

'I was there' and 'It happened to me': An Exploratory Study of the Social Organization
of Killing by Military Police Officers and Combat Soldiers, 1976-1987

by

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Background and Previous Research.....	10
Killing in a Social Context.....	10
Justified and non-justified killing.....	11
Legal Perspective of Combat.....	14
Justification.....	17
Culture.....	19
Fight or Flight.....	22
Preparation and Training.....	23
Accountability/Responsibility.....	24
A Process-Based Socio-Psychological Model of Killing as an Exploratory Framework.....	37
Data and Methods.....	39
Research Question.....	39
Unitizing.....	39
Sampling.....	40
Coding Process.....	42
Reducing the Data.....	42
Results.....	45
Preparation to Shoot: Pre-Killing Behaviour.....	45
Physical Preparations of Combat.....	45
Identifying the Enemy.....	49
Initiating Contact.....	54
Under Fire.....	59
Contact: During-Kill Behaviour.....	61
Taking Aim.....	61
Securing a Kill.....	63
Counting and Reloading Ammunition.....	74
Slow Motion.....	75
Visions of Death.....	78

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Refrained from Killing	79
Post-Kill Behaviour.....	82
Damage Assessment of other and self-injuries.....	82
Body Count/Search.....	85
Discussion and Conclusion.....	90
References.....	99
Footnotes.....	112
Appendix.....	113
Primary Source.....	113
1976.....	113
1977.....	113
1979.....	113
1980.....	113
1981.....	114
1982.....	115
1983.....	117
1984.....	118
1987.....	119

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Abstract

Various theoretical frameworks have been applied in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of killing. However, while previous studies have examined killing as an outcome-oriented measure, few have explored killing as a socially organized process. Using letters written by soldiers, police officers, and security professionals found in the magazine *Soldier of Fortune*, this study examines the actual behaviours that occur during the killing process. The present study demonstrates how subjects psychologically adapt to killing through a cognitive mobilization process, experiencing a dissociative state that deactivates one's emotional reaction. Applicability of findings to other homicides is discussed.

Keywords: *soldiers; combatants; pleasure; killing; shooting behaviour; dissociation*

Introduction

Homicide offenders are viewed as “evil monsters” (Haybron, 2002) while those who kill during the course of their state-mandated duties are viewed as being justified and/or “heroic” (Klinger, 2004; Bourke, 2000; Nadelson, 2005). It is also argued that the act of killing is executed in defense of what the killer believes is a universalisable ‘good’, a logical justification for one’s own actions (Katz, 1998; Haybron, 2002). A great amount of attention has been directed towards illegal forms of killing, namely homicide, serial and mass murder, specifically analyzing the different motivations, behaviours, and characteristics of the offence and the parties involved (Browne, 1987; Belknap et al., 2012; Alvarez & Bachman, 2003; Fox & Levin, 2015). Each form of killing is commonly examined through micro- and macro-level theories, defining killing as a result of collective social or interpersonal conflict (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Furthermore, the pre- and post-behaviours that occur during a kill have only been examined in relation to mundane homicide offenders, in the context of interpersonal conflict (Shon & Roberts, 2008; Shon & Barton-Bellessa, 2012), whereas limited information exists on the experiences of those who have the authority to kill. War zone combatants such as soldiers, mercenaries, and guerillas as well as military police officers are oftentimes tasked with killing in the performance of their duty, and are provided with the legal authority to kill under specific conditions¹. Scholars have focused their analysis on the pre-combat aspects of military training and conditioning, followed by post-combat psychological responses that soldiers/police officers have to killing such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Calhoun, 2011; Rosenthal & Erickson, 2013). As much

¹ Police officers are authorized to use deadly force when the suspect is presenting an imminent and credible threat to the life of the officer or another person

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

attention has been attributed to the pre- and post-circumstances of military killing, there is an absence of research pertaining to the social organization and in-situ aspects of killing during the course of such official actions such as war or law enforcement. Thus, this paper examines how such experiences of killing or refraining from killing are organized as a social-psychological process.

War experiences have identity-changing effects on many soldiers, with certain veterans expressing disturbed behaviour alongside others who maintain normal functioning (Maringira, Gibson & Richters, 2014; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). As the harsh realities of war are rarely shared with the civilian world, professionals are found to sanitize the concept of war in their writings (Walklate & McGarry, 2015), focusing on those who become victims of war. Thus, killing is viewed by civilians as an isolated and traumatizing event; regarded as an outcome of a transaction rather than a social process in which one is engaged. In contrast to the traumatizing perspective, some scholars argue that soldiers experience pleasure from killing, and are rather distressed and traumatized by the civilian (family and friends) reactions to their combat experiences (Bourke, 2000; Grossman, 2009). While such an argument requires further examination, scholars have largely overlooked how killing is a socially organized activity, limiting their analysis to the social and cultural responses to a soldier's experience of killing. Furthermore, theoretical explanations for a soldier's (i.e. individual's) experience of killing another person are scarce, given many scholars have applied existing theories to such a phenomenon without considering its unique epistemological underpinnings. Finally, while a soldier's psychological responses to killing has been thoroughly investigated, usually as a trauma suffered after having killed in combat (Gallaway et al., 2014;

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Nadelson, 2005; Rosenthal & Erickson, 2013), there is an absence of literature pertaining to the actual behaviours demonstrated by soldiers that shape their emotions during the killing process. In totality, there are several reasons why a socio-psychological examination of killing is warranted.

First, understanding killing as a process-oriented phenomenon is essential when considering how individuals who have killed in one social context may do so again through adaption in their reasoning, behaviour and emotions. Although many quantitative studies have proposed predictors or preceding circumstances to violent behaviour prior to killing, qualitative studies such as Klinger's (2004) revealed the physiological effects that police officers experience when engaged in the act of killing another person, such as blanking out. While it was not Klinger's (2004) objective to examine the behaviours and emotions the officers experienced when killing, such an occurrence sheds light on the adaptive processes that occur that allow the officer to maintain functionality. Furthermore, a grounded-theory approach is necessary when attempting to understand the in-situ aspects and theoretical underpinnings of killing. Second, this study is important because it examines the processes of killing, disaggregated by time and experience (pre-, during-, and post-kill), which can be applied to legitimate and illegitimate forms of killing. Studies on various forms of killing have addressed pre-offence characteristics such as premeditation, alcohol/drug consumption, and identity management (Lubaszka et al., 2014; Shon & Barton-Bellessa, 2012), as well as post-offence behaviours such as staging, cannibalism, touching and/or positioning the victim's body (Shon & Roberts, 2008; Meloy, 2002; Lubaszka et al., 2014), but neglect to consider the behaviours that occur during the kill itself. Thus, this uneven focus on pre-offense and post-behaviours of

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

homicide offenders has left a shortcoming in the literature regarding the actual sequences of behaviours and the incumbent emotions that accompany the acts of killing. Simply put, prior works have neglected to examine killing as a socially organized activity. Third, understanding the emotions and processes that soldiers experience during the act of killing may shed light on how homicide offenders in general, and serial and homicide offenders in particular, may experience killing. Given the routine act of killing soldiers in combat encounter, the emotional adaption that occurs in soldiers may be applicable to the adaptive processes serial homicide offenders experience when progressing through a number of murders. Thus, understanding how killing is organized as a socio-psychological process may illuminate how general homicide offenders go about the act of killing or serial homicide offenders may prolong their killing careers.

To understand the socially organized aspects of killing, I will conceptualize killing through an interactional framework, by examining the patterns in the written experiences of war combatants.² Many efforts have been made to understand killing through an existing perspective, such as arguments grounded in rational-choice or evolutionary perspectives (Brookman, 2015; Daly & Wilson, 1997). In this paper, I will provide an account of killing that is anchored in the socially organized processes and behaviour of combatants in their experiences of killing, derived from the theoretical frameworks of life-course and signature theory through a grounded approach. As soldiers are found to interact with the sights and sounds occurring in their direct environment, the

² A combatant is defined as an individual who participates in war. However, while combatants may exist as a category of guerilla's, mercenaries or irregular fighters, the terms soldier and combatant are used interchangeably in this paper given that my research focuses on the individuals killing experience, as opposed to their position.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

sociocultural factors that that affect and influence a soldier's behaviours and meanings he creates from the experience are explored.

Background and Previous Research

Killing in a Social Context

Killing is explained differently depending on its context. In the context of everyday social life, individuals often engage in killing as a result of interpersonal conflict (Elisha et al., 2010; Leonard & Leonard, 2003; Daly & Wilson, 1997). Killing in this context is characterized as homicide or murder, a form of violence that is deemed to be irrational and expressive or instrumental and rational that results in ending another person's life (Daly & Wilson, 1997). Homicides within the United States (U.S.) are often committed based on "face" and "status" disputes (Daly & Wilson, 1997), in which alcohol is the most common substance used by homicide offenders and victims (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003). The history of homicide research has taken many paths, and it was not until the late 1990's that there was a shift in focus from group violence (e.g. mob rioting, lynching, vigilantism) to collective social or interpersonal violence (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Furthermore, theorists from various disciplines have explored the event of killing in an ordinary context, which has led to the development of many theoretical perspectives, ranging from micro- to macro-level analysis.

Since the shift of focus to interpersonal violence, there was an increase in micro-level theories which examine events related to relational homicide such as violence against women and child abuse, and social homicides such as killing between friends or acquaintances (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Other micro-level theories that have been used to explain the phenomenon of killing are control theories that assert that murder occurs due to the absence of controls against the act of killing; social learning theories that argue that homicides transpire because the behaviour is learned and reinforced;

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

techniques of neutralization state that offenders develop justifications for their reasoning and actions in order to commit homicide; and rational choice theories argue that killing is most likely to occur if an offender will reap rewards in some way from the killing (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003). Macro-level studies focusing on gender have shown that intimate partner homicides have been declining in North America, as cultural influences as well as women's equality and status have changed perspectives on violence against women (Dawson, Pottie, & Balde, 2009; Dugan, Nagin, & Rosenfeld, 1999). More specifically, as the leading cause of death for women, intimate partner homicide (IPH) also spawned evolutionary theories such as the sexual proprietariness view, which asserts that a man's jealousy instigates the violence against his partner due to real or imagined sense of the women's betrayal to the relationship (Belknap et al., 2012). In contrast, explanations as to why women kill their current or former partners are explored by the self-defense theory (Browne, 1987). Simply put, unlike men who kill their intimate partners as extensions of their violence against their mates, research has shown that women kill their mates in defense of self or their children (Belknap et al., 2012). Furthermore, although there are biological and psychological theories that also explain a person's ability to kill, macro-level theories have focused on cultural and structural influences that occur prior to killing (Lee, 2011; Savolainen et al., 2008), such as strain or economic deprivation theories (Land, McCall, & Cohen, 1990; Alvarez & Bachman, 2003).

Justified and non-justified killing

Killing is defined by the purpose that it serves society. Given how killing is situated in a social context as predominantly a heinous act, it is considered acceptable

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

when placed in a justified context of necessity, such as situations of self-defense, war or by law enforcement in the line of duty (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003; Klinger, 2004; Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Furthermore, a person is justified in using deadly force in self-defense or defense of another person (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003) in the following cases: in response to the threat of death; if the perceived danger is imminent; and if there is no other path of safe retreat (Estrich, 1990). Thus, while justifiable homicides are deemed to be acceptable, murders or illegal killings are considered unjustified forms of killing which are assigned different levels of culpability (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003). The prevalence of justifiable homicides is found to lead to the use of violence as a culturally acceptable form of behaviour within a city's social context (Williams & Flewelling, 1988). Nevertheless, there are socially acceptable forms of killing and violence, such as violence depicted by the mass media; governmental use and justifications of violence (e.g. war and counterterrorism); and the participation in approved violent activities (Baron & Straus, 1989).

Given the socially acceptable forms of killing, one may question who defines the justification of a kill. Using a postmodernist approach, acts of killing are defined by the power relations that are exercised within civil society (Law Commission of Canada, 2004; Cowling, 2006). Agencies have the power to influence how forms of killing are interpreted within society by using the distinctions in law to differentiate between criminal and inappropriate behaviour (Law Commission of Canada, 2004). Defining what is a crime, and therefore who is criminal is a recursive practice that is rooted in historical and culturally specific discourses (Cowling, 2006). At a micro- and macro- level, historical and existing political bodies aim to kill the enemy through means of power and

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

social control (Mbembe & Meinjes, 2003), specifically characterized by alienation, ‘othering’, and capital logic (Cowling, 2006; Milovanovic, 1997). Furthermore, it is argued that the sovereignty of the state allows the ability to define who is disposable and who is not (Mbembe & Meinjes, 2003). Thus, who is a victim, criminal or offender following the act of killing is defined on a case-by-case basis given the cultural and political influences of the sovereign state.

Depending on how a kill is situated, a person who has killed can be portrayed as a victim or criminal. For example, in a social context, a woman who has killed her spouse in self-defense is defined as a victim (Browne, 1987). In a military context, a soldier who returns from war and experiences psychological and mental injuries is defined as a ‘victim of war’ (McGarry & Walklate, 2011). However, those who commit illegal acts of killing experience a form of ‘othering’, being criminally labelled and inadvertently become dead to society (Mbembe & Meinjes, 2003). Such forms of labelling initiates the transformation of the person from a subject to an object that becomes disposable (Smith, 2013). Yet, colonial forms of killing are not subject to legal and institutional rules (Mbembe & Meinjes, 2003), as soldiers maintain the legal authority to kill in one context and are further defined as victims and/or hero’s in a social context (Bourke, 2000). Thus, soldiers are often not subject to the transformative criminal label, but rather stand as a symbol of the survival of the nation (Dowler, 2012). Nevertheless, the phenomenon of killing is an under examined area, which stands to be especially unexplored when considering lawful forms of killing.

Legal Perspective of Combat

International humanitarian law (IHL) is considered to be a part of international law that regulates armed conflict (*jus in bello*) between states (Khan, 1967; Percy, 2007; Cassese, 1980; Cohn, 2011). The two prominent legal statutes of IHL are the Geneva Convention (1949) and Hague Convention (1907), which illustrate the regulations and crimes of warfare (Khan, 1967). When a state assaults a foreign state, the form and justification of fighting is comprehensively defined within the IHL (Geneva/Hague Convention). Within the phenomenon of killing in combat, international laws create a license to kill, thus potentially encouraging soldiers to kill whomever they perceive as a 'threat'. Within the context of a just-war, the term 'threat' is ambiguous, and thus, problematic in allowing the soldier to truly justify the decision to kill (Fabre, 2012).

In the context of war, various scholars argue that inherent loopholes exist in order to give an advantage for state actors, primarily with the state's use of private forces (Percy, 2007; Burmester, 1978; Khan, 1967). As legally organized armed forces are commonly used, private contractors (mercenaries) are considered to be cheaper and provide more flexibility in fulfilling their obligations (Avant, 2004). While the Hague Convention stipulates that it is the obligation of the state to prevent the organization of mercenary forces, there is no imposed regulation on the states to prevent individuals from joining mercenary forces. Enlisting oneself in foreign forces allows individuals to evade authoritative control (Scoville, 2006), granting no permanent allegiance or responsibility to the housing state (Burmester, 1978). Evasion of control has been found to lead to crimes of war, where little regulation of employed security companies (i.e. contractors) have allowed for disproportionate behaviour and ill respect for civilian lives (Campbell,

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

2000). Nations and states have continued to utilize mercenary forces under different labels such as contractors or private fighters in order to evade the stipulations set out in Article 47 Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions (Cassese, 1980). Percy (2007) proposes that loopholes or ineffective laws do not stand to simply control behaviour, but rather contain flaws in order to make it impossible to control behaviour.

The rules within international law can facilitate justified and unjustifiable amounts of killing by willing and reluctant soldiers (Overland, 2006; Nadelson, 2005; Grossman, 2009; Swank & Marchand, 1946). As previously mentioned, the variety of fighters who partake in warfare (soldiers, mercenaries and guerrillas) maintain a different reason for their participation in battle (Overland, 2006; Khan, 1967; Percy, 2007). Overland (2006) found that many soldiers participate in war out of loyalty to their country; however, some soldiers are reluctant to kill, missing their targets intentionally and/or refusing to fire a weapon (Grossman, 2009; Fabre, 2012). While there are soldiers who are reluctant to kill, such as military officers (Broome, 2014), there are those who enjoy killing and receive gratification from the experience (Grossman, 2009; Nadelson, 2005). Reluctance to kill another can be overcome by being 'told to do it' or fighting to be socially accepted by other soldiers, but such reluctance may be reaffirmed upon the witnessing of unjust violence, such as rape, torture, or killing innocents (Nadelson, 2005). Nevertheless, there is an absence of research regarding soldiers who experience pleasure in killing, as previous studies have limited their scope by only examining morally and mentally wounded soldiers (Swank & Marchand, 1946). Thus, a soldier's participation in warfare should not be taken at face value, as each individual maintains a latent

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

motivation that may not be willingly expressed verbally, but will be illustrated through the person's behaviour.

As a soldier may maintain the authority to use deadly force, there is a prominent difference in the meaning and purpose that the use of deadly force has to each type of soldier (Broome, 2014; Klinger, 2004; Edgar, 2005; Grossman, 2009). Between military officers, soldiers, mercenaries and guerillas, each have different motivations for using deadly force. For example, soldiers or military officers who are psychologically motivated by a cause will resort to violence when faced with imminent death situations (Broome, 2014; Klinger, 2004); murderous violence adopted by soldiers, mercenaries or guerillas may be thought to be motivated by greed, thrill, arousal or revenge (Jones, 2006; Percy, 2003; Broome, 2014). In general, it is found that soldiers who obtain training prior to deployment have a vested understanding about when to use deadly force, teaching them to be tactical and strategic in their actions (Broome, 2014). In such situations, Grossman (2009) argues that training will conquer the natural aversion to killing.

In contrast, Klinger (2004) finds that even with rigorous training, officers in particular will withhold deadly force, with hope that the situation will take another direction. The aspect of meaning attributed to how actors perceive themselves in relation to their victim largely influences their decision to use force, primarily as Broome (2014) found that the decision to shoot or not is a very personal decision for police [military] officers. Nevertheless, the psychological capacity to use deadly force varies between individuals. It has been recognized that soldiers are constantly trying to make sense out of what they experienced, a situation that can become a life-defining event (Edgar, 2005).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

A natural parallel exists between the occupation of a soldier and a police officer, found in their logic and legitimized authority to kill. Occupationally, police officers and soldiers are categorized as protective services, sharing surface and substantive characteristics. The common attributes include the following: distinctive uniforms; a hierarchical organizational structure; dependence on command and control; general concern for physical ability and strength (Campbell & Campbell, 2010). By occupying a specific role of protection, Fabre (2012) argues that like soldiers, police officers have a role-based commitment to look after one another. The transition from civilian to warrior is mechanically similar through their reality-based training, stimulation and experiences (Broome, 2014; Grossman, 2009; Klinger, 2004). Adverse situations of physical enforcement, violent coercion and deadly force have led to commonly shared experiences between police officers and soldiers, such as elements of social distancing, physical proximity, instincts of fight, flight, flee or bluff (Grossman, 2009). In essence, governments have granted police officers and soldiers the authority to use deadly force to uphold societal and state mandates (Campbell & Campbell, 2010).

Justification

Within the event of killing, lawful combatants are considered to be morally innocent, creating an incentive to kill when following the main principle in war that involves an equal right to kill (Overland, 2006; Bomann-Larson, 2004; Robin, 1963; Walzer, 2000). The equal war-right to kill refers to the idea that no combatants maintain immunity against killing or being killed, regardless of how legal or justified their cause in fighting (Bomann-Larson, 2004; Walzer, 2000). A soldier's temptation to kill may be derived from the lawful right to formally, legally and impartially kill as long as the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

combatants are deemed lawful (Bomann-Larson, 2004). Thus, if soldiers (or police officers) are found in a conflict of facing severe bodily harm, they are authorized to kill the offender in self-defense (Robin, 1963). However, Robin (1963) notes that police [military] officers will use fatal force as a last resort, as opposed to mercenaries and guerillas (Khan, 1967), who will resort to violence instantaneously (Fabre, 2012). Each threat that a soldier is faced with is subjectively interpreted, allowing a void to exist in how the term ‘threat’ is defined, that is further reasoned to justify the use of lethal force.

The status of a war is theoretically defined by the just-war theory, which may support or motivate soldiers towards inflicting severe injury or death. Just-war theory provides a justification for war, whether it be theoretical or historical in its perspective (Bomann-Larson, 2004; Fabre, 2012). Furthermore, one may question who created the notion of a ‘just’ war, as more narrow perspectives to justified enforcement (i.e. policing) is critically analyzed by academic and public discourse. Bomann-Larson (2004) describes two principles that are upheld in the context of war: *jus ad bellum* (fighting for a just cause that is proportionate to the means used) and *jus in bello* (justification is questioned as the war being fought is disassociated from its true cause). Some soldiers may be inspired by the justified cause of fighting (Fabre, 2012), whereas others may view war as the legal authorization to exert oneself without consequence (Percy, 2007; Grossman, 2009). There are a small percentage of soldiers who are highly aroused and excited about killing another person, regardless of the cause (Nadelson, 2005; Grossman, 2009). The type of threat during a combat situation plays a crucial role in how a soldier will react, as there are inter-military forces that pose a greater threat than that presented by the enemy (Fabre, 2012). Specifically, studies have observed the intricate functioning of military

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

groups, finding that commanding officers will use lethal force as a method of securing a soldiers' compliance. Orders delivered by one's commanding officer may be immoral and/or unnecessary, such as committing atrocities against civilians and/or engaging in irrational combat (Fabre, 2012; United States Uniform Code of Military Justice, 1949). Furthermore, the declared rationale of a war's cause can potentially influence a soldier's behaviour, allowing for the reflection of purpose by soldiers within military culture that requires further investigation. The temptation to kill varies between soldiers in the military, as the just-war theory provides a lawful foundation for soldiers, but does not indicate that once a soldier has started fighting, he/she must immediately stop (Fabre, 2012).

Culture

Military culture maintains an atmosphere of social isolation, reflecting both an occupational and national culture (Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006; Cohn, 2011; Nadelson, 2005; Lynch & Walsh, 2000). A military culture can consist of the sharing of common perspectives, norms, values and priorities (Cohn, 2011; Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006). Such group identification in the military can result in the generation of deviant values, beliefs and ideologies that are not reflective of the formal military culture (Lynch & Walsh, 2000; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). Although soldiers are continuously training and exposed to educational curricula, Cohn (2011) found that the absence of good policy, clear orders and allocation of policy making decisions resulted in the weak enforcement of formal norms (Huntington, 1981). In a similar context, Nadelson (2005) asserts that military training is designed to remove soldiers from their past, while instilling a new self-definition. The re-definition of a soldier by instilling

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

organizational values is a learning process that is also influenced by the mindset of individuals in their direct environment. Soldiers enter the military with a specific biological disposition; however, the expression of a soldier's disposition is dependent on cultural conditioning (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). Within some military organizations, soldiers may be forced to self-manage in a combat situation or may be directed by a leader, adhering to orders without question (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). Nevertheless, the terms of employment that a soldier selects, favoring either legitimate or illegitimate actors, will strongly influence the culture that a soldier adopts.

While working in unity, each individual soldier maintains a specific motivation and psychological disposition that will impact his/her behaviour (Percy, 2003; Samuels, 2007; Overland, 2006; Campbell, 2000). Although specific typologies of a soldier have not been clearly defined, various studies have described positions that exist, such as regularly organized armed soldiers who are party to the conflict, mercenaries and guerrillas (Percy, 2003; Samuels, 2007; Bomann-Larson, 2004). Each position may indicate the degree to which they will adhere to authoritative control (Percy, 2003). A soldier within a lawfully organized army is unlikely to disobey a command from a higher authoritative figure, regardless of his/her personal feelings about the command (Fabre, 2012). Overland (2006) found that soldiers choose to fight out of loyalty to their country; however some soldiers fail to ensure they are loyal to a just war. Alternatively, mercenaries are external to the conflict and are defined by the extent to which they are controlled by state governments or institutions (Percy, 2003; Campbell, 2000; Burmester, 1978). While the definition of a mercenary is ambiguous (Spall, 2014), many scholars have formulated their own definition in lieu of the cumulative description provided by the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Article 47 of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention (Percy, 2007; Scoville, 2006; Burmester, 1978).

A military group's composition will heavily influence the type of behaviour a soldier exhibits during a combat situation (Griffith, 2009; Cohn, 2011; Grossman, 2009; Turner et al., 1987). When analyzing the soldier's behaviour, using the framework of social identity theory (SIT), Griffith (2009) discovered that positive group relevant outcomes, such as entering the unit and unit membership were strong predictors of social cohesion within soldier populations. Upon elaboration of SIT, Turner et al. (1987) assert that people maintain two identities: a personal identity and social identity. The type of identity that is most prominent in a soldier is dependent on the soldier's form of meaning that he/she has attached to the social context (Griffith, 2009). If a soldier is heavily influenced by a sense of group membership, his/her self-concept and performance will depend on his/her belonging to the group (Griffith, 2009). Conversely, Cohn (2011) asserts that private contractors may or may not feature a culture, given that they are not employees of the state and place importance on efficiency and profit. Thus, upon joining a group of soldiers hired for a 'cause', a soldier's behaviour and motivation may change depending on how he identifies with the other members of the group. The argument that social identity influences behaviour in combat is further illustrated by Grossman (2009), who found that there was little emphasis by soldiers on fear of bodily harm, and great emphasis on not disappointing their fellow soldiers (Edgar, 2005). Furthermore, a group of soldiers creating their own identity or culture is not limited to the potential of having deviant values, but may also be adopted as a lifelong outlook. A study of soldiers who had either deserted or resigned from the Zimbabwe National Army found that the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

majority of soldiers reported maintaining an extreme hold onto their identity as soldiers (Maringira, Gibson and Richters, 2014). While such findings contradict previous research asserting that soldiers can be transformed back into civilians post-service (Vest, 2012; Lomsky-Feder, Gazit, & Ben-Ari, 2008; Dowler, 2012), the findings by Maringira, Gibson and Richters (2014) illustrate that a soldier's identity and self-concept is forever changed through the experience of soldierly group culture. With the potential adoption of a pugnacious identity, future research may consider the military background of modern killers, as such an experience may serve as a risk factor to future violence.

Fight or Flight

In a combat situation, a soldier is influenced by a series of psychological and physiological processes that determine whether the soldier will fight, submit or flee from battle (Grossman, 2009; Fabre, 2012; Suresh, Latha, Nair & Radhika, 2014). The processes an endangered soldier experiences serve to prepare and support him/her in fighting or fleeing (Grossman, 2009), which is further affected by the soldier's threshold value. Studies have found that a person's age is a vital predictor of his/her response in threatening situations, specifically finding that the 'fight or flight' threshold of a person decreases as age increases (Elhamdani et al., 2002; Suresh, Latha, Nair & Radhika, 2014). Grossman (2009) proposes four categories of 'fight or flight' responses, posturing, submitting, fighting, and fleeing. While the responses of submitting, fleeing and fighting maintain explanatory power from their label, posturing is an instinctual reaction that is used to discourage the enemy through nonviolent methods prior to physical contact. Such behaviour is demonstrated through yelling, battle cries, and weaponry (Grossman, 2009).

Preparation and Training

Prior to a combat situation, soldiers are provided with training that, arguably, prepares and conditions soldiers to respond adequately in life-threatening circumstances (Grossman, 2009; Jones, 2006; Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006). The implementation of training specially focuses on aspects of a military character, imposing uniformity, hierarchy, discipline and control (Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006). However, within training practices lies the instructions of killing, which are given great emphasis because most army recruits maintain an inherent resistance to killing (Nadelson, 2005; Grossman, 2009). Nadelson (2005) argues that training is designed to instill new self-definition, rejecting the prior soft civilian lifestyle and creating an automated soldier without conscious thought (Grossman, 2009). Contrasting views have been provided on the subject of a conditioned fighter, raising questions about the reasons behind post-deployment mental health problems. Some scholars argue that the typical soldier is purely conditioned in his ability to kill (Grossman, 2009), whereas other scholars suggest that all soldiers begin as ordinary men who maintain the instinct to kill, but are suppressed by the norms and customs within their greater society (Nadelson, 2005). Thus, the point of training adheres to such an instinctual craving, overcoming the initial resistance and resulting in the addiction to excitement and sense of freedom (Nadelson, 2005). Bayonet training drills are found to be the most prominently used kill-training technique, forcing soldiers to use hand-to-hand combat that arouses aggression (Grossman, 2009; Jones, 2006; Nadelson, 2005; Edgar, 2005).

The capacity of a soldier to kill remains in question, as there is a lack of consensus around psychological conditioning techniques (Lukas, 2014; Grossman, 2009).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Grossman (2009) argues that operant conditioning can be executed through joysticks' kill maneuvers in video games and shooting man-shaped silhouettes, resulting in an automatic conditioned response called automaticity. Contrary to this perspective, Lukas (2014) found that avid videogame players were clearly opposed to real-world violence, but rather discovered that video game contexts interlock in systems of cultural intertextuality. Virtual guns and violence do not directly result in real-world killing; however, the weapon-focused world of video games has social consequences, particularly in influencing how players view the worth of weapons, functionality, usability and results (Lukas, 2014). Although video games (i.e. pseudo-realities) are found not to lead to violence, one cannot divorce the social context in which such games are played from the actual game itself, mainly in the games reinforcement of the 'other' or 'enemy'. The practical use of a pseudo-reality is implemented in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's shoot-no shoot training program, a program alongside other previous military conditioning techniques that have been only partially successful (Grossman, 1970).

Accountability/Responsibility

A professional level of accountability is expected of soldiers, as their conduct may still be considered criminal irrespective of their deemed authority to kill another enemy soldier (Puls et al., 2005; Percy, 2003; Bomann-Larson, 2004; Khan, 1967). While maintaining the right to kill, soldiers and civilians preserve the right not to be killed, which cannot be denoted as a result of events in the world (Overland, 2006). Within Protocol II of the Geneva Convention, Article 4 stipulates that during times of armed conflict (internal or international), all non-combatants (including civilians) are entitled to humane treatment if exposed to any armed party in power within the conflict (Puls et al.,

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

2005). Thus, as non-combatants who cannot legally bear weaponry are immune from attack, the question is raised as to the relationship between being armed and having the responsibility to fight (Walzer, 2000). Bomann-Larson (2004) argues that war is portrayed as a privileged right to kill, given army combatants are instruments of an aggressive state. However, the use of private forces or mercenaries who operate secretly from the legal force of the state (Scoville, 2006) is defined purely as individual actors and thus, cannot be legally or morally excused from killing (Percy, 2003). Similarly, Khan (1967) argues that while some forms of guerilla warfare do not contravene the norms of international law, guerilla participants should be tried for crimes against humanity if the conflict is not of an international nature. National laws still apply to internal armed conflict; therefore, combatants who participate in the armed conflict and who are residents of the country of conflict, but do not belong to a legal armed force can be held accountable for their actions. Nevertheless, Khan (1967) notes that many guerillas cannot be simply singled out and treated like criminals given that war occurs in a 'no-man's-land' where rights and wrongs are silenced (Bomann-Larson, 2004). Holding a combatant legally accountable for his/her actions is recognized as a sound strategy to regulate behaviour; however, inappropriate conduct may result from weak supervision, weak enforcement and poor group influences.

Each individual soldier is unique in his/her ability to process killing in combat; the mental processing of a kill may be instigated by a soldier's acknowledged responsibility for the killing. Soldiers have been found to internalize killings, resulting in psychological disorders (Jones, 2006; Moss, 2014), whereas others dehumanize their victims and are able to function normally after they have killed (Nadelson, 2005;

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Grossman, 2009). Nadelson (2005) argues that the dehumanization of subjects occurs when a soldier focuses on a perceived characteristic of the victim, overcoming the moral effects of killing. However, similar to the findings of Jones (2006), Nadelson (2005) found that when there is little distance between the soldier and his victim that he has just killed, the psychological technique of denying victims their humanity may fail.

Divergently, in an environment that requires teamwork, such as artillery, the responsibility of killing is less detrimental because it is spread beyond one individual soldier (Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, Grossman (2009) argues that soldiers who are in front-line combat have the responsibility to kill, given they are faced with the irrefutable evidence that another soldier has the intent of killing them. With the inevitability of death by either oneself or the assailant is generally found to erase the primal fear of death (Nadelson, 2005). In totality, the meaning of the act of killing is individually defined. Thus, the meaning of killing can range from having a detrimental effect, to being a brief psychological hindrance, or to having an invisible existence.

Nevertheless, soldiers correlate the significance of their experience to the meaning they assign to their performed role (Vries & Liem, 2011; Grossman, 2009; Vest, 2012; Swank & Marchand, 1946). Vest (2012) found that the psychological impact of a deployment experience differed greatly depending on the soldier's cultural background. Contrasting themes arise when considering a soldier's moral accountability, as some define killing as 'just a job' (Vest, 2012; Klinger, 2004), justified cause (Bomann-Larson, 2004), or as an exciting experience (Vries & Liem, 2011; Grossman, 2009; Swank & Marchand, 1946). A person's acceptance of his actions through admitting personal responsibility may differ on the basis of his psyche, as some may be distraught by their

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

actions as opposed to others who maintain normal functioning (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Different gradients of morality exist among people, influenced by their culture, country or social group, that aid or hinder them in their ability to kill, which may lead one to question the level of arousal one experiences during the act of killing.

Neuro-biological dispositions may become instigating factors when rationalizing the decision to kill (Schoenbaum, Roesch & Stalnaker, 2006; Nickerson, 2014; Grossman, 2009). As each mechanism within the brain serves a different contribution to one's behaviour, studies have found that the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) uses associative information based on perceived value or expected outcomes as a precursor to guide decisions (Schoenbaum, Roesch & Stalnaker, 2006; Nickerson, 2014). Similar to individuals suffering from an addiction, blood flow increases to the OFC and neurons are activated in anticipation of a preferred outcome, acting as an incentive referred to as representational memory. Over-activation of the OFC correlates with a person's craving of a particular experience. However, a reduced amount of activation can lead to high levels of impulsivity (Schoenbaum, Roesch & Stalnaker, 2006). Thus, unbeknownst to a soldier's conscious rationalization process, the decision to engage in high-risk behaviour and/or killing is pre-cognitively made by desire-driven mechanisms in the brain.

The sociological and anthropological elements of a soldier's behaviour requires further exploration, as the behaviour of certain soldiers may reflect qualities of "aggressive psychopathic personalities" (Grossman, 2009, p. 43). Nickerson (2014) further revealed that antisocial and psychopathic individuals experience significant impairments in the orbitofrontal cortex within the prefrontal regions, which significantly influence the cognitive processes and decision-making abilities of an individual.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

However, various studies have found that the prefrontal cortex within the male brain is the last to mature, not reaching maturation until a person's mid-20's (Sowell et al., 1999; Gogtay et al., 2004), hindering the arguments of poor-decision making by younger soldiers. Soldiers who have experienced repeated concussions or have mild traumatic brain injury may demonstrate increased impulsiveness, frequent headaches and a persistent irritable mood (Bosco, Murphy & Clark, 2013), the progression of these symptoms which can then, lead to aggression. There is a considerable absence in current research about the existence of aggressive or psychopathic personalities within military populations, since most literature focuses on the psychological wounding of soldiers rather than personality dispositions.

The formal classification of deficient personalities found in military personnel was more explicit during World War II (McQuitty, 1943); a soldier's locus of control (LOC) influences his or her psychological resiliency to traumatic events (Stewart & Yuen, 2011; Gallaway et al., 2014; McQuitty, 1943; Johnsen et al., 2014). Gallaway et al. (2014) asserts that active engagement in combat is parallel to high internal LOC, further speculating that soldiers may perceive they are acting on their environment, as opposed to being subject to its control. Stewart and Yuen (2011) posited a similar assertion, finding that active coping and internal LOC were positively associated with resiliency. There is an absence of research pertaining to the LOC for those who choose to engage in risk-taking behaviour, particularly aggressive behaviours. In the 1940's, soldiers with limited fear conditioning and lack of self-control (psychopathic traits) were defined as 'retarded soldiers', deemed unfit to progress in a satisfactory standard to the regular training program (McQuitty, 1943). Thus, one may question the degree of resiliency that is

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

required for militant positions, as maintaining an internal LOC can also result in undesirable traits such as psychopathy. Johnsen et al. (2014) found that individuals with strong characteristics of commitment, control and challenge (i.e. hardiness) can control or influence their environment by investing personal effort, similar to the findings of Gallaway et al. (2014). Nevertheless, high hardiness is akin to sensation-seeking, which are preceding elements of risk-taking and challenge-seeking behaviour. By believing one can control his/her environment, some may approach situation with the desire to cope and learn, whereas others may be motivated by novelty and arousal (Johnsen et al., 2014). Such differentiation in personality and psychology is not specifically considered in current studies; the recently studied mental health populations readily define specific types of psychological illness, but rather discount any soldiers demonstrating aggressive or psychopathic traits (Moss, 2014). Thus, the experience itself becomes the motivating factor of arousal, a sensation that may be desired for different reasons, some reasons less desirable than others.

Sensation-seeking is understood as a form of psychological arousal that one may receive from a desired experience (Johnsen et al., 2014; Grossman, 2009; Nadelson, 2005; Gray, 1958). Interestingly, studies have discovered that soldiers were highly aroused and excited by the act of killing (Grossman, 2009; Nadelson, 2005), which some scholars suspect sustained them through the physical deprivations and risks of combat (Gray, 1958; Edgar, 2005). Grossman (2009) argues that soldiers experience a high from killing that is not only the result of adrenaline, but is rooted in the thrill of pleasure and satisfaction from killing. When a soldier admits to feeling pleasure from killing, such feelings may reveal social and psychological facets of the soldier's rationalization; these

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

aspects of a soldier's psychology currently remain unexplored by scholars. Furthermore, Nadelson (2005) argues that all soldiers are ordinary men who naturally resist killing; while soldiers often make the judgment to kill based on immediate danger, the result of killing leads to a complete transformation of the soldiers' psyche. Nonetheless, previous research fails to identify the diversity of emotions that exist within the aspects of killing: a person's apprehensive preconception of killing, in contrast to another person awaiting the opportunity to kill.

Different emotions are elicited by killing based on the distance between a killer and his/her victim, creating diversity in the amount of pleasure they derive from the experience. The excitement derived from killing has only been studied in the context of firearms weaponry (Grossman, 2009; Bourke, 2000), whereas the emotions elicited during a short range kill have been largely ignored. However, various soldiers interviewed expressed in their descriptions of an intimate kill that they will approach a victim in such a position that the victim's eyes are not visible, granting less hesitation to strike their victim (Nadelson, 2005). Averted eye contact is supportive of the dehumanization process discussed earlier, as the emotional strain by denying the victim their identity may be perceived as a proactive coping method. Furthermore, the psychological registration of a kill is found to be less intense when it is the result of a technological instrument, such as a gun or bomb; when conduct that is considered to be similar to the simulation of a training exercise (Lukas, 2014), soldiers have confessed to pretending that they are not killing humans (Grossman, 2009; Shifferd, 2011). If soldier uses a form of technology to kill, the action of killing fosters little emotional attachment, alongside less disturbing thoughts and/or dreams experienced afterwards. Oftentimes, a

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

kill is taped into a soldier's memory, existing as a consciously re-evoked pleasure that may disturb the veteran during the course of his or her civilian life (Nadelson, 2005).

A soldier's emotional response elicited after killing can be explained through the domain of social psychology, as one's social relationships and environmental "feeling rules" shape a soldier's emotions (Thoits, 1989, p. 322; Mesquita, Marinetti & Delvaux, 2012; Hochschild, 1979). Hochschild (1979) asserts that social psychology assumes that emotion is not governed by social rules. However, the emotional frameworks of sociology and psychology are heavily interrelated, since social rules consist of applying to behaviour and thought (Mesquita, Marinetti & Delvaux, 2012; Hochschild, 1979). Within this interrelated context, individuals actively manage their emotions in order to assume the appropriate emotion they feel is required for a particular occurrence (Lively, 2006; Hochschild, 1979). Emotional affiliation or identification is bound by rules around what a person should (or should not) feel and express; shared understanding of classic onsets, stages and results of emotional experiences/interactions, and expectations of emotional conformity. These are socially defined by exemption periods for emotions that are incapable of being successfully controlled (Thoits, 1989). The effort to appeal to the emotional patterns within each context indicates social rules or paths of social arrangement, feeling and consequence, which further creates a culture-bound vocabulary of feeling (Hochschild, 1975; Thoits, 1989). By transitioning between the cultural atmospheres of military and civilian life, soldiers face an internal battle of adhering to societal norms. For example, Calhoun (2011) found that veterans experience alienation within society as they are unable to relate to ordinary people.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Particular environments (e.g. workplace, home, society) have differing cultures that have a controlled vocabulary, forming ethnopsychologies that define a person's emotion in a specific context (Thoits, 1989; Hochschild, 1979). It is posited that authentic emotions are undermined by cultural beliefs towards intrinsic feelings and an individual's capacity, becoming "emotional work" to adopt ascribed feelings (Hochschild, 1979, p. 571). Upon a soldier's return to civilian life, Bourke (2000) found that the process of reciting and understanding his/her experiences is shaped by other civilians. One's inability to adopt a mode of vocabulary due to "misfeeling" or "inappropriate" feelings results in sanctions that are meant to enforce conventions of feeling (Hochschild, 1979). A soldier's emotional adjustment is not always successful as many have confessed to a sense of disillusionment, experiencing a 'profound emotionalism' that has destroyed their capacity to feel upon their return to society (Bourke, 2000, p. 350). Supporting this finding, Nadelson (2005) revealed Vietnam veterans reported that, "...they felt dysphoria, anomie...peacetime could give them no equivalent and demanded compliance to rules they had abrogated to survive" (p. 21). Thus, combat exposure provides soldiers with a new level of stimulation and arousal that normative society is unable to sustain.

The emotions that a soldier harbours can be understood as the result of social influences; each subjective experience elicits an emotion that modifies a soldier in his/her perception, cognition and behaviour (Christophe & Rime, 1997; Hochschild, 1975). Prior to active deployment, soldiers experience practical training, social cultures and warrior myths that are personally endorsed; the absorbed influences of a soldier's social reality prior to killing are projected in their perceptions and behaviour (Bourke, 2000; Klinger, 2004; Grossman, 2009; Griffith, 2009). The emotions experienced after a kill are either

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

accepted or denied by the soldier, depending on whether soldiers empathize with their victim. The soldiers may feel excitement and exhilaration, or become "...overwhelmed by the emotions and become incapable of further combat" (Grossman, 2009, p. 239). Nevertheless, the exposure to an emotion would modify a soldier's sense of self, further inspiring a soldier to interact with others to either confirm or disconfirm the changes they have experienced (Christophe & Rime, 1997; Mesquita, Marinetti & Delvaux, 2012). Christophe and Rime (1997) assert that individuals engage in the social sharing of emotion through forms of conversation to psychologically adjust, which is further supported by Calhoun (2011) and Moss (2014) in their analysis of talk therapy. Nonetheless, the possibility of non-verbal social sharing of emotion (cues, physical expression, demeanor, etc.) of soldiers remains unexamined overall.

The extent of a soldier's psychological trauma is a derivative of how he or she rationalizes the event, as a soldier may face an internal enigma, trying to make sense of what he/she experienced (Edgar, 2005; Nadelson, 2005; Jones, 2006; Gallaway et al., 2014). Front-line combat troops are the most prominent soldiers that experience psychological trauma (Jones, 2006), with killing as a significant predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), alcohol abuse, anger and relationship problems (Maguen et al., 2010; Gallaway et al., 2014). Moss (2014) proposed the idea that psychological breakdown is the direct result of unresolved tension in the psyche. Such tension can exist alongside mental strain of adhering to normative behaviour; various scholars argue that soldiers mentally breakdown due to the fact they experienced pleasure in killing, which is morally appalled by society (Nadelson, 2005; Gray, 1958; Bourke, 2000). As current literature may address the emotional responses elicited during the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

action of killing (Nadelson, 2005; Grossman, 2009; Gray, 1958; Bourke, 2000), there is a prominent absence of information pertaining to the soldier's feelings of received fire, specifically pertaining to subjects who are being shot at, targeted or witness their comrades die in the line of fire. Psychological dysfunctions require further distinction, as one may question if there is a psychological difference of impact between the act of killing and being the target of the enemy's attempted kill.

With regard to the tactical act of killing, studies have been unable to differentiate between the lethal intent of a person and the weapon that is wielded. More specifically, many authors have asserted that the act of killing another is magical (Nadelson, 2005), exciting and arousing (Grossman, 2009; Gray, 1958; Bourke, 2000); however, within each context of description, the aggressor has wielded an instrument that has killed another. Furthermore, there is a gap in current literature pertaining to the emotions experienced during an intimate kill. The emotional engagement of a kill has failed to be fully conceptualized, as current research does not address the emotions experienced when killing with/without a weapon. Thus, this study will hope to remedy this discrepancy, as there remains a possibility that such asserted 'excitement' may be derived from the act of killing itself as opposed to the idea of ending someone's life. The repeated killing that a soldier may experience has the potential to twist or reflect his/her true psyche. The impact on a soldier's psyche is subjective, as continuous killing may lead a soldier to be revolted with his/herself, whereas other soldiers have been found to engage in drinking the blood of their victim in celebration (Herr, 1977; Nadelson, 2005).

Parallel to a person's state of arousal, the distance that the act of killing is accomplished from can have implications towards the soldier's psychological status.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Technology as an instrument of death removes a soldier from personal involvement, becoming a routine with little emotional investment (Nadelson, 2005). Consequently, the experiences of soldiers who engage in intimate or proximate killing are limited, as current studies rely on preceding behaviour and attitudes to killing, such as positioning oneself to avoid eye contact (Nadelson, 2005) or adhering to warrior myths (Bourke, 2000). The intricate details of an intimate kill may help explain the consequent psychology of soldiers, leaving some with PTSD, abandonment of duties, self-harm in civilian life or contrastingly, eagerness to behave more violently.

The act of killing itself is described as having an intoxicating power over soldiers (Bourke, 2000; Nadelson, 2005; Grossman, 2009), followed by psychological repercussions that are dependent on a soldier's resiliency and acceptability (Stewart & Yuen, 2011; Gallaway et al., 2014; McQuitty, 1943; Johnsen et al., 2014). However, there is a gap in current literature pertaining to the exact processes related to killing; that is, the sociological and emotional processes related to the sequences involved in killing are absent from research. Current studies look at the preceding or subsequent behaviours of killing (Shon & Roberts, 2008; Shon & Barton-Bellessa, 2012), but avoid analyzing the behavioural sequences involved in the killing process. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted by Bourke (2000) demonstrated the behavioural and psychological aspects of men after close physical combat. Bourke's (2000) analysis focused on former beliefs maintained by soldiers such as warrior myths and delusions of personal heroism, positing that men are predisposed to perceive killing as desirable. Yet, such an analysis did not address the specific sociological patterns of behaviour close to and during the event of the kill itself.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Given that the majority of studies of killing occur post hoc, previous literature has limited its analysis to examining the emotional aftermath of killing. Furthermore, such literature has also examined a person's emotions towards the act of killing, but fails to examine the emotions that occur during the kill itself. Studies have focused on people who are traumatized by their emotions, often due to their initiative to seek psychiatric help (Moss, 2014); however, those who continue to function 'normally' have not been studied. This gap in the literature has been prominent for many years, as Swank and Marchand (1946) initially noted that research was directed at examining only morally and mentally wounded soldiers. One may question the differing degrees in emotional operationalization, as such soldiers may defy societal 'feeling rules' and appropriate management of emotions.

**A Process-Based Socio-Psychological Model of Killing as an Exploratory
Framework**

Life-course theory conceptualizes crime from a natural model, explaining crime from onset to desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003). In a way, life-course theory attempts to understand crime on a continuum, from its genesis and commission to, ultimately, desistance. Life course theory does not relegate the study of crime to one moment in time. Rather, it examines crime in its individual and biographical totality. Similarly, the signature theory of violence also conceptualizes violence along a continuum, examining the preceding factors related to homicide, its offense characteristics and post-offense behaviors of offenders (Keppel & Birnes, 1997). The signature theory of homicide attempts to explain killing from an individual and biographical mooring as well. The current study applies the two preceding theoretical frameworks to the study of killing by soldiers and police officers.

The current exploratory study applies the two frameworks to construct a model of killing that is based on the socio-psychological processes involved in the killing. It examines killing as a social process and as a social event. Consequently, rather than conceptualizing killing or the act of killing as a dependent variable (i.e., did a killing occur?), this study aims to understand killing as a social process and as a social event, from its beginning to end. Consequently, this project asks questions such as the following: ‘What are the preparatory behaviours that soldiers engage in prior to killing?’ ‘How do soldiers manage the emotions that occur during the killings?’ ‘How do soldiers deal with the consequences of having killed?’ And by examining the processes involved

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

in the killing, from beginning to end, this study also conceptualizes killing along a continuum.

Such a socio-psychological model of killing has been discretely applied in the study of various homicides. For example, Shon and Barton-Bellessa (2012) examined the various pre-offense characteristics of parricide offenders. While they found that some parricide offenders had a notable history of delinquency indicators, they neglected to examine the actual characteristics of the killings themselves. Similarly, Shon (2012) explored the various on-scene shooting behaviors, such as weapon acquisition and tactical maneuvers, as a way of explaining the variation in lethality of school shooters. Shon and Roberts (2010) also examined how parricide offenders behaved after having killed their parents. However, no such socio-psychological model of killing has been applied to soldiers or police officers. Moreover, such a theoretical framework has not been applied consistently or in its entirety, from beginning to end, for one type of event. Consequently, this project synthesizes the findings from a life-course model of crime (Laub & Sampson, 2003) and signature theory of homicide (Keppel & Birnes, 1997) in order to construct a process-based socio-psychological theory of killing. In addition, understanding how soldiers and police officers mentally and emotionally process killing is drawn from the field of necropolitics, in which figures of sovereignty who soldiers epitomize create a justification and right to kill one population in exchange for the power of another (Mbembe & Meintjes, 2003). To my knowledge, this project is the first to apply this framework to explore killing as a social event.

Data and Methods

This study used content analysis as its methodological approach. A content analysis is the examination of text in which themes and patterns become apparent in order to ascertain meaning and effects that are occurring within the phenomenon under study (Krippendorff, 2004). Throughout the following section, the steps taken during the content analysis process are described, beginning with the initial research question and followed by how the data was selected; the unitization of the data; determination of criterion (sampling); coding processes; and the reducing of data (Krippendorff, 2004; Strauss, 1987).

Research Question

Rooted in the phenomenon of routine killing, the goal of this study is to address the socio-psychological aspects of an offender's experience of killing. Given that an offenders account of killing is difficult to obtain due to the offender's reluctance to share homicide details; possibility of causing harm to the offender by re-living such memories in an interview; an offender's mental capacity; or the inability to interview a select population, this study addresses the experiences of those who have the authority to kill during the performance of their duties. Thus, the theoretical background of this paper will be based on the killing experiences of those professionals and civilians who have the legal authority to kill another person.

Unitizing

The process of unitizing is specifically designed to distinguish the types of text that provide meaning and are of interest to the phenomenon of study: the routine experience of killing (Krippendorff, 2004). For the purpose of this study, letters written

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

by military soldiers, officers, or combatants were used as data, originally published in the *Soldier of Fortune (SOF)* magazine. The SOF magazine initially released its first periodical in 1976, being available for public readership through physical, and recently, electronic viewing. Physical magazines are predominantly available in countries of the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

For manageability purposes, letters were obtained from articles that were published in the SOF magazine between the period of 1976 and 1987. As the magazine has remained publicly available since its inception, internal as well as international conflicts were included, often describing the combatant's introduction to the objective prior to contact and its resolve. These letters delved into the details of conflicts experienced during the Vietnam War (1969-1975), Rhodesia (1966-1979), Korea (1966-1970), Angola (1961-1975), Thailand (1975-1989); conflict related to law enforcement and self-defence occurred in Miami (FL), Herat (Afghanistan) and Ohio. The sections of *SOF* titled "I was there" and "It happened to me" encompass a combatant's lived experience of a person's chosen *adventure*, detailing his/her combat experience. Soldiers, police officers, security guards, and sometimes, ordinary civilians, who became involved in a violent encounter (e.g. ambush, home invasion, robbery) wrote about their experience and submitted them for publication to the SOF. The section titled "I was there" and "It happened to me" are accounts of those who have killed and have been authorized and penned. This published archival material was used as the source of data for this study.

Sampling

During the first reading through the *SOF* magazines for the period selected, I found that each magazine contained a different number of articles that reflected a subject's first-

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

person experience of killing. Thus, I began the sampling process by focusing my observation on first-person narratives (units) who describe their experience of killing (Krippendorff, 2004). While this study focuses on a subject's experience of killing, instances where a subject completed, attempted or refrained from killing were included. Given the letters detailed conflict in the aforementioned geographical areas, a variety of areas provides representation of a person's experience of killing, as the aspects involved in killing are not limited to one type of training, interpretation, or legal foundation. Furthermore, the act of killing and refraining from killing another person were examined separately. Thus, a total of 84 cases (i.e. letters) were included in this study, which were selected based on the following criteria: if the soldier/police officer combatant reported, wrote, or stated that he had shot, stabbed, or otherwise killed another human being; if the combatant participated in the killing of another combatant or a body of combatants; discussed the experience of killing in a detailed manner; described firsthand experiences of killing later in time; and if the combatant had almost killed or refrained from killing another combatant.

When selecting the data for this study, I focused my reading on letters that reflected first-person narratives of a soldier's, police officers, or combatants' experience of killing that met the aforementioned criteria. Following the initial case selection, further reading of the letters occurred with no preconceived themes or categories (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). With no predefined ideas or theoretical assumptions prior to reading the letters, the grounded theory approach I apply is emic in intent as it relies on indigenous conceptions to create a theory as opposed to using theory-driven concepts (Krippendorff, 2004).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Coding Process

The text was analyzed using an ethnographic and inductive approach (see Mayring, 2000), allowing me to identify socially constructed categories, patterns and meanings which emerge in the moment of being read (Krippendorff, 2004). As the first stage of coding was tentative (Strauss, 1987), I engaged in an open-coding process, noting patterns and themes in the behaviours related to the killings. That is, the words, sentences and descriptions soldiers used to describe and relate their killing incidents to create preliminary and abstract thematic codes (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Themes were created based on both in-vivo terms and constructed codes (Strauss, 1987); the latter were based on a number of actions described during a specific sequence of behaviour. In contrast, in-vivo terms were grounded directly in the language and terms used by combatants to describe their actions and emotions (Neuendorf, 2002; Strauss, 1987). From the repeated readings, it became apparent that a pattern was beginning to emerge in the way the killing behaviours were socially organized.

Reducing the Data

Through the extrapolative use of patterns, it became evident that subjects frequently experienced certain behaviours that occurred systematically when killing another person (Krippendorff, 2004). For example, upon minutely analyzing the text as well as reoccurring codes, it was found that killing is experienced through a specific sequence of pre-, during-, and post-kill behaviours. Furthermore, codes that were heavily saturated in the data; pertain to similar phenomenon; and shared a relationship with other codes were placed under higher order categories (Strauss, 1987; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The relationship and similarities shared between codes allowed for a reducing of the data into

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

three higher categories: pre-, during-, and post-kill behaviours (Krippendorff, 2004). In this study, codes that encompassed strategizing, organizing weaponry/ammunition or taking position were collapsed into the theme of preparing for contact. Furthermore, similar themes that occurred prior to killing such as identifying the threat, under fire, and approximating distance were defined under the higher-order category of pre-kill behaviours. Following the sequence of a killing experience, concepts occurring during a kill such as taking aim, direct/general fire, slow motion, physical attack, reloading ammunition and visions of death were all represented under the higher order category of during-kill behaviour. The final process subjects experienced following a kill were an assessment of damage (oneself and the victim) as well as a body search of the victim, each of which were defined under the higher-order category of post-kill behaviours. Thus, the themes that are related in their assigned meaning were be grouped under higher order headings in order to collapse similar or dissimilar themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Finlay, 2014). In total, there are 13 thematic categories that are defined until pre- (4), during- (7), and post-kill (2) behaviours.

Unfortunately, using letters written by soldiers published by the *SOF* magazine as a source of data is not without limitations. Certain limitations rest in the use of archival data itself, as the following drawbacks may exist: 1) self-reports contained in letters force the author to rely on the soldiers' ability and desire to explain the personal details of their physical/emotional functioning (Elder, Pavalko, & Clipp, 1993); 2) given that the authors come to observe killing after the fact, such observations may be subject to distortions of retrospective, self-interested memory (Katz, 1988; Edgar, 2012); and 3) specific designers may exaggerate or minify certain aspects in their letters in an attempt to protect

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

or impress their audience (Edgar, 2012). In addition, a form of selection bias exists when selecting the SOF magazine as a data source, given the magazine itself consists of advertisements, accounts, and discussions directed towards individuals with the desire attain or who currently maintain a position as a soldier or mercenary. Future research in this area might consider the use of additional sources such as interviews, or historical archival accounts, in addition to or supplemented with the current letters written by veterans to better understand the act of killing.

Results

Between the period of 1974 and 1987, there were 84 firsthand narratives that were published in SOF which describe a combatant's experience of the decision to kill or not to kill. Of this select population, there were 65 (77 percent) combatants who engaged in one or more acts of killing, whereas there were 19 (23 percent) combatants who refrained from killing. Select narratives reflected both experiences of killing as well as the inability to kill due to reasons that will be explained in the following section. In addition, soldiers were specifically found to have always operated in a group setting; however, independent killing experiences involved soldiers who made the decision and acted to kill in a solitary manner, even in a group setting, whereas collective killing occurs as a group action. Such experiences will be illustrated thematically throughout the following sections of this thesis, beginning with pre-kill behaviours which consist of physical preparations of combat (74), identifying the enemy (82), initiating contact and under fire (58); during-kill categories include taking aim (47), securing a kill (65), counting and reloading ammunition (21), slow motion (19), visions of death (12), and refraining from killing (19); post-kill behaviours involve the categories of damage assessment (30) and body search and counts (22). Within each thematic category, a soldier's experience of killing will be shown using excerpts that best illustrate the analytical category being discussed.

Preparation to Shoot: Pre-Killing Behaviour

Physical Preparations of Combat

Prior to making contact with the enemy, soldiers and police officers engage in a sequence of physical defense and preservation tactics that begin with one's own personal and collective preparedness. During the preparation process, soldiers and police officers

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

prepare their personal weaponry and supply of ammunition prior to entering a combat situation. Such behaviours become a ritualistic performance and enactment of safety, as concern for one's own mortality is visually constructed through the mental replay of past events or training (Crank, 2004). It can be argued that ammunition and firearms exist as tools as well as symbols to police officers and soldiers. The symbolic meaning that police officers and soldiers place in their weaponry sustain their identities as soldiers and law enforcers, as the repeated exposure to their weapons elicits specific feelings, which soon after become organized and thus sentimental. As some soldiers reported a particular attitude towards a type of weaponry, it can be argued that these emotional sentiments are created based on a soldier's past experiences of exposure and handling of the weapon. Through the course of employing such symbols repeatedly, it is argued that such individuals to become emotionally content when armed with a familiar firearm (Kertzer, 1988), thus growing more confident when engaging in ritual preparedness.

Soldiers demonstrating ritualistic preparedness is evident through J.W.'s experience, expressing a sense of confidence and indifference when volunteering as a support member for a security team providing a resupply of ammunition. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1

"I'll take it." The scared newbie who had the assignment fell all over himself giving me the Whiz-Wheel and code book. I put them on a dog tag chain around my neck and went over to the arms room.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

At least Coocher, the armorer and supply man, didn't argue with me. I had wangled a .45 auto as an assigned weapon when we were using a secure-unit scrambler in the field. So I signed for my Union Switch-and-Signal Special and a dozen loaded magazines. Cooch also let me have a frag and four different-coloured smoke grenades...I filled my plastic canteen at his water cooler, put them in my thigh pockets and wandered over to the chopper pad. (J.W., Vietnam, 1981)

The task of combat was not always the result of an order, but an act of volition as J.W. volunteered to attend a detail in Vietnam, standing as an extra security measure to detect artillery during a resupply of ammunition. The behaviours described by J.W. are indicative of his emotions during his preparation for his combat assignment. The action of volunteerism for a potentially dangerous task indicates two major components: first, J.W. maintains a strong sense of confidence when accepting a task of unknown risk; and second, J.W. has experienced similar ventures prior to his current military assignment. J.W.'s description of the other soldier as a 'newbie' indicates that J.W. has prior military experience; describing the soldier's behaviour as 'scared' may speak to J.W.'s ability to confidently handle his emotions. Furthermore, subjects engaged in a variety of emotional and physical preparation strategies that lessen their anxiety prior to combat. As observed in the data, physical strategies range from the professional organization of equipment to a personal ritual such as wearing silenced dog tags, also illustrated by the above excerpt. Emotional strategies were found to be based in communication and humor, as subjects participated in conversations aside from their current situation, or would joke about specific outcomes of past or present experiences. Joking about the possibility of death is

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

evident in P.B.'s experience in Vietnam, in which humor was used to alleviate the tension felt from the anticipation of combat:

Excerpt 2

One guy turned in his foxhole and said, "We who are about to die salute you." We all started to laugh. It took the edge off things. (P.B., Vietnam, 1984a).

After recently concluding an episode of battle, P.B. and his colleagues were ordered to sweep and patrol Go Noi and its adjoining islands in Vietnam. Once the evening hours came, P.B. and his colleagues could hear mortars were being fired on the broad side of the island, developing feelings of anticipation as the attack drew closer to their position. By relying on humor to alleviate the felt tension towards the possibility of death, humor used by P.B.'s colleague became a form of communicative resilience that creates a system of social support between the present soldiers (Henman, 2001). As a social function, a person's sense of humor is used when he/she has effectively adapted to a stressor and is further found to create a contagious resiliency among the group of individuals in which it is used (Henman, 2001; Vaillant, 1977). When facing the subject of death, torture, or captivity (such as prisoners of war) dark or gallows humor is used in a similar context, mainly used as a way of making fun of death by creating a resistance to death, creating solidarity among a group, and existing as a coping function (Feinstein, 2008). In this sense, the use of dark humor as a coping mechanism parallels the findings from police officers who engage in similar behaviours (Heidner, 2013). Nevertheless,

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

each subject prepared and coped with the anticipation of conflict differently, emphasizing the details of certain aspects and not others.

The degree of importance each piece of equipment means to J.W. is expressed through the difference which he ascribes in relation to their acquisition. For example, J.W. describes his radio as a general scrambler without a title but becomes very specific when discussing the title (*Union Switch-and-Signal Special*) and the .45 automatic shooting of the weapon. Upon choosing select set of words to depict each item, the emphasis and detail attributed to the Signal Special signifies J.W.'s perspective on each item (Grosz, 1979), with the firearm holding more importance. One may argue that J.W. felt a sense of accomplishment in acquiring Signal Special firearm, given that he used personal negotiation tactics, depicted as *wangled*, to unofficially acquire a firearm of his choice. Such preference for a specific model of firearm also supports the notion of previous combat experience, indicating an experiential dislike for other firearm models. Furthermore, personal knowledge and a sense of confidence were present when selecting his weapon, followed by J.W.'s ability to calmly *wander* towards the helicopter pad. Thus, J.W. is attuned to the mechanical means of killing, as his focus is directed towards acquiring his preferred firearm rather than towards the notion of ending someone's life. At the preparation stage, subjects often remained confident and indifferent towards the prospect of killing.

Identifying the Enemy

Soldiers identified their enemies in various ways: soldiers witnessed arms fire or heard exchange of gunfire in the distance. The soldiers often became nervous or remained indifferent when identifying the enemy, further working towards establishing a strategy

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

and an offensive position. Upon anticipating an attack, soldiers often approximated the distance between themselves and the enemy, irrespective of their mode of attack (plane/physical/vehicle). One may perceive such distance approximation as a form of mental preparation strategy, allowing the subject to gauge the level of concern and necessity of a quick response (Meloy et al., 2012). Consider the following excerpt from a soldier:

Excerpt 3

Replacing my handset, I went back to wondering what I was going to do with my two days off...

It moved again. This time my glasses had been pointed at the right spot. The bush moved. There wasn't any wind blowing. I moved my line of sight a little to the left.

I saw the leaves wave, and there still wasn't a breeze. Looking straight at the spot, I could see a dark hump down close to the ground.

I'll wait and make sure this isn't my imagination. Carefully I selected a couple of landmarks so I could pick out the same spot – then I looked away for a minute. It seemed longer. I rubbed some sweat out of my eyes, then glanced at my watch: ½ minutes. Looking at the spot again, I could see the hump was still there, but it had moved toward me about 10 feet. (J.F., Vietnam, 1984)

The above excerpt depicts a soldier's experience during his night shift in Vietnam, positioned at the perimeter's post with the objective of protecting against enemy

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

combatants. Given the evening hour and the stillness of the environment, J.F. questioned each individual event before progressing to full certainty. During J.F.'s logical progression from uncertainty towards inductively rationalizing that an enemy is present, J.F. evolved from a relaxed state (thinking about his days off) to mentally clarifying the present situation before taking action. Factors of mental preparation in soldiers and police officers often revolve around the legitimization of the task and analyzing conflict situations (Gilbar, Ben-Zur, & Lubin, 2010); the latter is predominant in J.F.'s experience, as he fully analyzes each development before finding the resolve in himself to take action. A full assessment of the situation occurs through a process of logical deduction: 1) he makes sure that the disturbance in the leaves is not caused by the wind; 2) he rubs his eyes as to make sure he is not imagining the situation; 3) he uses temporal markers to time the motion of events. Through the process of deductively rationalizing an enemy's presence, J.F. used physical and environmental benchmarks to test himself in order to reach a state of certitude, and in doing so, mentally prepares himself for anticipated action. A soldier's mental anticipation is rooted in the real-world simulation training and possible prior experiences in combat (Fowlkes et al., 1998; Leser & Sterrett, 2010), which would aid the soldier in predicting near-future events and thus a form of mental preparation. In totality, one may argue that the inductive rationalization process that aided in a soldier's mental preparation occurs as a way of reducing any tension and anxiety felt during that moment in time.

It is important to note that regardless of one's organization or control over the situation, some soldiers experience antecedent jitters both phenomenologically and corporeally, interpreting the passage of time not in objective terms but in subjective

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

ways. As evident in J.F.'s experience, the objective method of timing oneself is different as individuals in critical situations often experience an altered perception of time (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). Second, the anxieties of potentially coming into contact are embodied in physical manifestations such as sweating, heart palpitations, and shaking. Such physical reactions are defined as acute stress reactions, components of a person's autonomic arousal system which are triggered during/after a stressful or traumatic event (Gradus et al., 2010). While acute stress responses are often referenced in terms of a disorder that occur after rather than precede a traumatic event, acute stress disorder is found to be predictive of PTSD (Koopman et al., 1998). Third, soldiers and police officers are faced with unexpected and expected situations. Similar to the behavioural manifestations that occur in acute stress responses, such responses often occur during unexpected contact situations, in contrast to the greater degree of confidence found in expected contact.

Similar to the offensive position J.F. occupied, for soldiers who were positioned on the ground or in a vehicle, behaviours such as approaching, searching or pursuing the enemy were often accompanied by fear-based emotions (nervous, scared, fearful excitement). In contrast, soldiers who participated in air-based preparations experienced a strong sense of indifference. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 4

My speed was falling off. I could stall at any second. Then I'd be through. I'd have to lower the nose. Try to regain flying speed. Abandon the chase or risk falling into a spin.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

It would give my adversary the respite he needed. He would regain initiative, come about and kill me with blazing canon.

I had to chance one last burst from my guns. Flying ever so carefully, trying to maintain feather light touch on the controls, I began to line up the slim grey shape in the reticule image of my computing gun sight. My airspeed had disappeared. A single uncoordinated movement and I'd literally fall out of the sky. I would hold the MiG in my sights for only an instant. Range was critical; the Sabre was now trembling in a stall. I squeezed the trigger. (J.F., Korea, 1980)

As evident in J.F.'s airborne conflict in Korea, airborne warfare provides a setting of solidarity for a soldier to formulate a method of attack based on his judgement of his own visual perception of the battlefield; the information provided by technology within the plane itself; and overall status of the aircraft and its ability to continue in combat. The physical distance that the aircraft provides allows for a better evaluation of the situation, yet time as a factor in itself can induce stress which affects one's ability in organizing information to select the best alternative (Svensson et al., 1997). Prior to attacking, J.F. reviewed the status of the aircraft itself and its physical ability to continue in combat, weighing the probability of his success in battle. The condition of the aircraft became an imperative detail in any of J.F.'s plans, as the training he received would have placed tremendous value on detailed planning and exact timing of his strategy (Marquis, 1997). Furthermore, J.F. expressed a calm and methodical disposition as he engaged in the following processes: 1) calculating the remaining ammunition against the chances of killing the enemy; 2) considering the circumstances if he continued to engage or

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

withdraw from such warfare; 3) maintaining light and cautious movements when physically handling the aircraft; and 4) predicting the time required for a successful kill. Thus, the proximity and intimacy that a soldier shared with the enemy heavily influenced the type of behaviour and subsequent emotions that the soldier/police officer experienced.

Gauging the level of threat that one's enemy presents allows a soldier to conceptualize the behavioural patterns of his enemy and own collective group when expecting contact (Meloy et al., 2012). While risk in itself is individually perceived (Van den Berg & Soeters, 2009), a soldier's emotions are influenced by the amount of reinforcement he feels from the collective group, as well as if contact is expectedly or unexpectedly made. Similar to gang violence literature (Littman & Paluck, 2015), upon identifying a threat, soldiers were always aided by the support of their colleagues, demonstrating a great level of confidence towards accomplishing one's objective. Future research may consider the influence of group cohesion when killing another person in combat.

Initiating Contact

Expected Contact

When initiating contact with the enemy, the behaviour demonstrated by soldiers and/or police officers was based on fear or confidence. Soldiers who were preparing to ambush and concealed themselves from the enemy were gaining a tactical advantage by lying in wait. In most circumstances, however, the contact emerged as soldiers reported witnessing the firefight prior to participating, heard short-arms fire in the near distance, or took aim and/or fired at *anything that looked hostile* (N.U., Vietnam, 1979). Thus, it can be argued that most soldiers reacted to violence rather than proactively planning for

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

any near-future threats. Although the men expressed a great degree of confidence in their preparedness and eagerness for contact, soldiers still experienced feelings of nervousness and tension when anticipating battle:

Excerpt 5

All of the sudden it was happening. We debarked and split into our sticks. The big guns started pounding the gomel (hill) across the way. Crash – BOOM! I watched the 90mm rounds go in, followed by the 50s and the .30 Brownings. I knew that, in all probability, that stuff would be flying both ways shortly. I wouldn't say I was scared, but L.A. seemed mighty good at the moment. (M.P., Rhodesia, 1981)

Initially excited at his first prospect of action in Rhodesia, M.P. approaches the combat zone in a vehicle alongside his colleagues. The eagerness felt by M.P. quickly dissolved into feelings of surprise as the 'sudden' reality of the situation. The dissipation in M.P.'s emotions is rooted in recognition and realization that he and his colleagues had become the target of deadly fire that led to feelings of uneasiness at the newfound vulnerability.

When physically preparing for combat by disembarking from his vehicle and taking a position, M.P.'s behaviour is reflective of collective action; however, mental adaption to the combat situation occurs at an individual level as M.P.s shifted in his dialogue to a first person lexis. Such a shift is illustrated through his description of the type, sound, order and timing of each weaponry discharge, alongside the weighed probability of return fire. As M.P. mentally progressed through the logical sequence of combat, the subject visualized the enemy preparing a counterattack, anticipating that he

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

and his team would soon be under fire. Such anticipation engendered fear since personal injury or death could occur; coping with the possibility of death is managed through a reflection of a positive experience, a place that a soldier visualizes himself instead of facing his current situation. In this sense, the role of fantasy in the killing process diverges from the homicide literature in notable ways. Fantasy has been described as a form of coping strategy as well as a pre-offense characteristic of killers (Buss, 2005; Meloy, 2002). However, the findings from this study suggest that fantasy is a form of retreat from the exigent vicissitudes of combat. In that sense, fantasy is an integral component of psychological distancing in on-going combat. Furthermore, behaving in collective manner and rationalizing the sequential processes that occur in combat can be argued as preparation behaviours one experiences in order to cope with the current situation. As many soldiers mentally gauged the level of threat that the enemy presented when initiating contact, unexpected enemy contact also occurred, forcing the soldier into a combat situation that he had not previously foreseen.

Unexpected Contact

Soldiers who were on patrol or following up as reinforcements often assumed that the enemy was located at a farther distance, not posing an immediate threat. Sometimes, soldiers encountered enemies in unexpected ways. For example, coming around a physical barrier on foot or in a vehicle, men often became surprised and experienced shock as they came under enemy fire. Such unexpected contact with the enemy resulted in notable behaviours. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 6

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

My eyes just started to get heavy when there was a bright flash to the right and the sudden thump of an explosion broke the stillness of the night. Reflexively I slid down into the hole, covering the other trooper.

“What the hell?” he screamed. Before either one of us could speak or get straightened up, the second explosion went off some 40 feet directly in front of me. No one had to tell me what to do next. I had my M16 up and firing at random from my left to right until I ran out of ammo. I fumbled with the magazine. God! It seemed I would never get it out and the other one in. (G.S., Vietnam, 1983)

The above excerpt was taken from a soldier who was finishing his last week of combat training in Vietnam, assuming a position where he could witness battlefield conflict but was not expected to actively engage. G.S. was quickly introduced to the experience of combat when an explosion occurred near his position, which sent G.S. into an anxious and confused state.

In unexpected instances of contact, soldiers often demonstrated relaxed, controlled and sociable demeanour, maintaining stable emotions due to a predicted sequence of events. Similar to Jensen and Wrisberg's (2014) study, ambiguity is a consistent feeling throughout combat as the “sporting” rules upheld by one group of combatants is willfully defied by their opponents. As evident in the excerpt, G.S. was assigned a position for training purposes alongside more experienced soldiers in the field, believing there was little chance of combat occurring. In a relaxed state, G.S. experienced an arousing shock when behaving in the following manner: first, he experienced sudden reflexivity of his body movements; second, upon comprehending that an attack was

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

occurring he prioritized his colleague's safety before his own; third, he progressed from a state of uncertainty to certainty following the second explosion; fourth, he demonstrated fear-based emotions when randomly firing in the direction of the enemy, discharging all ammunition and fumbling when attempting to reload his weapon. Supported by the findings in Jensen and Wrisberg's (2014) study of hand-to-hand combat, the surprise and shock that soldiers experienced when unexpectedly attacked generated the most powerful descriptions of fear.

Reflexive or startled movements are found to be modulated by the person's emotional state, often activated by aversive and external threat cues (Globisch et al., 1999). G.S.'s fear was evident through his reflexive reaction, which soon became an overpowering emotion as it impaired G.S.'s ability to rationalize his shooting behaviour and manner in which he must reload his firearm. Prompted by his instinct of *knowing what to do next*, one may argue that the need to survive evidenced through reflective and physiological responses suppresses the mental and emotional conditioning emphasized in training procedures (Grossman, 2009).

How contact was initiated with the enemy was often the determining factor in how the subjects' emotions shaped their behaviour throughout the rest of their combat experience. Many soldiers mentally reflected on their training procedures once they were under fire (Jensen & Wrisberg, 2014); however, such training did not help soldiers develop personal coping strategies that are necessary for their survival (Wood & Michaelson, 2000; Driskell et al., 2008).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Under Fire

Once exposed to the enemy, soldiers and military police officers quickly became victims of enemy fire regardless of who initiated the contact. During the point in which the subjects were receiving fire, whether it is from guns, rockets, or grenades, subjects processed their own counter-attack strategies while attempting to stabilize their own emotions. Trapped in a volatile situation, soldiers devised methods and means of killing the enemy. In addition, subjects also assessed the location and actions of their colleagues, coordinating their actions based on those of others (Crane, 2004; Gray, 1958). In majority of cases, subjects were anxious, fearful and vulnerable. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 7

We were trapped, pinned down tight with nowhere to go. I finally realized that my buddy, Harold Nunley, and I were in bad trouble. We weren't protected by the embankment, but behind the pagoda. Only three small steps stood between us and all the fire coming our way.

The NVA sprayed the top of the dike randomly, not really aiming at anything unless a man came into sight. They must have thought there were several people behind the pagoda because they concentrated their fire there. I could hear the lead whizz past my head with a cracking sound. I was dripping wet with sweat. The top step was chipping away, little piecing hitting my helmet and face. I thought I was going to buy the farm that day. I tried to lift myself up to return fire, but the cracking of the rounds scared the hell out of me. (P.B., Vietnam, 1984b)

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Expressing eagerness to fight after watching the distant combat between each armed force, P.B. and his team set out on a patrol of the small islands in Vietnam. Soon after initiating contact with the enemy, P.B. became trapped after taking cover from a hail of fire, becoming victims of an ambush that sprung from the tree-line. Realizing his isolation and vulnerability, P.B. experiences the following physiological responses: first, his senses become sharp as he is under fire; and second, he hears with acuity and observes his surroundings more acutely. Such acute awareness is evident in P.B.'s description of the sound of shots fired near his head; the sound of the shots when they hit the wall (i.e. cracking); the physical damage to the step following each shot; and the ability to discern what and why pieces of rock were hitting his helmet and face. The enhancement of P.B. sensory abilities is founded in his drive to survive, as his heightened hearing and visual abilities are neurobiological responses that function to protect him from any impending danger (Southwick et al., 1994). As the physiological aspects of survival are a crucial component to understanding one's combat experience, the fearful emotions felt by P.B. are the trigger that elicited the psychophysiological responses (Carlsson et al., 2004).

Prior researchers have noted that while the fear felt by a person triggers reflexive processes, the attention attributed to such fear is dependent of the personal significance of the stimulus (i.e. threat), becoming the leading factor in enhancing sensory processing (Moratti, Keil, & Miller, 2006). While P.B. did not see his enemy, the auditory and visual indicators of an enemy's presence lead to sweating (increased skin conductance), agitation, attention to detail, and startled reflexes. Such responses are distinct psychobiological responses (Carlsson et al., 2004), often influenced by a rapid heart rate

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

acceleration experienced as a result of fear (Moratti, Keil, & Miller, 2006; Globisch et al., 1999). Thus, prior studies have found that odors and sounds are emotionally evoking, the emotionally induced startle reflexes that result from fear are found to persist after the offset of the negative stimulus (i.e. cracking, chipping, whizzing sounds), indicating a sustained emotional context to these negative stimuluses' and factors aiding in combat-related PTSD (Globisch et al., 1999; Gallaway et al., 2014)

Contact: During-Kill Behaviour

Taking Aim

A person's ability to take aim and shoot is influenced by a number of factors. The most prominent factors present being the following: psychological state, environmental barriers, physical impairments, and so forth. Alongside such influences, the distance between a soldier and his enemy was found to be a crucial factor in determining his emotions and subsequent behaviour. While subjects often reported the distance of their enemy through feelings of anticipation, far-distance lengths ranged from 100-300 meters, whereas close-quarter measurements were between 10-30 meters. In some cases, subjects did not use defined measurements but rather referred to landmarks, inanimate objects, or voice projection to describe the distance between themselves and the enemy. In close-quarter combat, soldiers and police officers were more physically exposed and became a more prominent target. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 8

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

I turned and saw the company scattering for cover in all directions. Less than 15 feet away lay a man with half his head blown away by machine-gun bullets. He had been my friend.

I yelled and ran, under heavy fire, toward the cave. I crawled on my stomach toward the German machine-gun nest, ignoring the steel rain of exploding stick grenades pouring about me. I lurched to my feet.

My eyes rolled crazily in their sockets and I held my M-1 rifle. The Waffen SS MG-34 machine-gun crew stared in horror when I stood inches from their faces. My bullets caught five of them. (H.B., Italy, 1980)

Engaged in a firefight in Italy, H.B. examined a corpse that he soon recognized as his friend, digesting the manner in which the man died. In the cases of soldiers and military police officers, exposure to repetitive injury and death can lead to an acquired capability that drives one's behaviour. An acquired capability is defined by Selby et al. (2010) as a response to reoccurring stressful or fearful situations, which may result in experienced pain or provocation. Such provocation may induce a sense of fearlessness that prompts reckless behaviour (Selby et al., 2010). Following the realization of his comrade's death, H.B. became numb and fearless, expressing anger and an indifference to the possibility of danger or attempting to kill the enemy as he yelled and charged towards the source of gunfire. It is important to note that even in the traumatic event of his friend's death, H.B. was still able to analyze the distance between himself and the corpse; how his friend was killed; and the enemy's (i.e. company) behaviour and departure from combat.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Given the intimacy of his enemy, direct aiming was not required. As H.B. aimed his firearm, he noted the following details: his own frantic observatory behaviours; the degree of threat he posed aiming his M-1 rifle at the enemy; the distance between his M-1 rifle and the enemy; the type of machine-gun and crew; and their emotional reactions to his presence. The physical abilities and strategy demonstrated by H.B. are indicative of the former training received prior to combat, as rehearsed tactics practiced in training become unconsciously implemented (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). Furthermore, fear-inducing situations encourage reckless behaviour that allow one to dismiss his/her own personal safety and manage emotions of pain.

Acknowledging the enemy's presence from a far distance through hearing or witnessing outlying arms fire allowed for more premediated and collected behaviours when taking aim. Taking aim at one's target from a far distance often encouraged one of the two approaches: allowing thorough preparation such as better positioning, coordinating with one's group, and/or lining up the target; and second, not taking aim or aiming in the general direction of the enemy.

Similarly, such premeditation was often evident through airborne targeting and shooting behaviour, as powerful and far-reaching weaponry removes soldiers from the consequences of firing, providing opportunity for aesthetic satisfaction (Gray, 1958).

Securing a Kill

After taking aim at one's enemy, soldiers fired their weapons (ranging from rifles, grenades, bombs or rockets). When rationalizing the best method to kill another when under the pressure of fire or imminent death, combatants often confidently, fearfully or

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

angrily targeted their opponent. Consider a soldier's description of his during-combat experience:

Excerpt 9

...the attacking ground force directed AK-47 fire my way. I spotted a hole and jumped in – to find four enemy sappers preparing satchel charges to fling at the artillery pieces. Their eyes met mine. I hesitated for a second in disbelief, then frantically started pulling the trigger of my M16, being so close that aiming was unnecessary. I got off four rounds when my weapon clicked (in the excitement I'd forgotten to reload)... I pulled a pin on a frag and counted, not giving the enemy enough time to throw it back. (R.D., Siberia, 1981)

Soldiers who were under fire and shooting at their target were generally in motion, looking for cover (e.g. ground, a vehicle, or a barrier); police officers proactively assumed protective positions when entering a conflict situation. Faced with a situation of close-quarter combat, R.D. reacts to enemy fire advancing in his direction. R.D. jumps into a hole in the ground only to discover that it is occupied by enemy forces. However, in the process of reacting to one form of threat, subjects did not visualize alternative threats that could have been possible in the near-future; further experiencing shock, disbelief and surprise by the new source of danger.

As evident in the excerpt, R.D. instantly realizes the new and impending threat; he becomes frozen in a momentary state of disbelief, only able to react after he has first observed the goals of their actions, and second, looked directly into the eyes of his enemy

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

to confirm their intent. Further, the distance between R.D. and his opponents was quickly studied, as he rationalized that aiming was unnecessary due to the proximity of the enemy and his inability to directly fire at the enemy as a result of overwhelming emotions.

Describing his forgetfulness as excitement, R.D. noted that the enemy attack had slackened from his initial burst of rounds, allowing him to better time his attacks when throwing the grenade, removing the enemy's ability to retaliate. Thus, R.D.'s behaviour during the heat of combat initially depicts reactionary responses, suffering from a state of shock which quickly becomes more organized and confident as he begins to time his attacks to prevent retaliation. Thus, R.D progressed from a state of shock to one of proactive logic.

During his state of disbelief and shock at the newfound confrontation, R.D. mentally processed and rationalized the purpose of their presence as well as their potential objective. Further, making eye contact with the enemy represented a silent confirmation of one's intentions, as soldiers often experienced a constriction of their visual field (Klinger & Brunson, 2009), focusing on the enemy's face and/or weapon when facing a near-death situation.

Regaining sobriety after experiencing paralyzing emotions of shock and disbelief, fear replaced surprise as R.D. reflexively and desperately began firing; such reflexivity is a physiological survival tactic (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000) triggered in attempt to suppress overwhelming feelings of vulnerability. Through experiencing fear-driven excitement, R.D. exhibited indiscriminate firing behaviours for the following reasons: first, R.D. was not capable of physically or mentally rationalizing a direct shot due to overwhelming emotions of desperation; and second, given the intimate distance of the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

enemy, R.D. rationalized that any shots he fired in the general direction of their target would be effective. Furthermore, one may argue that soldier's shooting behaviour is a result of a logical process of probability and calculation; the latter revolves around the fact that a soldier predicts and acts towards securing a kill based on his own belief, theorization, or visualization of how the scenario will progress. In contrast, police officers did not, and are generally not permitted to demonstrate indiscriminate firing behaviours (Klinger, 2004), as many officers resorted to non-lethal means of control or direct firing.

In a group, as well as individually, soldiers reported firing at anything perceived as hostile when anxious or scared, a behaviour supported by Crane (2004). Alarmed by any enemy bodies that may be present in the woods, Crane (2004) described soldiers experiencing a period of comprehension followed by recollection of their weapons; rationalizing one's threat level and ability to fight, soldiers commenced indiscriminate firing behaviours towards the enemy (i.e. woods). Fear-driven behaviours inspired lack of aim and general firing towards anything or anyone perceived as hostile. Such fear was driven by uncertainty prior to entering battle, as subjects would often receive reports and/or warnings of any suspected or actual threats in the contact zone, with limited definitiveness.

While limited definitiveness can be an influential factor towards a soldier's behaviour in combat, the behaviour of police officers as well as civilians who face critical situations are governed by shock due to unexpected events. As a private investigator with previous military experience, R.B. defines his behaviour as 'Mr. Nice Guy', describing the following experience:

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Excerpt 10

I was Mr. Nice Guy: jacket stayed over my .45, no cuffs, big smile for Jerry's mom as we left. Why ruin her Mother's Day right?

Down the walk and around my car, Jerry shoved Mr. Nice Guy on the arm. Why? Hell, I don't know – but I looked and saw a short, stubby knife in his hand. I backed up and drew – he charged and thrust.

Why I didn't shoot the son of a bitch I don't know. I caught him across the eye and temple with the top of my .45 and put him down with a swift kick where it really counted. Cuffs went on and he was transported. (R.B., San Fernando Valley, 1981)

During his routine arrests of individuals who had missed their bail court date, R.B. attempted to reduce the tension of the situation by re-framing his presentation, maintaining a friendly demeanor and civilian appearance. R.B. adopted a civilian appearance specially by hiding all symbolic features of his law enforcement role. Aligning his appearance with that of a civilian may have been used as a tool to gain compliance by being able to physically relate to the offender, as such practices are found to create comfort in stressful situation (Hubble & Gelso, 1978). However, covering his law enforcement identity and adopting and behaving similar to a civilian resulted in an identity shift. R.B. professional identity shifted in the following manner: first, full precaution was not taken in detaining Jerry that law enforcement personnel uphold; second, R.B. did not consider the ramifications of his friendly demeanor, as he

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

experienced a sense of shock when being ‘shoved’; third, R.B. attempted to rationalize why he had been ‘shoved’ in the given situation rather than proactively considering how Jerry might respond to being arrested; fourth, maintaining the grounds to kill Jerry given he posed a physical threat to R.B.’s safety, R.B. chose non-lethal means of restraint rather than deadly force. In the given situation, it can be argued that R.B. maintained the authority to use deadly force given he was under the threat of imminent and serious bodily harm, requiring an act of self-defense (Putnam, n.d.). Yet, R.B. resorted to non-deadly defense methods even while preserving the authority to kill Jerry. Nevertheless, while R.B.’s behaviour is reflective of his previous military and civilian experiences, the adoption of a civilian identity may have arguably hindered R.B. conduct.

The ability to identify a threat or risk in an adverse situation is not limited to one’s training and conditioning, but is also influenced by their personal experiences gained outside of their occupation. Alongside R.B.’s authoritative position, being the victim of a shove is associated with aggression, and allows one to predict that further violent acts and intentions will ensue (Watson et al., 2009). Thus, it can be argued that R.B. not only used his past experiences from his military life to predict future events, but also relied on interpersonal experiences gained throughout his civilian life (Osberg & Shrauger, 1986). Past experiences that have further become a source of knowledge may include being subject to harm if one does not act or encountering a threat in which a person was forced to consider the magnitude and severity of the given situation (Weinstein, 1989). Furthermore, one may argue that the application of personal knowledge allowed R.B. to perceive the risk with greater clarity (Weinstein, 1989), allowing for precaution and control when acting towards the threat. However, while such precaution aligned with the

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

training police officers and soldiers are subject to, R.B. did not physically recognize the fact that he had been stabbed. Furthermore, police officers and soldiers can still experience a physiological form of shock regardless of the degree of control they have over the situation.

When expecting to kill another due to one's level of control over a situation, soldiers expressed excitement, eagerness and complete indifference to killing. Oftentimes, indifference was depicted in long-distanced kills, such as those executed from an aircraft or sniper position. Positioned as door gunner in a helicopter gunship in Vietnam, J.C. describes the amusement of his experience:

Excerpt 11

On a 140-knot gun run, a ball of flame two feet in diameter leapt from the barrels. No one had ever seen anything like it. The effect on the target was awesome: a three-second burst covered every square foot of a swath 100 meters long. We spent a lot of time breaking up and linking ammo. We also spent a lot of time using it. (J.C., Vietnam, 1984)

Rather than focusing on the victims of their deployed rounds, soldiers often gain excitement from the handling, firing and outcome of the weapon being utilized. Attentive to the type of gun used as well as the deployed round, J.C. was more attuned to the physical dimensions and presentation of the round as it was discharged from its barrel. Possessed by the discharged rounds, Gray (1958) found that soldiers become absorbed in close firing scenes and thus become spellbound; such combatants are indifferent to future

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

consequences as symptoms of power overwhelm them, feeling personal immunity towards ending another person's life while also a superiority over the fate of others.

Dehumanization was a prominent aspect of long-distanced kills. The target, a group of enemy combatants, was significant to J.C. due to the effects created by the round deployed; the humanity of his opponents was not an aspect considered when observing the aftermath of each shot. Similar to J.C., subjects in aircrafts or sniper positions maintained a psychological distance through objectifying. One may argue that such objectification occurs through technological dehumanization (Montague & Matson, 1983), in which one's target is likened to a machine that portrays characteristics of robotic pursuit of efficiency and regularity, automaton-like performance, and an unemotional and apathetic approach to the given situation (Haslam, 2006). Thus, the source of dehumanization can be argued to be a coping strategy during critical situations, as well as a form of political 'othering' in which the enemy is perceived as dead due to their political opposition (Mbembe & Meinjes, 2003). Aside from personal dehumanization tactics, excitement and indifference to killing was also evident when a soldier participated in collective killings. Consider S.S.'s experience in El Tablon:

Excerpt 12

We took off in pursuit, firing from the hip and calling the Gs [gorilla's] everything but human. The Lenca Battalion troopers wanted a piece of someone's ass. And they got it on a second hill just outside of El Tablon ... the battalion commander to our rear had reached the artillery battery and ordered up some fire

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

from the 105s that created a wall of steel at the Gs backs. They had to stand and fight. They did ... and they died. (S.S., El Tablon, 1984).

Participating in the search-and-destroy mission inside guerrilla territory, located in the small town of Corinto, S.S. aligned himself with other soldiers from the Lenca Battalion in both pursuit and identity. Existing as a group action, S.S.'s individual experience of the mission was extended from "I" to "we" in his experience (Gray, 1958), minimalizing his personal accountability and autonomy in his actions. Such a reduction in autonomy is argued to relieve a soldier's personal responsibility for killing, as the greater number of soldiers in a group, the stronger their psychological bond, and the closer proximity each soldier is fighting to one another, the more enabled a soldier feels towards killing (Grossman, 2009). Furthermore, S.S. described the collective actions of the group, first depicting how they fired their weapons from their hips, followed by stating that each soldier participated in antagonistic name-calling, and lastly, identifying the group's intentions through a third-person voice. By using a third-person voice, one could argue that S.S. is attempting to separately identify himself from the intentions of the group. S.S. language changes when describing the goal of the group, not using terms such as 'we' or 'our' but rather indicating the official title of the group itself, *Lenca Battalion troopers' wanted...*, defining S.S. level of emotional investment as limited through his indifference in the objective itself. Thus, while the phenomenon of simultaneous firing encouraged excited and indifferent emotions, this interpretation should be taken with caution as there is limited research on the social and emotional processes that can fully substantiate this finding. The processes that are present and

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

unique to group killings require further investigation as they may aid in understanding the collective efficiency behind group homicides.

Intimacy of a fight dictated whether a soldier physically fought or threw grenades as a means of killing. Police officers resorted to physical means of restraint, many officers holstering their weapons, whereas soldiers often used physical means of force when the enemy was too close to shoot. Many close-quarter altercations led to a reduction in awareness of one's surroundings as well as a narrowed focus on the enemy and his weapon (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). Such experiences were reported to be common by both soldiers and police officers in life-threatening situations. Consider the following experience told by M.E. during his experience in Jerusalem:

Excerpt 13

Just at that instant, from the corner of my eye, I saw a man to my left-rear coming down with something in his hand to hit me on the back of the head. I cringed. The blow was very hard and I felt warm all over, seeing everything as though it were in a red light. As I fell, I knew they would kill me when they found out I was a police officer – if they didn't already know.

I decided it would be stupid to just lie there and get killed without even defending myself, so I reached under my shirt and drew one of my revolvers from my right side. I was looking at the revolver in the man's hand; I could see his finger squeezing the trigger and the cylinder beginning to rotate. I fired two quick shots at him just as my knees hit the floor, and then I fell forward. (D.K., Florida, 1983).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

As an undercover narcotics officer in Florida, D.K. assumed the role of a drug buyer in order to find and arrest the lead drug dealer that was supplying drugs to half of Miami's high-school students. However, during the undercover operation, D.K. was unexpectedly attacked from behind, intensifying the manner in which he perceived and processed his surroundings. First, D.K. was able to recognize the intention, action, and object the offender maintained in his peripheral vision, revealing that a person is capable of focusing on indirect fields of vision while maintaining the ability to rationalize the events of the situation. Second, he prepared himself for the impact of the hit while recognizing that the situation had the potential to get lethal if D.K. was identified as a police officer. Third, while actively trying to defend himself with his own revolver, D.K. maintained a strict focus on the type of weapon in the offender's hand, the position and squeezing motion of the offender's finger on the weapons trigger, and the mechanical functions of the revolver preparing to discharge a round. Given D.K. noted the sequential actions of the offenders shooting behavior, the perceptual changes that he experiences can be understood as the result of fear. Fear has the ability to trigger a tunnel vision reaction, similar to that experienced by D.K., given he lost his peripheral vision due to his inability to see beyond the threat; experienced a high visual clarity that allowed him to see the vivid details of the offender's weapon; experienced a slow-down or altered perception of time; felt a temporary paralysis as he observed the offender's actions before reactively shooting (Artwohl & Chistensen, 1997). A slow-down or altered perception of time as well as the effects of tunnel vision are found to occur alongside other perceptual distortions (e.g. auditory exclusion/inclusion, sensory exclusion) during high levels of anxiety that are normally present during one's involvement in a lethal situation

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

(Grossman & Christensen, 2008). The occurrence of perceptual distortions is prominent in deadly force encounters experienced by police officers (Klinger, 2004; Solomon & Horn, 1986), and in life-threatening situations in combat by soldiers (Grossman & Christensen, 2008). Nevertheless, an imminent threat of a soldier or police officer's safety and/or life can encourage a slow-down of time and a tunnel vision effect, physiological phenomena that occur as a method of rapidly processing events to provide more opportunity to the person to think and react to the critical situation (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000).

Counting and Reloading Ammunition

Despite the chaos of battle, soldiers are conscious of how many rounds they have used, how many rounds they have left, as well as the location of extra ammunition for future use. During each kill, subjects would often count the number of shots or bursts of ammunition they released, followed by how many had hit their target. Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 14

I had already found cover under a junked Renault. I tested my magazine, then rolled out halfway into the open and emptied the full 20 rounds on automatic. The hail from above increased as I ejected the lip and reversed the taped double magazine to feed a fresh supply of ammunition. (N.U., Vietnam, 1979)

As a military officer responding to a 'black market' call in Saigon, N.U. was forced to take cover under an abandoned Renault after being the victim of sniper fire. While his

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

colleague and N.U. remained under fire from the enemy, N.U. was continually aware of his protected position; the functionality of his weapon; the number of rounds he had to expend; and the action ensuing in his surrounding environment. Confirming his weapons operation, N.U. emptied the 20 round magazine, indicating that the subject was knowledgeable of the number of rounds the magazine held as well as the velocity that the rounds could be expended. By considering how many rounds have been spent, a soldier gauges how many rounds are left to use; how long he can engage in combat before positioning himself safely to reload; and how far he can stray from other soldiers who hold ample ammunition. Furthermore, counting rounds while shooting allows one to predict future behaviour during combat. N.U.'s behaviour in the combat reflects self-awareness, an asset that leads one to understand their operational environment and their own capabilities, while being able to identify and adapt to the change in their environment (DiGiambattista, 2003). Resuming his protected position, N.U. recognized that the hail of fire increased, prompting him to reload his empty clip through mechanically-detailed behaviours that resulted in a full magazine.

Slow Motion

Under high stress situations, the intensity of one's fear and anxiety has the ability to subjectively affect one's perception of time. Under the force of impact such as being shoved, shot, or stabbed, accompanied by the opponent's attempts to kill, soldiers and police officers experienced an altered perception of time. Such an altered perception was often described through an elongation or a slow-down of time, as subjects perceived specific events in slow motion, which is supported by Klinger and Brunson's (2009) study of sensory inputs during police shootings. Some soldiers in a heightened state of

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

fear described small black shapes (grenades) lobbing towards them, whereas others described watching as the barrel of the enemy's gun rotated to release another shot.

Consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 15

When my M-16 ran dry, he was still standing with his weapon in hand! My eyes never left the muzzle of his AK as I dug desperately for another magazine for my M-16. I could see that I wasn't going to get my rifle reloaded and back into action before he fired, so I tossed my M16 and went for my .45 pistol. In that slow motion way only life and death can produce, I watched a 7.62 mm slug impact his [opponents] chest, slamming him to the ground, and simultaneously heard the shot, followed by another which bounced him a foot off the grass. He then lay still.

I kept my .45 trained on the NVA lying in the grass until I was certain he was dead, and then began to look around for the soldier who had just saved my life.

(C.T., Vietnam, 1977)

Subjects often succeeded in killing their opponent after the first phase of shooting, however there were cases in which the opponent was not lethally injured and chose to retaliate. In the aforementioned excerpt, C.T. fired all his ammunition towards his opponent, assuming that he would not be capable of fighting back. During one's cognitive processing, one creates an assumption based on the 'next step' of a schema he/she has created of the situation (Janoff-Bulman, 2010), suffering from surprise and shock when the schema is interrupted. As C.T.'s assumption of his opponent's death was

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

denied, the ensuing events forcing C.T. into a state of shock and desperation. In the context of life-or-death, C.T. experienced the sequence of events in slow motion before one of the snipers on his combat team shot his opponent.

Through rationalizing that he was not going to be able to reload and fire his preferred weapon, C.T. resorted to an alternative weapon in order to survive. During the high-stress experience of facing death, this subject maintained the ability to logically process his inability to reload due to limited time, as well as other weapons he had available to him. The ability to rationalize is a unique occurrence, as majority of near-death homicide victims are mentally inhibited by the threat or actual use of a weapon (Fritzon & Ridgway, 2001). Furthermore, C.T.'s perception of time was altered due to the high stress of potentially being killed, leading to a reduction in his surrounding awareness as his focus narrowed towards his opponent's weapon (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). The narrowed focus on the opponent's weapon is a physiological response that occurs in life-threatening situations.

Reinforced and thus saved by another member of his team, C.T. watched as his opponent was shot by another soldier, being attentive towards each detail of the shot. C.T. identified what type of ammunition was used to kill the enemy combatant; where the shot was placed on his opponent, as well as the motion and direction that his opponent took upon being shot. Similarly, Crane's (2004, p. 144) perception of time and movements were experienced in slow motion during his combat experience, describing the detail and precision of the surrounding battle. Nevertheless, it was discovered that the world slowed down for a soldier right before he thought he was going to die, often followed by the envisioning of one's own death.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Visions of Death

When faced with a shotgun barrel or under fire with no plausible alternatives to continue fighting, soldiers began envisioning their own death. Similarly, police officers broke down the different angles of the given situation, evaluating the possibilities before accepting the possibility of death. Grounded in the fear he felt from his enemy's determination; consider the excerpt told by J.M. as he describes his near-death experience:

Excerpt 16

I was in bad shape strategically – wounded and too far from my car to get to either other radio or my shotgun – and I didn't know how many robbers were involved or how they were armed. Seconds after I was hit – it seemed like longer – two men appeared in the doorway. They apparently wanted out and I was lying on the sidewalk, blocking their exit. One of them began to raise his hand toward me. In it was a small-caliber semiautomatic pistol. My only thought was, "This may be the day I die!" I immediately opened fire and something whizzed by my head. Then I saw the gunman collapse to the floor of the diner. (J.M., Texas, 1981)

Walking into a hold-up in progress in Lubbock, Texas, J.M. was immediately identified as a police officer and shot in his right leg, forcing him backwards out of the doorway and collapsing onto the sidewalk. Acknowledging that he was vulnerable in both his physical status and position, J.M. logically processed each aspect of the situation by analyzing the following: 1) his wounded position prevented him reaching his vehicle,

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

which further inhibited him from calling for support (radio) or securing protection (shotgun); 2) the number of robbers involved and how many of them posed as an armed threat; 3) his perception of time had been altered due to overwhelming feelings of stress; 4) experiencing tunnel vision on the offenders weapon as he predicted the offenders intentions and anticipated his death. Thus, J.M. considered each alternative action before experiencing a sense of defeat in knowing he may die.

Similar to the actions of other soldiers, J.M. did not attempt to reposition himself or make an effort towards obtaining any form of support, but rather only rationalized the probability of each action. Recognizing the finality of his life, it can be argued that J.M. experienced a process similar to grieving, as the last stage of the grieving process entails acceptance of a fatal outcome. Soldiers more often than police officers experienced the finality of their lives alongside other soldiers, feeling a sense of familiarity in the environment and acceptance towards their attempt at fighting, requiring less adjustment to the notion of death (Kubler-Ross, 1969). While J.M. was saved by another soldier who shot the robber from a farther distance, police officers candidly accepted death, whereas soldiers often visualized the social processes that would occur when they found their bodies. It is important to note that even during death, soldiers maintain a group mentality, as soldiers insensibly extend their experience from “I” to “we”, as “my” becomes “our”, indicating that a soldier’s individual fate is no longer significant to his existence (Gray, 1958).

Refrained from Killing

In the heat of battle or a confrontation, police officers (7), soldiers (7) and civilians (5) each maintained a unique reasoning as to why they refrained from killing their

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

opponent. Police officers and civilians were each able to exert control over their opponent, keeping the offender restrained or controlled while other forms of emergency services responded. Prompted by his military background, G.H. maintained control of a break-in situation during his civilian life:

Excerpt 17

Well, I had been in Korea for more than 13 months, flown more than 1,000 missions, and was crazy. I decided to kill the medic for what he did and drew my Chief Special. In order to get a better shot at him I took two steps away from the wreck ... and the world exploded.

What was left of the rotor blades were still swinging and I was struck in the back of the head by one. I was knocked 20 feet up the mountain by the blow. By some miracle, I was not seriously injured ... but lost all interest in the medic. (E.N., Korea, 1982)

Between the periods of 1960-1985, many communities were often policed by the military, in which soldiers and military police officers were used synonymously in conflict zones, specifically in countries such as Rhodesia, Korea, continental Europe, Kenya, Vietnam, Kuwait, and Southeast Asia (Jackson, 2008; Brodeur, 2010). As the commanding officer of a medical evacuation just outside of a conflict zone in Korea, E.N. watched as one of the medics attempted to sabotage the evacuating helicopter that held a wounded officer inside. Drawing on his previous experiences in combat, E.N. swiftly decided that he was going to kill the medic, an act solely based on impulsivity.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Unable to regulate his emotions, E.N. reacted with anger and hostility and as a result clouded his awareness of his surrounding environment. During the clouding of one's awareness, it is argued that soldier's do not consider the soldiers they kill akin to themselves, but rather lose themselves in the grim satisfaction of revenge, and resulting in feelings of guilt (Nadelson, 2005).

In attempting to kill another person, E.N. engaged in a similar process found to those who successfully secure a kill. However, the keenness he demonstrated towards killing the medic interfered with completing the kill, as E.N. attempted a closer and more personal distance when killing. E.N.'s thought process and actions depicted how he planned to kill the medic, describing the type of firearm he was using; the type of angle required to successfully shoot the medic; and his exact body movements when aiming and preparing to fire his weapon. In being enveloped by his angered emotions and drive to kill, one could argue that such emotions inhibited his surrounding awareness, thus hindering his ability to kill and/or protect oneself from being killed. The desire to kill led to a narrow focus on his victim while neglecting to consider the happenings in his environment; in contrast, those soldiers who are indifferent to killing another maintain high awareness due to aroused sensory reflexes.

Police officers functioning within the civilian population resorted to physical means of control rather than lethal force. On the other hand, civilians with or without previous military experience generally fired a non-lethal shot that impaired the suspect, but did not kill him. During each altercation, the aforementioned subjects maintained control over their actions, but still referenced feelings of nervousness, fear and tension.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Representing the majority of the sample population, soldiers refrained from killing for very distinct reasons, often revolving around a physical or technological impairment. Soldiers did not shoot or kill due to succumbing to a physical injury; they were out of ammunition; weaponry malfunction; refusal to shoot due to interrupted line of fire (due to friend or hostage); denied permission to shoot; or witnessed rather than participated in killing. When attempting to kill another, soldiers often depicted anger and frustration towards the inability to complete a kill, indicating an indifference and eagerness in the act itself. The eagerness to kill expressed by some soldiers supports the effectiveness of their training that is argued to overcome their resistance to killing, resulting in feelings of freedom and excitement (Nadelson, 2005). However, it can be questioned as to whether or not feelings of such eagerness and excitement are a conditioned or natural response to the event of killing when the act itself becomes a routine event.

Post-Kill Behaviour

Damage Assessment of other and self-injuries

After breaking off contact or ending the battle, soldiers often inquired about what damage he had inflicted during combat, involving any form of damage including physical wounds, desolated areas, and weapons or vehicles destroyed. An assessment of the damage one has caused may relate to their sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, subjects also commonly perform a self-assessment following a firefight, after they had calmed down from the state of arousal and excitement that enveloped them during combat. Such an assessment occurred at a personal level, examining any damage incurred to oneself or gear following battle. Oftentimes, non-lethal injuries or damaged equipment was found. Consider the following excerpt:

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Excerpt 18

I felt someone shove me from behind and I fell on my face. At first I thought it was one of my guys shoving for my own good – to keep out of the line of fire...so I turned around. There was a goddamned North Vietnamese, grinning at me.

Grinning? Shit. I don't know why he was grinning. People do funny stuff in combat.

Well, hell, I grabbed my .38 Special and started blazing away. Group? Did I get a group on him? Hell, no, I hit him once in the ankle, once in the knee and once in the mouth, I think, and then I guess I got him in the chest. Missed a couple times too, 'cause I was trying like hell to reload when he finally fell down.

So I started reloading the pistol and the .308 and got back down to work again. A few minutes later the company corpsman crawled up and said, "Hey, sarg, you got a big splotch of blood on your back." I'd noticed my back was wet but just figured it was sweat. Hell, I was scared shitless and sweating like a pig. Corpsman says, "Take off your cartridge belt and I'll see what's wrong with your back." So I did. Then he says, "Hey, you got a hole in your back." So I bent over at the waist. Sheeit. When I did that, I opened it up and it hurt so fucking bad I passed out ... They told me there I'd been stabbed in the back with a knife and then I remembered being "pushed" from behind. That rotten fucker had poked me with a bayonet.

(K.K., Vietnam, 1979)

As a sniper in a landing zone in Vietnam, K.K. was attacked from behind by an enemy combatant who had discovered his position. As a sniper, K.K. held a firing

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

position that was selected based on an observation of the enemy's vulnerabilities, positioned a farther distance from the battle (Haugen & Liwanag, 2008). Standard operation indicates that such tasks are carried out in two-man firing teams (Haugen & Liwanag, 2008), justifying K.K.'s belief that it was one of his colleagues had tried to protect him. Furthermore, K.K. received an injury that he was not conscious of due to his engrossment in the firefight.

Through full engagement in the firefight, K.K. focus towards the battle led to the diminishing of awareness to his direct environment and the people within it. This focus altered K.K.'s sensory experiences, allowing lethal wounds such as a stabbing injury to register minimal feeling. Similar to the many soldiers who have killed, K.K. was surprised from the unexpected presence of an enemy body, which led to the onset of fear-driven emotions, depicted by the following behaviours: inability to directly aim; difficulty reloading his weapon; multiple shots fired missed their target; emptied all his ammunition in a single course of close-quarter shooting; and inability to fully identify where he had hit his target, through guesswork. However, regardless of how scared or stressed a soldier or police officer may be during a conflict, the individual consistently notes the type of firearm that he is using to kill. It may be speculated that the appraisal of one's weapon is a mental measurement of the damage that the subject is capable of inflicting with that specific weapon, as many subjects note the type of weapon and ammunition being fired.

Resuming his sniping position, K.K. notes the place, severity, and lethality of his enemy's wounds in order to comfort his own sense of security, but fails to acknowledge his own injury. Unbeknown to a soldier, injuries and/or damage inflicted during combat

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

were recognized when soldiers were not directly in the heat of battle, allowing soldiers to take stock of themselves. Due to the intensity and excitement felt during battle, the reports of soldiers being shoved or thrown often result in some form of physical wound that the soldier did not realize until he had re-grouped with other soldiers, having his injuries noticed by others. This fact was particularly evident in K.K.'s experience, as he did not identify his injury until he withdrew from the task of shooting, arguably calming down from the excitement of battle. In a few cases, subjects reported fainting due to injury (5), and learned of the details of their kill later in time.

The police officers and soldiers cited in a study by Grossman and Christensen (2008) described experiencing an 'eerie feeling' upon executing their first kill, describing the position and wounds to the victim's body. In later acts of killing, soldiers described becoming more intimate with the corpse such as making sure the victim was dead by eye thumbing or shooting the victim repeatedly (Grossman & Christensen, 2008), or searching the victim for gear or souvenirs (Bourke, 2000). Furthermore, soldiers were often found to be indifferent to having killing another, finding a greater sense of accomplishment in the damage caused, combatants killed, and/or items salvaged from the bodies. However, an assessment of damage also occurred when the subject chose not to kill his victim, such as in most police encounters. While a sense of accomplishment and relief plagued most soldiers and police officers when observing such damage, this point of closure also allowed many subjects to take stock of themselves.

Body Count/Search

As previously noted, soldiers actively count how many shots/bursts had successfully hit their target, an observation that occurred immediately after a kill or after

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

a certain period of time. To further define the latter observation, soldiers would either individually or collectively patrol the contact zone to collect and count how many combatants had been killed. For each soldier remembering a specific or intimate kill, soldiers reported returning to the kill site to seek out their victims. In some cases, soldiers and police officers were eager to observe what their shots had produced, immediately examining the direction or victims of their shots. As an infantry soldier in the French Foreign Legion, R.T. describes his experience after killing a perceived enemy combatant:

Excerpt 19

It wasn't as smoky as in the corridor, but I couldn't see much because my eyes were still full of tears from the smoke. I blinked and finally was able to see that my round had killed a tall black, who lay next to a FN FAL. On his chest I found a medal with a blue-white ribbon and a sort of coin that showed the portrait of a fat Negro wearing glasses. I picked it up because I always liked such things. (R.T., Africa, 1983).

During an ambush held in the streets of Mainka slums, R.T. faced an enemy combatant in an abandoned police station after becoming suspicious of a locked door. After smashing the lock on the door, R.T. instantly fired a shot into the room without identifying if there was an actual enemy presence. First, given R.T. was experiencing impaired vision and thus vulnerability, his indiscriminate shooting behaviour may have been done as a form of self-assurance towards his own safety. One may argue that such a vulnerability encouraged feelings of fear which guided the unorganized firing behaviour.

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Second, the alleviation of R.T.'s visual impairment by blinking and focusing his attention on the direction of his shots led to the confirmation of R.T.'s initial uncertainty as well as a kill. While there is a growing theme in the progression from uncertainty to certainty in killing behaviours throughout this paper, the quick resolve and curiosity of the victim's belongings that plagues soldiers following a kill is worth noting. Leading into the third point, R.T. remained indifferent to the death of his victim but rather became interested in the victim's belongings, catering to his personal fondness for such items.

Following battle, soldiers would seek the bodies of the men they had killed in combat, searching the bodies any souvenirs, weapons, papers (intelligence) or gear. In his description of encountering a dead body following battle, Crane (2004) described the desire to study and observe the body rather than search it. However, there is a marked difference between the possessions of one's kill. Evident through various experiences provided by soldiers, dead enemy bodies are objectified as the physical destruction of a body that was killed by another soldier is noted, as well as their ability to collect gear or weapons for their own advantages in future battle. The collection of weapons, gear and ammunition from one's own or found victims are possibly taken for survival purposes, as corpses are often searched to gain intelligence on one's enemy (Grossman, 2009). Such searches and looting often occurred with indifference towards the collection of gear, whereas others displayed positive feelings having gained a specific item after killing the victims themselves.

In the previous excerpt, R.T. experienced a sense of satisfaction upon taking the blue-ribbon from his victim, taking the item as a souvenir rather than for survival purposes. While it has been noted that souvenirs are collected towards the acquisition of a

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

particular status (Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011), it is argued that such items are collected as an attempt to transport the lived experience or journey across boundaries of time and location (Brown & Turley, 1997). Such happenings can be argued to occur in the cases of soldiers who collect souvenirs from their victims, as R.T. and many other soldiers may have acquired the victim's belongings to remember the kill later in time. The collection of trophies or souvenirs is also reflective of homicide offender behaviour, particularly sexual homicides, as these offenders will take specific belongings of the victim in order to relive and extend the experience of the kill (Keppel & Walter, 1999).

Searching and confirming the death of enemy combatants can serve as a form of accomplishment, sustaining a soldier's purpose in the army. It is important to note that such accomplishment was accompanied by feelings of satisfaction and relief. The latter occurs in relation to eliminating the threat posed by the enemy body, in contrast to the former which soldiers appeared pleased by the wounds they had inflicted on their victim. Furthermore, while soldiers remained indifferent to identifying, handling and searching dead bodies, the dehumanization and objectification is only effective for enemy combatants, but does extend to children. There were two reports by soldiers who had killed or witnessed a child being killed, both soldiers experience disturbed and saddened emotions following their experience.

In a civilian world, people are disturbed by the details of a homicide by 'criminal' and view it as a heinous event. Similarly, police-perpetrated killings are characterized through the media as both a legitimized use of violence as well an antagonistic event depending on the culture and ideological currents during that time period (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010). In contrast, killing performed by soldiers is viewed as a positive and

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

necessary experience that is justified in a civilian world, irrespective of the fact that the act itself is the same. Regardless of the perpetrator, the experiencing of killing involves many behavioural, psychological, and physiological factors that are triggered to ensure survival.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study found that soldiers are largely indifferent toward killing another person if he/she is deemed an enemy. Soldiers were more interested in maintaining a high level of fear towards their own self-preservation. Approaching a combat situation, soldiers displayed eagerness and confidence as they prepared for contact; when such individuals were faced with the realities of boots-on-the-ground combat, soldiers reported shaking, nervousness, difficulty aiming and indiscriminate firing behaviors. While some soldiers maintained their composure during combat, majority of soldiers described killing through a fear-driven excitement, an excitement based on the fear of being killed while attempting to kill the enemy. Furthermore, soldiers maintained an emotional indifference when killing their opponent in order to stay alive, captivated in a dissociative state that deactivated one's emotional reaction; such dissociation is argued to occur in order to survive (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). The psychological processes that were found to underlie shooting and killing behavior support the mental mobilization process asserted by Dyregrov, Solomon, and Bassoe (2000), a psychological process that is argued to occur during critical or life-death situations.

Existing as a survival tactic, the mental mobilizations processes asserted by Dyregrov, Solomon, Bassoe (2000) and colleagues are reinforced by the near-death experiences soldiers endured when entering battle. Upon approaching combat, soldiers reported becoming nervous or tense when hearing or witnessing arms fire, noting the far or intimate distance of the fighting. Focusing on the approaching battle, soldiers experienced a form of enhanced sensory awareness; Solomon and Horn (1986) argue that such an enhancement is an adaptive survival response that amplifies auditory and visual

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

details more than in normal circumstances. Further into the experience of close-quarter or intimate near-death situations, soldiers described experiencing a focused or tunnel vision effect on the opponent's weapon, as well as the location and ability to handle their own weapon. Alternations in visual perception are evident in research revolving around police-directed shootings, as an officer's vision will narrow if experiencing a life-threatening situation (Solomon & Horn, 1986; Klinger, 2004; Best, Artwohl, & Kirschman, 2011). In addition, such threatening or high anxiety situations resulted in a perception of altered time, as soldiers often felt an elongation or slow-down of time when experiencing anticipation or fearing an outcome.

Near-death experiences inspired visions of death, where soldiers mentally saw themselves being killed, expressing concern about what would happen to their bodies and legacy afterwards. While such visions have not been accounted for in current literature, Stevenson and Cook (1995) found that individuals experienced a 'life review' when anticipating death, a vision that encompasses a person's whole life. It must be noted that the study conducted by Stevenson and Cook (1995) occurred within the same time period as the current study (1974-1987), finding that police officers experienced a review of their life, whereas this study found that police officers and soldiers experienced visions of death. Nevertheless, the psychological arousal that accompanies threatening or deadly situations is found to elicit negative emotions (fear or anger), acting as a load on a person's cognitive resources which impairs one's performance and mental capacity (Kleider, Parrott, & King, 2010).

The dissociative state that soldiers experience during the heat of combat can be argued to be similar to that experienced by serial murderers. The dissociation experienced

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

is a psychological process that protects the person from traumatic feelings that would otherwise be painful to tolerate (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000; Carlisle, 1998). This perspective assumes that the act of killing itself is too traumatic to mentally endure, regardless of one's motives; the avoidance of trauma is argued to occur through a fantasy state or separation from the self which is asserted to be one of the factors in an offender's ability to commit serial murders (Carlisle, 1998). However, a serial killer's fantasy is the result of a process in which an offender develops an appetite for killing, where an initial fantasy begins to dominate the offender's behavior. In the present study, soldiers and police officers were not found to experience a progressive fantasy but rather attempted to psychologically and emotionally prepare themselves for anticipated contact. Furthermore, similar to that found with serial murderers, soldiers and police officers experienced a dissociation that allowed them to create an illusion or fantasy during contact, a state that avoids pain and generates excitement (Carlisle, 1998). Many of the soldiers demonstrated indifference, confidence and/or excitement during the killing of another person, suggesting a sense of detachment, numbing or absence of emotional response during the killing process itself (Dyregrov, Solomon, & Bassoe, 2000). Nadelson (2005) asserts that soldiers become automatons when emotionally overwhelmed, arguing that the rush associated with endangerment triggers a hyper-aroused and excited emotional state. In sharing common experience of dissociating from the act of killing, soldiers and serial murderers also have similar behavioural traits following a repeated exposure to killing.

As there are a number of factors that influence a person's behavior following episodes of repeated killing, serial killers and soldiers in particular were found to relate

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

in a number of ways. While relatable in their killing experiences, soldiers and serial murderers are often found to be psychologically functional (Ferguson et al., 2003), sharing similar characteristics such as handling corpses; being in the presence of decomposing flesh; and deriving a psychological satisfaction from killing (Ramsland, 2006). As each offender maintains different motivations, the psychological processes that soldiers and serial murderers experience when killing are arguably similar. However, one may challenge the idea of differing motivations as certain soldiers were found to harbor confidence and draw excitement from the act of killing, a phenomenon that requires further examination.

As dissociation is a mental and emotional existence aside from oneself, this state may be a significant factor in serial murderers who have a military backgrounds. Given the fantasy-like state that is experienced by both soldiers, military police officers and serial murders, it can be speculated as to if the excitement derived from killing may serve as an emotional high. In other cases, serial killers were found to develop dissociative identity disorders (DID), resulting in the existence of two or more personalities as a means of dissociating from the pain of the present experience (Castle & Hensley, 2002). While military experience itself cannot account for all cases of serial murder, there are limited studies that address the influence of military training on serial murder. While the military training has advanced to increase the killing abilities of its soldiers, using methods of operant conditioning, brutalization, classical conditioning and role modeling (Fox & Levin, 2015), only 7% of serial murders were found to have a military background (Castle, 2001). Thus, while the relationships between militarized training and

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

serial killing requires further investigation, a person's military training is less likely to lead to killing tendencies within the civilian world.

As some combatants may derive pleasure and excitement from killing another people, there are a large number of combatants who are emotionally and psychologically disturbed by their actions or experiences. During periods of contact, soldiers are argued to suffer from combat stress or a combat stress reaction (psychological breakdown on the battlefield), a stress that is found to endorse PTSD and other somatic disorders when soldier returns to the civilian world at a later time (Benyamini & Solomon, 2005; Solomon & Mikulincer, 2006). Combat stress is defined by Siddle (1995) as encountering imminent or serious personal injury or death, which can result in some of the physiological responses discussed in this paper such as tunnel vision, auditory focus, irrational behavior, loss of fine motor control, or inability to rationally think (Grossman & Siddle, 2000), each phenomenon becoming precursor for PTSD. Within the current study as well as previous research, each of these psychological phenomena occurs during close-range combat. Furthermore, despite the fact that military training strategies have advanced over time (e.g. simulation training), repeated incidents of close-range killing and combat are argued to result in psychiatric casualties or PTSD (Benyamini & Solomon, 2005). However, similar research has also found that direct and indirect forms of killing result in symptoms of PTSD, alcohol abuse, and psychosocial functioning, such as anger or relationship problems (Maguen et al., 2010).

While previous research has accounted for the perpetual anomalies and sensory distortions that police officers experience in the wake of gunfire (Klinger & Brunson, 2009), future research should consider the distortions that occur within an officer's

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

working memory when shooting. Thus, the difference between the experiences each profession maintains may be due to the type and intensity of training they are exposed to prior to deployment. In addition, each physiological phenomenon outlined in this study should be examined in the context of collective or group killing, as soldiers and police officers may not experience the same degree of sensory distortions when killing alongside his/her colleagues.

Throughout the various experiences from soldiers and police officers illustrated in this thesis, there was a consistent pattern of attention and detail towards the type of firearms used in the conflict. Two patterns emerged that were indicative of different emotional contexts: first, subjects experienced the ‘weapon focus’ (i.e. tunnel vision) effect when involved in a life-threatening situation, dominated by emotions of fear and anxiety when focusing on the weapon (Pickel, 1999); the second pattern was apparent in the description and knowledge of the firearm the subject personally attained prior to entering the conflict. The latter pattern can be argued to occur due to the symbolic meaning of the firearm to its handler (Kertzer, 1988), based on previous experience handling the weapon as well as the performance training that the person was subject to prior to deployment. While police officers may have previous experience with an assigned firearm both in training and in the field, soldiers are given more flexibility in their preferred firearm and may select their firearm based on its performance. Such performance can also be influenced by how the firearm handled in simulated training, as realistic motion capturing gun controllers used in military training are found to illicit increased perceptions of realism and cognitive aggression, heightening the degree of immersion that the users experience in the game (McGloin, Farrar, & Fishlock, 2015).

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

Given simulated movements, behaviours, weaponry and sonic accuracy in both natural mapping and firearm handling increase the person's immersion and emotionality (McGloin, Farrar, & Fishlock, 2015; Shilling, Zyda, & Wardynski, 2002), simulated behaviour is argued to be easily performed in real-world situations based on the person's reliance on pre-existing scripts of schema's from a familiar environment (Eastin, Griffiths, & Lerch, 2009).

In addition to the limitations that accompany the qualitative aspects of the proposed study, various limitations exist in the content of the subject being explored. First, this study does not include female soldiers, police officers, or civilians and thus cannot be universally applied to both genders. Given men and women are exposed to different forms of socialization often assigned through gender roles (Renzetti & Curran, 1999), women may experience the act of killing another person differently given the context and one's perceived role. In a study of battered women, Browne (1987) found that homicidal acts by women were unplanned and occurred during the threat of an assault; the weapon used to complete the kill was found to be a gun that was readily available in the home, often a weapon used by the abuser during past threats of violence (Foster, Veale, & Fogel, 1989). The narratives presented by Browne (1998) indicated that women suffer a period of blanking out, not remembering how or when she obtained and aimed the gun. However different forms of female homicide inspire a different behavioral reaction. Female serial killers favor methods of shooting, beating, strangulating or poisoning their victims, often targeting 'latent' or defenseless victims such as children, old or sick people, and/or people who are sleeping (Hale & Bolin, 1998). Furthermore, future research should examine the during-kill experiences of female offenders, soldiers, and

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

police officers, as such information would become pertinent to rehabilitative endeavors as well as understanding how female experiences compare to their male counterparts. In addition, an understanding of how females experience killing can shed light within criminological theory, as current theories often assume phenomenon's such as war, killing, and a male dominated experience. Female offending is often explored under 'general' theories of crime, accompanied by the assumption that females are implicitly discussed when examining male crimes (Smart, 2008). Thus, the examination of female experiences may serve to broaden, enlighten or challenge current criminological frameworks. In totality, the behaviors involved that range from preparing for combat to handling a weapon during a contact may be experienced differently or similarly by females to those experienced by the male subjects in this thesis, therefore the concept of gender was withheld until a more incorporative analysis of men and women can be performed.

Second, this analysis does not consider how many times a combatant has killed another person, as the combatant writing the letter may have already emotionally adapted to routinely killing other people. Future research should examine the emotions felt by combatants after their first and final experiences of killing to understand the socio-psychological adaption that occurs.

Lastly, this study does not consider the forms of social/formal controls placed on combatants during a kill in order to determine if such controls may have influenced their decisions, actions, and emotions while killing/not killing. As evidenced in this study, soldiers experience killing difference between independent and collective killing contexts. Thus, while this study did not exclusively examine such a difference, soldier

AN ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION OF KILLING

expressed a unique form of social adaption to killing collectively that may be applicable to other forms of group homicides such as those motivated by gang, political, economic or social membership (Littman & Paluck, 2015). Furthermore, future research should explore the previously mentioned limitations to create a stronger understanding of socio-psychological aspects of killing.

Each case is considered to be a personal memoire by a combatant. As such memoires are collected by the *SOF* magazine for the purpose of entertainment as well as a realistic perspective, some combatants may have exaggerated or invented details to add to the excitement of their 'adventure'.

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