Sheffield Hallam University

Relational legacies impacting on veteran transition from military to civilian life: trajectories of acquisition, loss and re-formulation of a sense of belonging

ALBERTSON, Katherine <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7708-1775>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

http://shura.shu.ac.uk/23968/

Published version

Copyright and re-use policy

Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive
http://shura.shu.ac.uk

Relational legacies impacting on veteran transition from military to civilian life: trajectories of acquisition, loss and re-formulation of a sense of belonging

Dr Katherine Albertson, Sheffield Hallam University

Abstract

The veteran cohort has been inextricably linked in the general public's mind by media generated perceptions of high risk and fear of crime, echoed in wider contemporary debates linking issues of place, social identity, social exclusion (Pain 2000) and a loss of belonging in wider communities (Walklate 1998). Despite the growing interest in the longer term outcomes of transition from military to civilian life from policy-makers, practitioners and academics, few qualitative studies explore the social and relational impacts of this transitional experience on those who have experienced it. Tensions and frustrations expressed by ex-forces personnel, engaging in addictions services with a history of engagement in the criminal justice sector, are explored through the lens of belongingness, loss and related citizenship frameworks to expose temporal impacts on the acquisition, loss and reformulation of a sense of belonging across the life course. The relevance of a significant loss of belonging in the transition from military to civilian life is useful, given the widely accepted damaging consequences of having this need thwarted. This paper concludes that a broader understanding of this largely disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002) can enable more informed reflexive opportunities to facilitate a valued military veteran citizenship status and thereby contribute to the formulation of current policy debates concerning the veteran question.

Key Words: veterans, belonging, military to civilian transition, military veteran citizenship

Introduction

Of the currently approximately 6.1 million of the Armed Forces community living in the UK, which includes spouses, widows and children, around 2.8 million are military veterans (NHS England 2015). Each year a further 15,000 men and women leave the UK Armed Forces (Ministry of Justice 2018), the vast majority transitioning successfully into civilian life. It is being increasingly recognised however that a small but significant number of veterans face a combination of transitional challenges, such as experiencing health issues, engaging in substance misuse and coming into contact with the criminal justice sector. There is also growing evidence that many veterans only come to the attention of statutory services many years after leaving the forces, often when these issues are far more complex (NHS England 2015; Bashford et al. 2015; Combat Stress, 2015; Howard League 2011). In this paper, we explore the idea that these difficulties in the transition from military to civilian life may be exacerbated by a significant loss of a sense of belonging signified by role identity disorientation, grief and stress (Bergman, Burdett and Greenburg 2014). We do this by presenting the experiential dimension of the transition from military to civilian life (Higate, 2001; Karner, 1998) through veterans' voices across the life course. This original narrative data follows a small group of veterans' successful journey to the adoption of a positive military veteran citizenship status. This is a unique contribution, as while it is well established that boot camp training facilitates the passage from one identity to another—from civilian to military (Van Gennep, 1960), to date, the processes and experiences of transition back from military to civilian identity remain largely unexplored (for an exception see Albertson and Hall, forthcoming 2019;).

The term belonging refers to the emotional need to be an accepted member of a group, an inherent desire to belong and to be an important part of something greater than ourselves. The need to belong is the need to give and receive attention to and from others is a desire that is so universal that it is found across all cultures (Baeumister and Leary 1985). The importance of belonging, as well as the damaging emotional, psychological, physical and behavioural consequences of having this need thwarted, has been linked to social cohesion and is increasingly becoming a politicised matter across the globe (Geddes and Favell 1999; Castles and Davidson 2000; Anthias 2006; 2009). According to Baeumister and Leary (1985) and further developed by Somers (1999) belongingness is formally defined as:

> 'the need to be and perception of being involved with others at differing interpersonal levels. . .which contributes to one's sense of connectedness (being part of, feeling accepted, and fitting in), and esteem (being cared about, valued and respected by others), while providing reciprocal acceptance, caring and valuing to others' (Somers 1999, p 16).

Belonging is such a fundamental human motivation that it is argued we feel severe consequences of not belonging, such as experiencing diminished self-esteem (Maslow, 1987), increased stress and anxiety (Anant, 1967), and depression (Sargent et al., 2002). The lack of a sense of belonging can signal a decrease in general wellbeing and happiness (Rego and Souto 2009) and is linked with engaging in negative behaviours (Clark, 1992). Few studies, however, focus specifically on the *experience* of belonging. The historical development of the discourse of belongingness and social displacement have highlighted the importance of the situationally salient nature of identity and focus on the relational nature of belonging (Castles and Davidson 2000; Anthias 2006; 2009). These studies have largely focussed on translocated migratory communities. This paper extends notions of belonging into a new population - military veterans, with a particular focus on the relationship between belongingness and associated notions of a sense of citizenship. While there is an implicit assumption in this literature that belonging is important to positive transitional experiences, few studies address the experience, meaning or implications of belongingness across the life course. Further, the specific processes by which civilian environments can either engender or form a barrier to belongingness for military veterans has not yet been fully explored.

On this basis, we assert the concept of belongingness in transition from military to civilian contexts merits further investigation. Our paper suggests that the challenge for those concerned with optimising veterans' transition experiences and supporting their lack of contact with the criminal justice system and addiction would benefit from an appreciation of the relationship between transition and belonging across the life course. In this way, we have the opportunity to recognise those features that are conducive to the enhancement of veterans' sense of belonging in transition into civilian life. This approach is adopted to underline further the significance of recognising oneself as a member of a group or community as significant, as to 'feel a powerful sense of belonging – and to be recognized by others as such, is a prerequisite or the formation of the inside/outside, self/other, us/them - boundaries that define' us all (Bell 2003, p 64). Likewise, from the field of citizenship studies it is posited that in modern society citizenship is 'most immediately experienced as a feeling of belonging' (Osler and Starkey 2005, p 9), again omitted by the lack of qualitative appreciations of the differences in the lived experience of citizenship (Hall et al. 1999; Osler and Starkey 2005). This paper posits that these tensions can be most usefully explored through conceptualising citizenship 'as signifying a field of struggle; an arena in which relations linking individuals to their wider community, social and political contexts are continually discussed, reworked and contested' (Hall et al. 1999, p 462-3). Significantly for the purposes of his paper is the link made to the 'participatory character of citizenship, comprising full and legitimate belonging' (Anthias 2006, p 206) that proves a key notion in this context.

Belonging and the Armed Forces community: An overview of the literature

The key dimensions of belonging are: how we feel about our location in the social world and the relational nature of belonging: experiences, relationships and interactions. The politics of belonging is thereby defined as the work of 'boundary maintenance' (Anthias 2006), as:

> 'The boundaries that the politics of belonging [and identity] is concerned with are the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into 'us' and 'them' (Crowley 1999, p 204).

This need for affiliation, belonging and attachment, has long been proposed as a key universal human desire to develop accepting and fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Bowlby 1969; Erikson 1963; Maslow 1968; 1987; Baumeister and Leary 1995; McDonald and Leary 2005; Somers 1999). Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. Based on an extensive critical review over three decades, Baumeister and Leary (1995) theorise that for a motivation to be truly fundamental it should influence a broad range of human activity which, as a reaction to its loss, people would suffer adverse reactions including maladjustment, stress, behavioural or psychological pathology, and health problems.

The grief and loss literature although generally focussing on the loss of intimate or family members is also informative here. For example, in this very journal, Jackoby (2015, p 111) summarises three general categories of loss: Relationship loss (person or animal); Status loss (way of being, e.g. health/ job), and (Im) material object loss (e.g., artefacts, places or/ and ideals). Within the military community, on leaving service one can suggest that veterans experience all three categories of losses - all at once. Another key concept from the grief and loss literature is that some losses, those not acknowledged, are described as disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002). This occurs where 'no-one else recognises a legitimate cause of grief' and most significantly for this study 'when the way a person grieves is not perceived by others as appropriate' or 'when the circumstances of the loss are such that sympathy is dismissed or the stigma of the loss inhibits the grieving person from seeking or receiving support' (Doka 2002, pp 159-160).

The sense of belonging embedded within military culture includes durable reciprocal kinship ties (Collins 1998; Tick 2005; Siebold 2007) that transcend individual self-interest (Mokos 2016) in terms of collective responsibility and group loyalty (Gallagher 2016).The expectations of behaviour instilled are a sense of honour, duty, safety, purpose and self-sufficiency, with an affiliation to alcohol use (Albertson et al. 2017). This is in direct contrast in contemporary civilian life where working-age veterans are twice as likely to be unemployed as their civilian contemporaries (Royal British Legion,

2014 , p 64) and between 3.5% and 17% of the prison population are veterans (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons 2014). Many of the Armed Forces community report disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services (Ashcroft Review 2014; Albertson et al. 2018). Combat Stress and the Royal British Legion report supporting more of the Armed Forces Community 'than ever before' (Royal British Legion, 2016, p 2). The largely academic responses to addressing this veterans' question (Murray 2014) has orientated around the moral panic of veterans' violent offending, most often shorn of considerations of wider power relations, structural inequalities and veterans lived experience. For an alternative approach see Albertson et al. 2015; Albertson et al. 2017; Banks and Albertson 2018. This complex cultural transition from military to civilian life has begun to attract the application of theoretical frameworks however. Thus far the process has been largely explained in terms of its significant disjunction, as a manifestation of reverse culture shock (Bergman, et al. 2014) illustrative of Bourdieu's discordant hysteresis (Cooper et al. 2018). This current paper both contributes to and extends this literature by providing both a comprehensive temporal understanding of the motivation to belong impacting on transition, and presenting an example of a practical application of the belongingness explanatory framework to inform the provision of appropriate support services to personnel leaving the Armed Forces.

Method

Approach

A life history is a story one tells about the life one has lived, and is a 'fairly complete narration of one's entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects' (Atkinson 1998, p. 8). Life history research does not simply tell the story of a life, however; as these stories are co-constructed between the narrator and the interviewer and also the narrative text that is generated (Hamilton and Albertson 2013). The benefits of this approach are that the narrated life reconstructs the actions and the context in which they were placed, revealing place, time and motivation, along with illustrating the narrators' symbolic system of orientation (Bruner, 1990). Where common distinctions were once made between stories being biographic or autobiographic, Stanley's use of the term auto/biography acknowledges the lack of any easy distinction, thereby 'recognizing their symbiosis' (Stanley 1992, p. 127). This term further acknowledges the inherently reflexive act of narrating one's life history. In terms of a study examining an individual's sense of belonging, this reflexivity is significant as we:

> 'construct stories to make sense of our lives are fundamentally about our struggle to
> reconcile who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and bodies with who we

were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, the workplace, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and culture' (McAdams 2008, p 242).

The view that individuals create their identity through the construction of life stories is also largely accepted as an integrative ideal in both the humanities and the social sciences (McAdams 2001). For the purposes of this research, the life history interview was adopted as ways of ensuring temporal elements were available to contextualise veterans' subjectivities regarding any changes in their sense of belonging over the life course.

Data set

The data set utilised for this paper are taken from a larger project involving a cohort of thirty-five ex-forces personnel engaging in a two year evaluation[3] of a veteran-specific service (Albertson et al. 2017). This sample includes a small number of female veterans, and those with experience of the regular and reservist Army, Navy and Royal Air Force, with ages ranging from 35 to 70 years old. While many had experience of combat postings, some also did not. The sample had left the forces on average of 23 years previously, but this ranged from eight to forty-three years ago. The majority reported criminal justice contact across their life course; however, some reported none at all (see Albertson et al. 2017 for full sample details). Notwithstanding this diversity in experiences – and that this cohort has all have had negative outcomes of transition into civilian life given they are accessing a substance misuse service – an additional striking similarity across these data are the narration of the dramatic impact of a loss in the sense of belonging. Our interest in these apparent phenomena therefore shifted to providing a unique insight into the significance of temporal impacts on the sense of belonging for this cohort - with a focus on appreciating the import of barriers to belonging on transition from military to civilian life.

The formative idea for this paper was based on the initial data set originating from the first or baseline interview in a range of episodic interviews (Flick 2000) conducted with 35 ex-forces personnel. This data set is complemented with life history narrative data from of a subsample of fifteen veterans who volunteered to conduct an additional life history interview with the research team. The life history interviews were conducted as part of an additional project exploring the impacts of ex-service personnel's life experiences and identity transformation on their offending and substance misuse profile[4.] These two qualitative datasets were merged for the purposes of this analysis of belonging over the life course. From this original data set, six individual veteran narratives were selected for inclusion in the sub-sample of data utilised in this paper, rationalised on the basis

of our focus on exploring the temporal impacts on one's sense of belonging. The six individuals selected were categorised as 'project completers' (Albertson et al. 2017, p 34) in the larger research project, in that they had spent more than 12 months engaging in the project and had basically moved on. These six men were now engaging in employment or volunteer roles in the wider community. Their narrative data indicates their having reformulated their previously lacking sense of belonging. This group were therefore selected for inclusion in this paper, given their position of having successfully traversed the terrain of belongingness, thus highlighting most clearly the temporal impacts over their life course- from aspiration to achievement and loss and finally reformulation. This subsample is not statistically significant or randomly selected.

Data analysis

The narrative data were initially analysed using a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998) providing an explanatory framework with which to understand the phenomenon under examination. Grounded theory methods consist of a systematic, inductive and comparative and interactive approach to inquiry with key strategies for conducting data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Following Charmaz (1991), we began with sensitising concepts including self, identity, meaning, and duration, and connections with time. Early readings of the data ensured familiarity with the texts, followed by segment-by-segment coding, recommended for ethnographic, narrative, or behaviouristic data (Charmaz 2002). This early reading of the data resulted in the identification of a significant amount of initial codes, which were gradually merged, emerged or re-merged around groupings of relational accounts. For this paper, all data relating to the leading theme - Belonging was extracted, and four significant themes were subsequently identified which moulded the subsequent discussion of military veterans' sense of belongingness. First, in their formative years, the veterans narratives contain a sense of being unsettled, as desiring more or different forms of attachment than their formative source of belonging. Second, their total absorption into military culture, which fulfilled their desire for a strong and meaningful sense of belonging. Third, on leaving service - this was replaced by a sense of alienation, anxiety and rejection, perpetuating a deep sense loss of their previously secure sense of belonging. These later narratives also contained a sense of resistance to the adoption of a civilian identity-based sense of belonging. The final themes- the 'resolution' - which involved remoulding their sense of belonging, to neither civilian nor military society, but to a military veteran citizenship. These temporal distinctions identified structure the four results sections of this paper.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

Military service sense of belonging

Brown (2015) describes military recruits undergoing conditioning with the effective replacement of civilian individualism with a focus on the collective. Similarly, Siebold (2007, p 290) defines belonging in the Armed Forces, as all-encompassing:

> 'Institutional bonding or cohesion occurs to the extent that there is a dependable exchange between the service members and the institution (i.e., service member effort, loyalty, and continuous performance are traded for a sense of elevated purpose, compensation, systemic training opportunities, career progression, and socially approved support for values, roles, careers, and way of life)' .

In this way, joining the Armed Forces facilitates the creation of loyal group identity, where recruits develop bonds ''that transcends all others, even the marriage and family bonds we forge in civilian life'' (Tick, 2005, p. 141). Amongst other relatively unique identity features for this cohort is the assertion of 'professional skill, competence and expertise of the trained military operative': camaraderie and a capacity for working within a teamwork-based reward system (Woodward and Jenkins 2011, p 252; Tick 2005; Collins 1998; Daley 1999). Given the samples' childhood restricted life experiences and intermittent sense of belonging- their experience of joining the forces is narrated as exciting and life-changing:

> when you join the forces you go through basic training and they basically strip you down and turn you into a soldier (Glassback).

> In fact when I watch Happy Potter and that, it reminds me of when they arrive at Hogwarts (Gillie)

Further restrictions left behind when joining up are narrated through the working class notions of appropriate masculinity, encompassing the bread-winner ideology, containing stern rules regarding what you could and couldn't do. Collectively the veterans' narratives are enmeshed in notions of subjective self-actualisation; in the military they realised adventures of which they previously had only been able to dream. On joining the military, these young men were pushed to excel, to become the best they could be and were provided with ample enthusiasm, resources and opportunities to find out what it was they were good at as individuals. Contrasting significantly with their previous sense of belonging in a world where adults were generally too busy working to heed children's capacities for development:

[I got] security. Cos never got it home, never felt part, fitted in and I was like the black sheep, all the time so [I] fitted in, and I did, enjoyed it. Loved it like, and I couldn't see myself anywhere else (Scouse).

However, being or becoming a service member is constructed in opposition to being a civilian (Fever 1996), underlined in the narration of reduced contact with families and the civilian world as the forces progressively became the sole source of their sense of belonging. This shift from familial and community connections is replaced by a strong sense of belonging to the military, which is narrated as being valued, achieving respect and conducting tasks that were important, which characterised the veterans' military service narratives of belonging.

Post- service sense of belonging- resisting a civilian identity and belonging

In sharp contrast to their recounting of belonging in the military, the narration of leaving service is imbued with a significant sense of bereavement and loss:

It felt so - the most unnatural thing (…).y'know it was like grieving. It just destroyed me. It felt tangible that I could feel...bits of me dropping off. Bits of you know, what I was, you know? My identity! Like it was like [an] frigging, egg timer thing, the sand like that was my soul and my identity and it was just running out and just running out... And then when it was empty just a long, long time of not knowing what I was here for and believing that I had no place in society. That you know… and I just used [drugs] and drank anything that would distract me from it... Yeah, for a long time I just became... I isolated myself like a hermit. I wouldn't do anything. When I look back now, I just could not see a place for me in the world. That's it - it's over (Gillie).

Scouse likewise recounted the fear he experienced on leaving service, leaving behind everything he knew, understood and all the relationships and structures he could rely on *"You've got a void in your life erm all security, everything you've had has gone"* (Scouse). Scouse continues:

When you're in the army it's, you're there to do a job, trained to do a job and that's what you do. So when you leave, and then you've got all that time on your hands, got years, [to try] and build your life over, that's when it comes back and it's like smacking you… They are my security. Like when kids have a security blanket. Even though they're not blood, they are your brothers, you'd die for them, they'd do same for you. Simple as, know what I mean, the camaraderie you have is unsurpassed; no one can ever match that (Scouse).

If viewed through the lens of belonging, this loss of a previously secure sense of belonging is narrated through recounting the damaging emotional, psychological, physical and behavioural consequences of having this need thwarted (Baeumister and Leary 1985). The veterans sample's 'missing years'- i.e. immediately post service to between 8 and 43 years later, are defined by marriage and family breakdown, employment issues, bereavement, engagement with the criminal justice system, homelessness and addiction.

The process of reformulating a positive sense of belonging

The veterans in this study accessed a community-based veteran-specific peer group recovery project. When recounting their early engagement with the project, the narratives were suffused with enthusiasm and relief, describing a renewed sense of belonging to their veteran peer group. A communally shared, collective reflection of their shared past being described as tapping into and reconnecting with a communal structure and the military traits they both recognised and identified positively with. Similarly, research has consistently shown that groups who collectively experience turmoil or significant life events tend to form stronger social bonds and become more cohesive (Whitehouse, 1996; Whitehouse, 2012; Bastian et al. 2014):

> So the first [veteran-specific] meeting was – it was great. There weren't a lot of us, but I just knew from that first meeting this was something special this, definitely. It was the big thing that helped me get a sense of belonging back and feeling comfortable about being me and helped me come out of meself (Gillie).

Individual veterans' narratives contained excitement about the opportunity to re-ignite the camaraderie, loyalty, energy and drive associated with their past military identity into a present-day setting. Scouse reflected on the reciprocal nature of the bonding that was taking place: *I've got back in the, that military get up and go, where I can't let people down now* (Scouse). This opportunity clearly enhanced the veterans' feelings of belonging in this group. These narratives contained a sense of being able to access a secure 'place', where they were both accepted and understood, clearly addressing the social isolation experienced since leaving service. The opportunity to meet together facilitating veterans to work collectively to reconcile negative self-narratives since leaving military service and a cumulative loss of belonging. In this way, the veterans' narratives can be described as collectively describing their peer group as operating as a 'social anchoring' mechanism, a concept that re-links issues of identity, security, belonging and integration described as being utilised as a coping strategy within migratory communities (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016). The purpose

this mutual exchange of social support interaction served became clear as the "advantages accrue not only to the one receiving support but those providing support" (Martinez 2011, p 65). This self-help model facilitating peer interaction, grounding veterans in their positive experiences of military life, reconstructing a sense of belonging, but based within their current context:

"It helps you bring out all that military stuff again which is no matter what you do its heavily morally based, if you like, on doing the right thing. The job, whatever you have done in the forces is like: "Try your best, do the right thing, and good things will happen". So just having that with the other people being there, and everyone goes to that group because their life isn't going the way that they want it, or the way they planned it, so you're going there with wanting to change and so having it veteran-specific, and all of the others in there, it helps you do that and achieve that and it changes you. It changes you, yeah (Gillie).

But as acknowledged in the excerpt above in the last line, this reaching back for a sense of belonging is not simply re-claimed, but reconciled with their new status and re-orientated towards inclusion, belonging and a different form of citizenship in civilian society, a process most clearly expressed by Scouse:

"you don't do that in civilian life, y'know, it's different. So there was that transition - to be told that you don't act like that on Civvie Street. [Now] I can speak about things and not be embarrassed and not feel that I'm being stupid (Glassback).

This process of unpacking their past belonging in the military and harnessing an alternative sense of belonging also involves resisting a civilian identity and belonging: "*I think I can co-exist with the civilian world, but to be totally integrated…No*" (Happy) is narrated as gaining an identity coherence via a sense of belonging within the veteran peer group context. This situation highlights Demers (2011) point that ex-forces personnel in transition can often reproduce military specific attitudes and ways of being without being conscious that their behaviour remains orientated towards the military mindset, a key revelation made explicitly by a number of veterans', for example:

"I've not lost my military identity at all, if anything getting back involved with military.….has sort of cheered me back up again, it's made me remember exactly what I did and all that and made me a bit prouder, so I've not turned my back on my military history in any way, shape or form. The main thing for me is I just took on… I don't live my life as a serving soldier anymore. I don't have the attitude of a serving soldier (Glassback).

The evidence of a shift in the previous turmoil felt by the veterans in this study is recognised on entering the veteran-specific initiative, as veterans' narratives increasing contain indications of an alternative sense of belonging being established. This is identified where veterans' narratives of belonging begin to reconcile their past losses and focus on a present and future sense of belonging to their peer group, community and wider society, such as increasingly engaging with wider public activities, all characteristics captured in the term 'military veteran citizenship' (Albertson et al. 2017). The awakening of these military veteran-citizenship-linked characteristics is identified in the narratives of those veterans as they increasingly engaged in civic opportunities, where their experience and expertise is valued:

> You know, you look at things different, compared to what I did that what I did before. I have been in and gone into conferences at the Council and the House of Chambers, so I have mingled in with all the top brass there and spoke to them and give my experiences, I have actually given speeches, well given talks about what we are about. I have got no nerves now; I can speak my mind now. You know I am telling people about the Veterans, what PTSD is and what the drink and alcohol thing is because I have been there (Happy).

In this way, veterans' sense of inclusion and belonging were encouraged within active citizenship rights and duties in both the communities they reside in and within the broader political and policy aspects around veterans' issues, thereby increasingly becoming invested with the rights, privileges, and duties contained within the concept of military veteran citizenship. This concept embodies a sense of belonging adjunct to moving past the loss of belonging and identity in the military, yet remaining distinguished from both serving military and civilian belonging. Therefore forward rather than past-focussed, this concept also acknowledges both the full and positive rights and duties associated with concepts of citizenship bound up with a sense of belonging to a valued communal identity of military veteran citizenship.

Discussion and conclusions

Conditional citizenship and the politics of belonging for the veteran community

This study has mapped out a process of the reformulation of a sense of belonging built around the notion of military veteran citizenship within a veteran cohort experiencing challenges in their transition to civilian life. This process began with the affirmation of military genealogy and the reconciliation of this heritage of belonging within the ex-forces group setting, which proved significant for the veteran group's renewed sense of belonging and citizenship status. One could argue it proved an opportunity to reflect on the lived reality of their civilian status, whilst

significantly serving as acknowledgement of their loss in belonging, thereby addressing their previously disenfranchised loss (Doka, 2002) status.

Whilst many transitional challenges are faced when exiting military service, such as practical issues of negotiating civilian employment, finances and accommodation, issues such as belonging and social integration also become intensified as time passes between leaving service, while opportunities to respond to these more relational concerns can be restricted (Black and Papile, 2010). Should the civilian reintegration of ex-forces personnel focus simply on their profile of engagement in the criminal justice system or the insistence on adopting a civilian over military identity? It is well established that past experiences can come to form an important part of the 'changed self' (e.g. Maruna and Roy 2007) as this impacts on well-being, behaviour and a sense of belonging which is an important task during any significant life transition (Farrall 2002). Indeed, should the ex-forces category of belonging and citizenship be restricted or rendered conditional (Vaughan 2000) on non-CJS contact or lack of access to health and wellbeing services? In this way, veterans utilising coping strategies, that wider society does not approve of, to deal with this loss in belonging and identity meaning we are disenfranchising these losses (Doka, 2002). Manza and Uggen 2006) utilise the criminological term 'felon disenfranchisement' to describe the restricted access to public services and certain occupations for those having served a custodial sentence. In not considering the potentially damaging impacts of the loss of identity and belonging in this cohort are we likewise resigning our responsibilities to veterans who have not coped with the transition well with the label of 'wayward veteran disenfranchisement', mirroring Manza and Uggen's phrase?

In order to begin to consider the loss of belonging and citizenship needs of the veteran community, this paper proposes the task is to locate an identity that fuses both ex-forces and civilian roles and behaviour at a point of 'optimal distinctiveness'. In other words, an identity, a sense of citizenship and belonging that simultaneously address both group affiliation and individual needs (Brewer 1991; Swann et al 2009, p 100). In this way, we can more effectively connect the inner and outer worlds and experiences, and link them with emotions; morality and culture (see Gadd and Jefferson 2007). By considering veterans' loss of belonging which can impede social participation and place barriers to engagement in civil life, our application of the belongingness lens illustrate that we could approach veterans - not as bearers of risks or needs, but as those suffering from a significant loss of belonging. Acknowledgement of these phenomena foregrounds practical and modest ways in which we can begin the process of reversing the ways we approach veterans' loss of belonging as disenfranchised. Not recognising a significant loss of belonging as a legitimate cause of grief in wider civilian society places barriers between the veteran community and a positive sense of belonging

personified within the concept of 'military veteran citizenship' (Albertson 2017, p 7). This study highlights that, in order to enjoy their rights, fulfil their obligations and realise their potential as members of a positive community and social resource, the veterans may benefit from a culturally competent informed provision of services.

More broadly, the political and policy implications of this study suggest that considering the significance of the loss of belonging and associated notions of active citizenship is important in the transition from military to civilian life. Opportunities to interact with their ex-forces peer group have been shown to facilitate this healing process, operating as a 'recommunalization of the disenfranchised' (Arrigo and Takahashi 2006, p 313). We suggest this may assist previously individualised, stigmatized and excluded members of the veteran community from moving forwards in a communal manner - which they already recognise due to their military sense of belonging - towards 'full democratic participation' as stakeholders in civilian society (Uggen et al. 2006, p 283).

What emerged from the veterans' later narratives was an alternative sense of belonging based on solidarity, inclusion and mutual responsibility, which proved capable of bridging the divide between military and civilian life. It cannot be underestimated that this alternative discourse around recreating a sense of belonging is however circumscribed by institutional frameworks that authorise legitimate and appropriate forms of grief and loss. This study has highlighted that poor transitional outcomes may be alleviated by securing a 'new' sense of post-service belonging, identity and value in the community in which they live (Albertson et al. 2017). On leaving service, the ex-Armed Forces community have been described as occupying 'a liminal[1] or interstitial[2] space between military and society' (Gardiner and Garner 2010, p 190) and this paper has illustrated that valuing different cultural and temporal experiences of the loss of belonging are significant in this context. Key is finding a space for securing civic participation for military veterans in order to address the largely socially disenfranchised losses experienced. Indeed, returning to the grief and loss literature this paper raises the distinct possibility that the veteran cohort likewise has a distinct and unique form of loss when in transition to civilian life (see Jackoby, 2015, pp 111-112), and that this is as an area worthy of more study.

Notes

1. Occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold.

2. Between things that are normally closely spaced.

Funding

ORCID iD

Dr Katherine Albertson https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7708-1775

References

Albertson, K., and Hall, L. (forthcoming, 2019) 'Mobilizing social capital for desistance: Lessons from the ex-forces community', in (Eds) Raynor, P., McNeill, F., Ugwudike, P., Taxman, F., Trotter, C., and Graham, H. (Eds) The Routledge Companion to Rehabilitative Work in Criminal Justice, Routledge.

Albertson, K. E., Albertson, K., Stevenson, J., and Murray, E. (2018) The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project: Mapping of the Armed Forces Community across the region, Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice.

Albertson, K., Best, D., Pinkney, A., Murphy, T., Irving, J., and Stevenson, J. (2017) "It's not just about recovery": The Right Turn Veteran-Specific Recovery Service Evaluation, Final report (June 2017), Sheffield Hallam University: Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, 68.

Albertson, K., Banks. J., and Murray, E. (2017) Military Veteran-offenders: Making sense of developments in the debate to inform service delivery, The Prison Service Journal, 234: 23-30.

Albertson, K., Best, D., and Irving, J. (2015) "A Social Capital approach to assisting veterans through recovery and desistance transitions in civilian life", The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 54 (4): 384–396.

Anant, S., 1967. Belongingness and mental health: Some research findings. Acta Psychologia 26, 391–396.

Anthias, F. (2006). Belongings in a globalising and unequal world: rethinking translocations. The situated politics of belonging, 17-31.

Anthias, F. (2009). Translocational belonging, identity and generation: Questions and problems in migration and ethnic studies. Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and migration, 4(1), 6-15.

Arrigo, B. A., and Takahashi, Y. (2006). Recommunalization of the disenfranchised: A theoretical and critical criminological inquiry. Theoretical Criminology, 10(3), 307-336.

Ashcroft, M. (2014) The Veterans Transition Review [on-line]: Available at: http://www.veteranstransition.co.uk/vtrreport.pdf

Atkinson, R.(1998).The life story interview (Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 44).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Banks, J., and Albertson, K. (2018) "Veterans and violence: an exploration of pre-enlistment, military and post-service life" The European Journal of Criminology, 1-18: DOI 10.1177/1477370818764825.

Bashford, J., Collins, C., Hasan, S., and Professor Lord Patel (2015) Call to Mind: A framework for action, Community Innovations Enterprise on behalf of the Forces in Mind Trust and NHS England [on line].

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological bulletin, 117(3), 497.

Bastian, B., Jetten, J., & Ferris, L. J. (2014). Pain as social glue: Shared pain increases cooperation. Psychological Science, 25(11), 2079-2085. doi:10.1177/0956797614545886.

Bell, D. S. (2003). Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity. The British journal of sociology, 54(1), 63-81.

Bergman, Beverly P., Howard J. Burdett, and Neil Greenberg. (2014) Service Life and Beyond – Institution or Culture? The RUSI Journal 159(5), 60–68.

Black, T. and Papile, C. (2010). Making It on Civvy Street: An Online Survey of Canadian Veterans in Transition. Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy 44, no. 4, 383-401.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss v. 3 (Vol. 1). Random House.

Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17, 475–482.

Brown, W. (2015). Veteran Home Coming Obstacles. Short and long-term consequences of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In Walklate, S., & McGarry, R. (Eds.), Criminology and War. Transgressing the borders. (pp. 120-136). London: Routledge.

Bruner, J. S. (1990). Acts of meaning (Vol. 3). Harvard University Press.

Castles, S., and Davidson, A. (2000). Citizenship and migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging. Psychology Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006) Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis, London: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (1991)Good Days, Bad Days: The Self in Chronic Illness and Time. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Charmaz, K. (2002) Grounded theory analysis. In J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein (eds), Handbook of Interview Research (pp. 675–694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clark, C., 1992. Deviant adolescent subcultures: Assessment strategies and clinical interventions. Adolescence 27 (106), 283–293.

Collins, J. (1998). The complex context of American military culture: A practitioner's view. Washington Quarterly, 21, 213–226.

Cooper, L., Caddick, N., Godier, L., Cooper, A., & Fossey, M. (2018). Transition from the military into civilian life: An exploration of cultural competence. Armed Forces and Society, 44(1), 156-177.

Combat Stress (2015) Key Fact Sheet v8 2015 [on line] https://www.combatstress.org.uk/media/204885/fact_sheet_2015_-_v8.pdf Accessed 05/02/2016

Crowley, J (1999) 'The politics of belonging: some theoretical considerations', in Andrew Geddes, A., and Favell, A. (eds), The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Daley, J. G. (1999). Understanding the military as an ethnic identity. Social work practice in the military, 291-303.

Demers, A. (2011). When veterans return: The role of community in reintegration, Journal of Loss and Trauma, 16, 160-179.

Doka, K. (2002). Disenfranchised Grief. In Doka, K. (Ed.), Living with Grief: Loss in Later Life, New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice. Washington,D.C.: The Hospice Foundation of America.

Erikson, E. H. (1993). Childhood and society. WW Norton & Company.

Feaver, P. D. (1996). The civil-military problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the question of civilian control. Armed Forces & Society, 23(2), 149-178.

Flick, U. (2000). Episodic interviewing. Qualitative researching with text, image and sound, 75-92.

Gadd, D., and Jefferson, T. (2007). Psychosocial criminology. Sage.

Gallagher, B. (2016). Burdens of proof: veteran frauds, PTSD pussies, and the spectre of the welfare queen, Critical Military Studies, 2,3, 139-154.

Gardiner, S. L., and Garner, A. R (2010) Relationships of War: Mothers, Soldiers, Knowledge in Chandler, R., Fuller, L. Wang, L. (Eds) Women, War, and Violence: Personal Perspectives and Global Activism, Palgrave: McMillan.

Geddes, A., and Favell, A. (eds), The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A (2016) Social Anchoring: Immigrant Identity, Security and Integration Reconnected?', Sociology, vol. 50 no. 6 1123-1139.

Hall, T., Coffey, A., and Williamson, H. (1999). Self, space and place: youth identities and citizenship. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 20(4), 501-513.

Hamilton, P., and Albertson, K. (2013) 'Reflections on values and ethics in narrative inquiry with (ex-) offenders', in (Eds) Cowburn, M., Duggan, M., Robinson, A. and Senior, P, Values in Criminology and Community Justice, London: The Policy Press.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2014) People in prison: Ex-service personnel: A findings paper [on-line] Available at: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/03/Ex-Service-personnel-findings-paper-2014.pdf

Higate, P. R. (2001). Theorizing continuity: From military to civilian life. Armed Forces & Society, 27(3), 443-460.

Hobbs, D., Hadfield, P., Lister, S. and Winlow, S. (2003) Bouncers: Violence and Governance in the Night-time Economy, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Howard League for Penal Reform (2011) Leaving forces Life: the issue of transition, London, Howard League for Penal Reform [on line]

Jackoby, N, R. (2015) The Self and Significant Others: Toward a Sociology of Loss, Illness, Crisis & Loss, Vol. 23(2) 110–128.

Karner, T. (1998). Engendering violent men. Month, 197-232.

MacDonald, G., and Leary, M. R. (2005). Why does social exclusion hurt? The relationship between social and physical pain. Psychological Bulletin, 131(2), 202.

Maslow, A. (1987). H.(1970). Motivation and personality, 2.

Maslow, A. (1968). Motivation and Personality, New York: Harper and Row.

Martinez, D. J., 2011. Former prisoners, their family members, and the transformative potential of support, pp 56 to 71.

McAdams, D. P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), Handbook of personality: Theory and research (pp. 242-262). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. Review of General Psychology, 5, 100–122.

Ministry of Justice (2017) UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics 1 January 2018 {on-line], available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681512/201801_-_SPS.pdf

Moskos, C. (2016). From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization. Armed Forces & Society 4(1), 41–50.

Murray, E. (2014). Veteran offenders in Cheshire: Making sense of the 'noise'. Probation Journal, 61(3), 251-264.

NHS England (2015) Developing Mental Health Services for Veterans in England [on line].

Osler, A., and Starkey, H. (2005). Changing citizenship. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Pain, R. (2000). Place, social relations and the fear of crime: a review. Progress in Human Geography, 24(3), 365-387.

Rego, A., and Souto, S. (2009). Does the need to belong moderate the relationship between perceptions of spirit of camaraderie and employees' happiness?. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 14(2), 148.

Royal British Legion (2016) Deployment to employment: Exploring the veteran employment gap in the UK [on-line] Available at: https://media.britishlegion.org.uk/Media/5035/deployment-to-employment.pdf

Royal British Legion (2014) A UK Household survey of the ex-forces community [on-line], available at: https://media.britishlegion.org.uk/Media/2275/2014householdsurveyreport.pdf

Sargent, J., Williams, R. A., Hagerty, B., Lynch-Sauer, J., and Hoyle, K. (2002). Sense of belonging as a buffer against depressive symptoms. Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, 8(4), 120-129.

Somers, M., 1999. Development and preliminary validation of a measure of belongingness. Unpublished Ph.D., Temple University, Philadelphia.

Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Procedures and techniques for developing grounded theory.

Swann Jr, W. B., Gómez, Á., Seyle, D. C., Morales, J., & Huici, C. (2009). Identity fusion: the interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. Journal of personality and social psychology, 96(5), 995.

Tick, E., 2005. War and the soul: Healing our nation's veterans from post–traumatic stress disorder. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

Uggen, C., and Manza, J. (2002). Democratic contraction? Political consequences of felon disenfranchisement in the United States. American Sociological Review, 777-803.

Uggen, C., Manza, J., and Thompson, M. (2006). Citizenship, democracy, and the civic reintegration of criminal offenders. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 605(1), 281-310.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). The rites of passage (M. Vizedom & G. Caffee, Trans.). London: Routledge.

Vaughan, B. (2006). The internal narrative of desistance. The British Journal of Criminology, 47(3), 390-404.

Walklate, S. (1998) Crime and community: fear or trust?, British Journal of Sociology, 550-569.

Whitehouse, H. (1996). Rites of terror: Emotion, metaphor and memory in Melanesian initiation cults. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 2, 703–715.

Whitehouse, H. (2012). Ritual, cognition, and evolution. In R. Sun (Ed.), Grounding social sciences in cognitive sciences (pp. 265–284). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Winlow, S. (2014). Trauma, guilt and the unconscious: Some theoretical notes on violent subjectivity. The Sociological Review, 62(2_suppl), 32-49.

Winlow, S. (2001) Badfellas: Crime, Tradition and New Masculinities, Oxford: Berg.

Woodward, R., and Jenkings, N., 2011. Military identities in the situated accounts of British military personnel. Sociology, 45(2), 252-268.