



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INST FÖR GLOBALA STUDIER

“What makes you Israeli”

A qualitative study of young men’s testimonies on military
service, nationality and identity in Israel

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Bachelor thesis in Global Studies
Spring semester 2016
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Abstract

Military service is an important site of contact between the state and citizen. Studying military service can highlight the penetrating power of nationalism, as the state makes a claim of the individual's sacrifice in the name of the nation. Israel provides an interesting example for such a study, as military service has a prominent position in the nation building project – nationalism and militarism are intertwined and mutually enhancing discourses. Still, globalised discourses that emphasise individualism are also influential. Subsequently, this thesis investigates how young Israeli men relate to nationalistic and militaristic discourses contra individualistic discourses; how these discourses mediate their identification process and the space for choosing to go to military service or not. The study is also concerned with these young men's identification or counter-identification with their nationality and the role as a soldier in a militarised state. Resistance towards militarism, and its manifestations in hegemonic masculinity, is explored and analysed. This was done through conducting qualitative interviews with eight men who had either done their three full years of service, gotten an early release or evaded the draft.

The study found that the respondents were highly affected by nationalistic and militaristic discourses. Their contact with globalised discourses on individualism and personal freedom did not entail diminished sense of pressure to serve the nation through military service. While the two respondents who had evaded service mostly framed their acts as driven by individualistic motivations, individualism also provided a way to justify going to the military. I hold that globalisation and individualism are not necessarily antidotes to militarism and nationalism. I further discovered that military service was a formative experience for several respondents, that made them disillusioned towards the nationalistic and militaristic discourses. Finally, the respondents who counter-identified with the role as a soldier expressed this in terms of a dissonance with hegemonic masculinity, indicating the masculinist nature of militarism.

Key words: *military service, Israel, hegemony militarism, nationalism, identity, masculinity, resistance.*

*En ensam tanke är en utopi. Två som tänker samma tanke är en realitet.
- Sara Stridsberg*

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my dearest friend Lola, who is ever full of life and love, and without whom this paper would have been impossible.

Thanks to all the people who were kind enough their stories with me; and did so with such generosity and humanity. Your stories will stay with me for a long time.

Thanks to my academic counsellor, Magnus Berg, who advised me and supported me throughout my work, and put up with my slightly unstructured process.

Key concepts and abbreviations

| | |
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| IDF | Israeli Defence Forces |
| Zahal | Israeli Defence Forces |
| Nahal | Infantry brigade |
| Profile | When drafted for military service, the recruits are given a profile that determines which units within the IDF they are eligible to apply to, or if they should be exempt. |
| Profile 21 | Exemption granted due to mental health unsuitability. |
| Profile 82 | Recruit fit for combat, but underweight |
| Profile 97 | Recruit fit only for combat |
| CV | Curriculum Vitae |

The respondents

Ido is 21 years, studies social anthropology, and lives in Jerusalem. Ido was exempted from his service after one month of training on mental grounds, by faking depression. Ido did not want to be anonymous.

Yakov is 27 years old, does art and contemplates his masters degree. He lives in Jerusalem. Yakov did not do military service, as he got a Profile 21, but he did a year of civil national service. His parents immigrated to Israel from Russia during the 1970's.

Tamir is 27 years old, studies fine art, and lives in Jerusalem. Tamir finished his three years, serving first as a combat soldier in the Nahal, a field force/combat unit, and then as a medic. He is originally from Beersheva, which he describes as a workers town.

Eli is 29 and works as an architect in Jerusalem. He finished his three years in the army in the intelligence unit, but hated it.

Nathan is 19 years old and lives in Tel Aviv. He is a music producer, but he also works in a night club. He chose not to do military service because he wanted to focus on his music.

Yuval is turning 24 years, and lives in Tel Aviv. He is hesitant to call himself an artist, but he is. Yuval served as a combat soldier, and later on as a medic, and was exempted from his service after two years on mental health grounds.

Nadav is 26 years old, lives in Jerusalem and studies his master in comparative literature and works as a waiter. He finished three years in military service in the navy.

Zohar is 26 and works at the national library in Jerusalem. He did the full three year of service in the military mostly as an artillery fighter.

Lola is my friend who helped me to get in contact with the respondents.

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1. Introduction

It has not been too long since obligatory military conscription was the norm for most nation states in the West, but the act of offering one's service and, possibly, life, would now appear very foreign to many. However, in Israel, military conscription is still obligatory for most citizens. Despite the emergence of global forms of identity and increased influence of Western, individualistic discourses, military service remains a normalised institution, and a core feature of citizenship (Sasson-Levy, 2008, pp.297-298). Israel's long history of recurrent wars, the occupation, attacks and counter-attacks, has facilitated the hegemonic position of a nationalistic discourse which ties citizenship to conscription (M. Weiss, 2001, p.40), and marginalises those who refuse to serve economically and socially (Lerner in Çinar & Üstercí, 2009, pp.157-158). However, despite social sanctions, conscientious objection and evasion are increasingly common (Adres, Vanhuysse & Vashdi, 2012) .

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyse how young Israeli men relate to nationalistic and militaristic contra individualistic discourses, in regards to their 1) identification or counter - identification with the role as a "soldier", 2) the choice whether to serve or not serve in the Israeli military. As military service can be understood as a focal point in the negotiation of the relationship between state and citizen, especially in a militarised state such as Israel, the study connects to larger discussion on how the state-citizen relationship is mediated by overlapping nationalist and individualistic discourses due to increased globalisation. Concepts such as nationalism, militarism, globalisation, individualisation, hegemonic masculinity will be applied to systemise and explain the testimonies provided by the respondents.

2.1 Research questions

- *How do nationalistic, militaristic and individualistic discourses affect the choice to serve or evade military service, in an era of increased globalisation?*
- *How do the respondents relate to the Israeli nationalism and the hegemonic ideas on being a soldier and masculinity?*
- *How is dissociation/counter-identification with the role as a soldier expressed and what strategies of resistance are used to manifest this dissociation?"*

This study does not intend to make categorisations or comparisons between the influence of nationalism, militarism, hegemonic masculinity – rather, these concepts are seen as intertwined. For example, it is difficult to understand the Israeli militarism without considering the hegemonic masculinity. In fact, this is what makes Israel interesting as a case. The integrated approach to these concepts will enable me to make a deeper analysis.

2.2 Delimitations

The study will not investigate the experiences of people who are currently doing their military service, partly due to issues of recruiting respondents, but also because people who have already served/evaded might have processed and reflected more upon their experiences, which was deemed more interesting for the study. Furthermore, it would have been possible to highlight other aspects of the state-citizen relationship in a militarised state like Israel through focusing on the *consequences* of evasion; whether, and how, the evaders and conscious objectors face marginalisation, economic discrimination and social stigma. Making comparisons between the different people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions or socioeconomic classes is not included in the aim of this study, mostly due to the limited time and scope allotted for the study. Given the opportunity to make a larger study, I would have prioritised to cover these parameters and to achieve a more representative picture of the Israeli society.

Hegemonic masculinity and how the respondents relate to it is investigated, but it is not the central focus of the study. Instead, hegemonic masculinity is seen as an essential part of the construction of the “ideal citizen” in Israel; a concept that will enrich the analysis of the state-citizen relationship, as patriarchy and militarism can be seen as mutually enhancing structures. The inclusion of hegemonic masculinity in the analysis is the main reason that women were not interviewed, but it was a way to limit the population as well. Though I am of the view that masculinity is not tied to the biological sex, men and women are affected differently by hegemonic masculinity; especially in relation to militarism. Even in Israel, where many women do military service, the male soldier has a very specific and central role for the militaristic and nationalistic discourses, something which this study aims to examine.

2.3 Relevance and contribution

Issues of state-citizen relationship, nationality and patterns of identification are well-researched within the field of Global Studies. However, there are tendencies to overemphasise the “breakdown” of the nationstate, and neglect the salience of nationalistic discourses. As will be explored later in the text, nationalistic discourses are still highly influential, despite the increasing “globality” (Billig, 1995, pp.128-129, 132-134, 138-141). I see this study as a part of the deconstruction process of militarism and nationalism as hegemonic discourses. In order to deconstruct structures of power, we must understand them. I would like to nuance the view on the state-citizen relationship in the postmodern era, characterised by globalisation and “new” patterns of identification, and to highlight the ambivalent space that emerges when individuals are subjected to multiple discourses simultaneously.

Recent research on military conscription in Israel has covered some themes which this study handles as well, such as militarism, masculinity, globalisation and draft evasion. In her extensive studies on the subject, Orna Sasson-Levy (2008, 2010, 2015) has focused on Israeli women soldiers in “masculine” roles, soldiers in “blue-collar” positions, combat soldiers – always putting the gender perspective in the forefront. Lomsky-Feder together with Sasson-Levy (2015),

have explored the experiences of women working as secretaries in the military. Meira Weiss (2001, 2002) has contributed with work on the body politics of the Israeli state, highlighting the male Israeli combat soldier as the “chosen body”. Erica Weiss (2015) has studied draft conscientious objection and draft evasion, with a special focus on ethics and politics. Eitan Adres, Pieter Vanhuyse and Dana R. Washdi (2012) did quantitative research on the impact of globalisation on young Israeli’s willingness to contribute to the nation by serving in the IDF. However, what distinguishes this study from previous research is the investigation on how young Israeli men’s *identification* is affected by militaristic and nationalistic discourses, how that might prompt them into resistance, and its integrated approach on masculinity and normative citizenship.

3. Background

3.1 Military conscription in Israel

Military conscription has been mandatory in Israel ever since 1948. Both women and men are drafted; the service is three years for men, and two or two and a half year for women (Weiss, 2002, p.42). The legal foundation of the conscription of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is the Defence Service Law. Legally, the only exemptions are granted to women who have children, are pregnant, are married, or, find military conscription contradictory to their religious plight or conscience. According to a law passed in 1967, non-Jewish Arabs should not be drafted. However, the Arab minorities Druze and Circassian are not exempt, so in practice, the law only applies to Palestinian Arabs (Røislien, 2013, pp.217-218). As the IDF is conceptualised as a “people’s army” and a “melting pot” for the different socioeconomic classes and ethnic groups of the Israeli society (M. Weiss, 2002, p.43), this appears contradictory. Ultra Orthodox Jews can be allowed exemption if they devote their life to religious practice and study at the Jewish academies *Yeshivas*. Finally, a certain selection is done before the draft, based on physical fitness and psychological suitability – exemption can be granted on medical, mental and religious grounds. (Røislien, 2013, p.219).

4. Theoretical framework and earlier research

This chapter will present the theoretical framework as well as provide a review of earlier research on military conscription and evasion in Israel. These two parts will be integrated, in order to give the reader a fuller understanding of what nationalism, citizenship, militarism and hegemonic masculinity can mean in the Israeli context.

The role of theory

The starting point of this study is empirical observation, which is further explored in a theoretical discussion. Theoretical concepts will be used to systemise and better understand the material, and to connect it to larger debates within the social scientific field of research.

Points of departure: discourse, hegemony and identity

This study departs from a postmodernist stance – although it remains critical to some of the postmodernist arguments. For the purpose of this study, the social world is seen as constructed by language, and specifically, *discourses*. Thereby, the study adheres to Michael Foucault's theories and emphasises the interconnection of knowledge and power (Foucault in Haugaard, 2002, p. 192). I view nationalism and militarism as hegemonic discourses in the Israeli context, and the IDF and the combat soldier as *nodal points* in these discourses (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.30). Joey Sprague (2005) writes that according to postmodernists such as Foucault, the identification process of individuals is always done in relation to the hegemonic, and competing discourses (p.37).

4.1 Conscription and militarism in Israel

According to Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (2010), militarism refers to “the extension of war-related, war-preparatory, and war-based meanings and activities outside of ‘war-proper’ and into social and political life more generally.” (p.7). Moreover, militarism can be seen as a state where the dichotomies war/peace and military/civilian are blurred and weakened (Sjoberg & Via, 2010,

p.7). Accordingly, Israel can be considered militarised, because citizenship is so closely linked to military service, and, as the state is always in preparation for military attacks – peace is never fully there, even in times when there is no ongoing war (M. Weiss, 2001, p.40).

Amos Perlmutter (1969) describes military conscription in Israel as a means to create a strong national community, a “we”, essential to the nation building project as Israel was a new state, made up of people from many different cultural contexts. Ben Gurion, Israel’s first minister of defence, is quoted by Perlmutter:

The main function of the ZHL¹ has been to safeguard the state. However, this is not the sole function. The army must also serve as an educational and pioneering centre for Israeli youth – for both those born here and newcomers. It is the duty of the army to educate a pioneer generation, healthy in body and spirit, courageous and loyal, which will unite the broken tribes and diasporas to prepare itself to fulfil the historical tasks of the State of Israel through self-realisation. (Perlmutter, 1969, p.66)

Here, the central role of obligatory military conscription in the Israeli nation building project is articulated; as well as the elements of control and disciplination of the soldiers bodies and minds. *Interpellation* is the process by which the individuals are subjugated by discourse and shaped to become ideological subjects (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.19). The Israeli youth are *interpellated* (Wasshede, 2010, pp.41-42) by the militaristic, nationalistic discourse during their service in IDF, and are expected to *embody* and adapt to the expectations in of this discourse, both physically and mentally (M. Weiss, 2001, p.39).

4.2 Nationalism, citizenship and the military

Benedict Anderson offers the following definition of a nation: “it is an imagined political community; and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”(2006, p.6). In order for a nation to exist, its people must believe in its nationalistic narrative; in this way nations are inherently bound to the concept of hegemony. Hegemony makes something appear natural and

¹ The Zahal, other word for Israel Defence forces.

unquestionable, and there is a broad acceptance of the nation as the most important social, political and economic unit, and of the international global system. Meira Weiss writes: “nationalism is a form of ideological consciousness that presents the nation and the world of nations as natural and moral.” (2001, p.38). Nationalism as a hegemonic discourse disguises the “imagined” or “invented” aspects of the borders and sovereignty of nations. Nation-ness, in its hegemonic state, is seen as natural, and un-chosen, predestined (Anderson, 2006, p.143). Anderson further highlights the strength of the national community – the fraternity and comradeship which makes people willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of their nations (2006, p.7). Chantal Mouffe argues that those in hegemonic position have the power to portray *their* interests as being “the common good”. To establish national hegemony, thus, is to create a collective national-popular will and a national common good (in Martin, 2004, pp. 26-27, 39). The sense of belonging to a national community also rests upon ideas of a shared home and kinship, and is tied to categories of skin colour, gender and parentage (Anderson, 2006, p.143).

The modern state-citizen contract implicates that the state ultimately governs the citizens lives and deaths, through the enforcing the military conscription as a central institution of citizenship. Military conscription rests upon the idea of a greater good of a community, for which it is worth dying for (Göregenli in Çinar & Üstercí, 2009, p.37). According to Adres, Vanhuysse and Vashdi (2012), more than 22,000 combat soldiers have lost their lives from 1948-2012, making the willingness to sacrifice for nation especially relevant to the Israeli case (p.94). Participating in military service entails forfeiting one’s body to the body politic of the nation, thereby embodying the nationalist discourse (M. Weiss, 2001, p.39). Edna Lomsky-Feder and Orna Sasson-Levy (2015) argue that military service is a site of contact between citizen and state, the embodiment of citizenship, especially so in militarised societies such as Israel, where military service be said to signify the “Étatisation of bodies and minds” (p.174). In the republican discourse on citizenship, military service is conceptualised as the citizen’s main contribution to the common good and the security of the state, thereby invoking the male combat soldier as the ideal citizen (Lomsky-Feder & Sasson-Levy, 2015, p.175).

4.3 Militarism and hegemonic masculinity

Via (2010) defines hegemonic masculinity as the dominating, idealised form of masculinity in a certain social context; under which all other variations of masculinity are subjugated (p.43). According to R. W. Connell, hegemonic masculinity can never be fully achieved by the individual, however, it creates a hierarchy between different masculinities; the one's closest to the hegemonic are premiered, while the ones furthest away are marginalised (Sasson-Levy, 2002, p. 358).

Though in many countries, military conscription nowadays includes women as well, the military remains a highly masculine institution. Even so in Israel, where conscription has been mandatory regardless of one's sex since its inception 1948, the IDF is dominated by masculine norms and formed after a gendered division of labour, which values men's roles highest (Lomsky-Feder & Sasson-Levy, 2015, pp.465-467, Sasson-Levy, 2002, p.359). Sasson-Levy argues that ideas of military service as the initiation rite to manhood, and but also citizenship, remain strong (2008, p.297). For women however, motherhood is seen as the ideal contribution to the citizenry (Lomsky-Feder & Sasson-Levy, 2015, p.467); which is expressed in the fact that married women and women with children are exempt from military service. Further, Sasson-Levy (2008) states that in Israel, values associated with the "good soldier" and produced by a militaristic discourse, such as bravery, honour, duty are in fact gendered as masculine. During the Second World War, the Jews were portrayed as emasculated and weak by European antisemitist discourses, therefore, it became a central mission of Zionist ideology to construct the "Judaism with muscles", and the "New Jew" – who is masculine, whole-bodied, physically fit, and always ready to defend the honour and territory of his people (Lomsky-Feder & Sasson-Levy, 2015, p.175; M. Weiss, 2002, pp.1-2, p.15). The nation building project Israel is thus shaped by masculinist discourses, and the male soldier has hegemonic status as the ideal citizen. This ideal of the male soldier is widely manifested both politically and culturally: soldiers receive economic benefits and the images of soldiers are used to market products (Sasson-Levy, 2002, p. 360).

4.4 Globalisation and identity

Roland Robertson defines globalisation as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (quoted in Steger, 2013, p.13). According to Manfred B. Steger (2013), globalisation is a process which not only entails the macro-level development of a *global community*, but also the operates at the microlevel of the individual psyche and consciousness. Steger argues that globalisation “.... facilitates the creation of multiple individual and collective identities nurtured by the intensifying relations between the personal and the global (2013, p.15). Globalisation is seen as a key feature of the postmodern era. Postmodernist theorists argue that globalisation has not only diminished differences between nation states, but also contributed to a fragmentation of the national community. Capitalist consumerist culture has created a situation where identity is often framed in terms of “lifestyle”. Individuals now operate on a free market where identities can be purchased and consumed. Billig (1995) writes “nations can no longer impose a uniform sense of identity”, illustrating the diversification of identities that exists within nations, which is possibly eroding the self-evidence of a national collective (p. 133).

This has implications for the state's claim on its citizens service in the military. When the identification with the nation is declining in importance vis a vis other identities and collectives, the will to sacrifice one’s life for the nation might falter. Perez and Sasson-Levy (2015) claim that especially the middle class is exposed to alternative discourses through globalisation, possible making the militarism of the Israeli state appear less self-evident (p.463). Sasson-Levy (2008) argues that globalisation has led to the decline of Israeli collectiveness, in change for an increased sense of individualism and an emphasis on self-fulfilment. Despite this, the militaristic discourse in Israel and its notion of the soldier as the emblem of good citizenship remains hegemonic (Sasson-Levy, 2008, pp.297-298). One reason for this might be the central role military service played in the Israeli nation building project (Perlmutter, 1969, p.66). Another plausible reason, brought forward by M. Weiss, is that recurrent wars and violent attacks on Israel has created a “siege mentality”, justifying the hegemonic status of the militarism (2001, p. 40). Furthermore, Billig (1995) notes that, despite all the talk of the “new” identities of the

postmodern era, described as ever changing and consumable, and the breakdown of the nation state system, nationalities and nations remain strongly entrenched in the consciousness of individuals (pp.132-134,138-141). In Israel, individuals are exposed both to nationalistic, militaristic, masculinist discourses, and alternative, global discourses associated with, for example, their involvement in virtual youth culture (Adres, Vanhuyusse and Vashdi, 2012, p.97). This might cause *ambivalent* identities and, potentially, the displacement of the national hegemony.

4.5 Hegemony and strategies of resistance

Hegemony is the state when a power regime appears as the natural, moral, holy and predestined order, and obedience to this power is seen as a duty. Hegemony is interconnected with knowledge production, and therefore, language and discourse. A hegemonic discourse can be understood as a regime of truth; producing the ideals and norms that serves the interests of the one's in power (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.34). In this sense, the militaristic discourse has a hegemonic status in Israel (Sasson-Levy, 2008, pp.297-298).

There are two main strategies that can be used to resist military service; either, one can chose the open, confrontative option of conscientious objection, or one can try to evade service through applying for exemption on either medical or psychological grounds, before or during one's service. Adres, Vanhuyusse and Vashdi (2012) include "quasi-evasion", or "riskless non-exit" as an additional option; to serve in the military, but deliberately avoiding serving in combat units or performing high-risk tasks (pp.93-94). According to Erica Weiss (2015), draft evasion is not conceived as politically motivated act, or even as resistance in Israel. However, E. Weiss challenges this notion, arguing that evasion can be both ideologically or ethically motivated (2015, pp.417-419).

According to Tali Lerner (in Çinar & Üstercí, 2009, p.156), conscientious objections increased during the *Second intifada*, the military campaign targeting the Palestinian territories under

Israeli occupation in 2000. Lerner further claims that the only people who are allowed exemption due to conscientious objection are “total pacifists”; if one’s application is refused, prison sentence will follow. People who are exempted due to mental health issues are subject to social marginalisation, and might face difficulties to find a job, getting admission to university and applying for loans (Lerner in Çinar & Üstercí, 2009, pp.157-158).

The space for open resistance is limited by the threat of jail time, if one refuses to serve. Other strategies of resistance than open rejection might be used, such as evading due to mental issues, or avoiding certain sorts of activities. James Scott argues that in cases where the subordinated is dependent upon the regime of power for security and basic needs, the price of open resistance might be too high. Instead, more candid forms of resistance are used, to avoid confrontation with the official discourse (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, pp.74-75).

This study will focus on the identity aspect of resistance. In regards to military service evasion, the study will investigate how one fails to identify either the nation state/the army or the role as a soldier, placing oneself in opposition to the hegemonic discourse when it interpellates one as a subject. This can be done with different motivations: resistance to ideology, ethical conflicts or resistance to gendered discourses. Within queer theory, three responses to discursive interpellation of subjects have been identified: identification (embodying the “good soldier”), counter-identification (resistance, differentiation) and dis-identification (refusal to participate in the interpellation), which can help us to better understand the resistance to hegemony (Wasshede, 2010, p.42).

5. Methods & Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methodological and epistemological points of departure of this study. Then, descriptions of the methods and their application during the course of my research will be provided. Finally, my role as a researcher and the ethical considerations of the research will be discussed.

5.1 Methodology

The study will treat the data collected during the interviews as *testimonies*, which will be seen as interpretations of reality. The testimonies will be interpreted and analysed as manifestations of discourses. The epistemological view underlining the study is primarily *critical realist*, but with a strong emphasis on the influence of interpretations, thus drawing from the *social constructivist* tradition. The method is related to the field of *hermeneutics*. Social constructivists claim that the world and our knowledge of it, is shaped by discourses and structures of social domination, emphasising the importance of cultural contexts and rejects the notion of “truths”. Critical realism also sees the world as socially constructed, and the relationship between the knower and the known as mediated by discourses; however, they claim the world exists independently of our minds, and that it is not impossible to produce universal knowledge (Sprague, 2005, pp.36-40). Within the hermeneutic tradition, emphasis is placed upon interpretation and contextuality. Hermeneutic theorists argue that the social reality cannot be fully grasped through quantitative methods, imported from the natural sciences. Instead, qualitative methods are propagated as the best tools to *understand* the social reality; accordingly, this study is qualitative. Within hermeneutics, it is further suggested that cases should be studied in their natural environment – as the social world is constructed and shaped by different discourses and norms in different societies, which is the motivation for using case study for this thesis (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobson & Karlsson, 2003, pp.28-29, 304).

The starting point of this study is empirical observation and data, which will be systemised and further explained, and finally discussed with the use of theoretical concepts. No hypotheses were made beforehand, and the study did not seek to test established theories. In this sense, the method was closely related to *inductive reasoning*. Induction is the foundation of qualitative research. The main issue faced by all inductive studies is that it is impossible to be entirely sure the cases studied will occur again; the conclusions are probable, not certain. Another researcher might use the same methods, but interview different persons, and get a different result (Danermark, 2003, pp.169, 173, 176). However, the aim of this study is not to draw generalised conclusions about the experiences from the military service of *all* Israelis; rather how these selected testimonies could nuance and create increased understanding of the state-citizen relationship in a militarised state, in the postmodern era, characterised by increased globalisation.

5.2 Choice of methods

To fulfil the purpose of this study, qualitative interviews was chosen as the method. Quantitative method, such as a surveys, was excluded early in the process, as the study is interested in the deeper motivations and feelings of the respondents and how they experience and interpret the phenomena of military service, not the frequency of, for example, draft evasion or certain motivations for it. Qualitative interviews offers the possibility to reach more varied and unexpected responses, and are the most efficient tools to investigate the individual outlook and understanding of the world. Further, the responses provided in a surveys are often more polished and less spontaneous, than in a qualitative interview (Esaiasson et. al., 2012, pp.251-253). The interviews were semi-structured and made use of a prepared interview guide. Semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to “be in the driving seat” and steer the conversation according to a number of themes adapted from the purpose and the research questions. Further, it is more precise, less time consuming and less intrusive and than an unstructured ethnographic interview, or participant observation, as the researcher might only meet the respondent once (McCracken, 1988, pp.8-9).

5.3 Population and sampling

The chosen population of the study was young men who have either done the full three years of service in the IDF, evaded or interrupted their service. The population was limited to a relatively small and homogenous group, *secular, leftist, residing in urban Jerusalem/Tel Aviv, ages 19-30*. The aim was not to achieve a completely representative sample of the chosen population, partly due to practical issues. Instead, the respondents were recruited through a friend of mine, currently studying in Jerusalem. Thereby, the sampling strategy was a combination of *first best* and *typical case* (Esaiasson et. al., 2012, pp.161-163, p.188). The first best sampling strategy was used due to the short time available for the study and my limited knowledge of the local context; it was much easier for me to recruit respondents through my friends who studies in Jerusalem, rather than, for example, putting up ads on notice boards at the universities. Typical case sampling was deemed suitable because of the relative homogeneity within group. The purpose of typical case sampling is to choose respondents who do not deviate too much from the population, and who can therefore be seen as relatively representative (Esaiasson et. al., 2012, pp.161-163, p. 188,). Practically, my friend Lola gave me a list of names of her friends who had said they were interested in doing the interview. The possible respondents were contacted through Facebook. There are issues of reliability connected to the sampling; one being that I was dependent upon a personal connection to reach the respondents. While this contributed to an atmosphere of trust, it might have been beneficial to recruit respondents by other means as well, as it could have resulted in a broader sample. The respondents are all somehow linked to each other, which means they probably share some common interests, values and opinions. However, this contributes to a high *internal validity*, that one can draw conclusions from one testimony to the others the in the study (Esaiasson et. al., 2012, pp.155-156). Another benefit with my personal connection to the respondents was that I had the chance spent time with them as friends as well – which helped me to understand their humour and their jargon. For example, I might have interpreted a statement as quite plump and harsh, but then, getting to know that person, I realised, that his statements were, at least partly, ironic.

5.4 Implementation of methods

The material was collected in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 26 April-10 May. Eight men were interviewed in total, ages ranging between 19-29 years, of whom two had evaded their service, two had interrupted it, and four had completed it. The interviews were conducted in English.

An interview guide was constructed inspired of the formula provided by Grant McCracken (1988). The questions were structured around a number of themes: *i) Your military service, ii) Thoughts on soldierhood and iii) military conscription, ix) Evasion/exemption, x) Looking back/ where you are now, xi) Identity, xii) Israel.* The themes were adopted from the theoretical concepts chosen as the lenses of this study. Under each theme, I usually started off with an open ended, *grand tour* question, to let the respondent speak freely on the subject. To help the respondents expand on interesting points, or clarify, *floating prompts* were used, such as raising an eyebrow when something interesting was said, or repeating certain words and statements. Then, *planned prompts* were used to dig deeper into selected themes. For example, using the “auto-drive” technique, asking the respondent to react to the statement: “*Because of Israel’s quite unique history and vulnerable position in the region, Israelis have a greater responsibility to their state and their people.*” (McCracken, 1988, pp.34-37). Additionally, I used *interpretative questions*, of the format “*did you mean that...?*” and “*Do you think that this is a part of a creation of an Israeli stereotype?*” in order to verify my interpretation of the respondents answer, or to test ideas or explanations I could think of (Esaiasson et. al., 2012, p.265). I varied the order of the questions, and sometimes, the respondents mentioned themes before I had posed the question. Sometimes we went deeper into themes that were not covered in my interview guide, such as Zionism in relation to Israeli nationalism and socioeconomic diversity within the military. This is one of the benefits of qualitative, semi-structured interviews: that the respondents can contribute with new perspectives which complement or contradict that of the researcher. Unfortunately, the study lacked space in-depth discussion of these themes.

The interviews lasted from around 45 minutes up to 1,5 hours. Some interviews were done in cafés, where there were elements of distraction, such as street noise or friends stepping by. Some

people, I met in their homes. One respondent did not want to be recorded, and one recording was unfortunately lost due to technical issues. In these cases, my influence as a researcher became stronger, as I had to reconstruct parts of the dialogue from my memory. However, I took extensive notes, and only used quotations that I wrote down word for word. The interviews which were recorded were then transcribed.

I was inspired by McCracken (1988) in my analysis and presentation of the material: he emphasises that the data should have chance to “speak for itself”, but then need to be weighed against the researchers theoretical framework to show its significance (p.52). I analysed the material through highlighting interesting statements in the transcripts and notes, and then sorted this into different themes with support from my theoretical framework. I especially looked for expressions carrying symbolic weight in coherence with my analytical concepts; militarism, nationalism, hegemonic masculinity, globalisation, individualism, identity and resistance. It is possible that the respondents will not agree or recognise themselves in my interpretations of their statements. However, these interpretations are derived from using my particular theoretical framework as a lens – had I used another lens, other interpretations of the same statements might have been possible.

5.5 Reflections on my role as a researcher

Standpoint theory has brought attention to the influence of the researcher and how their position in society affects the knowledge they produce (Sprague, 2005, p.53). As the element of research influence is quite strong in qualitative interviews and analysis (Esaiasson, Giljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012, p.235), it is important to analyse the position of the researcher.

I cannot fully relate to the experiences of the interviewees, as I have grown up in a peaceful, largely secular, society, and I have not been drafted, or even considered applying for military service. Therefore, I might not have been very relatable to the respondents either. Not being an “insider” affected my research as I do not have the same contextually grounded knowledge of the

Israeli society, as an Israeli researcher would have. Post-colonial scholars have argued that insiders will produce better knowledge, and that outsiders, especially Westerners, tend to produce knowledge that will justify their privileged position. However, being the “outsider” has benefits as well. I might have been able to notice things that the insider would have taken for granted, as I am not subjected to the same discourses. Moreover, this can be seen as something that contributed to trust: the respondents might have felt that I would not judge them for not doing military service, or applying for exemption on mental health grounds (Sprague, 2005, p.62). Finally, since the respondents and I are all friends with Lola, we could instantly connect and an atmosphere of trust was easily created, which made the interviews progress smoother. As we often shared certain values and interests, I think the respondents could identify with me, despite our different nationalities; something which could also be seen as a part of the globalised condition.

My position as a white, young, Swedish woman affected my research and the respondents. For example, a researcher who was Israeli, male, and over 30 might have gotten other responses from the respondents. I only interviewed men, and in a few interviews I initially found it difficult to gain authority in the role as a “researcher”; I felt that some respondents saw me primarily as a “girl”. This was probably strengthened by the fact that I am not a native English speaker, and my tendency to diminish myself in my speech. Additionally, it is possible that the respondents “toned down” their masculinity and emphasised their counter-identification with hegemonic masculinity and machoism in my presence.

Further, my educational background as well as my political orientation have given me a pre-understanding that most likely affected my choices of theoretical framework, delimitations, and the interpretation of the data; and of course, even the research issue itself. I am against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, thereby, I do not see evasion and conscientious objection as immoral or as problems. Even to see military service as an institution upheld by nationalistic and militaristic discourses implicates a critical approach. In addition, Sweden’s choice to recognise Palestine as a nation (“Sweden to recognise Palestinian state”, BBC News, 2014, 3 October), and that the European left is perceived as “anti-Israeli” by many Israelis (“Israel and the world: Us

and them”, The Economist, 2014, 2 August) might have had an influence. I am fairly certain that I managed to carry out the interviews with neutrality, driven by curiosity, rather than a will to judge. However, some respondents still emphasised that it is “not a bad thing” to be Israeli, and that they were not ashamed; something I had not implied – but it somehow felt as if they thought they needed to convince me.

5.6 Ethical considerations

As the research covers experiences and memories that might be painful for the respondents, caution was paid during the interview. To avoid trigger any harmful psychological processes, I did not probe further into painful or traumatic memories, or go further into topics if the respondent showed signs of unease. The respondents were informed about the aim and purpose of the research and where it would be published before the interview started. Further, they were informed about their right not to answer certain questions or to interrupt the interview whenever they wanted. The interviews were only recorded if the respondent felt comfortable. The respondents were given the opportunity to be anonymous in the text, and were subsequently given pseudonyms in the written text.

The subjects as agents

Sprague (2005) has called attention how social science researchers, especially those who are white, Western and male, have all too often resorted to objectifying their respondents, hiding their subjectivity and agency. While Sprague mainly poses this critique towards quantitative research, I think it is relevant to the study as well (pp.18-20). In this study, I will try my best to portray my respondents with understanding, not judgement, and bring their subjectivity to the front. One way I tried to avoid objectification was through making short presentations of the respondents in the first pages of the study. In addition, I have chosen to mainly use quotations instead of my own rephrasing of the respondents’ statements, something that was specifically requested by one of them – he wanted his voice to be visible in the text.

6. Results & analysis

In this chapter, the results will be presented and analysed. I choose to integrate the presentation of the results and the analysis of them, to limit the distance between the testimonies and the interpretation. The first chapter, *Military service and Israeli citizenship* seeks to portray the effect the dominant discourses of militarism and nationalism has on the respondents and their choice on whether to serve in the army or not, and their experiences from their time in service. In *Strategies of resistance*, the various motives behind, and strategies that are used to manifest dissociation with the army and the nation state are discussed and theorised. *Identity and politics in a globalised world* discusses issues of identity and dissociation in relation to nationality, globalisation, individualism and collectivism. In the final chapter, *Unveiling and deconstructing the discourse*, I discuss how the respondents have become disillusioned towards the social mechanisms behind military service. The themes of the chapters were derived from the analysis of the respondents testimonies, with support from my theoretical framework.

6.1 Military service and Israeli citizenship

It's just something that you do: Choosing to do military service

From the interviews, the link between citizenship and military service appears to remain strong, though the respondents claim that it is increasingly common to not do military service. The descriptions of military service as a natural part of life are recurrent in almost all interviews. Nadav said “it’s a big life component, a life event.”, Eli said “It’s part of the normal course of life”. Yuval said “I was kind of excited to go there, I wanted to be a like, protect the country, and lalala. Like, you get all the education, it builds up to this point, they make you feel like this is the right thing and shit”. Eli too emphasised the importance of “parents, teachers, holidays, it’s the environment” as factors that prepared the mind for military service. He described military service as “it’s something that’s been planted, you know in your lifestyle”, and said “it’s almost like an inherited kind of thing”. Eli further recalled: “I had a military camp next to my house, and on independence day, they opened it for visitors. And you had the option to like go on a tank, like a

kid, all the kids are going, and you can see the soldiers.” Through Yuval and Eli’s stories, it becomes clear that education, but also cultural events and festivities, play an important part in shaping the minds of young Israeli’s. Through education and festivities, the respondents were, from a very young age, subjected to nationalistic, militaristic discourses, their specific truths and worldview: making the individuals commitment to the common good – to protect the country through doing military service, seem like a natural part of life. M. Weiss (2002) argues that military indoctrination is integrated in the schooling system, and the purpose of school excursions, or ceremonies like the one Eli described, is to prepare children and teenagers for their service (p.42).

Ido said that the army “...sets everyone that onto a certain norm and – that is a basis for adult life.” That military service is seen as such an important part of the course of a normal life, and an initiation rite to adulthood, shows the strength of militarism; making service in the military and, subsequently, violence, appear as normal and natural. As Sjoberg and Via (2010, p.7) stated, militarism entails the blurring of the lines between the civil and military spheres; and Perlmutter (1969) described how the role expansion of the IDF included educational activities as well (pp. 66,69,71-72). Ido said that the military is “a educational tool and cultural tool for Israel.” The respondents spoke of the military as a place where you could acquire knowledge and skills that would be beneficial in one’s career later on. This serves to reinforce military service as a part of the life course even for those who are not especially interested in becoming combat soldiers and such, but rather aspires careers within areas such as photography and journalism. This further highlights the role expansion of the IDF and the military service as an “educational tool”, as Ido put it, which in turn indicates the militarism of the Israeli state, according to Sjoberg and Via’s conceptualisation (2010, p.7). Tamir talked about military service as a way to earn one’s place as an Israeli citizen, and said that it is “a good lesson of how to be Israeli”. He continues: “You learn how to be Israeli, how Israeli behave. Which is very specific, because it’s in army terms, how to be an Israeli soldier, which is also an Israeli civilian”. M. Weiss (2002) claims that making IDF into a educational tool for national values is part of legitimising the IDF (p.42). Tamir said: “And that’s also a major part of the army conception in society, that in order to like

civilise people, you need to take part of this nationalistic program, no – system, sorry.” Here, the intersection of the “citizen” and “soldier” become clear.

They never pushed me: Social pressure and the good of the nation

Parents and family were very present when the respondents recalled their choice on whether to serve or not. While Tamir, Yuval and said that their family “never pushed” them to do it, it seemed that their opinions still carried weight. Tamir said: “But it wasn't that he told me like ‘go to the army, be a fighter’ or whatever, more like, ‘go to the army, do your small part, that’s something you need to do’, he didn't pressure me.” Nadav said “It was really important that I’d do army to my parents. There’s this idea of being parasitic.” I asked him to explain: “It’s like, not doing military service, is like not paying your taxes. You know, it’s that kind of civic duty. Before, if you did not go, you would face stigma and it would be difficult to find a job.” Yakov said his parents eventually understood his choice not to serve, but that his father was a bit disappointed.

Eli said he “never wanted to do it, not before, not while, not after, not in the first year, second year or third year”, but that his parents pushed him. He recalled a time when he was really sick of it all, and just wanted to get out of the military; but his parents took him on a trip to Berlin to motivate to him go through with it – and, in the end he did. During the interview, Nathan got a text from his mother asking him not to “diss the army too much” –something which further points to the parental generations more normative approach to military service, as well as the social control they exercise.

Tamir said that his relations with his dad “pretty much thrived” during his military service:

Because for him, he was very much proud, because it wasn't something he thought I would do, or be capable of. Um, and in a very superficial, very artificial way, it made him very proud. Because, ‘my son is a combat fighter’, it’s not important what it means, or what he does or whatever, but he can flag this title.

Tamir's father took great pride in him being a combat soldier: indicating that the combat fighter still carries prestige and status. Yuval said that growing up around his father's stories from the military made him feel that it was "the right thing to do, to defend the country". M. Weiss (2002) refers to tales from the military as "manhood stories"(p.47), and argues that these stories socialise young people to adhere to militarised ideals, such as heroism and loyalty. Indeed, the fathers are more present in the respondents' accounts of their choice to go to military service or not. Stories like the ones Yuval's father told him, serve to connect generations, across time, to the same "uniqueness" of the national "we". M. Weiss (2002) has interviewed parents of combat soldiers, and found that the majority of parents supported and encouraged their children's decision to serve in combat unit. M. Weiss concludes that the family is "a major agent of socialisation and normative control" (p.45), which is reflected in this study as well.

Follow orders and shut up: The good soldier

In all my interviews, I asked the respondent to describe a "good soldier", trying to get them to highlight the normative ideals of the soldier. A response which reoccurred in almost all interviews was that a good soldier is obedient and follows orders. Ido said:

In the IDF now, in the past it was very different, or at least I thought it was, it probably wasn't. Now it's basically follow orders and shut up. The military is not a place for sceptics. In my idea of what is a good soldier ... see, for me, a good soldier is linked to heroism, which is something that I don't like.

Zohar described a good soldier mostly in terms of rationality:

It would be someone who takes orders well, but not blindly, not too democratic. Should be educated, needs to make good judgements on when to shoot or not shoot. A good soldier shouldn't shoot person lying on the ground. Should be morally stable, trustworthy, responsible, and know that a gun is not a toy.

When asked about whether he sees himself in this description, he said that he "never had problems with orders, even orders that I did not want to do". Nadav said that a good soldier is "... someone aware of his mandate, knows where the redlines are, responsible." When I asked him whether he sees himself in this description, he said: "Sure, I was even made commander, and

I took pride in it. But now I'm aware of the strong social mechanisms behind it, they make you develop internal feelings." Eli said: "Also like create with the soldiers, or the rest of the group, let's say, like, a productive environment, in a way that you encourage." Tamir described the good soldier as "bold, strong, who is serious, um, ... intelligent".

Almost all respondents described the "good soldier" as a "he", even though the question was posed in a gender neutral way – revealing that the ideal of the *male* soldier remains strong. Some of the characteristics mentioned, such as bold, strong, rational are linked to ideas of masculinity as well (Perez & Sasson-Levy, 2015, p.465). To become a combat soldier and to get a *Profile 97* appeared to be something very charged and desirable to the respondents, at least in the past. Yuval, Zohar, Nadav, Tamir and Yakov all aspired to become combat soldiers at one point or another. Even Yakov, who did not do military service, said he initially wanted to be a combat soldier. Ido recalled his feelings after he got the Profile 97: "There was very short period of time while I romanticised it."

I could never win the stereotype: Machoism and hegemonic masculinity

In most interviews, I did not inquire specifically about machoism and masculinity. However, it was mentioned anyway by Ido, Nadav, Yakov and Tamir. When I asked Tamir to describe the attitude within the army, he said: "It's a whole language, not spoken language, like attitude, talk ... um, machoism that gets examined." When Nadav talked about identity and how he did not identify with the army, he mentioned: "Also, the talk, sometimes it was really sexist and misogynist. Which I really couldn't stand. It's also a part of creating a unity within the army." In this case, the "we" is clearly formed along masculinist terms. Ido, when asked to emphasise what he meant when he talked about the creation of a stereotyped Israeli ideal, said: "I mean, I could never win the stereotype. I could never be the tanned macho with the m16." His statements show the tight link between normative Israeli-ness and the militarised masculinity. I then asked him more about this macho-stereotype, and he replied:

As the Independence War progressed the macho stereotype was attained with a m16, and with the backlash of the Nakba, those ideals, of let's say European values, were lost, and then the only thing people could

hold dear to the macho stereotype was the gun, a gun and an appeal. And now, that's the only basis of what it means to be an Israeli hero. An Israeli hero is not only one who protects values, but also attacks others.

The masculinity described here is based on ideals of aggression and violence, it is a militarised masculinity, described as the macho-stereotype. In Tamir's story, ideas of military service as a way to prove one's manhood can be traced:

Part of the fact that I chose to go to the army, and that I chose to take part as a combat soldier was for me, kind of like to prove myself, to prove whatever, if it was to my dad or my environment, that I, Tamir, which wasn't like that into the army, or that into like any formal structure that I took part at, 'the skinny guy', um, could do that. And it was kind of like, to prove to myself, that *I* can do it. I can be this, I don't know, ideal, heroic thing or I don't know, some romantic conception around it.

Yakov also adhered to the idea of military service as an initiation rite to manhood. Describing why he wanted to go to military service when he was younger, he said he: "thought it would made a man out of me. I still think that."

Moreover, the physical aspect of the militarised hegemonic masculinity is highlighted; Tamir did not fit the militarised masculine ideal physically, because he was "the skinny guy", he was not seen as someone who could be a combat soldier by his surroundings. Nadav mentioned the physical aspect of the Israeli machoism as well: "There is this macho myth, which I knew I wouldn't be able to live up to. I'm not very physical, I don't like running and stuff." Further, he described the macho ideal like this: "It is definitely someone local, very connected to Israel, works with his hands, sexy, bright, and, he is in the army." Working with his hands can be connected to the ideals of bodily strength. Tamir, Ido and Nadav describe a macho stereotype, or a macho myth. A stereotype is a "shared cultural descriptions of a social group" (Billig, 1995, p. 80). In Israel, the male combat soldier is central in tales of heroism, national sacrifice and pride. The male combat soldier should thus be seen as both a cultural symbol which figures as nodal point in the nationalistic and militaristic discourse, and as a body embodying these discourses (M. Weiss, 2002; 2001, p.39).

However, there are room for alternative masculinities as well. Eli, who served in an intelligence unit, described this as “the second gayest place, after my school, Bezalel”². Yuval, who first served in a combat unit, and then in a medic department at a training base, said that while there is “this super macho vibe, but it’s only a few people and you can chose who to be with.” In addition, he said:

Sometimes, in the room with eight people ... These people, you don’t choose, and there’s some conversations when you chose not be be in, just turn your head to the wall and just ignore it ... I grew up with two sisters, so I could never be this macho-vibes. I didn't feel any time I needed to prove that I'm a man and stuff.

From the interviews, it seems that the militarised masculinity *could* be more dominant in combat oriented units, though no conclusions can be drawn.

Finally, Nathan, who did not serve said he was “terrified” of carrying a gun, and said: “I think there are people who you know, would enjoy practice shooting guns, maybe it reales adrenaline or something, I’m not interested in that. I’m not interesting in holding a gun, I can ride a roller coaster instead.” Nathan is distancing himself from the hegemonic, militarised masculinity. Perez and Sasson-Levy (2015) argue that because military service constructed as the initiation rite to “proper” manhood, the men who avoid to serve may be more inclined to counter-identify themselves with hegemonic masculinity (p.464).

6.2 Strategies of resistance

Call me selfish, but: Choosing not to go

Nathan and Yakov are the two respondents who decided not to go to military service prior to inscription, by requesting to be released from service on mental health grounds. Yakov described his choice like this:

² Art academy at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

I wanted to go to the army, I wanted to go to a combat unit. I had the profile, the 97. But I wasn't sure. Push came to shove, I decided it wasn't for me. Not for ideological reasons, I wasn't against it. I was pretty right wing then, that came from the family.

Which is extremely similar to what Nathan was saying: “So I just decided that hey, for no political reason, I just decided, hey, I’m gonna do what I do, I’m gonna focus on myself.” The choice not to serve is not described as politically, or even ethically, motivated for Nathan and Yakov – it seems it had more to do with a wish for personal freedom. Yakov said “I wanted to do art, I wanted to be free.”, and Nathan stressed that he wanted to focus on himself and his music.

Both Nathan and Yakov reflected upon their choice of not serving as being selfish. This feeling, of being selfish, is an indication of the strength of the nationalistic discourse; that one should put one’s service to the nation over other aspirations in life, stemming from the belief that the interests of the nation are the interests of all individuals. Perez and Sasson-Levy (2015) further note that while conscientious objectors *can* be portrayed as heroic and brave, draft evaders are rather seen as selfish and passive – the antidote of hegemonic masculinity (pp.475-476). Yakov said:

I felt selfish. People would tell me ‘what, so others need to bust their asses for years for you to be free and do your hunky dory national service, you know promoting art projects in Jerusalem’. Of course I was being selfish.

There is a conflict that Nathan describes like this:

And this is such a big conflict, cause I want people to do what they wanna do, but at the same time. Here’s the thing, whatever I agree or disagree with the army, I think we do need it. And on the other hand, I want people to what they want, what their are interested in, to sharpen their talents and do something with their lives, let that thing influence their lives.

Yakov struggled to justify not going to military service after his decision: “I did want to do service. I didn't want to feel like I was not a citizen of this country.” Yakov thereby seems to be

affected by the notion of military service as a citizen duty. Both Nathan and Yakov are admitting to the hegemonic, nationalistic and militaristic discourse, while being unwilling to conform to it on a personal level. There is a clear ambivalence between ideas of “the good of the nation” – associated with the collectivism of nationalistic discourses and “individual freedom” – associated with a Western, liberal discourses that emphasise individualism.

Faking depression: Getting out of the military

The most common way to get out of military service is through applying for exemption on mental health grounds, which can be done both to evade drafting and and to be be released during one’s service. Nathan said: “I had to play myself crazy actually, I really put on a show. I slept for three hours the night before, I had really long hair, I was, well I’m not gonna describe more. I looked pretty sloppy.” Ido also said he had to *act* or *fake* depressed in order to get out of the military. The use of words such as “faking” and “acting” is interesting. Perez and Sasson-Levy (2015) claim that in Israel, military service evaders are sometimes referred to as “shikers”, and their going from the army is seen as illegitimate (p.463).

Ido added that he was lucky:

I went to someone who was the head of psychology in the IDF, who was a friend of the family. We paid him a 1000 shekels for him just to sign that I am not mentally fit to serve in the IDF for him to send some sort of recommendation. To be honest, the process to get out for mental reasons the process is very long, sometimes months, for me it happened, I think in a week and a half.

However, a person I talked to during my time in Jerusalem, but whom I did not have the chance to interview, said he had to go to mental institution, not because he was actually suffering from mental illness, but in order to get out.

Ido said: “I have no issue with the fact that my going from the army was very private, it was very minimal, and it is not something that am boasting, because for me, it’s natural thing.” Though none of the persons who choose to request an release from military service, whether before

(Nathan and Yakov), or during (Nadav and Ido), framed their act as political, their testimonies still contain rejections of the militaristic discourse. Perez and Sasson-Levy (2015) argue that “individual cases of emotional unsuitability to the military become an effective expression of resistance and a prime factor in shaping an anti-hegemonic masculinity.” (p.464). Further, Ido mentions he was in contact with the organisation “New Profile”, working to support and decrease the stigmatisation of people who avoid military service through *Profile 21*, mental health exemption. In this sense, he was not acting completely on his own, he was also a part of organised, public form of resistance.

In addition, I interpret Ido as trying to normalise his going from the army, by not claiming his exemption as a heroic thing. This is something Nathan did too, by emphasising that not doing army is not such a big deal anymore: “I think that, anything that involves art here, people don't really do army. Most adults that I know and work with in the music scene, they didn't do army.” Overall, the respondents agreed on this, that not going to military service, or quitting it, is becoming increasingly common.

Yuval was also released from service due to mental unsuitability, but he said he did not necessarily want to get out. He mostly wanted to be moved to a different unit, closer to Jerusalem, so he could go home every night. However, he said at one point in the interview, “I was a bad student in the army anyway, my whole life really haha.” – which I interpret as connected with feelings of failure since he did not finishing the full three years in service. When he got the news that he was exempted from service he said: “I was acting like I was very disappointed, but inside of me I was the happiest person I ever been.” – he was not reluctant to leave, but it was important for him to show a “strong” front.

Finally, Ido emphasised that getting out of military service can stem from economic reasons as well:

My, I remember, the last day I needed to return my uniform in this base and I remember seeing this guy who was recruited and the same day he left the army. And why? Because he was just like started acting insane. But he wasn't a leftist, he was just poor. And he couldn't be in a structure where he was paid only 400 shekels/month, where he has to worry about his younger siblings, that's not something he could allow himself. And that's something that the military cant understand.

Here, it becomes clear that had the study investigated a different population, interviewing people from a primarily a working class background – the motivations for dissociation and evasion might have been different from those discussed here. Yuval, who is from, as he expresses it himself, “the hood” in Jerusalem, said he struggled with nightshifts because he wanted to work – the salary from the army was very low, and his parents could not support him financially any longer.

Not serving in occupied territories: Riskless non-exit and quasi-evasion

The concepts of “quasi-evasion” “riskless non-exit”, brought forward by Adres, Vanhuysse and Vashdi (2012, pp.93-94) apply well to Nadav’s testimony. Nadav said that it was important for him not to serve in the occupied territories, because for him, that is where “the illegitimacy of the IDF begins”. In a sense, his choice is evasive, though it will probably not be perceived so, which decreases the individual risks of social stigmatisation. Both Yuval and Tamir started their service in combat units, but then chose to go to medical training to become medics, which both of them describes as a relief – this too could be interpreted as “quasi-evasion”. Tamir said: “it pretty much saved me. I was devastated after Hebron³.”

Changing the system from the inside: Being a “different” combat soldier

The stagey of *changing the system from inside* recurred in the testimonies. Ido expressed it like this:

There’s many, Israeli leftists have this idea of changing the system from the inside. Uhm, meaning I’ll go to combat, I’ll go to xx (inaudible), the West Bank, I would be better suited to handle the situation than people who have no idea what they are doing and who are only based on violence.

³ Where he served in a combat unit.

Tamir talked about "...doing things for the best, or trying to be a good soldier, as I concept it". Yuval said he wanted to apply to be a commander, because he wanted to "change the way they did some stuff". This strategy too is a form of resistance, showing a will to change – saying that I am going to be a soldier, but a *different* one – refusing to comply with certain normative ideals.

Faking sickness and making jokes: Everyday resistance

Scott's concept of *everyday resistance*, or resistance in the form of *hidden transcripts* can help us understand some phenomenas that recurred in the testimonies. Everyday resistance or hidden transcripts refers to resistance, which is hidden from the official discourse, "off stage", and can be expressed through irony, working slowly, misunderstandings, stupidity and sickness (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, pp.74-75).

Nadav, Eli and Yuval said they would sometimes go to a doctor in order to get sick leave to get out of things they did not want to do; not because they were actually sick. Yuval said: "You know, because I was a medic, I knew how to talk to these guys, I knew what to say and mostly, most of the days I wanted to get off, I could get it easy." Nadav said that: "People actually do this a lot, it's very common." Eli said that he was developing this "fuck you" attitude, and "I'm not getting anything out of it, you're getting everything out of me. I'm allowing myself to, you know, push the borders and little bit lighten, loosen up the day to day pressure I had on me".

Yuval, at his last night shift, made a joke:

And in every room of the army, there's a photo of the general. And I found it funny, I was a Instagram user, just in the beginning, with like 50 followers, and I thought it funny to bring the phone into the weapon thing, and the lens is the eye, and it is pointed at that guy. I wrote something ironic also.

The day after, he was called in by the highest commander at the base, and subsequently called into court, where he was sentenced to the maximum punishment of 20 days in military prison. He also described how he and his group of friends, in the first months of military service, developed a internal form of humour, and would "risk everything, for a good joke". For example "Like

saying something that the commander don't get, in front of him, a clever joke that he don't get. And then, I was smiling, I got the joke when nobody did, so these kinds of things.” Anna Johansson (in Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.199) highlights the transformative potential of humour. Humour can be a means of playing with and transcending the expectations and norms within a given social order. Humour often takes the form of hidden transcripts, and can be seen as a part of the construction of an alternative, parallel culture that exist outside the realm of power; as humour effectively creates unity (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.75; Johansson in Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.199).

Scott argues that these forms of resistance appear when it it to risky to make direct actions directed at those in power, but that they offer a window where subordinated can escape the control of the power (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, pp.74-76), or with a Eli's words, a way to: “push the borders and little bit lighten up, loosen up, the day to day pressure I had on me”. The stakes are high for those who contemplate evading military service: as shown in earlier chapters, the social pressure is substantial, and the process of getting out through a Profile 21 can be long and complicated. Eli said he really wanted to get out, but he was under a lot of pressure from his parents to finish. Nadav said that at one point, he was “plotting to get out”, but added that “...my parents, they wouldn't have taken it well. There's this ‘do not give up’ mentality.”. Eli, Nadav and Yuval all needed to develop strategies in order to make their time in service more bearable, either through sick leave or making jokes, strategies that also became a way to manifest their feelings of dissonance.

6.3 Identity and politics in a globalised world

Dissociation and counter-identification with the army and the role as a soldier

According to discourse theory, “the individual becomes a ideological subject through a process of interpellation whereby discourses appeal to the individual as a subject” (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.19). Stuart Hall suggests that the individual both *becomes identified* and

identifies itself, that is, the individual is interpellated by the discourse, but in this process is not one way, and the individual must respond to the interpellation of the discourse. Judith Butler argues that a “gap” appears here, an *ambivalent space*, wherein the individual has the chance to refuse to comply and identify itself according to the discourse. According to Macdonnell, the subject can either *identify* – to comply with the interpellation, *counter-identify* – placing oneself in opposition, saying that one is different, or finally *dis-identify* – refusing to participate in or answer to the interpellation (Wasshede, 2010, pp.40-44). Dis-identification was not very useful in this context, but *counter-identify* is a useful concept for explaining the testimonies.

The feeling of being “different” is something that appeared in almost all testimonies, except from Zohar’s, whether it is referring to the choice not to serve, or feelings that they had during their time in service. Eli said repeated several times during the interview that he never wanted to do military service: he said he felt that “it’s not the natural course of my life, the way I planned my life to develop.” and that he felt different from the rest of the people in his service: “I was more different than the rest, that’s for sure. Until this day, nobody was into art. I was completely different from the rest, and they knew it, they could, as a group, detect it.” However, he emphasised that these feelings did not stem from disagreement with the content of what they were doing, it was not ideological or even ethical. Instead, he claimed it was more in terms of interests and what he wanted to do in life.

Nadav felt “different” as well: “I would actually say it sharpened my sense of self. I felt very different, I didn't fit in. It was a very internal process of differentiation, outwards I adapted very well.” Ido recalled his last weeks in service: “I was filled with fear, I started pausing and think to myself, what am I doing here. I started reconnecting with my leftist roots I would say.”

Tamir said “And I remember continuously feeling this dissonance between what I think is right and what I think my place is regarding to what were trained for and what we were doing.” Eli also placed himself in opposition to how he described “a good soldier”, saying “I was like the opposite, de-encouraging everybody, all the time, telling them, listen, that’s shit. They didn't like

me for that. I was doing lots of trouble, and sometimes I was punished.” Eli, Nadav, Ido and Tamir distance themselves from the identity as a soldier, they are identifying themselves in contrast to it, they counter-identify with it.

The strategy of “changing the system from the inside” through serving as a combat soldier, explored in the last chapter, can also be seen as a way to counter-identifying oneself with the normative ideas of what it means to be a good soldier. The testimonies contain a wish to deconstruct this normative idea of a soldier, the aggressiveness and violence, and instead create an alternative soldier ideal, based on, as Tamir describes it, something which is not necessarily political: “It more relates to basic human values, how you treat people, how you approach someone, how you keep your basic behaviour regarding what you do.”

Collectivism vs. individualism? National identity and global personhood

Adres, Vanhuysse and Vashdi (2012) discuss that the rise of materialism, consumerism and individualism – brought about by Israel’s economic growth and globalisation, as contributing factors to the increasing number of young Israelis who now choose not to do military service. Within the “me-generation”, loyalty to the nation and the willingness to make sacrifices to it is reduced, in favour of pursuing more individual life goals. The rise of alternative “globalised identities” vis a vis national, local identities, further contributed to this development according to Adres, Vanhuysse and Vashdi (2012, p.96).

Billig (1995) argues that national identity works both “outwards” and “inwards” – it entails the construction of a “we” and a “them”, who are the foreigners, to which “we” are different. However, national identity is not only a matter of individual identification, it is formed by ideology, history and a shared mythology of the uniqueness of the people and their connection to the homeland (p.61). To the question on what it means for him to be Israeli, Zohar said: “I like history, and therefore I like the uniqueness of being Israeli, it gets attention nowadays.... I think your nationality is not something to be proud or ashamed of; you can’t chose where your born.” Zohar, who also was the respondent who identified the most with being a soldier, seems to be comfortable in his Israeli identity – these two things might be interrelated, as military service is

constructed as the initiation to “full” citizenship. Zohar said: “Because I was a soldier, I can’t complain, I didn’t have choice. I grew up here, had my education here, I know this culture.” Moreover, he said:

I agree to the idea that the Jews should have their own country – this is what is hypocritical, people say that Palestinians are not a people, that they only started to see themselves in that way after 1948. But I don’t think that matters, they consider themselves a people now.

Nadav agreed to this: “I believe in a Jewish state, especially the right to return, for example for Jews who are oppressed elsewhere.”

However, the other respondents appeared to have a more complicated relationship to their nationality. Yuval said, to the same question: “So I thought it was a bad thing, like I really hated it for the last few years.”, but after a trip to Berlin, he came to realise that he had a different outlook on life because of his Israeli-ness, and he started to appreciate certain things about it. Eli said that for him, being Israeli is:

...like trying, in a way – everyone has its perspective – in a way, living the paradox, this country, being Israeli. Being aware of it, critical, hating it, loving it. Hating it and enjoying it at the same time, it’s a very existential country in a way.

Nadav was also ambivalent: “I don’t know, like “Israeli”, “Jew”, I’m not sure what it is. You know, especially as a secular person, this becomes a real identity crisis. If you don’t believe, what is your Jewish identity based on?” – showing a doubt in the “naturalness” of the national community. Yakov, whose parents are Russian immigrants who came to Israel in the 1970’s, said he “never felt like I belonged here” and “I always felt like an outsider”, explaining that people saw him as a “a Russian kid”. He added: “what makes you Israeli is that you serve in the army”.

Ido said, on the meaning of being Israeli: “I mean, it’s just a person born in Israel. I mean, I really hate, people who have these beautiful Facebook videos, having an idea of what it means to be Israeli, it is to me, as annoying as the American dream or European values.”, displaying a

doubt in the linking of certain values to a geographical era as a part of creating a national identity. Ido said: “Basing yourself on nationality means to me that you’re obviously a person who doesn't have a lot of character.” Ido was the only one of the respondents who to a high degree refuted the national state system. “I don't live in an idealistic world, I will never live, and I don't think anyone will ever live in an post-national society, I wish that would happen, but it never will I think.” In this statements, anarchistic ideals are manifested. He also said “I don’t see myself as a Jew, I don't see myself as an Israeli, so I ask myself, why? And it is only based on politics, I want to stay here, but only on my terms.” The ambivalence that he experiences between his nationality and his personality can be seen in this statement:

I, I mean, whenever I’m abroad, and that’s an interesting thing, I never say I’m from Israel, I always said I’m from Jerusalem. During my last travel I didn't even say I’m from Jerusalem, I said I’m from Tel Aviv, because, it’s has a more Westernised appeal than Jerusalem. For me it’s bollocks, I mean I play the game because I know it, people asking where you’re from, um, but I, hopefully, with intelligent enough people, they would not see me as Israeli or Jewish, they would just see me as Ido.

Nathan also prefers to say that he is from Tel Aviv, rather than Israel, “I’d say I’m Tel Avian more than Israel.” He said:

I mean even people from outside Tel Aviv, they consider us a like a different state, Cause the atmosphere here, cities outside of Tel Aviv, Ashdor, or say Haifa, etc., it’s, people go the army. And here, you suddenly get this like, selfish? We are more like, what I said, a more Western approach to things.

Nadav asserted that the “liberal” lifestyle and a more humanistic mindset is very connected to Tel Aviv.

Nadav said on his Israeli identity: “...I do feel a sense of solidarity and that we share a joint fate. This is on a emotional level, at a though level, I would identify more with people like Liz and like you”. When asked to explain further, he added: “Well, you know, political people, who have commitment to human rights, usually middle class, regrettably. And I do not really want to putt like this... I guess I would say like hipster hippies.” I asked him if he thinks it is matter of

lifestyles, to which he replied: “I think it definitely correlates to a lifestyle, but it’s not completely that. It’s people who are more humanistically oriented.” For Nadav, the main thing is values and political orientations, rather than a similar patterns of consumption, though the term “hipster hippies” is certainly connected to a lifestyle. Similarly, Eli said he identifies as a leftist, artist, anarchist, a spiritual secular – also indicating a more value based identification. To conclude, there are different forms of collectivity which individuals identify with than the nation.

When I asked Ido what he thought about the post-modernist argument that nationality as the main basis for identification is declining, he responded:

The people who stated that are obviously Westerners. I was in the States and a friend of mine asked me: so what do you think is your Jewish identity? That made me realise that the people who need to think of their identity are in an obvious minority. I don't take it that the wasp in the mid-west US needs to think of his American identity, I don't think that the classical French in Lyon that have been in the country for hundreds of years need to think about his french identity. However, Syrian refugees should think about what it means to be Syrian in Europe, migrant workers that come to Great Britain from Poland needs to think what it means to be Polish in Britain. So to claim that the nation state is declining, that is one thing, but nationality is something that will always stick.

This statement highlights the materiality of nationality. Even though alternative, “global” group identities have emerged, the importance of “nationality” is salient. As Billig (1995) points out, nationality is not equivalent to other identities, as it is also the *concrete reality* of how the world is structured (p.65). Even if a person do not identify with their Israeli-ness, if that is their passport, it still governs the possibilities that are open to them in life. The state can still make demands on their citizenry contribution, for example through mandatory military conscription.

Nathan is highly involved in the Tel Aviv hiphop and electronic music scene, and is very up to date with Western pop cultural references. Getting to know him he talks a lot about American producers and rappers, such as Drake and Jay-Z; and he is very “American” in the way he speaks and acts. Nathan strives to become a successful producer within his field. He said that the main reason that he decided not to go was that he wanted to focus on himself and his music, that he

did not want to keep it as “a side thing” while doing army. When talking about his choice not to join military service he gave the following example:

It would have interrupted. I know...cuz you think about..So, here’s an example. You have Israeli models, Bar Rafaeli, like Esti Ginzburg. Bar Rafaeli didn't do army, and you know, she was up there, Esti Ginzburg, could have kind of got there, but she decided to serve in the army. So Arafaeli got really famous, and the other one, well, there was a while when she was really famous or whatever. It kind of interrupts, it holds you back for two three years.

Here, Nathan’s statement shows aspirations associated with Western individualism, such as becoming famous and successful. Furthermore, he talked about the opportunities he had because he did not do military service, such as being able to travel. Nathan can hence be considered to fit into Steger’s (2013, p.15) concept of *global personhood*. The fact that he spent most of his childhood living in Japan might also have contributed to this.

Still, drawing a line between individualism–evasion on one hand and commitment to nationalism-military service, appears to be a very simplistic approach. Zohar is also highly affected by globalised discourses on individualism. Though the testimonies of Nathan and Yakov, the two who did not serve, contain strong elements of individualism, Zohar, who was the one who most closely identified himself with the army, did so on very individualistic motives as well. He talked about how he wanted to do something that was “interesting” to himself, and emphasised his individual gain from the service. Thereby, for Zohar, his individualism becomes a way for him to legitimise his service in the army. In addition, Nathan said he has friends “who are taking full advantage in the best way ever” – for example by serving as army photographers or in the band of the IDF, being able to develop their creative skills. It is therefore possible to do military service on individualistic motives, seeing it as a stepping board into the career one desires, rather than being driven by a will to “protect the nation”, something concluded by Adres, Vanhuyse and Vashdi's (2012, p.110) as well. This idea is present in Yakov’s testimony as well, who did not serve in the IDF. Yakov said that he did not feel “parasitic” by not doing service, a notion which is part of a nationalistic discourse, but instead expressed a pinch of regret on the

basis of individual gain. Yakov felt that he missed out both “CV-wise” and in the sense that he thinks it would have contributed to his personal development. Zohar’s commitment to globalised values is further manifested in this statement:

Now, with globalisation, countries are becoming closer to each other because of the Internet. One can chose what he wants to learn and take. I’m Jewish, Israeli, Zionist. I’m Jewish, not half Jewish. But I also adopted things from Europe, China and so on, that have nothing to do with me. I did Asian studies at university; and took away a lot of knowledge about China, and adopted parts of it culture through studying history and language.

So, Zohar can also be seen to have a *global personhood* (Steger, 2013, p.15). All the same, he is committed to his nation. For example he states that he thinks it is “...important to contribute to the homeland and the country.”. He does not seem to experience any conflict between his “global personhood” and his identification.

The idea of the the military as a place characterised by fraternity and collectivity is expressed by Yuval. Yuval experienced a feeling of relief, being in a context where external attributes were stripped away:

But when you’re there, there’s no costume which you can chose to wear. You got your uniform and your haircut, which is very important for me, as a guy, and it takes away your special things, like all of it, you cannot design your clothes and your hair, you whole look is gone. And when everyone is equal in this way, the personalities pop up stronger. So that’s why people get stronger friendships, you get your type, your type of friends.

In this statement, the strong collectivity of the army is emphasised. It can be interpreted as a “break” from a social scene which is shaped after lifestyles and looks, and there is an underlying idea of the military as an arena where “purer” friendships are formed. According to M. Weiss (2002) is collectivism, especially associated with the military, still idealised over individualism in Israel (p.19), which seems to hold true in Yuval’s case. There are traces of this attitude in some of the other testimonies as well. Eli, for example, said wryly that “the age of individualism is

completely assimilated in the structure”. Ido appeared to harbour nostalgic feelings towards the early days of the Israeli nation, when socialism was more prominent.

6.4 Unveiling and deconstructing the discourse

Interestingly enough, it was the two people who had chosen to evade military service who described themselves as the least political. It appears, for those who did their service, that this experience was important to the formation of their political opinions. Ido and Tamir speak of “illusions shattered” and “reality dying out”. Nadav said:

But now I’m aware of the strong social mechanisms behind it, they make you develop internal feelings. When I was a commander, I started feeling responsible for the well-being of the people in my unit. I actually felt better as a commander. It felt more meaningful. But now I’m very disillusioned toward these mechanisms, I think they legitimise oppression.

This statement echoes the argument brought forward by Anderson (2006): that by generating feelings of fraternity and comradeship, sacrifice in the the name of the nation is legitimised (p.7). Zohar said that his service in the army helped him to understand the situation, especially in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the role of the IDF. He too showed signs of having “seen through” the dominant discourse, for example he said: “I understand that a lot of what I’m told about the conflict and the areas is not true.” Further, Zohar talked about the army’s *self-justification*, Ido talked about *normalising* actions as heroic, Tamir spoke of *narratives*. One of these narratives is that Israel is vulnerable and under constant threats from its neighbouring countries. Israel’s national identity is defined along the lines of the conflict with Palestine and the neighbouring countries, creating a clearly defined “us” and “them” – the threat (M.Weiss, 2001, p.409). However, this narrative is rejected by Nadav: “I do not think Israel is vulnerable. It’s very disproportionate, compared to Palestine. We face no military threat from the Palestinians. It is like a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating militarisation and mutual distrust.”, and Ido:

Well, to say to say that Israel is vulnerable is a bit bullshit I think. As of now and what we know, Israel is the only country in the middle east who is a nuclear power, it is the only one that gets an excessive tuning form the EU, US, the NATO, not Jordan, the Emirates, it's Israel. To say we are vulnerable it is not because of our military it's because of our politics.

All of this shows that the respondents are aware of the workings of the militaristic and nationalistic discourses. Therefore, it can be argued that a process of *deconstruction* has begun. Once hegemony is stable, the constructed elements of this particular social order are hidden (Mouffe in Martin, 2013, p.210, 216). But here, the respondents are *aware* of how they are disciplined to fulfil a certain role within the army and the national project of Israel. *Deconstruction*, a concept first introduced by Jacques Derrida, refers to a process by which the contingency of a hegemonic discourse is revealed – its truths are questioned, and no longer seen as natural. Marianne Winther-Jørgensen and Louise Phillips see deconstruction as process of revealing “that the given organisation of the world is the result of political processes with social consequences.”(2002, p.46). Derrida states: “The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. That are not possible or effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures.” (quoted in Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.46), a statement which could explain why those respondents who had been in military service as the most critical of it as an institution in Israel citizenship, and most disillusioned towards the social mechanisms that legitimise it. Taking part of it, being expected to embodying the discourses of militarism and nationalism, they became aware of the process they participated in. While the respondents sometimes said things that echoed the militaristic discourse on citizenship and masculinity, it was often with an ironic undertone. Irony can be seen as a form of everyday resistance (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.75), difficult to detect for those who are not disillusioned towards the hegemonic discourses.

In regards to nationalism, the talk of Israel as a young nation reappeared in the testimonies. Ido:

We need to remember that this a 60 something year old country. And it's not even the United States that is 300 years old, that is nothing, and that is why the only way to be Israeli is the one thing that was always Israeli, and that is the military. It was the one thing that was renewed and was platform for everybody. It's

not it's a little bit Moroccan, it's a little bit Polish, no, it's Israeli, it's in the title. So that's why we base our heroes, our villains, our literature and everything, on the one thing that was always Israeli, the military.

Similarly, Nathan said:

Israel is 60 something years old, and it needed an organisation, before it became what it is now, it was sort of all for one and one for all kind of thing. It was kind of like, 'communa', it's what we say in Hebrew. It's like, it's just a gathering of people living together. They just helped each other build the state, and there was this strong patriotic feeling. Because we are in a risky area, surrounded by Arab countries or whatever. People who think the land belong to them, people wanted to take over and whatever, so we had to act quickly, so victories and whatever, people started looking at Israeli soldiers as something very heroic, and it became a thing, it became normal, everyone was recruited, everyone was doing it.

Both Ido and Nathan are aware that the special place that military service had in the inception of Israel as nation and the creation of a national community, a "we": Israeli's, in need of protection, and a "them" – the surrounding Arab countries, posing as a threat to that "we". That Israel is quite a young state might make it easier to grasp the "inventedness and "imaginedness" of it as a nation (Anderson, 2006, pp.6-7); the respondents are very aware that Israel was "created".

7. Concluding discussion

In this final chapter, the results will be discussed and summarised in relation to the purpose and the research questions. I also provide a short final reflection on the meaning of these conclusions. Finally, future areas of study will be discussed.

How do nationalistic, militaristic, and individualistic discourses affect the choice to serve or evade military service, in an era of increased globalisation?

It seems that nationalistic and militaristic discourses are still highly influential and internalised by the respondents. This is manifested in both the testimonies of those who did not do service, Yakov and Nathan, and those who chose to do it. Yakov and Nathan both reflect upon their choice not to serve as “selfish”. The nationalistic and militaristic discourse is transmitted to the respondents both through their education and their parents. This creates substantial social pressure to do military service and reinforces it as a natural part of being a citizen. In the cases where the respondents were reluctant to do military service, or contemplated applying for an early release, the disapproval of the respondents parents seemed to be a determining factor which made them stay in the army. Both doing military service and evading can be motivated on individualistic terms, indicating a receptiveness to globalised, Western discourses. Zahar, Yakov and Nathan are all driven by a strong sense of individualism. The prime objective for doing military service can be to strengthen one’s attractiveness on the labour market, and one can choose to not do military service in order to be “free” and pursue an artistic career. This shows that the nationalistic and individualistic discourses coexist, and are not always in conflict with each other. Even if identification and loyalty with the nation state is declining in favour for more globalised personhoods, the militaristic hegemony of the nation state might be able to adapt by making military service attractive for those who are primarily driven by individualistic motives, for example by enhancing it as something that is “good for the CV”. Military service is still expected of the citizens, but the sacrifice in the name of the nation can be “hidden” by emphasising individual gain.

How do the respondents relate to the Israeli nationalism and the hegemonic ideas on being a soldier and masculinity?

The combat soldier is idealised and is something that several respondents aspire to, or have aspired to. Yuval, Zohar, Nadav, Tamir and Yakov all said they wanted to be a combat soldier, at least at one point in their lives. This may point to the maintained status of the combat soldier both as the emblem of good citizenship and as the hegemonic form of masculinity. The most common description of a “good soldier” was someone who following the rules, but many of the characteristics mentioned mirrors characteristics which are traditionally associated with masculinity, such as being responsible, rational, strong and bold. However, Nadav, Nathan, Yuval, Ido and Tamir all counter-identify themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity, a dissonance which often is described in physical terms, like not being strong or good at running.

What are the reasons for dissociation with the role as a soldier and what strategies of resistance are used to manifest this dissociation?

Dissociation and counter-identification does not seem to be primarily ideologically motivated. Though Ido, Yuval, Eli, Tamir are critical of the militarism, it is an ideological and ethical stance that developed over time, a process to which experiences from their military service appears to have been quite central. The reasons for dissociation/counter-identification appears to be at least partly connected to hegemonic masculinity. This became visible as the respondents spoke of why they felt different to their peers in military service, or when they said that it was not for them, they often mentioned their failure to live up machoist ideals, both in terms of mental and physical capacity. Besides draft evasion and applying for an early release on psychological grounds, resistance is expressed as everyday resistance; faking sickness to get sick leave, using humour and irony. Finally, quasi-evasion or riskless non-exit by choosing to serve in specific units was used by Nadav, who did not want to serve in occupied territories.

Final reflections

The deconstruction of the militaristic, nationalistic discourse has transformative potential and could hopefully contribute to a less antagonistic relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. In

combination, militarism and nationalism constructs people from other nations as “others” who are a possible threat to the nation, and an deconstruction of these discourses could blur the lines between “us” and “them” and open up for understanding and compassion. Yuval, one of the respondents whose time in the military made him aware of the process of indoctrination of militarism and nationalism, told me me about his cousin who was killed in service to the IDF. It was during a time of cease-fire, yet, the his cousin’s unit were given orders to expose a tunnel, without anyone clearing it first. They went in, and in a few minutes, Yuval’s cousin died in an explosion. Yuval did not blame the people, who were Palestinians, who had planted the bombs – he blamed the Israeli government who had given the orders to expose the tunnel.

However, this calls attention to whether deconstruction of discourse is enough to change a regime of power? The fact that the respondents (Eli, Yuval, Tamir) have become disillusioned towards the nationalistic and militaristic discourse did not always prompt them to take direct action, and, for example, apply for an early release from service, even though they considered it. Instead, their dissonance and resistance was expressed in the form of *hidden transcripts*, and *everyday resistance*. The perceived consequences of social stigma, potential conflicts with their parents, and maybe, the prolonged and complicated process of getting out, had the upper hand. But, Scott (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009, p.75) insists that everyday resistance that takes place can prepare the ground for organised, public resistance in the future, which I believe, is what is needed if militarism is to be pushed out of institutions and loose its hegemonic status.

Areas for future research

An interesting area for future research that this study only briefly touched upon due to the need to make delimitations, was the dimensions of status and socioeconomic class in the IDF. The IDF was constructed as a “people’s army” and as a “melting pot”, that would unify the Israeli population (M. Weiss, 2002, p.43). However, by the way Ido, Nadav and Zohar spoke of it, it seems like the IDF rather serve to reinforce social hierarchies and economic inequality. Also related to capitalisation, the importance of the military service as an educational institution and a “merit for the CV”, could be an interesting topic of study.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Interview guide

Introduction

Name, age

What do you do for work?

Your military service

How was your time in military service? (grand tour)

When were you drafted?

What were your expectations before your conscription?

How did you experience your first days in service?

What was your position?

Why this position?

What were your assignments/duties? How did you feel about them?

How did you experience taking orders?

What did you do in your spare time?

Did you feel connected or distanced to your “normal” life while you were in the army?

Thoughts on soldierhood and the military

What do you consider key characteristics of a “good soldier”?

If you think about your own personality, do you feel you fit this description of a good soldier?

How did you experience the group dynamics within your unit?

What was your position within the group?

Did you feel a sense of belonging/fitting in?

What was the mix of different backgrounds like in your unit?

What do you think of the idea of the army as a melting pot of Israeli society?

Evasion/exemption

Why did you request an early release/chose to evade?

Did you ever consider not serving? Why/why not?

How was your decision received? By superiors/peers/family?

What was it like returning from military service?

Looking back

Looking back at the period of your service, how would you describe it?

How has military service affected you as a person?

Do you have any regrets concerning this period of your life?

Identity

How do you identify yourself as a person?

What are the characteristics that you feel identify you as a person?

Which groups do you feel most connected to?

What is your political orientation?

Israel

What does it mean to be Israeli, according to you?

What are your thoughts on the politics of the Israeli government?

Would you consider yourself a political person? Why/why not?

What do you think about this statement: "Because of Israel's quite unique history and vulnerable position in the region, Israelis have a greater responsibility to their state and their people."