

Understandings of identity among Royal British Legion members: A qualitative insight

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Introduction

In the late 1970s Social Psychology was revolutionised by the conception of Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Tajfel and Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). SIT theorised a distinction between personal identity and social identities, and that these social identities are associated with different attitudes and behaviours. In the last decade SIT has given rise to the ‘Social Cure’ (SC) perspective (Jetten, Haslam, Haslam, & Branscombe, 2009). SC researchers explore the impact of group memberships and group identification (i.e., one’s subjective sense of belonging to the group) on health and wellbeing.

This is the first part of a project that looks to explore identification and its antecedents in the Royal British Legion.

Reported here is a qualitative study designed to explore of Royal British Legion/Scotland (RBL/S) members’ understandings of identity as well as identify possible antecedents in this group which may not be present in the current literature

These interviews explored participants’ sense of identity within the Legion and what this means to the individual. The themes identified in the data will be used to shape further research in September 2018

Materials and Methods

22 Semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the RBL/S

Participants:
11 Scottish, 8 English, 3 international

Aged 33-87,
11 male, 11 Female

Participants were in various roles, and from various backgrounds (military service/ civilian/ uniformed services).

Data is being analysed with a theoretically-driven Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results/Conclusions

Coding and analysis is in its initial stages.

However, some Social Cure-consistent insights that will inform or next study are already emerging.

Potential themes of role, meaning, purpose, and inclusivity have thus far been identified.

There is an interesting parallel in the interviews between the Social Identity Theory concept of group identification and the military veteran concept of ‘camaraderie’.

“And if you'd asked me before I had anything to do with the legion, I wouldn't, I'd have been like, oh, it's just another event, but just to be with all those guys all through the night and people were up for 24 hours. I'd had no sleep. They did their hour, but they didn't go home. They stayed, you know there was coffee, there was food on the go, that just the, as we said, on the craic and the carry on and the sense of comradeship was amazing. Now that was one night where it didn't matter who you are, what age you were, what type of member you are. Everybody was there together, remembering, remembering the dead, remembering that whole anniversary. And it was just, yeah, blew me away really, really did “

Conclusions

So far items measuring other possible antecedents of identification that have been identified in the interviews will be added, and questions asking participants about their roles within the RBL (e.g. chair, secretary, treasurer), purpose, meaning have so far been identified for inclusion in the second part of this research

This concept of camaraderie, its importance to military and veteran organisations, and its close parallel to the concepts in the Social Cure literature, shows the relevance of the Social Cure literature to this group, strengthening both this research and its potential impact.

“Female for one, which is definitely in the minority. I'm not ex-service, but those of us that are associate members, we're in the majority now in terms of the numbers, but when you think of the Legion and membership, you do think of those who are veterans who have actually served or so I suppose I'm in the majority of the numbers but not typical “

Literature cited

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