished often were pilloried to serve as deterrent, see *ibid.* p.153.

¹⁵³ Vickers. 2013. p.156.

Although homosexuality was slowly being decriminalised in civil law and instead labelled as a mental illness¹⁵⁴, the armed forces continued to criminalise homosexuality and increased their policing of same-sex activity with stricter punishment.¹⁵⁵ To identify gay men, military psychiatrists classified certain “traits” as an indication of homosexuality: “emphasis was most often placed on those characteristics considered most antithetical to combat duties, for example, effeminacy, passivity, a strong maternal attachment, and fearfulness”¹⁵⁶. The continued belief that sexuality has some physical properties that can be perceived remains an issue, especially with the question of how the Army today seeks to visually position itself as inclusive of members of the LGBTQ+ community. The identification of ‘traits’ also marks a shift from conduct to status, meaning that it was not just homosexual behaviour that was being policed, but homosexuality as an identity.¹⁵⁷ Irrespective of sexual activity, homosexuality or ‘traits’ perceived as indicating homosexuality became legitimate grounds on which to exclude men (and women) from the military. “In this way, the feminisation of male homosexuality sustained and re-established the complementary conflation of male heterosexuality with masculinity”¹⁵⁸. In the same instance, the concern was that military service would lead to the forming of masculine traits in women or mainly appeal to homosexual women in the first place.¹⁵⁹ The issue of the ban on homosexuality in the military gained wider visibility in 1997 with “Queer Remembrance Day”, a ceremony organized by *Outrage!* to commemorate queer people fighting in the Second World War.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ The World Health Organization categorized homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1948. See Vickers. 2013. p.156.

¹⁵⁵ See Vickers. 2013. p.159.

¹⁵⁶ Bower, Joanne. 2000. *(Im)possible women: Gender, sexuality and the British Army*. Dissertation: University College London. ProQuest Dissertation Publishing. p.96.

¹⁵⁷ Homosexuality was essentialised under an increasingly medical construction of sexuality and thus seen as “inherent, stable and ultimately pathological features of particular individuals, which precipitated a number of attempts at treatment or cure”, Bower. 2000. p.100.

¹⁵⁸ Bower. 2000. p.96.

¹⁵⁹ See Bower. 2000. p.98.

¹⁶⁰ See Outrage!. 02.11.1997. “Queer Remembrance Day”. In: *Outrage!*. <http://outrage.org.uk/1997/11/queer-remembrance-day/>. Accessed: 23.07.2020. Outrage! was a LGBTQ+ grassroots movement advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, fighting homophobia, discrimination and violence directed at LGBTQ+ people in the UK and abroad. Outrage! estimated that at least 250.000 queer people had served in the British military during the Second World War, see *ibid*. This number initially only included gay men and with lesbians and bisexual people in mind, was later upped to 500.000, see Vickers. 2013. p.3f.

The ban on homosexuality remained until 2000, which meant that homosexuality provided grounds for discharge long after it was decriminalised in British criminal law.¹⁶¹ The MoD only lifted the ban after a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁶² The sustaining of the ban was justified under the “*special nature of military service*”¹⁶³. The special nature of the military was argued through the need for discipline, unit cohesion and protection of the unit, specifically lower ranks.¹⁶⁴ Homosexuality is thus constructed as inherently predatory. While in theory the categorization of homosexuality as an offence in both criminal and military law only applied to men, and women were not mentioned (the homosexual body in both laws is clearly gendered as male), in the military practice women were as much disciplined for homosexual behaviour as men, if not more.¹⁶⁵ An important component in the enforcement of the ban was (and continues to be) a culture that strictly centres around and enforces heterosexuality and heteronormative behaviour.¹⁶⁶ “Difference is thus erased (and privatised) in favour of similarity and homogeneity”¹⁶⁷. This diagnosis of assimilation finds its epitome in Tatchell’s argument (1995) that homosexuals should not join the Army in the first place, for it can only mean conformation to military culture, which would mean becoming “heterosexualised homosexuals”¹⁶⁸. However, as has been the case with women, exclusion from the military raises the fundamental question of citizenship and equality for all citizens of a state. Heggie (2003) concludes that “[t]he military has been one of the few contexts in

¹⁶¹ See Heggie, Joan K.F. 2003. *Uniform Identity ? Lesbians and the Negotiation of Gender & Sexuality in the British Army Since 1950*. Dissertation: University of York/ UK. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. p.10.

¹⁶² See BBC News. 02.02.2010. „Gays in the military: The UK and US compared”. In: *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8493888.stm>. Accessed: 29.07.2020. A report issued by the MoD during the case took a strong stance for the continuance of the ban. Opposition to the inclusion of homosexual service-members was strongest in the Army, compared to other branches of the military. Following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in 1999, the law was replaced by a new Code of Conduct in 2000. See Belkien, Aaron/ Evans, R.L. 2000. *The Effects of including gay and lesbian Soldiers in the British Armed Forces: Appraising the Evidence*. Report: The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military. Santa Barbara: University of California. p.18f.

¹⁶³ Heggie. 2003. p.106. Italics in original.

¹⁶⁴ “The 1957 Wolfenden Report, the precursor to the 1967 SOA, recommended the adoption of special circumstances for military personnel, stating that ‘... it may be necessary, for the sake of good management and the preservation of discipline and for the protection of those of subordinate rank or position, to regard homosexual behaviour, even by consenting adults in private, as an offence’”, cited in Heggie. 2003. p.106.

¹⁶⁵ See Heggie. 2003. p.106f.

¹⁶⁶ See Heggie. 2003. p.189.

¹⁶⁷ Bower. 2000. p.322.

¹⁶⁸ Tatchell, Peter. 1995. *We Don't Want to March Straight: Masculinity, Queers and the Military*. London: Cassell. p.26.

which individual women and men have been overtly deprived of their citizenship rights, purely on the grounds of their sexuality”¹⁶⁹ in Britain.

With the lifting of the ban, the Army recognized sexuality and sexual orientation as a private matter, yet expected homosexual servicemembers to police the display of their sexuality in order to not cause any “disturbances”.¹⁷⁰ On the reverse of the protection of privacy now stood the expectation of minimized visibility, the motto being to “govern sex, not sexuality”¹⁷¹. A shift towards openly recruiting queer servicemembers and allowing for queer visibility in the Army only took place years after the end of the ban. As the last branch of the British military, the Army allowed soldiers in uniform to take part in Gay Pride marches in 2008, followed by putting the first openly gay soldier on the cover of the Army’s publication *Soldier’s Magazine* in 2009.¹⁷² It becomes clear that much around the exclusion, integration and inclusion of LGBTQ+ members revolves around visibility.

In 2016, the British Army was included in Stonewall’s¹⁷³ index of top employers who focus on inclusion in the workplace.¹⁷⁴ Interestingly, even before the ban on homosexuality was finally lifted, the Army announced in August of 1999 that henceforth transgender¹⁷⁵ people could serve in the Army.¹⁷⁶ In its policy on the recruitment of transgender personnel (2019), the MoD states that it is “absolutely committed to making diversity and inclusion integral to all our policies, functions and services so that we continue to attract and retain the best people available who represent the society we exist to defend”¹⁷⁷. In contrast to other militaries like the United States, gender affirmative care and the option to transition during service are given and

¹⁶⁹ Heggie. 2003. p.108.

¹⁷⁰ The Ministry of Defence advised homosexual servicewomen and men to keep the display of their sexuality to a minimum as to not “offend” anyone uncomfortable with a public display of homosexuality during official functions. See Heggie. 2003. p.203.

¹⁷¹ See Belkien/ Evans. 2000. p.24.

¹⁷² See Kiesel. 28.07.2009.

¹⁷³ Stonewall is a charity that lobbies for LGBTQIA+ rights throughout the UK.

¹⁷⁴ See Stonewall. 22.01.2020. „The Full List: Top 100 Employers 2020”. In: *Stonewall*. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/full-list-top-100-employers-2020>. Accessed: 09.07.2020.

¹⁷⁵ Transgender is an umbrella term that in its basic understanding refers to people who do not identify with the gender they have been assigned at birth.

¹⁷⁶ See Belkien/ Evans. 2000. p.23.

¹⁷⁷ Ministry of Defence. 2019. *JSP 889: Policy for the Recruitment and Management of Transgender Personnel in the Armed Forces*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recruitment-and-management-of-transgender-personnel-in-the-armed-forces-jsp-889>. Accessed: 06.08.2020. i. Under the Equality Act of 2010, any transgender individual is to be protected in the workplace, regardless of whether or not they chose to have any form of gender affirming (medical) care (e.g. Hormone Replacement Therapy or Gender Affirmation Surgery) or not, or how they chose to present. See *ibid.* p.3f.

any transgender person may serve as their affirmed gender.¹⁷⁸ However, it does appear that systematic and more detailed research into the lived realities of transgender servicemembers in Britain is still scarce and there remain some questions to the implementation of equality. Yet, it appears that the Army champions trans visibility, choosing Captain Hannah Graf, who came out as a trans woman during her service as the Army's Transgender Representative.¹⁷⁹ She received an MBE¹⁸⁰ for her work.

Homosexuality is still seen as one of the strongest threats to (military) masculinity, which I will further discuss in the theoretical part of this thesis. However, this section offers an important understanding of how sexuality in the absence of war becomes a clear nominator for military identity and central to the construction of masculinity. Furthermore, I could show how the belief that sexuality can visually be identified¹⁸¹ is itself rooted in militaristic power structures that seek to shape the representation of masculinity. A visual discussion of sexuality is thus highly nuanced and must be aware of these underlying dynamics.

3.3. “Echoes of Empire”¹⁸²: ‘race’, ethnic and religious minorities in the British Army

One of the manoeuvres Enloe (2000) identifies as a strategy to compensate for a lack of White, male recruits is to “deliberately create among men of certain racial and ethnic groups a sense that volunteer soldiering is somehow integral to their particular masculine identity”¹⁸³. Notions of being denied full citizenship within society can thus serve the military in recruiting men who are politically and economically marginalized, a strategy that Enloe calls

¹⁷⁸ In the U.S. for example, transgender personnel are only allowed to serve presenting in the gender they were assigned at birth. Any history of gender dysphoria or gender affirmative medical care count as disqualifiers. See U.S. Department of Defence. 13.03.2019. “5 Things to Know About DOD's New Policy on Military Service by Transgender Persons and Persons With Gender Dysphoria”. In: *Department of Defence*. <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1783822/5-things-to-know-about-dods-new-policy-on-military-service-by-transgender-person/>. Accessed: 06.08.2020.

¹⁷⁹ See Stonewall. 2019. „Trans Role Model of the Year 2019: Captain Hannah Graf”. In: *Stonewall*. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/people/trans-role-model-year-2019-captain-hannah-graf>. Accessed: 09.07.2020.

¹⁸⁰ Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

¹⁸¹ It is here important to distinguish between imagined markers of sexuality that have been socially constructed and self-chosen visualizations of identity (like symbols, flags etc.).

¹⁸² After Dandeker, Christopher, cited in: Ware. 2012. p.11.

¹⁸³ Enloe. 2000. p.237.

the “Gurkha formula”, after the famous Nepalese soldiers/ mercenaries the British Army has relied on since colonial times.¹⁸⁴ Not only does much of British military history revolve around violently colonizing people, leading campaigns either against those colonized or to protect colonies from other imperial powers¹⁸⁵, but it also quickly became common practice to use colonized people in combat. For example in the British West Indies in the early 19th century, the British Army filled its ranks with slave soldiers.¹⁸⁶ Racial discrimination is deeply ingrained specifically in the British military culture, as it historically divided regiments in a “tribal” system that was meant to exert control, if necessary, by using one ethnically homogenous regiment to discipline another; a system that is oftentimes still held up.¹⁸⁷ Brown (2007) thus argues that in Britain, “white women may be having an easier time fitting into military culture than minority men are”¹⁸⁸. Similar arguments of bonding and unit cohesion that sought to preserve the military as a male domain were also made with regard to ‘race’ or ethnic background.¹⁸⁹ Keeping in mind findings of tokenism and stereotyping of diversity, it is important to discuss the power dynamics that continue to shape the integration of Black and People of Colour, as well as military migrants, into the Army to assess in which ways representation might diverge from reality.

3.3.1. Commonwealth and foreign nationals

Again, the issue of ‘race’ and ethnic and other minorities is closely tied to citizenship and belonging. Although the archetypical soldier is imagined as White, the fighting (and dying) is not done exclusively by White British men. During the Second World War, over 165.000 soldiers from West Africa alone fought for Britain, with 15.000 being killed but remaining largely unrecognized.¹⁹⁰ In some regiments which were deployed in imperial struggles to defend India from Japan, not even 15% of the soldiers in the British Army had been recruited

¹⁸⁴ See Enloe. 2000. p.237.

¹⁸⁵ See Brown. 2007. p.276.

¹⁸⁶ See Bower. 2000. p.121.

¹⁸⁷ See Brown. 2007. p.280.

¹⁸⁸ Brown. 2007. p.279.

¹⁸⁹ See Brown. 2007. p.279f. Of course, this line of argument fails to consider intersectionality, as for example women of Ethnic minorities are not even yet considered.

¹⁹⁰ See Rae, David/ Keazor, Ed Emeka / Ojo, Ngozi Eneh. 14.08.2020. “Did Black Lives Matter to the British Empire in World War Two?”. In: *Byline Times*. <https://bylinetimes.com/2020/08/14/did-Black-lives-matter-to-the-british-empire-in-world-war-two/>. Accessed: 17.08.2020.

from Britain.¹⁹¹ And yet, shortly after the end of the war, the Army Council stated that “[m]en not of pure European descent should not be allowed to enlist in UK regiments or corps of the Regular Army’ on the grounds that they were considered ‘a threat to the discipline and well-being’”¹⁹². As I will show in the empirical part of this thesis, there are attempts to visually rewrite the past and create ahistorical continuities of inclusion, which makes a discussion of colonial history and racist ideologies within the British Army all the more important, especially given how they still intertwine with the recruitment drive of the AVF. On one side stand racist ideologies that imagined the British forces as only White, arguing that “the loyalty of black and Asian soldiers could not be relied upon in wartime”¹⁹³. On the other hand, stands the need to fill the ranks and a changing demographic.

Towards the end of the century, only 1% of servicemembers were from an ethnic minority background and a report found evidence of widespread racism.¹⁹⁴ Combined with external pressure, the MoD declared that it was “determined that the Armed Forces should better reflect the ethnic composition of the British population”¹⁹⁵. To boost recruitment numbers, the MoD dropped a five-year-residency requirement for Commonwealth recruits in 1998, thus widening the recruitment pool to citizens of over 50 countries.¹⁹⁶ Numbers climbed to around 10% servicemembers of Minority ethnics, of which approximately half are foreign and Commonwealth nationals serving in the British Army.¹⁹⁷ In 2018, the MoD announced that it would again increase the number of foreign and Commonwealth recruits to 1350 per year.¹⁹⁸ It should, however, be noted that thus the goal to represent the ethnic composition of the British population is not necessarily met but rather diverse ethnics conglomerated and subsumed under a White/ non-White binary in which different minority groups are seen as

¹⁹¹ See MoD. 14.08.2020. Twitter/ @DefenceHQ. <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1294263775978229775>. Retrieved: 17.08.2020.

¹⁹² Army Council, (1946), cited in: Ware. 2012. p.44.

¹⁹³ Army Council, (1946), cited in: Ware. 2012. p.45.

¹⁹⁴ See Ware. 2012. p.34f.

¹⁹⁵ Strategic Defense Review (1998), cited in: Ware. 2012. p.37.

¹⁹⁶ Ware. 2012. xv.

¹⁹⁷ See Sweeney, Paul. 08.05.2019. “Commonwealth Personnel in the Armed Forces”. In: *Volume 659, House of Commons Hansard/ UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-05-08/debates/3468AACC-1059-41E2-821F-EA20D21754FD/CommonwealthPersonnelInTheArmedForces>. Accessed: 10.08.2020.

¹⁹⁸ See Lancaster, Mark/ MoD. “Armed Forces to step up Commonwealth recruitment”. In: *Ministry of Defence/ Gov.Uk*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/armed-forces-to-step-up-commonwealth-recruitment>. Accessed: 10.08.2020.

interchangeable. Most of these servicemembers serve in non-commission and infantry units with the top three non-British nationalities being Nepali, Fijian and Ghanaian.¹⁹⁹ Historically, the Nepalese soldiers known as Gurkhas have been regarded as mercenaries and the term is still found in documents regarding Gurkhas in the 1980s when Britain lobbied with the UN against a ban on mercenaries that would in its definition include them.²⁰⁰ Although the definition was watered down enough to protect the recruitment of Gurkhas²⁰¹, the UK has never actually signed the convention.²⁰² Ware (2012) notes that without the recruitment of migrant labour, the British Army would not have been able to sustain their involvement in contemporary wars (specifically Iraq and Afghanistan). She suggests that this is a “contemporary version of the colonial armies” and connects these continuities to “legacies of British imperialism in the present”²⁰³. More diverse recruitment needs to also be understood with this backdrop.

In 1997, a memorial featuring a Gurkha soldier was unveiled in front of the Ministry of Defence, commemorating the Nepalese servicemen who had fought in the British military with the inscription “THE GURKHA SOLDIER: Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had country more faithful friends than you”²⁰⁴. However, instead of seeing the superlative as an acknowledgement of service, it needs to be seen in the context of constructions

¹⁹⁹ See Miller, Phil. 08.01.2020. “Revealed: One in 10 soldiers in the British Army is a foreign national, amid concerns over racism and mercenaries”. *Declassified UK*, In: *Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-08-revealed-one-in-10-soldiers-in-the-british-army-is-a-foreign-national-amid-concerns-over-racism-and-mercenaries/>. Accessed: 10.08.2020.

²⁰⁰ See Miller, Phil. 17.06.2020. “Exclusive: Why Britain wanted to ‘kill’ a United Nations ban on mercenaries”. *Declassified UK*, In: *Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-06-17-exclusive-why-britain-wanted-to-kill-a-united-nations-ban-on-mercenaries/>. Accessed: 12.08.2020.

²⁰¹ See Miller. 17.06.2020. The UN definition broadly defines a mercenary as a person that “[i]s specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict” but adds enough further detail that in its wording essentially foreign nationals recruited into a state’s armed forces not for a specific conflict and not for “personal gain” (meaning the recruited soldier should not earn “compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and functions in the armed forces of that party”) are legitimized. See *International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries*. New York, 04.12.1989, Chapter XVIII. Penal Matters. Available from https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1989/12/19891204%2008-54%20AM/Ch_XVIII_6p.pdf. p.1f.

²⁰² See Miller. 08.01.2020. However, the UK is not the only European country that recruits foreign nationals into their forces. Other examples are France with its Foreign Legion (9.000 members) and Denmark, see *ibid*.

²⁰³ Ware. 2012. xvi.

²⁰⁴ Cited in Ware. 2012. p.23. Nepal has never been a British colony, but as part of the pact that ended the Anglo-Gorkhan war (1814-16), allowed its soldiers to fight as mercenaries in the British troops of the East India Company. The warring parties were Gorkha and the East India Company, a private company with close ties to the British Empire. The term “Gurkha” is derived from the state of Gorkha in western Nepal, that was crucial in the unification of the Nepalese kingdom.

of ‘martial races’. In the 19th century, British officials declared Gurkhas to be a ‘martial race’, a people thought to be “naturally warlike and aggressive in battle”²⁰⁵. The theory of martial ‘races’ constructed certain communities as inherently possessing traits that would make them into perfect soldiers and still echoes in British recruitment practices.²⁰⁶ The Gurkha soldiers would become crucial for the colonial efforts of the British Empire on the subcontinent.²⁰⁷ As of 2019, 4270 Nepali nationals serve across all branches of the British military, a rise of 25% since 2018 – yet their case as migrant workers who weren’t allowed to settle upon discharge²⁰⁸ exemplify the unequal treatment of those who are only made valuable to the state through military service.²⁰⁹ “Doing right by these warriors because they were living evidence of the former glory of empire seemed suddenly very important [...] The annals of imperial history could be collapsed into a single uncomplicated narrative in which the details did not really matter [...] But Britain’s modern armed forces are products of that long history and the tangible memory of empire is evident throughout the institution”²¹⁰.

In the case of Caribbean (or then West Indies) soldiers, the British military has a long-standing history of recruitment that dates back to the late 18th century and was directly tied to slavery. Black soldiers were not recruited but purchased by the military as “slaves in red coats”²¹¹. Although paid the same wages as White recruits and promised their freedom upon discharge, freedom was rarely obtained due to the increased lobbying of slave owners.²¹² During Britain’s colonial efforts, soldiers from the Caribbean were recruited to fight in imperial wars in Africa and later in the First World War.²¹³

Like the Nepali foreign nationals, Commonwealth nationals who served in the British military still face restrictions and hardships when it comes to settlement or citizenship in the UK. The case of Filimone Lacanivalu gained quite some media attention in 2013, after the ex-

²⁰⁵ The Gurkha Welfare Trust. No date. “Who are they?”. In: *The Gurkha Welfare Trust*. <https://www.gwt.org.uk/about-the-gurkhas/gurkhas/>. Accessed: 09.08.2020.

²⁰⁶ See Ware. 2012. p.23.

²⁰⁷ See Ware. 2012. p.23.

²⁰⁸ See Miller. 08.01.2020.

²⁰⁹ It took a persevering campaign by retired Gurkha veterans and their families (known as the Gurkha Justice Campaign) with quite some media attention to finally in 2009 extend the right to settle to all Gurkhas who had served in the British Army. See Sweeney. 08.05.2019.

²¹⁰ Ware. 2012. p.19.

²¹¹ Ware. 2012. p.10.

²¹² See Ware. 2012. p.10.

²¹³ See Ware. 2012. p.11.

servicemember from Fiji, who tried to rectify his immigration status, was arrested, detained and almost deported had it not been for an intervention short of 48 hours before deportation.²¹⁴ In 2020, a group of foreign and Commonwealth nationals who had served between seven and 12 years in the British Army took legal action against the Home Office and Ministry of Defence “over an alleged systemic failure to assist them with complex, unaffordable immigration rules on discharge, leaving them classified as illegal immigrants, facing unemployment and homelessness and fearing deportation”²¹⁵. After four years of service – in accordance with the residency requirements for civilians – a foreign national can apply for indefinite leave to remain, but many veterans claim that they had not sufficiently been informed of their rights.²¹⁶ In addition, the fees for visa applications are in many cases almost unaffordable for servicemembers.²¹⁷ MP Paul Sweeney thus attests a “latent neo-colonial mentality in the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office when it comes to championing the equal right of those who have served us in uniform to become British citizens”²¹⁸. These policies also suggest that in fact, the Army does not recruit non-British soldiers as employees with potential partners or families who might relocate their lives to the UK, but rather temporary mercenaries.

3.3.2. Racism

Racism and the othering of Black and People of Colour – not only within the Army but the countries the British Army is a warring party in – continues to be deeply entrenched in military culture. In 2019, the Army had to pay record compensation to Inoke Momonakaya for racial discrimination. The Fijian Lance Corporal, who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan, had been ordered to dress up as a Taliban fighter along with five further Fijian soldiers for a training video because their senior officers found that they would passably embody the

²¹⁴ See Drewett. 10.02.2019.

²¹⁵ Gentleman, Amelia. 08.03.2020. „Commonwealth veterans accuse UK of leaving them in immigration limbo“. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/08/commonwealth-veterans-accuse-uk-immigration-limbo-home-office-mod>. Accessed: 10.08.2020.

²¹⁶ See Gentleman. 08.03.2020. During service, members are exempt from immigration controls, but the immigration status runs out immediately upon discharge from the Army.

²¹⁷ See Gentleman. 08.03.2020. To bring a family of four, the cost could rise up to 27.200£ and the Army’s recruitment page informs that “[i]t might take you several years to earn enough to bring your family to the UK”, see The Army. 2020. „Nationality & Commonwealth Information“. In: *Apply/Army*. <https://apply.army.mod.uk/how-to-join/can-i-join/nationality>. Accessed: 10.08.2020.

²¹⁸ Sweeney. 08.05.2019.

‘enemy’. In the video, all the British soldiers are White, while all the insurgents are Black or People of Colour.²¹⁹ A senior official is quoted to have told Momonakaya and his fellow Fijian servicemen that “you guys must be feeling right at home wearing them dishdash [Arab robes] – no one can tell the difference [between] you guys and the Taliban”²²⁰. The continued construction of the soldier as White and the enemy as Black is highly relevant to the later discussion of representations of diversity. This racist incident was reportedly not a singular incident but added to a culture of racism in the Army that rendered Lance Corporal Momonakaya suicidal and led to his medical discharge in 2012 for post-traumatic stress disorder. He accused the Army and specifically his unit’s instructors of treating Commonwealth soldiers like “second-class citizens” and repeatedly using racial slurs.²²¹ In addition, this example shows how the ‘enemy’, in this case, the Taliban, is also othered through racialization. Other service-members of Colour have similarly reported that during training, they would be the ones to portray the ‘enemy’, with one soldier of North African descent saying “I always get asked to be a suicide bomber”²²². In recent years, the military has seen a rise in complaints, its Complaint Ombudsman, Nicola Williams stating in 2019 that “incidents of racism are occurring with increasing and depressing frequency”²²³. Another case of racist discrimination in the Army was brought to an employment tribunal in 2019 by two members of the elite parachute regiment, Nkululeko Zulu from South Africa, and Hani Gue from Uganda. Claims included several instances of racial slurs and epithets as well as vandalised and defaced accommodations; photographs of the men had been defaced with swastikas, Hitler moustaches and explicit racial epithets.²²⁴ The verdict eventually found that the Army had created a “degrading, humiliating and offensive environment”²²⁵ regarding racism in the forces.

²¹⁹ See Miller. 08.01.2020.

²²⁰ Drewett, Zoe. 10.02.2019. „Black soldier ‘wins £490,000 compensation after being ordered to be Taliban in army DVD’”. In: *Metro*. <https://metro.co.uk/2019/02/10/Black-soldier-wins-490000-compensation-ordered-taliban-army-dvd-8504412/>. Accessed: 10.08.2020. Insertion in original.

²²¹ See Momonakaya, cited in: Drewett. 10.02.2019.

²²² The Economist. 18.07.2020. “Black Lives Matter and the British army’s culture war”. In: *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/britain/2020/07/18/Black-lives-matter-and-the-british-armys-culture-war>. Accessed: 17.08.2020.

²²³ Williams, cited in: The Economist. 18.07.2020.

²²⁴ See Siddique, Haroon. 16.09.2019. „Ex-soldiers suffered degrading racial abuse in army, tribunal finds”. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/16/ex-soldiers-suffered-degrading-racial-abuse-in-army-tribunal-finds>. Accessed: 11.08.2020.

²²⁵ Siddique. 16.09.2019.

This ruling is in accordance with a long-standing association of military culture with racist ideologies. It was racial theory that oftentimes informed the military's recruitment strategies, with one military theorist, General Garnet Wolseley, giving testament to the ingrained White Supremacy and racism of the Imperial Army by declaring the "savage from the interior of Africa"²²⁶ the perfect soldier: "So it is with races of men. There are some to whom drill and the ordinary duties of the soldier in the field can be more easily imparted to than others. That sort of work seems natural to them, and in accordance with their instincts"²²⁷. The only reason I quote this deeply racist thinking here is to highlight continuances and similarities with persisting ideologies. Racist ideas of the types of soldiers foreign and Commonwealth nationals make remain still today in the Army, essentializing and naturalizing traits associated with good soldiering in certain nationalities. Ware (2012) writes that she was told during her research by Army officials and servicemembers that Fijians would make for good soldiers because of an "intrinsic sense of hierarchy" and both Zimbabweans and South Africans were "great warrior material"²²⁸.

Furthermore, racism paired with extremism in the Army made headlines in 2018, when Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen was convicted for being a member of and recruiter for the banned far-right group *National Action*. He had been stockpiling weapons for a "race war"²²⁹. And then there is the Black Lives Matter movement, that gained worldwide momentum after the death of George Floyd in police custody on May 25th, 2020, during which MoD banned soldiers in uniform from taking the knee in support of the movement, as it was deemed "too political"²³⁰. It is yet to be seen how this will affect the military in the long run. Of course, racism in the British Army is not only a problem when it is directed at servicemembers, but also when it is directed at civilians and combatants alike in the countries the Army is active in. This is yet another important topic, but unfortunately beyond the scope of this work.

²²⁶ Wolseley (1888), "The Negro as soldier", cited in: Ware. 2012. p.24f.

²²⁷ Wolseley (1888), "The Negro as soldier", cited in: Ware. 2012. p.24f.

²²⁸ Ware. 2012. p.25.

²²⁹ See Mark, Katie. 11.06.2020. „It wasn't just Army banter - it was racism". In: *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52966077>. Accessed: 17.08.2020.

²³⁰ Brazell, Emma. 01.07.2020. „British military banned from taking the knee in support of Black Lives Matter". In: *Metro*. <https://metro.co.uk/2020/07/01/british-military-banned-taking-knee-support-Black-lives-matter-12929414/>. Accessed: 17.08.2020.

3.3.3. Religion

As previous examples have already illustrated the 'other' – for instance, a Taliban – is not only framed in terms of skin colour but religion. “[T]o put it plainly, the army had spent over a decade engaged in a long-running war in which religion – specifically Islam – was widely seen as the Enemy, whether in the guise of the Taliban or the impenetrability and intransigence of Afghan culture”²³¹. By 2015, not even 500 Muslims served in the Army, mainly due to aversions against the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To improve those numbers, the MoD adopted new regulations on employment equality in 2003 to end discrimination of personnel on the grounds of religious beliefs and started to more specifically target Muslims and Muslim communities in their recruitment drive, as seen in the 2018 campaign.²³² Muslims hold a unique position within the Army: on one hand, they face potential racism and stigmatisation by an army that has often constructed itself in a ‘Judeo-Christian tradition’ and is part of the international ‘War on Terror’, almost exclusively carried out in countries with Muslim majorities. Cases of discrimination against Muslims would thus have the potential to support views that the Army is fighting against Islam itself. On the other hand, positive integration of Muslims into the forces pose the potential of “spinning the military project of bringing security to a country that happens to be Islamic”²³³ and enforcing the idea that the Army is “fighting extremists, not Muslims”²³⁴. Besides, Muslim servicemembers and those sharing a common ancestry with the countries of deployment are seen as an asset when it comes to connecting with civilians. Soldiers are by now also allowed to wear garments specific to their religion, which means that for example, Muslim women can wear the hijab or Sikh men a turban, as long as it is in accordance with the uniform and safety regulations²³⁵, which could potentially alter how *the* British soldier is being visualized.

²³¹ Ware. 2012. p.139.

²³² See MacAskill, Ewan. 06.02.2015. “British army aims to recruit more Muslims after worries over low numbers”. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/feb/06/british-army-recruit-muslims-low-number-iraq-afghanistan>. Accessed: 18.08.2020.

²³³ Ware. 2012. p.143.

²³⁴ Taneja, Poonam. 21.02.2011. „UK's Muslim soldiers ‘fighting extremists not Muslims’”. In: *BBC Asian Network*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12504162>. Accessed: 18.08.2020.

²³⁵ See The Army. No date. “Faiths in the Army”. <https://apply.army.mod.uk/what-we-offer/what-we-stand-for/faith>. Accessed: 18.08.2020.

Theoretical Framework: Military Masculinity, Femininity and Diversity

The theoretical part of this thesis is based on the argument established and illustrated in the previous section that military recruitment and advertisement is not only reliant on evaluating how to best sell an Army career to young people, but that it actively seeks to shape society in a way that keeps the military relevant. Here, power relations connected to gender norms, societal order, citizenship and identity, and ideas about what constitutes diversity come into play. They are embedded in a long history of military oppression and marginalization of non-White, non-male, and non-heteronormative groups as well as exclusionist of disability or impairment; a history that must serve as a benchmark in assessing contemporary image creation of the military. The existing literature on recruitment in the British Army has shown that in recent years, there has been a focus on recruitment strategies that position the Army as diverse and progressive. Thus, the analysis of the adverts will focus on several categories derived from the literature and see how they are represented and constructed through mainly the body and language in the posters which will then be developed further considering the context. Most of the concepts' terminology has already been used previously but will be discussed more in-depth in this section. At the centre of the later analysis will be the soldiering body as the carrier and – through depiction in the campaigns – literal canvas for the military's messaging about the following concepts: military masculinity, military femininity, and diversity. As I follow a visual approach, I base the analysis on the argument that both, concepts of gender, and diversity, have a visual component that allows drawing conclusions from the way bodies are represented as eligible soldiers.

To be able to answer how the British Army represents the soldiering body in their latest recruitment campaigns in terms of gender and diversity, it is necessary to first establish a clear understanding of how the soldiering or military body is constituted. This serves to establish the body as a site of embodiment in which the other concepts relevant to the research design intersect, and ultimately, to answer the second research question by showing how constructs of military masculinity, femininity and diversity are mapped onto the body in the adverts. A detailed discussion of these concepts is also necessary to determine how ideas of military masculinity, femininity and diversity are being adapted or even transformed in the

advertisements in light of the previously discussed recruitment ‘crisis’ and the need to recruit from non-traditional groups. Only then can I turn to the bigger picture and ask how these ideas in turn reflect on civil society and how continued relevancy for the military is created through them.

1. The Body

*“Words like sex, gender, male, female, homosexual, heterosexual, masculine, feminine, fat, thin, black, white and so on have no meaning without the body upon which to write these terms”*²³⁶ – Heggie (2003)

The visual approach to ideas of gender and diversity within military recruitment becomes possible because these ideas are performed and represented in the body and thus observable. The body is not simply a fixed biological entity, but instead, “[b]odies are constructed with regard to some cultural ideal”²³⁷, which is to say that bodies are continuously negotiated in hermeneutic processes of relation – male to female, body to state, et cetera. “In these oppositions, neither term is fixed, but each mutually constitutes the other. [...] The constitution of the body is a history of oppositions”²³⁸. Frank (1991) suggests that “bodies exist between discourses and institutions”²³⁹ in addition to their corporeality. The body becomes a site of embodiment, in which for example the gendered male or female body is mainly constituted through the embodiment and negotiation of masculinity and femininity. In turn, however, the binarily gendered body, as Schuller (2018) shows, is based on racial ideology in which sex differentiation was originally used to distinguish White, “civilized mankind” from a “primitive” Black or Indigenous “race”.²⁴⁰ In this ideology, only White corporeality is perceived as capable of evolution and transformation, while Black bodies remain removed from this potential. “The greatest attainment [...] was allegedly the specialized quality of binary sex. Sex difference stabilized the vulnerability of the impressible body by dividing the civilized body

²³⁶ Heggie. 2003. p.149.

²³⁷ Frank, Arthur. 1991. “For a Sociology of the Body: an Analytical Review”. In: Featherstone et al. (Ed.). *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*. Sage Publications. p. 36-103. p.45.

²³⁸ Frank. 1991. p.47.

²³⁹ Frank. 1991. p.48.

²⁴⁰ See Schuller, Kyla. 2018. *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex and Science in the Nineteenth Century*. Durham/ London: Duke University Press. p.207.

into two and consigning the susceptibility and penetrability of the receptive body onto its female half”²⁴¹. The thus racialized constructions of binarily gendered bodies draw through all subsequently discussed concepts of masculinity, femininity, and diversity, and clearly show that ‘race’, gender, and sexuality are not categories that can be discussed separately. Instead, they intersect in the body and need to be looked at as reciprocal.

To follow this lens of understanding categories of embodiment as mutually constitutive and experiences derived from these intersections not as simply additive, but complex, builds on the concept of intersectionality, most prominently associated with Kimberlé Crenshaw.²⁴² Intersectionality is the “critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities”²⁴³. What Crenshaw proposes is that identities do not exist as *either/or* constructions in real people and thus the body, but often as *and*, and hence locate on intersections of different identities.²⁴⁴ Notably, she points out the potential for building coalitions based on intersections of identity.²⁴⁵ “Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics”²⁴⁶. Visually analysing bodies supposed to represent diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity (and possibly sexuality) necessarily means looking for difference. I posit that an intersectional understanding of representation and embodiment is integral to grasp the complexities of diverse soldiering bodies and their potential for subversion. Intersectionality is here however rather understood as a lens through which the body should be seen than as an analytical concept.

²⁴¹ Schuller. 2018. p.207.

²⁴² See Hill Collins, Patricia. 2015. “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas”. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.41/1. Retrieved: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142>. 12.11.2020. p.1-20. p.10. Crenshaw’s 1991 article *Mapping the Margins* however rather marks the point at which intersectionality was more broadly incorporated into academic discourse, but it has its origins in social movements. Ascribing a concept that was born in grassroots social movements to describe the lived realities and experiences of Black Women to only one scholar would render the collective character of the concept invisible. See *ibid.* p.10.

²⁴³ Hill Collins. 2015. p.2.

²⁴⁴ Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”. In: *Stanford Law Review*, Vol.43/6. p.1241–1299. p.1242.

²⁴⁵ See Crenshaw. 1991. p.1299. For example, race can provide the coalition for gay and straight People of Colour to challenge heterosexism, gender the coalition to challenge racism and so on. See *ibid.* p.1299.

²⁴⁶ Crenshaw. 1991. p.1299.

Basham (2016b) notes that “[l]iberal democracy is founded on the dream of a free but ordered and ‘secure’ society. This dream requires that some bodies are regulated and trained to fight wars, and that other bodies are disciplined or ‘militarized’ to support them”²⁴⁷. Following Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, the domination of other bodies starts with the body dominating itself first.²⁴⁸ “[O]nly bodies can do things to other bodies. Most often, what is done depends on what bodies do to themselves”²⁴⁹. Thus, two concepts are of consequence in the body-military nexus: the disciplined (or docile) body, and the dominating body. Frank (1991) argues that the body disciplines itself to gain control in form of predictability over its actual contingency. Through regimentation, the body is made predictable and thus, a sense of control is asserted.²⁵⁰ Although bodies do discipline themselves, this happens in the context of institutions and discourses.²⁵¹ However, “[w]hen internal discipline can no longer neutralize the threat of its own contingency, the disciplined body may turn to domination, enforcing on the bodies of others the control it cannot exercise over itself”²⁵². Through discipline, as it occurs in military training, the body is supposed to dissociate from itself. Even though the body in the military performs among other bodies, it is monadic in its relation to others, all the while isolated in its own performance.²⁵³ “When such a body comes out of itself and does relate to others, the mode of that relation will predictably be force, since the disciplined body can only relate to others by projecting its regimen upon them”²⁵⁴. In other words, the (militarily) disciplined body cannot escape its need to discipline to assert control, and when presented with an ‘other’, discipline turns into domination. In short, the disciplined body inevitable turns into a dominating body, and to dominate, the body first must be disciplined. “The dissociated, contingent body can only become the warrior body, the body which can only exist with itself by dominating. Once domination has been adopted as a style of bodily usage, the body itself is reproduced in the medium of force and becomes incapable of other action forms of relatedness”²⁵⁵. Consequently, the soldier body is both the medium and

²⁴⁷ Basham. 2016b. p.270.

²⁴⁸ See Frank. 1991. p.56.

²⁴⁹ Frank. 1991. p.56.

²⁵⁰ See Frank. 1991. p.55.

²⁵¹ See Frank. 1991. p.60.

²⁵² Frank. 1991. p.55.

²⁵³ See Frank. 1991. p.55.

²⁵⁴ Frank. 1991. p.55f.

²⁵⁵ Frank. 1991. p.73.

outcome of discipline, domination, and ultimately, violence: both in relation to the own body and the 'other' bodies, which will be disciplined, dominated or even violated through the means of war.²⁵⁶ This means that to represent the soldiering body as such, the body needs to be visually disciplined and visually dominate.

However, contrary to imaginations of military masculinity (of the soldier as aggressive and superior), the soldiering body is made docile. "'Docile' actually means teachable, malleable, obedient, amenable to training, submissive (to another's authority) and easily managed"²⁵⁷, all traits that as Foucault (1977) points out, render the docile body "useful".²⁵⁸ Representation, imagination and embodiment of the soldiering body thus unify contradicting traits within the body. For the soldiering body to be identified as such, discipline and dominance must somehow be visibly communicated in the adverts, while the body is at the same time made docile, with the most obvious strategy being the uniform. The uniform, as performance and embodiment of military affiliation, further controls, but also identifies the body (in the sense of rendering its identity visible): "It is the means by which the organisation reinforces its control over the individual as well as granting the individual the authority to control the masses"²⁵⁹. Thus, identifying markers of the disciplined and dominating body is a first step in analysing the soldiering body.

Dominating bodies are almost exclusively imagined as male bodies. Hence it is necessary to consider the construction of masculinity and the male body to understand the military body.²⁶⁰ "Basic military training is a key site for such transformational relationships between men, their bodies and the military"²⁶¹. Ultimately, the military transforms bodies: many into one, civilians into soldiers, boys into men, and so on. And transformation lies at the heart of the recruitment promise.

²⁵⁶ See Frank. 1991. p.73.

²⁵⁷ Heggie. 2003. p.154.

²⁵⁸ See Heggie. 2003. p.154. Her argument is based on Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977).

²⁵⁹ Heggie. 2003. p.160.

²⁶⁰ See Frank. 1991. p.69.

²⁶¹ Basham, Victoria M. 2016a. "Gender and Militaries: The Importance of Military Masculinities for the Conduct of State Sanctioned Violence". In: Sharoni et al (Ed.). *Handbook on Gender and War*. Edward Elgar Publishing. p.29-46. p.31.

2. Military Masculinities

The military is essentially imagined as an exclusively male domain as shown in the context chapter of this thesis, with spaces most closely associated with physical violence closed off to women until 2018. Despite a drive to recruit more diversely, the British Army is still in large parts made up of the 'traditional' White, cis-male soldier and structured around imaginations of military masculinity. Although the concept has evolved significantly since it was first used more ubiquitously as an analytical framework²⁶², it remains an important benchmark for an analysis of soldiering. The concept of military masculinity is now often used in academic scholarship to explain more complex and at times contradictory practices.²⁶³ However, following the critique of Chisholm and Tidy (2017), it is important to look beyond the hegemonic aspects of military masculinities and challenge the very hegemony of the concept itself and what it has come to mean.²⁶⁴ "[M]ilitary masculinities' has in some important regards become a form of comfortable story, the ending to which we seem to already know"²⁶⁵. I posit that looking at representations of soldiering bodies and bodies made to represent the military by using several intersecting lenses of which military masculinity is only one, can offer new insights, especially into these evolving complexities and ambiguities. It is very much in this regard that I believe an analysis of the recent British recruitment campaign can give some insight. "'Softer' or hybrid masculinities appear to always entail new race or class or sexuality oppressions. [...] Attentiveness to intersectionality, not just masculinities and femininities, is vital to ensure that change in gender relations is progressive and that any challenge to hegemonic masculinity is meaningful"²⁶⁶. The visual analysis of recruitment advertisements offers a look beyond hegemonic masculinities without erasing the ambiguity and contradictions of processes of constituting military masculinities. By using the lens of military masculinity, consistencies, as well as disparities in the representation of the soldiering body, can be highlighted. As I will show in the following section, masculinity is not necessarily associated with the 'male' body, which means that to visually identify representations that uphold military

²⁶² See Henry. 2017. p.13. Influential works were those of Cynthia Enloe (1990) or Paul Higate (2003).

²⁶³ See Henry. 2017. p.10f.

²⁶⁴ See Chisholm, Amanda/ Tidy, Joanna. 2017. "Beyond the Hegemonic in the Study of Militaries, Masculinities, and War". In: *Critical Military Studies*, Vol.3/2. London/ New York: Routledge. p.99–102. p.99f.

²⁶⁵ Chisholm/ Tidy. 2017. p.101.

²⁶⁶ Duncanson. 2015. p.239.

masculinity becomes more complex, but all the more necessary, given the proposed shift of the military from a 'macho culture' towards softer, more inclusive and diverse constructions of soldiers. Thus, military masculinity is not only integral to answering how the soldiering body is represented in terms of gender and diversity in the current recruitment campaigns but has the potential to identify signs of transformation over time, as well as showing how the concept might simply be translated onto more diverse bodies.

2.1. Masculinity and hegemonic masculinity

Concepts of masculinity and constructions of hierarchies of masculinities are a tool in the exertion of power. In the British case, ideas of masculinity were central to the organization and legitimization of British imperialism and colonialism²⁶⁷, which is an important frame when analysing representations of more diverse masculinities today. Ideas about masculinity played an important role in the already mentioned construction of martial 'races' during colonialism by constructing entire peoples or religions as either "manly" or "effeminate".²⁶⁸ This shows that it is not only femininity that is the binary 'other' to masculinity, but that 'otherness' to juxtapose ideal masculinity arises from more complex constructions of masculinity and femininity which are not congruent with 'men' and 'women'.²⁶⁹ The example of the use of the term 'effeminacy' shows how supposedly feminine qualities are used to render men who have previously been constructed as 'other' either through 'race' or sexuality inferior. Along with the already discussed origin of the strictly binarily gendered body, the concepts of masculinity and femininity are in extension "ideologies of the post-Enlightenment West [...] manifested in the hypermasculinity of British imperial ideology [which] reshaped more fluid and diffuse gender identities"²⁷⁰. Sinha (1999) notes that masculinity "has no a priori context or origin" (for example a 'male' body) but instead "acquires its meaning only in specific practices"²⁷¹. In short, masculinity is not necessarily linked to men. Or in the words of

²⁶⁷ See Enloe, Cynthia. 2014. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. 2nd Edition. Berkley: University of California Press. p.59.

²⁶⁸ See Sinha, Mrinalini. 1999. "Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India". In: *Gender and History* Vol.11/ 3. p.445–460. p.447.

²⁶⁹ For processes of othering, see Said, Edward. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.

²⁷⁰ Sinha. 1999. p.448.

²⁷¹ Sinha. 1999. p.454.

Enloe (2014) who posits that only through efforts to manipulate ideas about femininity and masculinity are men and women constituted: “Men’s sense of their own manhood has derived from their perceptions both of other men’s masculinity and of the femininities of women of different races and social classes”²⁷². It becomes clear that masculinity is not only constructed in relation to femininity, but also to other constructs like ‘race’ or class, thus making for various, co-existing, intertwining and interacting masculinities.²⁷³ This is an important notion for the analysis of military masculinity in the recruitment adverts, as it suggests that masculinities are ambiguous and complex, and most importantly, not tied exclusively to the representation of presumed ‘male’ bodies.

Identifying the power relations of multiple masculinities, Connell (2005) introduces the concept of hegemonic²⁷⁴ masculinity. “Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type [...] It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable”²⁷⁵. The idea of hegemonic masculinity is linked to constructions of ‘true’ masculinity or ‘real’ men, often constituted and reproduced in mass culture; ideas that are then intrinsically linked to and located in the ‘male’ body.²⁷⁶ This ‘truly masculine’ body is cis-gender male, White, able-bodied and heterosexual. Hegemonic masculinity in turn then creates subordinated or marginalized masculinities, for example, gay men or men of Colour.²⁷⁷ Connell (2005) states that at least in the ‘West’, homosexual masculinity presents the main alternative to the traditional model of hegemonic masculinity.²⁷⁸ An important takeaway from Connell’s concept of masculinities for the analysis is that “masculinity, like femininity, is always liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption”²⁷⁹. From Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity follows then the concept of military masculinity (regarded as a form of hegemonic masculinity), which was again developed into one of

²⁷² Enloe. 2014. p.164.

²⁷³ See Connell, R.W. 2005. *Masculinities*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press. p.75.

²⁷⁴ Hegemony is here understood as “the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. The term hegemony is today often used as shorthand to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive”, Rosamond, Ben. 06.05.2020. “Hegemony”. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hegemony>. Accessed: 08.11.2020.

²⁷⁵ Connell. 2005. p.76.

²⁷⁶ See Connell. 2005. p.45.

²⁷⁷ See Connell. 2005. p.78.

²⁷⁸ See Connell. 2005. p.216.

²⁷⁹ Connell. 2005. p.73.

multiple masculinities. “Constructions like ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘class’, ‘sexuality’, ‘disability’, ‘religion’ etc. are contributing to how individuals are placed on the spectrum of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities”²⁸⁰. It is useful to regard masculinities as an adaptable spectrum, with military masculinities as idealized forms of masculinity on the hegemonic end of the spectrum.

2.2. Military Masculinities

“Celebrated as a hero in adventure stories telling of his dangerous and daring exploits, the soldier has become a quintessential figure of masculinity”²⁸¹

Masculinity finds its epitome in the figure of the ideal soldier. There has to be an idea of what a soldier *is*, looks like, behaves like, thinks like for the military to function as a unit. “Something has to glue the army together and keep the men in line, or at least enough in line for the organization to produce its violent effects. [...] The production of exemplary masculinities is thus integral to the politics of hegemonic masculinity”²⁸². Among other military performances and representations, these ideas are communicated through advertising. Although there are again multiple masculinities, military masculinity has conventionally mostly been analysed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity. The argument here is not that all soldiers embody this idealized image of masculinity, but rather “that this model acts as a cultural ideal, in more or less overt ways, and all negotiate their masculinity in relation to it”²⁸³. Military masculinity can be understood as a mould of the ideal soldier, which yet remains evasive and is in constant need of negotiation. An approach to the analysis of the material is in identifying how the mould is visualized, as the logic of recruitment suggests that that which is represented is that which is looked for – the eligible, and in some form idealized soldier.

A distinction important for the following analysis is that of military masculinities and militarized masculinities: the former refers to understandings of masculinity within the military,

²⁸⁰ Stengel, Frank A./ Shim, David. 2020. „Was zieht junge Menschen in die Bundeswehr?: Eine Gender-Analyse der YouTube-Serie ‚Die Rekruten‘“. In: Schlag, Gabi/ Heck, Axel (Ed.). *Visualität und Weltpolitik: Praktiken des Zeigens und Sehens in den Internationalen Beziehungen*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. p.245-275. p.249. Translated from German.

²⁸¹ Graham Dawson, 2013, cited in: National Army Museum d). No date.

²⁸² Connell. 2005. p.214.

²⁸³ Duncanson. 2015. p.243.

the latter to imaginations of masculinity in the civilian sphere that are influenced by the military.²⁸⁴ Distinguishing between military masculinities and militarized masculinity is an important frame for analysing how the military seeks to shape society in the civilian sphere even beyond recruitment, adding to a discourse on militarism. Militarism and militarization, rather than being analysed as mere ideologies, are most commonly understood as processes through which military values are transferred to the civilian sphere.²⁸⁵ “But the civilian side is not just another institution; the military is an actor within a social and political system, not a neutral force outside its boundaries. The two ‘sides’ are thus highly interpenetrated”²⁸⁶. After Stavrianakis (2015), militarism can thus be understood as the “tendency or extent to which these military relations influence social relations as a whole”, and militarization as increasing influence of military relations.²⁸⁷ Enloe (2000) defines militarization as “the step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria”²⁸⁸.

With the need and integration of non-traditional recruits, military masculinities become more complex and ambiguous. Belkin (2012) suggests that “to attain masculine status in the modern American military, troops must disavow femininity [...] but they also must embrace that which has been constructed as abjected, such as femininity, queerness, softness, weakness and the like”²⁸⁹. He argues that within military masculinities, “[b]inaries can be conflated and thus confused, as well as enacted or repressed”²⁹⁰. This means that within the enactment of military masculinities, contradictions not only exist but are to a degree constitutive of masculinity. Still, with changing conception of what constitutes a masculine soldier, there needs to be an ‘other’ in relation to which the self is constructed. Duncanson (2015) cites, for example, a study of the American military during the 1991 invasion of Iraq (Niva, 1998), in which the author finds that the new image of the American soldier is “tough, but tender”: “The

²⁸⁴ See Stengel/ Shim. 2020. p.250.

²⁸⁵ See Stavrianakis, Anna. 2015. “Militarism”. In: Wright (Ed.). *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2nd Edition, Vol.15. Elsevier. p.490-494.

²⁸⁶ Stavrianakis. 2015. p.491.

²⁸⁷ Stavrianakis. 2015. p.492.

²⁸⁸ Enloe. 2000. p.187.

²⁸⁹ Belkin, in: Belkin, Aaron/ Carver, Terrell. 2012. “Militarized Masculinities and the Erasure of Violence”. In: *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.14/4. London/ New York: Routledge. p.558–567. p.560

²⁹⁰ Belkin, in: Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.560. An example is here the rejection of homosexuality in the military, with the simultaneous enactment of homo-erotic rituals of brotherhood, or even rape as a form of socialization or initiation. See *ibid.* p.560.

construction was based on race as well as gender, with the liberal and compassionate white masculinity of the US soldiers contrasted with Saddam Hussein, who became an ‘Oriental Hitler,’ and a positioning of Arab men in general as backward in their macho and hypermasculine ways”²⁹¹. Including ‘feminine’ attributes (tenderness) thus does not challenge hegemonic masculinities, but combines “aggressiveness *and* sensitivity, in order to ensure the position of elite men is harder to challenge”²⁹², leading to “hybrid masculinity”²⁹³. In short, including ‘feminine’²⁹⁴ attributes can be a way to ensure the hegemonic status of White military masculinity over ‘other’ masculinities.

Military masculinities do not exist in a vacuum but are in turn influenced by changing masculinities in the civilian sphere.²⁹⁵ Myrntinen (2019) identifies the emergence of four ‘new’ important masculinities on the political spectrum, of which one is the “softer” military masculinity.²⁹⁶ “Both in COIN²⁹⁷ and in peacekeeping, the gendered practices are often paradoxical and contradictory: soldiers need to protect and ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the local civilian population while often simultaneously having to use violence against members of that population”²⁹⁸. Furthermore, these sorts of missions have brought new sets of responsibilities with them, many of which were traditionally the responsibility of civilian actors. With new forms of warfare, new military activities emerge which require different skillsets and thus allow for ‘new’ understandings of soldiering.²⁹⁹ New military masculinities include for example the “humanitarian soldier scholar (White, literate, articulate, and doctorate festooned) [...] [who are] not interested in chest thumping gestures, deploy the language of hearts and minds [...] and see their wont as being the wielders of softer or smarter power”³⁰⁰. These ‘new’ masculinities are however contrasted with constructions of local masculinities.

²⁹¹ Duncanson. 2015. p.236.

²⁹² Duncanson. 2015. p.236. Italics in original.

²⁹³ Niva, 1998, cited in: Duncanson. 2015. p.236.

²⁹⁴ It is noteworthy here that the mentioned attributes of femininity all are associated with White femininity.

²⁹⁵ See Duncanson. 2015. p.236.

²⁹⁶ See Myrntinen, Henri. 2019. “Stabilizing or Challenging Patriarchy? Sketches of Selected ‘New’ Political Masculinities”. In: *Men and Masculinities*, Vol.22/3. Sage Publications. p.563–581. p.565.

²⁹⁷ Counterinsurgency.

²⁹⁸ Myrntinen. 2019. p.568.

²⁹⁹ See Myrntinen. 2019. p.568.

³⁰⁰ Khalili, 2011, cited in: Duncanson. 2015. p.238.

These are cast – feeding into colonial tropes – as “brutish and backward, child-like, unreliable, and with deviant sexualities”³⁰¹.

Differentiated constructions of military masculinities vary not only over time but among different militaries. When it comes to the British military more specifically, Jester (2019) argues that the current trope of masculinity in the British Army is actually more defined by a rejection of hegemonic masculinity.³⁰² This tendency was already identified by Duncanson (2015), who finds shifts in the construction of British military masculinity towards “a masculinity that is associated as much with conflict resolution as conflict, with the skills and practices of communication, negotiation, humanitarianism, sensitivity, compassion, and empathy”³⁰³. By putting “flexibility over fitness”, the Army shows not that it “has gone soft but that it is becoming an ‘enabling, nurturing’ employer rather than the rule-bound, muscle-bound bureaucracy of the past”³⁰⁴. Brown (2007) however, in assessing media coverage on military shifts in the UK and US, also points to the media’s role in potentially guarding conservative notions of military masculinities despite these shifts: “In the UK, young men are feared to be too soft for the military; [...] the concern seems to be that young men don’t share the same standards of masculinity as their elders or don’t subscribe to the notion that it’s important for them to be tough and strong”³⁰⁵.

2.1. Violence

An important aspect of military masculinities is the conduct of violence. In the military, the power to perform violence is legitimized, institutionalized and thus monopolised by the state.³⁰⁶ Military masculinities, in turn, are “the normalized and legitimized ways through which state violence is not merely represented as itself but also distinguished – usually by silent implication – from any number of other things”³⁰⁷. This means for example, that a soldier can be distinguished from a citizen through the representation of their body in uniform,

³⁰¹ Myrtilinen. 2019. p.568.

³⁰² See Jester. 2019.

³⁰³ Duncanson. 2015. 241.

³⁰⁴ Crampton, 1998, cited in: Brown. 2007. p.63.

³⁰⁵ Brown. 2007. p.264.

³⁰⁶ See Duncanson, Claire/ Woodward, Rachel. 2016. “Regendering the Military: Theorizing Women’s Military Participation”. In: *Security Dialogue*, Vol.47/1. Sage Publications. p.3–21. p.10.

³⁰⁷ Carver, in: Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.559.

a representation and distinction that can mean the difference between violence perceived as legitimate (a soldier doing their job) or illegitimate (a civilian killing and thus becoming a murderer). In order to effectively perform the violence that is inherent to the institution of the military, it first needs to produce and make hegemonic an understanding of masculinity that will serve this purpose.³⁰⁸ Connell (2005) asserts that “[v]iolence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity [...]. Most episodes of major violence (counting military combat [...]) are transactions among men”³⁰⁹. That is in no way to say that men are biologically or in any naturalized and essentialized way prone to violence, but that violence is a socially acceptable and encouraged way for men to assert ‘manliness’. The way in which masculinities are institutionalized and made hegemonic in the military are crucial in understanding how war is gendered.³¹⁰ Military masculinity and violence continuously reproduce each other and this gendering of war: “The association of masculinity with toughness, aggression, and war, and femininity with weakness, passivity, and peace privileges ‘tough’ responses to conflict and feminizes nonviolent alternatives, reinforcing the systems of war and militarism”³¹¹. Thus, masculinity is always imagined as superior to femininity in the social order. In short: “Gender continues to shape who fights, who dies and in defense of whom”³¹².

Yet, the already mentioned contradictions of military masculinities apply especially when it comes to the conduct of violence: for any notions of aggressiveness or risk-prone behaviour go against what is imagined to be legitimate conduct of violence. Enloe (1983) observes that “[i]n reality, of course, to be a soldier of the state means to be subservient, obedient and almost totally dependent. But that mundane reality is hidden behind a potent myth: to be a soldier means possibly to experience ‘combat,’ and only in combat lies the ultimate test of a man’s masculinity”³¹³. This notion of combat as the ultimate site to produce and acquire masculinity then also explains why women were for so long excluded from combat; if just through language, while they were already serving in high-risk ‘supporting roles’. It becomes clear that ‘combat’ is not necessarily spatial, but more imagined as a space where men legitimately use violence to fight other men. The underlying construction of this performance of

³⁰⁸ See Connell. 2005. p.259.

³⁰⁹ Connell. 2005. p.83.

³¹⁰ See Connell. 2005. p.258.

³¹¹ Duncanson. 2015. p.235.

³¹² Basham. 2016a. p.29.

³¹³ Enloe (1983, p.12), cited in: Duncanson. 2015. p.234.

violence is that of men as protector and women as protected. Women in combat thus hold the potential to challenge the singular association of violence with masculinity and thus, the legitimacy of this violence.

In this discussion, violence has remained largely abstract, something that is typical for the military representation of violence. Carver (2012) points out that in representations of violence carried out by the military, what we see is a thoroughly controlled presentation: “What we are looking at is served up to us, precisely so that we can see ‘it’ for what it is, and ‘what it is’ has already been decided for us. What’s in the picture isn’t real violence at all; it’s a sanitized representation of legitimated (and sometimes illegitimated) violence”³¹⁴. Actual violence, however, is not represented, it is erased from the presented image as well as in the use of language: violence in the military context gets erased discursively through the dichotomy of “good guys” vs. “bad guys” and through what is left or made invisible.³¹⁵ “[T]he stereotypical version of militarized masculinities ‘approved for release’ either erases real violence altogether or tames and sanitizes it through symbolism. Thus, in parades or recruiting videos we see clean uniforms, unmarked bodies (and, so it seems, untroubled minds) and weapons that aren’t firing at all, or if so, only on training exercises with blanks”³¹⁶. It is one of the challenges of the visual analysis to also see what might not be there and include this absence into the bigger picture.

3. Military Femininities

An important contribution of feminist scholars to concepts of militarism and militarization has been its dependency on certain ideas and performances of both masculinity *and* femininity.³¹⁷ To understand femininity not only as that against which masculinity is constructed but as a lens to understanding military performance in itself might be one way to look beyond hegemonic masculinity. In the visual analysis, looking specifically at military femininities can not only

³¹⁴ Carver, in: Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.559.

³¹⁵ Carver, in: Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.559.

³¹⁶ Carver, in: Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.561.

³¹⁷ See Enloe. 2000. p.188.

offer insights into how military women are represented, but how attributes constructed as 'feminine' are incorporated into transforming ideas of soldiering.

Historically, women who joined the military were not necessarily seen as disruptive but occasionally used in a narrative of 'female masculinity' "to show men what they ought to do to prove their manliness"³¹⁸, meant to taunt men as 'effeminate'.³¹⁹ While individual women could in instances be celebrated for the performance of 'masculine' virtues, femaleness or femininity was simultaneously used to create a threat to masculinity. Men are supposed to feel taunted, threatened and effeminate by women performing virtues which ideally, *they* are supposed to embody. "[T]he threat of being feminized is used to downgrade and police groups of men—which we see in army training with the archetypal use of 'woman,' 'girl,' 'queer,' and 'faggot' to put down those who are failing to complete the various physical challenges associated with manliness"³²⁰. Thus, qualities constructed as 'feminine' are simultaneously rendered inferior.

While in the section on military masculinities, different masculinities could be described – which means they are positively constructed – (military) femininity is more evasive, as it is often negatively defined as a 'lack of' or 'other than', which poses a challenge to the visual analysis. There is a very simple assumption underpinning women in the military, that appears almost too trivial to mention but is integral to the discourse: women are not men, and in extension, women are often not soldiers, but *female* soldiers. Where masculinity is associated with violence, femininity is associated with peace, which supposedly excludes women from military action.³²¹ "While women's bodies fulfill a symbolic, and integral, role in male military bonding, their actual presence is a different matter. Women's bodies are also often regarded as weak, leaky and reproductively problematic"³²². Women are essentially seen as disruptive, as the presupposed heterosexuality of the ideal male soldier would mean the possibility of sexual tension between unit members. Furthermore, as women are continuously constructed as the ones in need of protection, they are seen as potentially more distractive in case of injury or death to the 'actual' protector, men.³²³

³¹⁸ Lynn. 2012. p.129.

³¹⁹ See Bowen. 2004. p.42.

³²⁰ Duncanson. 2015. p.235.

³²¹ See Duncanson/ Woodward. 2016. p.7.

³²² Basham. 2016a. p.36.

³²³ See Basham. 2016a. p.34.

So, what happens, when the feminine ‘other’ is included in a sphere that has been constructed as exclusively male? I have previously shown that military masculinity is not necessarily tied to male bodies. Connell (2005) states that “[w]omen are bearers of masculinity as well as men”³²⁴ and especially within recruitment discourses, women are given the opportunity to access masculinity through joining the military and performing associated traits like physical strength.³²⁵ This enactment of military masculinity by women poses a certain dilemma for feminist discourse. The question what a woman in the military *can* be, or indeed, *should* be, is best summarized by Woodward and Duncanson (2016): “In military institutions [...] it is possible that women may only ever be tokens, never fully accommodated, and militarism may never be challenged. Yet to argue as women for nonviolent alternatives to war risks reifying women’s age-old association with peace and pacifism, which ignores the diversity of women’s experiences and aspirations”³²⁶. This dilemma in the discourse of women in the military finds a pivot in the case of human rights abuses carried out by US soldiers – both male and female – against Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison during the US invasion of Iraq; a case that included physical and sexual abuse, rape, torture and murder. Titunik (2008) thus concludes “that women have proven capable of torturing and tormenting captives in war apart from a need to gain male acceptance”³²⁷.

The notion of women in the military actually killing, torturing and even raping turns binary notions of masculinity and femininity on their head. But even without such drastic examples in mind, it becomes clear that with the full inclusion of women into combat roles, traditional imaginations of femininity lose their traction. “Differentiation of military tasks has generally led to differentiation of gender ideologies; gender images cannot be reduced to the dualism of ‘war-prone men’ and ‘peaceful women’ anymore”³²⁸. Militaries deploy different modes of dealing with this dilemma, or what Woodward and Winter (2004) call an opportunity for the “breach of a boundary which marks the Army as a masculine preserve”³²⁹. Indeed, Heggie (2003) finds that the British Army not only embraces but in instances emphasises femininity,

³²⁴ Connell. 2005. p.230.

³²⁵ See Brown. 2012. p.155.

³²⁶ Duncanson/ Woodward. 2016. p.6.

³²⁷ See Titunik, Regina F. 2008. “The Myth of the Macho Military”. In: *Polity*, Vol.40/ 2. p.137–163. p.158.

³²⁸ Stachowitsch, Saskia. 2013. “Professional Soldier, Weak Victim, Patriotic Heroine”. In: *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.15/2. Routledge. p.157–176. p.161.

³²⁹ Woodward, Rachel/ Winter, Patricia. 2004. “Discourses of Gender in the Contemporary British Army”. In: *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 30/2. Sage Publications. p.279-301. p.294.

thus making women's bodies useful, if still clearly differentiated from male bodies.³³⁰ 'Difference' is here an important operationalization to analyse the representation of military women and military femininity. Yet, gender is seemingly de-centred: "Gender is constructed as a variable, but one that can be controlled for [...] with the emphasis changing from 'equipping the man' to 'manning the equipment'"³³¹.

The soldier is thus constructed as a professional and seemingly no longer gendered entity. It seems that this framing of soldiers as more or less gender-neutral professionals made it possible that in the case of Britain, the broadened inclusion of women has not been framed as 'emasculatation' or 'feminisation'.³³² The gender-neutral, professional soldier is also one of four tropes of military femininity that Stachowitsch (2013) identifies in her analysis of media representations of women in the US military and poses an important frame to the visual analysis and a possible alternative to representations based on 'difference'.³³³ The author furthermore identifies the portrayal of women as patriotic heroines, especially used in the course of the so-called 'war on terror', where femininity is emphasized and constructed in contrast to "oppressed Muslim women"³³⁴ as well as particularly capable and useful to 'win hearts and minds'.³³⁵ Importantly, the study gives insight into how representations of female soldiers are highly susceptible to and thus representative of, shifts in the economic and political environment which speaks to the explanatory value of this perspective.

Often, however, conventional femininity is retained in some form. Brown (2012) for example finds that in the US Army, "[t]he idealized female servicemember gains skills and independence and faces challenges, but she is not martial. Imagery of female servicemembers in recruitment materials poses no threat to the concept of the masculine warrior"³³⁶. An interesting new aspect to military roles in general is peacekeeping operations, as the previously exclusive realms of war and peace (and in relation, masculinity, and femininity) are here interlinked. 'Feminine' attributes, and indeed female soldiers are often centred in peacekeeping operations, where "we see a valorization of alternative ways of soldiering: more

³³⁰ See Heggie.2003. p.148.

³³¹ Woodward/ Winter. 2004. p.288.

³³² See Woodward/ Winter. 2004. p.295.

³³³ See Stachowitsch. 2013. p.163f.

³³⁴ Stachowitsch. 2013. p.168.

³³⁵ See Stachowitsch. 2013. p.169.

³³⁶ Brown. 2012. p.172.

collaborative, communicative and constructive”³³⁷. In his study on Kenyan female soldiers in direct combat roles in the war against al-Shabaab insurgents in Somalia, Ombati (2015) for example finds that female soldiers are on one hand expected to subscribe to ‘feminine’ roles during daily military life, but then exhibit ‘masculine’ behaviour the moment they enter combat. “Women in the military are expected to (re)enact stereotypically feminine behaviours such as nurturing, supporting and being empathetic and caring, while at the same time suppressing these emotions as they face the enemy in combat. [...] Women are called to combine their femininity with the combative masculine stance of the warrior in the military”³³⁸.

Once again, femininity in the military is not monolithic and trying to only understand constructions of femininity through gender would come short of the significance of intersectionality to the image of women in the military. As Brown (2012) finds in her study of women and military femininity in the US forces, the overwhelming majority of women depicted as female and ‘feminine’ soldiers is White. She poses that White femininity is seen as representative of universal womanhood and “as more feminine and thus as more appealing and non-threatening”³³⁹, which deepens gender divisions through racialization. These divisions become especially apparent when military femininity is used to legitimize war in instances where (White) military women are constructed as emancipated and in contrast to othered, (Non-White) women who are constructed as oppressed and in need of rescuing.³⁴⁰ Understanding military femininities as a complementary, yet distinctive lens can be useful to make visible representations of soldiering that might not fit the lens of military masculinities and expand the framework to comprehensively answer how soldiers are represented and how ideas about soldiering are transformed.

³³⁷ Duncanson/ Woodward. 2016. p.9.

³³⁸ Ombati, Mokua. 2015. “Feminine Masculinities in the Military: The Case of Female Combatants in the Kenya Defence Forces’ Operation in Somalia”. In: *African Security Review*, Vol.24/4. Routledge. p.403–413. p.411.

³³⁹ Brown. 2012. p.171.

³⁴⁰ See Stachowitsch. 2013. p.168f.

4. Diversity

Diversity is the vaguest and ambiguous of the three lenses of the visual approach as it is largely only constituted by being measured against that which is majorly represented and thus perceived as the norm. At the same time, thoroughly discussed by now, the norm in military representations is well-defined and explicit in the White, male, able-bodied and gender-conforming soldier, which makes that which is constructed to be 'diverse' visually rather easily accessible. Much of what is commonly perceived as representing diversity is "*surface diversity*, meaning attributes of people that can easily be seen and thus often become the basis for stereotyping"³⁴¹. Based often on optical 'difference' like 'race', ethnicity or gender, diversity seeks to bring into a space those who are underrepresented or formerly excluded.³⁴² Broader definitions, however, go beyond visual aspects, and include "whatever differences are most significant in a particular organizational setting"³⁴³. This could also refer to language, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic background etc.

In its statement on diversity and inclusion, the British Army only refers to itself as an "inclusive employer that respects difference, attracts talent from all areas of society, overtly embraces equality of opportunity and always challenges unacceptable behaviour" without going into more detail than "protected characteristic and background" or "individual differences"³⁴⁴. The MoD's diversity statistics reveal the characteristics deemed to be most relevant by collecting data on gender (specifically, female servicemembers), Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAME), religion, and sexual orientation.³⁴⁵ To consider diversity rather in individual terms than applying a narrow definition opens up space for "considering the place and importance of invisible differences and intersectional identities"³⁴⁶. However, this understanding of diversity can lead to "institutionalized outing" in which individuals must

³⁴¹ Hays-Thomas, Rosemary. 2016. *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective*. New York: Routledge. p.4. Italics in Original.

³⁴² See Hays-Thomas. 2016. p.3.

³⁴³ Hays-Thomas. 2016. p.5.

³⁴⁴ The Army. 2020. "Diversity & Inclusion". In: Work Well. <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/work-well/diversity-and-inclusion/>. Accessed: 12.11.2020.

³⁴⁵ See MoD. 25.06.2020. „UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics: 1 April 2020". National Statistics, Gov.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2020/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-1-april-2020>. Accessed: 12.11.2020.

³⁴⁶ Edgar, Alistair/ Mangat, Rupinder/ Momani, Bessma. 2019. "Unpacking Diversity and Inclusion". In: Edgar et al (Ed.). *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p.1–18. p.4.

identify their ‘diversion’ from the dominant group, with one example being sexual orientation.³⁴⁷ The visual analysis can offer valuable insights by analysing what is represented into how the British Army constructs certain departures from the narrowly defined military norm as desirable diversity, while omission in representation points to that which is less desired. ‘Diversity’ in the military setting should thus be understood as a term deeply embedded in the power structures discussed at the beginning.

One problem that arises when focusing on representation and diversity is the very reproduction of assumed difference and hence, that what is perceived to be the norm. “Looking [...] at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing the sense of the oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human”³⁴⁸. To be ordinary in a ‘Western’, European setting is first and foremost to be White, something that is hardly ever specifically named, but simply assumed. As Dyer (2017) notes, “race is not only attributable to people who are not white, nor is imagery of non-white people the only racial imagery. [...] As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people”³⁴⁹. This is an important reflection when talking about visualized diversity. Furthermore, to be ordinary in this setting is to be un-ambiguous in presenting gender and heterosexuality and conforming to Christian values³⁵⁰ in a way that cannot be attributed to a religion constructed as out of the European norm. While androcentrism persists as a tacit norm in society, it is more explicit in the military. The female soldier is still an anomaly, a divergence from the norm.

Edgar et al (2019) observe that in the military setting, the inclusion of diversity serves to reject (or rather, dismantle) a “simple and simplistic notion of a typical soldier, against which all differences then are measured. Often differences are presumed to be inferior to the norm, problematic to the functioning of the military unit, and therefore, primarily a challenge to be

³⁴⁷ See Okros, Alan. 2019. „Introspection on Diversity in the Canadian Armed Forces”. In: Edgar et al (Ed.). *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p.153-168. p.162.

³⁴⁸ Dyer, 2002, cited in: Cervulle, Maxime. 2017. „Looking into the light: Whiteness, racism and regimes of representation”. In: Dyer, Richard. *White*. 2nd Editio. London: Routledge. xiii- xxxii. xvi.

³⁴⁹ Dyer, Richard. 2017. *White*. 2nd Editio. London: Routledge. p.1.

³⁵⁰ As Edgar et al note, “[t]he notions of martial values in Western militaries also are predominantly informed by a Christian ethos”, Edgar et al. 2019. p.16.

overcome by training”³⁵¹. As the previous chapters have shown, ideas about *the* soldier are strong and diversity is often constructed as disruptive to unit cohesion. In a more positive framing, diversity is seen as a challenge to the status quo. Yet, as Okros (2019) concludes, results of diversity policies have often been more aligned with systematized assimilation than integration. A consequence has been the “artificial creation of differentiations within the military between ‘us’ and ‘like us but different in some way’, with a range of policies [...] intended to help minimize the differences identified by the dominant group”³⁵². Analysing the recruitment campaigns through the framework of diversity thus means looking at what ‘differences’ to the norm become representable and how they are then visually communicated.

4.1. (Militarized) Multiculturalism

I have argued that ‘diversity’ in the military setting is deeply embedded in power structures informed by constructions of gender order, ‘race’, identity, and historic legacies like colonialism. I would lastly like to discuss the concept of militarized multiculturalism as introduced by Ware (2012), who connects diversity measures within the armed forces with public attitudes toward immigration, citizenship and soldiering.³⁵³ Multiculturalism is here understood as a big umbrella nation: “In this generous vision, multiethnicity, religious tolerance [...] and regional diversity are consciously embraced, seen not as threatening the nation but rather as the distinguishing hallmarks of the big-umbrella nation”³⁵⁴. Ware introduces a militarized understanding of immigration and multiculturalism through assessing the British Army’s foreign nationals’ recruitment schemes. While the immigrant (meaning a Person of Colour, as immigration only is marked as such through non-Whiteness) is not welcome, the immigrant in uniform is – as long as they visibly serve the country.³⁵⁵ Although the minorities recruited through the foreign nationals and Commonwealth scheme do not necessarily represent diversity within the UK, adequate representation does not matter. In the militarisation of

³⁵¹ Edgar et al. 2019. p.5.

³⁵² Okros. 2019. p.159. It should be noted that this conclusion was made with regard to the Canadian Armed Forces.

³⁵³ See Ware, Vron. 2017. “From War Grave to Peace Garden: Muslim Soldiers, Militarized Multiculture, and Cultural Heritage”. In: *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, Vol.10/4. London/ New York: Routledge. p.287–304. p.290.

³⁵⁴ Enloe. 2014. p.57.

³⁵⁵ See Ware. 2012. p.259.

multiculturalism, what matters is that through the inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities, a continuity in the military history from Imperial past to the present is constructed.³⁵⁶ This present is understood to be post-colonial, yet with an almost affectionate lasting connection that provides soldiers to the nation who might not be citizens, but loyal through the 'traditional' links of their home countries with Britain. This form of approved (yet still heavily restricted!) immigration can only be understood in the context of the military as link between empire and modern global player. "In short, the visible embrace of diversity was integral to the process of modernization, as a result of which the armed forces could assert themselves as a dynamic and modern employer, equipped to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century despite public reservations about the wars that they were engaged in"³⁵⁷. Ware's concept thus adds an important dimension to visual analysis of diversity.

³⁵⁶ See Ware. 2012. p.282.

³⁵⁷ Ware. 2017. p.290.

From Snowflakes to Army Confidence: analysing the campaigns of 2019 and 2020

5. Research design

At the centre of the analysis stands the soldiering body as a site of embodiment of the Army's message. In the section introducing the main concepts relevant to this thesis, I have argued that the visual approach becomes possible because concepts of gender and diversity have visual components that intersect in the body and allow to draw conclusions from the way these bodies are represented as eligible soldiers. While the discursive construction of the soldiering body will feed into this thesis via the context of the recruiting campaigns, its focus is the visual construction of the soldiering body and thus the visualization of military masculinities, femininities, and diversity. The visual analysis will first look at how bodies are represented in the campaigns in terms of gender and diversity and how these bodies are visually marked as soldiering bodies. In a second step, I will analyse how existing notions of military masculinities and femininities are mapped onto the body, and how notions of diversity are visually conceptualized. And finally, by considering the context both of the broader concepts, as well as the power structures and historic context, the chosen method of visual context analysis allows discussing how these ideas are transformed to recruit a new generation and create continued relevancy for the military within society, which by extension poses the question of militarization. To assess transformative potential, I ask if and how conventional ideas of military masculinity are challenged, rejected, adapted, or adhered to.

5.1. Visual Context Analysis: Methodology & Method

Bleiker (2018) notes that “[t]here are few realms where the importance of the visual is more pronounced than in security”³⁵⁸. When it comes to the military, visualization is one of the main means of forming, reproducing and communicating the institution vis a vis civil society and ‘the other’ – through uniforms, artefacts like weaponry, visualized rituals like parades, or the imagery widely distributed to recruit new personnel. Bleiker distinguishes between

³⁵⁸ Bleiker. 2018. p.191.

two-dimensional imagery such as pictures or videos, but also three-dimensional artefacts such as uniforms, which are part of the visualization of security.³⁵⁹ Images “frame or reframe the political, either by entrenching existing configurations of seeing, sensing, and thinking, or by challenging them. [...] They can entrench existing power relations or they can uproot them”³⁶⁰.

Images have become omnipresent – as Müller and Knieper (2019) put it, the ‘pictorial turn’ has long become “pictorial ubiquity”³⁶¹ – and images have surpassed (complex) text in communicating meaning. Images are part of the symbolic representation of reality and do not have a specific code to their message, which makes decoding a complex matter with ambiguous interpretations.³⁶² Thus, Geise (2011) defines an image as “international, at most two-dimensional, media-related visualization or visual representation of meaningful content, which do not have to be fixed beforehand, with reference to situational, temporal, spatial, individual and social contexts”³⁶³. Importantly, the definition of an image remains rather open, which allows to include advertisement posters as well as comparably recent forms of imagery like YouTube videos. While imagery is now often framed by text – a caption, a slogan, etc. – image and text should never be mistaken as superimposable and necessarily conveying the same meaning.³⁶⁴ An important notion for the visual analysis is that images do not represent social reality, but “social illusions”³⁶⁵, which means that images become a way to decode ideology and make more abstract ideas accessible. Michael Shapiro’s work *The politics of representation* (1988) made an important step towards including images into the analysis of international politics and security. He proposed a “politicized reading practice, one which situates the images in order to discern their complicities with prevailing power and authority

³⁵⁹ See Bleiker. 2018. p.191.

³⁶⁰ Bleiker. 2018. p.193.

³⁶¹ Knieper, Thomas/ Müller, Marion G. 2019. “Zur Bedeutung von Bildkontexten und Produktionsprozessen für die Analyse visueller Kommunikation“. In: Lobinger, Katharina (Ed.). *Handbuch Visuelle Kommunikationsforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. p.515-526. p.516. All direct quotes translated from German.

³⁶² See Rössler, Patrick/ Dussel, Konrad. 2019. „Bilder als Quellen in der Kommunikationsforschung“. In: Lobinger, Katharina (Ed.). *Handbuch Visuelle Kommunikationsforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. p.491-513. p.492.

³⁶³ Geise, Stephanie. 2011. *Vision that matters: Die Funktions- und Wirkungslogik Visueller Politischer Kommunikation am Beispiel des Wahlplakats*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. p.63. Translated from German.

³⁶⁴ See Böhm, 2011, cited in: Rössler/ Dussel. 2019. p.500.

³⁶⁵ Rössler/ Dussel. 2019. p.494.

as well as their challenges”³⁶⁶. When it comes to the military and security practices more generally, Vuori and Andersen (2018) note that “security practices are more often than not visual. [...] visual practices are operative, for example, in making things and political norms visible or obscure, on display or hidden, and in the enactment of social sorting”³⁶⁷. I follow this argument in suggesting that the way the military seeks to shape society is visualized in its recruitment campaigns and can be analysed through visual methodology.

While in many instances the flood of imagery on a certain topic is overwhelming and does not allow for a detailed examination of singular images, this is not the case with the material at hand. The advantage of a narrow focus on the main British recruitment campaign released in January every year is that the number of images is limited to the issued posters, framed by a limited amount of rather short video clips. This allows for a far more detailed focus on the construction of every image, and thus, a method which puts the visual at its centre. To be able to include both the image itself and its wider context, I will follow primarily Marion G. Müller’s approach to visual context analysis. In short, visual context analysis broadens iconographic and iconological methods developed in the field of art history to include the context dimension. It aims to allow for a differentiated analysis of visuals, something that has long been established for textual sources, but not for visuals. Müller’s visual context analysis builds on Panofsky’s three-step process of Iconology, a method of qualitative content analysis genuine to art history³⁶⁸. My three research questions approximately follow these three steps:

- I. *Pre-iconographic description*: all formal aspects and content of the image are registered, capturing the subject of the image. Thus, the mental image of the image is mapped out for further analysis. [This first step allows to rather descriptively show how the soldiering body is represented in the campaigns. *Gender* and *diversity* are here mainly operationalised as optical categories based on ‘difference’ to the pre-existing mental image of the ‘traditional’ soldier.

³⁶⁶ Shapiro, 1988, cited in: Vuori, Juha A/ Saugmann Andersen, Rune. 2018. “Introduction: Visual Security Studies”. In: Vuori, Juha A/ Saugmann Andersen, Rune (Ed.). *Visual Security Studies, Visual Security Studies*. London/ New York: Routledge. p.1-19. p.7.

³⁶⁷ Vuori/ Andersen. 2018. p.10.

³⁶⁸ See Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.517.

- II. *Iconographic analysis*: In this stage, the secondary subject of the image is identified by more closely looking at how historical background in form of belief systems, dominant principles, and narratives manifest in the image. |Here, the descriptive dimension of representation is broadened to include the more abstract concepts of military masculinities, femininities, and diversity and the question of how they are mapped onto the body. Conflict areas of the image, mental image, and textual framing are identified. Specifically, I look at how the military body is constituted as such through markers of discipline and domination; how (military) masculinities are (re)produced and potentially translated onto non-traditional bodies; how (military) femininities are constituted and negotiated with military masculinity; how diversity is constituted and communicated as a desirable mode of soldiering; and lastly, how violence as an integral aspect of the military body finds entrance into the representation or is rendered invisible.
- III. *Iconological interpretation*: the previously identified elements of the image are put into relation to approximate the meaning and intention behind the image. “It is a matter of determining the actual or underlying meaning of the image or its content in the context of reception”³⁶⁹. |In the final step, I move from the visual representation to the underlying meaning and intention. The areas of conflict in the image – discrepancies and consistencies of representation, mental image, and text, – are extended to the wider discourse of the underlying concepts and how they are embedded in and interact with the broader historical and contemporary context. This includes a comparison to earlier campaigns or findings of other countries. Through this deeply embedded interpretation, it becomes possible to answer how the military seeks to shape society.

It is important to note that methodologically, these three steps are not as clearly separated or even chronological as it might appear. Especially the second and third are rather cyclical as they are continuously informed by the overarching concepts and the context. The extension of the visual methodology to include the context is not an added step but, following Müller, should be included in all steps of the analysis.³⁷⁰ She, therefore, introduces three strata of analysis: form context, production context and reception context. “In addition to the

³⁶⁹ Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.517.

³⁷⁰ See Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.518f.

conscious interpretation of the image, this is about the unconscious dimensions of perception and meaning”³⁷¹. Context analysis further considers the different stakeholders who are significantly influencing the meaning and effect of the image. “For the iconological context analysis, all actors [...] are of high relevance, as they select, interpret, reduce and construct within the corresponding contexts”³⁷². Although the imagery in this thesis can clearly be ascribed to the Army, production and reception context as well as the actors are more blurred through the outsourcing of recruitment to a private firm, with sophisticated, mediatized advertising being carried out by a PR agency. Media reception offers yet another dimension.

An important distinction when analysing images is the duality between image (effigy) and mental image. The latter are “immaterial, mental images or ideas. Images, on the other hand, are, in principle, images of the outside world that can be perceived through the sense of sight, which are synonymous here as material images”³⁷³. An image then becomes of interest for research when there is an area of conflict between effigy and mental image and the interplay of both thus shapes public opinion.³⁷⁴ A central aspect of the method of analysis is thus to identify underlying mental images and to find those areas of conflict, where representation and mental image are not congruent. This means that as part of the first step of the analysis, I look for possible visual references to well-known tropes of representation or even iconic imagery and then identify similarities as well as discrepancies to ascertain areas of conflict. In addition, discrepancies between visual representation and accompanying text present a further field of conflict, as textual and visual message might diverge, something the campaigns intentionally use.

The focus of the analysis is on the visual construction of the soldiering body and the visualization of a recruitment message of diversity. Thus, practices of “representing difference” are investigated, something that Hall (1997) thoroughly addresses in *The spectacle of the ‘Other’*.³⁷⁵ Especially in the early stages of the analysis, the method necessarily looks for ‘difference’, or rather markers thereof. This means that “‘Difference’ has been marked”³⁷⁶ and can

³⁷¹ Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.519.

³⁷² Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.520.

³⁷³ Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.518.

³⁷⁴ See Knieper/ Müller. 2019. p.518.

³⁷⁵ See Hall, Stuart. 1997. “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’”. In: Hall, Stuart (Ed.). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications/ The Open University. p.223–290.

³⁷⁶ Hall. 1997. p.230. Italics in Original.

be represented and perceived as such in the first place. Hall notes that “[h]ow it is then interpreted is a constant and recurring preoccupation in the representation of people who are racially and ethnically different from the majority population. Difference signifies”³⁷⁷. Hence, images centred around bodies always carry implicit messages about ‘race’, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, in a much more complex way than can be accounted for in this thesis.³⁷⁸ But most importantly, it becomes clear that perceiving images is never an objective task. “For obvious reasons, the decoding of images depends on context variables such as personal experience, previous knowledge, cultural identity or the historical framework”³⁷⁹. Thus, the way I can analyse the British Army’s recruitment campaign is necessarily informed by my specific positioning. As Chisholm (2017) shows, “knowledge we produce about militarism, violence, and gender cannot be separated from our own embodiments and gender biases that will always frame our research questions and mediate how we navigate and write about the field”³⁸⁰. The bias however doesn’t end there. In perceiving human bodies, different sets of biases inform our perception, like ‘race’/ perceived ethnicity, colourism, ableism, heteronormativity, or hegemonic beauty standards which for example degrade certain body types. An advantage of the chosen method is here that as fewer images are analysed in greater detail, the process of seeing, reading and interpreting visuals remains transparent, a process that in itself makes visible and leaves space for the ambiguity of imagery. Lastly, it should be said that there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in analysing imagery and the method is not meant to identify the images’ one ‘true’ meaning. Rather, it aims at identifying possible meanings and the way they are anchored in the context.³⁸¹

5.2. Material

The focus of the analysis is on the main recruitment posters designed by PR agency *Karmarama* and published in January of 2019 and 2020 which represent (soldiering) bodies. It is important to note that additional images and campaigns tailored to specific events later in

³⁷⁷ Hall. 1997. p.230.

³⁷⁸ See Hall. 1997. p.231.

³⁷⁹ Knieper/ Müller 2019. p.518.

³⁸⁰ Chisholm/ Tidy. 2017. p.100.

³⁸¹ See Hall. 1997. p.228.

the respective years – like the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 – are not integrated into the main analysis. The 2019 *Your Army Needs You* campaign consists of six recruitment posters and three YouTube videos which provide the storytelling to the posters (one main video of one minute and two additional videos of 30 seconds). All six posters depict portraits of service-members and are thus considered for the analysis. However, the videos are no longer featured on the Army's YouTube channel at the point of writing in 2020, and only the main video of one minute can still be found elsewhere online, since it was the most widely received and medially (re-)distributed. For the 2020 *Army Confidence* campaign, eight posters were issued with one accompanying YouTube video that frames the posters' messaging. Additionally, seven very short video clips were published, all only around ten seconds long. Out of the eight posters, three depict objects instead of bodies and are thus not considered for the main analysis. This means that the main body of images analysed for this thesis consists of 11 recruitment posters. The four YouTube videos feed into the context, with additional campaign material and media reception being considered as well.

All posters fitting the research criteria depict bodies in the wider sense – either black-and-white, seemingly sketched portraits of servicemembers, as in the 2019 campaign, or body parts arranged in a collage as in the case of the 2020 campaign. They are framed by written slogans, which means that each poster provides data in form of imagery and text. The pre-iconographic analysis will include depictions of the material.

6. Analysis

6.1. Pre-iconographic description

In a first step to the analysis, each poster will now be described to answer how soldiers are represented in the campaigns, keeping in mind the central focus of gender and diversity. The pre-iconographic description follows methods genuine to art history by breaking down the posters into image and text, composition and style, modes of representation and visual references or antetypes. Posture, body language, facial expression and styling are equally important as visual markers of the military, symbolism or represented 'difference', and all serve

to identify fields of contention how the soldiering body is constituted and conceptualised. In addition, I briefly summarize the recruiting videos which will feed into the context.

6.1.1. 2019: Your Army Needs You

It is not difficult to identify the prototype of the six posters of the 2019 campaign, which clearly reflect the well-known style of the 1914 iconic Lord Kitchener recruitment ad. Each prominently features a black-and-white portrait of a servicemember marked as such through the camouflage uniform and beret against a monochromatic background that is made to look like old-fashioned paper. Each portrait appears to have been painted and then printed, as inconspicuous grey splatters of paint across each poster suggests, thus additionally mimicking the traditional printing method. Each portrait is depicted down to the shoulders, where the paint is running out on the seams. The focus of each poster is on the respective servicemember's face which is clearly drawn and almost photographic with clear lines and precision, guiding the gaze towards the individual features, while the uniform starts to blend with the background. Above every portrait, a buzzword features prominently in flashy red print, with the slogan "Your Army Needs You" underneath the portrait in black print, the "You" enlarged and black-rimmed. Then, at the bottom of each poster and again in red print, although slightly washed out, the buzzword is made synonymous with a certain attribute. Recruitment information, the Army slogan "Find where you belong" and the Army's logo all remain outside the monochromatic greyish frame on a white background framing each poster, which gives it the appearance of a poster on a poster. Significantly, often the outer white frame of the poster is cropped, and the poster is redistributed without the logo and additional slogan.



Figure 1

6.1.1.1. “Snowflakes”

The poster that has often been used synonymously with the whole campaign is the one calling for “snowflakes”. It shows a White, male³⁸² soldier in uniform and beret in three-quarter profile, chin raised and looking directly at the viewer. The pose of the raised chin depicted from a low angle is often associated with positions of high authority and generally known as a commander’s pose; the viewer is looking up at the soldier. The raised chin and low angle could, however, also be interpreted as arrogance or standoffishness, looking down on the viewer. Nevertheless, his expression seems to suggest a certain vulnerability and concern that can be

traced to the line of the eyebrows, forming a slant towards the middle of the forehead. The corners of his curved mouth point downwards and give the soldier a serious air. Rather significant for this poster, however, is his prominently featured and contrasted exposed throat, the V-neck of his uniform exposing bare skin, with even the onset of the chest visible. The focus on the vulnerable area of the exposed neck underpins the air of vulnerability.

The subheading, in this case, attributes the buzzword “snowflakes” with “compassion”. The English Dictionary defines “snowflake” as a derogatory term that describes an “overly sensitive or easily offended person, or one who believes they are entitled to special treatment on account of their supposedly unique characteristics”³⁸³. Often used as a term of abuse by the political right to degrade the left, it gained prominence in the British Brexit debate. Additionally, it is often used to insult a younger generation that is seen as hypersensitive, thin-

³⁸² Although binary genders will be used for the description, it should be made clear that these descriptions regard stereotypical representation of gender and can in no way relate to gender identity of servicemembers. The author is aware that by describing servicemembers as either male or female, the gender binary is being reproduced and other identities are disregarded. This will be however addressed in-depth in the discussion of this thesis.

³⁸³ English Oxford Living Dictionaries: “Snowflake”, II. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/snowflake>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.

skinned, and easily offended.³⁸⁴ “Members of the so-called ‘snowflake generation’ are type-cast as emotionally weak and lacking resilience”³⁸⁵.



Figure 2

6.1.1.2. “Me Me Me Millennials”

“Me Me Me Millennials” is used as the buzzword in one of two posters that feature a female soldier and matched with the attribute of “self-belief”. In this case, the uniformed servicemember is a Black woman who is represented in a half-profile, looking at the viewer over her shoulder. The angle is on one level with the viewer and she seems to be looking back while turning away. Her expression seems confident, yet relaxed, her chin is not raised, and her lips are slightly open. The eyebrow that is visible under the beret seems to be slightly raised, her pose and expression seem to prompt the viewer to follow her.

Her long hair is pulled into a low bun and while there are no distinct markers for make-up, an earring is visible. On her shoulder, a Union Jack is featured. “Millennials” include, broadly defined, the so-called Generation Y (ca. 1981-1991) and Generation Z (ca. 1991-2001) and ascribes them with certain identity markers and traits.³⁸⁶ The label “Me Me Me generation” is not new but can be traced to a 2013 Cover of the US Magazine Time which featured a young woman lying on her stomach, taking a selfie. The cover is captioned “Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents”³⁸⁷.

6.1.1.3. “Phone Zombies”

The second poster featuring a female servicemember is headed “Phone Zombies”, a buzzword that is then equalled with “focus” in the bottom line. This time, the woman is White, with light

³⁸⁴ See Nicholson, Rebecca. 28.11.2016. “‘Poor little snowflake’ – the defining insult of 2016”. In: *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/nov/28/snowflake-insult-disdain-youngpeople>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.

³⁸⁵ Haslam-Ormerod, Shelley. 11.01.2019. “‘Snowflake Millennial’ label is inaccurate and reverses progress to destigmatise mental health”. In: *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/snowflakeMillennial-label-is-inaccurate-and-reverses-progress-to-destigmatise-mental-health-109667>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.

³⁸⁶ See Urban Dictionary (a): “Millennial”. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Millennial>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.

³⁸⁷ Stein, Joel. 20.05.2013. “Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation”, in: *Time*. <http://time.com/247/Millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.



Figure 3

hair, again long and pulled into a low bun. She is depicted in a three-quarter profile, with her head turned towards the viewer, chin slightly raised. Although the low angle is not as clear as in figure 1, there is still a sense of looking up to her. Her face doesn't give much away, she seems concentrated and alert, with closed lips. Interesting is however her gaze, it isn't quite clear if she fixates the viewer or something that would be just behind the viewer's right shoulder. She likely wears make-up in form of mascara, as her eyelashes are significantly more prominent than on the other posters, as well as a subtle earring. On her shoulder the Union Jack is visible.

The term "Phone Zombie" generally means someone who consistently stares at their smartphone, even when walking. The Urban Dictionary describes a phone zombie as follows: "They are almost always stumbling slowly in the way of general progress. Likely to be seen blocking the only path. Usually oblivious and inconsiderate"³⁸⁸.



Figure 3

6.1.1.4. "Binge Gamers"

The "Binge Gamer" is represented by a male servicemember of Colour, from a frontal low angle perspective. His gaze is fixed on the viewer from above, half of his face and his eyes rather heavily shadowed. The eyes (partly due to the perspective) appear only half-open which, together with the shadows underneath, seem to point to a certain degree of fatigue or exhaustion, which is however contrasted with the raised chin and upright posture. His face seems to be a little fuller compared to the other servicemembers, which is possibly supposed to indicate a heavier body type. Unlike the soldier in the "Snowflake" poster, he is wearing a shirt that is visible under the V-neck of his uniform.

³⁸⁸ Urban Dictionary (b). "Phone Zombie". <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=phone%20zombie>. Accessed: 15.10.2020.

The caption suggests that “Binge Gamers” have “Drive”. The Urban Dictionary defines “binge gaming” as “[g]aming long and hard until you collapse, lose consciousness, or drift off into sleep apnea”³⁸⁹. Binging is generally associated with behaviour deemed unhealthy and means to “indulge in an activity, especially eating, to excess”³⁹⁰.



Figure 4

6.1.1.5. “Selfie Addicts”

The poster titled “Selfie Addicts” features a male, Black soldier and attributes the addiction of taking pictures of oneself with “confidence” in the subheading. His posture, with thrust out chin, body in half-profile but face turned towards the viewer, only seems to suggest said confidence. His eyebrows are slightly raised, as well as the corners of the otherwise relaxed mouth, which adds to the air of self-assuredness. Eye-catching is however the goatee beard that sets him apart from the other three male soldiers and which appears to be meticulously groomed. Also, where the beret does not cover his head, a side-cut becomes visible, a hairstyle whereby a pattern is shaved

into the hair. He, too, is wearing a shirt as part of his uniform.

The selfie, a picture taken by the pictured themselves and originally mostly featuring the face, has become synonymous with a generation of Social Media users. “[F]rom a psychological perspective, the taking of selfies is a self-oriented action that allows users to establish their individuality and self-importance; it is also associated with personality traits such as narcissism”³⁹¹. The addition of “addict” is not necessarily an exaggeration, as experts suggest an addictive potential of taking selfies.³⁹²

³⁸⁹ Urban Dictionary (c). “Binge Gaming”. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Binge%20Gaming>. Accessed: 16.10.2020.

³⁹⁰ Oxford Languages. „Binge“. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/binge>. Accessed: 16.10.2020.

³⁹¹ Griffiths, Mark. 12.01.2018. “Obsessive Selfie-Taking: A brief overview of ,selfitis””. In: *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-excess/201801/obsessive-selfie-taking>. Accessed: 16.10.2020.

³⁹² See Griffiths. 12.01.2018.



Figure 5

6.1.1.6. “Class Clowns”

The last poster in the series uses the buzzword “Class Clowns” above the portrait of a (possibly) White, male servicemember who appears almost burlesque. His face is featured in a three-quarter profile, eyebrows so starkly raised that they half disappear under his beret, eyes squinting at the viewer from his raised angle, the head slightly retracted in a manner that produces the onset of a double chin. The lips are pressed together, one corner of the mouth points down, the other upwards, which gives him a rather comical or sceptical expression. The caption equals being a “Class Clown” with having “spirit”.

While there is no specific connection to the generation of Millennials, Class Clowns are generally regarded as disruptive and having not much respect for authority.

6.1.1.7. Context: Recruitment video(s)

Together with the campaign posters, three recruitment videos were published on television and available via YouTube, one main video of one minute, and two shorter ones of 30 seconds each. While the shorter ones each star one character stereotypically wanted in the campaign’s posters (the binge gamer, and the class clown), the longer video is a more general framing of the entire campaign, featuring a young woman of Colour, who is only identified as a “Millennial”, but not one of the specific campaign characters. The videos are no longer available via the Army’s YouTube channel, and only the main video remains accessible due to broad media reception.

The video follows narrative storytelling with different characters and overlapping scenes of civilian and military life. In the first scene, the woman is shown in the evening, picking up discarded supermarket trolleys on a deserted parking lot and quite playfully putting them away. The shot intermittently changes to her two White colleagues inside the supermarket, at least one of them appear older than her, both talking disparagingly about her work ethics, the older man commenting: “Millennials. Useless”. While the shot goes back to the young

woman, apparently pleased with the way she arranged the trolleys, voices via radio and noise from a rotor blade can be heard from the off. The scene switches to a helicopter cockpit and is followed in quick succession by different shots from what immediately becomes clear is a military operation: soldiers in full camouflage yelling commands, running through the undergrowth of a forest, then an open field towards a helicopter, a group of soldiers inside the helicopter, the helicopter taking off. This is followed by several changes of scene between supermarket and field operation, with the young woman being reprimanded by her colleagues and in the following scene soldiers – both male and female – opposing those rebukes. “Hurry up” is met with a male soldier staring into the distance saying “resilience”, then a female soldier handing out aid saying “we need that”; “come on, chop, chop” is met with a female soldier telling a unit member handling equipment “slow and steady”. The next scene features a military raid in different installations, with a female voice coordinating the operation from the off. Explosions are audible and the scene dissolves into fire and soldiers running towards the burning debris. Then again, the young woman, obviously satisfied in front of a neat row of trolleys, scene switch to a male soldier aiming a rifle, finger on the trigger, saying “patience”. In the last scene, the young woman on her way, gaze focused on the road, then looking into the camera. Shots are audible and an image of presumably her in full military gear flickers over the screen. The video is accompanied by first sombre, then increasingly dramatic music, blended with a range of sounds indicating an active military operation (yelling, voices over radio, shots fired, explosions etc.) and is dominated by the very quick changes of scenery with combat imagery.³⁹³

6.1.2. 2020: Army Confidence

Compared to the campaign of 2019, the recruitment posters cannot immediately be visually attributed to the military. Although all eight posters share a common style, they can be put into two separate categories, of which only one is directly relevant to this thesis. Five of the posters feature various body parts (2x upper bodies, one male and one female; 2x faces, one male and one female; and a pair of apparently female legs), while three depict abstract objects

³⁹³ See British Army. „Your Army needs You – and your Resilience”. *Video Advertisement/ YouTube*. Accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8V4etDsKZ4>. (Posted: 17.12.2019 by Scoala Spor/ Accessed: 17.10.2020).

(an emoji, a training shoe, and a glass of beer). Significant is the chosen style which resembles a collage made from magazine cut-outs. In each poster, the featured image is made up of four to six individual pieces that are arranged to produce a somewhat complete picture. However, while the objects still retain a certain degree of integrity, the collage style becomes especially apparent in the posters depicting only partial bodies. Each collage is put on a simple white background and rounded off with a rather subtle slogan in black lettering that only takes up a fraction of the respective poster. Each slogan is two-tiered, with the first part referring to the individual poster in relation to “confidence” and printed in bold-type; and the second part referring to the 2020 Army slogan, saying “or it can last a lifetime”. The only actual reference to the Army (by name or symbol) is found underneath every slogan in form of the Army’s logo featuring the Union Jack and the slogan “Be the Best”. The only indication that this is a recruitment campaign is found in the quite small lettering underneath stating, “Search Army Jobs”. As the style of this campaign is less uniform and images vary more widely, the approach differs slightly, insofar as the posters are first categorized and then discussed in these categories.

6.1.2.1. “Confidence” 1&2: Torso and Arms



Figure 6

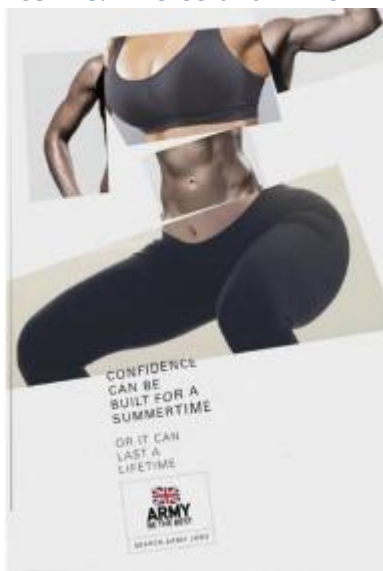


Figure 7

The first category is comprised of the two posters featuring a male and female torso. Both are pictured from the neck downwards, however, while the male torso is only pictured just below the navel, the female is constructed with an additional clipping (even depicting a second

navel) that shows legs and posterior in a squatting position. The male torso is completely naked and is put together by five different images, all featuring heavily trained bodies which, although skin tones vary slightly, could be identified as White, or White-passing/ light-skinned. The emerging overall impression is that of a White, lightly tanned muscular upper body. Both arms are flexed, showing off bulging muscles, with one arm sporting a set of tattoos. The arms are depicted ultra large in comparison to the rest of the body, with the clipping featuring the stomach (with a defined six-pack) being the smallest.

The female body also consists of five separate pieces; however, it seems possible that both arms (and possibly the stomach) have been used from the same original picture. Arms and stomach are as well heavily trained, yet considerably smaller than the rest of the body, also compared to the male body. In contrast, the clippings featuring the (rather large) breasts and the squatting legs with prominent backside are both oversized. The body is depicted wearing tights and a sports bra. Although the body appears to be rather light skinned, the way the features are presented renders it more ambiguous. The slogan for both posters reads “Confidence can be built for a summertime – or it can last a lifetime”.

6.1.2.2. “Confidence 3&4: Face



Figure 8



Figure 9

The second poster category features two faces, one of which would generally be read as female and one which would be read as male. Both seem rather cubistic, each assembled from six distinct pieces that starkly vary in size. Figure 9 shows a heavily made-up face. One eye

seems to belong to a person of Colour and is fixed on the viewer, the other to a White person, the pupil looking upwards. Both eyes are brown, and feature heavily made up artificial lashes, one visible eyebrow is perfectly trimmed. The nose is made up of two different, yet seemingly identical clippings, both light-skinned and adding up to a very small, symmetrical nose. The lip is divided horizontally into two clippings, with the upper lip being ultra-large and painted in coral lipstick and the lower, smaller lip painted red. The upper half appears to belong to a White person while the lower half and chin appear more tanned or possibly belong to a Person of Colour. All pieces were airbrushed and could have their origin in a beauty magazine. The slogan reads: “Confidence can be reapplied every morning – or it can last a lifetime”.

Figure 10 shows a face that is dominated by two large clippings featuring a blue-grey eye with a rather bushy eyebrow and a brown eye with a shaped eyebrow. The other dominant clipping is the mouth and jaw (one picture), with curved lips, a masculine jawline and well-groomed stubble. The nose again consists of two vertically divided and perfectly symmetrical clippings, this time, however, one White and one Black. The last clipping shows the hairline with an indication of short brown groomed hair. Except for the one, all clippings feature White skin. The slogan reads “Confidence can be restyled every morning – or it can last a lifetime”.

6.1.2.3. “Confidence” 5: Legs

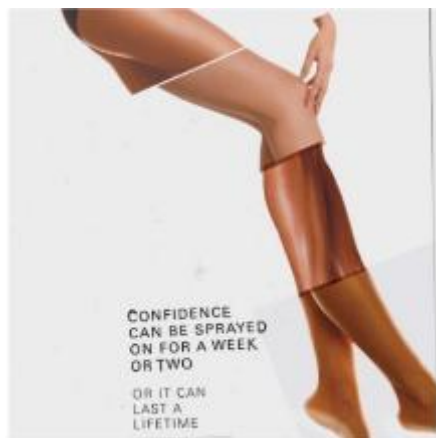


Figure 10

The last category consists of only one poster, featuring presumably female legs in four pieces and different stages of tanning. The way in which the pieces are assembled makes the legs appear unnaturally long. They are very thin, hairless, defined, and airbrushed. A hand lightly rests on the knee as if posing, directing the viewer's gaze (as if pointing) to the defined muscles of the lower leg. Although two of the four clippings appear darker, the slogan makes clear that the person depicted is artificially tanned and likely not

a person of Colour: “Confidence can be sprayed on for a week or two – or it can last a lifetime”.

6.1.2.4. Context: Recruitment videos

There is only one recruitment video that specifically frames the recruitment posters. However, there are additionally seven very short videos (about 10 seconds) which were also released as part of the *Army Confidence* campaign and will briefly be mentioned. The main video again uses narrative storytelling. The scene is set in an unidentified desert setting, slowly zooming into a small contingent of soldiers walking with their weapons at the ready towards an unknown destination. A male voice starts speaking from the off and the camera zooms in on one young, White, male soldier in full gear. The voice asks “Where does confidence come from? How you look?”. Suddenly, as if he were a mirage, a bulky, tall, bodybuilder-type Black man in sportswear appears, jogging next to the soldier, flexing his muscles, and demanding his attention by saying “Hey, little man, look at me. This could be you in just six weeks” in a very deep voice. He continues to rattle down the benefits of his fitness plan before disappearing again. The soldier, visibly under stress, stumbles on and immediately three almost zombie-like White figures appear, two men and one woman. They appear to be wasted from a night of excessive partying, with the woman’s make-up smeared over her face, all staggering as if still drunk and pressuring the young soldier to go out with them. Their voices fade into the off while the scene shortly shows the forlorn soldier walking in an empty desert, before it jumps to the next scene, in which a young Asian man appears, offering him in quick succession different shoes, flipping the wrapping and boxes carelessly away as he unwraps “the hottest drop of the year”, urging “don’t forget to subscribe”. The soldier appears more and more in distress, with a voice from the off asking “Instant likes?” and sounds of incoming messages becoming louder and louder, making him look around himself almost as if in panic. Suddenly another soldier appears, clapping him on the head, encouraging “Come on mate, you’re nearly there”. While the camera zooms out and the whole group becomes visible again, the male voice resumes: “Lots of things can give you confidence – for a little while. But confidence that lasts a lifetime? There’s one place where you’ll find that”. During his commentary, the scene focuses on a cloud of smoke in the distance, and the sound of rotor blades approaching becomes audible, before in answer to his question the Army logo and recruitment information appear on screen and the video ends.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁴ See ARMYjobs. 02.01.2020. „Confidence that lasts a lifetime”. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plyzF4yZNc8>. Accessed: 18.10.2020.

In addition, seven further videos were published that however only seem to be associated with the messaging of the rest of the campaign through the slogan of *Army Confidence*. The short clips are very different in style, each seemingly featuring a snapshot of everyday military life, ranging from ceremony to bomb squad. They all include the slogan in form of a military coordination log stating, “Confidence that last a lifetime can be found...”, completed by a random time/ date/ location, and the pictured activity. The videos resemble short outtakes of a documentary on military life and are simply named for the activity featured: “The Ceremony”, “The Patrol”, “The Long Walk”, “The Commander”, “The Watch”, “The Shot”, and “The Team”.³⁹⁵ Unlike the other videos, they are not supported by music or voice-over, but focus on the sounds associated with the activity, enhancing the immediacy of the scene: a shot fired with shelling falling to the ground, yelled commands, rotor blades, combat fire, sirens, intense breathing, and the typing of the slogan being entered into the coordination log. Each video begins with a close-up of one soldier, some, however, featuring a whole unit upon zooming-out. Although in several videos, the gender of the soldier becomes immediately clear – e.g. in “The Ceremony”, featuring a Black female servicemember in a ceremonial uniform of jacket and skirt – in others, there are no markers that would hint at the gender of the soldier (e.g. “The Watch”), with “The Long Walk” featuring a servicemember completely covered by special protective gear. At least two out of the seven videos feature Black servicemembers.

6.2. Analysis

The visual analysis will not only build on the pre-iconographic description of the recruitment posters but on the concepts discussed in the framework of this thesis, in instances already supplemented by the broader context, specifically at this stage the framing videos. The existing literature on recruitment in the British Army points to the Army’s positioning as more diverse and progressive. Central to this positioning are general representations of diversity, which mostly accumulate around the inclusion of women, ethnic and other minorities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community and which are conceptualized in more diverse representations of military masculinities and femininities. In the analysis, I will discuss how these

³⁹⁵ See ARMYjobs. 02.01.2020. “The Ceremony”, “The Patrol”, “The Long Walk”, “The Commander”, “The Watch”, “The Shot”, and “The Team”. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/c/talive/videos>. Accessed: 19.10.2020.

categories are represented and constructed mainly through the body, how areas of conflict between representation, mental image, and text emerge and how the Army thus creates its desired positioning.

Before focusing on each category, it is important to address the chosen style of each campaign to uncover how pre-existing imagery frames the reading of the posters. The *Your Army Needs You* campaign is especially clear in its reference to the archetypical recruitment poster, reproducing the iconic image of Minister of War, Lord Herbert Kitchener from 1914. The black-and-white portray, bold red-letter writing, even the black lining around the “You” and the background colour of the campaign reference the 1914 antetype. Although the iconic image was in fact never a recruitment poster, but a cover for the magazine *London Opinion*, the design has often been used for recruitment posters.³⁹⁶ Importantly, it is not the first time that the British Army has revived the wartime image: in answer to the 1998 report which found that only about 1% of servicemembers were from ethnic minorities, the MoD issued a recruitment campaign that used Alfred Leese’s Lord Kitchener image but replaced his face in one version with that of Ghanaian-born Captain Fedelix Datson, and in another with that of Warrant Officer Ashok Kumar Chauchan from India.³⁹⁷ Ware (2012) hence argues that “[b]y the end of the twentieth century, it was clearly intended to invoke a patriotic response from those who might otherwise have felt excluded from the national collective”³⁹⁸. I assert that the same intent underlies the 2019 campaign, given that women had only been fully integrated into all roles the previous year and the drive to recruit more diversely, including from foreign and Commonwealth nations, has been clearly stated by the Army.³⁹⁹ In addition, the reference “Your Army needs You” creates not only a patriotic response, but serves to support the narrative of recruitment in ‘crisis’. Women and non-White servicemembers are featured in percentages that are in no way reflective of the actual makeup of the military, with two out of six posters portraying women, and three featuring Black and servicemembers of Colour, clearly indicating the self-proclaimed recruitment drive for female and Ethnic Minority recruits. I argue that the adaption of the iconic design is meant to construct a continuity to a time in

³⁹⁶ See BBC. 03.01.2019. “Army campaign targets ‘snowflake’ Millennials”. In: *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-46747862>. Accessed: 20.10.2020. The famous “Uncle Sam wants You” posters of the US Army are for example based on this iconic image.

³⁹⁷ See Ware. 2012. p.39.

³⁹⁸ Ware. 2012. p.39.

³⁹⁹ See Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.11.

which the Army was unambiguously seen as “the good ones” (World War I) that completely blanks out colonial and post-colonial history and the history of erasure, exclusion and exploitation of women and ethnic and other minorities by the Army. By using the prototypical recruitment design, the military context is immediately evoked, and the featured person incorporated into an idea of the Army that blends out the history of their exclusion.

The concept of taking traits/ character descriptions from civilian life and giving them a military ‘twist’ is not new either but has been used in British campaigns before, as seen in a 1997 campaign focused on the Army’s “humanitarian” work: “The posters request ‘body builders,’ ‘body piercers,’ and ‘surrogate fathers.’ The accompanying pictures show the ‘body builders’ delivering food, the ‘body piercers’ giving inoculations to refugee girls, and the ‘surrogate fathers’ taking care of young boys”⁴⁰⁰. Quite similarly, the 2019 campaign seeks to reattribute a new meaning to several buzzwords, with the difference that these are rather insulting to the generation they are aimed at. The Army thus constructs itself as a powerful actor in (re-)framing and defining language, imposing an artificial reclamation of language – originally a subversive strategy of the marginalized – on a young generation.

The chosen style for the 2020 posters is less iconic and indeed does not immediately hint at the military context. Only the ‘male’ upper body activates a mental image associated with the military, namely the ‘warrior’. The design is rather reminiscent of collages made from magazine cut-outs and could just as well serve as an advertisement for any kind of self-improvement product, be it a subscription to a gym or a beauty product. Imagery and style appear to be borrowed from a non-militaristic context and I argue that the underlying intention is to evoke a mental image geared towards daily messages of self-improvement. While the campaign of 2019 would also clearly work as Army recruitment without the additional video advertisement, the 2020 campaign is merely discernible as military advertisement through the Army logo – not even the slogan – and only fully framed as such through the recruitment video. It seems that the additional seven videos featuring short sequences, seemingly taken directly from mostly field and combat operations or even high-risk scenarios, are meant to balance out the (at first glance) ostensibly un-militaristic approach to the recruitment posters.

⁴⁰⁰ Brown. 2007. p.268.

6.2.1. The Body and (Military) Violence

First, I will analyse how the body is placed in the context of military discipline and violence and thus established as a soldiering body. Violence and the association (or dissociation) with it plays an important part in the construction of military masculinity (and femininity) and is inscribed in the body on different levels. Violence seems at first glance completely absent from all the posters. There are no depictions of war, no suggestion of violence through symbols like weaponry, and in the second campaign, not even a visible reference to the military. Yet, I ascertain that in both campaigns, associations with war and violence are evoked, even if sometimes perhaps unconsciously and not necessarily intended. In the 2019 campaign, at least the military connection remains obvious. Besides the fact that the word “Army” is written boldly on each poster, the uniforms also immediately identify the featured men and women as belonging to a military body. The uniform hides the mortal, vulnerable body – something that will be significant in the analysis of the ‘Snowflake’ poster – and instead marks it as the (only) legitimate perpetrator of violence. Each poster clearly depicts a soldier, because the uniform has transformed the civilian body into a soldiering body by visually disciplining it, turning the body through representation into a dominating body. Through the lack of other imagery or symbolism of war, all depicted soldiers are equally associated (or dissociated) with it, apparently without a gendered mode of association. All soldiers wear the same camouflage uniform, a uniform that suggests the possibility of combat, as it is meant for the field and different from gendered ceremonial uniforms, as shown in the video “The Ceremony”. However, a small difference between the uniforms is created by including the Union Jack into both portrayals of women. This seems to reinforce the legitimacy to carry out violence in the state’s name, something that is apparently deemed as in need of additional highlighting in the women’s case. Thus, although subtle, there remains a slight difference in how the genders are depicted in connection to war.

Another way in which war and violence are implied in the posters is through the style. By citing an iconic style that is famously associated with the First World War, the logic of a state of war is implied and the war drive focused. The question *why* the Army needs recruits thus finds an immediate answer in the style of the poster, recreating the idea of a nation involved

in one of the most violent and deadly wars of the 20th century. The narrative of a recruitment 'crisis' with severe consequences is thus visually reinforced. While this connection to war is probably perceived more subconsciously, the video is more explicit. Although it never depicts the carrying out of violence, it includes imagery and audio markers such as rotor blades or shots and detonations associated with combat. Female soldiers are shown alongside male soldiers in the field, although scenes in which female soldiers are clearly identifiable remain gendered in ways congruent with the tropes of military femininity discussed in the respective section. For example, one soldier is pictured while she hands out relief goods from the back of a vehicle, associating her rather with humanitarian missions.⁴⁰¹

The connection to war and violence, or indeed any militaristic symbolism, seems absent from the successive campaign. Yet, the chosen collage style offers another lens to understand military violence. While depictions of violence may be absent from the posters, the very style of the campaign needed a form of violence for its production, in dismembering images of bodies and rearranging them. Although all the depicted body parts appear idealized, and each individual clipping seems to depict an in itself integral and able body, the fragmentation is reminiscent of the dismemberment. Not only is each body pieced together by different pieces, but also does no poster depict an entire person. Each body remains a fragmented partial. Given the actual impact that war and military violence can have on the body, I argue that this dismemberment integrates the risks of war in an unexpected – and arguably, unintentional – way into the posters. In contrast, the short sequence videos display war and roles in the military more explicitly in connection to violence. Noteworthy are here for example "The Commander", depicting an intense combat scene, and "The Long Walk", in which the protective gear suggests the devastating effect an explosive device could have on the body. But each scene is cut short in a way that only focuses on the action, not the consequence, quite symbolic in "The Shot", where a shot is fired, but the video stops without showing the hit target. Furthermore, discipline as the prerequisite for military violence is embodied through the posture and muscular body type of both the male and female torso. The body (parts) seem caught in action as if performing the rituals (e.g. work-out) that would be needed to retain the depicted muscular body type. I argue that this performance of fitness is a way of visually

⁴⁰¹ See Duncanson/ Woodward. 2016. p.9.

not only representing, but embodying discipline, rendering the civic body preconditioned to turning to domination.⁴⁰² Additionally, the hypermasculine torso evokes the mental image of a warrior, anticipating the transformation into a soldiering body. The posters seem like they could just as well be an advertisement for a gym or fitness routine; an impression, that is promoted by the accompanying slogan “Confidence can be built for a summertime – or it can last a lifetime”. Both, visual reference, and slogan, have at their centre the transformation of the body through discipline. Although the slogan asserts to break with the message of the image, the dominant image and the mental image it evokes reassert the association of the trained and disciplined body with the military, thereby creating a field of contention between a supposedly non-militaristic body and the military. Furthermore, the notion of the body disciplining itself to escape its own contingency through regimentation can be found in the promise of lasting confidence through military discipline, as well as in the imagery centred around the transformation of the body through performance and ritual.⁴⁰³ Ultimately, confidence through military violence promises an escape from the supposedly contingent civil body.

6.2.2. Gender

Both campaigns seem to be rooted in a binary understanding of gender, although the fragmented and abstract style of the *Army Confidence* campaign poses some potential to go beyond the binary. However, all posters are presented in such a way that gender can be assumed at first glance. I find that this binary is visually upheld both by markers of masculinity and femininity, as well as the construction of the posters as having a male and female counterpart, especially clear in the 2020 campaign. Although the collage-style images are pieced together by different parts, all parts appear to be gendered as either ‘male’ or ‘female’. The binary remains visually intact not only in the way each image is arranged but also by choosing to depict two alternatives for each poster, one presumably ‘male’, one ‘female’. Thus, gender is visually constructed through differentiation. The only poster that is exempt from this pattern is figure 11, the poster depicting legs, an exemption, however, that still fits into

⁴⁰² See Frank. 1991. p.55.

⁴⁰³ See Frank. 1991. p.55.

constructions of femininity and masculinity. I argue that clearly dividing the body into two distinct categories of gender even in instances where this body is artificially assembled is a strategy to visually discipline the body, a premise to turn it into the soldiering body.

6.2.2.1. *Women and (military) femininity*

The two female servicemembers in the 2019 campaign are clearly marked as such (figure 3&4). Although wearing the same uniform as the male servicemembers, markers of femininity are featured in both posters. Both women have long hair, which is visible under their berets, and both women wear jewellery in form of earrings. Although it is not entirely determinable if both women wear make-up, at least the defined, long lashes of the “Phone Zombie” soldier seem to suggest so. Both women can be described as attractive and fit popular beauty standards, which is arguably pre-emptive of claims that the military would erase femininity. Yet, it is important to note that this perceived attractiveness cannot be analysed without keeping in mind the intersectionality of beauty standards with racial ideology that includes discrimination or exotification of appearances read as non-White, and the history of centring beauty around Whiteness.⁴⁰⁴ For example, the Black woman’s hair is painted with merely a suggestion of curls, most of it remaining a silhouette, while the White woman’s straight hair is painted in detail and with structure. The containment of the hair can be seen as another marker of discipline. While both female servicemembers are clearly marked as women through their appearance, the slogans seem to be chosen completely at random. Neither a “Me Me Me Millennial” nor a “Phone Zombie” seem to presuppose a certain gender. The re-framing of the former through the positive attribute “self-belief”, and the latter through “focus”, however, might indicate a certain subversion of rather masculine attributes by associating them with female servicemembers. As mentioned before, these are the only two posters with a visible Union Jack, which suggests that the link between women, the military, and the nation was deemed as needing symbolic reinforcement.

⁴⁰⁴ See Jha, Meeta. 2015. *The Global Beauty Industry: Colorism, Racism, and the National Body*. New York: Routledge. p.2f. Jha notes that “visible physical characteristics such as skin color (as well as hair texture and nose and lip shape) became markers of social difference, and part of a process of racialization through which the concept of “Race” is given specific social meaning. The power of beauty can be understood by examining its racialized and colonial history”, *ibid.* p.4.

In summary, although at first glance every poster seems to feature a uniformed soldier, depicted in a way that focuses on equal professionalism by picturing all in the same attire, several clear markers remain that reinforce ideas about femininity, such as long hair, pretty features, jewellery and indications of make-up. Although these markers might seem subtle, “beauty rituals are one way of performing femininity in order to fulfill heteronormative gender and sexual roles”⁴⁰⁵. Yet, compared with the campaign of 2020, this reproduction of ideas of femininity appear as an afterthought. Instead, what stands at the centre is the disciplining of the body. All markers are rather subtle and dominated by the uniform: the long hair is contained and largely covered by the beret; the body remains invisible in dual respect, first, because it is not depicted below the shoulders, and secondly, because it is uniformed. I argue that these markers not only emphasize femininity despite the camouflage attire but also individualism despite uniformity. While they slightly thwart discipline through uniformity, they also reinforce conventional notions of femininity. Gendered notions of *female* soldiers continue in the video advert. Although both visible and audible as members of their units in the field, roles appear to subscribe to notions of military femininity as compassionate, caring and supportive, as for example the soldier handing out aid is female, while another female servicemember is audible in coordinating an operation, an activity that suggests her not being physically included in a combat scenario.

In the successive campaign of 2020, professionalism, uniformity of the body and comparably subtle feminine markers are completely turned on their head. Here, the connection to the military seems entirely absent in the imagery and instead, the focus is on the body and face in a way that artificially enhances and exaggerates markers of femininity. In figure 8, the body is immediately read as female and subscribes to contemporary popular ideals of femininity⁴⁰⁶: all the body parts depicted are slim, trained and defined, and able-bodied in their partiality. Arms and stomach consist of smaller clippings, while the breasts and squatting legs are featured prominently by much larger clippings, making for a pieced-together body that exaggerates ideals of an hourglass-shape with slim arms and waist, but large breasts and defined buttocks. Although with the two largest clippings appearing to be White, the body is

⁴⁰⁵ Jha. 2015. p.20.

⁴⁰⁶ See Appleford, Katherine. 2016. “‘This Big Bum Thing Has Taken over the World’: Considering Black Women’s Changing Views on Body Image and the Role of Celebrity”. In: *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*, Vol.7/2. p.193–214. p.196.

rendered racially ambiguous by apparently putting some sort of colour filter over arms and stomach, and featuring the posterior overly large compared to the body.⁴⁰⁷ This body type is often described as “slim thick” and embodied in popular culture by celebrities like Kim Kardashian, a hyperfeminine aesthetic “which increasingly [appeals] to both Black and white audiences, as it [combines] a desire for both slimness and fuller figured curves”⁴⁰⁸.

The second poster likely read as female is the collage of a face featuring heavily made-up parts. While in the former picture femininity and womanhood appear naturalized in the body, femininity in the second poster (figure 9) is entirely based on the reading of make-up as ‘feminine’. The fragmented face pieced together in a cubistic manner, gives in fact no indication of gender whatsoever. All the clippings are obviously airbrushed and support the artificial impression of the image. Two of the six clippings apparently feature Black skin, yet the overall impression of the face appears as rather light-skinned.⁴⁰⁹ At the same time, the way the features are arranged, with starkly exaggerated lips, the face is rendered racially ambiguous. Deconstructed, all that the viewer is presented with are two distinct, heavily made-up eyes; a through the size of the clippings minimized, completely symmetrical nose; and painted partial upper and lower lips. Two things render the face feminine: the association of beauty and beauty rituals like make-up with femininity, and the contrasting of this poster with a ‘male’ counterpart (figure 10). The slogan suggests that (feminine) confidence is performed through the depicted beauty rituals, but that the repetitive performance of these rituals is merely that, a performance, and unable to have a lasting effect. It becomes clear that in both posters, the appearance occupies a middle space between White and Black aesthetics,

⁴⁰⁷ While body standards are still focused on thinness and Whiteness, singular features formerly constructed as less desirable and Black have been incorporated into imaginations of ideal beauty, such as an enhanced backside or full lips. “[W]hile Black women’s body ideals are perhaps shifting more towards the white aesthetic, white western women appear to be seeking a fuller shape, with growing numbers of women opting for cosmetic surgery to enhance their derrière fuelled by media images of celebrities, such as Kim Kardashian”, Appleford. 2016. p.194. It is important to note that Black women have historically been “othered” and constructed as hypersexual and deviant by being depicted as having a fuller body. See *ibid.* p.195.

⁴⁰⁸ Appleford. 2016. p.194.

⁴⁰⁹ With phenomena like “Blackfishing” in mind which have been adopted by the beauty industry, it would be careless to speculate about actual representation of diversity. Blackfishing describes a practice, through which Black culture and aesthetic is appropriated, for example through temporary practices like excessive tanning or artificial alteration of features, mainly by “White women who wish to capitalize off of impersonating racially ambiguous/Black women for monetary and social gain. [...] These are the same features that, once derided by mainstream White culture, are now coveted and dictate current beauty and fashion on social media, with Black women’s contributions being erased all the while”. Thompson, Wanna. 14.11.2018. “How White Women on Instagram are profiting off Black Women”. In: *Paper Mag*. <https://www.papermag.com/White-women-Blackfishing-instagram-2619714094.html?rebelltitem=6#rebelltitem6>. Accessed: 22.10.2020.

combining light skin, a small nose and idealized thinness with (sexualized) curvaceous features like voluptuous lips and big buttocks. The effect appears rather unrealistic, unattainable, and artificial.

The third poster (figure 11) is a variation of the same message of beauty and thus superficial confidence as artificial and temporary performance. The depicted leg in various stages of tanning appears to be feminine by exaggerating the beauty standard of long, thin legs that are free of body hair. Here, however, the focus is specifically on skin tone through the slogan. In analogy to make-up, the poster reiterates the idea that skin tone is something that can be artificially achieved and temporarily “worn” to gain confidence, an idea that feeds into essentially racist and appropriative practices in beauty trends.⁴¹⁰ The focus remains entirely on White skin. While I will address this topic again in the chapter on diversity, it has an important consequence on the construction of idealized femininity in the 2020 campaign: ideal femininity is constructed as White, yet with the possibility to temporarily pick and choose ‘other(ed)’ features, something that is supported by the collage style of the images. This finds an important equivalent in notions of military femininity: as I have shown in the corresponding section, accepted modes of military femininity in the Army are largely associated with White femininity. Interestingly, the third poster does not have a ‘male’ counterpart. Legs appear exclusively as a gendered marker of femininity.

In the accompanying video, only one woman is featured, and she is not a soldier, but a civilian diversion. Apparently drunk and with running make-up, she seems to try to distract the young, White, male ‘hero’ from his mission. Given just this video, one could ask if women are even part of the intended audience. The video could just as well be from a time where no field roles were open to women. This however is starkly contrasted with the seven short sequence videos. Here, women are not only featured, but shown as an integrated part of a group⁴¹¹, in proximity to weaponry⁴¹², and in gear that highlights the professional character of a soldier, and not gender⁴¹³. It is the only instance in which gender in instances falls behind a representation of soldiering that is entirely based on a task.

⁴¹⁰ See Thompson. 14.11.2019.

⁴¹¹ „The Ceremony”.

⁴¹² “The Ceremony”, likely “The Watch”.

⁴¹³ „The Watch”, “The Long Walk”.

6.2.2.2. *Men and (military) masculinities*

While the two female soldiers in the 2019 campaign feature similar markers of femininity, the male soldiers each seem to represent a different ‘type’ of masculinity. Most prominently discussed in the media was the ‘Snowflake’, apparently a depiction of a soldier that is most in conflict with the traditional image of military masculinity. His body language has the most insight to offer. While a raised chin in military imagery is generally seen as a posture of confidence and authority, his chin is raised quite high, which has a whole different effect: the throat is exposed and becomes a prominent feature in the image, making him vulnerable to the viewer’s eye, something that is also supported by the bare skin showing underneath his uniform jacket. The combination of violable, naked skin with the camouflage uniform suggesting operational readiness has a rather startling effect. The uniform, which transforms the civilian body into the soldiering body, a protected body into a protecting body, becomes penetrable. The vulnerable, mortal body becomes evident underneath the carapace of the uniform. Together with the drawn eyebrows, the thrust-back head and exposed throat suggest a vulnerability that could almost be interpreted as fear. Yet, through the uniform, clear-cut jawline (which would be read as ‘masculine’) and ambiguity of the low angle perspective, which places any viewer below the depicted soldier, there is a certain defiance in his posture that thwarts the vulnerability to a certain degree. While the exposed vulnerability suggests femininity, masculinity seems reinstated through the uniform and starkly contrasted jawline. Although the positive attribute of “compassion” does subvert the negative attribution of “Snowflake”, it is not a property that would traditionally be associated with military masculinity, but rather femininity. All other slogans attribute the assumptive negative keywords a positive twist that is rather read as a masculine trait (self-belief, confidence, focus, drive, spirit). “Compassion”, on the contrary, is associated with nurturing femininity and thus supports the ‘femininized’ reading of the male ‘Snowflake’ soldier.

The representation featuring characteristics that are typically not associated with (heterosexual) masculinity, but rather femininity, continues in figure 5 with the “Selfie Addict”. The compulsive need to take pictures of oneself is mostly associated with vanity and self-centeredness, both properties that are not associated with military masculinity. The style-centred appearance featuring a perfectly groomed beard and pattern of a side-cut suggests a “softer” type of masculinity which embraces visual features that are abjected in hegemonic

military masculinity.⁴¹⁴ In the military context, where beards have been forbidden for the longest time in favour of uniformity, a beard plus the specific hairstyle retain a level of individualism that seems untypical for representations of soldiers. Contrary to the ‘Snowflake’ soldier, meanwhile the “Selfie Addict” retains his masculinity by being attributed “confidence”. However, the buzzword not only stands in stark contrast to confidence, being associated with a lack thereof, but addiction opposes military discipline. The depiction of the “Binge Gamer” and “Class Clown” seem to visually largely subscribe to ideas of masculinity, here it is more the buzzwords that divert from ideals about soldiering: “Binge Gamers” are assumed not to be physically fit, something that is probably suggested in the fuller face of the soldier in figure 4 and that I will revisit when discussing the soldiering body in more detail. And “Class Clowns” are presumed less likely to adhere to authority and carry out commands. Humour and ridicule seem to especially contradict the idea of military violence. To summarize: none of the images in the 2019 campaign appears to subscribe to hypermasculine ideals of soldiering. Instead, they embody various traits that are regarded as feminine or diverge from hegemonic ideals of military masculinity. They retain individualistic features and I suggest that they embody different modes of “hybrid masculinities”⁴¹⁵.

This, however, changes in the 2020 ads. Just like the body read as female was pieced together in a way that exaggerates ideals of femininity, the ‘male’ body portrays hypermasculinity. Masculinity is here constituted through muscles: the bulky and ultra-large depicted, flexed muscles of the arms, as well as the slightly less prominent chest muscles, and (although this clipping is the smallest) the well-defined stomach muscles. Built, posture and pose are reminiscent of a bodybuilder, a trope that is taken up prominently in the accompanying advertisement video. Here, the first of several diversions trying to lure the main character away from his task is a bulky, bodybuilder type, hypermasculine Black man, flexing his muscles and offering a special work-out in a voice that is so deep, it might have been artificially altered. While the video heavily feeds into racist stereotypes, which will be discussed separately, it is interesting to see how the very same body type is represented by exclusively light-skinned fragments in the static imagery of the posters. In the posters, White hypermasculinity is represented as – although exaggerated and like the slogan suggests hardly attainable– an ideal

⁴¹⁴ See Belkin/ Carver. 2012. p.560.

⁴¹⁵ See Duncanson. 2015. p.236.

of masculinity, while that same body type is racialized in the narrative where hypermasculinity is rejected. The idealization of White hypermasculinity in the image might be slightly thwarted by the slogan, yet the composition favours the image over the text. In addition, the slogan does not actually dismiss the body type as such. The focus on an (insecure), young, White, male audience becomes especially apparent in the accompanying video that centres around a soldier fitting that exact description, posing the question if the video was intended for anyone else.

The trope of groomed and styled masculinity, that was already evident in figure 5, is again reintroduced in the second poster of the 2020 campaign, which features a face presumably read as 'male'. Here, the slogan insinuates that confidence is nothing that could be attained through styling – however, the image lacks the exaggerated character of the 'female' counterpart poster and the message remains rather weak, given that 'styling' is not necessarily depicted. Except for a hint of styled hair, that is hardly included in the frame, and a well-groomed stubble, 'styling' appears to be synonymous with idealized White male attractiveness. Although this poster is the only one in the series that unmistakably features one clipping with Black skin (a partial nose), it is the smallest clipping and the overall impression remains that of a White man. I would thus suggest that this poster was merely included as a 'masculine' counterpart to the other poster featuring a face, to clearly construct that as feminine in a process of differentiation.

6.2.3. Diversity

Some aspects of how both campaigns portray diversity have already been mentioned, as they cannot be untangled from analysing portrayals of femininity and masculinity. Of course, a separation of the categories is rather artificial, as I have already pointed to the role an intersectional lens plays in this analysis.

The most visually apparent portrayal of diversity is found in a) the rather high inclusion of women throughout both campaigns, including the video advertisements (with the exception of the main video of 2020); and b) the focus on portraying BAME soldiers which is congruent with the recruitment aim as discussed in the section on the recruitment 'crisis'. Both intersect in the focus on visibility of Black and Women of Colour, something that does however not

become apparent without discussing the videos as context as well. In the 2019 campaign, diversity seems something that was meticulously thought through in terms of ratio: half the posters portray White soldiers, half Black, and soldiers of Colour. Two portray women, of which one is White, and one Black. Compared to the actual numbers of women and ethnic minorities in the Army being each just about 10%, the aim of the ads to target non-traditional groups becomes obvious. Indeed, the 'hero' of the main recruitment video unifies both aspects. Referred to only as "Millennial", the young Woman of Colour becomes the representative of the generation the ad is aimed at. It is in this instance important to note that the negative treatment she receives by her colleagues is clearly framed in the ad as something having to do with her being a "Millennial", as if to a priori negate other sources of that mistreatment (like racism, or sexism). The one video in the short sequence series of 2020 that also prominently and clearly features a woman, again centres on a Woman of Colour ("The Ceremony"). Although the posters of that year render the depictions of bodies perceived as female racially ambiguous, there is a pattern of representing Women of Colour when an individual (woman) is in the focus. It seems that White female soldiers are sometimes almost interchangeably used with male soldiers, something that becomes especially apparent in the short sequence videos, where gender seems in instances completely decentred, while the featuring of non-White women is always made explicit.

The posters of 2020 are rather exceptional compared to the rest of the reviewed material in dominantly centring White skin but in the cases of the bodies constructed as female rendering them racially ambiguous through the exaggeration of features and partial inclusion of darker skin tones. Yet, this ambiguity as the only suggestion of diversity is framed through the messaging of beauty and appearance as a 'trend'. This becomes especially clear in the poster featuring the leg, suggesting that skin tone is something that is "sprayed on for a week or two", a slogan which almost overturns any inclusion of darker (=tanned?) skin tones in any of the images. In fact, I would suggest that this slogan must necessarily frame any discussion of Ethnic diversity in the 2020 adverts, as it suggests that to aspire to an ideal, skin can easily be altered. This message is one that appears to be exclusively addressed to a White audience. Non-White skin remains largely invisible in all posters and the combination of imagery and slogan in figure 11 only seems to reinforce the idea propagated by the beauty industry, that skin tone is something that is changeable, with darker (yet still light enough not

to be socially dismissed) skin merely another fashion trend. Ethnic 'diversity' mainly appears as distorted through the exaggeration of features and is presumably used to render the female images racially ambiguous as a way to hyper-feminize (or sexualize) gender.

It is rather interesting to note the difference in focus on ethnic diversity between the 2019 and the 2020 main campaign, but also between the 2020 poster/ video campaign and the additional seven videos. While the target audience of 2019 is congruent with the Army's proclaimed focus on recruiting more women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic recruits, the 2020 campaign, most clear in the video ad, seems to return to addressing the 'traditional' young, White, male recruit. That the focus in 2020 has shifted, becomes not only clear in the lack of non-White representation in the imagery, but especially in the racist stereotypes⁴¹⁶ employed in the main ad. I have already mentioned the shift from the idealized, White, hypermasculine body in the poster to the hypermasculine Black man in the video, where hypermasculinity is then dismissed as somewhat of a diversion of Social Media culture. That image is clearly racialized as it feeds into a stereotype about Black men as physically overdeveloped and aggressive, a racist construct that was in fact used to legitimate the physical exploitation of Black people through slavery by imagining them as "savage beasts [...], stronger than White men"⁴¹⁷. The stereotyping continues when a young Asian man is used to symbolize consumption and fast fashion. The seven short videos of the same campaign stand in stark contrast to this, as ethnic diversity is made visible, but integrated into a professional construct of soldiering that appears to equally include men and women, as well as BAME servicemembers. Other types of diversity are more subtle in both campaigns. Most noteworthy seems here the 'Snowflake' poster. I already discussed several aspects of how the depiction of the male soldier deviates from military masculinity in exposing the body under the uniform and featuring a vulnerable expression. Of course, it is impossible to deduce someone's sexuality from their appearance and to do so, would simply follow heteronormative stereotypes. Also, there is no clear messaging that would suggest that the Army intended to aim at LGBTQ+ audiences with this campaign. Yet, this specific depiction of a male soldier received the most backlash in the

⁴¹⁶ Hall defines the process of stereotyping as follows: "Stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference' [...] [and] deploys a strategy of 'splitting'. It divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable", Hall. 1997. p.258.

⁴¹⁷ Taylor, Evi et al. 2019. "The Historical Perspectives of Stereotypes on African-American Males". In: *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* Vol.4/ 3. p.213–225. p.214.

media, with it being called “an assault on modern masculinity”⁴¹⁸ and the soldier whose photo was used for the campaign threatening to quit over backlash and ridicule.⁴¹⁹ The fact that one of the PR agencies planning directors later brought the ‘Snowflake’ campaign in connection with the Army’s high position in the Stonewall index and referenced its support for transitioning soldiers, stating that “the army was ready to talk about what it means to be a progressive organisation”⁴²⁰, suggests that to a certain degree the poster was supposed to be read as a “softer” alternative to hegemonic heterosexual masculinity.

The last aspect of diversity suggested in the posters is the inclusion of body types that do not subscribe to the ideal of fit, trained soldiers. The association of a seemingly heavier male soldier with the mostly assumed physically inactive occupation of binge gaming supports a message of the Army easing up on its physical fitness standards. However, the fact that a (presumed) heavier body type was chosen for the binge gaming poster does not necessarily imply that more body types are included into soldiering, but that soldiering activities have changed and allow for more diverse body types in certain fields. The apparent area of conflict is in fact none. Militaries all over the world have started to specifically recruit gamers by building up eSport teams (note the shift in language from gaming to eSport), as gaming skills actually fit skills needed in modern military technology.⁴²¹

7. Discussion

In the analytical chapter, I have shown how the Army has visually represented soldiering bodies in their recruitment campaigns in terms of gender and diversity. The emerging picture is ambiguous, with at times seemingly contradictory representations that juxtapose images that centre Ethnic diversity and gender equality with highly stereotypical imagery. In the next step, I will now discuss how thus concepts of military masculinity, femininity and diversity

⁴¹⁸ Stewart. 20.03.2019.

⁴¹⁹ See Stewart, Rebecca. 07.01.2019. „MoD issues defence after 'Snowflake' army ad soldier threatens to quit over backlash”. In: *The Drum*. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/01/07/mod-issues-defence-after-snowflake-army-ad-soldier-threatens-quit-over-backlash>. Accessed: 24.10.2020.

⁴²⁰ See Stewart. 20.03.2019.

⁴²¹ See Jevsejevas, Tomas. 15.04.2020. „Gaming and eSports could be the best solution to military recruitment shortages in Europe”. In: *EuroNews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/15/gaming-and-esports-could-best-solution-to-military-recruitment-shortages-in-europe-view>. Accessed: 24.10.2020.

are inscribed in and represented through the body and how they have or haven't been transformed. Essential to the question of transformation is if and how the representations have adapted more conventional imaginations of military masculinity or even challenge these ideas. And finally, I ask how the military positions itself vis a vis civil society and how it seeks to create relevancy for itself through its campaign. In order to do so, the campaigns are placed in the wider context of the military recruitment 'crisis', the link between Army and society and the question of relevancy and possible militarization, and discourses around gender and diversity.

7.1. Snowflakes and Selfie addicts: alternative constructions of military masculinities?

One of the starting points for this thesis has been Jester's analysis of previous recruitment campaigns (2019), in which the author suggests that the British Army, in the context of a 'recruitment crisis', rejects traditional conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and instead seeks to recruit "beyond the stereotypical demographic of young, white, men"⁴²². I would however argue that the visual analysis of the successive recruitment campaigns of 2019 and 2020 offers more ambiguous interpretations of the imagery than a general rejection of hegemonic military masculinity by recruiting more diversely. I argue that not adhering to very traditional representations of military masculinity does not necessarily translate into a challenge thereof, and that instead with 'new' (but in many instances by now established) masculinities, the visual analysis offers more nuance between rejection, adaption, and challenge. What is for certain is that the Army wants to *appear* to be a champion of inclusivity and diversity in its recruitment campaigns, which in itself does speak to a transformative potential in the representation of military ideals and soldiering bodies beyond the stereotypical White, male soldier. The idea of progressiveness in a supposedly less progressive societal climate is medially reinforced by Army staff as well as employees at *Karmarama*, who repeatedly emphasised that the Army as an inclusive institution was "ready for the backlash"⁴²³. There is a clear conjecture of the Army being a leading institution in inclusive hiring practices. This is

⁴²² Jester. 2019. p.3.

⁴²³ See Contagious. 16.01.2020; and Stewart. 20.03.2019.

exemplified by the campaign designers being represented at an event on toxic masculinity, where the speaker referenced the Army's accomplishments on equality and inclusivity (specifically LGBTQ+), stating that "the army was ready to talk about what it means to be a progressive organisation"⁴²⁴. The way especially the 2019 'Snowflake' campaign was represented in the media certainly gives the impression that part of the controversy was happening around a clash of 'traditional' conceptions about masculinity (most prominently in the claim of an "assault on modern masculinity"⁴²⁵) with a more 'progressive' understanding. It becomes apparent that in the Army's narrative around the campaigns, it distances itself from conventional representations of soldiers centred around hegemonic masculinity and instead projects itself as a trailblazer for inclusivity in a more conservative environment.

The analysis has shown that the most iconic image when talking about 'new' military masculinities is the 'snowflake' poster, which also received the most attention medially. Meanwhile, although the slogan was controversially discussed, I wouldn't necessarily see an attempt at rejecting hegemonic masculinity in the use of the phrase. While the attribute "compassion" might rather be associated with femininity, "compassion" as part of soldiering is no longer a novel concept but has found mention especially in peace-keeping operations for years.⁴²⁶ I argue that "compassion" thus feeds into constructions of 'new' masculinities which have effectively already been established as forms of soldiering in conflict settings and often supersede conventional notions of hegemonic military masculinity. In this respect, Duncanson (2015) suggests that softer masculinities have the potential to become hegemonic, too: "[t]he idea that a softer, more feminized form of hybrid masculinity (in the sense that it has incorporated traits and practices associated with women and femininity) can become hegemonic, however, is theoretically possible and empirically observable in many situations"⁴²⁷. Although the controversy around the Army's appeal to supposedly over-emotional "snowflakes" suggests a rejection of conventional ideas of masculinity, congruent with Jester's earlier findings, I argue that in fact none of the slogans of the 2019 campaign rejects common notions of military masculinities or poses potential for transformation. Instead, I suggest that the transformation is already completed in the slogan itself by redefining each phrase in a way that is

⁴²⁴ Stewart. 20.03.2019.

⁴²⁵ Stewart. 20.03.2019.

⁴²⁶ See Myrtilinen. 2019. p.569.

⁴²⁷ Duncanson. 2015. p.243.

congruent with ideals of dominantly masculine soldiering, such as “focus”, “drive”, “confidence” or “self-belief”. A distinction is here important: The Army does not recruit soldiers. It recruits civilians, who will be transformed into soldiers through discipline. The slogans anticipate this transformation and turn each phrase into a conventionally desirable attribute of soldiering, and thus define each term unambiguously. The posters only *address* “Snowflakes” or “Me Me Me Millennials” – what they seek to *retain* in the trained soldier are only singular attributes which hardly pose a threat to more traditional types of military masculinities. “Compassion” in this regard does not challenge established ‘new’ forms of soldiering. Following Connell (2005) who argues that “there is an active defence of hegemonic masculinity [...] [which] takes a variety of forms and [...] often has to yield ground or change tactics”⁴²⁸, the reinterpretation of tropes that exemplify undesirable qualities into desirable and conventional militaristic traits can be seen as such a tactic. To recruit ‘new’ types of masculinity does not necessarily mean that these will be the types of masculinities amplified and promoted in the Army, or even preserved during basic training. It should be remembered that the Army has historically lauded itself as “straightening out” masculinities perceived as deviant and turning “boys into men”, as exemplified in the recruitment of gay men in times of crisis as long as they adhered to militaristic values and remained invisible.⁴²⁹ Instead of actually offering seminal ‘new’ types of soldiers, I argue that the slogans reinforce well-known tropes under the guise of controversy and promote the idea that society looks upon the character of young people (“Millennials”) unfavourably, while the Army values them.

The importance of detailed visual analysis to understanding military transformations becomes apparent when turning to the featured portraits of soldiers, which I find far more ambiguous in challenging hegemonic masculinities. While the slogan addresses the insecurities of young Millennials, the image is supposed to “sell the dream of the consumer”⁴³⁰ by offering something to attain to. The featured soldiers embody the positive attributes, something which becomes attainable to the stigmatized Millennial by joining the Army and going through military training. The key phrases are only meant to attract and provoke, directed at the civilian; the image however is meant to represent and embody that which can be aspired,

⁴²⁸ Connell. 2005. p.216.

⁴²⁹ See Vickers. 2013. p.27.

⁴³⁰ Bailey. 2007. p.68.

directed at the potential recruit. The distinction is clearly made by the uniform, which unmistakably identifies each featured person as a soldier. The transformation from undesirable into desirable military traits is thus visually completed. This in turn offers insights into how desirable soldiers are imagined.

I find that one of the most obvious ways in which traditional conceptions of hegemonic masculinity are challenged is that military masculinities are not exclusively idealized as White. Although the campaign of 2020 intentionally applies racial stereotypes, which I will discuss later, the featured images of Black and soldiers of Colour in the 2019 campaign serve to embody principles of inclusivity and equality. I cannot identify markers that would suggest a visual creation of hierarchies between different masculinities. By representing all soldiers in the same camouflage uniform, differences are integrated and all servicemembers are visually equal. At the same time, the uniform character is subtly but visibly subverted in favour of retaining markers of individualism which in instances also pose the potential to offer readings alternative to dominant representations of military masculinity. I would argue that the most noteworthy challenge to hegemonic masculinities (and even many of the more commonly discussed 'new' masculinities), besides prominently featuring Black and men of Colour as equals, is the much-discussed soldier on the 'snowflake' poster. The slogan aside, it is his posture that I find most remarkable in challenging military masculinity – not just hegemonic masculinity, but the very notion of the male military body as impenetrable and inviolable. As I have observed in the analysis, the exposed throat and bare skin under his uniform jacket render the body vulnerable. A vulnerable body becomes penetrable, something that is constructed as inherently feminine. I argue that by exposing and highlighting this vulnerable part of the body, ultimately a taboo of the male military body is challenged. As Belkin (2012) states, "military bodies are not supposed to be penetrated by bullets [...] or anything else [...] penetration of the male, military body is [...] constructed as the ultimate taboo and abjected state of being"⁴³¹. Although the author further argues that that which has been constructed as abjected must to a certain degree also be embraced⁴³², his argument rather regards military rituals and initiation, not visual representation. It is here that the visual analysis offers valuable new insights: I suggest that with the drive to recruit more diversely, that which has

⁴³¹ Belkien/ Carver. 2012. p.560.

⁴³² See Belkien/ Carver. 2012. p.560.

been abjected must not only be increasingly embraced through performance and ritual, but is in instances more permanently inscribed and embodied in the visual representation. Whether or not the implicit feminization of the image is regarded as potentially conveying queerness or not as discussed in the analysis, the visual representation of the vulnerable body poses a challenge to traditional representations of male soldiers as it challenges a taboo of military masculinities. The visual challenge of what a male soldier can look like appears through subtle markers in two other portraits as well. The suggestion of a larger body type and individualistic styling features of two of the other male soldiers featured, additionally challenge the uniform representation of male soldiering bodies. I thus conclude that while the slogans of the 2019 campaign do not reject conventional constructions of masculine military attributes, the images are more ambiguous in offering alternative and even challenging representations of masculinity. Most importantly, through the similarities in how they are depicted, no hierarchy is established between the different representations, which rejects the notion of one hegemonic military masculinity.

Meanwhile, in the case of the 2020 *Army confidence* campaign, hierarchy is immediately established by visually offering an exaggerated ideal of masculinity, with the slogan both suggesting its desirability and rejecting it at the same time. On first impression, the posters appear to stem not from a military production context, but a commercial one. Thus, it is suggested that what the viewer sees is not a representation of the kind of masculinity the Army promotes, but rather an ideal perpetuated by society. By using the slogans to apparently disparage the desirability of the image, the Army claims to demand precisely *not* what is represented on the poster but leaves open what the alternative on offer would look like. The underlying message seems to be that in the Army, truly confident masculinity is not tied to a hypermasculine ideal of overly trained and defined muscularity, or a certain look. But at the same time, the image on the poster is the only thing to actually *look at*. The slogan remains unostentatious, the gaze is caught by the image. The poster would still make sense as a recruitment ad without the slogan: an image of a heavily trained, strong, and fit, White man, underneath the Army logo with the Union Jack and the motto “Be the best”. I argue that while the slogan claims to reject this ideal of masculinity, the image simultaneously reinforces it by evoking a mental image which connects the military to hypermasculine representations of the warrior trope. In the mental image, the body type is connected to the military, not rejected

by it. And as the analysis of the slogan has shown, even the supposed rejection is not implicitly given. Visually, the only representation of masculinity offered is one that subscribes to archaic ideals of hypermasculinity and would be in line with mental images of military men. Rejection or adoption of the image is left to the viewer. Neither does the video offer a challenge to hegemonic military masculinities, instead, it features a main character that falls into traditional depictions of soldiers – male, young, White, in uniform and carrying a weapon. The non-military men are all represented stereotypically and thus placed in a hierarchical relationship to the soldier, in which they essentially become the ‘enemy’ by being an obstacle to his mission. The ‘battle’ the soldier must fight is a symbolic one with stereotypical, contrasting performances of masculinity. I pose that the construction of hierarchies between masculinities follows several axes of which one is the vilification through (racialized) stereotyping of the Black and Asian men, and the other the deprecation of non-military men in general. To summarize my findings, neither are hegemonic masculinities nor (White) hypermasculinity necessarily rejected, and alternative representations are at least not visually offered.

I find that in discussing military masculinity in a first step mainly through the lens of the male body, the images offer limited alternatives and only in instances challenges to hegemonic military masculinities, congruent with Duncanson’s observation (2015) that “there is a softening of hegemonic masculinity, through the adoption of new practices and styles of soldiering, but with little in the way of shifts of power from privileged men”⁴³³. One of the most fundamental challenges offered is the vulnerability inscribed in the body of the soldier on the ‘snowflake’ poster; violability is generally associated with femininity. Thus, the lens of (military) femininity becomes the second important lens.

7.2. Professional soldiers, uniformed femininity?

In the analysis, I have found that representations of women in both campaigns mainly oscillate between female soldiers and professional soldiers, contrasted with the distorted, stereotypical, sexualized, and overemphasized depictions of femininity in the posters of the *Army Confidence* campaign. I make the distinction between female soldiers and professional

⁴³³ Duncanson. 2015. p.236.

soldiers because, in instances, the campaigns challenge notions of gendered soldiering, while in others, they are subtly reinforced even where there is apparent parity in representations of male and female soldiers. At first glance, the 2019 *Your Army needs You* campaign seems to depict male and female soldiers similarly, but the analysis revealed that not only are markers of femininity subtly but clearly retained, the women's uniforms also differ from the men's in featuring the Union Jack. I argue that the patriotic emblem is used to emphasize and enhance the female soldier's connection to the state and holder of its legitimacy to the military use of force, as well as mark their suggested emancipation and equality, gained through the uniform, as 'British'. Military femininity in these representations is clearly marked as both: military through the uniform, and 'feminine' through markers like long hair, jewellery, and make-up. The message thus seems to be that women in the military are equal with men, but not forced to assimilate or embody masculinity to obtain this equality. Military femininity is represented as an equal mode of soldiering, apparently without having to subscribe to masculinity and giving up femininity. However, while the representation of female soldiers as equal to their male counterparts poses a visual alternative to military masculinity, it does not necessarily pose a challenge to masculinist military practice, as Myrttinen (2019) argues: "On a more fundamental level, regardless of how hard or soft gendered military performances are, they remain tethered to the primary function of the military, which is the projection of state-sanctioned violence and coercion"⁴³⁴.

Considering the recruitment videos, representations embedded in the context of military action, on the contrary, don't necessarily emphasize femininity, but professional modes of soldiering. As I have shown in the analysis, female soldiers in the video of 2019 and the short video clips of 2020 are in instances directly associated with featured combat scenarios. Especially in the short video clips, there are representations of women where no markers of femininity are retained in favour of a professional depiction of soldiering in which uniform and gear dominate (the video "The Ceremony" poses an exception, here femininity is clearly marked through the ceremonial uniform featuring a skirt). Where soldiering gear erases markers of femininity, gendered representations are apparently visually overcome, epitomized in the video "The long walk", in which the entire identity of the soldier remains

⁴³⁴ Myrttinen. 2019. p.569.

invisible under protective gear. However, while these representations pose a challenge to gendered representations of soldiering by offering the alternative of the professional soldier where gender becomes meaningless, they don't necessarily challenge the masculinist logic of military violence.⁴³⁵ This ambivalence in discussing representations of female soldiers vs. professional soldiers is reflected in the wider (feminist) discourse on the inclusion of women in the military.⁴³⁶ Duncanson and Woodward (2016) reference the example of the inclusion of women into peace operations and the question of whether female soldiers here pose a challenge to the prevalent logic. "The idea that a small number of individuals can challenge an organizational culture such as that of the military is said to be naïve in the light of scant evidence that the inclusion of a number of women [...] has challenged masculinist military cultures or made militaries more democratic or gender sensitive [...]it does little to challenge the assumptions underpinning the entire endeavour [...] which may also be masculinist and violent"⁴³⁷. The visual analysis of the campaigns shows that clearly gendered representations of military women coexist with more professional, almost gender-neutral depictions. This coexistence is however not necessarily contradictory: I find that representations marked as feminine occur most prominently on the 2019 posters and in the "Ceremony" video, all detached from the context of combat and violence; meanwhile within combat context, a shift towards representations favouring gender-neutral professionalism can be observed. This observation would go in accordance with Ombati's findings (2015) that women in the Kenyan forces, where they are part of direct combat, are encouraged to display traits regarded as 'feminine' in daily military life, but expected to suppress this 'femininity' upon entering combat in favour of more professional, or 'masculine' behaviour.⁴³⁸ I argue that the way different military femininities are represented in different military settings in the recruitment campaigns suggest that rather than having them coexist at all times, military women are expected to negotiate different embodiments of masculinity and femininity in varying military settings. However, I would argue that less gendered representations of female soldiers exclusively in the combat setting do not necessarily serve to challenge masculinist military logic of war by

⁴³⁵ See Myrtilinen. 2019. p.575.

⁴³⁶ See e.g. Stachowitsch. 2013.

⁴³⁷ Duncanson/ Woodward. 2016. p.9.

⁴³⁸ See Ombati. 2015. p.411.

apparently neutralizing gender in favour of professionalism, but instead can reinforce the association of masculinity with combat.

The emerging picture is one in which female soldiers and military femininity are more complex and more ambivalent. The analysis has also shown that when it comes to representations of military women, many contradictions remain and at times confuse a clear message. One of those instances is, for example, the absence of women from the 2020 main advertisement video, in which only once a young, apparently drunk woman is depicted, trying to divert the featured soldier from his mission. When another male unit member comes and pats him on the shoulder, breaking the nightmarish scenario, male-male bonding is evoked. Following Bulmer (2013) who finds that moments of 'patriarchal confusion' are important sites for the potential of change⁴³⁹, I suggest that precisely these inconsistencies in the message pose the potential to challenge military logic. The point is thus not in finding a consistent explanation for contradicting representations of military women, but to point to instances where the message doesn't necessarily make sense. "The multiple instances where gendered boundaries are challenged and confused calls the 'foundational' categories of gender into question and reveals the malleability and transformative potential inherent in all performances of gender. This reconceptualizes boundaries as 'attempts' to police and discipline a reality that is unstable and contingent"⁴⁴⁰.

In contrast to the rather subtle markers of femininity in the 2019 ads, the 2020 campaign does everything to overemphasize and grotesquely exaggerate femininity. As I have shown in the analysis, it does so by applying stereotypes, combining beauty ideals centred around Whiteness and slimness with features that have historically been read or constructed as Black and used to hypersexualize Black women.⁴⁴¹ The mechanism of centring the image despite the alleged rejection is the same as previously discussed for the 'male' poster of the campaign, but the mental image has a different function here. The associations with pop culture, beauty regimes and prevailing body ideals serve to evoke narratives women are continuously visually confronted with in society through advertisements, Social Media, and popular imagery, and are supposed to evoke anxieties. I argue that thus, the Army constructs itself as

⁴³⁹ See Bulmer, Sarah. 2013. "Patriarchal Confusion?: Making Sense of Gay and Lesbian Military Identity". In: *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Vol.15/ 2. p.137–156. p.150.

⁴⁴⁰ Bulmer. 2013. p.150.

⁴⁴¹ See Appleford. 2016. P.195.

an escape for women into not having to subscribe to unrealistic and unattainable ideals of femininity. While in the case of the 'male' body, the contrasting of Army and society is less obvious, as the image creates a mental image that is originally connected to the military, the contrasting juxtaposition becomes much clearer in the case of the posters constructed as 'feminine'. The distortion of femininity is purposefully associated with consumerism and unattainable societal ideals and are externalised from the Army, which as the slogan suggests, can offer a truer mode of femininity. I argue that (confident) femininity is constructed as artificial, illusionary, and ultimately unattainable within society, while the Army is presented as the *only* way for women to achieve *lasting* confidence. I suggest that the Army purposefully recreates objectifying imagery that fetishizes the female body through fragmentation and exaggeration of sexual(ized) parts like breasts or buttocks, reapplying historically racist modes of representation⁴⁴² to support this message. To summarize my argument, the posters create a dichotomy between society and Army, in which the former is allegedly distorting femininity, and the latter emancipatory and liberating for women, offering alternative modes of performing confident femininity. These alternatives are however only visualized in the short video clips of the same campaign, while military women remain entirely absent from the main recruiting video.

The focus on Black and women of Colour, especially in the 2019 campaign and the short video clips of 2020, poses the strongest challenge to hegemonic representations of soldiers and military masculinities. In the dominant narrative on war, which is reproduced in pop culture, Black and Women of Colour generally do not appear as active agents, but passive victims. As Stachowitsch (2013) shows, an important function of the inclusion and representation of military women is the construction of the 'own' culture as emancipatory, progressive and thus superior which in turn legitimize war abroad (in the British case, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan) as "saving oppressed Muslim women"⁴⁴³. When White women no longer unambiguously serve to legitimize war by being represented as in need of protection, non-White women are contrasted as the passive 'other' and in turn serve to establish White military women as the ones who do the protecting and liberating. The centring of Black and women of Colour as soldiers thus challenges one of the central narratives and legitimations of war.

⁴⁴² See Hall. 1997. p.266f.

⁴⁴³ Stachowitsch. 2013. p.168.

And yet I propose that this opens another field of contention in which only some non-White women become active agents, essentially again through the means of war, while others remain invisible in the narrative of the emancipated female soldier. I argue that, following similar mechanism that Connell (2005) identified in the creation of hegemonic masculinities, military femininities are in this instance placed in a hierarchy of 'emancipated' and 'oppressed' or 'subordinate' femininities. Although the Army, for example, allows for religious garments like a hijab, Muslim women remain entirely absent in the Army's drive for diversity; presumably, as the representation of Muslim women as active agents and not passive victims would stand in stark contrast to legitimizations of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. While these representations in both campaigns pose a challenge to military masculinity as well as the singularity of White military femininity, the hierarchy to 'other' femininities remains intact, which is then continued in the deprecation of non-military femininity.

Mainly in the 2020 posters, non-military femininity is created as insufficient, artificial, and ultimately subordinate. As I have argued before, femininity as supposedly idealized by society is represented as distorted and sexualized in a manner that can be read as feeding into racist and fetishized depictions of women. As bell hooks (2003) argues with regard to images of Black women representing diversity in magazines: "[r]einscribed as spectacle, once again on display, [...] their features are often distorted, their bodies contorted into strange and bizarre postures that make the images appear monstrous or grotesque. They seem to represent an anti-aesthetic, one that mocks the very notion of beauty"⁴⁴⁴. The parallels to the purposefully grotesque and artificially racially ambiguous images in the campaign are obvious and question the Army's commitment to diversity beyond its representation.

In summary, by focusing on the representation of White, Black and women of Colour throughout both campaigns, the Army is constructed as equal, inclusive and emancipatory, while the invisibility of Women of Colour from the most prominent British conflict context in the Arab/Muslim world enables the continuance of the narrative of 'other' women as less 'emancipated' and in need of liberation and protection. The Army can not only remain a liberatory

⁴⁴⁴ hooks, bell. 2003. "Selling hot pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace". In: Weisz, Rose (Ed.). *The politics of women's bodies: sexuality, appearance and behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.122-132. p.128.

force in the narrative of “oppressed” women outside Britain but similarly constructs itself as the only truly emancipatory force for women in British society.

7.3. Making the body – making the soldier

In the analysis, I have shown that although military violence appears to be mainly absent from the recruitment posters, it is in fact inscribed in the body in different ways which I want to discuss further. The underlying message of both campaigns, which is closely tied to military masculinity and femininity, is that the soldiering body is ‘made’. The *Your Army needs You* campaign both discursively and visually offers modes of this ‘making’ of the soldier. For one, the Army claims the power to reframe and thus reclaim insults directed at a younger generation of Millennials, however, as O’Loughlin argues, “the right to reclaim words has historically been held by injured groups themselves. [...] Not only do the adverts take away from the youth the power to reclaim words for themselves, they corrupt it by setting it to transparently self-serving ends”⁴⁴⁵. The transformation of the apparently “useless Millennial”, as the accompanying video suggests, into potential ‘soldiering material’ is concluded in the slogan and as a consequence, every Millennial (the key phrases are not exactly exclusionary in potentially addressing every young person with a smartphone and the habit to regularly use it) could potentially be ‘made’ into a soldier. The portraits conclude the transformation from ‘useless’ into ‘useful’ bodies in Foucauldian manner⁴⁴⁶ by depicting not “useless Millennials”, but soldiers. As the Millennial is exclusively made useful and hence valuable through the means of war, the Millennial is militarized.⁴⁴⁷ The body has visually been disciplined and regimented, as the uniform suggests that the body has been made into a soldier through military training.⁴⁴⁸ Following Frank (1991), who asserts that when represented with an ‘other’, the disciplined body will inevitably become a dominating body as its only mode of connection is control, I argue that in the uniformed and thus disciplined body, the dominating body is visually implied, the use of force and violence inevitable.⁴⁴⁹ “[The uniform] is the means by

⁴⁴⁵ O’Loughlin. 12.01.2019.

⁴⁴⁶ See Heggie. 2003. p.154. Her argument is based on Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977).

⁴⁴⁷ I here follow the definition of militarism by Enloe. 2000. p.187.

⁴⁴⁸ See Frank. 1991. p.55

⁴⁴⁹ See Frank. 1991. p.73.

which the organisation reinforces its control over the individual as well as granting the individual the authority to control the masses”⁴⁵⁰. However, while Frank has pointed out that dominating bodies are almost exclusively imagined as male bodies⁴⁵¹, I suggest that the equal although gendered representation of female soldiers asserts an equal potential to domination and ultimately, the use of force and violence. It could however be argued that in the erasure of markers of femininity in the construction of the professional soldier, the imagination of the dominating body as male is not visually challenged. In the video sequence that is most closely associated with military violence, “the Commander” is a White male. I conclude that violence as an eventual outcome is equally implicit in the representation of both male and female uniformed soldiering bodies, however, the strong connection between masculinity and violence in the combat setting as represented in the videos remains intact. As I have previously argued, clearly marked femininity is erased in the combat setting in favour of representations of the professional soldier which do not disrupt the link between masculinity and violence. I would in this instance follow Louise and Sangster’s argument (2019) that “despite attempts to move away from gender stereotypes, the trope that the military ‘makes a man of you’ is still subtly echoed”⁴⁵², as femininity is clearly not associated with military force.

The idea of the military ‘making’ the body could not be more pronounced than in the 2020 *Army Confidence* campaign. The very method of representation is a ‘making of the body’ through violence and power. By dismembering bodies and only using certain parts to reconfigure a ‘new’ body, the Army asserts *symbolic power*⁴⁵³ to create a purposeful body. Following Hall (1997), “[p]ower, it seems, has to be understood here, not only in terms of economic exploitation and physical coercion but also in broader cultural and symbolic terms, including the power to represent something or someone in a certain way”⁴⁵⁴. The body created by the Army in the recruitment campaign doesn’t have to be complete, it serves its purpose precisely by only focusing on the ‘usefulness’ of the body to convey the message. I argue that thus, the Army ascribes itself the power to make parts ‘useful’ and transform them into a functioning unit, be it a singular body or the metaphorical body of the military institution.

⁴⁵⁰ Heggie. 2003. p.160.

⁴⁵¹ See Frank. 1991. p.69.

⁴⁵² Louise/ Sangster. 2019. p.24.

⁴⁵³ See Hall. 1997. p.259.

⁴⁵⁴ Hall. 1997. p.259.

Notably, the bodies depicted in the 2020 adverts are not supposed to be soldiering bodies but placed in the context of civil society. By assembling bodies constructed as un-militaristic, the Army claims the power to represent, define and thus discipline the civil body as well. Furthermore, all body fragments that are used in the images already represent bodies that are in some way disciplined through regiments: the work-outs which are implicit both in the body language of the arranged upper bodies as well as their defined muscles; the alteration of the face through the application of make-up; and finally, the alteration of skin tone through tanning, can all be read as ways to control the body through certain transformative regiments. The message does not suggest that this regimentation of the body that society supposedly demands is “bad” – on the contrary, the message proposes that it is not effective in rendering a lasting effect and that the Army has a more effective, lasting regiment to ascertain discipline. It even has a recognized name for it: *Army confidence*⁴⁵⁵. The claim to influence over wider civil society that Louise and Sangster (2019) asserted the recent recruitment campaigns thus becomes particularly evident in the 2020 collages. Especially in this artificial creation of bodies, the military’s power to shape gender in the wider context is visualized by continuously reinforcing binary gender representations.⁴⁵⁶

Similarly, the artificial making of the body is used to reinforce stereotypes. An important aspect for the subsequent section in which I discuss the implications for the representation of diversity in the campaigns is stereotyping as a part of the exertion of symbolic power. As Hall (1997) notes, “[s]tereotyping is a key element in this symbolic exercise of violence”⁴⁵⁷. I argue that through fragmentation, the body is reduced to its ‘parts’, and in the subsequent assemblage, aspects are pronounced as if they stand in no relation to the entirety of the body, which is a form of reductionist essentialism. Hall identifies this as a “strategy often applied to women’s bodies, of whatever ‘race’”, which turns the body into “a set of separate objects, a thing” that is disassembled into its “relevant parts”⁴⁵⁸. In this representational strategy, in which relevant parts are substituted for the entire body⁴⁵⁹, each depicted body – partial or

⁴⁵⁵ As part of the campaign, Army confidence was established as a distinctive attribute and can be legitimately put down as a ‘skill’ on professional networks: “One thing that I’m proud of is the fact that we’ve managed to convince LinkedIn to put Army confidence down as a skill that people can add to their profile. After all of these years, it’s finally an attribute that people recognise as unique to the Army”, Kean, in: Contagious. 16.01.2020.

⁴⁵⁶ See Duncanson. 2015. p.232.

⁴⁵⁷ Hall. 1997. p.259.

⁴⁵⁸ Hall. 1997. p.266.

⁴⁵⁹ See Hall. 1997. p.266.

not – serves to symbolically stand for the Army as an institution. The stereotypical images and representations in the 2020 *Army confidence* campaign have important implications in framing not only how the British Army represents diversity, but how diversity is used in contrast to society.

7.4. Militarizing Millennials: Diversity as legitimization for war

The image of *the* British soldier has for the longest time been that of a young, White, able-bodied man, who conforms to heteronormative and Christian values. To include diversity into the Army – that is, anyone ‘different’ from this image of the soldier – means to visually challenge how the soldier, and thus the Army is *seen*. In the recruitment campaign, the Army visually performs identity. And this identity has now become inclusive of diversity, is progressive and ‘modern’ – or so the advertisements suggest. In the discussion so far, I have shown that representations of military masculinities, femininities and diversity are complex and ambiguous and retain contradictions that draw through both campaigns and are just as Belkin (2012) has argued, at times “conflated and thus confused, as well as enacted or repressed”⁴⁶⁰. However, seemingly paradoxical coexistence of binaries often serves a purpose. One of those areas of conflicting messages is the concomitance of problematic stereotypes and depictions of inclusive diversity within the campaigns. Not all depictions of diversity are stereotypical, on the contrary. The Army makes a point of positively representing diversity and often features Black and women of Colour as the focal point of an image or video where they represent that which can be aspired to in the military, endowed with positive attributes. But what the analysis has shown is that these positive depictions of diversity *only* occur in relation to the Army. Yes, stereotypes are – in instances quite strongly – employed, but I argue that they always occur in the realm associated with society. Thus, society and Army are essentially again constructed as binary oppositions. This contrasting juxtaposition of Army and society can even be observed as an overarching theme in both campaigns: the 2019 campaign suggests quite literally that society regards Millennials as “useless” as seen in the video ad and taken up in the slogans, but offers them belonging in an army that reframes this uselessness as desirable military traits and focuses on representations of inclusivity and diversity.

⁴⁶⁰ Belkien/ Carver. 2012. p.560.

The 2020 campaign, on the contrary, employs stereotypical, and in many instances objectifying, and racist depictions, but externalises them by throughout associating them with society. This opposition of Army and society is exemplified in the storyline of the video adverts: the 2019 main video is set in a commonplace setting and follows a narrative in which the main character is pulled into Army life, away from a society that neither understands nor values her, while the 2020 video is set in a symbolic war setting, with the main character being haunted by stereotypical embodiments of the anxieties of society. He only escapes by walking towards metaphorical combat, symbolized by the cloud of smoke on the horizon. The images are supposed to induce anxieties⁴⁶¹, so the Army can offer a solution. While at first glance the way the two campaigns deploy depictions of diversity, and in relation masculinity and femininity, seem to contradict each other, with no consistent message, I argue that this apparent antagonism in fact follows an integrated logic of differentiation and legitimization of the military. The campaigns purposefully reproduce and reinstate stereotypes to construct civil society as the ‘othering’ agent, while simultaneously constructing the military as the ‘accepting’ one. In terms of ‘difference’ and diversity, a binary is established between society as exclusive and the military as inclusive. Hall states that stereotyping “classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as ‘other’”⁴⁶². By visually externalising practices of stereotyping away from the Army, the function that stereotyping fulfils as a “practice of ‘closure’ and exclusion [which] symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything that does not belong”⁴⁶³ is associated with society. The Army instead apparently seeks to align itself with those that are stereotypically othered. It is supposedly society where difference is stereotyped and thus excluded; where that which is ‘different’ cannot belong. I argue that a central aspect of the Army’s recruitment message is that the Army can offer belonging to marginalized groups and even an entire misunderstood generation, which cannot be found in civil society, offering a similar understanding of diversity as that of Ware’s (2012) concept of militarized multiculturalism.⁴⁶⁴ The central narrative of the ‘other’ that legitimizes the military is not predominantly a ‘distant other’ – although this narrative is vaguely implied as well – but the strongest differentiation is created between the British Army and British society. Hall

⁴⁶¹ See Bleiker. 2018. p.195.

⁴⁶² Hall. 1997. p.259.

⁴⁶³ Hall. 1997. p.258.

⁴⁶⁴ See Ware. 2012. p.259f.

goes on to say about stereotyping that “it is also what Gramsci would have called an aspect of the struggle for hegemony”⁴⁶⁵. And of course, ultimately it is still the Army that has visualized and put to use the depicted stereotypes. Thus, the campaign can be seen as ultimately a struggle for the hegemony of representation: who gets to define what and how. The Army clearly claims that power in a way that extends beyond the military context.

Edgar et al (2019) suggest that including diverse groups can “help the military improve, or at least reinforce and maintain, its public legitimacy”⁴⁶⁶ by offering all social demographics a sense of belonging within the state and its institutions. However, since belonging can *only* be found in the Army, legitimacy is not created by *representing* values of a diverse and inclusive society, but by constructing the Army as a trailblazer in *presenting* solutions to societal problems. “Deploying the language of ‘exception’, the Army is posited as much kinder, much more familial and much more feminist than ‘normal’ jobs out there”⁴⁶⁷. Manchanda and Higate (2019) meanwhile point to the danger of this form of inclusionary representation: “militarisation [...] need not be limited to white, straight, men. And herein lies both the seduction and the danger of these ‘inclusionary’ Army videos. Through mass appeal and in the face of an ever-expanding remit of who constitutes a ‘good’ soldier, the Army becomes more attractive to those who might have otherwise voiced opposition to it”⁴⁶⁸.

I argue that thus, in the recruitment campaigns diversity is similarly to Millennials militarized.⁴⁶⁹ Although the Army claims to champion diversity, it does so only in the military context. By purposefully employing stereotypes, exclusion of ‘difference’ is enforced, not challenged, and indeed its proliferation needed to legitimize the Army as the *only* inclusive space. Instead of truly challenging harmful practices of exclusion, diversity is reframed in terms of military usefulness. Diversity is conflated with a ‘new’ generation of Millennials, and both are only made valuable through association with the military. This argument is in line with Stavrianakis (2015), who notes the potential militarization of marginalized groups by the military expanding its recruitment pool: “liberal equality agendas within some national militaries are widely seen as progressive in terms of the rights of women, homosexuals, and ethnic

⁴⁶⁵ Hall. 1997. p.259.

⁴⁶⁶ Edgar et al. 2019. p.6/7.

⁴⁶⁷ Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.31.

⁴⁶⁸ Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.30.

⁴⁶⁹ Using Enloe’s definition of militarization as discussed in the conceptual framework, see Enloe. 2000. p.187. See also Ware’s argument of the militarization of multiculturalism. Ware. 2012. p.282f.

minorities. Yet they simultaneously reinforce militarism by incorporating marginalized parts of the population into war fighting and war preparation"⁴⁷⁰. Additionally, the reach of the military is extended far beyond the recruitment narrative to shape society in a way that renders the military relevant as a necessary sphere of inclusivity and progressiveness that cannot be found anywhere else and spans an entire generation. The way diversity – meaning all those formerly marginalized and excluded by the military – is represented in the British recruitment campaign uses symbolic power to gloss over any exclusive or harmful behaviour within the Army, both contemporary and historic.⁴⁷¹ By using the World War I poster template to transform the image of the soldier into a more diverse representation, the inclusion of women and Ethnic minorities is constructed as a historic continuance. Although, as the context chapter has shown, racism, discrimination and sexual harassment continue to be systemic in the British Army and neo-colonialist tendencies pervade the recruitment of foreign and Commonwealth soldiers, these issues become difficult to articulate. With the overriding visibility of the narrative of the inclusive, diverse Army, these issues are rendered invisible and likely difficult to address as continuously persisting.⁴⁷² I argue that instead, inclusion is used as a legitimization of the military, and ultimately the reproduction of violence. The military is legitimated as the only true champion of diversity, equality, and inclusion in its own society with the purpose of upholding and defending progressive values at all times.

What Manchanda and Higate (2019) have observed in earlier recruitment campaigns is here significant: “what the construction of the Army as a ‘safe space’ does is exacerbate the difference between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’. ‘We’ in Britain have feminism, diversity and liberalism, ‘they’ over there, where we fight, have sexism, intolerance and abuse”⁴⁷³. I would considering my previous arguments sharpen this statement to “‘We’ in the *British Army* have feminism, diversity and liberalism” while society is rather “over there”. Yet, in the context of war, it cannot simply be the own society which threatens these values, but there must be an external ‘other’ that poses a constant threat. Outside Britain, where in the videos in vague nature settings (often a forest or desert) combat takes place, are the distant ‘others’ that can potentially

⁴⁷⁰ Stavrianakis. 2015. p.494.

⁴⁷¹ See Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.31.

⁴⁷² See Strand/ Kehl. 2019. p.296.

⁴⁷³ Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.31.

threaten British values of progressiveness and diversity. “The legitimisation of war is brilliantly folded into these videos, reifying difference and celebrating ‘British values’”⁴⁷⁴.

These findings and the subsequent argument are similar to what Strand and Kehl (2019) find with regard to the Swedish Armed Forces, although in this case the strong juxtaposition of Army/ society is not used, but instead an unnamed distant ‘Other’.⁴⁷⁵ The examined Swedish campaign centres around a similar mode of representing the Swedish Forces as progressive and inclusive, mainly through gender and sexuality. “The mobilization of ‘LGBT rights holders’ in these campaigns thus superficially challenges, but at the same time externalizes and hides existing normativities regarding gender and sexuality. It thereby also risks reproducing a familiar and hierarchical gendered and sexualized order of international politics”⁴⁷⁶. Similarly, I conclude that the British campaign superficially challenges exclusionary and discriminatory practices, but essentially relies on them to construct itself as relevant. By externalizing them onto an ‘other’ (both inside and outside society), the existence of the military and war is legitimized. Furthermore, the authors argue that this strategy is supposed to render the Forces relevant even beyond wartime.⁴⁷⁷ I come to a similar conclusion regarding the British campaign. Herein lies a further aspect of the militarisation of diversity: if the main opposition is constructed between military and society, the Army remains relevant in wartime as the defender of the nation, and beyond wartime, as the upholder of progressive values within society.

Diversity appears as a transformative force that legitimizes the military by making it less masculine and more inclusive. Through representing women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic servicemembers as equally valid soldiers, the image of who makes a good soldier is broadened. Where does this focus on diversity leave hegemonic military masculinities? I would argue that the recruitment campaigns have shown that on one hand, they persist in the practices and underlying logic, with a decline mainly in representation. They are not necessarily challenged, and in instances even reinforced. But they are also often at least visually de-centralized from the military narrative and replaced by more diverse representations.

⁴⁷⁴ Manchanda/ Higate. 2019. p.31.

⁴⁷⁵ See Strand, Sanna/ Kehl, Katharina. 2019. “‘A Country to Fall in Love with/in’: Gender and Sexuality in Swedish Armed Forces’ Marketing Campaigns”. In: *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.21/ 2. Routledge. p.295–314. p.306.

⁴⁷⁶ Strand/ Kehl. 2019. p.308.

⁴⁷⁷ See Strand/ Kehl. 2019. p.308.

Although I see the employment of highly stereotypical imagery where it serves the Army's recruitment drive as an obstacle to this argument, I would still say that the inclusion of more diverse representations of soldiers introduces an ambiguity that has the potential to challenge military narratives. Duncanson argues that softer, more feminized and diverse forms of what she calls "hybrid masculinity" hold a double potential: "[it] has the potential to be dangerous—masking new oppressions by seeming to be progressive—or more positive. It is positive if, and only if, it is constructed through relations of empathy and respect"⁴⁷⁸. Although I argue that diversity is militarized in the recruitment campaigns, I would also say that it makes military narratives more ambiguous. What does it say about an army that needs to construct the society it is supposed to protect and defend as their 'other' in order to legitimate itself and create relevancy? If including more and more diverse representations of soldiers leads to an ambiguity in visually marking an 'us vs. them' that renders an outside 'other' insufficient to legitimize the military, this increasing messiness in clear distinction holds potential to truly challenge underlying practices of hegemonic military masculinity and violence. As Bulmer (2013) suggests, this confusion in military representation, performance and practice offers "possibilities to exploit this failure [...] as a strategy for disrupting and challenging contemporary patriarchy"⁴⁷⁹.

8. Conclusion

Looking at the controversial British Army recruitment campaigns of 2019 and 2020 from a visual analysis perspective that applied the intersecting lenses of military masculinity, femininity, and diversity has offered new insights with which strategies the Army seeks to fill its ranks admits a so-called recruitment crisis and stay relevant in society. In this thesis, I have asked how soldiers are represented in the campaigns because I have argued that in the featured bodies, ideas about military ideals, masculinity and femininity are inscribed. I have shown that instead of binary conclusions of either a conforming to or rejection of

⁴⁷⁸ Duncanson. 2015. p.243.

⁴⁷⁹ Bulmer. 2013. p.150/151.

conventional ideas of military masculinities, the images offer a reading that is far more complex, ambiguous, and at times contradictory.

By visually ascribing military value to more diverse bodies in terms of gender and Ethnicity, but also subtle suggestions of sexuality or body type, the Army positions itself as inclusive and progressive, apparently offering belonging to a more diverse generation of Millennials. I have argued that a central aspect of this positioning is the construction of Army and British society as opposing by visually contrasting society as stigmatizing and exclusionary, thus turning the military into the *only* space where diversity can truly belong. To this end, exaggerated constructions of (hyper-) masculinity and femininity and highly stereotypical imagery are purposefully deployed and associated with a non-militaristic context. The imagery associated with the military context instead offer less masculine and more inclusionary, diverse representations. I have argued that these are generally in line with “softer”, yet predominantly established military masculinities and don’t necessarily reject conventional notions of military masculinity, like the closer association of masculinity with combat and violence.

Military femininity has in the campaigns clearly become an important and alternative mode of soldiering, as military women are represented as equal servicemembers. I have however also shown that representations of military women oscillate between clearly gendered female soldiers vs. professional soldiers that don’t display markers of femininity and have suggested that women have to negotiate femininity and masculinity depending on proximity to combat and violence, which keeps notions of combat as a masculine sphere intact. By on the contrary visually constructing society as perpetuating objectifying, grotesque, and unattainable ideals of (hyper-) femininity, the Army is again positioned as a liberating space, and ultimately the only space that can offer women equality.

Through these representations of diversity, the Army legitimates itself beyond war as a defender of inclusivity and progressive values within British society, and for an entire generation of Millennials. I have argued that thus, Millennials and diversity as one key factor are militarized as they are only ascribed value and usefulness in the military context, while the Army in this narrative relies on the continued stigmatization and discrimination of marginalized groups (or apparently an entire generation) within society.

Meanwhile, I have also argued that the more diverse representations come with ambiguities and contradictions that have the potential to not only adapt but challenge the underlying military logic. For example, hold the focus on the representation of Black and Women of Colour the potential to challenge the military narrative of war in which non-White women only appear as passive victims in need of war which then legitimises their liberation through war abroad. Furthermore, the representation of the ‘snowflake’ soldier challenges the idea of the (male) military body as inviolable by embodying vulnerability, thus breaking a central military taboo.

8.1.Outlook: Brexit, Covid-19, and the return of old tropes

Writing about a recruitment campaign in the year 2020 means also writing with the backdrop of Brexit on January 31st, and the Covid-19 pandemic, both having far-reaching consequences that will shape European security. At the point of writing, Brexit is being formally concluded after a period of transition, with an ongoing debate about the UK’s future role in the world amidst visions of a “Global Britain”⁴⁸⁰. The respective policy document, Britain’s long-awaited integrated foreign, security and defence policy review, which has been repeatedly delayed, is due in March 2021, and will likely acknowledge, but not formally codify the EU as an important foreign policy partner, while calling for greater engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁸¹ As Britain remains in the NATO, many aspects of the military might not be affected, the question is rather “what are the United Kingdom’s values and interests, and how do these translate into national security objectives?”⁴⁸². In advance of the review, prime minister Boris Johnson already announced the highest increase in military spending since the Cold War in November 2020, stating that he had “done this in the teeth of the pandemic, amid every other demand on our resources, because the defence of the realm and the safety of the British

⁴⁸⁰ See Ellehuus, Rachel. 11.08.2020. “The UK Integrated Security and Defense Review: Opportunity amid Chaos?”. Report. In: Centre for International and Strategic Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/uk-integrated-security-and-defense-review-opportunity-amid-chaos>. Accessed: 06.02.2021.

⁴⁸¹ See Taylor, Paul. 03.02.2021. “Brexit Britain: Smells like teen spirit”. In: *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/brexit-britain-eu-uk-trade-smells-like-teen-spirit/>. Accessed: 07.02.2021.

⁴⁸² Ellehuus. 11.08.2020.

people must come first”⁴⁸³. It will be interesting to see how British military identity will be constructed in the future, how the military positions itself within society and who will be the ‘other’ in the security narrative, and which tropes and representations will emerge from new branches like cyber force and Artificial Intelligence announced in the new budget.⁴⁸⁴ It is quite possible that, after all, the “Binge Gamer” will become the trope that most fundamentally transforms ideals of soldiering, making technology an important factor in future representations of (gendered) soldiering.

The pandemic has certainly reshaped security and defence politics, with an undeniable connection to the military and language of war. How many nation-states have declared war on the virus? In many, if not most countries, armies were deployed to assist with crisis measures. While much of civilian life was on hold – indefinitely suspended – the Army continued to recruit, celebrating high numbers in recruitment amidst the insecurity of Brexit and pandemic, positioning itself as a central figure in the “battle against Covid-19”⁴⁸⁵ while drawing comparisons to the World Wars of the previous century. By May 2020, the Army had quickly drawn up an additional campaign, breaking with the previous contrasting of Army and society, reinstating patriotism by calling: “Rejoiners: Your Nation needs You”⁴⁸⁶. Images from short video clips of the *Army Confidence* campaign were adapted, showing exclusively male soldiers in field and combat settings, one saying “Confidence that lasts a lifetime can even take on invisible enemies”⁴⁸⁷ and another “Confidence that lasts a lifetime: It’s found when the world shuts down”⁴⁸⁸. The images clearly turn the pandemic into another kind of war, centring a military response and firmly reinstating the Army as a “force for good”⁴⁸⁹. An

⁴⁸³ MacAskill, Andrew/ James, William. 18.11.2020. “Post-Brexit UK announces largest military spending since Cold War”. In: *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-defence-idUKKBN27Y314>. Accessed: 06.02.2021.

⁴⁸⁴ See MacAskill/ James. 18.11.2020.

⁴⁸⁵ Kennart/ Glenton. 13.05.2020.

⁴⁸⁶ Advertisement in *Soldier Magazine*. See *Soldier: Magazine of the British Army*, “We’ve got your back: Army supports key workers”, May 2020. <https://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=4900d666-7061-461b-8443-98c18cc5b531>. Accessed: 05.09.2020. p.3. The campaign is targeted at ex-servicemembers to rejoin the forces and be fast-tracked into deployment. See Kennart/ Glenton. 13.05.2020.

⁴⁸⁷ Mackenzie, Nick. 26.04.2020. *Twitter/ @ad_recruiting*. https://twitter.com/ad_recruiting/status/1254305730242523136. Retrieved: 08.09.2020.

⁴⁸⁸ Possamai, Cath. 27.04.2020. *Twitter/ @CathPossamai*. <https://twitter.com/CathPossamai/status/1254738378106470400>. Retrieved: 08.09.2020.

⁴⁸⁹ MoD. 19.03.2020. „Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA): A force for good”. In: *Medium*. <https://medium.com/voices-of-the-armed-forces/military-aid-to-civil-authorities-maca-a-force-for-good-31ddb1cc1aca>. Accessed: 08.09.2020.

additional recruitment video then shows again exclusively male soldiers helping to build the fittingly called Nightingale hospitals, framed by an animation of the iconic Army nurse Florence Nightingale, the 'Lady with the Lamp'. The video ends with the words "166 years later she shone again. When the worst happens, the best step up"⁴⁹⁰. Patriotism, the historic trope of women as military nurses and men as combat soldiers – the narratives are all too familiar. The starting points for further visual analysis are manifold, starting with the reestablishment of gender roles to the question of how an invisible enemy like a virus gets represented.

⁴⁹⁰ ARMYJobs. 01.07.2020. „Army Nightingale – The Best stand up“. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9KemZF9Pp4>. Accessed: 07.02.2021.

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Appendix

I. Table of Figures

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II. List of Acronyms and Names

ATS	Auxiliary Territorial Service
AVF	All-Volunteer Force
BAME/ BME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities/ Black and Minority Ethnicities
BPOC	Black and People of Colour
Capita	Private recruitment firm contracted by the British Army
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
Karmarama	PR-agency
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus further identities
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
POC	People/ Person of Colour
WAAC	Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps
WRAC	Women’s Royal Army Corps

III. Abstract

Abstract

With the backdrop of the so-called recruitment crisis in Britain, the thesis at hand looks at how the British Army seeks to recruit a 'new' generation by positioning itself as inclusive and progressive. The thesis takes a visual analysis approach to the recruitment campaigns of 2019 and 2020 to understand how gender and diversity, and in extension military masculinity and femininity are represented through the soldiering body. The aim is to identify how conventional ideas of the soldiering body and military ideals are transformed, and how the military tries to create continued relevancy for itself.

The thesis finds that the Army presents itself as less masculine and more diverse, employing softer masculinities and presenting non-traditional recruits as equal tropes of ideal soldiers. While hegemonic military masculinities are not necessarily rejected, representations of soldiering bodies become more ambiguous and complex, offering scope to challenge the military narrative. To remain relevant, the British Army constructs itself as a champion of diversity and inclusivity within British society, which is visually contrasted as stigmatizing and exclusionary by purposefully employing stereotypical imagery. Thus, legitimacy for the military beyond wartime is created. The military is presented as the only space where diversity can belong, relying on the continued marginalization of the addressed groups within society, and ultimately militarizing diversity and the Millennial generation.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Vor dem Hintergrund der sogenannten Rekrutierungskrise in Großbritannien wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit untersucht, wie die britische Armee versucht, eine ‚neue‘ Generation zu rekrutieren, indem sie sich als inklusiv und fortschrittlich positioniert. Die Arbeit verfolgt einen visuellen Analyseansatz mit Fokus auf die Rekrutierungskampagnen von 2019 und 2020, um zu verstehen, wie Geschlecht und Diversität sowie militärische Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit durch den Soldat*innenkörper dargestellt werden. Ziel ist es herauszufinden,

wie sich konventionelle Vorstellungen des soldatischen Körpers und militärischer Ideale wandeln und wie das Militär versucht, eine anhaltende Relevanz für sich selbst zu schaffen. Die Arbeit stellt fest, dass sich die Armee als weniger männlich, dafür diverser darstellt, weichere Männlichkeiten einsetzt und nicht-traditionelle Rekrut*innen als gleichwertige Tropen idealer Soldat*innen fokussiert. Während hegemoniale militärische Männlichkeiten nicht unbedingt abgelehnt werden, werden Darstellungen von Soldat*innenkörpern mehrdeutiger und komplexer und bieten Raum, um das militärische Narrativ in Frage zu stellen. Um relevant zu bleiben, konstruiert sich die britische Armee als Verfechter von Diversität und Inklusion innerhalb der britischen Gesellschaft, die durch gezielte Verwendung stereotyper Bilder visuell als stigmatisierend und ausgrenzend dargestellt wird. Auf diese Weise wird eine Legitimität für das Militär geschaffen, die nicht an Krieg gekoppelt ist. Das Militär wird als der einzige Space dargestellt, in dem Diversität Zugehörigkeit findet, ein Narrativ, das sich jedoch auf die fortdauernde Marginalisierung der angesprochenen Gruppen innerhalb der Gesellschaft stützt und letztendlich die Diversität und die Generation der Millennials militarisiert.