



**University Students from Military Families:
the same, but different**

Brunel University London
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Research Team

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Particular thanks to the University's planning team for supporting our research and providing us with the data we required.

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Executive Summary

This research investigated the experiences of university undergraduate students from military families at Brunel University London with a specific focus on the following areas:

- The educational experiences the students had before coming to university and the perceived impact that this had;
- The experiences they have had whilst at university, links to their previous educational experiences, any issues that have arisen, and the types of support they have drawn on;
- The impact of the students' backgrounds and circumstances, and what pastoral awareness and support may be required.

The research was undertaken between June 2020 and October 2020 with undergraduate students who had described themselves as being part of a military family when they joined Brunel University London. The primary data collection involved an online questionnaire that was emailed directly to the self-identifying undergraduate students from military families, followed by an invitation to a semi-structured interview to expand on their responses and the emerging themes.

Participating students came from across all three of the University's Colleges: College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences; College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences and College of Health, Medical and Life Sciences.

This report details the context of the study, the research methods used, and key findings and recommendations for Brunel and the wider higher education sector.

Key findings and recommendations are summarised below.

Key Findings

- The students have experienced, and some continue to experience, high levels of unpredictability in their lives that may impact on their studies at university, such as the loss of a parent, separated families, moving schools, and moving house.
- The experiences that these students outlined are recognisable across the university student population. However, the causes, complexities and combination of their experiences present us with a student group who are unique: 'the same, but different' to their peers.
- None of the students reported any difficulties or challenges at Brunel, beyond those that current policy and procedures at the university are alert to.

Recommendations

- The University should review its commitment to this group of students at the start of each academic year to ensure that policies and procedures continue to support them as an underrepresented and unseen group in Higher Education (HE). Information should then be collected periodically to 'check' to ensure the University stays up to date with the issues that the students may be facing and take steps to support them.
- Ensure all staff, including Senior Tutors, Personal Tutors, Academic and Student Welfare services are made aware of the combination of experiences that this group of students face, with a specific emphasis on the uniqueness, thus the lack of homogeneity.
- The University to involve the Union of Brunel Students in discussions relating to students from military families, and the contribution they may make to the University community as well as the support they may require.
- Given that this research could only investigate the experiences of the students who attend Brunel University London, the University should continue to look at how it can aid recruitment and widen participation among this group by working with the local and national communities.
- Given the diversity in the characteristics of the participants, the number of participants in the study and the range of their experiences, we propose that further research with these students is vital.

Introduction

Background to the Research

The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance consider a child from a military family to be "a person whose parent or carer serves in the Regular Armed Forces, or as a Reservist, or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life" (SCiP, 2017). It has also been acknowledged that the significance of having been a child from a military family does not end when the serving parent(s) leave(s) active service (McCullouch & Hall, 2016).

Previous research has found that three quarters (76%) of undergraduates from military families surveyed agreed that their experiences had an impact on their education in ways that were "significantly different from the challenges and opportunities experienced by other groups" (Rose & Rose, 2018, p. 4). However, one of the risks, particularly with small groups such as this, is that they are understood as homogenous, with similar experiences and needs. Given the focus of the Office for Students (OfS) on the specific and complex barriers faced by these students in both accessing and succeeding in higher education, (OfS, 2020, p. 5) this research sought to explore this further.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) recognise that family members being deployed can significantly impact upon a child, and that mobility within the services can result in children changing schools more frequently and from an early age. (Ministry of Defence, 2019, p. i). The latter of these is considered in the provision of service family accommodation, and the MoD has spoken about how stability in education can help children and young people through these times, from early years through to higher education (Ministry of Defence, 2019, p. 5).

Brunel University London

Brunel is a university with the mission to bring benefit to society through excellence in education, research and knowledge transfer. Part of its 2030 mission is to "celebrate diversity and further strengthen our culture of mutual respect and equality of opportunity" (Brunel University London, 2019, p. 9), and to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to succeed.

The University's diverse student population is made up of approximately 12,000 students of which 63% are undergraduates. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24 sets out how the institution aims to be "well-informed" and "enabling" (2021, p. 2), and activity already takes place in relation to inclusion, access, student success and progression towards the following OfS Target groups:

- students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status
- black, Asian and minority ethnic students
- mature students
- disabled students
- care leavers
- carers

- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- children from military families

The University is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and routinely engages with the London Hub of the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance. Harrow, and Hounslow are large London Boroughs in close proximity to Brunel, and the University is located in Hillingdon. These three boroughs have the largest military communities across Greater London (SCiP, 2017). The University's Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25 outlines its aim to create links with nearby RAF Northolt, and its commitment to building on its existing activity to support children of military families to access and succeed in HE (Brunel University London, 2020, p. 11).

Research Aims

This research, funded by the Access and Participation Fund, was initially concerned with whether these students experience any challenges while at Brunel, and if their experiences are specifically different from those of other students.

The research specifically investigated:

1. The experiences of being a 'student from a military family' while studying at Brunel and prior to joining.
2. The experiences of 'students from military families' while studying at Brunel, the types of support/resources they have drawn on and the types of support/resources they may require.
3. Ideas, policies and practices the University could use to enhance the support available to 'students from military families' to increase access for these students, improve retention rates, and enhance their experience, success and progression.

This research focused on the latter of these aspects by drawing on the personal, institutional and structural dimensions of their lives (Chappell, et al., 2014), particularly as there is little research on what factors may impact on an undergraduate student's progression and success.

The research more broadly sought to:

1. Enhance our knowledge of, and better recognise, this cohort of students.
2. Better understand the composition of the 'student from a military family' population.
3. Provide the University with an evidence base to facilitate attracting and effectively supporting these students thus enabling and enhancing access, success, and progression (OfS, 2018).

The Research

This report is based on fieldwork conducted between June and October 2020 at Brunel. This study devised a multiple methods approach based on questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Data were collected in two stages.

Stage 1

This involved an online questionnaire with undergraduate students who self-identified as being from a military family. The online questionnaire, designed using 'Online Surveys', contained a mix of closed and open qualitative questions (Appendix 1). All undergraduate students who self-identified as being from a military family at Brunel were sent a short email with the questionnaire link and an invitation to participate. In total this was sent to 138 students, and 18 questionnaires were completed, a response rate of 13%.

57% of the students were the first in their family to attend university, and 61% percent were receiving a full Maintenance Grant. All students were 'Home' students (those from the UK or Republic of Ireland). The key demographics of gender, age and ethnicity are presented below:

Figure 1: Gender of students

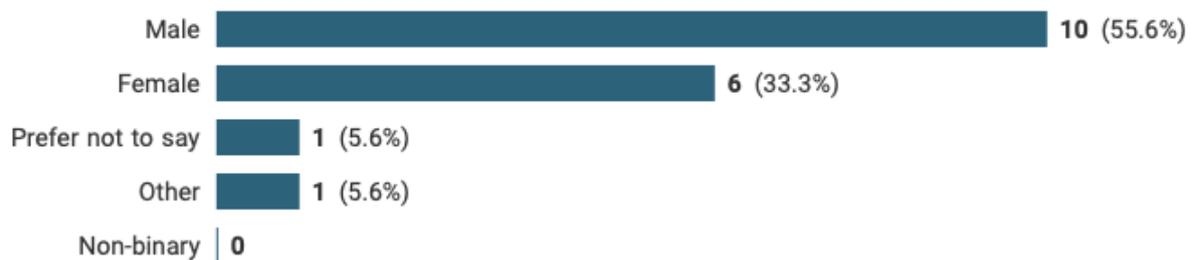


Figure 2: Age of students

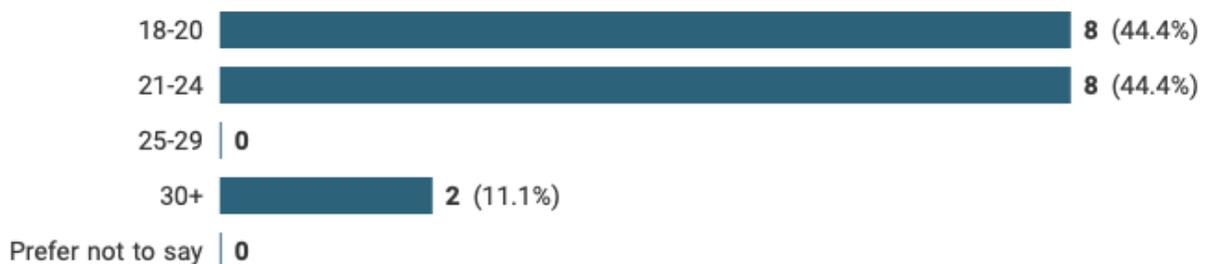
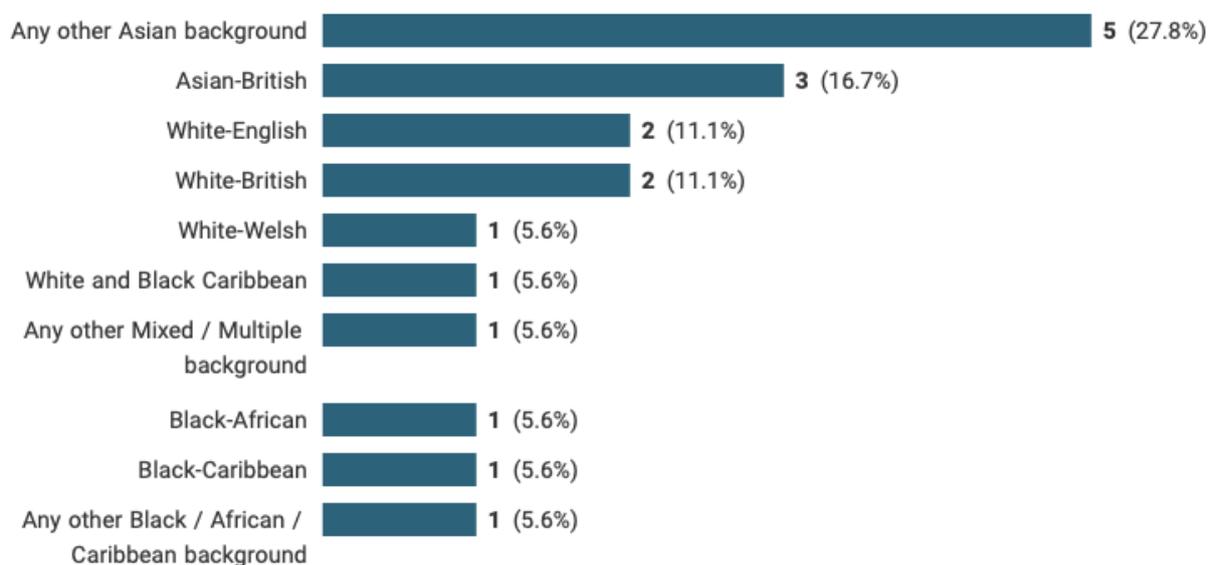


Figure 3: Ethnicity of students from military families



The majority of the students were studying on BSc programmes, but came from across a wide variety of the University’s departments, which can be seen in figure 5 below:

Figure 4: Degree courses

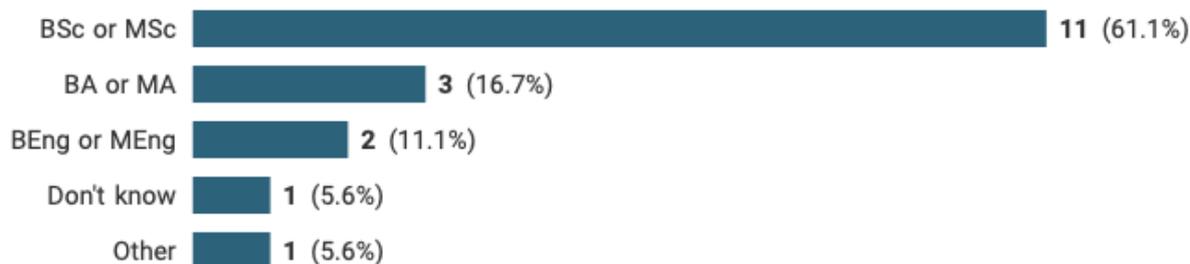
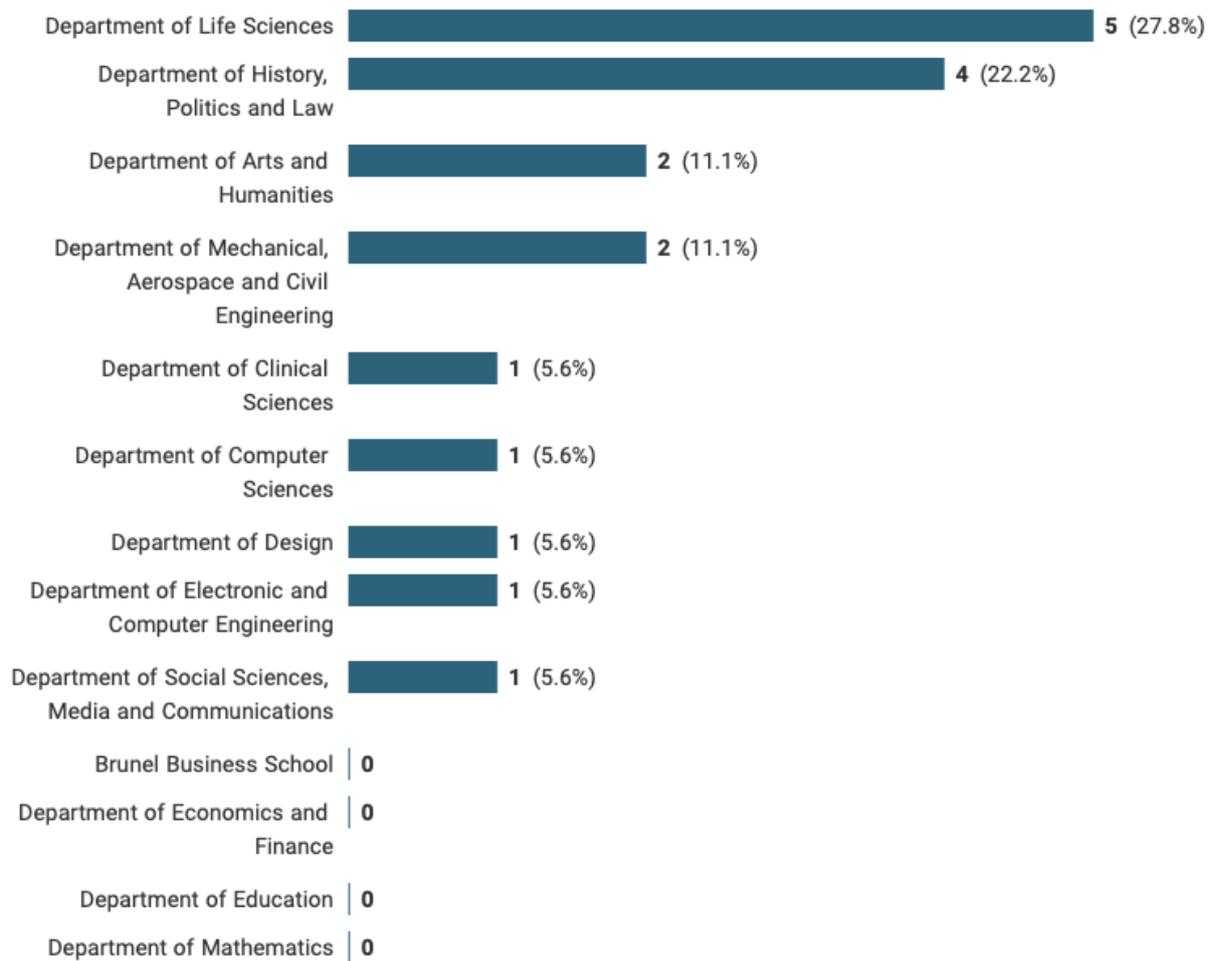


Figure 5: Departments

The students fell into the following widening participation categories:

- Eleven were in receipt of a Full Maintenance Grant;
- Three were a 'looked after child';
- One was Registered Disabled;
- One had dependent children.

In terms of the qualifying family member, all eighteen students identified a Male Guardian/Father that led to them describing themselves as a student from a military family. In four cases, their Male Guardian/Father is 'currently serving'.

When asked if they had another serving family member, six students responded affirmatively, with one stating that their Female Guardian/Mother had also been in the military.

Stage 2

This comprised an in-depth interview (Appendix 5) with one male student who took part in the online questionnaire and expressed a willingness to be interviewed.

This interview took place in July 2020. The online interview lasted forty-nine minutes and was audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Research Ethics

Participation in the research was entirely voluntary and the informed consent of all participants was sought prior to participation. All participants who took part in the research were assured that their comments would be treated in confidence and their data would be anonymised. The study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, Brunel University London.

Findings

This section is organised by themes identified through the data analysis and the key research questions under investigation. The themes emerging from the responses in the questionnaires and the interview related to the experiences and the perceived impact described by the students are presented below. The students in this research highlighted practical concerns as most significant to them, but there was no explicit reference to the need to change policy or procedure at Brunel.

The findings are structured around three key themes:

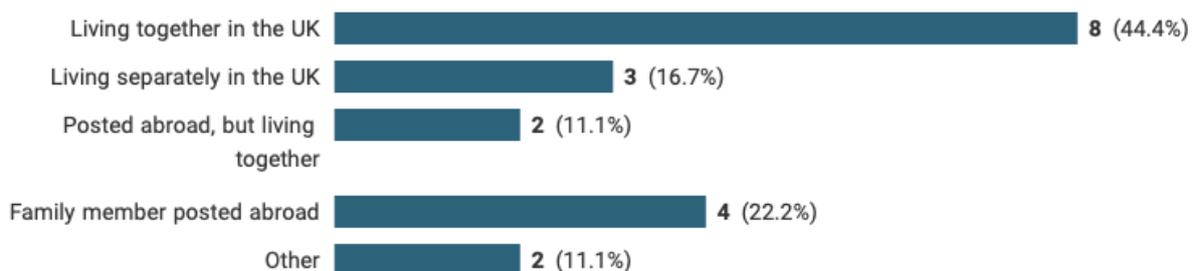
- pre-university educational experience and background;
- impact of mobility on their educational experiences;
- educational experiences at Brunel.

We have presented the findings using a significant number of quotes as we wanted to foreground the words of the students to illustrate the complexity and richness of their experiences.

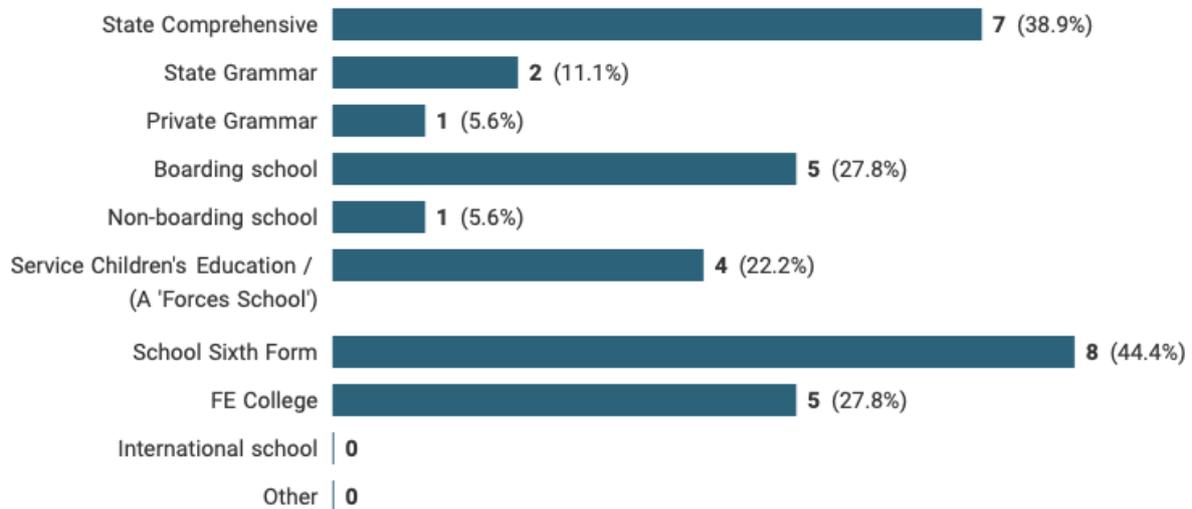
Pre-University experience and background

Eight of the students indicated that their family lived together in the UK while their family member was serving, but the majority had a different arrangement; this included separated arrangements within the UK, as well as postings abroad. As the students may have had more than one arrangement during this time, the total number of responses is greater than number of respondents.

Figure 6: Family arrangements



While the majority of the students had attended a UK state comprehensive, the variation in type of schools that had been attended by the students is broad, as indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Type of School and Further Education establishment attended

One of the students described being home-schooled for a period of time, and several had attended schools in other countries, primarily those where the British military were based. The breadth of the schooling and experiences on an individual level was also significant, as one respondent described:

As a child of a serving Gurkha, it was a privilege to be sent to a top private boarding school. I went from growing up in a village in Nepal to attending a school with kind girls who have never experienced poverty like I did. The opportunities were amazing, and it has opened my eyes to another way of life. (Questionnaire 8)

Similarly, one student had attended a State Comprehensive School, Private Grammar School, School Sixth Form and Further Education (FE) College. Another had attended six different Primary Schools before they were eleven, and the student interviewed described schools located in Buckinghamshire, Falkland Islands, Scotland, and Staffordshire. We did not collect specific data regarding the intervals of time spent at each school, however it was indicated in the data that not all of these changes occurred at typical educational transition points as a result of postings.

While switching schools and environments is not unique, the number, the regularity and timing of them contributes to the uniqueness of this group, in combination with many other potentially impactful factors.

Consistency

The concept of a 'consistent' pre-university educational experience was determined by the students and fourteen felt that their experiences could be described in such a way. Crucially, that tracked into exploring whether they felt this consistency, or lack thereof, affected their time before their studies at Brunel.

Four students said that they had ‘inconsistent’ experiences, and these were largely due to moving between schools and a variation in syllabi at different stages of their education, some when they were in Primary School, and some in FE:

For the first 8 years of my life I had 3 different schools i [sic] can remember each with a slightly different syllabus so I either had to learn content I'd already done or catch up on stuff the new school had just done and my old school was about to. I am dyslexic so this was extremely hard. (Questionnaire 10)

One student (Questionnaire 4) described their Father being killed in action just before they entered high school and the impact that this had on them while they were at school. While they mentioned missing “general fatherly guidance” they also specifically highlighted a “lack of educational values” that they felt were absent.

Others described situations related to variability in school. One shared that ‘boarding’ allowed them to positively cope with the transition to university, as they were used to the independence that this brought in being away from home:

In a positive way, yes, as I boarded for over 8 years so I could handle being independent and not get home sick. (Questionnaire 8)

Impact of mobility on educational experiences

Students reported high levels of mobility over the course of their school experience and the impact this had on their education:

A lot of moving between schools and locations meant I had to readjust to different curriculum within schools before GCSEs. I was unaware my grammar school had already began [sic] GCSE exams in year 10. (Questionnaire 1)

Lots of schools initially with different syllabus [sic], even the basics were learnt in different terms so I had to redo some stuff and learn things such as fundamentals of the English language because my last school were just about to cover it when I moved and my new school had already covered it (Questionnaire 10)

Some students reported that the impact of this high mobility often resulted in them learning the same curriculum content at different stages of their schooling:

Generally if you're in year 4 somewhere, you're learning the same things, you might end up studying Vikings five times or something, but apart from that you generally ... are doing the same kind of things. And I was always kind of at the top ... top end of the class anyway, so if there was ... I was always fine with maths and English and stuff, and those were the kind of things that would be generalised across there.” (Interview 1)

Repeating some topics at the expense of others at an elementary level results in a lack of knowledge in line with their peers and may lead to gaps in cultural literacy.

It may also result in significant misconceptions or missing aspects in their more recent education and have an impact on their studies in HE. However, as described previously, not all of the students perceive moving schools to be a negative, and in some cases identified the possibilities this created for additional experiences:

I don't feel like in terms of my education I lost much from having to move around as a primary school kid. Most people don't go to a private boarding school because most people can't afford to, we couldn't afford to if we weren't military, so ...! And much as some things were crap there, I did get some very good bits of education there, I got opportunities to study subjects that I wouldn't have otherwise, like Latin and classical civilisations and creative writing and stuff like that. (Interview 1)

While it would not fall within the purview of the university to consider students 'making friends' and their interpersonal relationships, particularly given that the majority of university students do not know each other prior to their studies with us, this is noteworthy. The University's desire to build a 'connected community' (Brunel University London, 2019) may require consideration of those who have been consistently transient, and those who may struggle with a sense of belonging. Some of the students indicated being used to transition:

When you move every two years, that is always your experience of education, that kind of just being the outsider, being the new kid, becomes the pattern that is consistent. (Interview 1)

These high levels of mobility may ease the initial experiences for some when joining the university, but for others it may lead to a difficulty in forming personal bonds and working relationships with their peers, and settling into the university community:

I believe that army kids make friends a lot more quickly than other people, but also faster in the sense that we don't get to know them as well but have a good feel for if we like them, for we are used to having a maximum of 3 years usually 1-2 years with close friends then moved to opposite sides of the country, this was prior to facebook for me so it was very hard to keep in contact with them. (Questionnaire 10)

As you're used to changing living situations quite frequently, there is trouble in later years coming to terms with staying in one place. Therefore, being able to build a stable life and future for myself, knowing my family unit will be getting posted, is something that is very challenging. (Questionnaire 9)

I read about how moving a lot at a young age and having to constantly break and reform friendship groups and stuff is traumatic in itself and ... it's quite potentially why I never clicked with a friendship group, even with the seven years at [boarding school]. (Interview 1)

Within this theme is the recognition of the positive characteristics that the students specifically describe that may not only allow them to transition to university successfully, but to form the kind of relationships with their peers that may further facilitate the work of the university in creating the thriving and connected community it is committed to:

Being in a military [family] challenges and sharpens your adaptability skills. Academically, this has impacted me positively as I'm always looking to learn more about my studies, about other people, and other cultures. (Questionnaire 9)

More open minded to other points of view, as I grew up with people from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds. (Questionnaire 9)

The experiences of this group of students are not unique to them and are shared by many other students. However, they are not the same as other students in that many report combinations of experiences of a nature that is varied and distinct. Examples of this include the repeated high levels of mobility and constant change, and the loss of a family member being killed in action. In addition, there is the influence of how they make sense of being a 'student from a military family':

I know that I am more politically aware for being in a military family, I had to deal with the fact that my dad worked in an industry of killing people, often unjustly, and reconcile that. (Interview 1)

In response to this diversity of experience we have adopted an overall description of these students as 'the same, but different'.

Educational experiences at Brunel University London

Students were asked whether they felt being a student from a military family had an impact on their overall experiences at university. Of the five students who answered the question, only one identified a direct impact:

About to get posted again, and I have a retake in August, which is our moving date. Hopefully the internet will be fixed to submit. (Questionnaire 8)

However, nine students highlighted other issues impacting on their lives outside of their academic studies:

As you're used to changing living situations quite frequently, there is trouble in later years coming to terms with staying in one place. Therefore, being able to build a stable life and future for myself, knowing my family unit will be getting posted, is something that is very challenging. (Questionnaire 9)

My father has recently been promoted and is now commuting to Bicester from Folkstone. This means we don't have access to a car on most days (Questionnaire 1)

*Concerning coronavirus, life has not become any easier or clear cut.
(Questionnaire 2)*

Dad could potentially be posted abroad. (Questionnaire 17)

While this group of students do not explicitly report being unduly affected at Brunel by being a student from a military family, there are more subtle ways in which care and support may be needed or warranted based on the examples above. Indeed, this point came up during the interview:

Yes, I think it's definitely had an impact, yeah, whether it's positive or negative is hard to tell because I can't go and live the alternate timeline. (Interview 1)

Conclusion

Woven through these findings is evidence of the complexity and variability in the lives of these students. Literature and policy refer to these students as a group, and rarely as individuals. However, the 'fragments' of the stories shared as part of this research illustrate the uniqueness of their individual experiences and lives, and how they need to be understood as distinct from their peers.

With this in mind, the University community needs to work with these students to understand, support, and remain alert to their evolving needs arising from the broader socio-political and ever-changing contexts which these students navigate.

Recommendations

In concluding this research, it is encouraging and valuable to note that the students who participated in the research did not report that any aspects of the University's structures and practices presented them with difficulties beyond that can be perceived to be 'usual'. This is particularly useful given their inclusion as a group of interest by the OfS (2020).

However, this is a group that is under-researched, and worthy of further study within the context of teaching and student experience across Higher Education Institutions.

From the findings, this report makes the following recommendations:

- The University should review its commitment to this group of students at the start of each academic year to ensure that policies and procedures continue to support them as an underrepresented and unseen group in Higher Education (HE). Information should then be collected periodically to 'check' to ensure the University stays up to date with the issues that the students may be facing and take steps to support them.
- Ensure all staff, including Senior Tutors, Personal Tutors, Academic and Student Welfare services are made aware of the combination of experiences that this group of students face, with a specific emphasis on the uniqueness, thus the lack of homogeneity.
- The University to involve the Union of Brunel Students in discussions relating to students from military families, and the contribution they may make to the University community as well as the support they may require.
- Given that this research could only investigate the experiences of the students who attend Brunel University London, the University should continue to look at how it can aid recruitment and widen participation among this group by working with the local and national communities.
- Given the diversity in the characteristics of the participants, the number of participants in the study and the range of their experiences, we propose that further research with these students is vital.

Dissemination of Findings

During this study, the authors have consulted with and presented the preliminary findings and analysis to a number of stakeholder and charitable organisations:

- Community Development Team at RAF Northolt
- Little Troopers (registered charity supporting all children with one or both parents serving in our British Armed Forces (regular or reserve))
- Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces People Support (Families Team)
- Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance London Hub
- King's Centre for Military Health Research, King's College London

The research has also been presented to academic audiences:

Chappell, A., Ince, C. and McHugh, E. (2021) *Auto/Biographical experiences of university students from military families: the same but different?* presentation at the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, Online, 14th April 2021.

Ince, C., McHugh, E. and Chappell, A. (2020) *The same but different: Auto/Biographical accounts of university students from military families*, presentation at the British Sociological Association Auto/Biography Study Group Conference, Online, 4th December 2020.

Future dissemination and work

Ongoing discussions about this work are taking place with the:

- Royal British Legion
- Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance

Further funding has been secured from the CBASS Global Lives Research Centre to extend the research beyond the student community:

<https://www.brunel.ac.uk/research/Centres/Global-Lives/Research-projects>

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

About you

1. What gender do you identify with?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your ethnic group?
4. What qualifications did you have before coming to Brunel?
5. Are you the first person in your family (in relation to your parents/guardians or siblings) to enter higher education?
6. Are you in receipt of a Full Maintenance Grant?
7. Have you ever been in receipt of a Pupil Premium Grant?
8. Are you Registered Disabled?
9. Have you ever been a 'looked after child'?
10. Do you have any dependent children?
11. Do you have a part-time job?

About your course

12. Are you studying part-time or full-time?
13. What type of degree are you presently studying?
14. Which department do you belong to?
15. What is your fee status?

Context

16. Who is your qualifying family member?
17. Do you have any other qualifying family member?
18. During their service what are/were your family arrangements?

Your Pre-University Educational Experiences

19. What type of secondary school (or schools) and FE establishments did you attend?
20. During your pre-university schooling, would you say that you had a consistent educational experience?
21. Would you say that your status as being part of a military family affected your pre- university educational experiences?

Experiences at Brunel

22. Please describe any impact concerning your academic studies.
23. Please describe any impact concerning your life outside of your academic studies.
24. Please describe any impact in another capacity.
25. Is there anything that you think that it would be useful for us to know (either positive or negative) related to your academic studies?
26. Is there anything that you think that it would be useful for us to know (either positive or negative) related to university life, structures, or policies?
27. Anything else?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

The questions and responses will be used as topic guide: participants will be asked to tell us more about their questionnaire responses in order to elaborate on what they have said.

Additional questions:

- If you had a non-serving parent what was their role (if there was a non-serving parent)?
- How do you feel about having been a part of the military community? Have your feelings about this changed over time?
- How do you think your educational experience was shaped/impacted by your life in a military family?

Appendix 3: Information for Participants



Participant Information (Post-Questionnaire)

Study title: Students from Military Families Research Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The objective of this study is to explore the experiences of students from military families at Brunel University London and develop recommendations, guidelines and further research in order to better support them.

Why have I been invited to participate?

In order to improve the experiences of students we want to understand the experiences of students from military families. You have valuable experiences to share with us and have indicated that you are interested in participating in this project.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary, and the decision to take part is yours. The research process requires participants' time, and so we anticipate that those who volunteer will have a genuine interest in the topic. There is no obligation for you to participate.

What will happen if I take part?

We are keen to undertake this research with you rather than about you using two methods:

1. Questionnaire: you have already completed an online questionnaire which you gave your consent for and subsequently indicated your interest in being involved in this next stage of this research.
2. Interview: we would like to talk to you to give you an opportunity to share your experiences of being a military student at Brunel University London. These will take place either by phone or in person at Brunel University London. All students taking part in the interview will be given £10 to compensate them for their time.

Are there any lifestyle restrictions?

There are no lifestyle restrictions.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks associated with taking part in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no benefits for individuals taking part in the research but the findings will generate recommendations and future research that will have benefit for students more broadly.

What if something goes wrong?

The person to be contacted is the Chair of the CBASS Research Ethics Committee (see details at the end of this document).

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Pseudonyms will be adopted and you will remain anonymous in data presentation. Any data that may identify other individuals, groups or specific locations will be omitted.

Anonymised data will be retained confidentially in a locked/secure/password protected location on the Brunel University London network for up to five years and may be used as the basis to plan future research, in line with University policy.

If during the course of the research evidence of harm or misconduct come to light it may be necessary to break confidentiality. We will tell you at the time if we think we need to do this, and let you know what will happen next.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

The interviews/focus groups will be recorded, transcribed and analysed by the researchers to produce the findings from the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Findings of the project will be disseminated via a report and recommendations. In addition, the research team will present findings at selected conferences/ seminars and through writing academic papers for publications.

Your right to withdraw from the study

If you agree to take part in the study, you are free to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. Voluntary participation is key and you can also decide whether or not you want us to use any data that we have collected up to that point.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The project researchers are Dr Christopher Ince and Dr Anne Chappell, Department of Education, Brunel University London and the project is funded by Brunel University London.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

Brunel University London provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Who has reviewed this study?

The College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study to ensure that it complies with university guidelines in terms of anonymity, confidentiality, data protection, and potential harm to

participants. All this is part of our standard procedure and ensures that research is conducted ethically.

Research Integrity

Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK [Research Integrity Concordat](#). You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research

If I agree to be involved, what happens next?

The research team will provide you with a consent form which you will be asked to sign and date. This will demonstrate that you have been fully briefed about the research process, have read the information provided, and had any questions answered.

Contact for further information and complaints

If you have any questions, thoughts or observation at any point during this research please contact the researcher: Dr Ellen McHugh (ellen.mchugh@brunel.ac.uk). Alternatively, if you wish to discuss any concerns please contact, Professor David Gallear, College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Chair (cbass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk)

Thank you.

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Students from Military Families project - Participant Consent Form (Post-Questionnaire)

Approval has been granted for this study to be carried out between 01/05/2020 and 30/09/2020

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for the online questionnaire)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for the online questionnaire)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who have you spoken to about the study?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that:		
• You are free to withdraw from this study at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect you in any way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• You can withdraw your data any time up to 30/09/2020	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my interview being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of research participant:	
Print name:	Date:

Appendix 5: Interview Extract

The interview conducted as part of the research was forty-nine minutes in length, was recorded and transcribed. A section of the anonymised transcript is reproduced below.

...

So one of the questions ... during your pre-university schooling, would you say that you have a consistent educational experience, and you answered yes. Can you tell me just a little bit more ... I mean you've spoken in quite great detail about your boarding and your pre-school but do you think it's been quite consistent pre-university would you say?

Yeah, I was ... there's ... I don't feel like in terms of my education I lost much from having to move around as a primary school kid. Generally if you're in year 4 somewhere, you're learning the same things, you might end up studying Vikings five times or something, but apart from that you generally ... are doing the same kind of things. And I was always kind of at the top ... top end of the class anyway, so if there was ... I was always fine with maths and English and stuff, and those were the kind of things that would be generalised across there. I never ended up in a place where I felt like I'd missed something or that I didn't know what I was supposed to know.

Mm mm. OK. And ...

And ...

Sorry, go on, sorry.

I was just going to say that when you move every two years, that is always your experience of education, that kind of just being the outsider, being the new kid, becomes the pattern that is consistent.

I mean it's interesting that you've chosen the word 'outsider', so can you tell me a little bit more about that word, because it's quite a powerful word, it's an interesting word. I mean do you feel that you were different to the children there who were there from say day one and continued their education up until year 6 before they transferred to a secondary school, do you ... is ...?

Yeah, I would say that I was. I mean it was least apparent in High Wycombe because I was there from year 1 up, so I think I got pretty much the same as anyone else who was there from year 1, but ... And in the Falkland Islands, it was kind of like a communion of outsiders, everyone was military kids who were just stranded here for a year, six months, eighteen months, whatever. Scotland was the most clearly outsider experience.

Mm mm.

Because even though I was going to a school where in a class of like twenty-one there would be seven to thirteen military kids because we were just right next to [RAF base name redacted], which was the main employer in that area I think ... just having a very non-Scottish accent, which I had and was there because I was moving around with a military family made me an outsider, and I actually got bullied there just ... and often quite physically, just for sounding English.

Wow.

Which was not fun, but hey ... if I was Scottish, I wouldn't like the English either, I'm English and I don't like the English. I'm British! So ... I can definitely see how a kid whose parents are angry at Westminster Govt and the English as a thing could see some relatively small kid comes into their school one year and thinks, ah English person, bad, let's beat them up. So whilst I lamented being the English person, I understand the viewpoint.

Mm mm!

But yeah after that ... it was two year ... one year at [School Name redacted] was the school, and coming into like year 6 ... there was a school play that happened or kind of like a school theatre arrangement-y thing, and they were doing kind of like a Big Brother thing, so they had ... and it was ... there was plotting this class basically all the way through that ... through their education at that school, and they had people kind of sit down in the chair and talk to camera about cool, funny anecdotes from when they were in year 3 or you know with these teachers and stuff, and it was kind of weird being in that ... and I had a bit where I had to come in and be like, hi, I'm Joe, I'm on a chair now, as you can see because I am sitting on it. I only just joined here, whoa, I am new. And it was like even in that kind of ... production, I was an outsider, a newcomer, a ... that kind of really put a nice point on it!

And how do you feel now at Brunel? Do you ... do you think ... do you feel like an outsider in Brunel or do you feel that you belong?

No, not really, I feel great in Brunel ... Brunel ... and specifically the games design course has a lot of LGBTQIA presence, which is great to be in, and there's not a lot of other military people that I've found but that ... I don't really care, there's a lot of people who share kind of like working class, proletariat values which I care more about ... politics than what your dad or mum does for a living ... or did for a living in my case. So I definitely think in my opinion the ... the kind of impact that my being from a military family has on my uni is all about kind of the carry through of the impact it had on my primary and secondary school education. The years of untreated diag ... undiagnosed depression that I'm starting to catch up with ... just being at [School name redacted] which was a very kind of ... not nice environment, although you'd go through it completely fine if you were a white CIS(?) male kind of thing, you'd just ... oh this is great, look how many cricket pitches we have! And completely oblivious to all of the social imbalances.

Mm mm.

So ... yeah and if there's truth to kind of the things I read about the moving around early(?), breaking up ... like how relationships form as patterns ... then I suppose I probably should have a few more friends from before uni, but hey ...

So you mentioned that in ?? sixth form you didn't really stay in touch with friends going into university, you kind of like ...

No.

Yeah, mm mm. So you ...

I had everyone added on Facebook and everything, but just no one ever messaged anyone and thus the friendship dies.

And do you ... would you say that your status as being part of a military family has affected your pre-university experiences positively or negatively? Do you think that status has had an impact?

Yes, I think it's definitely had an impact, yeah, whether it's positive or negative is hard to tell because I can't go and live the alternate timeline.

...

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