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Tracing Moral Injury in US Wars and Implications for the Year 2050

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Tracing Moral Injury in US Wars and

Implications for The Year 2050

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Abstract

Throughout conflicts in history, the psycho-spiritual construct known today as "moral injury" can be found. This term was coined in 1994 out of conceptions of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to describe intense shame and guilt aspects resulting from military service. The challenge comes with extrapolating this injury in the wake of nuances in terminology about related symptoms in conjunction with an evolving consciousness in identifying invisible military-related injuries. With current research and a historic pattern of unnamed moral injuries, this study explores the following: How did military chaplains address moral injuries without this construct? What are Unitarian Universalist (UU) military chaplains of today able to do for those with moral injuries using this framework? What implications might moral injury have in future conflicts, and, for our purposes, in the year 2050? In answering these questions, this study reviews case studies of extended moral injuries from the US Civil War and World War II. Drawing on interviews with current and former UU military chaplains, these interviews provide insights with how military chaplains address moral injuries through ministry today. Ultimately, these findings show that moral injury was traceable in history but was left unattended to without the modern concept of moral injury. With the construct today, military chaplains are more capable of addressing such injuries resulting from military service. As moral injuries have been observed in history, perhaps without the name, I argue that military service members will continue to face moral injuries in the future, especially in the wake of newer technological advances, like drone warfare, in future conflicts.

Keywords: moral injury, Unitarian Universalist, military chaplaincy, the year 2050

Tracing Moral Injury in US Wars and Implications for the Year 2050

Jordan is a United States service member deployed in modern-day Baghdad, Iraq. Riding in the gunner's seat of a humvee, Jordan's role is to defend the vehicle and accompanying service members from any possible threat of danger. Jordan braces in the seat as the humvee weaves through the convoluted streets, whizzing past cluttering obstacles and fallen rubble. The vehicle comes to an abrupt stop, where only several feet away in front of the humvee sits a stripped parked car, blocking the road. Jordan starts to get a bad feeling about this frozen moment, where the vehicle and company are potentially susceptible to an insurgent attack. Through the gun's sights, Jordan glances off to the right to see a silhouetted figure, dressed in all black, holding a cellphone. From training and personal experience, Jordan knows that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are capable of being detonated by cell phones and suspects this sitting vehicle, and likewise potential insurgent, to be a threat. Jordan is faced with a difficult and excruciating decision: Jordan must decide in seconds to shoot the silhouette, risking the slaughter of an innocent civilian, or to hold fire, knowing that the delay might have cost the lives of fellow soldiers, including Jordan's own.

While Jordan is fictitious, narratives of moral ambiguity and split-second decision-making would be familiar to service members who have come to identify their experiences with intense feelings of shame and guilt for what they have either done or failed to do. For many soldiers in active war zones, decisions like these must be made at the drop of a hat. These scenarios are not clean-cut and often don't have a simple "right" or "wrong" answer. Even in situations where a professional soldier's military training requires a specific and unambiguous response, there is a risk of causing ambiguous harm, sometimes to civilians or other noncombatants. Recent expansions to the understanding of these situations have been important

for former service members of the United States' armed forces, as well as the public's understandings of warfare, resulting in the development the term "moral injury".

Moral injury, a term that refers to feelings of guilt and shame as a result of committing an act that violates one's moral conscience or witnessing a similar act that one was unable or unwilling to prevent (Maguen & Litz, 2016), has become a useful way in which some service members frame aspects of their military service, in order to reconcile moral and ethical aspects that they have self-identified as fraught. Likewise, this term has aided mental health and religious professionals and other support persons to understand the difficult path that so many service members travel. Moral injury is sparsely written about in history in explicit terms. In order to demonstrate this, this paper reviews two military chaplain and witness accounts of would-be moral injuries—from the US Civil War and World War II—to show how little this construct was documented, as well as the limited ways in which military chaplains were able to address these self-identified moral wounds.

As a portion of this paper is historical, moral injury as a term was not available in history to describe the shame and guilt service members felt resulting from service; this leaves room to extrapolate today's definition of moral injury to previous instances of moral trauma to determine if this definition fits. I must mention that these perceived moral injuries are hypothetical in entirety without the validation of those who lived with them. With this understanding, I attempt to show a link between these historical accounts and the modern definition of moral injury to frame the conversation around what can be done today with the advent of this framework. Ultimately, these findings show that moral injury was traceable in history but was left unattended to without the modern concept of moral injury. With the construct today, military chaplains are more capable of addressing such injuries resulting from military service. As moral injuries have

been observed in history, perhaps without the name, I argue that military service members will continue to face moral injuries in the future, especially in the wake of newer technological advances, like drone warfare, in future wars and conflicts as the year 2050 approaches.

Methods

The research methods used in this paper include a literature review of accounts from military chaplains and witnesses from the US Civil War and World War II and personal interviews with current and former Unitarian Universalist military chaplains. Interviews were conducted to explore moral injury and how it manifests in their military ministry. The purpose of these interviews was to look for ways in which military chaplains are able to address moral injuries in those they serve, using the name moral injury as a contemporary construct to describe these shame and guilt aspects. A total of six were interviewed: Chris Antal, Marie deYoung, Seanan Holland, Susan Maginn, Rebekah Savage, and David Pyle. Both Antal and deYoung were former military chaplains and offered insights with regards to their prior service; the other named chaplains are current military chaplains in various branches of the military. All chaplains identify as Unitarian Universalist, and interviews were conducted virtually using a variety of different platforms, like Skype, Zoom, telephone, and FaceTime Audio.

Literature Review

US Civil War: Mary Livermore

Not much can be found in the way of chaplain accounts of the moral qualms and questions that many of the soldiers in the US Civil War reckoned with while in their care. However, key aspects are found within the war that seemed to cause what would nowadays be characterized as moral injuries. To showcase this, I explore Mary Livermore's story.

Mary Livermore began her service in the Civil War as a Union army nurse in 1861, in her role as coordinator of the Chicago branch of the US Sanitary Commission. During her time as a nurse, Livermore visited many hospitals, caring for wounded soldiers or sometimes writing letters home for them. Livermore, while never in combat, witnessed the aftermath in her time caring for soldiers. As a woman, Livermore was unable to pursue ordination in the Universalist tradition. Livermore, however, offered assistance in a similar role to soldiers in the throes of shame as a result of military service.

Livermore recalled one particular moment as a nurse when she helped to console a dying soldier. Making her rounds in one of the wards, every bed occupied by a wounded soldier, Livermore came across a soldier in deep distress. Gasping for air, the soldier was dripping in sweat as he suffered from a severe pain, causing him to fear that he may lose his life. Trying to comfort the soldier, Livermore began to ask him why he was panicking so much, offering that he could still recover from his pain. In response, the soldier replied, "Oh, no, I can't live—I know it—there's no chance for me. I've got to die—and I *can't* die! *I am afraid to die!*" (Livermore, 1887, p. 191). Livermore further sought the help of a surgeon in the ward, who explained that the soldier, after both of his legs amputated, his right and left arms crushed and broken, and being shot twice in the abdomen, saw slim chances for survival.

Livermore further attempted to console the man she knew was bound to die in just a couple of hours. Inquisitive, she asked the soldier why he was afraid to die, to which the soldier elaborated on the guilt he was carrying. "I ain't fit to die," the soldier remarked. "I have lived an awful life… I shall go to hell" (1887, p. 192). Noticing his soul was in deep distress, Livermore instructed the man to be still and listen to her as she told him of God's ability to forgive all sins, it being Christ's mission on earth to do so. She told the dying man of his ability to receive

forgiveness due to his penitent heart. After having the soldier repeat a prayer with her, this spiritual consolation did little to calm him. Still in distress, the soldier asked Livermore to bring a Methodist minister to the ward to receive final consolation, absolution, and pastoral care from a clergy member of his tradition.

After bringing over one of the hospital stewards who was also a Methodist minister, Livermore and the minister did their best to alleviate this soldier's suffering in his final moments. The soldier was relieved to have a Methodist chaplain at his side and listened attentively to the chaplain's themes, which were centered around Christ's love and trust in God to deliver forgiveness to all those who seek it. Praying together in song, the soldier began to reach a state of peace; according to Livermore, "The burden rolled from the boy's heart…" (1887, p. 194). The chaplain sang and the soldier was comforted, lying at peace in his bed.

If one understands this soldier's story within the modern context of moral injury, some clear indications of this being a moral injury surface. Terrified to face the reality of his imminent death, the soldier feared Hell and eternal torment that he was sure his soul would receive in his passing. Marked with guilt, the soldier never discloses what torments him so deeply. This leaves speculation as to whether the soldier was wrestling with experiences or actions that he committed in war. However, this could also speak more intimately to this being a moral injury with the soldier's lack of confiding the sources of his guilt to those caring for him in his final moments; this is often characteristic of moral injuries, with service members sometimes—and often not— sharing those experiences or actions only moments before death. Without the name, Livermore seems to have witnessed a soldier struggling with a moral injury.

World War II: Israel Yost

In the social milieu of the Second World War, many citizens of the United States felt a sense of unambiguous duty to counter the evil of fascist regimes. Even in a time of such faithfulness in a cause for liberty, one can still find the touch of moral injury in the stories of service members who served on behalf of their country. To explore one of these stories, I present the story of Israel Yost, a chaplain who served in France and Italy in World War II and encountered soldiers with moral injuries.

Israel Yost was a Lutheran combat chaplain in the US Army who served the 100th Battalion, the only Japanese-American battalion, in Europe during World War II. Military service had little appeal for Yost in the time before the start of World War II. After the birth of his daughter, Monica, in 1942, Yost began to witness the growing and escalating world conflict. With the Lutheran church calling for an increased quota of Lutheran clergymen in the armed forces, Yost answered the call and began his preparation for military chaplaincy.

Yost encountered the moral questions of war throughout his service as a chaplain. In one instance of his service, Yost is face-to-face with the pain and anguish many of his soldiers are holding in their hearts. In a period of rest at a camp in Salerno, Italy, moments for reflection would arise, where soldiers would discuss aspects of service. The deaths of fallen privates and officers were discussed to a crowd of shaking heads, talking in particular about how someone died or was killed. Many of the soldiers discussed the importance of writing home and, just perhaps, how they should write to their loved ones back in Hawaii that they might not ever return. Additionally, soldiers talked about their chances of making it, wishing for a lucky wound to prevent being placed back in combat. According to Yost, who witnessed this, "Talking helped

to get the agony out of the souls of the veterans" (2006, p. 95). It was helpful that soldiers shared their experiences with one another to communalize the senses of fear, loss, and anguish.

Yost addresses a moral injury in one soldier towards the end of his service. After a worship service during his time in Italy, one of the soldiers who attended the service approached him with enthusiasm for the service that he performed, explaining that he always felt better after worship. In the change of a moment, the soldier begins to discuss a moral rift between aspects of his service and his religious values as a Christian. "I know what the Bible says: 'Thou shalt not kill.' But that's what I'm doing—killing. I don't know what to do about it, but every time I go back into combat I'm more upset about what I'm doing" (2006, p. 265). The soldier had a moral conflict between his service as a soldier and his duty as a Christian, recognizing that he sees firsthand the men that he kills; this tore at his conscience. One can speculate that this conflict followed him many years after his time serving abroad.

Yost's story provides a great account of a military chaplain who, without a doubt, encountered aspects of moral injury in the soldiers he served. Yost writes about his service as a chaplain, carrying much of the pain on his own conscience as a result of witnessing so much warfare. In a letter to his wife, Peggy, dated February 15th, 1944, he explains that he has become "used to the unnatural things of war," stating that he is no longer phased as much with bandaging torn and shredded limbs (2006, p. 126). However, Yost also explains that there comes a point where he can no longer remain strong in the face of these difficult aspects: "...every so often the awfulness of it all overwhelms me, and I get tears in my eyes, and my heart faints. How low mankind can fall!" (2006, p. 126). Yost carries the pain of war in his heart much like many of the soldiers he serves. Although not further elaborated upon, perhaps Yost carries a level of guilt

himself in serving a cause he finds at odds with his Christian faith and values. Yost provides a rich account of his encounters with soldiers and their moral injuries.

Military Chaplain Interviews

The interviews with current and former military chaplains yielded a rich and vast terrain of themes involved in addressing the moral injuries of today's soldiers and veterans. I will share some of the themes that emerged from conducting these interviews with military chaplains.

Moral Injury as a Human Condition

A prominent emergent theme across some of these interviews identified moral injury as a condition with applicability outside of military contexts. While some military chaplains surveyed see moral injury in a strict military context, where split-second decision-making occurs before the brain has time to rationalize an appropriate action, a number of military chaplains opened the definition of moral injury to include instances of moral trauma outside of these strict confines of military service. One respondent defined moral injury as "a psychological construct that attempts to name particular kinds of pain that we carry as human beings when we act as moral agents and people in the world," which leaves this construct open to moral pain in broader contexts. Another chaplain corroborated this definition by adding that "human beings want to be good and about goodness," and that in our "personal and professional lives, we are put into situations where we really don't have good choices to make and we have to live with the choices we do make". For these chaplains, the framework of moral injury serves as a potentially recognizable construct in dimensions outside of military service.

There remains for some of the chaplains this idea of moral injury in strict military contexts, specifically in which there is an institutional element of betrayal, by way of a perceived betrayal from a legitimate authority figure to the service member. Moral injury, in this case, can only arise

in the military out of a believed sense of betrayal from a superior officer or leader. A military

chaplain also expressed moral injury as a "fight or flight" reaction to military-related trauma that

only arises after the brain has had the time to rationalize this trauma as a moral injury. An

additional description of moral injury was that it is "an ethical wrestling with who and what you

are as a result of [military] service," which speaks to experiences of military service that are unlike

anything else experienced, especially in civilian life. For these chaplains, moral injury remains in

the confines of military service and is not extended past those confines.

Is the Construct of Moral Injury Useful?

Many of the chaplains surveyed expressed an opinion that moral injury was a useful

construct in their work with service members. One chaplain saw this construct as incredibly

necessary for one of the soldiers coming to the chaplain seeking assistance with reconciling a

self-identified moral injury. Moral injury, as a framework, helped this soldier to see his own

personal role in shooting a noncombatant as a call to become his better self; it helped the service

member reframe his experience as one of moral and ethical growth instead of holding onto

feelings of unforgivable guilt. Another chaplain found moral injury to be a useful framework in

helping to name experiences an individual is reckoning with as a result of military service. In one

story, a chaplain found moral injury helpful with a soldier who was facing the fact that he had

shot a child who appeared to be holding a weapon. Putting a name to experiences through the use

of the term was useful for some service members to self-identify what they were feeling, in order

to heal and grow resiliently from an ambiguous or traumatic experience.

Some chaplains expressed hesitation with seeing moral injury as a unilaterally useful

construct in their work with service members. One chaplain described moral injury as a specific

case of a more general set of combat trauma, where aspects of trauma that are left unattended to

can sometimes inhibit further rationalization or healing with moral aspects of service. Another chaplain spoke to how chaplains must be careful to not ascribe their own systems of making meaning on those they serve. In an instance where a chaplain places a sense of moral blame on a soldier who did not have that sense before, this can become harmful to a soldier and their resilience. In this chaplain's experience, it is crucial and essential to meet each service member where they are spiritually and emotionally, and to "approach each experience through the lens of their experience" and not from the lens of the chaplain. From these chaplains, it is case-specific whether moral injury is helpful in facilitating healing from war.

The opinion that moral injury is not a useful construct also came up in interviews. One chaplain spoke to how moral injury simply isn't as visible as people think it is, never having dealt with a soldier with a moral injury as described in literature. Another chaplain expressed that this seems to be a construct that has grown out of issues that civilians have with military service, instead of out of the experiences of service members. An additional chaplain echoed this sentiment in stating that moral injury is sometimes a civilian mindset imposed on the lived experiences of a service member. Likewise, chaplains may impose this sense of shame on service members who would otherwise not view their experiences as shameful. In these cases, moral injury appears limitedly as a viable construct in describing the experiences of those who serve.

Moral Injury as a Potentially Harmful Framework

It is important to mention another emergent theme that came from these interviews: the theme that moral injury, in some circumstances, may cause more harm than good. One such way is a component of pity, where one chaplain described moral injury as sometimes an avenue through which civilians pity service members. Seeing it as a form of class privilege, this chaplain expanded: "Civilians and our wider culture have injury more than the service members do.

Civilians are torn about what the military does on their behalf. There's a lot of pity without understanding for what soldiers go through in the military". Another chaplain spoke to this aspect, adding that service members understand their service as a form of sacrifice for their country, where pity is juxtaposed with pride in selfless service to one's country. In this instance, the chaplain repeats the words of a marine who was wounded in Iraq and lost limbs during his time in service: "If you are coming in here to feel sorry for me, don't". With this sense of pity, moral injury does not mesh with some service members and their understandings of their service and may actually harm their outlooks.

Along with issues of pity, another potential harm of moral injury is the damage it can do to a service member who had not previously seen their service with moral issues. One chaplain spoke to how moral injury can be ascribed to a service member's experience rather than come from their own perspective. Ascribing rather than allowing a service member to self-identify with the construct can be damaging in how it reframes the service of a soldier in a way that the soldier previously did not understand their service. Seeing service as a moral issue with this lens may actually put them in further jeopardy, as they may be less able to respond instinctually in cases where survival instincts are required for staying alive. In addition, reframing their service may also destroy a service member's resilience in future deployments. In this case, there is value in allowing a service member to self-identify, should they so choose, with the moral injury construct so that it fosters a sense of resilience, rather than having the moral injury construct imposed on a service member's experience in a damaging and deconstructive way.

The Openness in Unitarian Universalist Religious Methodology

One key theme from the interviews was that of the uniqueness of Unitarian Universalism in exploring the moral and ethical dilemmas that military service members might encounter in

the service. As each of the military chaplains surveyed identified as a Unitarian Universalist, each chaplain also spoke to how this religious perspective has informed and guided their military ministry, particularly in their ministry with individuals who might suffer from what we would call moral injuries. Within this theme of Unitarian Universalist military chaplaincy, the Unitarian Universalist military chaplains who were interviewed for this project had a number of insights as to what Unitarian Universalism has to offer those in the military.

A large overarching theme from the interviews was that of Unitarian Universalism's ability to welcome different individual perspectives in its methodology. A religion whose believers affirm and covenant to promote seven different principles, Unitarian Universalism's fourth principle is "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning," welcoming individuals to seek out what brings meaning and fullness to their lives freely and openly (Unitarian Universalism's Seven Principles, 2017). With this principle, Unitarian Universalist military chaplains approach each service member in a way that is welcoming towards that person's own personal faith and/or theological perspective. One chaplain stated: "It is about meeting people where they are. Sometimes I might use the seven principles, but really I reach people where they are". Another chaplain said Unitarian Universalism guides military chaplains to "being open to truth as it comes from multiple sources," while another expressed Unitarian Universalism's advantage in being comfortable in a diverse, multifaith context: "Being a [military] chaplain anywhere, you have to be ready to work with people of all faith backgrounds. This isn't difficult territory for us". As a methodology that stresses this "free and responsible search," Unitarian Universalism enables military chaplains to individualize pastoral care approaches and to do so comfortably in an interfaith environment like the United States military.

Another aspect of Unitarian Universalist military chaplaincy builds off of this concept of "free and responsible search for truth and meaning," with many of the military chaplains surveyed speaking to their ability to see the fields of psychology and psychiatry as valuable ways of knowing; some chaplains of other faiths, in many of the experiences of those interviewed, are not comfortable engaging or exploring theories within these fields and stick within the realms of their faith traditions. One chaplain shared that "many chaplains do not go near stuff written by psychologists. [Unitarian Universalist chaplains] are open to truth from multiple sources, including psychology and psychiatry". Another chaplain shared similarly the view that "people need as humans to be nurtured and Unitarian Universalists [military chaplains] are good at bringing that to the table," speaking to the ability of Unitarian Universalist military chaplains to be open to psychological theories and explanations of trauma. Honoring the fields of psychology and psychiatry is an additional way that Unitarian Universalist military chaplains are able to make and share meaning with service members and veterans.

Furthermore, Unitarian Universalism's openness in the use of theological and spiritual language was another strength that arose out of these interviews. "Unitarian Universalist vocabulary is extensive and nuanced," one chaplain shared, speaking particularly to Unitarian Universalism's tolerance for "living in a world of gray, not all black and white". As Unitarian Universalism is heavily informed in this dialogue of multiple perspectives on meaning-making, one chaplain spoke to its flexible theology: "We're better together. We are proper—the only and right way—to bond and be together". This theology emphasizes a unity across lines of disagreement with regard to religious outlook or perspective. For Unitarian Universalist chaplains, it is not required that they share the same religious perspective with those they serve; in fact, it is "proper" that they do not share a common perspective. Unitarian Universalist

military chaplains come prepared with diverse forms of theological, religious, and spiritual

language that they are able to use to their advantage in reaching the diverse faith needs of the

soldiers they serve, especially in moments where the boundaries between "white" and "black"

decisions are heavily skewed and grayed.

Meeting Service Members Where They Are

A huge component in military chaplaincy, as brought up by every chaplain interviewed,

is the requirement to meet each service member where they are. This is reflected in the questions

a military chaplain posed during an interview: "In the midst of suffering, how do you find

meaning? How do you live again carrying this wound?" The chaplain's role is to help the service

member discern that meaning, especially in cases of struggling with combat trauma. In other

words, "We preach from our scars, not our wounds," this chaplain expressed, sharing the

necessity for healing in order for growth and resilience from trauma. Moral injury ministry

requires a general assessment of combat trauma; the moral rationalization can only occur once

these scars from such experiences start to form.

Another chaplain spoke specifically to how other chaplains ought to approach service

members in their ministries. In this chaplain's opinion, it is best to approach each experience of a

service member "through the lens of their experience"; this chaplain spoke to the "core scripture"

within Unitarian Universalist military chaplaincy being each service member's own experience,

not outside religious scriptures imposed on their experiences. In this regard, chaplains are tasked

with meeting each service member emotionally and spiritually. It seems that they are well

equipped to do so in light of flexible religious methodology and language, allowing them to truly

live into this role and meet the needs of those they serve.

A Shared Sense of Community

A resonant theme that further arose from these interviews was the theme of community, particularly forging a sense of community for service members regardless of faith, religious, or spiritual identity. Building trust, many of the chaplains expressed, is one of the most required aspects of military ministry; in assisting a service member with a moral injury, a chaplain is "invited to be present at the edge of someone's mind if they're willing to share the circumstances of a moral injury". In order to hear of circumstances in which someone feels morally and ethically implicated, the chaplain must keep and hold that service member's trust. A further theme involved in building this sense of community involves a "ministry of presence" that several of the military chaplains referenced. In one chaplain's experience, the dynamic of the room changes when the chaplain enters the room. Holding a ministry of presence calls people to be their better selves while simultaneously establishing the military chaplain as a safety net. This safety net available to service members is sometimes the only thing many service members feel that they need, whether they receive the assistance of their chaplain. In one chaplain's words, repeating what one of the soldiers in the unit had said: "All I need to know is you're there". By being present in military ministry, Unitarian Universalist military chaplains are able to serve as resources for service members in need and foster their greater resilience.

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Discussion

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Moral Injury in the Year 2050

In exploring future moral injuries resulting from conflicts as the year 2050 approaches, evidence for moral injuries resulting in service members far away from the field of battle suggests that soldiers, no matter their proximity to the battlefield, are still susceptible to moral

injuries in light of newer and more advanced remote technologies, like drone warfare. For this, I

extend the argument of possible moral injuries in future drone operators by the following:

In 2016, Slate published an article that discusses the character of Buster Bluth, a military

drone operator and pilot, in the television show *Arrested Development*. The series humorously

portrays drone operation to the public in its fourth season, where Bluth re-enlists in the military

and finds himself operating a joystick connected to a monitor he believes to be showing him

imagined killings and carnage in the latest game of the *Call of Duty* video game franchise

(Kirkpatrick, 2016). When Bluth realizes that he is not playing a game and that he has killed real,

actual people by leveling a hospital in Spain, Bluth falls out of his chair, with his colleagues

screaming "Man down!" as paramedics attend to him. The show makes light of this disturbing

subject by claiming Bluth has received the "first known injury to a drone pilot" (2016).

While the public holds this warped sense of perceived safety for drone operators, in

actuality, the subject of mental health outcomes for drone operators is not so much of a funny

subject. A 2013 study of United States Air Force Remotely Piloted Aircraft Pilots confirmed that

there was "no significant difference in the rates of [mental health] diagnoses" between mental

health outcomes of remote pilots and fixed-wing combat pilots deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq

(Otto & Webber, p. 3). In other words, United States Air Force Combat Pilots and Remotely

Piloted Aircraft Pilots had similar mental health outcomes resulting from their military service;

this is especially true in cases of PTSD (2013, p. 3). While drone operators might not suffer the

physical dangers of war, they remain susceptible to similar adverse mental health outcomes of

combat pilots, regardless of their proximity to the battlefield.

As outcomes from the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq would suggest, moral

injury is the "signature wound" resulting from these conflicts for United States service members

(Conan, Boudreau, Shay, & Brock, 2012). In addition, a 2012 study linked service members who witnessed or committed morally injurious acts to an increased risk of suicide and other behaviors (Maguen & Litz). In perspective to veteran suicide statistics, the year 2012 saw eighteen veterans committing suicide each day, which increased to twenty-two veterans per day in 2013 (Brock & Lettini, 2012; Kemp & Bossarte, 2013). With moral injury as the signature wound from recent wars and a rise in veteran suicides, the year 2050 may also see an increase in resulting moral injuries from military service, in conjunction with a growing veteran suicide rate.

Elements of moral injury are evidenced in the historical accounts from Yost and Livermore from their respective conflicts. This pattern in written history suggests that moral injuries, without the name to call them as such, were faced by soldiers of previous wars and conflicts. As one can see, military technology has readily advanced since the US Civil War and World War II. Modern technological advances allow for the remote control of military drones by pilots, safely operating overseas unmanned aircraft from bases in the United States. Yet, as *Arrested Development* perhaps unintentionally portrays, these pilots still reckon with the moral aftermath of their service. Although absent from the physical space of war, these operators realize that the "joysticks" they operate have real-life consequences and outcomes, which sometimes result in the loss of innocent human life. With this consideration, the year 2050 and future conflicts can expect to witness moral injuries just as combatants, veterans, and service members have in history and continue to witness today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, moral injury is a term that, although historically absent and undocumented, remains helpful in circumstances where a soldier requires naming a morally injurious experience in order to heal. From Livermore's and Yost's accounts, one can see into the minds and hearts of

service members who struggled with moral traumas that went unnamed. Sparingly written about in history, these case studies serve as examples of the moral injuries that occurred in past wars and conflicts. After interviewing six current and former military chaplains, the majority of them see utility in the use of moral injury to assist soldiers who would self-identify moral aspects of service with it. At the least, moral injury serves as another lens through which service members today can view their spiritual trauma, which in previous centuries went unnamed. One does not know the future moral implications of warfare in detail. However, while warfare has evolved, humanity's response to warfare has remained steadfast; souls continue to be torn in the face of extreme shame and guilt aspects resulting from war, no matter how removed that person is from the battlefield. As moral injury research expands, may those who assist soldiers to heal from war use this framework responsibly as soldiers navigate the difficult roads to recovery and resilience.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Are you familiar with the phrase "moral injury"?

2. **a.** If you are familiar with the phrase, how would you describe "moral injury" in your own words? **b.** If you aren't familiar with the phrase, a general definition of moral injury is the shame and guilt aspects that result from an act or transgression that violates deeply held moral beliefs and values. A person suffering from moral injury feels a deep sense of shame and guilt for what one has done or failed to do, sometimes with a limited amount of personal agency.

3. What, in your experience, is a way that military chaplains generally respond to moral injuries in the individuals they serve?

4. In your opinion, what is the ideal way a military chaplain should respond in assisting an individual with a moral injury?

5. What, if any, are the types of support that the military offers to service members who are struggling with moral injuries?

6. What, if any, is the role of the military chaplain in exploring the moral dimensions of military service for those they serve?

7. How, if so, has being a Unitarian Universalist military chaplain impacted how you see and address moral injuries in service members?

8. As a contemporary Unitarian Universalist military chaplain, do you have any information to offer with looking into the historic roots of Unitarian/Universalist/Unitarian Universalist military chaplaincy?

9. Do you consider the construct of "moral injury" to be useful in working with service

   members?