**Combined Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Anonymous Online Surveys for Adult Participants**

**Study Title:** Exploring the Relationship between the Components of Compassion and Moral Injury in Military Veterans.

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**Ethics/ERGO no:** 69915

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**What is the research about?**My name is Leanne Morgan and I am a Doctorate student studying to become a Doctor in Clinical Psychology at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. As part of my doctorate, I conduct research into an area of interest and write this up as a thesis.

My area of interest is the mental health experiences of military veterans and psychological interventions to treat these. Specifically, the current study aims to explore and understand an emerging mental health problem called moral injury (MI) within military veterans, and whether using compassion as a psychological intervention would be beneficial in treating MI.

MI in veterans is now being more widely recognised and there has been some promising results looking at using self-compassion interventions to treat MI in veterans. However, the research base in this area is limited and further research is needed to explore the different components of compassion and how it can be a helpful treatment for MI.

Some of the components of compassion are explained in more detail below, however, the different components of compassion are:

**1. Self-compassion**

**2. Compassion to others**

**3. Compassion from others**

**4. Fear of compassion**

**5. Shame**

**6. Self-attacking/self-reassuring behaviours**

Currently, no one to date has explored whether there is a relationship between military veterans experiencing MI and the different components of compassion (as stated above). Therefore, the current study aims to explore whether the components of compassion are affected by levels of MI in military veterans. Once we explore this, it means we can think about whether compassion-based treatments are helpful for treating MI in military veterans and if so, what components of compassion would be important to consider in treatment.

By taking part in the research, you will be contributing to a body of evidence researching the use of compassion-based therapy for MI in veterans. This means that hopefully in the near future, there will be a well-supported psychological treatment approach for treating MI in military veterans. By completing the study, you will also receive access to compassion-based resources and have the opportunity to enter a prize draw of winning one of four £50 Amazon vouchers.

**What is Moral Injury?**In military service, military personnel are presented with moral and ethical dilemmas which can put them into difficult positions of decision-making. Military personnel may experience situations where they are unable to prevent, and/or bear witness to acts that go against their moral beliefs. This may consequently force them to act in ways that go against their moral beliefs and values. These situations have now been recognised as morally injurious and can cause a person to develop MI.

MI has been linked to difficult feelings of intense guilt, shame, increased suicidal ideation, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**What is Compassion?**Often, we tend to think about compassion as being kind towards ourselves, otherwise known as self-compassion, however there are in fact many layers to compassion. In compassion focussed treatment we need to think about the ability to be compassionate towards ourselves, as well as the ability to accept compassion from others and be compassionate towards others. Being self-compassionate, accepting of compassion from others, and being compassionate towards others isn’t always easy and barriers can get in the way. These barriers might include feelings of shame, feeling fearful of receiving compassion, and falling into habits of being unkind towards ourselves.

For military veterans experiencing MI, we tend to find that some of these barriers to self-compassion are heightened. As explained above, MI can cause feelings of shame, distrust, and self-harmful behaviour which might make it tricky for us to be compassionate towards ourselves, others, and in accepting compassion from others.

**Ethical Considerations**This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 69915).

**What will happen to me if I take part?**This study involves completing an anonymous questionnaire which should take approximately 30 minutes of your time. If you are happy to complete this survey, you will need to tick (check) the box below to show your consent. As this survey is anonymous, I will not be able to know what answers you have provided if you agree to take part.

**Why have I been asked to participate?**You have been asked to take part because you are a military veteran who has previously served for one of the armed forces. Each participant completing this study will have their own unique experiences throughout their military career as well as in their personal life. Therefore, the only requirement for takingpart in thisstudy is that you are a military veteran over the age or 18 years old and are not currently actively serving in one of the military armed forces.

I am aiming to recruit around 103 participants for this study.

**What information will be collected?**The questions in this survey ask for information in relation to your demographics, (for example, if you’re male or female, which force you served in), your experience of potentialMI, your mental well-being, alcohol use, and your levels of compassion. Some of the questionnaires in the research may explore sensitive or personal issues and therefore there may be the possibility that you experience some psychological discomfort or distress.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**If you decide to take part in this study, the main benefit will be to help improve our current understanding and treatment approach to helping military veterans with MI. Another benefit of taking part in the study is having the chance to enter a prize draw of winning one of four £50 Amazon vouchers.

**Are there any risks involved?**There is a possibility that taking part in this study could cause you some psychological discomfort and/or distress. If this happens, you can contact the following resources for support:

***• Your registered GP*** – We recommend you contact your registered GP to discuss any concerns and seek advice. Your GP should be able to either signpost you to a helpful service or make a referral.

***• Samaritans*** - Samaritans is a registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide throughout Great Britain and Ireland.Telephone: 116 123  
Website: https://www.samaritans.org/

***• Combat Stress*** - Combat Stress is a registered charity in the United Kingdom offering therapeutic and clinical community and residential treatment to former members of the British Armed Forces who are suffering from a range of mental health conditions; including post traumatic stress disorder.  
Telephone: 0800 1381619  
Text: 07537 173683  
Email: [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)  
Website: https://combatstress.org.uk/

• ***Help for Heroes*** - Help for Heroes is a British charity which provides lifelong recovery support to British Armed Forces service personnel who have been wounded or injured in the line of duty, and to their families.  
Telephone: 0300 303 9888  
Website: https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/

• ***Veterans Welfare Service***- The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides a professional help and advice service to veterans or anyone supporting a veteran, their families and dependants.  
Telephone: 0808 1914 218  
Email: [veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk)  
Website: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-welfare-service

**If you feel you are in a crisis and need urgent support, please contact the following:**

**• *NHS111*:** Please dial 111 on your telephone (UK).

**• *Local A&E department* –** Please go straight to your local A&E department should you feel you require urgent support and attention.

**• *Samaritans -*** Samaritans is a registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide throughout Great Britain and Ireland.  
Telephone: 116 123   
Website: https://www.samaritans.org/

**• *All Call Signs -*** All Call Signs is an award-winning peer support network for veterans, serving military personnel and their families.  
Telephone: 023 9438 7914  
Website: https://allcallsigns.org/contact-us/

***Please note, the above services are based in the United Kingdom. For international / non-UK based participants, please contact your local healthcare provider.***

**What will happen to the information collected?**All information collected for this study will be stored securely on a password protected computer and backed up on a secure server. In addition, all data will be pooled and only compiled into data summaries or summary reports. Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will therefore be kept strictly confidential.

As I will not be asking for any identifiable information before or whilst you complete the questionnaires, all your data will be unidentifiable and anonymous. If you would like to be entered into the prize draw, then you will be asked to provide your email address for us to contact you should you win. These email addresses will be stored in a file separate to your data, therefore it will be impossible for me to link your email address with your questionnaires and your data will remain anonymous. Only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to this information.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of the thesis. The research project will also be put forward for publishing meaning that the results may be published in a journal and/or forum for people to access. The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

**What happens if there is a problem?**If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk, phone: + 44 2380 595058. Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link: https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.**

Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you have read and understood information on this form,

are aged 18 or over and agree to take part in this survey.