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Research Article

Embodiment of the Spirit: A Case Study

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Abstract

Adopting a longitudinal approach to exploring the psychology of the transition from military to civilian life, one case study is presented that adds a spiritual perspective to the transition process. This case study serves as an example representative from a group of participants who have been followed through a research project on identity reconstruction during the transition to civilian life. This individual, not unlike many others within the group, undergoes an unexpected progression of the military I-position of the self throughout the process of becoming a civilian. This study utilizes a dialogical approach to the identity work to further the understanding of longitudinal adjustments to the self. An analysis of the narrative developments and interactions among pre-existing and new I-positions of the self over time has been made based upon three annually conducted interviews spanning from 2014 to 2016. The results lead to the suggestion that if a military I-position of the self grows more salient and voiced throughout the process of transitioning into civilian life, then this vocalization may be related to the spirit of a person embodied in a specific I-position of the self. Such growth of a military I-position after leaving active service may gravitate around a deep sense of “who I am” with a profound sense of meaning attached to this position. Instead of perceiving as an unwanted development the growth of a military sense of “who I am,” one should acknowledge it as a deeper dimension of self and life. It is important to find an outlet for such a progression of the self so as to sustain balance and dialogue. Future research is encouraged to further examine these qualitative findings.

Keywords

Military to civilian transition • Self • Spirit • I-position

“Ruh”un Şekillenmesi: Bir Durum Çalışması

Öz

Bu makalede, askeri hayattan sivil hayata geçiş sürecine manevi bir perspektif ekleyerek, boylamsal bir yaklaşımla bu olgunun psikolojik boyutunun incelenmesini amaçlayan bir durum çalışması sunulmaktadır. Bu çalışmada incelenen vaka, sivil hayata geçiş sürecinde kimlik inşası üzerine yürütülen bir araştırma projesinde izlenen bir gruba örneklik teşkil etmektedir. Bu birey, grup içindeki diğerlerine benzer bir şekilde askeri ben-konumunun (I-position) “sivil olma” sürecinde umulmadık şekilde seyreden bir dönüşümünü tecrübe etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, benlik üzerindeki boylamsal dönüşümleri daha iyi açıklamak için kimlik çalışması bakımından diyalojik bir yaklaşım kullanılmaktadır. Benliğin zaman içindeki, önceden var olan ve yeni ben-konumları arasındaki anlamlı gelişmeleri ve etkileşimleri üzerindeki analiz, 2014-2016 yıllarını arasında üç kez yapılan mülakatlarla elde edilen verilere dayanarak yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, sivil yaşama geçiş süreci boyunca askeri bir ben-konumu belirginleştiğinde ve seslendirildiğinde, bu seslendirmelerin, benliğin belirli bir konumunda yer alan benliğin “ruh”uyla ilişkili olabileceği fikrini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Aktif hizmetten ayrıldıktan sonra askeri ben-konumundaki büyüme, “Ben kimim” sorusu ve bu konuma atfedilen derin anlam ekseninde açıklanabilir. Askeri ben-konumun büyümesini istenmedik bir gelişme olarak ele almak yerine bireyin bunu benlik ve yaşamın derin bir boyutu olarak ele alması yerinde olacaktır. Dengeyi ve diyalogu sürdürmek için tür bir sürecin dışı vurulabileceği mecralar bulmak da önem arz etmektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmalarda, bu nitel bulguların daha ayrıntılı olarak incelenmesi teşvik edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Askerlikten sivilliğe geçiş • Benlik • Ruh • Ben-konumu

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Little attention has been directed to exploring and describing military-service members' transitions into civilian culture with an exclusive focus on self-identity work. Brunger, Serrato, and Ogden (2013; p. 88) suggest that "the concept of identity in relation to the military is by no means a new one," but much of the focus thereof has been upon the investigation of military identities and the construction of gender "rather than how one's identity might shift in response to contextual alterations." The process of leaving military service and transferring one's self into a life in the civilian population necessitates some type of identity reconstruction, which may pose serious challenges to a service member's self (Beder, 2012; Bragin, 2010; Buell, 2010; Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2012; Drops, 2004; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011; Savion, 2009; Yanos, 2004). Due to the possibility that warrior culture tends to internalize problems within individuals, military identities themselves may potentially accentuate the difficulties of identity reconstruction (Bryan & Morrow, 2011; Devries, Hughes, Watson, & Moore, 2012; Dickstein, Vogt, Handa, & Litz, 2010; French, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Hall, 2012a, 2012b; Kim, Britt, Klocko, Riviere, & Adler, 2011; Moore, 2012; Wertsch, 1991). Additionally, Brunger et al. (2013, p. 95) suggest "that the transition from military to civilian life is representative of a shift in identity, whereby ex-service personnel must accept identity loss and the inevitable need for change therein." Such a process of identity reconstruction may touch upon the deepest sense of who one's self really is and its related meaning and purpose in life (Grimell, 2016a).

This introductory review of self-identity work in transitioning from military to civilian life indicates that more research would help better illuminate the process of becoming a civilian. However, much of this research implies a more linear understanding of the process as a steady one-way progression from a military identity to another identity constructed as a civilian. This perceived progression of self-identity work does not seem to leave much room for a more fluid or dialogical approach to the process of becoming a civilian. It may even seem to suggest that banishing the military position to the shadow lands in the periphery of the self is desirable and advantageous.

A dialogical perspective of the self in transitioning to civilian life is rare to find, as are spiritual perspectives that reflect upon self-identity work in the process of becoming a civilian. This article, which cooperatively consider a case study from an ongoing longitudinal and qualitative project investigating existential and religious aspects of identity reconstruction among Swedish service members in civilian transition, seeks to begin filling the gap by combining a dialogical approach with a spiritual interpretation. Within the sample of nineteen ($N = 19$) service members transitioning to civilian life, an articulate group of participants have been experiencing an unexpected process in the self whereby the military I-positions have become more pronounced and noticeable over time. This case study has been chosen as the representative voice for this group.

By adopting the lens of a dialogical self (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2003), much of the tensions and conflicts in transitional stories and experiences can be understood as arising from the need to reorganize the I-positions of the self (Grimell, 2015b). Such processes of the self are in general described and understood from psychological, social, and cultural perspectives; thus, it feels complementary to gain a broader perspective by considering the spiritual dimensions of inquiry. In the process of transitioning to a civilian, a military I-position may initially be described as causing conflict within the self, perhaps even by growing overly dominant in some cases with negative implications from a dialogical outlook (Grimell, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b). In contrast, transitioning away from active service can easily be expected to lead to a distinct decline of the military I-position. From a more traditional psychological perspective, a military I-position that appears to grow more noticeable and pronounced in the self over time could indicate a service member's difficulty adjusting to a civilian life and population. However, based upon the current project, this is not necessarily the case. One could instead consider this unexpected process in the self from a spiritual perspective; one could suggest that this development is related to the spirit of a dialogical self, embodied by a particular I-position. Such a discussion may even lead to suggesting criteria that can be used to identify the spirit.

This article will utilize a narrative and dialogical approach in the longitudinal analysis of self in civilian transition, finalized through a spiritual interpretation. The following sub-questions will inform the analysis.

- How do pre-existing and new I-positions interact and evolve throughout a transition?
- How is the spirit of the self embodied in the process?

This will continue with a conceptualization of dialogical self and its related concepts, followed by the method, findings derived from the longitudinal case study, discussion, and conclusion.

Conceptualization

A dialogical self with I-positions

The idea of a dialogical self is inspired by and rooted within the tradition of the self as proposed by James (1890), Bakhtin (1973), Mead (1934), and Sarbin (1986), who described a poly-vocal type of self due to the many characters that populate a self, which is highly influenced by culture. Mancuso and Sarbin (1983) and Sarbin (1986) suggested that the author of these narrative characters in the story of who I am is the "I" of the self. Formulated another way, "I" constructs the character "Me," which the self then presents in the personal story of who I am (Sarbin, 1986, p. 18). Hermans,



Kampen, and Van Loon (1992) proposed a dialogical translation of the narrative I-Me distinction that Sarbin (1986) made, which could be viewed as the starting point for the concept of a dialogical self. A dialogical self (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2003) combines and goes beyond the traditional, modern, and post-modern views of the self (see Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, for a full review). A dialogical self is understood as an extension of its society; the self is understood as a “society of mind” with its potential for dialogue, tension, and conflict (Hermans, 2002, p. 147). A dialogical self consists of many I-positions with specific voices (e.g., I as a husband, I as a son, I as a football player, I as a musician). These I-positions can be linked to either the internal or the external domain of self (Hermans, 2008, 2013). I-positions in the internal domain of self are located inside of a person (e.g., I as ambitious, I as happy). I-positions in the external domain of self are located outside the person (e.g., my family, my colleagues) but are really part of the self. Given the basic assumption of the extended self, the other is not outside the self but rather an intrinsic part of the self (Day & Jesus, 2013; Hermans, 1996, 2001a). The compilation of these I-positions creates the position repertoire of the multiplicity of self (Hermans, 2001b). Unity is still a central concept, and by attributing I, me, or mine to positions, they become parts of the self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

The dialogical self aims to support integrating decentralizing and centralizing self-movements (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Such a movement of the self could be understood as a dynamic process of positioning and counter-positioning between the I-positions that differ from person to person. The process may be flexible or controlled by a dominant I-position. Monologues can become the hallmark of self. I-positions of the self can cooperate and collaborate due to shared desires and interests. The self may need to innovate as new life situations are encountered. “In the case of a transition, the self is confronted with a new, unfamiliar or even threatening situation that requires an adaption or reorganization of the self” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 239). Transitioning implies a transfer from one particular context with a related identity to another context with its own related identity. In that movement a new character(s) in the story of who I am will be added alongside the already existing ones in the position repertoire of self (Hermans, 2001b). Such a process calls for some type of reorganization of self. A transition formally starts when the service member leaves active service; however, the transition may have been processed by the self, and others for that matter, long preceding such an exit point. The transition has no concise stop point in time. Yet I suggest that transitions where the self can engage in dialogue in such a way so that the old and new characters (i.e. identities) are allowed to make their voices heard and attuned to the sense of who I am are complete.

The concept of narrative identity consists of two components (Slocum-Bradley, 2009): the character as such (e.g., I as a service man, I as a boyfriend) and the

specific features of these characters (e.g., focused, efficient, loyal, talented). These self-characters populate a personal narrative, which serves as an identity claim and a self-representation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Mancuso, 1986; McAdams, 1997, 1988; Mishler, 1986, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).

Method

Research Design

This longitudinal case study has been collected from an ongoing longitudinal project on the transition to civilian life. The working title of the project, which reflects the overall research purpose, is *Existential and Religious Dimensions in Identity Reconstruction among Swedish Military Personnel during the Process of Becoming Civilians*. The empirical phase, including annual interviews, started during the summer of 2013 and was completed in the summer of 2016. The project sample included nineteen ($N = 19$) Swedish military service members in the process of transitioning to civilian life (for a further description of the project, design, and sample, see Grimell, 2016a). The approach to the inquiry is narrative, a productive and qualitative lens to use when narrowing in on empirical issues of identity in lived life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McAdams, 2013; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2002, 2006). The process of narrative analysis is an inductive inquiry, and the methodological principle is built around the interview, as detailed in the next section.

Interview Methodology

The interviews are based on a semi-structured design to cover topics relevant to the research purpose (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; van den Brand, Hermans, Scherer, & Verschuren, 2014). The same interview guide has been used throughout the interviews. The questions are open and designed to allow the interviewee to construct answers in the ways he finds meaningful (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crossley, 2000; Riessman, 1993; Scherer-Rath, 2014; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The topics covered were: military story, transition, relationships, identity, and existential concerns. Some of these topics could be seen as implicit spiritual questions with a reference to Pargament's (2011) questions for implicit spiritual assessment. Each interview has been transcribed into a complete transcript. Complete transcripts in Swedish and a summarization in English will be provided to other researchers upon request.

Interviewer

In addition to the fact that I conducted the interviews as a researcher in practical theology with a stated research purpose, the participants were informed in the consent letter that I am a former military officer. In the eyes of the participants, I am a person



who has served, and we share a common military background that establishes a sense of basic trust throughout the interviews (Mishler, 1986, 2004).

Interviewee and Material

Sergeant First Class Oskar was chosen for this article because his case is representative of and gives voice to a number of participants in the project related to military self-identity in civilian transition. Oskar's case neither too strongly nor too weakly illuminates these experiences in civilian transition. His case is rather medial in comparison to the full body of the participants' experiences regarding transition. Through this analysis is the opportunity to present both a unique, but also representative, case study which shows finer details in the longitudinal process. This case study analysis elaborates the first (T1, February 2014), second (T2, February 2015), and third interviews (T3, February 2016) made with Oskar.

Each interviewee volunteered through a snow-ball sampling method (Noy, 2008; Polkinghorne, 2005). Oskar was approached by another participant using a letter of information about the study, which had been distributed using email. Each participant had to fill in and return a response letter and, among other things, suggest a time and place for each interview. This also served as the informed consent agreement. The participants joined the study without any confessional requirements. The interviews lasted about one hour. The interviews were conducted on location chosen by the interviewee, whose anonymity has been protected by using the fictitious name of Oskar in this case.

Analytical Methodology

A portrait of how the pre-existing and new I-positions that populate Oskar's self interact and evolve throughout the transition will be presented in the case study description in the subsequent section. This portrait also includes a background in regards to Oskar's decision to leave active service. Based upon the given theory of a dialogical self with I-positions, including the definition of narrative identity as shared earlier in this article, this section serves to describe how the pre-existing and new I-positions were derived from the interview narratives even as they interacted and evolved throughout the process of becoming a civilian.

The first phase of analysis included a reading and re-readings of the transcripts. Through this process a number of voices or characters of the interview narratives could be discerned who "function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement" (Hermans, 1999, p. 72). The condition of Oskar's self in transition over time were assumed code-able through the levels of narrated tension, cooperation, harmony, and dialogue among

the voiced characters of, for example, an officer, boyfriend, student, and security consultant during the interview narratives (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Hermans & Hermans-Jensen, 1995).

In order to organize the initial findings systematically, the subsequent step was to code the transcripts in a qualitative data analysis program called Atlas.ti. The content in the interviews was organized through the hermeneutical unit in Atlas.ti by coding the different characters into narrative identities (e.g., officer, student, boyfriend, friend, security consultant) including specific features of the characters (e.g., disciplined, focused, organized). Levels of narrated tension, cooperation, harmony, and dialogue were attached to coded narrative identities, as were experiences or emotional states of meaning, purpose, and sadness, to name a few. Based upon the coded narrative identities, a corresponding set of I-positions was developed (Grimell, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b). The described process of analysis and coding in Atlas.ti made it possible to compare the development and interaction among pre-existing and new I-positions of the self over time.

In order to validate the narrative identity codes with the corresponding set of I-positions, the researcher considered the three interviews as a type of triangulation that included content and process over a longer period of time and space (Polkinghorne, 2005). No ambiguous I-positions were coded; the extracted I-positions were induced from clear narrative descriptions of characters made by the participant Oskar (Raggatt, 2013; Stemplewska-Żakowicz, Zalewski, Suszek, & Kobylńska, 2013). As for the validity and reliability of a narrative inquiry such as this, the article agrees with the position of Ganzevoort (1998), who in reference to Mishler (1991), suggests that narrative research may score higher on validity (i.e., measuring what it intends to measure), depending of course upon the quality of data collection, than on reliability in terms of replication, which may be more difficult to capture within a narrative study.

A list of I-positions extracted from the interviews are:

- I as an officer
- I as a student
- I as a boyfriend
- I as a friend
- I as a security consultant

Minor details of the narrated accounts have been slightly altered in the article to protect Oskar's anonymity, and his name is fictitious. Words or expressions within quotations or italics are taken verbatim.



The Case Study Portrait

Background

Oskar is a Sergeant First Class in his mid-twenties with a background in the Swedish Army. His service, totaling nearly five years as a specialist officer within the intelligence field, has included deployment in Afghanistan. Initially, Oskar perceived that his professional development had been rapid, but he experienced his progression gradually lose potential and ultimately leave no promising prospects due to a rigid military system. This development frustrated him. Oskar wanted to accomplish more in life. This drive to do more was the primary reason he left active service, which amid such frustration was a difficult and slowly processed decision rooted in deliberation that long preceded any actual action.

Six months post-exit: Transition as a positive experience

When I met him for the first interview (T1, February 2014), Oskar had been six months post-exit. He had been attending university studies. According to Oskar, leaving active service was the right decision to make, and the transition experience had been positive thus far. He had contact with his unit and could serve whenever he wished as a reserve officer. Oskar emphasized a specific feeling when serving, particularly on missions, that is difficult to find elsewhere:

It is a difficult feeling to describe. The only ones who can describe it are probably those who have served. It is a feeling of being part of something, to contribute to something that is bigger than one's self; I support and contribute to something that I cannot do by myself.

When Oskar was encouraged to describe himself as an officer he replied:

Disciplined, motivated and driven by will, organized is first and foremost something that constitutes me as a person, no matter if I am at work or elsewhere, I am proud to have such a capacity, that I am organized and structured.

As the transition began Oskar started studying at a university to pursue a degree in security management. His character as a student bears many features of his military character. He is an organized and efficient student.

Oskar is living with his girlfriend and has many civilian as well as military friends. Oskar perceives his self as flexible and dynamic. Depending on the people he interacts with, he alters the subject matter for discussions and positions of his self (e.g., girlfriend, family, civilian, military friends). Oskar claims that it is vital to be able to shift from “me” being a service member to “me” being a civilian person and vice versa.

Twenty months post-exit: A strengthened sense of being an officer

During the second interview (T2, February 2015), about twenty months post-exit, Oskar has graduated and is employed as a security consultant in a civilian company. The security consultant is a new character in Oskar's personal story. There is an obvious change from the decidedly positive tone that permeated the first interview. Oskar has begun to miss many aspects of service (e.g., meaning, camaraderie, excitement, benefits). An emotion of sadness and doubt is present, and Oskar considers reenlisting in active duty. It appears that Oskar has served for a month between the first and second interviews. The sense of being a part of something bigger than one's self when serving is an articulated theme. A new evolving self-theme in the second interview is a claim regarding his identity as an officer:

I haven't felt so much as an officer as I do now when I have left... when I identify myself such as when I think of what I do, what I am, I identify myself as, yes, I am still an officer; of course I am. That is something fundamental to the person I am, and for that reason I am very eager to not lose it.

The character of a boyfriend has also advanced in his self, as Oskar talks about starting a family. That is another reason for reenlisting according to Oskar, because that would generate more vacation time compared with working as a security consultant.

Oskar is still struggling with a deeper existential question of what to do with his life. He would like to contribute and make the world safer, but his career as a security consultant does not seem to carry the same significance and impact. The security character appears less integrated in Oskar's self as he struggles with finding a balance between work and deeper meaning and purpose in life.

Thirty-two months post-exit: Protecting the officer's self

As we met for the third and final interview (T3, February 2016), about thirty-two months post-exit, Oskar continued to work as a security consultant. Amid his work as a security consultant, Oskar is eager to present himself in different civilian work settings as an officer who has served and still serves. It is important for Oskar to maintain and protect the military part of who he is in more contexts than just the military one. Oskar replied:

Yes, it is important, it really is. I don't know why, but when I ceased serving actively, I began to feel more proud of being an officer. Before, I hadn't said that, but when I stopped serving I almost wanted to scream it out loud. It means a lot. I often see myself as an officer... and because of that it is important to keep serving as a reserve officer, to maintain that identity. I have an outlet for my personal characteristics such as being structured. If I am going to ransack myself than I'll of course say I am an old service member. It lies inside me.



For Oskar, military service is still attached to contributing some greater good for society, something larger than one's self, something that goes beyond money and monetary profit. Even though being a security consultant also appears important, Oskar claims that *somehow it feels that serving in the armed forces was more meaningful*.

Although Oskar misses the camaraderie, service, meaning, purpose, and identity, he nonetheless supports the idea of staying on a civilian career path in combination with satisfying the otherwise unsatisfied needs through part-time service as a reserve officer. Yet he aspires to bridge the span between these two worlds by finding a more meaningful civilian career that gives him the satisfaction of contributing to the greater good for society and transcends the self, money, and profit.

Discussion

As a short dialogically-tailored recap, Oscar was quite positive at the onset of his transition process. He entered the university context, and a new I-position as a student was added to his self. The climate of dialogue in his self was instilled with cooperation. The disciplined, focused, and efficient officer was collaborating with the student position. In the second interview, yet another transition into professional civilian work-life had been entered, and this provided him with a new contextual I-position as a security consultant. Throughout this lengthy process the position as an officer became strengthened and more voiced in his self. There appeared to be more tension in his self. Oskar even considered reenlisting again. His I-position as a boyfriend was inclined to cooperate with such a military I-position, as it would generate more time for family. Thus the process was more nuanced and included a new tone. The third and final interview suggests that the transition was complete, as Oskar no longer seriously considered returning to active full-time enlistment; he had decided to stay on the civilian course. Yet a significant, possibly crucial, detail had enabled this decision by preserving his I-position as an officer, which he felt resided within a deeper level of his self: Oskar's frequent part-time service. Part-time service included some higher meaning in life for Oskar.

From the beginning to the end of the transition, through university to civilian employment, Oskar's dialogical capacity has survived intact, and the self has engaged in cooperation and seriously identified solutions for sustaining a good climate of dialogue within the self throughout the reorganization of I-positions (Hermans, 2001a, 2003, 2004, 2008). Oskar's transition and adjustment of I-positions makes a good case of integration and dialogical interactions amidst the challenges of transition. Every detail may not have evolved precisely as he would have liked; still, Oskar has found dialogical routes to persevere. He has widened his self and learned more about

his self in new contextual situations that were not accessible as an actively serving officer (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

There are some interesting questions which may be addressed from a psychological perspective. Why has Oskar's I-position as an officer become strengthened and more voiced in his self throughout the years of transition? Why has it continued to evolve? Why is this I-position so vital for him to preserve? From a dialogical point of view there is a large amount of internal and external power or energy in the I-position of an officer (Hermans, 1996, 1997, 1999). Internal energy refers to features related to the internal domain of his self (e.g., structured, disciplined, focused, efficient, motivated), while external energy refers to aspects of service related to the domain outside of Oskar (e.g., being a part of something larger than one's self, contributing to the greater good and society, purpose, meaning, camaraderie). It seems reasonable that Oskar wants to maintain an I-position with such internal and external magnitude. The officer is a salient part of his self that lacks negative implications and tends to override other positions. The dialogical condition of his self throughout transition supports such an interpretation, as he is fully capable of engaging in good dialogue even with a "core position" of officer (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 240). Yet this seems to fall short of answering why the I-position has evolved, grown stronger, and intensified in his self throughout his transition and reorganization of self.

Now I shift focus then from a dialogical to a spiritual lens and begin the interpretation by stating that from a spiritual outlook, one assumes that humans are not exclusively psychological, social, and physical beings, but spiritual beings, as well (Ellens, 2008, 2011; Rumbold, 2013). Life viewed through a spiritual lens can discern deeper meanings in experiences. Through a spiritual lens, one can find timeless values that offer self-understanding and give direction in life (Pargament, 1997, 1999, 2011). From such a position I assume that Oskar's self has a spirit that could be defined as "the essential core of the individual, the deepest part of the self, and one's evolving human essence" (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011, p. 58). His spirit would then consist of a vital and deeper force of who he is, which is constantly evolving. His spirit would be directed toward told and untold dreams, goals, and aspirations (e.g., contributing to society beyond individuality, being part of something larger than one's self) anchored in the self, which propels Oskar forward (Sweeney, Hannah, & Snider, 2007). The idea that Oskar has a spirit is related to a variety of higher order qualities such as purpose, meaning, authenticity, interconnectedness, and self-actualization (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011). Some researchers have also ascribed a number of sacred qualities to the spirit, including ultimacy, boundlessness, and transcendence (Otto, 1928; Pargament, 2011; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Pargament, Lomax, Shealy-McGee, & Fang, 2014; Tillich, 1952).



The spirit of Oskar is linked to spirituality, which in turn refers to the continuous journey he takes to discern and realize his spirit and essential self (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Sweeney et al., 2007; Teasdale, 1999). In other words, spirituality is an extraordinary quest that aspires to unfold what is most essential to the self. In general people can engage a variety of pathways in the service of developing the human spirit (Heelas, 2008; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Mahoney, 2013). “Nature, music, exercise, loving relationships, scientific exploration, religion, work, art, philosophy, and study are just a few of the paths people follow in their efforts to grow spiritually” (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011, p. 39). Oskar’s journey to realize his spirit and essential self has been fulfilled militarily at the moment. What is suggested then is that the spirit of Oskar’s self is embodied in his I-position as an officer. Within this I-position lies the inner (internal) and outer (external) qualities of Oskar’s spirit. Through a spiritual lens, the change of tone (e.g., loss, sadness, tension) in the second interview indicates a broader awareness of the loss of the old pathway (i.e. active service) for the spirit to sustain itself, and it is this unmet spiritual need that stimulated thoughts of re-enrolling (Pargament, 2008, 2011). Amid the rising awareness of this loss of the old pathway for spiritual fulfillment, Oskar felt an intensified need in the third interview to protect his identity as an officer through part-time service. The different transitional phases continued to further disturb the connection to the pathway for the spirit to sustain itself, thereby causing a need to protect it. Oskar has dealt and coped with the rising awareness by holding on to the associated military aspects of his spirit using a conversational approach through part-time service (Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2005).

There are limitations in this article that need to be addressed. This is a case study in which Sergeant First Class Oskar was selected because his case is representative of and gives voice to a trend in the sample of the project related to military self-identity in the civilian transition whereupon the military I-positions refuse to decline and instead became more voiced and salient over time. The case neither too strongly nor too weakly illuminates these experiences in civilian transition, but is instead rather typical of them. This case is an attempt to present unique, albeit representative, details in the process. The quantitative amplitude is small, but within the sample of 19 participants, several service members had experienced a growing awareness of having a service member in the spirit of who they are while transitioning to civilian life. This hopefully serves as an invitation to continue this qualitative inquiry in different contexts among other service members in the transition to civilian life that concentrates on this type of self-identity development. This is an invitation for other researchers to expand its quantitative amplitude. It would be interesting to employ an even longer longitudinal time-frame that includes more interviews with each participant than this project. A time-frame of five to seven years in regards to a smaller sample seems as though it could yield additional robust knowledge about

such self-identity processes as described in this article. Another limitation is that only five clear I-positions had been detected in the interview-narratives; however, many more likely populate Oskar's self. Yet all five of these that were discussed are explicit narrative positions. Some may perceive that the spiritual interpretation of the explicit military I-position is too implicit and too weak, but the suggestion may provide more insight as to why Oskar's I-position keeps evolving over time, why it needs to be protected, and why it is so important for him to preserve it. The spiritual essence of who Oskar is resonates in his military self.

Conclusion

Spiritual psychology provides counselors and caregivers with yet another dimension in which to guide and treat care receivers (Pargament, 2011). In the case of the psychology of military-to-civilian transition with regard to self-identity work, the spiritual approach is both underemployed and promising (Grimell, 2016a). The termination of active service equates to terminating the self's military voice, or at least signals its decline to a large degree. Research on identity processes often suggests that former military service members must accept identity loss and the inevitable need for change therein. For Oskar, like others, the evolving military voice of the self may be regarded from an external or outer perspective as a problem that needs to be solved, subdued, or perhaps reorganized into a more shadowed position of the self in favor of the empirically obvious identity as a security consultant. Particularly in a civilian society of peace, such a military voice and military features in general (e.g., disciplined, structured, efficient, organized) may be loaded with negative connotations. However, for Oskar and others in this project, the evolving military voice represents who he is on a deeper level of the self; it fulfills a need for deeper meaning and purpose that has, at least so far, been otherwise unmet within the civilian realm. This may also serve as one criterion for recognizing the spirit from a narrative point of view: an evolving voice that continues to articulate itself in the interest of sustaining itself in spite of the hardships and challenges posed by time, new contexts, and I-positions of the self. From a spiritually guided psychological lens, one may view a military voice such as Oskar's as his spirit embodied in an I-position of an officer. Even considering the fact that Oskar is now primarily a civilian in regards to the temporal dimension, the intensified military voice is not problematic but rather a positive entity that endows his life with deeper dimensions. To acknowledge the military voice is a part of the growth and development of his spirit. The challenge is to find an outlet for the spirit, which in Oskar's case has been resolved through part-time service as a reserve officer. Unfortunately among other participants in this project, and of course society at large, the route to the old military pathways may on the other hand have been more difficult or even utterly inaccessible due to varied reasons, which can result in sadness, anxiety, and frustration (Grimell, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b).



I need to state, however, that this interpretation of the spirit embodied in a self's specific I-position rests upon a more secular existential understanding of spirituality related to self, meaning, and purpose in life, without necessarily reducing it to purely psychological or social processes (Bryan, Graham, & Roberge, 2015; Currier, Kuhlman, & Smith, 2015; Heelas, 2008; Kopacz & Connery, 2015; Rumbold, 2013).

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