Men and Boys

● ● ● *Representations of Israeli Combat Soldiers in the Media*

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ABSTRACT: In this article we examine the representation of combat soldiers in Israel through their media image. Using two major national Israeli newspapers, we follow the presentation of the Israeli combat soldier over three decades. Our findings indicate that the combat soldier begins as a hegemonic masculine figure in the 1980s, shifts to a more vulnerable, frightened child in the 1990s, and attains a more complex framing in the 2000s. While this most recent representation returns to a hegemonic masculine one, it includes additional, 'softer' components. We find that the transformation in the image of the Israeli soldier reflects changes within Israeli society in general during the period covered and is also indicative of global changes in masculinity to a certain extent. We conclude by analyzing two possible explanations: the perception of the threat and changes in the perception of masculine identity.

KEYWORDS: identity, IDF, Israeli society, masculinity, media image, military service, representation, soldier

The twenty-first century has encouraged the discussion of representations, and the representation of soldiers is no exception. In the present article, we focus on a specific aspect and social context of such a representation: the combat soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In this study, we explore how the Israeli media framed and constructed the image of the combat soldier[1] in the IDF over the course of the past three decades (1980s–2000s). In order to examine the changes in the representation of the Israeli soldier, we concentrate on events of a clear combat nature that involve the presence of a defined external enemy. Events are analyzed through the use of two central national Israeli newspapers: the tabloid *Yediot Aharonot* and the broadsheet

Ha'aretz.[2] Our findings show that in the period under examination, the representation of the Israeli soldier in the media underwent changes that reflect shifts in Israeli society in general, as well as global changes.

This article is part of a larger research project examining a range of criteria and identity components that make up the image of Israeli combat soldiers. The present study focuses on changes that this image underwent during the past three decades in terms of framing the Israeli soldier's representation as an adult man versus portraying him as a boy. We begin with a survey of the relevant literature and then describe the study's methodology. Following this, we analyze and discuss our findings. Lastly, we offer some explanations of the main findings and suggest what we can learn from them about Israeli society and perhaps global society as well.

Survey of the Literature: Soldiers, Men, and Boys

Masculinity has many components,[3] but in the present context we focus on only two of them: man as an adult and as a boy. The representation of the adult male warrior as the epitome of masculinity is well-documented. In most cultures, 'to be a man' has included the element of wielding physical power (Gilmore 1990). It has also been closely tied to the concept of citizenship: being a full citizen includes the ability to bear arms and use them (Pateman 1989).

In the Western postmodern era, to be a man implies being a strong, assertive, stereotypical male, but it also includes 'softer' components (Yosef 2010). Men are no longer expected just to protect their families and to provide for them. They must also nurture and be involved as both fathers and partners. This process is genuinely confusing (Bukobza 2013), and it is not surprising that the traditional identity of man as a warrior has undergone changes as well.

Men's bodies have traditionally been harnessed for labor and war. They are therefore in constant danger of bodily harm, whether as part of the workforce or as soldiers. Men, Gilmore (1990: 223) tells us, "must accept that they are expendable." Society expects them to sacrifice their health, fitness, and even their lives in order to further its goals (Bokubza 2013). This understanding is what makes them men rather than children: "manhood is the defeat of childish narcissism" and the understanding that adult men must overcome personal pain in order to do what society deems morally just or needed (Gilmore 1990: 224). Children must be protected and provided for, and men must do the protecting and the providing. Boys therefore become men when they produce more than they consume and give to the collective more than they take from it, to paraphrase Gilmore (ibid.: 226).

Much scholarship, both Israeli and global, looks on the military as a way to shape society into patriarchal models and to control women (e.g., Enloe 2000; Izraeli 2001; Pateman 1989; Sasson-Levy 2006).[4] It is also viewed as a pivotal force in forming masculine identities (Enloe 2000; Sasson-Levy 2011). The military is generally seen as a framework that benefits men at the expense of women, building a construct of patriarchy that is mutually beneficial to the military sphere and to men as a gender category. We would like to return to the earlier realization that this is not always the case (Gilmore 1990) and that (heterosexual) men and their identities as soldiers are also worthy of critical inquiry (Barrett 1996).[5]

Israeli scholars note that service in the IDF denotes the boundaries of the collective (identifying who is classified as a 'good' citizen). But they also find that military service signifies hegemonic masculinity and that combat soldiers are believed to be the epitome of ultimate masculinity. Tested in battle, these warriors have controlled their emotions, risked their lives, and shown physical stamina. They are thus considered 'men' in Israeli social terms (Ben-Ari and Levy-Schreiber 2001; Sasson-Levy 2006).[6]

Associating 'correct' masculinity with the image of a warrior was an obvious choice when Israel began constructing its collective identity, beginning with the Jewish community in pre-state Israel (the Yishuv) and continuing in the first decades of independence. Seeking to detach itself from life in the Diaspora, the Yishuv formulated the identity of the 'New Jew', who was everything the Diaspora Jew was not. Whereas Diaspora Jews were weak, studious, and passive, the New Jew was strong, farmed the land, and was ready to bear arms in order to protect himself. In short, the Diaspora Jew had a more feminized identity, while the New Jew took the masculine identity to the extreme (Gluzman 2007; Yosef 2010). In accordance with Israel's security concerns, this identity acquired a military dimension that encouraged physical stamina and the willingness to lay down one's life in order to protect the collective.

During the period following independence, Israel absorbed a large number of immigrants from Jewish communities around the globe. It needed to transform these individuals into a national collective, in part through military mobilization. The harnessing of the civilian population to the military effort brought about national admiration for the image of the warrior, with all that this entails. In turn, this caused combat soldiers to be regarded as national heroes and the embodiment of patriotism and good citizenship—the gold standard for all Israeli men (Ben-Eliezer 2012; Sasson-Levy 2006, 2011).

Beginning in the 1980s and gaining momentum in the 1990s (and more so in the current century), the meaning of masculinity began to change, in Israel as well as globally. With anti-militarism and anti-war voices growing

louder in the wake of the First Lebanon War (1982), the macho warrior image came under attack (Almog 2004), and an alternative identity of sensitive masculinity began to emerge. In Israel (as around the world), television, movies, literature, and advertisements began to focus on the image of a man who was more in touch with his 'feminine side', a book-reading, well-dressed, gallery visitor rather than a rugged farmer or warrior (Lahav and Lemish 2003; Laughey 2007).

While this was not the dominant identity in Israeli society, it became more accepted and acknowledged, gaining popularity among younger generations (Almog 2004). At the same time, cultural minorities within Israeli society bolstered this trend by refusing to accept the equation stating that a good civilian is, by definition, a good soldier and that being a good soldier equates to 'correct' masculinity. Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) men and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, for example, rebelled against this identity and presented an alternative model of masculinity (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 2003; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2000).

Reactionary trends saw the idea of the 'new man' as a result of feminist influences, perhaps even as a media 'spin' intended to weaken Israeli society (Yosef 2010). Yet although its components changed over time, masculinity remained a stable category and did not necessarily become more feminized. When 'real men' cried in public, as soldiers did during the funerals of their comrades, this did not shatter their identity as men. The category of masculinity in Israel is sufficiently embedded as an identity that it can include new components without losing its traditional core. Still based on physical stamina and strength, masculine identity continues to relate more to traditional, hegemonic components, including that of the warrior, than to feminine components, such as displays of emotion (Naveh 2010). Consequently, any examination of masculinity in Israel must address it within the context of the IDF and the combat soldier (Sasson-Levy 2006, 2011).[7]

Juxtaposed to the masculine representation of Israeli men is the way Israeli society views children. Israeli society is a "child-oriented society" and "a childless couple is not considered a family" (Lavee and Katz 2003: 203). Children are seen not only as the responsibility of their parents, but also as the responsibility of the community (Bornstein et. al. 1998; Lavee and Katz 2003). During Israel's first decades, in the wake of the Holocaust and in light of the fact that 1 percent of the Jewish population of Israel was killed during the 1948 War, tremendous weight was given to having children. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, publicly encouraged women to have at least four children. Married women and mothers were exempt from military service since they were viewed as contributing to the national effort by bearing and raising children. These feelings have carried over to

the present century to a certain extent, and although there are differences among sectors in Israeli society, Israeli women in general tend to have more children (2.7 children per woman in 2013) than their Western counterparts.[8]

For Israelis, parenting "is a social experience that involves others," such as friends and other family members (Bornstein et al. 1998: 671). In other words, the collective is perceived as playing a part in protecting and assisting children and shares in the responsibility of parenthood.[9] It is no surprise that during the social unrest in Israel in the summer of 2011 (known as the Rothschild or 'tent city' protests), many of the demands centered on assisting families, including state support for educating children from the age of 3.

Children are seen as the main focus of their parents' lives, and this feeling extends to grown children, including those who become soldiers (Lavee and Katz 2003).[10] Beginning in the 1990s, parents have become more involved in their children's military service and are more willing to confront the military system when they feel that the well-being of their children is at stake (Israeli and Rosman-Stollman 2014). For example, parents have demanded that the IDF investigate training accidents and change its policies regarding military burials (Ben-Eliezer 2012).

The IDF has recognized this trend and responded to it. Since the mid-1990s, parents are invited to visit their children's military bases, are provided with phone numbers of commanding officers, and are encouraged to maintain open communication with the IDF (Harel 2013). The twenty-first-century IDF has learned to co-exist with parental involvement: it accepts that its soldiers not only are adult warriors but also are someone's children.[11]

Research Framework

Demographics

The present study is based on an analysis of Israel's two main newspapers: *Ha'aretz* (a broadsheet) and *Yediot Aharonot* (a tabloid). Nine national papers are published in Israel: *Calcalist*, *Ha'aretz*, *Hamevaser*, *Hamodia*, *Ma'ariv*, *Makor Rishon*, *Yated Ne'eman*, *Yediot Aharonot*, and *Yisrael Hayom.* Most of them existed during the time of our study (1980–2010). Due to Israel's small geographical size, there are no local daily papers, and the above-mentioned papers are national. That said, most of these newspapers are directed at a specific sectarian readership (e.g., *Hamodia* targets the ultra-Orthodox population) and therefore have low circulation. Thus, when analyzing national trends, media studies in Israel tend to focus on *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot Aharonot*, both of which boast a stable readership and have substantial influence on public opinion.[12]

Ha'aretz has an elitist image, due, among other things, to the fact that it is the favored platform for discourses among the elites, and the paper plays an important part in shaping their outlook (Caspi and Limor 1992). Various studies have shown that coverage in *Ha'aretz* refrains from emotional and sensational descriptions and tends toward the ironic and realistic (Nir and Roeh 1992; Roeh 1994).

Since the 1970s, and including the period under review, *Yediot Aharonot* has been the most widely distributed newspaper in Israel. This profit-oriented paper promoted a prototype of a popular, pluralistic newspaper that publishes a wide variety of views and appeals to a wide demographic (Caspi and Limor 1992). Examining the image of the Israeli soldier in both of these papers allowed for a broad range of images and framing to be explored.[13]

Chronological Scope

This study commences with the 1980s and concludes with the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. We organized and characterized security-related events that took place during this time. As our focus is the representation of combat soldiers, the events examined were of a clear combat nature in which there was a well-defined external enemy, rather than civilians.[14] However, beyond this common factor, we chose a range of events that varied based on their intensity, duration, and number of casualties. Thus, there were 'large' events, with many casualties and/or substantial combat, and 'small' events, with fewer casualties and limited combat. In keeping with these definitions, two kinds of events were examined:

High-level intensity conflict (HIC) events. Concentrated and of relatively short duration, these events included the First Lebanon War (with HIC events taking place from June to September 1982); Operation Electric Lead (Lebanon, 1986); Operation Law and Order (Lebanon, 1988); Operation Blue-Brown (Lebanon, 1988); Operation Reckoning (Lebanon, 1993); Operation Grapes of Wrath (Lebanon, 1996); Operation Burning Torch (Lebanon, 1999); the Second Lebanon War (2006), and Operation Cast Lead (Gaza, 2008–2009). These events were examined in their entirety.

Low-level intensity conflict (LIC) events. These conflicts were of some duration, including, for example, the First Lebanon War (with LIC events taking place from October 1982 to June 1985) and Israel's long-time presence in the security zone in Lebanon (1985–2000). These

events were usually characterized by routine combat situations, which saw lulls in the fighting, and were examined twice a week, on Sundays and Fridays,[15] throughout the entire period in question.

As part of this investigation, we studied informative aspects of the media coverage, that is, news reports and articles. The corpus of material included the news pages, the daily supplement, and the weekend supplement.[16] Over 1,800 items were examined.

Our analysis employed both text and images, but greater significance was accorded to headlines due to the nature of the case study. Headlines are especially important for newspaper readers who are considered 'headline consumers'. Since headlines are usually composed by the editor, they can also be viewed as an expression of the paper's opinion (Nir and Roeh 1992). In addition, comparing headlines can reveal the differences between tabloids and broadsheets (Limor and Mann 1997).

A pilot study was conducted in order to locate dominant interpretive framings. The findings were useful in putting together a list of criteria to sort and classify the items. Since the scope of this article does not allow us to present all of the criteria formulated, we will focus on one of the most prominent: framing the soldier as a 'man' versus framing him as a 'child' or a 'boy'. Did the media depict soldiers as mature and independent adults, as warriors? Or were they represented as frightened children who needed the care and protection of their parents, as weak individuals unable to cope without the help of a responsible adult? We also noted whether the soldier was part of the standing army or a reservist.[17]

We used these criteria to examine each of the media items and identify how the image of the soldier was framed. Our analysis was based on the local Israeli cultural context, and it is thus possible that scholars from other cultures might identify different framing and messages. However, since the newspapers used are part of that same cultural context, it is reasonable to assume that our interpretation is in line with the original framing of the items.[18]

Findings

Based on the criteria above, we detect a shift from the representation of the combat soldier as an adult man in the 1980s to that of a child or boy in the 1990s. This trend continues until the first decade of the twenty-first century, at which point the representation of the combat soldier becomes more complex. In order to present these changes, our findings will be divided by decade.

The 1980s: The Israeli Soldier—an Adult Man

This decade began with the First Lebanon War, which started as a military operation—Operation Peace for Galilee—and developed into an HIC event (extending from June to September 1982). After the events at Sabra and Shatila, the war entered an LIC phase. During this time, we find gradual changes in the framing of the soldier. At the beginning of this period, soldiers were depicted as strong, adult masculine figures. As the decade drew to a close, we detect a gradual process whereby soldiers were identified more as children.

At the beginning of this decade, the media consistently treated the IDF as a monolithic entity: soldiers were seen as part of a collective rather than as individuals. This is reflected in headlines such as "An IDF Force," "IDF Forces," and "The IDF," as well as in photographs, which almost exclusively portray soldiers as members of a group.[19] As a result, it is difficult to discern personal representations of individual soldiers.

However, it is still possible to identify the framing of combat soldiers to a certain extent. During the HIC stage of the First Lebanon War, the Israeli soldier is clearly a strong, masculine adult figure. Thus, for instance, on the front page of a special supplement, we find a large photograph of soldiers with military vehicles in which the troops are presented as warriors (*Yediot Aharonot*, 11 June 1982). In the rare cases when a soldier is portrayed as an individual, he is framed as a responsible adult, as in the photograph of a combat soldier carrying a Lebanese child in his arms (*Yediot Aharonot*, 9 June 1982, 3). It is important to note that during this time most of the soldiers who appear in the papers are reservists. Naturally, they are older, and it is easier to frame them as men.

A first hint of change can be seen in the coverage of the protests against the war during this period: a *Yediot Aharonot* (27 June 1982, 5) headline reads "Let the Boys Come Home before It Is Too Late." Here the implicit message is that soldiers are children who are in need of being protected by the collective, rather than adults who are capable of taking care of themselves. However, this is an exception to the rule that becomes a clear pattern only later on.

It seems, therefore, that at the beginning of the 1980s, when presented at all, the soldier is clearly identified as an adult man. However, as the war went on and turned into an LIC event, the image of the Israeli soldier began to change. The mid-1980s signaled a lull in the war, which continued until the beginning of the 1990s. During this time, HIC activities were carried out by the air force, resulting in a sharp decline in the number of references to ground troops in the media. In fact, a new pattern of framing emerged whereby, during routine combat and LIC events, coverage was technical and brief and usually did not include images.[20] A typical

headline reads "Our Airplanes Attacked an Abu Nidal Base Near Sidon Again," with no accompanying image (*Yediot Aharonot* 13 November 1989, 1). On the other hand, during events of mid- to high-level intensity, especially when there was a high number of casualties, or during military operations, such as Operation Law and Order and Operation Blue-Brown, soldiers featured prominently in the news coverage.[21]

When soldiers are present in media coverage during this time, photographs usually focus on the older reservists, framing them as traditionally masculine adult men. However, the verbal aspect of coverage depicts soldiers as more vulnerable than those in the images. For instance, in a photograph published in *Yediot Aharonot* (29 March 1985, 3), a combat soldier is seen in a firing position with a machine gun, and the caption reads: "I am not even 21 years old, and I don't want to die in some stinking house." This is the beginning of a gradual change.

Framing soldiers as vulnerable appears most prominently in the coverage of military funerals. As of 1988, soldiers are photographed crying openly during the funerals of their comrades. A typical report reads: "Only those who can cry know how to fight. To shed a tear over the death of a comrade is not weakness but a sign that, although we are warriors, we remain human" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 5 February 1988, 1). This tendency grows stronger during the following years. Soldiers are photographed weeping copiously and are described as "unable to control their emotions" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 11 September 1989, 3).

In conclusion, while at the beginning of the 1980s the image of the Israeli soldier was clearly one of an adult masculine figure, as the Lebanon War dragged on and became an LIC event, changes became apparent in the soldier's representation. From the middle of the 1980s until the beginning of the 1990s, the framing of the Israeli soldier shifts slightly toward that of someone's son, as can be expected during a transitional period. This discourse will intensify and reach its peak later in the 1990s.

The 1990s: "Don't Go, We Are Only Children"

The peak of the change in the media representation of the Israeli soldier appears in the 1990s, a period characterized mainly by LIC events and little to no involvement of reservists in the front lines, with mostly standing troops involved in operations. As in the preceding decade, here too one can see a change in the soldier's framing according to the intensity of the events. During routine operations and LIC events, the image of the soldier is hardly noticeable, but when HIC events occur, the soldier's image appears once more on the media's agenda, and with it comes a shift in representation.[22]

In the 1990s we find a gradual but clear change in the soldier's image—from that of an adult to that of a child. Using expressions such as "Mommy's boy" and "a mother's son," the media framed soldiers as the children of concerned mothers. In fact, this change in media representation can be seen in two different but complementary aspects: soldiers acquired a more vulnerable image, and the presence of parents increased significantly.

During this period, soldiers were portrayed as frightened and emotional—trends that had begun to develop at the end of the 1980s. They were also quoted voicing fears, for example: "I am scared of going back to Lebanon" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 7 February 2000, 2); "We all understand that each of us might be killed at any moment" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 10 February 2000, 2). Additionally, soldiers weeping at military funerals received heightened coverage (see, e.g., *Yediot Aharonot*, 16 October 1995, 1).[23]

Parents became a part of the media coverage of soldiers. For example, one mother recounted: "Ofer called an hour before he was killed and said: 'Mom, you have no idea what it's like in Lebanon'" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 31 August 1994, 3). These are not adult men but boys in need of protection. Typical headlines after events in which soldiers were killed read: "We Were Helpless" and "Don't Go, We Are Only Children" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 9 February 1994, 2).

In a similar fashion, in interviews with soldiers whose comrades were killed in battle, we find passages such as: "My mother … told me on the phone to come home. To leave everything and come back. She would rather I go to prison for deserting than be killed in Lebanon" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 17 October 1995, 1). In other words, the soldier is not an independent adult or a strong masculine figure. He is guided by his parents, and it is they who make his decisions.

This trend can be seen throughout the decade, culminating in the period preceding the withdrawal from Lebanon and during the withdrawal itself in 2000. The headlines accompanying the huge photographs of soldiers celebrating their return from Lebanon, hugging each other excitedly during the withdrawal, read: "Mom, We Are Home." *Yediot Aharonot* (24 May 2000) even published a special supplement about the stories of soldiers and their parents, emphasizing the words of the then prime minister, Ehud Barak: "Seeing the mothers' joy made it all worthwhile."[24]

In the early stages of our research, we assumed that we would be able to discern a clear and consistent transformation of the soldiers' framing in the media—from strong, masculine adults in the 1980s to frightened children at the beginning of the twenty-first century—and that the hegemonic masculine identity of the solider would continue to erode, revealing a sensitive postmodern man. However, the next decade brought about a surprising change in the representation of the Israeli soldier, as discussed below.

The First Decade of the Twenty-First Century: Fighting for Mom and Country

Two HIC events dominated this decade, influencing the soldier's image: the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2008–2009. The findings from this period reflect a complex picture of the representation of the Israeli soldier. The soldier still appears to some extent as a vulnerable child, but the image of a traditional masculine adult is now reinforced, especially during HIC events.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, soldiers are not framed as children to the extent that they were in the 1990s. Even when their parents are included in the media coverage, the soldiers are clearly identified as adults who can take care of themselves. However, this is not the same adult man we found in the 1980s, when soldiers were depicted as traditional adult masculine figures whose parents were hardly mentioned and barely played a part in this framing. After 2000, parents appear as part of the soldiers' social context and identity, but they are not making decisions for their son, and he does not need their guidance or protection. Furthermore, at times the relationship is reversed, with the soldiers presented as being concerned for their parents' well-being, reinforcing the image of a man who is willing and able to protect his family and the collective.

The vulnerable and emotional soldiers of the 1990s do not disappear, but during this decade their identity shifts. The unabashed weeping of the 1990s is no longer prominent. Soldiers acknowledge their feelings but are able to control their emotions and do not fall apart. For example, a soldier discussing his battle experience is quoted saying that once the battle is over he will "cry, but it's not weeping out of weakness, but crying out of which a stronger person will grow" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 13 August 2006, *24 Hours* supplement, 6–8). The crying soldier is not the dominant image.

Furthermore, the image of the soldier as being very young, or not yet a full adult, has not disappeared. For instance, a reporter accompanying troops during the Second Lebanon War refers to them as very young, feels sorry for them on account of their inexperience, and calls them "real children" (*Ha'aretz*, 28 July 2006, 7). But at the same time, the war is described as a rite of passage for the young soldiers, while parents are shown as hindering the 'correct' behavior of the soldiers. Thus, for example, a civilian driver transporting soldiers is quoted saying: "They are good kids. What gets in the way especially are the parents, the mom and dad who drive them crazy all the time by calling them" (*Ha'aretz*, 9 August 2006, 8).

In other words, the soldiers are the children of concerned parents, but they themselves do not behave as such. It is the parents who do not recognize their proper place. Further on in the same article, an officer explains that his soldiers started out the war as children, with no fighting

capabilities, "and now they are leaving Lebanon as warriors" (*Ha'aretz*, 28 July 2006, 7). The soldiers are children, but not helpless ones. Rather, they are children going through a process of growing up and becoming adults—a rite of passage from boys to men.

When parents are referred to, the soldiers are shown to be protecting them, rather than the other way around as in the 1990s. Media coverage frequently tells of soldiers who do not inform their parents where they are being stationed so as not to worry them. For instance, in eulogies for fallen soldiers, headlines read: "Don't Tell Mom I'm in Lebanon" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 8 August 2006, 4; *Ha'aretz*, 2 August 2006, 3). These are markings of traditional masculinity whereby a 'real man' bears his burden alone, shows no emotion, and tries to protect his family, even if this behavior makes his own trial more difficult.

This trend intensifies toward the end of the decade when soldiers are described as actively fighting for their parents' safety. For example, much coverage focuses on soldiers from the south of the country whose homes are under missile attack from Gaza. They are described as being motivated by the desire to protect their homes. A typical headline reads "I Am Fighting for Mom." A soldier is quoted saying: "The first bullet I fire is for my mother, who takes shelter in the stairwell because we have no reinforced shelter [*mamad*] in our house" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 4 January 2009, 4–5). In another article, a high-ranking officer declares that "the mother of every combat soldier should be proud of her son," due to the soldiers' professional conduct in the field (*Yediot Aharonot*, 4 January 2009, 4–5). These are not frightened boys but adult warriors who make their families proud.

To conclude this discussion, even when coverage focuses on the parents of soldiers, they are usually not presented as hysterical or overprotective, unlike the 1990s. Their sons are not children who must be kept safe and guided, but men who are doing a good job. These soldiers do have parents and a social context, but they have not reverted to their childhood identities.

An important aspect of this context is the media coverage of reservists. During this decade, we again find reservists in the front lines, unlike the 1990s. In contrast to the more raw motivation of regular troops, reservists are aware of the dangers and of the difficult situations that their service puts them in. They miss their families and understand their responsibilities. They display more emotion, even if they are reluctant to do so. For example, one reservist is quoted saying: "I knew that I would cry, so I deliberated if I should call my wife. In the middle of our conversation, I noticed a bit of emotion in my voice, so I stopped a minute and said to her: 'I'm having reception problems'" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 13 August 2006, *24 Hours* supplement, 6–8).

In conclusion, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the identity of the Israeli soldier depicted in the media returns, to a certain

degree, to his 1980s identity as a responsible adult, a man as opposed to a boy. However, this is a more complex image than the warrior of the 1980s: the twenty-first-century soldier is also vulnerable; his parents are occasionally mentioned; he does not always feel in control of the situation and is sometimes worried and afraid; he understands that he is entitled to have emotions, even if he attempts to control them. Although his image has returned to the determined warrior of an earlier decade, this twenty-first-century soldier is a more intricate figure.

Discussion and Summary

As our findings indicate, starting in the mid-1980s, the traditional framing of the Israeli soldier, which is clearly that of an adult, began to regress to that of a child in need of protection. This process intensified in the 1990s. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we detect a change and a shift back to a traditional masculine identity. Although we can still discern characteristics of the child in the soldier's image, this representation is closer to the traditional framing of an adult man. Even when soldiers cried or were afraid, the media focus was more on their control over their emotions, on being adults and postmodern men. When parents featured in the coverage, the media underlined the soldiers' desire to protect their parents and also their ability to deal with their problems independently. How can this change be explained?

A number of factors have influenced the soldier's image in the media, and among these we have found two dominant ones. The first is the type of conflict and the perception of threats. The second is related to changes in masculine identity.[25]

The Perception of Threats

When examining the transformation of the Israeli soldier's media image in light of the type of conflict at the time, we can detect the following patterns. The higher the perception of threat to society and the more that an event is of an HIC nature, the more likely it is that the soldier will be framed as an adult man. Conversely, the smaller the threat, involving fewer ground troops, and the more that an event is of an LIC nature, the more likely we are to see soldiers framed as children, needing the protection of the collective.

In the wake of the First Lebanon War, Israel underwent fundamental changes with regard to the perception of conflict. This was the first war to be classified in Israel as 'a war of choice', rather than an unavoidable conflict, and it challenged the traditional relationship between Israeli society

and the IDF (Ben-Eliezer 2012). Additionally, the 1990s brought about a significant diminution in the perception of an acute physical threat to Israeli society, allowing for a general feeling of normalization. The peace process seemed to indicate that Israel was finally entering a new phase in its history and no longer needed to fear for its very existence. Such views also made the public less willing to fight and to pay the price of armed conflict (Eran-Yona and Ben-Hador 2013). It is therefore not surprising to find the image of the Israeli soldier framed as more conflicted than in the past, and this image mirrors the feeling of society itself toward its conscripted sons. Young men are expendable, to use Gilmore's term, if the ends justify the loss of life. But what if society is not so sure that these ends can be justified?

Additionally, as Gilmore (1990: 228) notes, when threatened, adult men (and women) tend to regress to childhood patterns, to escape from reality and seek protection. If society does not believe that the loss of life in wartime is justified and does not trust the decision-makers who send their sons to do battle, it tends to view soldiers as children. In these circumstances, society does not expect soldiers to protect its members and sees itself as being responsible for bringing the boys home safely. The soldiers themselves feel justified in regressing to childhood identities and respond in kind. As illustrated above, Israeli social structure allows for this view of soldiers as children who are still supported by their parents and live at home.

However, Israeli society underwent a further transformation in September 2000. The failure of the peace talks at Camp David and the subsequent Second Intifada led Israelis to believe that the conflict in the region is insoluble.[26] Such feelings were in stark contrast to those prevalent in Israeli society during the 1990s,[27] and Israelis returned to the state of mind that prevailed in the 1980s—that of 'a nation in arms'. As described above, society cannot send children to protect it: only men are able to perform such a task. Accordingly, media coverage once again identified Israeli soldiers as traditionally masculine, expected to protect society from the enemy. In other words, HIC events are more likely to amplify the identity of soldiers as men, while LIC events are more conducive to framing them as children. Additionally, since HIC events usually involve reservists, while LIC events usually involve only standing troops, adult men are physically present on the battlefield and are more visible in media coverage.

Still, the transformation that the Israeli public underwent during the previous decades could not be ignored. Framing soldiers as children, as postmodern men with emotions they cannot control, as described previously, could not simply disappear after being the dominant narrative during the 1990s. It appears that these components of identity influenced the representation of the Israeli soldier during the beginning of

the twenty-first century. Rather than disappearing, they evolved to make room for the return of the adult warrior component.

Changes in Masculine Identity

Alongside the nature of the conflicts and the perceived threats in the periods examined here, changes in the perception of masculinity clearly influenced the changes in the Israeli soldier's image. As described above, in the 1980s the Israeli male was mainly a traditional masculine figure. His image was connected to his ability to protect the collective, and this is the figure we see at the beginning of this decade.

As Israeli men became more attuned to global trends, masculinity acquired components that weakened traditional hegemonic perceptions (e.g., that 'good' men are warriors), and these components became stronger and more visible in the 1990s. The masculine identity we find in this decade is of individuals who were more aware of their emotions and limitations, more willing to admit confusion, and less prepared to be expendable.

At the same time, Israel remains a patriotic society, and the traditional masculine image never disappeared completely. In the early twenty-first century, Israeli men are indeed expected to be more accepting of their limitations and feelings, but they are also expected to be aware of their responsibilities toward the collective and its safety.

A contributing factor is the security situation in Israel in the twenty-first century. While the 1990s were characterized by the feeling that peace was on the way, the following decade caused Israelis to feel that the opposite is true: Israel must still fight for its existence and protect itself. To do this, it is in need of traditional masculine warriors, and therefore these components became more visible in the third period depicted here. This trend is not only an Israeli one. In the wake of 9/11 the entire Western world has become more apprehensive regarding security, and hegemonic masculine components can be seen gaining ground in other societies as well.

In addition, this article illustrates that the dominant masculine image in Israel is still that of a strong male warrior. Even when softer components are added, it is this identity—hegemonic masculinity, in Connell's (1995) words—that is perceived as 'good' and 'correct' in Israeli society. This dictation of masculine values to young men is not solely an Israeli concern. Western society today is also grappling with the messages it sends its young men, specifically the 'hyper-masculine narrative', which promotes hegemonic masculinity.[28] There is certainly a need for comparative works in this regard. Understanding the variables that might influence which components become more pronounced, and under what circumstances, holds implications for boys and young men worldwide and is worthy of further inquiry.

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NOTES

1. This article does not examine soldiers in 'supporting combat roles', for instance, female soldiers. For the purposes of the present study, we adopt Harel and Cohen's (2012: 7) definition of the combat soldier as someone who "is in mortal peril in the course of duty."
2. Other studies in masculine identity have also used media elements in their methodology. See, for example, Day and Mackey (1986).
3. For a comprehensive definition of masculinity, see Connell (1995).
4. It should be noted that there are many differences between Israel and Western countries with regard to patriarchal models. However, in the context given here, comparisons may still be drawn.
5. At the same time, research on gays in the military and their identities has also been pursued. See, for example, RAND (2010) and Kaplan (1991).
6. This view is also in line with Barrett's (1996) findings about the US military.
7. It is important to note that other identity components, such as ethnicity and cultural minority status, also come to the fore within the IDF. For two important examples, see Levy (2003) and Sasson-Levy (2006).
8. For a more complete survey of the statistics on Israeli families, see Lavee and Katz (2003).
9. This is even more true in the case of military families. See, for example, Eran-Yona (2008).
10. This is especially the case for Jewish-Israeli parents. It is also important to note that Israeli parents continue to support their children financially while they

serve in the IDF and usually for a number of years after discharge (Lavee and Katz 2003).

11. This is particularly true for standing troops, as opposed to career personnel and reservists.

12. The influence that these two papers wield has been established in earlier studies. See, for example, Caspi and Limor (1999) and Limor et al. (2014).

13. Since the 1990s, the impact of digital media on Israeli media has expanded greatly. The scope of this article does not allow us to discuss this development further, although we hope to do so in a subsequent study.

14. Events involving civilians included, for example, those during the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and in the West Bank during the First and Second Intifadas.

15. Sunday is the beginning of the work week in Israel, and Friday is the day that weekend newspapers are distributed. Friday papers are generally an expanded edition, including supplements and magazine additions.

16. The study focused on the news coverage of these events and included material from the news pages, such as news reports and commentary; from the daily supplements (*24 Hours* in *Yediot Aharanot* and *Part B* in *Ha'aretz*), which contain articles and background coverage; and from sections that do not necessarily deal with the latest news. The weekend supplement (appearing on the weekend in place of the daily supplement) features articles, interviews, and commentary summing up the events of the week. In terms of definitions, a 'report' is a basic newspaper item that conveys mainly information and is usually brief; it is the most common type that deals with news items. An 'article' is an item that focuses on a certain subject, event, or site and describes various aspects of it (Limor and Mann 1997).

17. The IDF is comprised of a standing army of conscripts, a small professional force, and a very large reserve force.

18. This topic has yet to be investigated in depth, and we could find no comparable studies, whether in Israel or abroad, covering the same time span. Lemish (2000) discusses the transformation that Israeli society has undergone from individualist to collectivist ideals through the media image of the IDF. However, her work focuses solely on commercials, and therefore its perspective is not the same as that of the present article. A study by Woodward et al. (2009) focuses on British soldiers, but not on media representation alone. Rather, it compares the soldiers' personal perception of self versus the perception that the media constructs. It is also more time-constrained and does not differentiate between LIC and HIC events.

19. Thus, for instance, the front page of *Yediot Aharonot* on 11 May 1982 appears with the headline "The War for the Peace for Galilee" and features a large photograph of a tank with a group of soldiers in its shadow at a distance. Military machinery is dominant rather than the soldiers who operate it.

20. Exceptions were events with fatalities. Such cases had completely different coverage, as will be shown in our forthcoming study regarding the image of the fallen soldier.

21. It should be noted that the First Intifada (1987–1993) began in late 1987.
22. The scope of this article does not allow us to delve into the differences between the two main Israeli newspapers. However, it should be noted that during this decade, those differences become more marked: *Yediot Aharonot* shows a clear change in the image of the soldier in the 1990s, while *Ha'aretz* does not present a similar change until the 2000s.
23. The 'crying at funerals' phenomenon received much public attention and criticism. For example, Uri Lubrani, the IDF liaison in Lebanon, noted: "Photos of soldiers crying are cause for celebration in Tehran and Damascus" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 20 October 1995, 7). The Golani Brigade's commander instructed his soldiers that although they may cry at funerals, they should "make an effort not to weep loudly, to stand straight and not fall upon each other" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 11 June 1998, 5).
24. In other words, the media did not discuss whether the withdrawal from Lebanon was desirable. Parents' feelings on the matter were the important point.
25. An additional possible explanation pertains to changes in the Israeli media. See Israeli and Rosman-Stollman (2014).
26. It is important to note that the feeling of peace being a pipe dream was not unique to Israel in the post-9/11 world.
27. This change has been noted and discussed extensively. See, for example, Bar-Siman-Tov (2010) and Kelman (2007).
28. See the Representation Project, "The Mask You Live In," 18 December 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo (accessed February 2014).

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