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There Is No Such Thing as an Ex-Marine:

Understanding the Psychological Journey of Combat Veterans

Melinda A. Morgan

A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Educational Specialist

Department of Graduate Psychology

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my research project to all former and current members of the armed forces of the United States who have given so much of themselves in service of our nation.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the support of my committee chair, Dr. Jack Presbury, as well as committee members, Dr. Renee Staton, and Dr. Lennie Echterling. Without your feedback and guidance I never would have been able to complete this project. I am so very appreciative of your backing and your willingness to assist me through the process of becoming a counselor. I would also like to thank my loving partner, Josh Fox. Your constant patience and encouragement allowed me to keep moving forward when I was ready to throw in the towel. I would like to further thank my dear friend, Julie Clay, whose insight, understanding, and well-timed reality checks helped me to believe in myself. Lastly, I would like to thank the former and current members of the military who so graciously shared their experiences with me and trusted me to understand.

Melinda A. Morgan

Preface

While descriptions in this paper are general enough to apply to all branches of the military, the majority of the research in this paper reflects experiences particular to the United States Army and Marines. Each branch of the military has its own term for members; however, the terms "recruit" and "soldier" are used throughout this paper to represent all trainees and military members. This paper also focuses solely on male service members and their experiences. The use of these terms and the single gender focus is for continuity and flow and is in no way meant to discount other military branches or the experiences of women in the military. Additionally, this paper cites personal communication with a former Marine and current soldier, which occurred via email on February 15, 2011 and February 23, 2011, respectively. All references of personal communication reflect the thoughts and experiences of these two anonymous individuals.

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Abstract

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have turned national attention to the prevalence of invisible wounds in service members returning from combat. This surge in mental health care needs has resulted in a shortage of mental health care providers in both military and veteran's hospitals (Barlas, 2007). Clinicians in the civilian sector have an opportunity to help address this shortage by taking on service members and veterans as clients; however, they need to be prepared to work with such a specialized population. The entire process of being part of the armed forces - from the decision to join, to the structure of training, to the excitement and tragedy of war - all must to be taken into consideration when preparing to work with a service member. The intent of this paper is to introduce civilian clinicians to military culture and to outline the psychological journey of combat service members. Additionally, current counseling practices and perspectives are reviewed to further assist civilian clinicians in their preparation to serve those who have served our country.

There Is No Such Thing as an Ex-Marine:

Understanding the Psychological Journey of Combat Veterans

Max was a Captain in the Army and had been a soldier for just under ten years.

He had been deployed to Kosovo once and to Iraq twice in the last five years. Max loved

his life in the Army. He felt he was fantastic at his job and he knew he was on the path of

a full military career. Even though he missed his family during his deployments, his pay

scale and genuine love of the job balanced out his time away from home. By Max's

second deployment to Iraq, the situation in the Middle East was less than desirable.

Max's position during this tour was to assist a commanding Colonel. This position

allowed Max a number of perks, but also put him in some very dangerous situations as

the insurgents were always looking to target high-ranking officials. Max took part in one

of the largest firefights in Iraq at the time and watched a number of emergency surgeries,

the worst of which involved trying to save four severely burned soldiers. Max shot and

killed a number of enemy combatants and watched a great many others die. Also, over

the course of his tour, Max's vehicle was blown up seven times.

When Max returned home from Iraq, he faced a new war. Within a few days of

arriving home, Max found that his wife had already leased an apartment for herself. As

the days unfolded, Max also discovered that his wife had squandered all of their savings,

liquidated a number of their retirement funds, fraudulently opened credit cards in his

name, and had not paid a single bill since he left almost a year before. His wife had

started a new relationship and had spent the majority of Max's deployment with this man,

while their children stayed with numerous babysitters. As hurtful and confusing as all of

this was, the worst part for Max was the restraining order his wife filed within days of his return. Max was not able to see or talk to his wife or his children for the next month.

As Max started putting the pieces of his life back together he was introduced to a woman, Sara, through an old friend. Although they lived states away, they decided to pursue a relationship. Max knew that remaining in the Army meant risking redeployment. He didn't feel comfortable leaving his son with his wife so he decided to leave the military and relocate with his son to be closer to Sara. Once they were in a position to see one another on a regular basis, Sara began to notice some things that she hadn't picked up on in their long distance correspondence. Max was on edge a lot. He seemed to have a very short temper and did not have much patience, especially if he felt like someone was doing or saying something stupid. Max also had terrible dreams and night sweats, and he was grinding his teeth into dust while he slept – the sound of which woke Sara up numerous nights. Max also became agitated in large crowds, drove in the middle of the road, refused to sit with his back to the door in a restaurant, used drugs and alcohol to calm his nerves, and was angry. He wasn't able to express to Sara many of the thoughts that were going through his head, but he was able to express disdain and say cruel, hurtful things. Although Max was not always kind, Sara felt like he had been damaged by the war and it wasn't his fault. Sara accepted disrespectful, unloving treatment because she thought if she could stick with him, he could be healed. After numerous arguments Max finally agreed to see a counselor. The counseling sessions seemed to help Max, but by that point their relationship was far too damaged to survive.

Following his time in the Army, Max's life seemed to fall apart – his wife left him, he became a single father, his house was foreclosed, he had to file bankruptcy, his

new relationship disintegrated and he was unemployed. His family and friends noted changes in his personality and people viewed him as unpredictable, angry and potentially dangerous. Four years after returning home from the war, the war within still raged on as Max tried to find stability and reestablish routine amid the mental chaos. From the outset Sara wanted to help Max, but she didn't have the knowledge or the tools to do so – love was not enough – and the relationship with Max ended up being a terrible, traumatic experience for her.

The story of Sara and Max leaves many questions for counselors. If the second-hand effect of combat could be so emotionally destructive, what must the first-hand effect be like? What must Max be going through internally? What are the psychological implications of war? Although these questions may not have definitive answers, having a fuller understanding of the culture of the military and the journey of the combat service member may help counselors in their efforts to establish rapport and conceptualize their clients.

Training

Motivation

According to statistics from the Department of Labor (2010-11), over 180,000 people make the decision to join active duty components of the U.S. military every year. The vast majority of these new recruits are young men in their late teens and early twenties. While there's no universal motivation to join, the military offers unique opportunities to learn self-discipline, structure and responsibility. In my experience working in a military high school, I found that the majority of students who went on to enlist did so because they felt their other options were limited and they were uncertain what else to do with themselves. According to Matthew Massing (2008), the majority of soldiers he interviewed cited financial security as the primary reason for enlisting. The military offers hefty signing bonuses as well as educational incentives, quality health care and good salaries. Young men, fresh out of high school, are hard pressed to find such benefits in other lines of work. In addition to financial gains, other frequently cited motivations for joining the military include the opportunity to travel, military family background, patriotism and the desire to escape a current situation (Hall, 2011). Regardless of background or motive for joining, all potential service members engage in the same acculturation process.

Resocialization

The psychological journey of the combat veteran begins with basic training. Each branch of the military has its own basic training course. The duration and extent of the training may vary but the underlying concepts are the same. Service members are groomed physically, mentally and emotionally to perform military duties in preparation

for combat. Every part of the training experience functions to meet these goals. Prior to arriving to basic training, recruits are given a specific list of items they are permitted to bring, which is typically limited to toiletries and two sets of civilian clothes. Personal items including books, magazines, electronics, framed photographs, etc. are not permitted ("Ten Steps," 2011). Recruits often realize the moment they step off of the bus and onto the base that their lives are about to change drastically. The concept of individuality is immediately squashed as recruits are issued uniforms, given haircuts, referred to by their last name only and instructed to remove the word "I" from their vocabulary. "Recruits refer to themselves in the third person…the third person doesn't suggest self-obsession, instead denoting its opposite. The Marines realize that the path to true self-esteem—to self-confidence and competence—runs through the obliteration of selfishness" (Lowry, 2004, p. 35).

Recruits are trained in units and perform tasks that strengthen group cohesion - one of the primary goals of the training experience. Recruits are often lined up in formations so tight that one recruit's toes are nearly touching the heels of the recruit in front of him. This unnaturally close formation gives the visual illusion of one giant mass rather than a group of individuals (Ricks, 1998). Daily room and uniform inspections promote attention to detail, encourage routine and serve as a gauge for overall level of compliance. Repeated drilling exercises further support the concept of moving as a unit and condition recruits to react to commands in a quicker, more efficient manner. Recruits also engage in repetitious weapons exercises that create automatic responses to handling, loading and adjusting their weapons. Mental toughness is built through rigorous physical exercise and expected compliance to leadership. When the recruit enters basic training he leaves

behind the sense of autonomy and independence that he was likely accustomed to.

> The military…will make it quite clear to him that he is owned for the full 24 hours of every day. To have any hope of understanding even part of what is happening, he falls into the knowledge that "he," in this new Army context, really means a set of appearances. He is to become an almost exact duplicate of a predetermined standard of behaviors, moves, codes of address, and uniformed clothing. Even what freedoms he enjoys will be only those that are predetermined. (Artiss, 2010, p. 260)

To further emphasize this loss of individual identity, punishment for mistakes or misbehavior is often doled out to the group rather than just the offender. Drill Instructors give orders in a timeframe that requires recruits to help one another in order to accomplish the task, which strengthens recruits' need to support one another for the betterment of the group. In training, recruits also learn to depend on their leadership. Leaders utilize "tough love" practices, which serve to separate the leaders as authority figures while simultaneously instilling respect and strengthening a recruit's ability to act in the face of fear. Following orders is of utmost importance in military culture. Instructors train recruits to respond to orders in an instant and without second thought. "When recruits are given seemingly pointless commands, there is a reason – to establish an absolute and unquestioning submission to authority" (Lowry, 2004, p. 34). This submission may be the difference between life and death on the battlefield.

While all of these training activities serve an extremely important purpose in a combat zone, they also challenge the very nature of human beings as Artiss (2010) explains:

(The recruit) will be made aware that he exists in the military as an occupier of a well-outlined slot. He will gradually come to recognize that the entire Army is made up of slots, just like those he is asked to inhabit, from top to bottom. Slots, he will come to know, are all there is. Each slot has a name, and the name of that slot will become part of his name. Sam Small is to be replaced by Private Samuel Small. Outside of that slot, he does not exist.

The slots will be parts of a totally arranged hierarchy. He may have sensed part of this in his previous employment, but here he will discover that slots are everything. He will become and exist as a slot. Uniqueness has no place at all, because here it means not fitting into one's slot. Being different has no currency. It simply means deviation and is not tolerated.

Perchance, he may notice that, socially, the Army is much like any other large organization except for the fact that its structure is so open. Sometime during the last half of his 13-week basic training stint, or at least in the first year of his new Army life, he will be seen to undergo a major change...He will stand straighter, swing along in exact rhythm with others, salute cleanly, enjoy and become precise in close-order drill, wear his uniform neatly, and in a host of other ways give evidence that he is successfully becoming a soldier. (p. 260)

The process of becoming a soldier demonstrates the desire of humans to become part of a group, which is absolutely necessary for successful military functioning. Recruits who do not fall in step are not permitted to continue on as a part of the military.

Another topic to consider when addressing the psychological journey of the combat soldier is the influence of age. As stated, most military recruits begin their training in

their late teens or early twenties. The frontal lobes of the brain are still developing during this age, which makes it an ideal time for training and instilling new concepts, values and responses. Dyer states, "…the most important qualities teenagers bring to basic training are enthusiasm and naïveté…(you) can take almost any young male civilian and turn him into a soldier with all of the right reflexes and attitudes in only a few weeks" (as cited in Grossman, 1995, p. 267). Young men at this age are also in a place of social transition as they depart from their daily lives as part of their family of origin. The desire to individuate and develop their masculinity coupled with the uncertainty of the wider world creates a natural appeal for the military. The military provides a social environment, which combines aspects of family, social groups, and employment. (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). The resocialization process of the military allows recruits to create a new persona, which is often based on respect, responsibility, pride, discipline and tradition. In many cases this new persona is a far cry from their former, youthful view of how to be in the world. An anonymous former Marine stated:

> (Military training) makes you very proud of how far you've come…of your own accomplishments. (You realize) how tough you really are, 'Yeah, look at us. We've all been through hell and made it.' It builds esprit de corps, which is unit cohesion and integrity. It emboldens you... I felt proud, arrogant, afraid (never told anybody), ready, unready, and willing to try it anyway. (Personal communication, February 15, 2011)

While timely military training enhances what are generally considered positive personality attributes, the opposite can be true in times of war. Accelerated training timelines, combat and multiple deployments can have a significant impact on a service

member's personality development and sense of self (Grossman, 1995).

Physical fitness is also central to the success of military members. Conditions in combat are less than desirable and it is necessary for recruits to have an understanding of what to expect and how to survive. Those recruits who cannot meet the physical health standards required cannot pass basic training. They would be a burden to the unit and a detriment to the mission in a combat situation. The rigorous physical demands also mentally push recruits to move beyond their assumed limits. Achieving physical goals that a recruit did not think was possible instills a sense of pride and determination.

Combat Exercises

Aside from the physical training and resocialization process, which typically happens during the first part of the basic training process, recruits are also introduced to combat exercises. The military has realized over time that the best way to train service members for combat is to replicate the combat experience in as much detail as possible. This simulated training experience is a far cry from the "bulls-eye" target practice soldiers received prior to World War II. Recruits suit up in full gear and practice shooting from foxholes or behind areas of cover at human shaped targets. Speed and accuracy are prized and hits earn immediate recognition and praise. Recruits who do not demonstrate skill in shooting are teased by peers and berated by instructors. The process of training recruits to shoot at human targets followed by positive reinforcement conditions recruits to kill without thought. Another important facet to this training is the concept of being directed to shoot. Recruits are trained to shoot only on command at specified targets. Shooting without command or shooting somewhere other than the specified targets results in immediate and severe punishment (Grossman, 1995).

Recruits also experience forms of desensitization as they move through their military training. Physical training desensitizes them to bodily responses such as soreness, fatigue and hunger as well as environmental factors including extreme temperatures, weather conditions, dirt and darkness. On a more psychological level, recruits are desensitized to the kill the enemy. Cadences - short rhymes or songs service members chant while participating in group training exercises -often include direct and indirect suggestions regarding expected military behavior or attitudes. This is perhaps illustrated best by a USMC sergeant in his description of running during physical training, "…every time your left foot hit the deck you'd have to chant 'kill, kill, kill, kill.' It was drilled into your mind so much that it seemed like when it actually came down to it, it didn't bother you" (Dyer, 1985, p. 121). Training also encourages recruits to separate themselves from the enemy by thinking of the enemy as objects rather than men. Derogatory nicknames such as "towel heads", "Hajis" and "sand niggers" dehumanize the enemy, which makes it easier to shoot a stranger. Euphemisms such as "engage" and "target" replace the words "kill" and "person" to add another level of separation (Grossman, 1995). The term "friendly fire" can also be considered euphemistic as it carries with it a different connotation than "fratricide."

Humans are taught through social, legal and religious doctrine from the time they are born that harming and killing others is wrong. For most, this concept has been thoroughly internalized and imprinted on one's soul. The bottom line of combat military training is to undo that thought process and reorganize it in a way that allows recruits to successfully complete their missions. As described by an anonymous former Marine:

Most Marine combat training takes what was not a natural response and makes it

natural. We call it "muscle memory." The idea is to have us automatically respond to certain external stimuli. If there is nearby fire, we assault through the objective. If there is indirect fire, we take cover. If we are being shot at from afar, take cover, suppress the fire, and assault through it. Individually, when you see a threat, raise a weapon to it accurately (muscle memory), assess quickly, and either shoot or don't shoot…all in the course of half a second. When the weapon jams, do thus and such. When the weapon runs empty, do X to reload it safely (muscle memory again). In terms of mental training, we are also trained to know how tough we actually are. The term is "train how you fight." The philosophy is that we gain a greater understanding of what we're able to tolerate and endure - so the shock of a combat zone isn't a shock but a gross, irritating inconvenience. We are trained to compartmentalize emotions, channel it all into anger, and direct that anger at an enemy. We are trained to do so remorselessly. In general, training toughens us, teaches us tactical prowess, and prepares us mentally for the rigors (and horrors) of a combat zone. (Personal communication, February 15, 2011)

The military would not be able to function without such mental deprogramming. However, no amount of training can fully prepare a recruit for the mental, physical and emotional toll of combat.

In Theater

Arriving

In documentaries such as *Restrepo* (Junger & Hetherington, 2010), soldiers demonstrate eagerness to experience war first hand. There is a level of excitement prior to arriving that is reminiscent of the anticipation of Christmas. For many soldiers, having the opportunity to participate in a firefight marks the culmination of months of readiness training and serves as an initiation or rite of passage into manhood. With the excitement and adrenaline of a firefight also comes a shift in perspective, especially in a volatile area. The reality of war and all of its ugliness becomes increasingly apparent as the weeks and months pass. Soldiers not only kill the enemy but they also face the challenges of environmental factors and boredom as well. This section addresses the psychological impact of these factors along with the effects of guerilla warfare and witnessing death and destruction.

Physiological factors and the Environment

In a war zone the physical environment is often the least of a soldier's worries; however, it's not something that should be overlooked. The enemy does not wait for soldiers to take a nap or have a full meal before engaging in combat. Soldiers are expected to be ready to take action at any time regardless of the conditions. In this way, training prior to combat is a major factor as it prepares soldiers for bodily reactions to extreme conditions. Junger, an American journalist embedded with an Army platoon in Afghanistan, notes that on the front lines sleep averages somewhere between four and six hours and does not necessarily occur at night (2010). Sleep is often light as the mind remains on high alert for signs of impending danger.

According to Grossman (1995), a lack of food also plays a significant role in the psyche of soldiers. Without proper nutrition soldiers become weak and their reaction times diminish, while on the flip side good food can boost morale. Other factors like extreme temperatures, lack of shower facilities and vermin also create psychologically challenging environments for soldiers on a day-to-day basis. As Junger (2010) notes:

Summer grinds on: A hundred degrees every day and tarantulas invading the living quarters to get out of the heat. Some of the men are terrified of them and can only sleep in mesh pup tents, and others pick them up with pliers and light them on fire. The timber bunkers at Phoenix (a U.S. military outpost in the Korengal valley of Afghanistan) are infested with fleas, and the men wear flea collars around their ankles but still scratch all day long.

First Squad goes thirty-eight days without taking a shower or changing their clothes, and by the end their uniforms are so impregnated with salt that they can stand up by themselves. The men's sweat reeks of ammonia because they've long since burned off all their fat and are now breaking down muscle. (p. 53)

Additionally, soldiers must constantly be aware of their surroundings and ready to react. This continuous activation of the fight or flight response leads to emotional exhaustion (Grossman, 1995). In contrast, "down-time" can also have negative consequences. For soldiers who spend more time on the forward operating base (FOB), consistent "down-time" can lead to complacency, which can be dangerous (Shaw & Hector, 2010). For active platoons "down-time" can provide respite, but it can also lead to boredom.

After one particularly quiet week – no firefights, in other words –the tension got so

unbearable that First Squad finally went after Weapons Squad with rocks…Men wound up bleeding and heated after these contests but never angry; the fights were a product of boredom, not conflict so they always stayed just this side of real violence. (Junger, 2010, p. 23)

Guerilla Warfare

Prior to the war in Vietnam, military forces had the advantage of knowing whom they were fighting against based on uniforms. At that time, the majority of all militaries throughout the world had their own distinct apparel that separated them from other militaries. In Roman times, uniforms demonstrated strength and authority and were designed to instill fear (Grossman, 1995). However, by the Vietnam era uniforms became less favorable with the opposition forces. Soldiers began to experience guerilla warfare, which consisted of sudden attacks by small groups of insurgents dressed as civilians. These ambushes changed military tactics drastically and also led to an increased sense of vigilance on the part of the soldiers.

The line between combatant and non-combatant has been significantly blurred, especially in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Grossman, 1995). Taliban and Al-Qaida members are virtually indistinguishable from civilians and as such, service members have significant difficulty knowing exactly who the enemy is. Additionally, most engagements, especially in Iraq, occur in urban or suburban areas where combatants more easily blend in. Along with the uncertainty of who might attack next comes the additional challenge of refraining from shooting civilians. Many of the current conflicts involve peacekeeping missions, which require soldiers to interact with civilians by bringing them supplies and rebuilding communities. This can be particularly mentally

stressful as there is no way of knowing if the person being helped may end up being the next attacker. Other ambush style war tactics such as the use of snipers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) also wear on the psyche of soldiers and keep them on high alert.

Bearing Witness and Group Cohesion

While one might be inclined to believe that bearing witness to carnage plays a significant role in the psychological aftermath of war, they are often not the images that catch a combat service member mentally off guard a on a random Tuesday. The real issue of bearing witness seems to come in when a soldier is unable to help the mortally wounded and all he can do is watch it happen and wait for it to be over. As discussed in the section on training, the importance of looking out for fellow soldiers becomes deeply ingrained. Soldiers are trained to respond in an instant:

> Stripped to its essence, combat is a series of quick decisions and rather precise actions carried out in concert with ten or twelve other men…The choreography…requires that each man make decisions based not on what's best for him, but on what's best for the group. If everyone does that, most of the group survives. If no one does, most of the group dies… (Junger, 2010, p. 120)

Knowing that a soldier's actions affect fellow soldiers makes every decision that much more intentional and consequential.

Soldiers are willing to give their lives for one another for the benefit of the group. Personal bonds exist, but the bonds of unit cohesion and each doing their own part to take care of the larger group are paramount. For many, watching a fellow soldier die is a blaring indicator that they failed their own mission - they did not do their job as a soldier and they let the group down. It is through this mentality that one's own life becomes less

important than the lives of their comrades. This is the foundation of selfless service, which is a key military principle.

> Combat fog obscures your fate—obscures when and where you might die—and from that unknown is born a desperate bond between the men. That bond is the core experience of combat and the only thing you can absolutely count on. The Army might screw you and your girlfriend might dump you and the enemy might kill you, but the shared commitment to safeguard one another's lives is unnegotiable and only deepens with time. The willingness to die for another person is a form of love that even religions fail to inspire, and the experience of it changes a person profoundly. (Junger, 2010, p. 239)

Soldiers are trained to respond without question to commands and to do their part in protecting the unit – they learn to display unwavering faith to their commanders. Leaders, on the other hand, have the same basic training but also are tasked with making decisions and calling the shots. They are responsible for the group in a way that surpasses the responsibility of the individual soldier and as such can lead to profound psychological difficulties in the event of a fallen soldier. SGT Brendan O'Byrne reflected, "…when Steiner got shot I realized I might not be able to stop (my men) from getting hurt, and I remember just sitting there, trembling. That's the worst thing ever: to be in charge of someone's life" (as cited in Junger, 2010, p. 196). Feeling responsible for the life of another is an intense psychological weight that often has a lasting impact. Even when soldiers know on a cognitive level that the death of a fellow soldier was not their fault and likely couldn't have been prevented, they often can't escape the emotional guilt of surviving. "The guilt and trauma associated with failing to fully support men who are

bonded with friendship and camaraderie on this magnitude is profoundly intense. Every soldier and every leader feels this guilt to one degree or another…the guilt can be traumatic" (Grossman, 1995, p. 89). The "what-ifs" of combat can become incapacitating in the aftermath.

Killing

It goes without saying that one of the main facets of war is killing; however, there is limited research available on the impact of killing on a soldier's psyche. Army psychiatrist and retired Colonel Harry Holloway summed it up as a hesitation on the Army's behalf to label its heroes as psychological casualties because it runs the risk of pathologizing a necessary experience (as cited in Baum, 2004). It is counterproductive for the military to take into consideration or over-emphasize the psychological impact of killing because the job of the soldier is to kill. Regardless, it doesn't negate the fact that killing, in any circumstance, has consequences. One of the most commonly asked questions returning combat soldiers face from the civilian population is, "did you kill anyone?" Those who have, hate the question. An anonymous former Marine put it this way, "it's grossly inappropriate, frankly. It's asking us to aggrandize the one thing that most traumatized the combatant - despite great training" (personal communication, February 15, 2011).

As a population, we are taught from a young age that taking the life of another human being is wrong on all levels - social, religious and legal. Society views killers as deranged, sick and dangerous. Killers are bad and must be removed from society and punished for their actions. That basic cultural view permeates deep into the human psyche and often becomes a personal value. When soldiers go off to war and their job

becomes the antithesis of their deeply seated belief, the result is psychological dissonance.

> Dan Knox…figures that his moral upbringing not only got him into a war but also left him disabled by it…Knox's infantry suffered huge casualties, but what bothers him most, more than three decades later, is not the fear, the carnage he witnessed, or the loss of friends but the faces of the people he killed while serving as a helicopter door gunner. (Baum, 2004, p. 5)

In his research, Grossman (1995) found that one of the biggest factors impacting the psychological "after burn" of killing is distance. The further someone is away from his target, the easier it is to kill. Distance appears to have some psychologically protective function, which allows the soldier to further depersonalize or dehumanize the enemy. There is an urban myth that the pilot of the Enola Gay, the plane used to drop the atom bomb, committed suicide after he dropped the bomb because he couldn't cope with the resulting devastation and suffering. His actions alone killed between 70,000 and 100,000 people; however, upon his actual death at age 92, Paul Tibbets expressed no regrets for dropping the bomb (Grant, 2007).

In instance after instance, Grossman (1995) illustrates the relative psychological ease with which pilots drop bombs or missiles that result in mass casualties. The true horror of killing seems to come with close range combat, which is what makes the current wars in Iraq and to a lesser degree, Afghanistan, so psychologically traumatizing. Soldiers are trained to dehumanize the enemy – to think of them as lesser – but this dehumanization practice becomes increasingly challenging when a soldier is close enough to look in the enemy's eyes. Humans break the language barrier through facial

expressions. Feelings of happiness, pain, fear and hatred can be recognized almost universally, based on facial expressions (Ekman, 1993). Killing at a close range includes the experience of witnessing these facial expressions and makes the action intensely personal. Close range killing also eliminates the possibility that someone or something else actually caused the death. The closer to the target, the more certain a soldier is that he killed someone. Watching someone die is difficult; accepting responsibility is life altering. Guerilla warfare adds the additional challenge of determining whether the enemy is truly the enemy or an innocent civilian. Soldiers don't want to kill the innocent, but showing mercy runs the risk of that person returning to cause some sort of harm or death to other soldiers.

Not all soldiers have difficulty coming to terms with killing, which is an important concept to keep in mind (Grossman, 1995). Also, some soldiers only realize their difficulty years and even decades later. Soldiers have been trained to do a job, and in combat that job is to kill the enemy. Understanding their actions through the lens of doing their job may be experienced as absolution. According to Major Peter Kilner, a former West Point philosophy professor, soldiers need to believe that "killing in war is morally justifiable, and that military leaders should impress this justification on their soldiers. This may help protect their long-term mental health, and it also readies them for combat" (as cited in Baum, 2004, p. 3). Other protective factors may include group cohesion/support, personal moral beliefs and the role of self-defense.

<center>**Reintegration**</center>

The Familiar Becomes Unfamiliar

Soldiers returning from combat face a number of challenges. The reintegration process is often much more difficult than the deployment process. Soldiers spend months to years training for combat. Through an intensive basic training program, service members are socialized into the military culture and are encouraged to leave some fundamental personal beliefs behind (Ricks, 1998). They are mentally restructured to think like a soldier, react like a soldier, and behave like a soldier. The military culture permeates all aspects of their life – they are soldiers twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As such, being a soldier takes on much more meaning than a job in the civilian world; it becomes part of their identity. As stated previously, most new soldiers enter the service right out of high school, so their first experience of the "real world" is through the lens of the military. Generally, to be successful in the military soldiers must fully integrate military values into their daily lives. The structure of the military is linear and hierarchical and logical. Young soldiers have very specific expectations and their days, especially during training, are routine.

Soldiers become hard-wired to follow orders and only do things when they are instructed or if they have permission, which leaves little room for autonomy. They are told when to get up, when to go to bed, when to eat, when to exercise and when to work. They are also taught to separate their family lives from their military work lives, which is challenging because of how integrated the military is in the soldier's identity. Soldiers are taught to compartmentalize their emotions. Having a "meltdown" in the middle of a firefight will compromise the mission, so those fears and reactions must be contained and

dealt with at a later, safer time.

Military protocols are an absolute necessity for life in the military. They keep the soldier and his comrades alive and they win wars. Yet, they don't translate well in the civilian sector and can pose a challenge for a soldier in his transition process. Given the amount of time the military spends training and socializing, it would seem reasonable to think that reversing the process might be necessary; however, at this point the military doesn't provide "un-training." In the words of an anonymous former Marine:

> We've made great warriors, but we don't do so well with 'un-making' them. Combat training has been fine-tuned to be superb - resulting in the creation of great, fierce, lethal warriors…but…we don't 'undo' that thinking/mentality/ethos very well, so we have a generation of young men and women who come back and feel dreadfully adrift in life. What they once used to determine their purpose as human beings no longer means a thing. It's easy to go to war, but very hard to come home. (Personal communication, February 15, 2011)

Soldiers returning from a combat zone generally have, at most, a two-week period between being on the front line and walking into the living room. In many cases soldiers are only given travel time to debrief, although this is currently changing as post-deployment stress programs are instituted. Unfortunately, soldiers are often anxious to get home and pay little attention to post deployment programs and questionnaires. Many answer the questions in ways that will get them to their family and friends quicker, rather than truthfully. Also, in the excitement of returning the horrors of war may momentarily take a backseat to the elation of being around loved ones in a familiar setting.

The Ambiguous Civilian World

Once the excitement dies down and the honeymoon period ends, the real challenge begins. For soldiers who are exiting the military, this time marks a drastic change. Through their time in the military, soldiers become accustomed to the services the military provides and they begin to define themselves based on their rank and job. Their sense of worth is derived from their ability to do their job well and move up in rank. The differences between doing a good job and doing a poor job are clearly defined and everything makes sense. Expectations are spelled out, orders are given, boundaries are set and consequences are certain. In a combat zone, things may not make the same kind of sense emotionally, but pragmatically they make more sense. Every movement has a consequence, every decision a reaction, and nothing is mundane. "A simple act of carelessness can cause the death of an entire unit and after living with that perspective it can be hard to return to civilian life, where almost nothing has lasting consequences" (Junger, 2010, p. 161).

Many combat soldiers return to civilian life with an air of disbelief and disdain. People's problems seem petty, people's actions seem audacious, things are loose and open to interpretation and everyone seems to take everything for granted (Powers, 2010). Newly discharged veterans also sorely miss the sense of camaraderie. They go from being in a situation where everyone's primary goal is to look out for one another and the group to a situation of relative isolation and autonomy. It can be a difficult and scary transition as Junger (2010) notes:

> O'Byrne is also worried about being alone. He hasn't been out of earshot of his
>
> platoonmates for two years and has no idea how he'll react to solitude. He's never

had to get a job, find an apartment, or arrange a doctor's appointment because the

Army has always done those things for him. All he's had to do is fight. And he's

good at it, so leading a patrol up 1705 causes him less anxiety than, say, moving to

Boston and finding an apartment and a job. He has little capacity for what civilians

refer to as "life skills"; for him, life skills literally keep you alive. Those are far

simpler and more compelling than the skills required at home. (p. 232)

Learning how to become part of the civilian world again is far more challenging and

frightening than many realize. Practically speaking, veterans can also have difficulty

integrating into the job market. A military resume can look vastly different than a

civilian resume and awards and honors that may be a sure-fire path to promotion in the

military are often overlooked in the civilian sector. Also, many soldiers entered the

military straight out of high school and have little in the way of civilian job experience.

They are new to the resume writing and interviewing process, which can negatively

impact their ability to market themselves to future employers (Driscoll, 2006). This may

not seem to be an overwhelming psychological hurdle, but when one considers how

central a soldier's MOS (military occupational specialty) or job was to their identity and

sense of self, it's easier to see how not finding employment could be mentally defeating.

In the military they had a job - a job they were good at – and their actions were viewed as

accomplishments, which instilled pride and self worth.

Who Am I?

Through a civilian lens, combat seems horrific – an unbearably awful ordeal that no

one would want to experience, much less re-experience. Soldiers see it differently, and

that can be a hard concept for civilians to grasp. Combat provides an adrenaline rush that

can have a drug-like effect. Extreme sports such as skydiving and rafting provide rushes, but according to soldiers it's nothing compared to the feeling of surviving a firefight.

> (War) is insanely exciting, The machinery of war and the sound it makes and the urgency of its use and the consequences of almost everything about it are the most exciting things anyone engaged in war will ever know…war is life multiplied by some number that no one has ever heard of. In some ways twenty minutes of combat is more life than you could scrape together in a lifetime of doing something else. (Junger, 2010, p. 144)

Some soldiers can't escape the pull of that sort of rush, especially if their experience isn't marred by the painful loss of fellow soldiers. From that perspective, it's understandable how seducing the combat experience could be.

Leaving the military is a bittersweet experience for many soldiers. An anonymous former Marine commented, "As much as I was proud of my service and found it an interesting adventure, it was extremely taxing mentally, emotionally, and physically." (personal communication, February 15, 2011). Combat tours take a lot out of soldiers and for many, exiting the military is a matter of necessity and not preference. A vast majority of combat soldiers love what they do. It provides them with an unparalleled sense of purpose and fulfillment.

> Combat is the smaller game that young men fall in love with, and any solution to the human problem of war will have take into account the psyches of these young men. For some reason there is a profound and mysterious gratification to the reciprocal agreement to protect another person with your life, and combat is virtually the only situation in which that happens regularly. These hillsides are

where the men feel…most utilized. The most necessary. The most clear and

certain and purposeful. If young men could get that feeling at home, no one would

ever want to go to war again. (Junger, 2010, p. 234)

Family Reunion

Reintegration can also be problematic for married soldiers who leave their families

behind for months at a time. When a soldier is deployed his family must learn to function

independently, which inevitably leads to changes. The spouse at home becomes a single

parent, as all of the responsibilities that were once divided between two fall on the

shoulders of one. Rituals and rules may shift and the spouse at home may develop a

sense of autonomy as a result. While deployed, the soldier may experience feelings of

guilt around being away from the family. The homecoming period is often filled with

excitement and anticipation as well as anxiety. Generally, the family has successfully

adapted to life without the soldier, which can complicate the reintegration process.

Soldiers may feel like strangers in their own home given missed milestones, the changes

that have occurred in family dynamics, as well as possible physical changes in their

spouse and children. Young children may not recognize their soldier parent upon their

initial return. Older children may display lingering feelings of abandonment.

On a spousal level, intimacy and sexual relations are likely to be issues. After

months without physical contact with one another, re-engaging sexually is likely to be

awkward for both spouses. It may also be difficult to re-establish the emotional bonds

the couple shared prior to deployment (Pincus, House, Christenson & Adler, 2004). Each

spouse may also have certain expectations or ideas of how life will be once the soldier

returns – often those fantasies don't translate into reality, which can be hard to come to

terms with. Similar to the experience of the single soldier, married soldiers have to learn to function in a setting that is vastly different from the combat zone.   On top of the environmental and social change, soldiers have to simultaneously reintegrate their mind and shift their perspective. More and more often, this obstacle is too great for the returning soldier. They cannot reconcile their experiences in combat with their civilian life and their marriage or relationship becomes another casualty of war.

Escaping the Thoughts

It doesn't take long for returning soldiers to realize something is different.   It usually occurs within the first few days, after the honeymoon period is over and life goes back to "normal." With no one telling them where to be or what to do and no immediate danger, soldiers are left with their own thoughts. Thoughts, however, seem to be just what returning soldiers try to escape. Upon return to civilian life, many soldiers find themselves stuck in an existential crisis. The experience of war leaves them with a sense of emptiness; they struggle to make sense of what they witnessed and continually contemplate how the world continues to exist in spite of the horrors of which they were a part. Anger and rage often accompanies this lack of understanding, and soldiers find themselves resenting the civilian population that did not share their experience (Junger 2010).

Depending on the level of group cohesion and a soldier's overall view of himself and the military, additional questions of self worth may come into play after leaving the military. As an anonymous former Marine stated:

> We have reduced confidence in our own humanity. Our lives really aren't that
>
> important to us. We're numbers. Boots on the ground. Crunchies. Fighters.

Legs, etc. We're nobodies. We train up, we go, we die and that's the end of it.

We no longer see ourselves as sacred human beings. Ever wonder why veterans

are so profoundly more likely to take their own lives? (Personal Communication,

February 15, 2011)

Many soldiers turn to drugs and alcohol in an attempt to numb or avoid their feelings.

Given all of the available substances, alcohol seems to be the primary substance of abuse

for veterans. In 1999, 68% of veterans seeking treatment for substance abuse reported

alcohol as their substance of choice (DASIS Report, 2001). The current war has seen a

rise in post-deployment alcohol abuse rates, especially in members of the National Guard.

According to researchers, 53.6% of surveyed Reserve or National Guard members

reported binge drinking following deployment. For active duty members, 26.6% reported

new-onset binge drinking (Jacobson, et al., 2008). For some, substance abuse is used to

suppress bad memories, for others good. O'Byrne notes:

Combat is such an adrenaline rush. I'm worried I'll be looking for that when I get

home and if I can't find it I'll just start drinking and getting in trouble. People

back home think we drink because of the bad stuff, but that's not true…we drink

because we miss the good stuff. (As cited in Junger, 2010, p. 232)

Regardless of the motivation, substance abuse is another obstacle for many returning

combat veterans.

The Reality of Stigma

If so many soldiers are facing so many difficulties during, between and after

deployments, why aren't they seeking help? One of the major barriers soldiers face when

dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues is stigma. Soldiers are trained to

be both physically and mentally strong. They are entrusted with weapons and classified information, and it is their job to make sound judgments, maintain the safety of their fellow soldiers, and protect the nation. Furthermore, if a soldier admits to having psychological problems, he runs the risk of losing his rank and being viewed as unstable. This is a major dilemma for active duty soldiers who would like assistance but are afraid to ask for help. Veterans, on the other hand, do not run the same risk, but they still fight against the stigma of weakness. Asking for help represents a loss of control, which correlates with weakness in the minds of many former solders. Veterans can have a hard time admitting to that they may have a problem because they do not want to be viewed as weak.

The concept of stigma can be viewed from two vantage points – public stigma and self-stigma. Both perspectives can create considerable barriers to treatment. If a soldier fears what his superiors or others might think of him, he will be likely to avoid seeking help. Similarly, if a soldier believes that his mental health issues are his fault because they result from character flaws such as weakness, shame or inferiority, he is also less likely to seek treatment (Wright et al., 2009). The irony of the situation around stigma is that those who are suffering from some sort of mental health concern are twice as likely as other soldiers to fear stigmatization (Britt, Greene-Shortridge, & Castro, 2007). In essence, those who need the help most are the least likely to seek treatment. In the military, public stigma seems to be particularly prevalent. In the movie *Patton* (Caffey, McCarthy & Schaffner, 1970), Gen. Patton berates a soldier who is seeking treatment for "nerves" – he denies this soldier treatment, calls him yellow and a coward and sends him back to the front line. This cinematic perspective captures the traditional spirit of the

military. Psychological disorders are viewed as controllable and individuals who are seen as responsible for their disorders are often met with reactions of anger and disdain (Britt, Greene-Shortridge & Castro, 2007).

Outwardly, the military appears to be making strides in addressing stigma and changing the perception of mental health concerns. Programs and other mental stress training initiatives are being implemented to head off mental health problems before they start (Cary, 2009). However, changing an entire culture can be a formidable task. As an anonymous former Marine states:

> (Stigma) exists, it's real, and it hasn't gone away - despite what they keep telling us. Get seen for (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and people will say you're weak, you're defeated, or you're a wimp. You're a coward. Your countenance diminishes if you're a leader; your peers think less of you if you're a trooper. It's damaging personally and professionally. It probably won't ever go away, either. (Personal communication, February 15, 2011)

Considering these words, the implications of stigma must continue to be acknowledged and addressed.

Characteristic Injuries of Recent Wars

We have made great strides in military technology over the years and have been able to protect our soldiers from receiving many terminal injuries in the line of duty. Thanks to improvements in body armor and vehicle design, soldiers are surviving experiences that at one time would have led to certain death. However, minimizing casualties has also come at a cost. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have produced numerous wounded warriors whose injuries are invisible to the naked eye. These wars

have also seen an unprecedented pace of deployments with longer deployment cycles, shorter periods of time between deployments and multiple redeployments almost certain (RAND, 2008).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder seems to be one of the characteristic injuries of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As such, there is a substantial amount of research available in the study of PTSD. Given the prevalence of PTSD diagnoses, it is important for clinicians to keep in mind the criteria for PTSD when diagnosing returning war veterans. According to studies approximately 14 percent of returning service members screen positive for PTSD (RAND, 2008), which indicates the vast majority of combat soldiers will not meet the criteria for PTSD. However, many will still struggle with combat-related stressors that fall closely in line with the criteria. Conceptualizing the soldier's experience on a continuum between adjustment and trauma stress is integral in differentiating between PTSD and adjustment issues related to combat stress.

TBI is another common injury of the recent wars. Improvised explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenades are the weapons of choice for the insurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These devices cause explosions that leave soldiers with blast injuries of which they may be totally unaware. Research in the area of brain injury is still relatively young and physicians and scientists are still learning about its impact on overall functioning. There are currently no screening instruments available that can reliably make a TBI diagnosis where there is no open wound. Also, a number of studies have shown that mild TBI has similar symptoms to PTSD, making differential diagnosis difficult (Summerall, 2007). Clinicians working with war veterans should be aware of a TBI diagnosis and take such a diagnosis into consideration when treatment planning.

Working with Military Populations

Recognizing Culture

As stated, the military has a culture of its own. There are beliefs, norms and practices specific and unique to the military way of life. Yet, many current texts on multicultural competencies do not include military populations (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2009; Lee, Blando, Mizelle, & Orozco, 2007; Sue & Sue, 2008; Erickson-Cornish, Schreier, Nadkarni, Metzger, & Rodolfa, 2010; Vacc, DeVaney, & Brendel, 2003). As such, counselors may not recognize the importance of cultural awareness when working with members the military. Many soldiers are weary of therapy and are hesitant to buy into the process. It is up to the counselor to establish rapport, which can be difficult if the counselor does not demonstrate any cultural awareness or understanding. Counselors planning on working with this population should consider investing time into learning military lingo, hierarchies and protocols, at the minimum.

As previously stated, a soldier's basic sense of self revolves around his rank and military occupational specialty (MOS). Appendixes A and B respectively outline the rank structure for enlisted service members and officers. Having a general understanding of rank structure, the chain of command and specializations may give the counselor some immediate insight on their client's experiences and worldview. Considering both age and rank can help a clinician determine years of service, the likelihood of prior work experience, and the probability of combat exposure (Reger, Etherage, Reger, & Gahm, 2008). Having knowledge of a client's rank can also factor into what a clinician may expect along the lines of initial rapport. Enlisted service members may respond differently than officers in the counseling room based on their interpretation of the role

and rank of the clinician – military clinicians always have an officer rank, which may impact how comfortable an enlisted service member is in sharing personal concerns (Hall, 2011). Officers and other higher ranking service members may also experience elevated levels of concern with stigma and may prefer to forego the use of their rank in clinical settings to limit their exposure in the waiting room (Reger et al., 2008).   It benefits clinicians to be aware of these nuances, as well as other cultural behaviors such as seemingly extreme politeness and a hesitance to open up and be fully forthcoming with emotions, so as not to misinterpret or pathologize them.

The military is notorious for its use of acronyms and colloquialisms, which become regular vocabulary for most soldiers and will certainly be brought into the counseling room. If a counselor doesn't understand the terms a client is using the counselor must risk disturbing the flow of the conversation to ask for clarification. While in most cases clarification is a minor disruption, it can also affect the client's perception of the credibility of the clinician, which can then impact treatment outcomes and compliance (Reger et al., 2008). Appendix C lists some commonly used acronyms and terms.

Military training works to separate reactions from emotions and suppress autonomy in favor of the group. These heavily ingrained principles can prove challenging in the counseling environment as they are counter to the basic premise of counseling. Counselors must recognize this conflict of ideals and work with the soldier to integrate the seeming incongruities. It is also important to recognize overarching belief systems held by members of the military.

Many of the beliefs that are common in the Army culture are based on a shared understanding that the Army's mission is to provide national defense. There are a

number of basic cultural beliefs that appear related to this common understanding: the mission is of utmost importance; serving in the Army requires personal sacrifices; anyone who joins the Army should be ready to fight; personality characteristics that are adaptive for fighting are valued; characteristics that could put other team members at risk are devalued. These beliefs and their corollaries may have significant implications for the professional services and experiences of the civilian psychologist. (Reger et al., 2008)

Counseling techniques also need to be evaluated and adapted depending on the service member's employment status. Active duty service members will likely have differing needs and objectives than veterans.

While it is important that civilian counselors convey a level of understanding and competence in working with military populations, counselors should also be careful to not assume too much knowledge. Every service member comes into the counseling room with his own individual set of experiences and beliefs. Displaying too much knowledge or understanding can discount individual experiences and convey to the service member that the counselor has preconceived notions or assumptions. A service member may immediately discredit a civilian counselor who implies knowing or understanding his experience. As with any client, finding the balance between being empathic and competent is important. Many service members also worry that their thoughts, actions and reactions are abnormal in the civilian world and they fear that their civilian counselor will view them in a particular light. As an anonymous former Marine expressed:

It is always a fear that a civilian counselor will presume that you're insane, that you're a cold-blooded killer, etc - merely because of military terminology, because

we are - at our core - trained to kill the enemy, etc. We're afraid that we're

presumed murderers or just horrible people (and)…they'll be afraid of us, turn us in,

report us, etc. A military counselor, however, at least understands the warrior

philosophy and mentality. (Personal communication, February 15, 2011)

This statement alone demonstrates the importance of cultural understanding.

Counseling Approaches

There are numerous counseling approaches to working with combat stress issues.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and its derivatives have the most empirically based

evidence for success and are supported by the Department of Defense as appropriate

treatment modalities. These treatments include Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Cognitive

Processing Therapy and Stress Inoculation Training. Eye movement desensitization

reprocessing (EMDR) is also empirically supported as an effective method of working

with trauma victims. In EMDR a clinician uses an eight-step process in which talk

therapy is utilized while simultaneously having the client engage in specific eye

movements. This method suggests that the eye movement in conjunction with the

recounting of memories creates a dual attention stimulus that allows the client to

dissociate specific feelings from specific memories and forge new, positive or adaptive

connections with those memories (Shapiro, 2001). Additional non-traditional therapies,

including acupuncture and Yoga Nidra, are being utilized as complementary treatments

with some success; however research documenting their effectiveness has been limited

(PTSD, n.d.).

Group therapy has also been a popular and successful form of treatment when

working with service members. In group settings service members can feel supported by

others who are going through similar situations or have similar feelings. An anonymous active duty soldier explained:

> The group setting was good because everyone there understands a lot of what you are saying or trying to say. Sometimes when you can't really explain something and you are trying to describe feelings, the others typically, completely understand. It's just good to know that you're not the only one feeling that way. (Personal Communication, February 23, 2011)

Group therapy also fits well with the ethos of the military in that service members are there for one another. In goal directed or structured groups, the outline of the program can mimic other types of training the service member has experienced, which can feel familiar and less stigmatizing than pure talk therapy (Castellana, 2008). There are some challenges, however, that are inherent in a group therapy setting. Service members may be more hesitant to fully disclose their concerns when in a group. The fear of appearing weak can be especially troubling when group members are of mixed rank. Groups can also be difficult to form depending on location. Civilian therapists may have trouble attracting enough members if they are located in a rural area away from military bases and installations.

Regardless of theoretical orientation and treatment models it is important to listen to the service member first and foremost. The approach to treatment should be based upon individual needs and constraints. Active duty service members may be time limited in their availability to engage in treatment, while veterans may have more flexibility in the length and duration of treatment. Research has also shown that younger service members appear to be more susceptible to traumatic stress injuries, which should be

considered in treatment planning (Nash, n.d.).

 Clinicians must also be able to distinguish between common post-deployment adjustment problems and traumatic stress injuries, including PTSD. Almost all service members return from combat and face some difficulties reintegrating back into the civilian world; however, these difficulties are not indicators of sustained traumatic stress injuries and should not be pathologized. Aggression, substance abuse and emotional numbing are all examples of typical reactions to combat and while they can be distressing for the service member and his family and friends, these reactions act as an emotional scab. It is also important to keep in mind that a typical reaction doesn't mean that a service member doesn't need treatment and support. For these service members, family support and counseling can ease the transition and help the service member process his experience (Lighthall, 2010).

Determining where a service member falls on the traumatic stress-adjustment continuum is important. According to Clymer (2010), giving a diagnosis such as PTSD can send the message that a service member has been damaged and therefore has a reason for his actions, which negates the concept of resilience and self-efficacy. Diagnosing can create an avenue for the service member to stay stuck and view himself as a victim rather than a survivor who has the ability to reestablish control and balance in his life.

For service members who do return from combat with traumatic stress injuries, which occur when stress is too intense or lasts too long, prolonged symptoms of trauma, fatigue and grief are present. According to Nash (n.d.), damage has been done to the brain system and the brain has made allostatic shifts to compensate for the damage. New set points were created to allow for neurotransmission, which was adaptive at the time of

the stressor. Once out of the stress situation the brain usually returns to its original set points, but this is not the case for those experiencing traumatic stress injuries. On a psychosocial level traumatic stress injuries also compromise a person's belief system and self-esteem.

Clinicians working with traumatic stress injuries need to be especially sensitive to military culture and individual identity as they help the service member make meaning of their experience and learn to function in the civilian world. Combat elicits a wide variety of emotional responses both during and after contact and while each encounter is unique the one thing that is universal is that service members are invariably changed by their combat experiences.

Conclusion

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have set the stage for a dramatic increase in the need for mental health care in military populations. That need appears to be surpassing the available workforce in both active duty and veteran facilities. Civilian clinicians are needed to bridge that gap so that no current or former service member in need of support goes without treatment. In order for civilian clinicians to effectively work with this population they must have a basic understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the combat soldier. This understanding includes the significance of training, the impact of war and the military culture as a whole. The experience of combat inevitably changes people. Clinicians are needed to help service members make meaning of their experiences, find peace with their new way of being in the world and accept their change as part of the journey of the warrior.

Appendix

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Military Acronyms and Expressions (Alvey, 2011; OCS, 2006)

ACU – Army Combat Uniform
ASAP - As Soon As Possible (pronounced "Ay-Sap"; sometimes as initials) Meaning: "Now, dangit!"
AWOL - Absent Without Official Leave More commonly known today as UA
CO - Commanding Officer
DD or DoD - Department of Defense
DFAC - Dining Facility (Mess Hall or Cafeteria)
DS - Drill Sergeant; an NCO that teaches new recruits in Basic Combat Training; only the most qualified NCOs are chosen to attend Drill Sergeant School
FOB – Forward Operating Base
FTX - Field Training Exercise
GI - Government Issue; originally used for government supplied equipment, often sardonically used by soldiers to refer to themselves
IBA - Individual Body Armor; Kevlar vest
IED – Improvised Explosive Devices
MOS - Military Occupational Specialty—formal job classification, usually expressed as a number or number/letter combination—e.g. 11B Infantryman
MP - Military Police
MRE - Meal Ready to Eat; portable meals in a plastic bag, made to last for years without going bad; consist of about 1500-3000 calories; some are better than others
NCO - Non-Commissioned Officer: an enlisted person with command responsibility over soldiers of lesser rank; a corporal (grade E4) or any grade of sergeant (grades E5 - E9);
OBC - Officer Basic Course
OCS - Officer Candidate School
POV - Privately-Owned Vehicle, a soldier's personal automobile
PT - Physical Training Although in the plural (PT's), it means the PT Uniform
PX - Post eXchange A multi-purpose store, which usually includes a barbershop and a convenience store
RPG – Rocket Propelled Grenade (a.k.a. – bazooka)
UA - Unauthorized Absence
XO - Executive Officer (officer second to CO)

Slang Acronyms

BCG - Birth Control Glasses/Goggles This acronym refers to the standard issue glasses
ETA - Estimated Time of Arrival
SNAFU - Situation Normal, All Fouled Up
FRAGO – Fragmented Order: a hasty or sudden change or amendment to a previous order
FUBAR – Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition

Non-Acronym Expressions

Ate up - something that's messed up or not up to the standard ("You're all ate up, soldier!"); also known "chewed up" or "jacked up"

Blue Falcon - someone or something that screws others over to elevate themselves

Cadre - a small group of trained professionals that is the nucleus of a larger group; in basic training parlance it generally refers to the drill sergeants of a training company

Chalk – the personnel and equipment that make up the load of an aircraft

Chow – food; often consumed in a Chow Hall

Civys – Civilian clothing and/or apparel

Cover – military headgear of any type

Dropped – an Army or Air Force term used to describe punishment by physical training (usually push-ups)

Fireguard - overnight desk duty for your bay (the room where your platoon sleeps in the barracks); generally an hour in length and rotates among the men; a historical term that described the duty assigned to soldiers to maintain and keep an eye on the campfires while the rest of the men slept

Flash Bang – an explosive device that emits noise and light but is not intended to cause damage

Fobbit – a soldier or other person stationed at a secure FOB; (hence) a person who is reluctant or afraid to leave a military base

Fourth Point of Contact – term for the rump, buttocks

Gig line - visual straight line on uniforms formed by the jacket (actually a shirt), the brass belt buckle, and the fly of the pants

Grade - pay grade of a soldier, currently E1-E9 for enlisted personnel, W1-W4 for warrant officers, O1-O10 for commissioned officers; each grade may translate to several ranks; i.e., Grade E4 may be a corporal (command position) or specialist (non-command)

High Speed - a squared-away and highly motivated soldier; often used sarcastically when a Soldier is motivated but doesn't really know what he's doing- as in "Slow down High Speed"

Hot Wash – a performance review, particularly after a training exercise or combat operation

In Country/Theater – In a foreign territory, esp. a combat zone

Interview Without Coffee – a formal disciplinary meeting or official reprimand

Klicks - kilometers

Mikes - common term for "minutes"; taken from the phonetic word for "M" ("My ETA is 15 mikes")

Real World - return to civilian life; return to USA from overseas

Ruck - shorthand for rucksack; the Army version of a backpack

Sand Box - Iraq, particularly the southern

Sir – term used to address a commissioned officer (i.e. "Yes, Sir"); non-commissioned officers are to be addressed using their rank (i.e. "Yes, Master Sergeant)

Squared Away – taken care of

The Head – going to the bathroom

Top - first sergeant; head sergeant in unit

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