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Home from War

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

Home from War is an account of which factors strengthen and aid coping with the impact of war, combat experiences and military service post-war for New Zealand veterans. While there is extensive and valuable research into combat-related stress reactions, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, little attention has been given to what might support veterans' abilities to cope with war experiences across the life span. Oral histories of 25 First World War veterans, 25 Second World War veterans, and 20 Vietnam War veterans were analysed to build themes from patterns in the men's talk about coping with war and life afterwards. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse, interpret and summarise themes or patterns in the qualitative data. Three themes were identified. '*Personal growth and development*' is a discussion of the psychological and emotional growth which occurred from benefits of military service. Such growth included emotional and intellectual maturity, independence and tolerance which developed from experiences of travel, general positive effects of military service and Posttraumatic Growth. '*Social regard and status*' was found to be important to facilitate veterans' return from war, especially genuine positive acknowledgement expressed at social and political levels through rehabilitation assistance, social respect and sites of remembrance. Social care, respect and compassion provided a sense of social connectedness necessary for psychological recovery from war. '*Dealing with the war*' was about making sense of war. War experiences were either actively incorporated into the life story through identity practices, moral validation and processes of normalisation, or suppressed using

repressive coping strategies and silence. Processes of dealing with the war were mediated by social support. Coping with war was strengthened by the social support veterans received from wives and partners, other veterans and organisations such as the RSA. Coping with war is a complex process and the effects of war are expressed across the veteran's lifespan. Experiences of trauma and well-being were embedded through wartime service and incorporated into how veterans dealt with life post-war.

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