Selfies, Sexts, and Squadrons

The Digital Culture of the Israeli Defense Forces

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Abstract

For Israeli youth, digital connectivity is an enduring aspect of mandatory conscription into the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). This essay will investigate social media participation among enlisted Israeli soldiers. It unpacks the effects that portable information and communication technologies (ICT) have on Israeli collective memory, identity, and public space, and looks to identify the mundane spheres in which militarization saturates the life of the young sabra. As a result of a proliferation of military imagery on Israeli social media, and public participation in the production of that content, the digital culture of the Israeli Defense Forces will be shown to reflect the complex lived realities of young Israeli soldiers negotiating conflict and forced conscription. Through ICT’s, the soldiers are imbued with the ability to obfuscate violence towards Palestinian populations. Simultaneously, they are provided with allowances to renegotiate with Israel society, and highlight the injustices of their military occupation.

Keywords: Digital, social media, military, selfies, media memory, public space, identity, conflict, ICT, selfie, mobile culture, Israel, Palestine

Introduction

Israeli youth are some of the most hyper-connected social media users on the planet. The young sabra spends up to a fifth of their waking hours negotiating with social media and ICT technologies (Kuntsman & Stein, 2015, p. 112). This culture of digital connectivity does not halt with mandatory conscription into the Israeli Defense Forces (צה”ל). The essay to follow will address social media participation among enlisted Israeli youth by expanding upon popular discourses about Israeli participatory media and identifying the various spheres in which militarization saturates the lives of Israeli youth. By centralizing the notion of the digital mundane, it will assert that for conscripted Israelis, “mundane social media rituals simultaneously draw on and extend military practice into new and increasingly non-normative terrains” (Matlby & Thornham, 2016, p. 3).
This investigation into the militarizing potentials of the digital mundane will utilize a three-part method. Israeli collective memory will first be considered through the performative action of photo sharing. Lived military experience will be shown to disrupt traditional forms of national memory production, and form an unofficial collective cultural memory that is continuously documented, updated, and preserved on the flexible landscape of social media. The second section of this work will investigate the development of Israeli national identity in the context of this new media production. Here, the repetitive memetic body of iconography, codes, and norms central to Israeli social media and their effects on Israeli conceptions of the self will be unpacked. As a result of a proliferation of military imagery on Israeli social media and public participation in this content production, section three will argue that the Israeli Defense Forces are no longer confined to spaces of territorial occupation. Rather, militarization will be shown to extend into all aspects of mundane Israeli life.

Scholarly discourses surrounding the digital cultural production of conscripted Israeli youth position this content as exclusively damaging (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 89). This is because the content harbours covert references to institutional violence towards Palestinian peoples and the occupation of their traditional lands. This paper will complicate this essentialism, by asserting that the digital culture of the Israeli Defense Forces reflects the complex lived realities of young Israeli soldiers negotiating conflict and forced conscription. In portable information and communication technologies, soldiers are simultaneously imbued both with the ability to normalize violence towards Palestinian populations, and to renegotiate with Israeli society by highlighting the injustices of their military occupation.

**#tzahal: Participatory New Media Archives and Israeli Collective Memory**

Collective memory is an elusive socio-political construct. Israeli scholar Motti Neiger defines collective memory as “the relationship between the individual and community to which she belongs ... that which enables a community to bestow meaning upon living existence” (Neiger et. al. 2011, p. 11). Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the nation has gone to significant lengths to establish this sort of personal and meaningful collective memory among its Jewish-Israeli citizens. Traditional constructions of that memory often include testimonies of biblical precedence, images of agriculture and the settling of the land, themes of overcoming diasporic struggle, and especially (but not exclusively) military life (Casemajor, 2014, p. 9). The construction of Israeli collective memory is a task that conventionally fell to the Israeli State Archives (הנצך המדינה) and institutional bodies who carefully curated cultural and socially-relevant images depicting the birth and development of the young nation (Katriel & Shavit, 2011, p. 77). Iconic images such as *The Ink Flag* and *Paratroopers at the Western Wall* forge what is known colloquially as the “personal photo album,” representing an array of national images and testimonies embodied by each Jewish citizen (Casemajor, 2014, p. 8). The archival content merges the national and institutional memory of the state with the popular imagination of the Jewish-Israeli public. In doing so, the archives bond the Israeli public in memory, connecting individuals to the political body, while framing a collective national identity (Casemajor, 2014, p. 7).
Information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the popularization of social media have disrupted this relationship between popular and national memory. Tamar Ashuri posits that prior to ICTs, Israeli collective memory was segmented into two distinct forms: the common and the shared (Ashuri, 2011, p. 105). Common memory is a mutual experience communicated between individuals. Shared memory, alternatively, is a collective experience supported through retelling and presentation, often communicated through national institutions and archives in the public domain. Digital devices, however, enable the individual to make their personal memories visible to the public domain. This action gives rise to what Ashuri terms “joint memory.” Joint memory, they explain, is an “aggregation of the memories of various individuals, made accessible to those absent from such occurrences in both space and time” (Ashuri, 2011, p. 107). These memories are not calibrated, constructed, or disseminated by professional agents; rather, they are the public compilation of personal recollection. Through social media, conscripted Israeli youth are able to connect their personal military experience to the experiences of the broader Israeli public and its joint memory. With the act of photo sharing, the everyday military life of the individual becomes inseparable from an unofficial shared cultural memory that is continuously documented, updated, and preserved on the flexible landscape of social media (Katriel, 2011, p. 78).

Unlike official cultural repositories, such as the National Photo Collection (ה媄נות לשכת הממשלתית), by clicking through the tzahal hashtag (צה”ל) on Instagram (Figure 1), the viewer is confronted with a new archive of Israeli collective memory (Kim, 2015, p. 9). Unlike the national archives, this participatory collection presents images of eroticism, narcissism, and violence (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 15). It confronts the realities of daily military life for enlisted Israeli youth. The compulsive photo-sharing emerges out of an often unconscious process of “mundane and quotidian actions that are embodied, corporeal and unthought” (Maltby & Thornham, 2016, p. 3). These depictions document all aspects of military life, including the boredom and frustration of the everyday in uniform, and personal trials as an Israeli in combat (Benedikter & Davide, 2013, p. 328). Online participatory archives transform, representing (whether factually or not) the radically complex lives of Israeli youth and all aspects of their political recourse. These participatory archives have the dual potential to both normalize violence towards Palestinian populations beneath layers of selfies (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 82) while also simultaneously providing Israelis with space to renegotiate with Israeli society about their military occupation.

The case of Edan Abergil illustrates the first potential of these archives to normalize Palestinian subjugation (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 83). In the summer of 2010, Israeli bloggers were sifting through archives of content tagged with the hashtag #tzahal when they came across the Facebook account of a former Israeli soldier named Edan Abergil, and her public album titled IDF, the best days of my life (Reider, 2010, p. 4). At first glance, the contents of the album are unremarkable, filled with portraits of smiling soldiers in uniform and casual shots of friends in military jeeps. However, closer inspection reveals images of Abergil posing playfully against the backdrop of two blindfolded
Palestinian men, seated on cement blocks, with their hands bound with plastic handcuffs (Figure 2). In another image, Abergil is posed like a mock cover-girl, with lips pursed, her head turned suggestively against the bound prisoner (Figure 3) (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 67). Jocular conversation follows in the posts below the images, in which friends joke about her romance with the bound Palestinian man (Reider, 2010, p. 5). With these posts, the previously benign archive of Israeli military memory is disrupted, and the dehumanizing practices of the IDF made public.

Soon after its discovery, the album incited a “web-storm” on Israeli social media. It was followed by massive condemnation of the Israeli army by the Jewish public. Nonetheless, it is through these discourses of anger surrounding Edan Abergil that the normalization of violence towards Palestinian populations is made visible (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 69). While the IDF publicly denounced her posts as “repulsive,” assuring the public that it “in no way reflects the spirit of the IDF” (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 72), corresponding coverage presented Abergil as an exception, an unusual bigot within a broader and un-implicated military power. Abergil is also often addressed through racist remarks as a Mizrachi woman herself, called an arsit (ארס) or a frecha (פרך) (these are derogatory terms for Mizrachi women) by the Israeli public (Reider, 2010, p. 5). Although many Israelis publicly admitted to having similar photographs on their personal phones, in demonizing the individual, fault is removed from the collective military and their violent occupation of Palestinian land. In centralizing Abergil as a locus of violence, she is simultaneously made the culprit and the alibi for the military violence plainly presented by the photograph (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 72-74).

Social media’s expansion of Israeli collective memory into the hands of IDF soldiers has the potential to obscure violence towards Palestinians through the normalization of the subjugation they face. ICTs, however, also open the potential for what Israeli scholar Tamar Katriel terms “memory-based moral activism” (Kartiel & Shivat, 2011, p. 79). The work of a testimonial project known as Breaking the Silence (שותיקה שוברים), for example, archives and shares photographs taken by soldiers during their time in combat accompanied by descriptive testimonies. The testimonies are entirely anonymous (to safeguard the security of the soldier) and speak about army experiences frankly using in-group language. The project is updated constantly, attempting to collect and archive the lived experiences of soldiers enlisted in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem since the Second Intifada (Katriel & Shivat, 2011, p. 80). Content is collected with intentions to “expose the true reality of Israeli occupation in which young soldiers are facing a civilian population daily” (Katriel and Shitvat 2011, p. 81). The collective effort is designed to provide an evidentiary basis for countering social silence and obfuscation surrounding speaking out against Israeli violence towards Palestinian populations.

The testimonies and photographs collected by Breaking the Silence are archival in nature (Ernst, 2013, p. 19). They accumulate soldiers’ personal memories as a larger body of text and images to affect the future of the occupation. By disrupting the banality of Israel’s online military archive, the group calls for accountability in public collective memory and within national archives in Israel. As Katriel and Shitvat (2011) note, they seek to develop a more nuanced view, informed by both national history.
as it is promoted by official archives, and the collective memory shaped by soldiers online (p. 82). In disseminating these stories and images, which are normally kept out of public view, the soldier’s personal memories invoke a shared experience in unjust occupation, that are then archived into the same masses of digital content that form the rest of Israeli military memory. The project forms a larger movement directed at Jewish-Israeli society, which soldiers feel they act in the name of whilst on duty (Katriel & Shitvat, 2011, p. 83). In doing so they force their experiences as an oppressive force into collective memory, something only possible through the use of ICTs and the expansion of Israel’s collective memory from national archives into the hands of individual soldiers, equipped with their smartphones and varying hashtags.

**Strength in Selfies: Military Selfies as a National Currency of Identity in Israel**

In the age of ICTs, what constitutes political participation has broadened significantly to include mundane, everyday digital practices. As Israeli scholar Limor Shifman (2014) notes, “new media offers appealing and convenient ways to stimulate participatory formal politics” (p. 24). In Israel, a global selfie capital (Berman, 2014, p. 2), it is the military selfie that has emerged as a critical political act, and performance of national identity for Israeli youth (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 12). With the rise of social media sites (SNS), ICTs have crowded the social networks of Israeli youth with a mass directory of selfies, illustrating smiling Israeli troops, with or without their weapons, on and off the battlefield. These selfies often follow a corresponding logic: military uniforms are visible, with a straight and unabashed view of the soldier(s) (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 14). The photographs document a wide range of emotional responses (boredom is common) and geographic locations that range from the army base, to the playful beaches of Tel Aviv, to crowded kanyon (mall) food courts. Accompanying these images are a variety of hashtags such as #tzahal (צה”ל), #IDF, #soldiers (חיילים), #armygirl, and commonly #israeli. The hashtags collect and group the images into the participatory archives discussed above. These images are then instantly uploaded, for mass consumption by the online social network. In this way, selfies uniquely reflect the lived realities of Israeli soldiers, depicting their lived and political identities in conflict and conscription (Dijck, 2013, p. 199).

Acknowledging their shared thematic structure, these military selfies may be read as Internet memes in order to understand the function of these images in representing the lives of Israeli youth online. The meme functions as a “small cultural unit of transmission that flows through discourses by copy or imitation” (Gal, Shifman & Kampf, 2015, p. 705). Here, political participation is broadened to include mundane practices, such meme sharing. As noted by Shifman, through their accessibility, memes act as fundamental modes of political expression because they constitute a space in which multiple opinions and identities can be negotiated simultaneously (Shifman, 2014, p. 137). In this sense, it is the selfie that acts as the central platform through which Israeli youth negotiate their participation in the IDF with the broader Israeli public. As the images “couple everyday digital aesthetics with
militarized ways of seeing,” the body of iconography, codes, and norms presented in this military vision come to directly affect the collective identity of Israeli youth (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 94). Virtual space here becomes a significant site for collective identity formation. (boyd, 2011, p. 39). This formation of Israeli collective identity becomes a process of boundary work. It consists of the ongoing production, performance, and validation of values, codes, and norms through selfies (Shifman, 2014, p. 32). This process is inherently dialectic, with the inclusion and exclusion of individuals within the community constructing the collective itself. Here, the relationship between selfies and identity is made twofold: reflecting identity and constituting a central place for its formation (Gal, Shifman & Kampf, 2015, p. 706).

The formation of this identity requires compliance or subversion, as each individual chooses to either echo or defy a certain memetic vision in this complex process. Obedience to the norm strengthens collective boundaries and enhances transparency as “natural” (Frosh, 2015, p. 48). As Gal notes, the “process of military identity construction in participatory media on the one hand, enables innovative trajectories for subversion, while on the other hand seems to enhance conformity” (Gal, Shifman & Kampf, 2015, p. 708). With corresponding likes and shares, validation arrives in the openly public consumption of these images. In liking and sharing these selfies, the collective validates its own military action while policing its borders of acceptability simultaneously (Brandes et.al. 2013, p. 743). The sharing of selfies among Israeli youth becomes a performative act of positioning oneself within the nation, while negotiating identity and belonging through certain social codes in the process (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 14). This corpus of selfies, with each successive generation of Israelis entering the military, comes to document negotiations with the inclusive and exclusionary boundaries of Israeli society.

This process of identity construction through the normalization of military vision in selfies is demonstrated through the presence of “selfie booths” at Israeli Defence Forces induction centres (Figure 4). These booths are playfully decorated with animated soldiers saluting the living soldiers in front of them (Winer, 2015, p. 2). They are meant to mechanize the selfie process directly following induction into the army. As new recruits are forbidden to use their mobile phones during the induction process, they are deprived of the ability to take selfies. According to Colonel Oren Shani, the machines are essential as “...the families of recruits want on the induction day of their son or daughter, to finally see them in uniform” (Winer, 2015, p. 3). The stall simulates much of the experience of taking a selfie. The soldiers stand in front of a screen, which shows them how they will appear in the final photograph, and then press a button. After snapping the picture, the soldiers can then send or share it via text message, email, Instagram, or Facebook (Winer, 2015, p. 4). Here, the selfie becomes a benchmark for Israeli citizenship through a public declaration of an individual’s military identity (Dijck, 2015, p. 199). The selfie-booth functions as a liminal space that establishes the soldier’s position within the Israeli army and Jewish peoplehood following the dissemination of the photo online. The congratulatory likes, comments, and shares the picture receives then validate the decision of the new Israeli soldier and affirm their identity as a part of the nation (Shifman, 2014, p. 118).
Performances of military identity through selfies for Israeli soldiers are not always so benign. In reinforcing this normalization of military vision within understandings of Israeli identity, the selfies also have the potential to normalize and erase Palestinian suffering and occupation. This indisputable erasure can be witnessed in the public Instagram account of IDF soldier Mor Ostrovski (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 79). The soldier’s account became the site of international condemnation when he posted an image of a young Palestinian boy through the scope of his sniper rifle. That photograph, however, presents violence towards Palestinians directly. It is in Ostrovki’s more benign selfies that the erasure of Palestinian suffering is simultaneously normalized and revealed (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 83). His Instagram account (Figure 5) also contains numerous militarized selfies in army issued attire, often posing with weapons between his legs as a phallic prosthetic (Grenoble, 2013, p. 2). Many of Ostrovki’s selfies are taken in the interior of abandoned Palestinian homes, the owners of which he and his comrades have presumably dispelled (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 84). Through these selfies, violence is effaced by his teenage posture and nonchalance. The Palestinian subject(s) who previously inhabited the home have been replaced with the violence of their bodily erasure. The couch that Ostrovki casually lies against belongs to a family forced to flee Israeli violence. These images contain no degradation or humiliation of Palestinian subjects. Instead, the force of the IDF is in full view.

Selfies are a powerful communicative tool for young IDF soldiers. As demonstrated, they have the power to drastically erase Palestinian suffering, and normalize militarism within Israeli identity. However, in deviating from the traditional boundaries of normativity constructed around IDF selfies, the photographs are also imbued with the potential to disrupt erasure and share subversive assertions for peace online (Shifman, 2014, p. 119). When a young IDF soldier took a selfie with her friend on a public bus, a small but valuable attempt at peace was shared online. This selfie (Figure 6) of an Israeli girl in uniform with a close Palestinian friend disrupts the violent military identity established by some Israeli youth by posting a selfie that, instead of negating Palestinian bodies, presents two individuals sharing a joyful, albeit banal smile (Proulx, 2016, p. 114). The image transforms the violent identity of the Israeli soldier into an individual who hopes for peace. While participating in the memetic practice of other Israeli soldiers, the soldier and her friend open up the possibility for mutual respect and coexistence. Palestinian and Jewish individuals who shared and recreated the image online propagate that same possibility.

Divisive Borders: ICTs and the Militarization of Public Space in Israel

Through the normalization of the military in physical and digital spaces throughout the nation, ubiquitous images and posts of Israeli soldiers in uniform are made identical to those of any other civilian using the same social media platforms. Militarism is simultaneously exposed, made public on social media applications, and concealed, because it is normalized in public virtual and physical spaces. (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 82) The result of this proliferation of military imagery within the normal is that militarized spaces are no longer confined to areas of territorial occupation. Instead, militarization
permeates throughout mundane spaces in Israel, previously removed from the realities of military life in conflict (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 81). Through the compulsive sharing and liking of this military imagery, the digital networks of Israelis no longer active in the military become participatory battlefields that facilitate negotiations surrounding the treatment of Palestinian populations, military action, and public policy (Shifman, 2014, p. 121). Through this collective participation in military activity online, militarization and the banality of state violence is present in all spaces throughout Israeli society, carried by the social media content on each handheld and desktop device throughout the nation (Shifman, 2014, p. 124).

In April 2014, a short amateur video of an Israeli soldier shoving, kicking, and pointing his gun at unarmed Palestinian teenagers in Hebron’s old city circulated widely throughout Arab and Israeli media outlets (Figure 7) (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 61). Such content is not uncommon online. Checkpoints often act as spaces of contention between Palestinian and Israeli populations. The soldier in question, named David (דavid), was subsequently suspended. However, following that suspension, the Israeli public mobilized rapidly on social media. Soldiers from every sector of the Israeli military uploaded repetitive meme-like images, holding weapons and protest banners, with the words “We are with David the Nahalite” (the soldier was part of the Nahal Infantry Brigade) scribbled in Hebrew (Figure 8). A Facebook group of the same name emerged soon after, and quickly accumulated photos, memes, and messages of support for David, from Israeli soldiers and civilians alike. The group gained over 20,000 “likes” in less than twenty-four hours. The practice then spread to civilians, “who uploaded pictures of themselves [in support of David] at home or at work, with pets and household objects rather than guns” (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 63). Online protests continued against more general targets, such as Palestinian provocation, and the vulnerability of Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories. People began urging the army to better protect “the nation’s children,” namely the soldiers of the IDF. The social media conflict became so contentious that Israeli parents began threatening to remove their sons from the Nahal Infantry Brigade if David was not reinstated (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 67).

In many respects, this military event is not unusual. The public response replayed recurrent Israeli political discourse about the military occupation; “an inversion whereby the armed Israeli soldier, not the Palestinian civilian population, is figured as the chief victim” (Kunstman & Stein, 2015, p. 69). Displays of this sort of patriotic militarism are common in Israel. The permeation of public discourse with images and memes demonstrating concern for David rid the discussion of the Palestinian individuals implicated. However, equally remarkable is not the disregard for Palestinian lives, but the ease with which popular social media could be mobilized to advance a national military agenda. Through the civilian population mobilizing on social media, a discussion that would have previously been settled at the military checkpoint (מחסו) was brought out into the forefront of the Israeli public (Shifman, 2014, p. 134). Spaces of militarization, brought out into the mundane homes of Israeli individuals, are no longer confined to areas of direct conflict (Breznitz, 2005, p. 31). With discourses of violence concealed within Israeli public space by way of its banality, the potential for condemnation
within the Israeli public is reduced. Moreover, by means of sharing or liking these images, personal experience is made collective, and violence in anonymity is promoted (boyd, 2011, p. 41). With the Israeli public sphere saturated with military discourse and iconography, Palestinian suffering is made visible, but often normalized and disregarded as a result.

ICTs are imbued with the potential to obscure Israeli violence by expanding the normative territorial terrains of the Israeli military into the public domain (Maltby & Thornham, 2016, p. 15). However, within those same technologies lies the potential to force Israeli recognition of military violence towards Palestinian populations. This potential can be realized by extending the injustice present at zones of conflict into mundane spaces within Israeli society. By making Israeli violence and Palestinian suffering blatantly and purposefully visible on the homepages and desktops of individuals throughout the nation, it cannot be ignored, even in its banality. ICTs allow Israelis to productively utilize the dissolution of boundaries between militarized and non-militarized paces (Maltby & Thornham, 2016, p. 16). They provide Israeli individuals not presently in military conflict to surveil the actions of the IDF by documenting and sharing the violence they witnessed while visiting military zones and Palestinian territory (Breznitz, 2005, p. 32). Through ICTs citizens can police their own military, “documenting soldiers’ actions and intervening when necessary to ensure that the human and civil rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are protected” (Ashuri, 2011, p. 108). In protecting the fundamental rights of Palestinian populations, such actions simultaneously disrupt the normalization and obfuscation of Israeli violence within the Jewish public.

Machsom Watch (מַחְסָמוֹנ), for example, is a group of Israeli women who volunteer to monitor and document the conduct of soldiers at military checkpoints throughout Israel and the West Bank. This group was founded in 2001 by Ronnee Jaeger, Adi Kunstman and Yehudit Keshet. The stated goals of the project are “monitor[ing] the behaviour of the military, protecting Palestinian human and civil rights, and bearing witness [to Palestinian suffering]” (Ashuri, 2011, p. 108). The group performs twice-daily checks of machsom (checkpoints), which Palestinians must pass through to move to and from Israel. Volunteers document their observations with notes and photographs. They also attempt to sway soldiers to enable the speedy passage of Palestinians and treat them with respect. Intervention is made firstly by directly approaching and confronting soldiers. When this is ineffective, attempts are made to contact higher military ranks, the media, and Israeli politicians (Ashuri, 2011, p. 109). Volunteers also monitor agricultural gates in the Israeli West Bank and temporary roadblocks. The organization claims that soldiers treat the Palestinian population better when its activists are on the scene, so that their very presence and documentary capabilities contribute to improving the plight of the Palestinians passing through checkpoints (Ashuri, 2011, p. 110).

The machsom is a space of political significance. It is a symbol of “territoriality in action: in regulating movement, they create stark boundaries separating ‘Israelis’ and ‘Palestinians’ (as well as Palestinians from Palestinians), and assert the de facto boundaries between Israel and Palestine” (Ashuri, 2011, p. 110). Previously, these spaces were kept in radical separation from the Israeli public, as they lie on
or even beyond boundaries of the nation. Machsom Watch challenges the political and geo-spatial boundaries they are monitoring, as through their use of ICTs and social media, they “bring before their audiences, in their mundane homes, a marginalized reality of the suffering and pain that is caused in their name” (Ashuri, 2011, p. 112). In this way, the militarized realities of the Palestinian everyday are brought directly into the faces of the Israeli digital public. The volunteers remind the soldiers of their accountability, while simultaneously forcing the Israeli public to recognize their civic responsibility to the Palestinian people. Through the activities and social media exposure of the group, digital technologies saturate the Israeli public sphere with the unjust realities of their occupation through a subversive method that avoids erasure. This radical exposure re-opens the possibility for change through awareness and forced acknowledgment.

**Conclusion**

Military obligation is an enduring aspect of Jewish-Israeli national identity. Although life in conflict and mandatory conscription remain constant, the proliferation of smartphones and digital technologies on and off of the battlefield have allowed for the dissemination of that militarized identity throughout alternative realms within Israeli society. In negotiating with the divergent scholarly discourses surrounding digital military cultures and new media technologies, this essay has demonstrated how mundane social media rituals in the context of Israeli military action are a driving force in extending the IDF into all aspects of the Israeli everyday (Matlby & Thornham, 2016, p. 3).

Through explorations into Israeli collective memory, it is evident that ICTs have disrupted traditional, apolitical forms of national military memory and provided young soldiers with the ability to form an unofficial collective cultural memory that reflects the lived realities of their experiences in conflict. Israeli national identity is simultaneously influenced by this new media production. Through the repetitive standardization of the military selfie as a national currency of belonging, Israeli identity is shown to require military self-presentation. Further, through public participation in the digital culture of the IDF, militarization is shown to saturate all physical and digital spaces in Israel, beyond the immediate context of the occupation. In the context of a violent occupation, the mundane performativity of these social media rituals undoubtedly normalizes and obscures violence towards Palestinian populations. However, as demonstrated by the subversive potentials of ICT technologies, digital media platforms and social media sites simultaneously provide Israeli youth with the potential to provoke renegotiations with Israel society about their collective injustices, and prompt both banal and radical initiatives towards peace.
Images

Figure 1: #זהל Archive - 72,161 posts. Screenshot. November 14th 2016.

Figure 2: Selfie taken by Soldier Edan Abergil of Herself Posing with two Blindfolded Palestinian Men (2010). Image courtesy of https://reider.wordpress.com/
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Figure 3: Selfie taken by Soldier Edan Abergil of Herself Posing with Blindfolded Palestinian Man (2010). Image courtesy of https://reider.wordpress.com/

Figure 4: A soldier tries out the IDF’s ‘selfie’ station at the main induction centre. (IDF spokesperson) (2015). Image courtesy of the Times of Israel.
**Figure 5:** Screenshot of Mor Ostrovski’s Instagram (2011). Image courtesy of the Electronic Intifada.

**Figure 6:** Selfie taken by an Israeli Soldier and her unidentified friend (2014). Image courtesy of scoopnest.il. http://www.scoopnest.com/user/IsraelHatzolah/
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Figure 7: Screenshot at 0:26 from a Video of Israeli Soldier "David" Intimidating a Palestinian Youth with his Gun. April 27 2014. Uploaded by Youth Against Settlements.

Figure 8: Israeli Soldiers taking Instagram Photographs in Solidarity with David the Nahalite (2014). Images courtesy of ynetnews.il.
References


