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THE WAR VETERAN IDENTITY²

ABSTRACT. The paper discusses how war veterans perceive themselves and how they answer the question "Who am I?". War veterans face many challenges in the process of re-socialization from a state of war and war traumatization to a peacetime society. There are several reasons why their re-socialization is a slow process: the first one is that a war engagement is in itself a highly stressful situation which carries traumas of different degrees, the other reason is the changed system of values in relation to war engagement. Namely, at the time they went to war, they had a strong social support, but at the time of their return and today this support is lost to the point of judgment. And the third reason which limits their re-socialization is the situation of social transition they found on their return from war, which specifically means that a large percentage of the population in general, and thus the war veterans after returning from the war, lost their jobs, creating a large social group of "transition losers". Such a condition often generates an identity crisis.

This set of socio-cultural circumstances together with the ontological insecurity carried by war trauma generate an identity crisis, which is manifested among the respondents in nihilistic answers when responding to questions about their own personality. Studying the identity of war veterans, it was found that a strong attachment to the veteran identity is dominant. In fact, this paper discusses the different ways in which this attachment is refracted in the personality and identity of subjects, from negative attitudes to the pride in belonging to a group of war veterans and personal fulfillment in the activism in associations of war participants.

KEY WORDS: war veterans; identity crisis; resocialization; stigma; war trauma.

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INTRODUCTION

The research shows that there is a negative attitude of society towards war veterans (Jasarević and Leutar, 2010; Marković-Savić, 2012). The attitude of society towards their war engagement has varied depending on the ideological support or the loss of ideological support for a violent resolution of conflict in the former Yugoslavia. War veterans testify (Marković-Savić, 2012) that they went to war-affected areas with a broad public support, and that upon return their personal sacrifices were rendered senseless by the primary social groups, and that this attitude towards their military engagement, as contacts grew more and more socially distant, was increasingly deploring.

Due to this overall negative attitude of society towards war veterans, it can be concluded that they belong to stigmatized groups. The fact that war veterans are the bearers the social construct of stigma is shown by their experience. They are often labeled as outsiders, not because of specific acts they committed (which, as stated, can be supported or contested from ideological positions), but due to the fact that the environment, in accordance with the general attitude of the public, applies rules and sanctions to "the offender". The person who bears the stigma of being a war veteran is faced with prejudices of the environment towards that label in the form of social and psychological consequences. Prejudices are, in themselves, and so in this case, generalized and affect the identity and personality of the stigmatized person. The visibility of the stigma may affect the way in which the stigmatized person will deal with it, so that carriers of "invisible" stigmas, such as war veterans who are not disabled, can be spared from social rejection at first glance. However, invisible stigmas can also lead to problems in re-socialization and psychological vulnerability. Respondents who are disabled war veterans point out that the dominant attitude of the society towards them is pity, but they feel rejected and condemned to a lesser extent as compared to those respondents whose stigma is considered subject to control, i.e., war veterans without physical trauma.

Dealing with discrimination often leads to the loss of self-confidence and self-esteem of the stigmatized person, since the negative labeling and stigma are associated with self-image. The identity of self-awareness is, in fact, "the subjective experience of one's own situation and character that a person experiences as a result of different

social experiences" (Goffman, 2009:117). Goffman distinguishes between a social and a personal identity. Identity, on the one hand, comprises the attitudes and definitions about a person's identity made by *other* people, and on the other hand, the "ego" or the identity of "self-awareness" which is "a subjective attitude, a thought process that is inextricably linked to what a person feels" (Goffman, 2009:117). This conclusion is derived from the sociological concept of identity, which assumes that the individual identity always develops with the interaction with others, i.e., the interaction of "I" with "society". This means that we see ourselves depending on what kind of a message others reflect about what we are like in their eyes. One of the most important ways in which we get to know ourselves is exactly through the reactions of others toward us. Significant others present us with a mirror that allows us to see ourselves. We include this reflection in our self-image. In the case of veterans, it is important to emphasize this aspect in the study of their identity, since they are typical representatives of the carriers of socially constructed stigmas, based on the negative attitude of society towards their war engagement.

THE DEFINITION OF WAR VETERANS

The term veteran has its roots in the Latin language (lat. *vetus*), which means a person who has served in the military. The adjective *veteranus* (from *vetus*, "old, experienced, ancient, aged³") was used in Rome to describe an old or experienced soldier who has served in the army for a long time and was then discharged from active service. In English, the term veteran began to be used in the early sixteenth century (Harper, 2001) and indicated "an old soldier", and soon its meaning extended to those who have a long experience in any service or profession. These two parallel meanings are used today in many languages, as is the case with the Serbian language. In the Serbian language, the word veteran in its colloquial usage does not denote a person who was a member of the armed forces, but the one who has participated in war as a soldier. One might therefore conclude that a veteran is pri-

³ *Vetus, veteranus* comes from the Indo-European root *wetus* "year"; in Greek *ethos*, also, "year", and the words for "old" in Romance languages (Italian *vecchio*, France *vieux*, Spanish *viejo*) also stem from it. Harper D. (2001) *Online Etymology*, available at URL <http://www.etymonline.com/abbr.php>

marily determined as a warrior, precisely as an old, former but also experienced and deserving warrior.

In legislation in Serbia, *fighters*⁴ (Serb. borci) is the official term for all those who were involved in war or armed actions, and for whom the colloquial term "veteran" is used. The term itself clearly indicates war and fighting. However, the term veteran is more precise because it refers to the former fighter/warrior, not the active one. The term fighters remained in use from the period of socialist Yugoslavia in which the fighters of the NLS (National Liberation Struggle) occupied a special place. Those numerous fighters remained in the armed forces after the war and made the most of the officer corps.

What separates war veterans from other citizens, what brings their specificity about, is war traumatization resulting from conditions of war which abound in stressful events, and as such leave traumatic consequences on the participants, especially if they resulted in physical damage to the body. Given the fact that each person acts as a single unit of biophysical and psychological characteristics, it is logical that the survival of the stress of high intensity or a violation of physical integrity necessarily results in a violation of psychological integrity.

War and combat stress are most commonly of such intensity and character that they are referred to as "the traumatic stress disorder" (Čabarkapa, 2008:23). According to current definitions, a traumatic event involves life-threatening situations that are always associated with intense feelings of fear and helplessness. In studies of psychological stress factors in the war events in the former Yugoslavia, the causes of intense stress events are: the death and wounding of comrades, directly dealing with the fallen and wounded soldiers and officers, participation in the care of the wounded and killed, the experience of the risk of mortal danger to one's own life, treason or surrender of individuals and entire units, leaving military installations, capture and other events (Čabarkapa, 2008). Recent literature suggests that the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is only one part of post-traumatic reactions comprised of depression, anxiety and panic disorders, and that many sufferers develop drug addictions and somatic diseases, especially hypertension, asthma, and the chronic pain syndrome. (Klarić et al., 2010). When veterans talk about their war experience, they describe it as being so strong that it

⁴ Zakon o pravima boraca, vojnih invalida i članova njihovih porodica (*Law on the Rights of Veterans, Disabled Veterans and Members of Their Families*), Službeni zakon SRS no. 54/89 and Službeni Glasnik RS, no. 137/04 from 24. 12. 2004).

changed them as a people: "Wherever the position in war, on the third or the front line, one cannot come back the same as one was"... "I'm not the same man any more, I notice it myself, regardless of how strong personality you have, anybody who says he's the same does not speak the truth"... "No one can go to war and return the same, those are two different persons, maybe some cold-hearted people can, and there were some who were like that." They point out that this experience has changed their personal identity, and that, in the light of this experience, the values established in a person change: "The people in my environment cannot understand that a man thinks differently after the war and that he has lost much of the personal identity he had earlier, and that in turn he strengthens some principles and categories which had not been that important before." War veterans emphasize that this is an experience that leaves lasting consequences to the personality ("one does not die from it, but one dies with it" ... "It is impossible to stay cold in a situation when your friend is killed. These are the traumas that will stay for life."). When talking about war experience, veterans most frequently mention an intense feeling of fear especially in the first encounter with the war, but also about adjusting to traumatic situations.

In the process of re-socialization to peacetime living conditions, the subjective perception of self-worth has a greater impact than the scope of war trauma or physical disability. That is why a veteran should learn how to live with his own perception and the sense of his sacrifice in the war, and the perception of the physical damage to the body.

The issue of identity is especially emphasized in times of crisis. An identity crisis occurs when some of the basic social roles are brought into question, among others, those that allow elementary social security (e.g., professional roles). This social situation can be found in the conditions of social transition, which is usually characterized by high unemployment and a new social layer called "transition losers". The war trauma continues with a trauma that results from rapid and sudden social changes that call into question the very existence, causing uncertainty and resistance to change. Therefore, the crisis of identity is associated largely with uncertainty, which causes confusion and concern. This situation calls into question the previously achieved identity, which can be shown only as a crisis of growth, and not necessarily a discontinuity which brings anomie and a sense of loss and identity crisis (Golubović, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the impact of changes in the socio-cultural environment to the inter-

nal integration of veterans' personality, manifested in a difficult re-socialization, adaptation to peacetime living conditions blocked not only by war traumatization, but also by traumas due to social rejection faced upon return from the war.

We can say in a summative manner that veterans' specific social situation consists of the following circumstances: war traumatization they were exposed to and whose consequences they feel today, stigmatization and, in the end, what they share with the rest of society, a deep social crisis waiting for them upon their return from wars which represents an additional burden for peacetime rehabilitation. Therefore, it is important to see how this social situation is refracted in the individual's identity.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLIED INSTRUMENTS

The research was conducted as part of a broader research entitled "Social Status of War Veterans in Serbia", using the tehnic of semi-structured interviews 30 veterans who were engaged in the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as in war-affected areas on the territory of the former Yugoslav republics, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were questioned. The study was conducted in the Nisava, Jablanica and Pcinja district. Before the start of research, all participants understood in detail the theme and purpose of the research, and after promised anonymity, all respondents agreed to record the conversation. The interview was conducted according to pre-established groups of questions, and the analysis of questions related to personal and collective identity is the subject of this paper. The interviews were recorded in audio format and then transformed into transcripts. Nineteen respondents live in a main city area, three in the suburbs and eight in a village. The sample included war veterans who suffered damage to the body on the basis of which they obtained the status of disabled war veterans and those without such status.

Thus, among the questioned veterans, fifteen of them have suffered damage to the body in the range of 20% to 100%. One respondent has the status of a peacetime war veteran, fourteen of them do not officially have the status of being disabled, including the two who seek a formal assessment of disability in court. By employment status, in

the sample there are 10 working respondents, 9 pensioners and 11 unemployed persons. According to the education level the respondents can be grouped as follows: 2 respondents with primary education only, 21 respondents with the secondary level of education, 5 respondents with a higher school and 2 respondents with a university degree. Voluntary participants in the war are those who have not received an official call to participate in the reserve army, but they themselves reported in the state military formations.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The question of identity is mostly linked to the question of belonging to a group: it can be a family, territorial, national, professional, generational one, etc. In this regard, the goal of the research is to determine: how much, in their opinion, is belonging to a group of war veterans important to them? The task of the research is to see how the veterans understand personal identity, i.e., how they describe it and how much space the veteran identity occupies in their personal identity. The task is also to determine to what extent the respondents are fully aware of the identity (i.e., to what extent respondents spontaneously concretized their answers, or were unable to answer the question "Who am I?"). The analysis of respondents' answers to the question that was asked produced 5 categories, ranked from an excessive identification with a group of war veterans and an identity crisis caused by this identification to those subjects with whom belonging to a group of war veterans does not play a role in personal identity.

THE IDENTITY CRISIS

The crisis of personal identity and nihilistic attitudes can be encountered in respondents who believe to have lost not only social but also personal identity. The respondents who entered the military profession at the beginning of the war, having not been prepared for it but for a civil profession, have a much more intense experience of an identity crisis than people who have been professionally prepared for the military occupation. Their lives changed significantly the moment war "came to their doorstep" and harshly interrupted the life they had previously led and the reality they had constructed for themselves. Thus, today's retired soldier, and a young man in Croatia

at the beginning of the war in early 90s who had to make a decision whose army he will fight for and decided for the YNA, says: "I'd say I'm an empty sack, nothing... these days you are worth less if you say that you were a hero, and that you were awarded a medal. Today I *regret* not having gone abroad in '91 as a refugee, but grabbing a rifle" (3). A former philosophy professor who witnessed the same fate in Sarajevo as the previous respondent says about herself: "A man who was brutally thrown out of his track and life, now I'm on a track that I've never wanted nor planned for, and my time is passing by... I was getting ready for something else in life, to be a teacher and to teach children, before the war I was a professor of philosophy and sociology. That's what I loved to do, but it's all in vain, most of my students are dead. So the answer to the question of who I am is: a failure" (4). Therefore, the biggest problem with identity is caused by the changed system of values in society which highly valued the accession to military units and a sacrifice of one's own life for higher community interests when the wars began, but that now regards this sacrifice as almost worthless, often condemned and seen as an anti-value and a crime. At this point it can be seen how the "ontological dissonance" (Malešević) of modern society from the structural level refracts on the lives of individuals. Namely, in the 20th century, there was an establishment of the proclaimed values of the Enlightenment such as: human intellect, independence, tolerance and peace, which are embodied in the constitutional guarantees in the form of: the right to life, liberty, equality before the law, the preservation of peace, the prohibition of cruel punishment and the like. At the same time, there was a spread of violence on a massive scale, so as Malešević said: "Bearing in mind that only in the 20th century more people were killed than in the rest of the whole of human history, there is an imperative to solve the ontological dissonance created by the disparity between the reality and the proclaimed ideals" (2011:18).

A sniper who was wounded twice, as a reserve soldier in special units activated in the professional military service and eventually fired, for which he is in a legal dispute with the military, sees himself as follows: "I was successful when I was healthy and in service, which is not the case now. I am disappointed with the army, with the service and this country, with its system of values and morals. In all our combat operations, we lose wars, lose territory, we feel as *losers*. In the end, I'm sorry that I was serving the army" (8); It is noticeable from the statement above how society's attitude towards war-experienced soldiers reflects to their self-image and self-confidence; an ambiva-

lent relationship with one's own participation in war is also noticeable, on the one hand, they are proud of their war engagement and on the other, due to the social evaluation of their sacrifice, they feel a misunderstanding and rejection by the wider community, which leads to the feeling of contempt for their own personalities and acceptance of the prevalent attitudes about the futility of their sacrifice. In other words, the "the standards that the stigmatized person accepted from society lead him to intimately accept what others see as his failure, inevitably provoking, even only at certain moments, the feeling that he really did not achieve what he should have. The shame in this case becomes the primary option, and it arises from the individual perception of one's characteristic as something bad or as something he readily believes he does not have" (Goffman, 2009:19).

This feeling is shared by a member of the Roma ethnic minority, who participated in the war in the reserve army: "I am nobody. I went where I went, I got what I got. I have no job, I'm living on a disability allowance that is minimal." (9). The identity crisis is evident in a voluntary war participant who describes himself in the negative connotations: "I am currently an unemployed person, a former business owner, a former teacher, a former soldier" (19).

A heavily disabled war veteran emphasizes that his war engagement has left a powerful mark on his personality even today, almost 20 years after the war: "I am someone who has returned from a crazy environment such as war, and who finds it hard to fit in the environment in which he lives now" (18). This sentence reflects the difficulties of re-socialization to peacetime living conditions, after experiencing war. This is also a paradigmatic situation in a large number of war veterans, therefore, as the physical or psychological traumatization in the war was stronger, the re-socialization process is slower. The lack of institutional support for the re-socialization of war veterans contributes to this situation.

Some respondents divide their lives to "before and after the war", namely their war engagement, because their lives or living conditions significantly changed after the war in which they participated. As we discussed in the introductory part of the paper, the war brought about by the change in living conditions, and war veterans did not return back in the way of life that they had left to go to war, but they returned to a changed society. A member of the reserve army in the 1999 war tells us how the engagement in the war has left a strong mark and an actual re-identification and how he "divides" his personality to categories "before" and "after" the war: "I am a fighter for jus-

tice, for honesty, for the honor. I respect a given word, it's something I'm particularly occupied with after the war. Before the war, I was thinking like a producer, a creative spirit, wanting to know how to make a story, something artistic" (25). In the context of war engagement, we can observe other life failures which have their basis in social changes and the fact that one belongs to that part of the population whom, specifically in the context of social changes that have occurred in Serbia, we refer to as "transition losers". A veteran with a PTSD diagnosis divides his life into the one before and the one after the war: "No one comes to my house anymore, not the friends, nor the relatives, nobody. Before the war, I had a friend circle and I used to hang out a lot" (28). A veteran who quit his job after the war, due to the inability to do the same job, sees his personality as being different before and after the war: "Before going to war, I knew what I wanted and I had clear goals in life, and now I also know what I want, but I cannot put it into action mainly as a result of a lack of will and ambition" (30). A negative determination is also present in other voluntary participants in armed conflicts: "A very complicated personality, often changing moods, there is also *pessimism*. I think I had a happy childhood with my father, an officer, and my mother, a teacher. I am very emotional because every little thing can make me cry, although I am a soldier and a fighter, although I am 59 years old. I have always fought for justice; I sought it, but have not found it" (22).

ACTIVISM DUE TO THE VETERAN IDENTITY

A dominant characteristic of belonging to a group of war veterans is typical in the case of disabled war veterans. This dominance is expressed in the fact that the identity of being a disabled war veteran stands out above all other forms of identity or as the one that gives dimension to all other forms of identification. This is due to the fact that damage to the body leads to a completely different self-perception in the light of new circumstances and social relations. Such a strong identification with a group of war veterans leads to the need and desire to be active in organizations that veterans formed themselves to protect the rights and interests of vulnerable groups. A most heavily disabled war veteran, from the war in Croatia in which he was engaged as a member of the reserve forces of the YNA, answers the question to describe himself as follows: "To put it simply, I am now a man with a label of being a war veteran, with the scar of being disabled, the man who has only one motivation in life, and that is to help the popu-

lation of war veterans. I've been working for this goal as a volunteer for more than 10 years, all in all, I'm an ordinary citizen. I would like to show the people in my city that, whether or not we took care of the veterans, they are here and will not go away; I want veterans to become visible. I know that veterans have some amount of trust towards me because they call me when they are having the biggest problems and the veterans say that it is much easier to talk to a fellow man who's had a similar experience, than to a Professor dr. neuropsychiatrist. This is because they do not want to open up at the doctor's appointment because they fear that someone would place them in the group of madmen, which is easy to do with war veterans. I think they feel that they have my support, and I've been doing it from the heart and soul for the past 20 years. My motivation did not start during the war, but during a long-term treatment of a year of lying in hospital, when I watched those guys who were about 20 years old and serving in the military. These guys lost parts of their bodies in seconds and, then, their wounds and tears were harder than my own. All of them were happy to leave the hospital, they rejoiced in going home to their loved ones, while I was in a strange situation that scared me. After a year I got so familiarized with these people who had no legs and arms, who were in wheelchairs, on crutches, that somewhere inside I classified myself as belonging to them, they were my brothers in fate. When I got my discharge papers, halfway to the house I had the urge to turn around and go back. It's a strange feeling, this need to go back to these guys, as if I was afraid what they would do without me. Even then, I was the leader of those wounded soldiers in a sense that I struggled to assist them to provide themselves with basic things, because these boys were brought in sheets from the battlefield, mostly from Bosnia, where families were destroyed, expelled, in exile abroad. I was a wounded man from Serbia, so my family would come and bring hygiene supplies, money for the cigars, while they had no one. They were given some hospital clothes, that's all they had. I then took it upon myself to gather material help for these guys with the help of football clubs Red Star, Partizan, FC Beograd and I managed to do it. People brought lots of stuff. This was the beginning of my motivation to find people with a similar way of thinking and to try to do something to stop the violence and the consequences of war" (12). A voluntary participant in the war, who decided to take this step because his son received a call to participate in the war, a member of a minority, explains the purpose of social engagement as follows: "... what I love is the work and commitment to the association so that I would con-

tribute to improving the social and material conditions of the categories who suffered damage" (11).

The stigmatized person may see all the hardship he went through as a blessing in disguise, especially because of the belief that through suffering one learns about life and people, as Goffmann explains. In case of war veterans that could be a new kind of heroism in the form of the struggle for the realization of rights of the members of this population. The new meaning of life can be sought in finding opportunities to help the most vulnerable members of the group, all of which may also lead to a new kind of identity.

PRIDE IN IDENTIFYING WITH A GROUP OF WAR VETERANS

This category includes those statements in which the dominance of a collective veteran identity induces a feeling of pride in belonging to this group. This is particularly the case with the members of the so-called special units that had a special status among other military formations and whose membership was considered a great honor and achievement in military ranks. Members of these units express diametrically opposite feelings, on the one hand, a negative reflection of the society towards their war engagement, but also the pride in belonging to this group, on the other hand. Thus, a retired paratrooper, in addition to a negative attitude about herself, points out: "... I still like to say that I was in the parachute brigade, that I made 1,600 jumps, that I fought, and I am very glad that last year at the end of my career I was carrying the Serbian Flag at the air show in Belgrade" (3). Another retired member of the special units says a similar thing: "Lately, especially with influential people, I often present myself as Hadzi D.M., a veteran of the 63rd Parachute Brigade or the Vice President of a veteran association and I feel strong and good about that. I noticed that people look at me differently when they hear this" (1). At this point, our respondents convey social information through certain symbols that complete the idea that we have of them in a clear and uncomplicated manner. Labels such as: parachute jumps, an air show, a pilgrim (hadzija), a veteran of the 63rd Parachute Brigade, are used as "status symbols", maybe even better to say "symbols of prestige" as they strive to highlight a well-organized and respected social position.

A retired officer with a severe disability, the loss of both arms sustained during the NATO aggression, expressed his feeling of pride in negative categories: "... I am not ashamed of anything I did, and I'm not sorry that I lost arms while serving my country" (5). The state-

ment is expressed in such a way that it seems as if he is supposed to be ashamed of and lament over something. There is an ambivalence of feelings carried by the weight of re-identification with the stigmatized group, being double stigmatized as a war veteran and as a severely disabled person. The fact that past war engagement can also be used for the purposes of personal promotion, and that the identity of a war veteran may have a manipulative purpose is witnessed by a reservist from the war in 1999: "I do not like to talk about my war engagement, especially because of those braggarts who exaggerate their role in the war. Also, these stories about war make me remember things I do not like to remember" (23). A heavily disabled war veteran points out that his participation in the war that brought him injuries and disability causes pity that makes him feel bad. This is why he conceals his participation in the war. "I am an ordinary man. I do not like to brag about my war engagement, because a great number of people, especially women, *pity* war veterans" (16).

THE DOMINANCE OF A PERSONAL IDENTITY OVER THE COLLECTIVE ONE

This group includes all those subjects in whom individual forms of identification are emphasized, that is, in whom the identification gets an ontological dimension, unlike the previous answers that emphasize the identification with a group of war veterans. The past war engagement is integrated into the complex of life experiences, and in this complex the experience of war does not take a major role, but acts as a factor which has contributed to form a certain figure.

A war veteran, a former member of the special forces who participated in all wars in the former Yugoslavia, puts this part of his history in an equal context with other activities pursued in life: "I would describe myself as a person who wishes to try different things in life. At school, I was an excellent student and I liked to study, I liked parachuting, I was a soldier and paratrooper, in the past 20 years I have been working with computers as a hobby, and now I am a professional website designer; I have obtained a degree as a professional chef, I worked in the restaurant business, and now I do athletics, running marathons and half marathons, I was a football referee for 7 years. I started running to lose some pounds, but later it turned into something more, the goals have become bigger, so I started running marathons. I run for an hour a day" (6); A member of the reserve army in the war in Kosovo says about himself: "I am a schmuck, a man who has grown as a member of the community in a rather leisurely time,

someone who has missed a lot of opportunities for acquiring professional skills and qualifications. Today, I do not regret and do not whine over missed opportunities, I have never whined over "spilled milk", I have never complained about having missed the opportunity to gain position by joining a political party, I have never used the position in the association to solve my problems, and my family understands that. I have never been a member of the League of Communists, then, I was criticized for that, now, I'm criticized because I'm not pro-European and pro-NATO. Maybe I am too conservative, although I think even a stone needs to change depending on new information, but I do not wish to change something that is mine (11).

CONCLUSION Previous studies support the allegation that war veterans fall into the category of stigmatized social groups, primarily due to the negative attitude of the society towards their participation in the war in former Yugoslavia. The person who bears the stigma of a war veteran is faced with prejudices of the environment towards that label in the form of social and psychological consequences. Prejudices are, in themselves and in this case, generalized and affect the identity and personality of the stigmatized person. Globally speaking, war veterans feel that the "ontological dissonance" of modern times reflects itself to war participants in the individual plan. In addition to negative generalizations and the stigmatization, the personal and social situation of war veterans is affected by war traumatization.

At this point it is important to indicate the gravity of the social circumstances that waited for them upon return from the wars, which meant unemployment, material and existential uncertainty and unstructured time.

Findings from the study suggest that the veteran identity plays an important role in the overall structure of respondents' identities. Thus, the identity crisis and nihilistic attitudes dominate in those subjects in whom personal war trauma, its strength and the inability to surpass difficulties in re-socialization brought by such traumatization correspond with the awareness of environment's negative attitude towards war veterans. The identity crisis is manifested in those respondents who internally merge the difficulties of re-socialization, in a sense that they feel a deep misunderstanding and non-affiliation to the environment in which they live, with a strong awareness of the change in society's value system regarding war engagement. Under certain conditions, respondents may feel pride in identifying with the group of war veterans, especially the members of special units who

had to make a special personal effort to enter once elite military units. The dominance of the veteran identity is found in those subjects who discovered their new life role in a personal commitment to help and support veterans and their families.

Finally, regarding identity, respondents from the research show a high degree of awareness and, thus, self-consciousness, since the answers relating to the given (attributed), i.e., unselected characteristics, such as name and surname, are completely absent. They are able to speak about their own sense of "I", but also about their belonging to a particular social and subculture community, in this case, the community of veterans.

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ОЛИВЕРА С. МАРКОВИЋ-САВИЋ

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У ПРИШТИНИ СА ПРИВРЕМЕНИМ СЕДИШТЕМ
У КОСОВСКОЈ МИТРОВИЦИ, ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

РЕЗИМЕ

ИДЕНТИТЕТ РАТНИХ ВЕТЕРАНА

Овај рад говори о томе како себе доживљавају ратни ветерани и како одговорају на питање „ко сам ја”. Ратни ветерани се сучавају са бројним изазовима у процесу ресоцијализације из ратног стања и ратне трауматизације на мирнодобско друштво. Више је разлога због којих њихова ресоцијализација тече успорено: први је тај што је учешће у рату само по себи високо стресна ситуација која са собом носи трауматизацију различитог степена, други разлог је промењен систем вредности према њиховом учешћу у рату. Наиме у времену када су у рат полазили имали су снажну подршку у друштву, да би у периоду повратка и данас ту подршку изгубили, све до осуђивања. И трећи разлог, који им отежава ресоцијализацију је ситуација транзиције друштва коју су затекли по повратку из рата, што је конкретно значило да је велики број становништва уопште, а тиме и ратних ветерана по повратку из рата остало без запослења кандидујући се за једну велику друштвену групу „губитника транзиције”. Оваква друштвена ситуација неретко генерише кризу идентитета.

Наведени скуп социо-културних околности, заједно са онтолошком несигурнишћу коју са собом носи ратна трауматизацију заједно генеришу кризу идентитета, која се код испитаника манифестује у нихилистичким одговорима када говоре о властитој личности. Истраживањем идентитета код ратних ветерана утврђено је да доминира снажена везаност за идентитет ратног ветерана. Заправо, овај рад говори о различитим начинима на који се ова везаност прелама у личности и идентитетима испитаника, од негативних ставова преко поноса због припадности групи ратних ветерана, те личном испуњењу у активизму у удружењима учесника ратова.

Кључне речи: ратни ветерани, криза идентитета, ресоцијализација, стигма, ратна траума.