

Between Academic Ornament, External Expert and Suspect Ally: Research on the Israeli Military

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Introduction

- Based on three decades of research on military - to chart out implications of my participation in the creation of knowledge about “things military”.
- How this knowledge was amalgamated in forms that military actors *could* use including intended and unintended uses.
- Researchers (including me) are not just mediators and producers of knowledge between the military and the civilian society, but rather becomes an extension of the two domains **serving multiple agendas and aims:**
 - Given time limitations my aim is to suggest a key distinction, one question and a suggestion.

My Argument

- Uniqueness of military lies in handling legitimate state violence – hence secrecy and control, loyalty and commitment, national security and allegiance, and seduction and fascination.
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- Sociologically, the production of knowledge means focusing not only on contents (documentation, description or analysis) or translating findings and results into policy or organizational change.
- But also looking at such things as:
 - Formal and informal (hidden) agendas of actors (incl. ourselves) - what actors want of the knowledge that has been produced?
 - “How” the knowledge we produce is used and by whom?
 - Crucially, what does academic participation in creating knowledge “do”?

Experiences of Research

- Rather rich personal background – a few examples:
- Personal experience: Ethnography based on infantry battalion I served in.
- Large research projects: IDF in Second Palestinian Uprising, “Management of Diversity (inequality)” in military.
- Public committees: IDF in 21st Century, New model for reserve service (turned into law).
- Committees within IDF: agenda for research and establishment of new IDF military research unit, IDF relations with Palestinian civilians
- Projects funded by academic institutions: effect of law on IDF in occupied West Bank, new agenda for sociology of combat formations.
- Applied research: on checkpoints in occupied West Bank, leadership, peacekeeping forces in and around Israel.
- Supervising students: (officers and civilians) out of all supervision – 11 PhDs and 26 masters’ students.

Summary of Some Work (with others)

Project	Formal Aims	Informal Aims	Direct use of knowledge	Indirect use of knowledge	What does academic research "do"	Academic indicators
Second Uprising 2000-5	Analysis of changing ground forces	Furthering academic knowledge of action	Some effect on policy on using violence	Conceptualization	Creating allies in IDF	Books and articles
Checkpoints 2000-5	Research at ground level	Same	Part of moves to change policy	Conceptualization	Academic support for criticism	Articles and chapters
Diversity 2008-11	Managing diversity	Analyzing inequality	?	Part of emerging awareness	Legitimizing research of inequality	Articles
Committee Civ-Mil 1995-1999	Setting agenda for IDF	Supplanting psychology with sociology	Establishing dedicated IDF Unit	Long-term research in IDF	Setting academic standards in IDF	None
Committee Reserves 2003-9	Setting terms for changes to reserve service	Leading to legal changes	"Reserve Service Law"	Theoretical development	Academic legitimization for change	Articles
Committee IDF Future War 2000-1	Analyzing effects of new technology	Careering of general heading committee	None	None	Ornamentation	None

Conclusions

A key distinction about creation of knowledge:
Informal and formal aims (informal agendas).

Question: what does academic participation “do”:
Legitimate, support, supplant, open up new areas,
help conceptualize, set standards for research,
contribute to public discussions or ornament.

Suggestion: thinking about three types of knowledge
(following Habermas and work with Yagil Levy)

Engineering knowledge: improvement.

Enlightenment: educating publics and military actors.

Social Criticism: uncovering hidden agendas and
inequalities

Compliments, questions
and (well, yes) criticisms