
CRM4970

MSc Criminology with Forensic Psychology

TRAINED TO KILL THEN HUNG OUT TO DRY:

A CORRELATIVE & INVESTIGATIVE STUDY OF CRIME RATES AMONGST EX-MILITARY.

**COULD A LOSS OF SELF-IDENTITY PLAY A ROLE IN THE HIGH INCIDENTS OF CRIME & MENTAL
HEALTH PROBLEMS FACED BY EX-MILITARY PERSONNEL?**

Student - *R.C. CRAWFORD - M00281341*

Tutor - D.Porteous Middlesex University

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Not forgetting all the other charities and organisations that were not military specific, but who nonetheless offered me links and advice.

I hope that this report has offered new and fresh insight into an old problem that needs more time and research allocated to it. It was my intention to produce work that the participants would be pleased with and respected.

This study takes an investigative psychological approach in examining the relationship between ex-military, crime and mental disorders and applying theories of identity. There has been no previous work in this specific area of ex-military crime and identity theories.

Rather than focus on the symptoms this research will apply the key concepts of Identity Theories (*Burke & Stets, 2009. Stets 2003-2005. Stryker, 2005. Tajfel & Turner 1979.*) in relation to another established problem, that of the high incidence of former servicemen suffering either mentally or physically. It is widely accepted that individuals have multiple identities in order to socialise and 'fit-in' to a society, but what happens if an individual's multiple identities clash when trying to change between two disparate societies? In this study military organisations are viewed as their own self-contained society and not a sub-set of civil society. This is the very essence of the study.

As well as providing further insight into the field of ex-military crime and mental health issues this report has revealed another area that may be able to explain why many individuals not solely ex-servicemen exhibit 'deviant' behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to determine why a high percentage of ex-military personnel fall victim to a life of crime and/or homelessness and mental disorders after service. Previous studies depicting this trend are plentiful, *Caesar (2010)* paints a dire picture through a qualitative study whilst recent government statistics claim that 3% of the male prison population are ex-military and a further 20,000 veterans are caught up in the UK Criminal Justice System, which they claim is more than twice the number actually serving in Afghanistan. (www.defencemanagement.com). This area in criminology is extremely topical as more disillusioned and damaged troops are being brought home.

Numerous studies are underway, however many of the established studies and reports fail to question beyond the symptoms - using PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), other forms of mental illness, homelessness and financial strains as causal factors. This study aims to treat all these factors as symptoms, look at the issues that preempt them and ask why this is a growing trend and what can be done to prevent capable young men, once seen as upstanding members of the community turning 'bad'. What do the Armed Forces do, or not do, that creates these desperately unhappy individuals who are unable to function in our society? It could be viewed that the Forces create potentially very dangerous individuals, who are highly skilled at combat yet often mentally de-combust to the detriment of society. This study will also address the dangers of having a license to kill without facing redemption; in a typical society killing is an ultimate sin, could this cause inner conflict when a combatant is put back into a society where these actions cannot be justified?

Rather than focus on the symptoms this research will apply the key concepts of Identity Theories (*Burke & Stets, 2009. Stets 2005-2005. Stryker, 2005. Tajfel & Turner 1979.*) in relation to another established problem, that of the high incidence of former servicemen suffering either mentally or physically. It is widely accepted that individuals have multiple identities in order to socialise and 'fit-in' to a society, but what happens if an individual's multiple identities clash when trying to change between two disparate societies? In this study military organisations are viewed as their own self-contained society and not a sub-set of civil society. This is the very essence of the study.

This study will have a bias towards the psychological effects combat, initiation and group changes and dynamics has when reviewing the participants lives pre, during & post service, paying close attention to the 'Neutralization Theory' (*Topalli, 2005*). The purpose of this study is not only to re-evaluate the dangers ex-servicemen face when trying to reintegrate back into society but what if any are the hurdles that prevent them from leading a normal life. Also it must be asked, why does it only affect some ex-servicemen and not others.

Finally this study will also determine if the many claims that the Armed Forces fail to offer sufficient psychological support to troops (www.mfsg.org.uk) is warranted and if so what this may imply. This study will also review the efficiency of the mental health screening process when applying for the armed forces and whether certain young men should not be eligible to join. This is especially so when looking at the occurrence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders, which *Zies & Dickman (1989)* claim is stress variable related, simply if you are a product of a stressful background (lower class, abuse, lack of emotional nurturing) then the chance of developing PTSD after service will be increased.

It is important to stress that this project does not intend to criticise any of the Armed Forces or question their place in society. It would be extremely disrespectful and naive to blame the problems on these organisations or to suggest that the world would be able to function without their presence. The media often focuses on one aspect of their work and forget to highlight the many peacekeeping duties that are met. Also it must not be forgotten that many men have very positive experiences of joining the Armed Forces.

Literature Review

Research concerning the dangers of military life during and post service (psychological, physical, situational and financial) has received much coverage, more-so since the return of soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan (*Savage 2010*). The same can also be said of various identity theories, however as of yet it seems neither subject has come into contact within academic research. The purpose of this report is to gather information on both topics and determine firstly if there is a direct relationship, and if so how prevalent it is. This research aims to address the importance of both social and personal identities in relation to ex-servicemen and the many difficulties that are faced post service. It seeks to ask if a possible conflict in identities (belonging to mainstream society and belonging to a military group) could be one of the many causal factors that contribute to the problems experienced post service. It looks to address if there is a shift, loss or confusion over personal and social identity when switching from one group to another, not only do the groups mentioned differ greatly in hierarchy and power but also rules and general structure. This report takes the stance that due to these dynamics that a military group (whatever service) is not interactional with the society in which they defend, rather than a sub-group to society it is a separate society within itself much more than any other profession, as it contains a completely different set of rules and standards to that of a mainstream society. Therefore what problems if any are faced when leaving a powerful and skilled society (Armed Forces) into one that may appear to have less purpose, less power depending on where one may slot-in, and a rule-book that is unfamiliar?

This section will first address the research into the dangers ex-military personnel face, it will then review the current theories and history behind various identity theories. Finally it will conclude with a view to explain how the concept of identity (devised and included in *Burke & Stets 2009* works) could be applied to the problems and suffering felt by an increasing number of ex-servicemen.

According to *The Howard League for Penal Reform* ex-servicemen make up a disproportionately high percentage of the prison population in relation to their group occupation. Furthermore a survey by the probation officers' union (Napo) revealed that in 2009 10% of the UK prison population were former military personnel which in real figures is 8,500 men suffering in jail (www.defencemanagement.com). It very soon becomes apparent that ex-servicemen are clearly a 'vulnerable' and at-risk group, especially as this trend is on the increase. However when we hear that a third of personnel who served in Afghanistan and Iraq return wounded physically or psychologically (*Johnson & Lakhani, 2009*) (the figures could be higher, as not all mental health issues are reported or diagnosed) and are then treated with indifference or worse, is it any wonder that we find ourselves with a highly at risk group?

In an investigative report on the plight of former military personnel *Johnson & Lakhani, 2009* interviewed six ex-servicemen who had experienced problems during and post service. A common perception aired by the men interviewed was that neither their organisation (Army, Royal Marines etc.) nor the society for which they fought for empathised or cared about their traumas and experiences. It was also reported by the men that they received no or very little psychological help either during or post service, this is especially horrific when we learn of one of the men's torments: "*I had friends who were blown up in convoys and we helped clean the blood off the vehicles.*" (*Neil Christie cited in Johnson & Lakhani pg.16*). According to another interviewee instead of proper counseling their superiors advised them to consume copious amounts of alcohol by way of getting it out of their system. This type of behaviour promotes alcohol abuse as it has been reported that soldiers returning from combat report an 18% increase in alcohol abuse (*King's College London*). This is self-reported so the figures may well indeed be higher. *Laurance (2010)* reports that returning servicemen abuse alcohol at a 22% increase compared to those that remained on home turf, it seems that during times of extreme stress in a foreign land alcohol is used as a crutch - however a very addictive one. Not only does a dependency on alcohol or drugs (cocaine is primarily the drug choice of servicemen) (*Savage, 2010*) cause physical problems but it more than likely exacerbates any mental illness, creating even more thoughts of paranoia and depression whilst also leaving the men even more incapable of overcoming their initial problems.

cont.

Other problems highlighted by *Johnson & Lakhani's* report were the difficulties in finding work, dealing with unemployment and fitting in with civilians. These factors were all linked with the presence of PTSD, most of which had either been left untreated or not treated sufficiently. According to *King's College London* the rate of PTSD amongst servicemen returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is 4.8% with other forms of mental illness reported at 27.2%, again these figures should be looked at as an underestimate, as many servicemen are either too proud or ashamed to seek help (*Smith, 2009*).

Caesar (2010), revealed similar findings to that of *Johnson & Lakhani* in his investigative report specifically on why so many ex-military personnel end up in prison. *Caesar* interviewed three former British Army soldiers that have ended up in jail, each telling their unique stories but also the common ground that they share. This study also revealed the high incidents in alcohol and drug abuse and the inability to fit back into 'civvy street', again it was found PTSD and other forms of mental illness play a huge part in the demise of a serviceman. Two of the men interviewed had joined the army at a young age, were highly capable and had great potential, however after suffering psychological traumas during service that were not treated, they ended up unemployed, homeless, alcoholics and in an extremely unstable mental state finally resulting in jail time due to acts of violent aggression, which again is symptomatic of PTSD. It seems evident that it is not merely the traumas and memories of combat zones that these men have had to deal with, but when they return in a damaged mental state, it triggers an avalanche effect - not being able to deal with 'typical' impacts such as deaths within the family, divorce, unemployment and it then seems their life from once being highly ordered and structured now takes a destructive path of its own.

Another common factor aired by *Caesar's* participants was the difficulties of re-integrating back into society, the men often acted in a way that was not acceptable such as taking pub brawls to the next level of violence, taking it as a serious threat and viewing the opponent as an 'enemy' that was posing a real threat therefore needed to be taken down. It becomes apparent that many ex-servicemen have trouble leaving their highly skilled training and forms of combat behind, as it has become second nature and is often misleading and to their detriment when trying to lead a civilian life. It seems this is not really taken into account by the justice system (*Mendelsohn 2010*), as war heroes are placed in the same boat as mindless violent thugs, when in reality it is a confusion of one set of norms from one group (Armed Forces) being misinterpreted as they join a less life-or-death situation in a civilian group, they may be unable to determine how much a threat a certain stress may be and therefore react as if it is a combat zone.

Jimmy Johnson, a soldier who served in Northern Ireland between 1965-1972, is a classic case of undiagnosed PTSD and showcases the difficulties in rejoining civilian society (www.disabilitynow.org.uk). Jimmy was a highly regarded soldier who had achieved numerous medals of recognition, however two years after leaving the army he found himself sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of another man. Jimmy has since been diagnosed with PTSD and is adamant that this mental illness explains why many ex-servicemen find themselves in trouble with the law post service, especially in violent crimes. There are numerous academic research papers which back Jimmy's theory, as *Novaco & Chemtob (2002)* claim that PTSD causes extreme anger more than is deemed rational and it appears deep-rooted, their results point to anger management as part of the treatment for PTSD. Whilst *Bollinger et al (2000)* have found that PTSD creates and prompts further mental illnesses, thus highlighting the danger of not diagnosing PTSD in time. However *Zeiss & Dickman (1989)* claim that PTSD may not happen to two people who witness the same atrocities, as they claim the disorder is highly correlated with other stress related variables, such as stresses experienced prior to the incident, childhood traumas and also the way in which an individual handles stresses. One could infer that the Armed Forces may need to improve their initial screening methods in order to prevent or lessen the likelihood of servicemen developing the disorder. Also it has become apparent that the Forces do not offer enough psychological support during and post service which is an obvious area of concern.

cont.

Another interesting find from *Caesar's* report was the idea that a soldier may hold feelings of extreme guilt over the act of killing as part of service, and that this hidden pain and shame may also contribute to PTSD and other forms of mental illness. This view is supported by *Maguen et al. (2009)* who found that the damaging effects of killing not only leads to exhibiting regular bouts of violent behaviour but that it increase dramatically the chances of developing PTSD. Again perhaps if a line has been crossed such as killing it may make other acts of violence very hard to control, a loss of limits has been established, which when returning back to society could potentially make many ex-servicemen extremely dangerous and unpredictable (*Smith 2009*). Exposure to extreme and long-term violence has long been associated with the enactment of violent behaviour (*Newburn 2007*), therefore the need for psychological help and counseling is imperative if we want to avoid servicemen returning in a dangerous mind-set.

In the various interviews of ex-servicemen that have been reviewed previously, a common bone of contention is the perception that society seems to either dismiss or have no interest in both the traumas or the work that is typical of military life. This was also true for Charlotte Madison, the first servicewoman to pilot an Apache attack helicopter, who found readjusting on return extremely difficult as even her own family could not relate to her experiences; she describes her work life and her home life as completely disconnected (*Madison 2010*). Furthermore, many ex-service-personnel report a lack of financial and network support after service, it is not uncommon for returning service-personnel to be at the back of housing welfare and NHS waiting lists (*Leppard 2010*). According to both *Johnson et al. (1997)* and *Obenchain & Silver (1992)* rates of PTSD amongst military personnel have a high inverse correlation with the feelings of support sent from home, so if a war is deemed immoral and unjust by the general public there is a higher incidence of PTSD reported. This was evident in both Vietnam and Iraq, where both wars were voiced by the general public as illegal and morally wrong. This trend has yet to be reported in Germany, but as the anti-war sentiment has increased to 62% amongst the German public (*Coghlan 2010*) it will be interesting to see if the rates of PTSD incurred by German servicemen will correlate as predicated in other cases.

It could be argued that the problem of reintegrating former military personnel back into mainstream society is universal and not culture specific. Whatever the label of the military group whether they are employed by the state or if they are deemed rebel militants they both have endured traumas and experiences that society are not privy to, they have both chosen to follow a new set of rules ones that often don't comply with the ones that make-up a society, they are also more likely to return with a host of physical and or psychological injuries. *Bignell's (2010)* coverage of the lives and experiences of former Colombian Farc's Marxist-Leninist guerrillas that have now 'retired' showcases similar issues and difficulties that are faced when trying to slot back into mainstream society. Again the witnessing of killing and horrific bloodshed (friends, family and enemies) has a long term affect on the former rebels which prevents them from adapting and fitting back into society. All of which makes the connection of uncompromising group behaviour between military and general society groups all the more viable as a causal factor of the dangers an ex-serviceman may incur. It provokes the idea that in-group and out-group behaviour may play a big part in the issues raised.

Topalli (2005) 'Neutralization' theory could also be applied to this area, certain behaviour may not be normal to the rest of society, but for those who are apart of the military group (almost a separate society altogether), it is deemed extremely normal and they may have forgotten any other way of life. This could be viewed as a very worrisome trend, if people are altering their understanding of right and wrong will the 'neutralization' effect be reversible disallowing former military personnel the ability to reintegrate? If we take a wider appreciation of norms, it could then be argued that aggressive and violent behaviour is normal group behaviour in an abnormal setting: *Fiske (2004)* comments that there are four core social motives in group compliancy: Self-enhancing, Trusting, Belonging and Understanding, these traits are all met in military related groups.

However it is important to remember that not all former Armed Forces personnel have had negative outcomes and can successfully slot back into society.

cont.

Having covered the facts and harsh realities faced by many ex-servicemen, we will now look at the main identity theories as proposed by *Burke & Stets (2009)* with a view to find a correlative link. As a social species humans function by being part of a group, it is therefore very important to observe a person's actions with a view to their social group/setting, and gauge what effect group behaviour may induce in the individual. Putting this view into context of this research I will ask; what happens to a person's social and personal identity when shifting from potentially incompatible groups?

In order to fully appreciate *Burke & Stets'* work it is important to give a brief overview of how the various identity theories have formed and developed. *Tajfel & Turner (1979)* Social Identity Theory, an evolution of *Stryker's* early work on identity, argue that the behaviour of a group cannot be explained only by the psychology of an individual, claiming that an individual has two separate identities; one social and one personal. Furthermore they deduced that an individual may move to a group that will provide them with a positive identity, for example a man that holds racist opinions may seek to join a group that would celebrate such behaviour rather than be apart of a mixed race group, where such opinions would be frowned upon and result in a negative identity followed by a lower self-esteem. *Tajfel & Turner (1979)* conclude that the identity that presents itself is dependent on the situation that the individual may find him or herself, for example; a racist individual (who happens to be a doctor) will engage his professional identity when at work but during another situation may engage in his personal and less attractive identity. *Tajfel & Turner's (1979)* work on identity has heavily influenced and set the research that has since followed, however *Stryker's* earlier work (1968) has been equally influential in determining why and how people behave as an individual and as part of a group.

Burke & Stets (2009) expanded on *Stryker (1980)* 'Symbolic Interaction' theory, claiming that individuals are made up of not two but of multiple identities, in which to slot into a variety of groups/societies: Multiple identities for multiple situations, not dissimilar to the traits of a chameleon. Furthermore they argue that previous theories have been oversimplistic and claim that it is not as straightforward as a group determining an individual's behaviour, rather like the chicken and the egg debate - does a person alter their behaviour in order to join a group because they see like minded people or do they start to exhibit behaviour in which they think someone of their group should be portraying? Perhaps an individual may strive to fit into a group therefore as an individual they are preempting and mimicking certain behaviours before they have even joined the said group. An example of a stereotypical scientist is given: Do scientists have a pre-disposition to behave awkwardly and dress a certain way, or does a potential scientist sub-consciously feel it will make them a more successful scientist if they adopt certain traits? Perhaps it is not one or the other and rather a combination. *Burke & Stets* further propose that within a society there are multi-organisations and groups and the evolutionary benefit of switching between our various identities allows for positive interactions and lessens the likelihood of social conflicts/aggression between groups.

Following the general summary of identity theories, this section will now delve deeper into the various components and sub-categories that have formulated within this field. Looking at how these aspects of identity directly affected the design and formation of the questionnaires and thought process behind this study.

The theory of 'Structural Symbolic Interactionism' was developed by *Stryker (1980)*, and has since been expanded and built upon by both the originator and by fellow academics. It is the base of most identity theories and therefore heavily influences this research project. To summarise, the three central components that make-up *Stryker's* theory on identities are: self, language and interaction. These three concepts are inextricably linked, the self emerges by way of social learning and exposure, whilst language is used in turn to communicate with the social group. Interactions around the labels placed on roles, for example professional or family position, impart the knowledge on how to behave in certain situations. It seems this is a very important aspect to societal functioning, by labeling individuals such as 'teacher' or 'criminal' it allows us to make sense of the world and act accordingly (*Campbell, 1990*). The three concepts mentioned previously will feature in this study's foundation alongside theories on: Control, Identity Verification, Hierarchy, Threatened Identity, Emotion and Social Learning. After giving a brief summary of each theory, a section will be devoted to how these areas may influence former military personnel's state of mind.

cont.

According to *Burke & Stets (2009)* there is an element of control prevalent in identity formation, that an individual will act a certain way depending on the meaning of the situation. Due to societal labeling and a set of rules that are created an individual will follow these in order to be in control of their situation, almost as if through symbolic interaction we are all reading from a script. For example a Doctor when faced with an emergency situation knows that it is a time to remain focused and calm, in contrast during his/her social time playing a sport it may be acceptable to display heightened emotions. *Swann, Rentfrow & Guinn (2005)* argue that rather than control being the main factor in attaining ones identity individuals are already aware of their perceived identity and choose their settings in order to re-establish how they already view themselves, this is called the *Self-verification theory*. Already one can see the similarities and overlaps in both theories.

McCall & Simmons (1978) also accept that an individual is in possession of multiple identities, however they claim that an identity does not merely present itself depending on the social setting, but that our multiple identities have a ranking known as '*Prominence Hierarchy*', this relates to how one perceives oneself and how one would like to be viewed. Support from others will also affect the internal hierarchy of identities that one holds. Furthermore *McCall & Simmons (1978)* proposed another hierarchy theory; '*Salience Hierarchy*', this they claim reflects how a social situation will determine how one may rank their multiple identities in order of importance whereas the '*Prominence Hierarchy*' is very much bound up with how the individual views the ideal self. *McCall & Simmons* make an interesting point on threatened identity which may prove extremely relevant within this study. They claim that when an identity is threatened the individual will feel negative emotions and depending on the severity, the individual may either switch identities, situations, or put up an internal buffer, and justify their version of the truth.

Turner & Stets (2005) propose that the core primary emotions (happiness, fear, anger and sadness) play a fundamental part in how identities develop and progress. Rather than identifying the single emotions, they break it down into displaying negative or positive emotions and claiming that this will have a direct affect on which identity will present itself, irrespective of the situational setting. One wonders if this could play a major role in preventing undesirable behaviour in individuals, by essentially replacing negative emotions with positive ones?

Although the many identity theories mentioned above tackle the subject from varying angles, it can be said that they all agree that individuals are made-up of multiple identities in order to slot-into an array of social situations. It also enables a certain degree of control and logic giving the individual a sense of purpose and reason and alleviating fear from the unknown. The creation of religion may also be an extension of this need to control ones outcome, by creating answers to the unknown, death may then prove less unfathomable. However, it must be mentioned that the way an individual acts, or the type of identities they may behold is not necessarily solely the result of ones social environment. Many social scientist ignore the nature aspect and focus primarily on the nurture factors, this research takes a balanced view and follows the path that both nature and nurture are significant in how an individual develops and behaves.

The intention of this research is to apply the various identity theories as mentioned above to the problems faced by many ex military personnel. Paying close attention and elaborating on *McCall & Simmons* notion on threatened identity and the possible outcomes. Using *Stryker's (1980)* three key concepts: Self, Language & Interaction I wish to address if all three concepts change or are at odds within one individual, who is a part of two conflicting groups, what this might incur for an individuals inner harmony. Would it create a lack of or confusion over ones identity? What if a person in this situation may be unable to 'switch' identities based on their social situation, could this be responsible for servicemen acting out behaviours that would be in keeping with their former combat settings but not appropriate in general society? First it is important to establish if in fact the two groups (that have been determined in this research) ex-military and general public are incompatible. Could being a member of two conflicting core groups (ones that are fundamental to ones identity, the base of who one is) play a part in the downfall of that individual? It could be argued that Military organisations are a separate culture and a society unto itself and not a part of the general public, they both follow different sets of rules, laws, morals, interactions, forms of language, labels and inner consistency.

cont.

Another area that will be addressed is the shift in power status/ hierarchy; what happens when an individual drops from a powerful group (military) to that of a powerless group? (unemployed/homeless etc.) How this will affect an individual's identity and could perhaps be a causal factor for a universal problem faced by many ex-servicemen? The intention of this research is to establish firstly if there is an identity clash/conflict present in individuals who have joined a military organisation and have since left. If so, how it manifests itself, and how it could be a causal factor for many of the problems faced by ex military personnel.

To conclude, the fates of ex-military personnel is an issue that affects the whole of society whether we knowingly interact with this group or not, as stated previously 8500 former servicemen are currently incarcerated in UK prisons (www.defencemanagement.com). According to *Liebling & Maruna (2006)*, jailing individuals (ex-military or not) is extremely harmful. They lament that the dangers and psychological damage of imprisonment are not exclusive to offenders and that there is a knock-on effect as the damages trickle through into the offenders family and into society. If a child's father is imprisoned, this will affect the family dynamics, along with the child's behaviour at school, which in turn puts stress on a teacher which will also affect the teacher's family life. They also assert that the damaging effects are prevalent during and post incarceration, highlighting the fact that imprisonment is a life changing experience that cannot be escaped even when 'free'. *Liebling & Maruna (2006)* emphasise that incarceration creates outcasts in society; individuals then feel pressurised into joining a group, and the only one that is welcoming is one of a criminal reputation. In turn this induces extreme stress by way of labeling, lessening the chances of future employment and destruction of self-esteem and self worth. One could presume that the dangers would be heightened if a former serviceman were to find himself in a similar situation with all the extra baggage they may have.

To round-up, it would be an error to believe that only the ex-military personnel who find themselves in jail are the ones who have suffered, many former servicemen suffer in silence, slip through the net and are never identified.

Research Aims

This research paper takes a socio-psychological approach in the interpretation of the various hows and whys regarding the downfall of many ex-forces personnel. In order to understand why many ex-military personnel don't readjust back into society it is imperative to look at what society they came from, what type of society they join (the forces), how the outside view this other society, and then how they are viewed once rejoining their old societal group.

The main questions this research seeks to answer are:

- * Why is there a high percentage of discharged military (a relatively small group within society) finding themselves either in prison, committing crimes, suffering from mental health problems or abusing alcohol and drugs?
- * Why is this trend increasing?
- * Could an identity shift/change/loss play a role in the struggle to readjust back into civilian life? This is based on several respected identity theories.
- * In going to war it is inevitable that one would be responsible for causing deaths, does killing without retribution cause inner psychological torment?
- * It has been documented that exposure to extreme violence is often a factor in those diagnosed with PTSD. What are the implications for rejoining mainstream society? What other factors contribute to PTSD and how may these be lessened or alleviated?
- * Does a shift in power and hierarchy become problematic when readjusting to civilian life? Is the transfer from a powerful group (Armed Forces) to an inferior group (mainstream society, or unemployed) damaging and not smooth?
- * Is it possible to leave a powerful group that is in effect above the law of mainstream society, and that follows a different set of rules and conduct?
- * It has been reported that wars that have been deemed unjust by mainstream society are more likely to result in military personnel suffering from PTSD. What other effects do a lack of respect shown by mainstream society cause?

It is important to stress that this research has no intention of undermining any of the Armed Forces or their niche in society. By examining the increase in ex-military personnel experiencing problems post service this research hopes to throw up some solutions or areas that need addressing, it by no means aims to play a blame game, neither does it naively think there may be one grand solution for a very complex and multi-faceted problem.

Due to a suspected lack of participants, it was decided that this research would gather both quantitative and qualitative data. It is always useful and interesting to study statistics, however due to the highly personal nature of this study it seemed a sensible idea to combine check-box questions with open-ended questions followed by some e-interviews depending on what issues arose. Thereby, if the worst case scenario transpired of only a handful of participants, it would at least enable valuable insight and interpretation from the open-ended questions.

As the study continued some interesting insights did arise, and an extra questionnaire was designed with the subject group made up of the general public with no military connections. This allowed comparisons to be made between the two participant groups over perceived importance of certain professions.

Methods

To recap, the purpose of this study was to gain a fresh insight into the already established and well documented problems faced by many ex-military personnel once discharged. Returning to an unhappy life of crime, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health problems and homelessness are just some of the many obstacles and pitfalls that are encountered. Instead of viewing these factors as cause and effect, i.e. becoming mentally unstable due to incarceration or vice versa, it may be more useful to look at these factors as symptoms of a much deeper problem. It is evident that there is no single causal factor, individuals are unique with their predisposition, history and genetic make-up, there is no logical equation where $1+1 = 2$. Rather than treating symptoms such as crime, mental illness or substance misuse it may prove useful to find the underlying similarity and seek to rectify that, hopefully reducing the likelihood of symptoms reemerging. This study seeks to question what role identities play in the difficulties faced by many ex-military personnel.

This section will layout how the study was conducted, why certain approaches were taken, how data was gathered and analysed, difficulties faced and address changes that could be made in order to reproduce a more effective study. It is important to note that this research took a strategic approach in that there was a clear question and aim from the outset, but the ways in attaining data were mixed and often contacts were gained by word of mouth or from helpful individuals who passed my details on to third parties. Due to this approach certain data only emerged as the project developed.

Preparation

Step 1 - Gathered reading materials and articles on problems faced by Armed Forces - during and post service.

Researched rates and incidents of mental illnesses faced by subject group - primarily PTSD and Gulf War Syndrome.

Gathered information on the main identity theories circulating in the field of Social Psychology.

Enquired as to whether the link between identity theories and problems faced by ex-servicemen has been made previously; decided that this link is not only fascinating but capable of being beneficial if applied in the future.

Step 2 - Designed and created a combi-questionnaire (made up of both qualitative and quantitative questions)

Created questions that addressed the current Identity Theories as stated by *Burke & Stets (2009)*.

Incorporated questions that would reveal status, race, personal history, nationality etc.

A copy of the questionnaire used can be found in *Appendix I*.

Created an Ad that laid out the intentions behind the study and requested participation from the said subject group. A copy of this Ad can be found in *Appendix I*.

For both the questionnaire and advertisement it was important to come across as non-threatening, user friendly and respectful. A £50 cash prize for one random participant was offered as a gesture of good will and appreciation of the time given.

cont.

Step 5 - Attained Ethics Approval from Middlesex University.

Step 4 - Making contact with participants was initiated by posting the Ad on various web forums, internet chat rooms, online classifieds (such as Gumtree) and making contact with a variety of charities dealing with ex-military, homelessness, substance misuse, crime and unemployment. As a high percentage of the subject group face these dilemmas it seemed a sensible option to target a wide range of charities rather than those specifically dealing with the Armed Forces.

Initially there was an extremely low turn out, with only 2 participants both having read the Ad on the Gumtree posting in Scotland. The Ad was posted on numerous Gumtree sites - all major UK cities, 3 cities in South Africa, 5 States in USA, 2 cities in Australia and 1 in New Zealand & Canada.

The same was also done on Craigslist (similar to Gumtree an online classified), forums and blogs.

It was then decided to approach the various charities directly - asking if they could showcase the Ad in their private members section whilst also asking for any advice. This approach proved much more fruitful, with a majority of the participants contacting me through an organisation they belonged to, whilst I received one participant through my tweets on twitter. A list of all the charities and organisations that were contacted can be found in Appendix II.

Sample Selection

Due to time restrictions and a limitation on project size, it was deemed unrealistic to cover both genders. As male and females display psychological pain in different ways it was decided to focus on only one gender group. As there are more males in the Armed Forces than females it was decided that it would be more likely to get a higher number of contacts within the male subject group. Also previous research on PTSD amongst combatants played a part in focusing on a male subject group, as there is huge amount of established and published research concerning men with very little involving women. As this study is not based on PTSD, it is important to have credible results from previous research to rely on.

Initially the main criteria for the subject group was: Male, served in one of the Armed Forces, had been discharged, had suffered from mental health issues, had experienced unemployment post service and had committed crimes. These questions were asked during initial contact and again on the questionnaire. However during the survey quite a few men made contact and were very keen to take part yet they did not meet the crime committing criteria. This seemed like an error on my part; just because a person has not committed a crime does not mean that they had not suffered, so this criteria no longer became an essential requirement. In order to broaden the search and potentially make more contact the study focused on English speaking nations not solely the UK. Although the likes of South Africa, USA, Canada and New Zealand have their own distinct cultures they also share a common heritage and mind set with the UK.

In the end only 1 participant came from the USA whilst the remaining 13 came from the UK. A more in-depth analysis of the participants can be found in Research Findings, which follow this section. More data was gathered from participants who did not want to or were not eligible to participate in the questionnaire. This was qualitative data gathered by way of email based interviews - these proved invaluable and provided a great deal of information. Transcripts can be found in *Appendix II*.

Developments

A question regarding hierarchy of professions indicated an interesting find, therefore it was followed up by a second survey (a duplicate of the mentioned question) and the sample group this time was the general public. It only became apparent after data collection had taken place within the ex-military group that there was a discrepancy between both groups perceptions of importance and therefore felt needed probing. Also within one of the open-ended questions and a theme that popped up during many of the interviews was the feeling that the general public had little understanding or empathy for the life of a combatant. The vox pop can be found in *Appendix I*. There was no real criteria for this group, other than they are apart of an English speaking society and had no affiliations with any of the Armed Forces.

Data Collection & Analysis

Due to the difficulties of contacting potential participants - legal, administrative and financial factors, participants were contacted by way of modern technology. This is a relatively new approach in social science research, however this method proved successful and deserving of future use and refinement.

A web based company called Questionpro.com was used to create and distribute both questionnaires. This allowed the sent and completed surveys to be tracked and monitored, it also allowed me to monitor the amount of times the survey had been viewed, started and completed. More importantly it gave the research an air of professionalism and respectability and allowed participants to remain anonymous, which is vital in gaining trust and respect from a 'vulnerable' subject group.

Questionpro.com not only helps with the technical design and distribution of surveys but helps with data analysis. An SPSS package is used to determine significance, percentages and sample traits. This helps with the quantitative data to a certain extent, however the sample was relatively small at 14 so tests on significance is not particularly valid however percentages are always useful. The open ended questions and the email based interviews rely on the researcher to interpret - this is always the down side to qualitative data. A mixed study enjoys the best of both worlds, and together they can complement each other - as was found during this research.

Strengths

- >The use of primary data.
- >Original use of Identity theories in applying it to an established area of research.
- >High quality data that is both interesting and useful.
- >Highlights an area that both society and Governments must address.
- >Combination on qualitative, quantitative and literature review made for a more holistic approach - people are not mere numbers and statistics.
- >Modern technological methods used to attract a wide range of participants.

Weaknesses

<The questionnaire depended on respondents remembering how they thought and felt pre, during and post service. This is asking a lot of someone's memory capacity and the ability to be honest with oneself. In an ideal situation these phases would be monitored at the time of experience - however this would require a 20 year plus field study, the time limit for this study was 9 months.

<Terms used may have caused unintentional offense - it is important not to over generalise and use terms such as 'Soldiers' or 'army' when dealing with all of the Armed Forces.

<Unable to gain access to ex-military in Prisons, this was a major blow to the initial concept of the study as this was the primary target group.

<Lack of participants resulting in limited in statistical validity.

<Limitations in both size and time, of which more could have progressed into larger sample numbers.

<The initial criteria for the first survey was too specific.

<This study relied on participants having access to computers and the internet.

Although there appear to be many weaknesses in the research it does not change the fact that this is a highly relevant and just topic that deserves more research interest and funding.

Research Findings

As mentioned previously this research has incorporated data from both qualitative and quantitative sources in order to achieve a balanced insight into the subject group's situation. In doing so, this research benefits from both real figures and also opinions from those who have had first hand experience of ex-military life.

Two Questionnaires were designed and distributed, one that targeted former servicemen and one that targeted the general public. Both were distributed via email through Questionpro.com. A breakdown of both questionnaires and the data gathered will now be disclosed:

Questionnaire 1 - 'Forgotten Heroes: The Aftermath'

Data gathered between 23/05/10 - 29/07/10

SAMPLE GROUP STATISTICS

Sample size = 14,

Gender = 100% male,

Age at time of joining military organisation = ranges between 15 - 21 yrs,

Years of service = ranges between 3 - 24yrs,

Race = All 'white'/ Caucasian,

Nationality = Scottish, English, British, Human Being, German American.

Level of Education = ranges from GCSE (or equivalent) - BSc (hons).

Socio-economic background = 11 - working class, 3 - middle class.

Marriage status = 5 married with kids, 1 married without kids, 5 divorced with kids, 2 single.

Service = Royal Air Force, Army, T.A, Royal Navy,

Discharge status = 10 voluntary, 1 involuntary, 3 other.

Worked in War-zones = 11 - yes, 3 - no.

Suffered from Mental health issues = 11. *With 5 having spent time in a mental health institution post service.*

Have committed crimes post service = 6. *However 0 have spent time in prison.*

Experienced unemployment post service = 12,

Further figures and allocation of each category can be found in *Appendix II*, for research purposes they were not all deemed significant and therefore have not been elaborated upon.

The questionnaire that targeted ex-servicemen contained questions that produced both qualitative and quantitative responses, the quantitative data will be examined first.

In order to understand the impact military life has on an individual it was important to compare their lives pre, during and post service.

The first comparison question asked (in a check-list format) if participants had experienced any of the following: Un-employment, Alcohol misuse, Drug misuse, Periods of homelessness, Time in prison, Time in a mental institution, Committing non-violent crimes, Committing violent crimes, Verbal attacks from the public, Physical attacks from the public, Marital separation, Separation from offspring. The participants were asked this question twice, with pre-service then post-service in mind.

The results indicated that in general the participants had experienced more personal lows post-service than had

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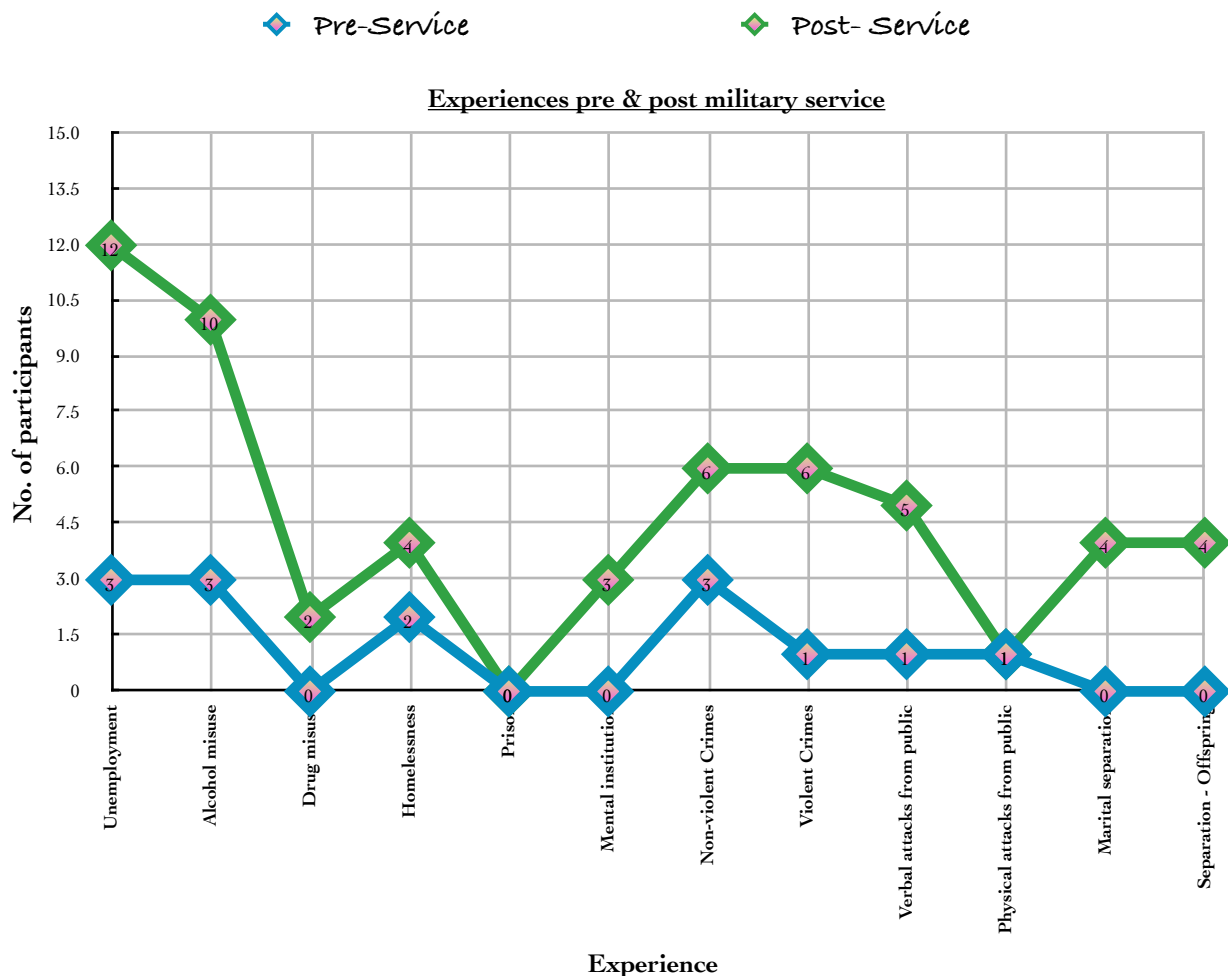
experienced pre-service. However it must be said that all of the participants had signed-up at a relatively young age, and there is no saying if their lives may have followed a similar route irrespective of their career choice.

From the graph below it appears that rates of unemployment and alcohol misuse has increased significantly between pre and post-service, with 3 men claiming they had suffered unemployment pre-service increasing to 12 post-service. Likewise with alcohol abuse jumping from 3 to 10.

Experiences of drug misuse, homelessness & committing non-violent crimes have also doubled in frequency. Whilst time spent in a mental institution has risen from 0 to 3.

Alarmingly, pre-service only 7% of the participants had committed a violent crime, post-service this has increased to 42.8% of the participants have engaged in violent crimes.

It also becomes apparent that only one participant recalls verbal abuse from the public pre-service this rises to 36% of participants experiencing similarly post-service. Again the figure rises from 0% (pre-service) to 28.6% (post-service) in regards to marital and offspring separation. However it must be noted that these last two experiences may not be indicative of military life, as the participants entered military life between the ages of 15-21 yrs therefore most likely before marriage or child birth. Finally it appears that 0% of the participants have experienced any jail time, plus there has been no increase in physical attacks from members of the public.



cont.

Another interesting find, revealed that the same 11 participants who classified themselves as working class were the same 11 who also reported spending time in a mental institution post-service. This supports previous studies mentioned in the literature review chapter that PTSD and other forms of mental illness are more commonly found within working class groups.

So far the data collected on experiences pre and post-service are in keeping with the secondary data reported in the literature review section of this report. Nothing new has been established with the above data rather that common experiences and trends have been supported.

Next we will review the questions (and the data that followed) that was designed around the identity theories as reviewed previously. Rather than assess each question individually, the questions relating to identity theories have been grouped accordingly, some of the categories can be assigned to more than one question. For example a question may equally relate to hierarchy and threatened identity. The main groups assigned are : **3 Key Concepts (Self, Language, Interaction), Control, Emotions, Threatened Identity, Self-Verification theory & Hierarchy.** With categories concerning self-esteem and self-worth being an extension of one of the main groups, as with the theories themselves there is no clear cut boundaries and they are all inextricably linked.

3 Key Concepts

Using the three key concepts of identity theories identified by *Burke & Stets (2009)*, as a base in which to create and categorise questions, it emerged that pre, during and post-service the participants had changed self-perceptions and how they self-viewed dramatically. It also becomes apparent that in general participants peaked during service but then post-service they found themselves worse off than their pre-service frame of mind. *All questions and answers can be found in Appendix II.*

When asked about drive and ambition (*pg4, Q.1*) in each phase of their lives (pre, during & post): 43% reported feeling 'uncertain or neutral' pre-service, whilst during-service 86% reported feeling either 'extremely focused or focused'. Finally post-service 57% reported feeling 'lost & aimless' with a further 28.6% feeling 'uncertain'. From this we can gage that indeed the participants may have lost an aspect of control and an ability to understand who they are and where they wish to go.

Q.2 (*pg.4 of Questionnaire*) enquires about forming friendships and relationships, again it seems the participants peak during-service and hit an all time low post-service. Pre-service 71.4% of participants reported having no real concern in forming friendships or relationships by opting for 'neutral' or 'agree'. During-service 73.3% claim that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they have no trouble in this area, however post-service 71.4% claim to have had real difficulties in this area by opting for 'disagree strongly' or 'disagree' in regards to ease of forming friendships/relationships. This again highlights that many ex-servicemen are at risk post-service. An inability to form meaningful friendships implies that one is at odds with ones new setting impacting on one's personal and social identity. This theme is also highlighted in Q.3 (*pg.7*), when asked if friends and family understand them; 50% chose 'disagree' pre-service. During-service this provided a mixed response with 14.3% choosing 'disagree strongly', 28.6% choosing 'disagree', 7.1% opting for 'neutral', 28.6% choosing 'agree' and finally 21.4% choosing 'strongly agree'. This may imply that as suspected previously military organisations provide a new society which is perhaps incompatible with the society that these participants left behind.

Q.12 (*pg.21*) participants were asked the importance of how others viewed them, pre-service 78.6% claimed that it was either 'extremely unimportant', 'unimportant' or they chose 'don't mind'. During-service the same figure of 78.6% swings around and report how they are viewed by others as either 'extremely important' or 'important', post-service the figures go back to how they were pre-service. This indicates that the participants felt they belonged during service and actively sought to integrate into their new society, something that did not concern them pre or post-service.

cont.

In regards to understanding the difference between military rules and society's rules, it appears not to be an issue as can be observed in Q.13 (pg.21). When asked about their understanding of the moral rights and wrongs in society there is only a slight change during the set phases: Pre-service 86% report that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with 14.3% opting for 'somewhat', during-service 100% chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree', whilst post-service 86% chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree', 7.14% chose 'somewhat' and 7.14% chose 'disagree'. One can conclude that there is very little change in regards to this question, as only 1 participant out of 14 felt that their understanding of the rights and wrongs of society had changed over the course of the set phases. This question relates to social learning as outlined in the literature review chapter, one could infer that during-service participants did not necessarily learn societal rules but perhaps paid more attention to them due to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth provided by the relevant military organisation.

Q.14 (pg.23) highlights the perceived importance of social inclusion. Pre-service 64.3% of participants claimed that being part of a group was of 'equal importance' to being an individual, however during-service 71.4% either chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in regards to importance of group inclusion. Whilst post-service 35.7% chose either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' and a further 35.7% chose 'of equal importance', this implies that during-service participants felt included, and saw themselves as part of a group instead of an individual, however post-service they seemed to have become more socially isolated than pre-service, again which may imply a worse-off frame of mind and a loss of social identity. Q.5 (pg.9) indicates a similar trend.

Q.23 (pg.35) indicates another interesting find relating to the three concepts, specifically language and interaction, as there was a change in communication and perception between the participants and others. When asked if their use of language caused offense to others both pre and during-service present 0% for the option 'frequently' however post-service this figure rises to 35.7% 'frequently' causing offense by use of language alone. Q.16 (pg.25) provides similar results, in regards to being misunderstood. Again if using *Burke & Stets (2009)* identity theories this would indicate that post-service the men (from this research sample) present problems interacting and using language as a form of non-confrontational means of communication, which the authors claim is a fundamental factor in identity development and success.

Control & Self-Verification

Questions that related to control and self-verification aspects of identity have been grouped together as at times they are difficult to differentiate from one another. An individual may control their setting and interactions in order to self-verify enabling an individual to self select the type of person they wish to be viewed and treated by others. Q.6 (pg.10) sought to infer what control the participants felt they had during the set phases, by asking if they agreed with the statement: *'Bad things always seem to happen to me, I am very unlucky'*, pre-service 7.7% chose 'strongly agree', during service 0% chose this option whilst post-service 57.14% chose this option - this indicates that during-service participants feel in control of their life but post-service this seems to decline. Q.15 (pg.25) also highlights this trend. This links up with the emotion aspect of identity theories as presented by *Turner & Stets (2005)*, who claim negative emotions may have a knock on effect to identity awareness.

Q.8 (pg.13) enquires about the importance of routine structure, pre-service 0% chose 'strongly agree', whereas during-service this rose to 57.14% and post-service dropped to 42.7%. This would indicate that the participants benefited from the routine and structure offered from a military organisation, and perhaps if a structure is not provided then this may have an effect on ones perception of self-purpose which in turn may affect ones personal or social identity. The data from Q.10 (pg.17) & Q.22. (pg.34) also highlights the sense of purpose and meaning in the individual's life as pre-service it starts low, is at it's peak during-service and then drops to it's lowest post-service. A similar trend can be spotted from the data gathered on Q.24 (pg.36) as regards to the importance of wearing a uniform, it became apparent that during-service a uniform offered a sense of belonging whilst pre and post-service the wearing of a uniform lost it's importance.

cont.

Emotions

Questions relating to emotions and identity, most importantly if they are negative or positive also provided some useful findings. Q.9 (pg.15) revealed that pre-service 14.3% reported themselves to have either an 'aggressive' or 'extremely aggressive' character, during-service this rose to 28.6% and post-service it rose again to 57.14%. This is regarded as a negative emotion and therefore could imply that this may have an affect on an individuals identity, if using *Turner's* (2005) ideology. Again this may highlight the incompatibility between both sets of groups/societies, and the difficulty in moving from one to the other. Questions regarding **anxiety** - Q.11 (pg.18), **fear** - Q.17 & 20 (pg.27 & 31), **happiness** - Q.18 (pg.29) **sadness** - Q.19 (pg.29) & **anger** Q.21 (pg.35) indicated a similar trend to the previous questions regarding emotion and identity, that pre-service is generally a low period, during-service individuals experience mainly positive emotions and finally post-service the participants experienced more negative emotions than pre-service. An interesting find developed from Q.20 (pg.31), as it became apparent that participants felt 'fearful' more frequently post-service than at any other time, during-service 92.3% chose 'never' or 'rarely' whilst post-service 71.4% chose 'often' or 'regularly', whilst pre-service the results were scattered. This may surprise many as one would expect first hand experience of war-zones to induce fear, however looking at the rest of the results it also becomes apparent that during this time participant's felt a part of a group, in control of their destiny and were generally experiencing higher levels of self-esteem and self-worth, all indicators that during-service the participants had strong, positive feelings about both personal and social identities.

Threatened Identity

Q.4 (pg.7) sought to find how stable the participants identity and self-worth was during the set phases. When asked if they were an important person in their social group; pre-service 28.4% chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree', during-service this rose to 71.5% selecting the same options, however post-service 0% chose 'strongly agree' and only 7% chose 'agree' resulting in 71.5% choosing either 'disagree strongly' or 'disagree'. This implies that during-service the participants felt important and needed within their social group but post-service they had lost either their social group or their niche in society which again takes us back to the issue of identity and how society helps form and develop this need. In light of this Q.12 (pg.20) asks about thoughts of suicide, *McCall & Simmons* (1978) fail to address what happens if an individual is unable to switch/change identities or select a more palatable 'truth', it has already become evident that the participants rates of aggression of intensified post-service, and suicidal thoughts or actions are the ultimate form of aggression against oneself. The results showed that pre & during-service 85.7% claimed they had 'never' experienced suicidal thoughts whereas post-service 71.4% claimed to have experienced suicidal thoughts either 'sometimes' or 'frequently'. Perhaps this is the result of losing ones identity or failing to re-join a group that had conflicting ideology to the one recently departed.

A question that enquired about memory was also added, this was not developed from an identity theory but developed during research. It relates to identity though, as it queries what happens if an individuals memories either cause ongoing pain, an inability to adapt to ones new surroundings or hijacks all the previous positive memories. This question was included to provide any light on possible treatments or approaches that could be developed in the future care and treatment of ex-servicemen. Results showed that pre-service 38.5% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they had positive memories to provide comfort, during-service this rose to 92.7% however post-service this dropped dramatically to 23% with 53.9% either 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing'. Perhaps if the positive memories could be re-ignited and used to control or overshadow the traumatic warfare memories, ex-servicemen may have a better chance of overcoming other difficulties that they may face.

cont.

Hierarchy

In this section I wished to know if the participant's views on status had changed and how they labelled themselves, it then became apparent that in conjunction with their results it would be useful to compare the general public's responses to the same question.

Questionnaire 2 - 'General public's Viewpoint'.

Data gathered between 27/06/10 - 29/07/10

SAMPLE GROUP STATISTICS

Sample size = 40 Gender = 19 male & 21 female Age range = +18yrs

- * All live in an English speaking society.
- * All had no military affiliation.
- * Randomly selected.

The general public questionnaire consisted of only one question, and that was to list in order of importance the given professions. This same question was also part of the ex-servicemen's questionnaire.

The 9 professions given were generic terms - such as 'doctor' or 'soldier' this was purposely designed in order to avoid participants over analysing. A stereotypical response was wanted not deep thought into what 'doctor' inferred i.e. G.P or surgeon etc. A quick and honest answer was required.

Fig. 1 Shows both sample group's responses. It becomes evident that there is a discrepancy between the ex-military's order of importance and that of the general public's.

Both groups agree that being a 'criminal' is the lowest rank in society, similarly both agree that the 'police' are highly ranked at no.2.

However, the public rank 'soldiers' at 6, below a 'postman' & a 'dustbin man'. Whilst the ex-military group rank 'soldier' as being no.1.

These results could imply that there may be significant differences between how the public view military groups and how military groups view themselves, resulting in a lack of respect and communication.

Also it highlights the dramatic downfall an ex-serviceman has made in terms of power and status - from being no.1 on the pyramid they (in many cases) drop to being 7 or 9. This may also prove damaging to an individuals identity and self-worth.

This will be looked at further in the discussion chapter.

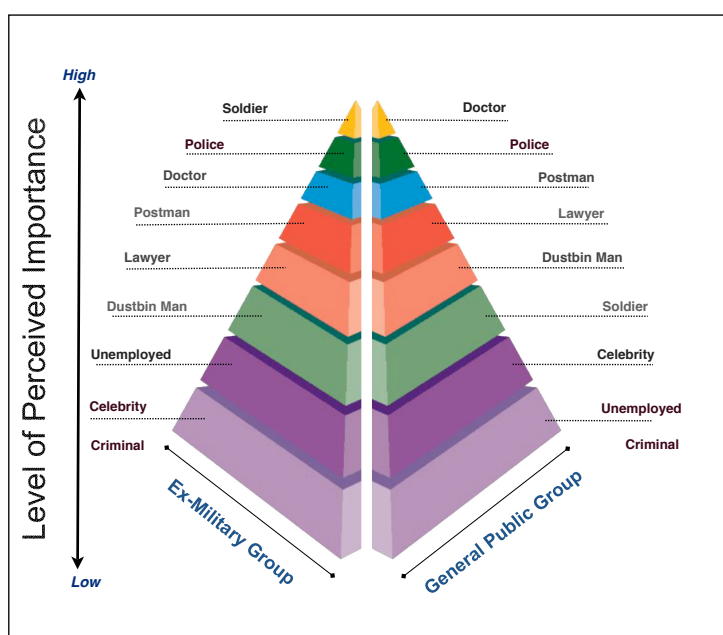


Fig. 1

As the quantitative data was derived from small sample groups the significance provided by an SPSS package was not deemed valid, in it's place % were used. All results can be found in *Appendix II*

cont.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was also gathered from the ex-military sample group, as mentioned previously. However qualitative data was not only comprised of open-ended questions incorporated in the questionnaire but also from individuals who gave e-interviews and participated in the questionnaire and those who declined to participate in the questionnaire. The main reason for declining to fill out the questionnaire was that the individual felt they did not meet the requirements - either they worked for an ex-service charity/organisation and never joined one of the forces, or they had mainly positive experiences since leaving the forces. In order to respect privacy I did not question why some of the other potential participants did not oblige.

To protect individuals anonymity all participants of the questionnaire and e-interviews

(apart from charity workers) have been re-named.

From the data attained by questionnaire it became apparent whilst 11 out of the 14 participants had worked in war-zones only 1 of the 14 men recalled being offered any psychological help during any of the set phases. The results also reveal that of the 14 participants 11 felt they had either no one or only themselves to provide comfort during times of distress - during and post-service. It also became apparent that counseling and mental health treatments are equally not sought for and are also unavailable: *Mr B* recalls “*psychological help within the army has a stigma attached you get called basket weaver and ridiculed by workmates.*” whilst *Mr G* stressed “*no help or training was given during my service, or at the end, to de-condition us from the ‘conditioning’ that forms part of basic training (one of the causes of PTSD)*”. According to several of the participants and interviewees stigma is not the only deterrent in seeking help, as Debra from SoS points out “*these men are extremely proud individuals, and view seeking help as a weakness*”. This supports previous claims on the lack of psychological help available to military personnel both present and former.

Mr L who was a participant in the questionnaire survey and who also gave e-interviews explained post-service he finally was diagnosed with PTSD after spending 6 weeks in a mental health ward. He was then referred to ‘Combat Stress’ - an Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society. *Mr L* attends these therapy sessions once every 4-5 months and each session lasts 2 weeks. Thankfully *Mr L* is responding slowly but surely, after 2 years of therapy he is feeling optimistic about his future. *Mr L* appears to be ‘fortunate’, as other interviewees and participants claim they have received no or little help for either their mental or physical injuries: *Mr D* feels that the situation may have improved for recent ex-servicemen, as previous wars (such as Gulf wars) and the veterans who returned received no help at all, since returning the only help *Mr D* has had is appointments with a surgeon - furthermore he has been kept on the NHS waiting list. Understandably this has left *Mr D* feeling resentful and “bitter”.

There does seem to be specialist help available albeit to the few, CHT (Community Housing & Therapy) offer a programme called Home Base to homeless ex-military personnel. This programme is intensive, military specific and extremely holistic covering an array of areas from decision making, learning to live outside of military confinements and overcoming/dealing with mental illness’s such as PTSD. However currently they are only able to offer 35 spaces per year due to a lack of funding.

Other problems aside from a lack of diagnosis and treatment of mental illness’ were also reported by the participants. *Mr P* who not only served in various military organisations now works as a full-time welfare case worker to ex-servicemen who are not coping, claims that a major problem faced by ex-servicemen was the inability to grasp an understanding of basic skills that civilians take for granted: “*one of the biggest problems faced by those leaving the services especially the ‘singlies’ who have always lived on camp accommodation is learning to budget. They have spent years being paid and that money is there to be spent on fun basically. Rent, utilities, food etc has all been taken out at source.*” One could deduce that many ex-servicemen, especially, if joining at a young age have missed out on a major part of the social, personal and emotional development that belongs to civil society; this then becomes apparent when re-joining that society.

cont.

Mr O states that not only do ex-servicemen often lack a command of basic social skills - such as budgeting etc. but that the main problem encountered is military 'conditioning' is not relevant in society and can be viewed as a "handicap". He also states that conditioning involves "breaking an individual down.....so they function as a machine". Taking this into account and training to operate and survive in combat zones often does not allow for a smooth transition back into civilian life. This adds weight to the base of this study which queries if the two groups, military and civilian are compatible and if their social structure clash and create conflict. Also *Mr O* proposes that the problems emerge when an individual leaves the forces as a uniform service often offers quite a "supportive environment", and when an individual leaves they also leave behind a "safety net of support from like minded individuals." Again this supports the quantitative data gathered from this report, in that problems surface when leaving one group for another when both groups differ fundamentally in hierarchy, logic, emotional expression and mentality.

This idea that there is a difficulty fitting back into civilian life is voiced many times by the participants. Not only have the servicemen been 'conditioned' they have also witnessed things that members of the public will never witness. They have formed intense relationships with their 'troops', 'squadron' etc that could not be matched in a civilian lifestyle. Many of the participants felt that the general public offers neither sympathy nor appreciation for work achieved by the armed forces, and this has resulted in feelings of resentment and disgust. Unfortunately this has reinforced the feeling of 'us' and 'them' (public). *Mr C* feels that the public can never fully understand the sacrifices made by servicemen ; "civilians will never understand what it is like to see and smell dead people, to be constantly on alert for something to happen." *Mr Q* also comments on the memory of smell in some of his posts/blogs, this notion has appeared in both e-interviews and in reading materials during the research. Not only are many servicemen faced with the horrors of visual memories and nightmares but also a smell memory of rotting flesh and death. Could the known close link between smell and memory be adapted in therapeutic treatments?

When asked how the plight of an ex-serviceman could be improved upon, the general feeling was: 1- Provide more psychological help and make it accessible. 2- provide 'de-conditioning' in order to reintegrate back into society smoothly. 3-More funding for the organisations and charities that provide help for ex-services. 4- Provide help to veterans that returned pre 2003 - currently the successive Governments have failed this group, provide housing and employment opportunities to those returning. 5- Offer more courses on learning basic skills such as budgeting, avoid waiting list for housing, welfare and NHS and finally 6- Receive more recognition from both the Government and the general public.

To conclude, the data gathered supports the notion that a military group and society are mutually incompatible, they may be able to function side by side but they are not able to merge. It is apparent that military groups are not merely a sub-group of society but are a separate society with their own rules, perceptions and logic, often making it difficult for military personnel to re-join civil society smoothly. The data gathered suggests that an individual's identity and how they see themselves changes from pre-service to during-service and then post-service problems arise - often individuals report difficulties in aspects concerning both personal and social identities.

All transcripts and correspondence can be found in [*Appendix II*](#)

The results from this survey have provided useful and interesting results. Identification of the obstacles that were faced by the participants during and post-service has not only supported previous findings but also provided this study with a solid base in which to enquire about causal factors. The results imply that the participant's situation benefitted significantly between the stages of pre-service to during-service, however post-service saw individuals regress to a frame of mind below pre-service, indicating that on many levels the men were worse-off than before joining one of the Forces. This trend could be attributed to the lack of psychological and welfare support, training courses, public sympathy and peer support as outlined in the qualitative findings. However if it were simply the case of an absence of these factors, then one would expect all ex-servicemen to experience a similar deterioration. Undoubtedly these aspects play a pivotal role in the downward spiral of many ex-servicemen's lives but as stated previously, this study aims to seek if there may be a broader causal factor that provokes issues such as criminal behaviour, psychological problems and substance abuse to rise and fester.

This study queries if an individual who is a member of two incompatible societies, military and civil, who subsequently finds various personal and social identities clashing (such as the three key concepts addressed by *Burke & Stets 2009*) may then go on to experience the typical problems described previously, such as mental health issues and substance abuse. *McCall & Simmons (1978)* proposed that a threatened identity could lead an individual to change or switch their identity, change their situation, or create a self-selected truth. No work has identified fully what happens when all these multiple identities clash, especially if an individual is a member of two societies with conflicting views. The results of this study could imply that a loss or shift in identity may be a broader causal factor for 'deviant' or 'unhealthy' behaviour. Perhaps by tackling the issue of identity first, the other factors that add to the demise of a ex-serviceman's life may waiver or not be encountered. *Mr O* concedes that ex-servicemen should be "*de-conditioned*" before they are put back into society, which is not far removed from the idea of providing individuals with an identity that fits in with their new environment, and the confirmation of where one belongs.

A positive outcome from the qualitative data has been re-establishing the areas that are lacking for ex-servicemen. Although this is well documented it is important to reiterate what is required in terms of support and preventative measures. The data gathered from both qualitative and quantitative questions indicated that lack of public sympathy, recognition and understanding has caused extreme anger and resentment and heightened the sense of 'us' and 'them'. This was especially evident from the results of the question that was put to both sample groups. By listing professions in order of importance to society the 'general public' group highlighted their disregard for servicemen by placing them beneath a 'dustbin man' on the hierarchy pyramid. One could presume that the 'general public' are either unaware or unsupportive of the highly skilled qualities servicemen have achieved. Another finding from the hierarchy pyramid showed that the 'ex-military' group rated 'soldier' as number 1 and 'criminal' or 'unemployed' as 9 and 7 respectively, having assessed that 12 out of the 14 participants had experienced unemployment post-service, and 6 had committed non-violent crimes with a further 6 admitting to committing violent crimes post-service one could assume that a majority of the sample group have gone from top of the hierarchy pyramid to the bottom. However, the participants still identify with their previous label and are, unsurprisingly, unable or unwilling to accept their new label. Finally in the eyes of the 'ex-military' sample group, they have gauged that their status and power has dropped from top of the table to bottom, however in the eyes of the 'general public' sample group the change in status from being a 'soldier' to 'unemployed or criminal' is not hugely different as they rate the former a 6 and the latter 8 & 9, this must add to the frustration and resentment felt by many ex-servicemen. This supports the notion that military groups and society are inherently different in terms of interaction, language, communication, hierarchy and general rule setting.

cont.

Positive Steps

For the purpose of this research we will accept the idea that switching from two incompatible societies, with multiple personal and social identities clashing, could cause an identity crisis resulting in a host of problems faced by ex-servicemen. It is therefore important to re-view the data and identify any positive steps that could be made in order to prevent identity displacement.

The data has revealed that ex-servicemen and the members and workers of military charities and organisations are in desperate need of financial aid, and public and Governmental recognition. A good incentive to create less boundaries and exclusive behaviours from both sample groups would be to have more interaction and exposure to each other, to try and combat the ignorance viewed by the 'general public'. Also to give a sense of respect and belonging to ex-servicemen within their new community.

It has become apparent that no or little psychological help is offered pre, during or post-service, and alcohol and drugs are often condoned as an alternative. Perhaps a more in-depth psychological screening should be applied to all applicants, paying close attention to at risk-groups of PTSD (as mentioned previously). As servicemen are 'broken-down' and re-programmed it may not be an option to have counseling during-service, these people have a job to do that is beyond comprehension to a majority of people and perhaps counseling would prevent them from following orders. However as *Mr O* claimed - ex-servicemen should receive 'de-conditioning' in order to reintegrate back into society, currently they are left to fend for themselves. Studies on former child-soldier's rehabilitation indicate the success of a holistic and intense approach to re-programming before a child is sent back into the community (*Ovuga, Oyok & Moro, 2008*). Yet this is an extremely time consuming and expensive approach, as the rehab can take years of re-programming before the child is re-integrated. 13 out of the 14 participants joined one of the Forces between the ages of 15 - 19 yrs. old an idea could be to delay the age of combat to a latter age, an age where they may be able to cope better with the horrors that combat brings.

Although non of the participants of this study had spent time in prison, it is nonetheless a risk that many ex-servicemen face. From secondary data collection it has been accepted that prisons often fail typical inmates (especially short-term sentences). Ex-servicemen are twice failed as their actions are not viewed in the context of their past. Depending on the severity of the crime, it would seem more appropriate to suggest that ex-servicemen are placed in rehab centres.

The Armed Forces has a 'gang' like structure and is subject to a different set of rules than civil society; the actions of individuals are protected by the group status, protecting them from the experiences of mass violence and death. It could be suggested that like gang protocol, a member should never be allowed to leave the organisation. Perhaps by witnessing death and causing death to others a line has been crossed, one that may prevent some individuals from re-joining society; this may be from feelings of ultimate power or guilt. No individual should be forced into combat or the life of a serviceman if they wish to leave. However membership could still continue and other jobs that would be more suited to that individual could be found with the military organisation still delegating. They need not necessarily be military jobs, but by maintaining a military status this may protect both an ex-serviceman's self-esteem, sense of belonging and ultimately their personal and social identities. *Englehart's (2010)* report on ex-servicemen amputees who continue to work in a military environment supports this idea. He claims that amputees who work as 'casualties' on military training camps benefit from still being of use in their chosen profession, maintaining their peer-group position and thirdly it was found to be beneficial in enabling the men to come to terms with their loss of a limb.

To conclude, the findings from this study indicate firstly, that military organisations are not merely a sub-group of society but are a discrete and separate society. This has been determined by assessing structure, values, hierarchy, language and general rules. Secondly, the findings imply that ex-servicemen's mental health and well-being peaked during-service but post-service they found themselves worse off than their pre-service frame of mind. Thirdly, that it is feasible that an ex-serviceman's demise may be attributed to a shift or inner clash and conflict of identities.

An unexpected and interesting find was the discrepancy between the 'general public's' perception of societal importance and that of the 'ex-military' group. This highlights firstly the lack of communication and understanding between each group, but also what people view as 'facts'. Whilst the 'ex-military' group view the decline in status as catastrophic, it becomes evident that the 'general public' assume there is not a huge leap from being a 'soldier' to being 'unemployed', as can be viewed on *fig.1 pg.25 (Research Findings)*.

It is of great importance to know who we are, how we are perceived and what our purpose is in society. From the data collected it transpires that many ex-servicemen post-service find themselves in limbo. A lack of identity and self-worth could lead these individuals to deep unhappiness and to becoming potentially dangerous. Following on from this report it may be useful to further investigate the idea that a conflict and or loss of identity could attribute to all forms of 'deviant' behaviour in society, applying identity theories and criminal behaviour may prove beneficial to both areas.

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APPENDIX I

APPENDIX II