Chapter 2
Theory, approach and methods

2.1 Theoretical concepts and theoretical frameworks

This research, while embedded in anthropology, is influenced by insights from other disciplines as well. These disciplines and debates related to them will be discussed here briefly while clarifying their relevance for this research.

Ethics and morality

The study of ethics historically belongs to the world of philosophy. For centuries philosophers, beginning in ancient Greece, have thought about people’s understanding of good and bad, right and wrong, what one ought and ought not to do. Philosophy being such an extensive and centuries-old discipline, here I can only touch upon its most central part, namely the issue of morality. If ethics entails the systematic thinking about of morality, then morality is the whole collection of norms and values that a group of people has (Verweij 1999). Morality can then be defined as ‘a set of fundamental rules that guide our action’ (Solomon 2005: 509) but also as ‘an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behaviour that affects others, and includes what are commonly known as the moral rules, ideas and virtues and has the lessening of evil or harm as its goal’ (Gert 1998: 13). Importantly, morality is connected to a certain group of people within a specific timeframe (Verweij 2002a), which means it has the ability to change over time and space; different groups of people have different moralities within different contexts.

However, the way we perceive morality, its origins, development and the way people learn these fundamental rules are much debated not so much within the discipline of philosophy but certainly within psychology and the social sciences. The researcher who chooses to use the concept of morality has some important choices to make about how the term should be used and about what definition is the most appropriate. Here I will discuss some of the theoretical debates surrounding the concept within the social sciences, including social psychology, and I will especially focus on the debate concerning the social character of morality versus its cognitive character and on the morality of the group. I will then explain the way I intend to use this concept myself.
Morality: a social phenomenon?

There are many social scientists who have concerned themselves with morality, E. Durkheim being one of the most influential amongst them. The French sociologist was concerned with the way modern society held itself together and in his work he emphasized the importance of shared collective representations. He wrote: ‘a society is not made up merely of the mass of individuals who compose it, the ground which they occupy, the things which they use and the movements which they perform, but above all is the idea which it forms of itself’ (1973: 196). Durkheim, then, believed society to be a moral entity held together by shared collective representations that we could call culture. From this we can understand how he viewed morality as the foremost social phenomenon. Social context was, to him, the main factor in shaping and reshaping morality. When setting out to write about morality it is, then, crucial to clarify the social framework within which this morality is seen and interpreted.

This generally accepted stance is, however, disputed by another influential sociologist, namely Z. Bauman (1989). Bauman criticizes Durkheim’s idea of the social origins of morality and is convinced that morality is intrinsic to humans, meaning that we are born with ideas of what is good and bad, right and wrong. These values are, according to this line of thinking, not learned socially. He even goes so far as to say that ‘morality is something society manipulates – exploits, re-directs, jams’ (as cited in Vetlesen 2005: 22), it destroys ‘the capacity of the innate moral impulse’ (in Junge 2001: 110). Being moral, for Bauman, is not ‘being good’ but exercising one’s freedom of authorship to make a choice between good and evil. Having moral responsibility means one is always in doubt, this being a very ambivalent state. In other words, for Bauman ‘moral action is connected with the ultimate and indispensable responsibility of the person’ (ibid: 109). Modernity, Bauman asserts, tries to eliminate this ambivalence by making codes, prescriptions and rules (Bauman 1993: 4) while in post-modernity, the tyranny of choice returns (ibid: 5). In clarification, M. Junge writes: ‘for Bauman morality comes into being only if someone takes up pre-social responsibility and the innate moral impulse’ (2001: 109). He immediately criticizes this view, however, because it misses the notion of reciprocity and the existence of a real other: ‘Bauman’s approach is missing the ideas of social action, social relations, and social situations’ (ibid: 113).

In his work Evil and Human Agency (2005), A. Vetlesen also attacks Bauman for these, in his eyes, short-sighted views on the origins of morality, especially considering that they come from a sociologist. Bauman does make a distinction between the social, by which he means co-existing with others, and the societal. ‘Factors responsible for the presence of moral capacity’ (as
cited in Vetlesen 2005: 23), he says, must be sought in the first of the two. Vetlesen, however, is far from satisfied with this explanation which he finds too vague.

He particularly criticizes Bauman’s view of the function of proximity in moral behaviour. This is an important issue that will be taken up in Chapter 3 of this work. Here it suffices to say that Vetlesen disagrees with Bauman’s position that one needs distance in order to be able to commit evil or immoral acts against another human being. He instead argues that it is precisely the proximity between humans that enables violence, as emotions are an elementary part of morality. Both Bauman and Vetlesen use the Holocaust as their main case for argumentation. Bauman sees in the acts of German Nazis a clear immorality triggered by them ‘not seeing’ their victims, by not perceiving them as humans and by treating them as almost invisible (on a moral level). Vetlesen, on the other hand, claims that the acts of the Nazis could only be so evil because the Nazis felt a deep hatred towards the Jews and their other victims, emphasizing how many acts of killing during the Holocaust were committed at close range and not solely in distant gas chambers (on which Bauman focuses). This emotion is, then, also socially constructed.

On a theoretical level then, especially on the issue of the social character of morality, I choose to stay with Durkheim and his many followers. I see, as will become clear in this work, morality as a fundamentally socially constructed phenomenon, although not denying the innate human disposition and capacity for (im)moral behaviour. The specific ideas of right and wrong, good and bad that Israeli soldiers take with them are ‘luggage’ from their upbringing, their socialization and education and are not constructed in a social void. The social, but also the physical, surroundings of these soldiers, I will show, are influential for their moral decision-making and behaviour.

**Duty ethics/virtue ethics/utilitarianism**

The distinction between duty ethics, virtue ethics and utilitarianism is a well-known one within the philosophy of ethics. In the case of duty ethics we act in the way we think we should and thus we want to do the right thing. In the case of virtue ethics, however, one acts in a certain way, because one feels that is the right way to act. A clear distinction is made between acting from a pure rational motivation as opposed to moral behaviour that is more emotionally motivated. Within utilitarianism, furthermore, whether certain behaviour is morally just depends on its expected consequences; if these are seen as just, this behaviour is perceived as morally right. The first two modes of thought will be elaborated on as they are important within military ethics.

Aristotle is the most famous philosopher of those who have emphasized the issue of virtue within ethics. Virtue, for him, is a trait of character that makes it possible for people to
make a deliberated, ‘right’ decision (Verweij 2002a). One acts in a moral way because one feels this is what one needs and also wants to do. He furthermore wrote that ‘a virtuous person is one who does what he is supposed to do because he wants to, because it is built into his very character’ (in Solomon 2005: 531).

D. Hume, who put an emphasis on emotions as well, wrote: ‘What I ought to do – or ought not to do – depends on something that is not a matter of fact or reason at all, my moral feelings or sentiments’ (cited in Solomon 2005: 542). He spoke of natural virtues, related to natural motives which ‘do not involve moral thoughts, or desires whose content must be specified in terms of moral or normative concepts. So when we are moved by these desires, we are not trying to do our duty, or the right thing, or what is virtuous, or what is owed’ (in Korsgaard forthcoming: 1). Most of our actions and decisions are, then, not thought through very deeply but come naturally. Actions that are done out of duty are motivated, in Hume’s eyes, by artificial motives (ibid: 2). These artificial motives make us do things because it is our duty not because we feel it is the best thing we can do.

However, philosophers like I. Kant believed that only reasoning, or the ratio, led moral behaviour. He argued for the use of reason and emphasized the sense of duty people felt to do good. For Kant, emotions, which Aristote did incorporate in his ideas about rational thought, should be strictly separated from rationality. He was in search of rules that would be valid for all persons, a Universalist principle. When someone then acts in a way that he or she believes is acceptable for everyone (the categorical imperative), this behaviour could be labelled as morally just (Verweij 2002a: 109–11).

Within military ethics, duty ethics were central for a long time. Soldiers were to keep to clearly defined rules of how one should act, in line with military linear thought related to performing one’s duty. However, D. Verweij shows that currently there is a renewed interest in virtue within ethics. She quotes Hursthouse in relation to this who gives the following definition: ‘the motives and character of moral agents … moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of emotions in our moral life, and the question of what sort of person I should be, and how we should live’ (in Verweij 2002a: 113). The issue of virtue ethics is all encompassing and is more concerned with being a good person and living a full life, while duty ethics seems to indicate a moral minimum with its rules-based moral action (ibid.).

This renewed interest exists on the level of meta-ethics and one could certainly agree with a preference for virtue ethics when considering the ideal moral behaviour of soldiers (ibid.). However, within this research, which is written from the point of view of the soldiers on a micro-
ethical level, this tendency is not clearly visible on the ground or in the experience of the soldiers themselves. I will show in this work how soldiers are often led by ideas about how they think they should act in order to avoid criticism and punishment, or to favour their own in-group. Such motivations for action could be more easily categorized under duty ethics. Soldiers do not act because they feel this is the right thing they should do, but because they think this is the right thing within the duty they have perform. However, as we shall see later, it seems that they do not follow rules which, as Kant suggested, would ‘be valid for all’ but rather behave in ways that are mostly beneficial for themselves or their in-group. As such the actual behaviour of soldiers cannot easily be categorized under one specific type of ethics.

Closely related to this issue of duty versus virtue ethics is what social psychologist A. Bandura refers to as different kinds of moral agency: inhibitive agency and proactive agency (2002). Inhibitive agency refers to refraining from immoral behaviour while proactive agency refers to active moral conduct. Inhibitive agency, then, takes into account situations where a decision is made not to behave in an immoral way. If someone goes further and not only refrains from wrong behaviour but also does his or her best to behave morally, this is called proactive agency. Bandura’s distinction between the two aspects of moral agency is important to mention as it helps us to situate the moral behaviour and decision-making of Israeli soldiers.

Both types of agency seem to apply to this case. At first sight, the agency of Israeli soldiers would seem of the first sort: inhibitive. ‘Behaving as good as possible’, ‘hurting as little as possible’ and ‘doing your job the best you can’ are all themes that are used by soldiers and point to an inhibitive moral agency. To a lesser extent, however, active actions to behave in a morally just way are also taken by soldiers. Both types of agency can be grouped with either duty or virtue ethics, depending on the motivations that lead to them.

As will be shown later in this study, both the inhibitive and proactive agency of Israeli soldiers often has an instrumental motivation. When soldiers refrain from immoral behaviour or act morally this is often done with an underlying instrumental, goal-directed motivation. There is, thus, a process of reasoning involved in moral behaviour, which makes it seem more compatible with duty ethics.

On the other hand, moral actions that are directed to the immediate in-group can be motivated by emotions and intuition and could, thus, be said to belong to virtue ethics. In the next section this idea will be discussed in more detail. It seems that in the case of Israeli soldiers we can distinguish characteristics of both duty and virtue ethics depending on the social context the actor finds himself in and on the subject of his moral behaviour.
Groups and group morality

When thinking about the behaviour of soldiers, one cannot ignore the dynamics of the group as soldiers work within such a context most of the time and this group aspect influences their behaviour, including their moral performance. Much has been written by social psychologists about the dynamics of human beings living in groups and about functioning under group pressure. A famous example is the work of psychologist S. Milgram, who performed experiments to find out how people behaved under pressure from an authoritarian figure during his study of obedience (1974), but who performed research on group pressure as well (1965). Another example is S. Asch who wrote about the effects of group pressure and made a distinction between conformers and resisters to this pressure (1951, 1955). Others have used his ideas to analyse the way conformers or resisters perform within groups (see, for example, Goldman, Haberlein and Feder 1965).

However, when one is searching for the influence of such processes on moral behaviour, one has to look at the work of a few psychologists and sociologists who have been concerned with the issue of shared values within a group or community. A. Etzioni, for instance, is a supporter (if not the ‘guru’) of the communitarian movement that emphasizes the power and importance of the community for the upholding of values within the group. The prominence of individualism today is a step away from this community-based life and is, in Etzioni’s eyes, one of the reasons for the decline of morality within, particularly, American society (1996). He states that ‘communities often have strong moral voices and hence can help maintain a social order that draws significantly on value commitments and is voluntary, rather than bought or forced’ (1996: 123).

This approach, however, has had many critics who are afraid that in its prescriptive form it leads to an increase of control over people’s lives and a decline in personal freedom. E. Turiel is another scholar who criticizes communitarian thought and its ideas on generations and their moral behaviour (2002). Turiel’s criticism comes from his notion of morality as something based on rationality and reasoning, an issue discussed above.

In the case of Israeli soldiers, however, I would propose an approach that takes into account the power of a group over its members. Such groups can be made up ad hoc in a military setting and often have a very temporary character (from a few months up to several years). We are, thus, not talking about actual communities in the sense that communitarians speak of this, where people have known each other for a long period of time and ‘where the postmaster knows

---

24 See, for example, Shweder, Much, Mahapatra and Park (1997) on communitarianism and its effect on medicalized life-practices.
your first name or someone wants to hear the answer when they ask you how you are’ (Etzioni 1996: 123). Within the military setting groups are set up arbitrarily, often consisting of people from very diverse backgrounds who become very close out of a certain necessity. They have to pull each other through the hard times that military service entails; they eat, sleep, work and fight together.

Within the military context, social researchers, who will be discussed in more detail shortly, have given attention to this group cohesion and bonding along with factors enhancing or undermining it (see, for example, Rosen, Knudson and Fancher 2003; Winslow 1999; Ben-Shalom et al. 2005; King 2006). In this respect much work has been done to understand the notions of comradeship and the behaviour of soldiers within a group.

Not much has been written by social scientists, however, about how such group processes influence the moral decision-making of soldiers. For this purpose I turn to the work of social psychologists who have been working on the issue of group morality. In his work on group morality M. Ridley (1996), for example, implies ‘that individuals who are most likely to engage in moral behaviour also may be most likely to engage in violence on behalf of their in-group’ (in Cohen, Montoya and Insko 2006). This idea is interesting, as it makes a clear connection between the dynamics of the group and the moral behaviour of its members, albeit leaving space for individual differences. Cohen et al. show in their experiments that violent group behaviour does not mean members of the group are immoral (2006). The very violence that is used towards an out-group can indicate the deep loyalty for the in-group. The member of the group, then, truly believes that he or she is doing the right thing and is, as such, acting morally.

Another work, that by T. Wildschut and C. Insko (2006), tries to bridge the gap between philosophy and social psychology (or between rational and empirical research) by looking at the incompatibility of ‘inter-individual relations … [and a] more selfish moral code governing inter-group relations’ (2006: 377) or between individual and group morality. In their eyes, this incompatibility has to be resolved to make moral progress possible. They look at situations where individuals can realize that at times ‘inter-group cooperation serves the group interest better than does inter-group competition’ (ibid: 381).

These ideas will be discussed further on the basis of empirical examples in Chapter 7, where the concept of instrumental morality will be discussed. Here it is enough to note the importance of such works concerning the group and group morality for this study. Soldiers work in groups and Israeli soldiers in particular work together while facing a clear out-group (the Palestinians) who could be seen as their ‘significant other’ (Triandafyllidou 1998).
Military ethics
Moving beyond these ideas about the essence of morality and ethics, it is now time to turn to a more practical use of ethical thought: theories about ethics and war. Here I will briefly discuss four such positions.

A famous contemporary philosopher of war and ethics is Michael Walzer, an influential proponent of a *just war* theory which is an Aristotelian concept also elaborated by St. Augustine within the Christian context. Walzer (1992) supports the theory which implies that there are just and unjust wars, depending on the motivations for going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and the manner in which the war is conducted (*jus in bello*). Several years ago, a third condition was added: that of justice after war (*jus post bellum*) (Walzer 2004). A war has to conform to certain rules relating to just cause, legitimate authority, likelihood of success and proportionality, to name a few, before it can be named a just war.

The so called realists (see, for example, Hobbes and Machiavelli) oppose this just war theory. They believe that wars are non-moral. In wars, they say, there is no such thing as inhumanity; there is merely humanity under pressure. One cannot, they say, make a moral judgment on warfare. They are defenders of the idea that during war the law is silent (*inter arma silent leges*) (Walzer 1992).

Yet another stance is that of the militarists. These theorists believe that any war’s horrors are compensated for by their gains. As Fotion, Coppieters and Apressyan wrote about this position: ‘It makes Men out of men. … The rigors of war teach those who participate in it such virtues as discipline, self-confidence, perseverance, loyalty, responsibility, and courage. So, along with the costs of war, there are also important gains for the individual who lives in the militaristic society’ (2002: 5). Besides this, there are national gains believed to be won by warfare. Militarists, unlike realists, do take a moral stance, albeit a national, internal one.

Finally, there are those who believe that all wars (and all reasons for going to war) are unjust. These people fall under the label of pacifists. Pacifists, naturally, also take a clear moral stance.

These very general positions, however, give only a very broad outline of the ways wars and conflicts in general can be viewed. T. Van Baarda and Verweij see military ethics as a ‘form of applied ethics on a scientific basis’ (2006: 1) with the goal of promoting morally fit or morally professional military personnel. Theirs is, thus, a practical approach to the questions of how military cadets, Dutch cadets in their case, can be educated to become morally responsible professionals. They distinguish five layers within military ethics: ‘personal value systems, ethics of the military profession, ethics of particular professions within the military … organisational ethics
… and political ethics’ (ibid: 2). All these layers can then be analysed separately; they can even be at odds with one another at times.

While dealing with a subject at the crossroads between military and ethics, this study will not extensively deal with the above mentioned general positions about the nature of war and military ethical education, although they are important to mention. My goal is to look closely at the way Israeli soldiers make sense of the conflict they fight and work within in moral terms in order to begin to understand their motivations for acting in the way they do. This micro-ethics takes into account existing meta-ethical theories but tries to look at notions about right and wrong within military action from below instead of from above, as meta-ethics inevitably does. Ideas about how soldiers ought to behave are taken into consideration less and only when comparing regulated codes of ethics with the way soldiers use these moral rules in their daily activities.

The anthropological contribution to the study of morality

Many anthropologists have concerned themselves with what is perceived as good or bad in different cultures and what people, according to their beliefs, ought to do or ought not to do. Without describing their work in such terms, the study of these anthropologists dealt with issues of morality. M. Mead already ‘suggested that every human group has separate sets of behaviour for the treatment of in-group members and out-group members’, clearly pointing to group morality (in Cohen et al. 2006: 1560). The work of N. Scheper-Hughes, who studied mothers in a Brazilian shantytown (1992a), is a good example of more recent work. Her study of the way these mothers dealt with their sick and dying children is, in fact, a study of the morality surrounding children’s deaths in this specific locality in Brazil. Partly due to its cultural relativist heritage, anthropology has historically shied away from dealing specifically with ethics. Therefore, little work was done actually defining itself as belonging to the ‘anthropology of morality’.

M. Edel and A. Edel (1959) were the first anthropologists to discuss this issue; after that, however, not much related work has been published. They state that ‘a great part of any morality must be articulated in discourse’ (1959: 108) and thus urge us to look at ‘patterns of argumentation, teaching and justification’ when we study morality (ibid.). This advice is certainly taken on board in this study since discursive, moral strategies will be thoroughly discussed.

Morality, moreover, is central to social behaviour as it is ‘an expression of the relationship between the “self” and others’ (van Baarda and Verweij 2006: 9) and as such fits neatly within the anthropological research agenda. In this vein, S. Howell (1997) edited a pioneering volume under the name The Ethnography of Moralities in which several anthropologists discuss their research on
indigenous views on moral issues. Questions posed in the book are: what do people understand to be moral or not and what are the core principles their moralities are built on? E. Archetti, for example, writes about Argentinian football and the moral discourse of football supporters. He tries to understand more about issues of ‘male virtue [and] the importance of traditions, roots and historical continuity’ (1997: 102). N. Rapport studied a small English village (1997) and links morality to locality and the distinction between insiders and outsiders.

Even though Edel and Edel (1959) believed that the only way for anthropologists to study morality was to study the complete morality of a certain culture, the above cited authors take a distinct part of a culture as their focus and try to find out how ideas on morality are constructed within this cultural niche. This approach gives the opportunity to investigate ideas in a small-scale setting that can help us understand broader issues within society.

Clearly, the amount of anthropological work on moralities is not extensive, especially as many anthropologists do not think of their work as such. The current project will be able to contribute to this niche and will use the above mentioned approach, focusing on the moralities of Israeli soldiers during their tour of duty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is not an effort to produce an ethnography of Israeli morality, its primary aim being to outline moralities within the Israeli military context and through this to learn about the ideas and behaviour of the soldiers serving in the Territories.

The anthropology and the sociology of the military

While anthropologists have written much about societies that find themselves in the midst of conflict and about the implications of this violence on the members of society (Aijmer and Abbink 2000; Schmidt and Schroeder 2001; Robben and Nordstrom 1995; Nordstrom 2001; Malkki 1995), the study of institutional violence or militaries has been limited. Within sociology more attention has been given to the relationship between the military and society and to dynamics within the military (see, for example, the Handbook of the Sociology of the Military edited by G. Caforio 2003) and hence this discipline is important to mention.

Both S. Huntington and M. Janowitz can be thought of as the founding fathers of what Caforio has depicted as the American School within the discipline of military sociology (2003: 13). While Huntington was more concerned with relations between politics and the military (1957), Janowitz was interested in processes of change within the military alongside changes in society (1960). This school of thought came into being after World War II and the massive

25 Howell uses the plural form of morality: ‘first, because it opens for plurality – a prerequisite for anthropological comparison; second, whether in the singular or the plural form, it is a more inclusive term than “morals”. Moralities can be made to contain and express both discourse and practice’ (Howell 1997: 4).
military involvement of the American military therein. The pioneering work of S. Stauffer (1949) also belongs here as does the work of C. Moskos (1970, 1973, 1997). Stauffer wrote a comprehensive study on American troops during World War II resulting in an, especially for that time, extraordinary work. Moskos carried out research with American troops with reference to the debates on military–civil relations and introduced the pluralistic model which shows that ‘armed forces in transformation does not present a homogeneous institution, but a pluralistic organism where sectors with marked characteristics of assimilation to civil society coexist with sectors that preserve a more traditional military habitus, far removed from civilian mentality’ (as quoted in Caforio 2003: 21).

In Europe scholars such as C. Dandeker (1994, 2001, 2003), P. Manigart (1995, 2003) and B. Boene (2001, 2003) have been researching the subject of change within the military and civil–military relations after the end of the Cold War in Europe.

In Israel, where research on the military–civil society relationship has been quite extensive, scholars discovered the military as a central institution affecting society early on. In line with the subject of this research, I will give the latter some more attention. Israeli social research into ‘things military’ (Rosenhek, Maman and Ben-Ari 2003: 461) can be divided into three different phases.

Initially, up until the 1980s, research into the military was mostly functionalistic and looked at social–military relations from this perspective, taking political issues into consideration. Scholars belonging to this school of thought were, for example, M. Lissak (1984) and D. Horowitz (1982).

Secondly, in the 1970s, a more critical movement arose; this was more focused on war and the use of it for creating social contracts between citizens and the state. Issues around protest and dissent were put on the agenda. Scholars belonging to this movement are, for example, U. Ben-Eliezer (1995), Y. Levy (1998); the later works of Kimmerling (1993) are also of this school of thought.

The third and final approach is a combination of the above mentioned approaches with an emphasis on the questions surrounding the production and reproduction of militarism and processes of in- and exclusion related to military service. Within this latter approach, analysis on the micro-level came up, often carried out by anthropologists. Examples of scholars working on these issues are E. Ben-Ari (1998, 1999), E. Lomsky-Feder (1998, 1999) and Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman (1997). Two themes are central to these newer approaches: ‘the role of war and the military in the constitution of membership in Israeli society and polity and in the social construction of collective and individual identities’ and ‘the ways in which the “sense of
existential threat” to Israel has been created and used by the state and its representatives to gain and maintain legitimacy’ (Rosenhek et al. 2003: 475).

The present study fits within this latter school of thought, as this work is an anthropological study of ‘something military’: the issues of morality of Israeli soldiers. The approach, which will be discussed shortly, consists of research on a micro-level that looks at the ways soldiers make sense of their own surroundings and make their decisions. It, furthermore, takes into consideration the ways these surroundings influence soldiers’ behaviour.

The contribution of this work

An anthropological approach to the subject of military ethics is unique. As discussed above, this research stands at the meeting-point of several different disciplines, contributing to knowledge within these disciplines and, in turn, using their concepts.

This work is, first of all, part of the growing corpus of social research on the military. It contributes, however, to a neglected topic: the morality of soldiers within the area of their daily activities.

Secondly, this research contributes to the small niche represented by the anthropology of moralities. While much anthropological work has been done on the values and norms of different societies, research aimed at uncovering the moralities of specific groups of people has been limited. This work represents a contribution on this front.

Thirdly, the discipline of military ethics shares a similar research subject to that of this project: looking at the moral decision-making of military personnel. However, within military ethics the researcher often looks at the situation that is to be analysed from above in terms of how soldiers should behave and what rules and codes should be designed for them. This research aims to looks at the soldiers themselves and at the setting they work in every day in order to see how their reality looks in moral terms. This can also be useful when trying to understand soldiers’ behaviour in other settings than the Israeli one.

On a fourth level, this work will try to make a social contribution. Understanding the violent behaviour of soldiers will, hopefully, help to avoid such confrontations in the future not only by contributing to solutions to curb harmful and humiliating confrontations between military personnel and civilians by emphasizing the contributing factors of such behaviour but also by encouraging others to take a more systemic view of the conflicts soldiers are sent to and the situations they are put in. By understanding the effects of the practices of occupation on the behaviour of soldiers, one should also pose questions regarding the legitimacy of certain conflicts
and/or occupations and the way they are conducted. Related to this, I further hope to be able to contribute to the debate around ethical education within the military and its effectiveness.

2.2 The approach
As already indicated above, the approach that was chosen to answer the research questions and thus achieve the goals set for this project is an anthropological one that seeks to uncover the views of soldiers from the inside and from below, without losing sight of the macro-context. The language, behaviour and the reasoning of soldiers led the research. In this section I will explain this approach and I will also discuss the related choices I made during the research.

_Lay theories or folk models_
‘Lay theories’ or folk models can be simply defined as the way common people think about the world around them. However, such models go further than just explaining a phenomenon: ‘folk models are used not only to describe, explain, or analyze, but are also used to evaluate, prescribe, and label’ (Ben-Ari 1998: 140). This approach fits neatly with the concept of cultural repertoires, which will be discussed shortly, as these repertoires show how common people think and organize the world around them. Lay perceptions have been used extensively in research on the way the common man looks at health issues, for example HIV or cancer (see Wight 1999; Nzioka 1996). A. Furnham shows how in explanatory theories there are usually two perspectives: the explicit one of academics and the implicit one of the lay person (1988). This project does not look for an implicit explanation by lay persons of a certain phenomenon but will try to extract their ‘worldview’ or explanatory theory concerning specific issues.

In anthropology, the implicit approach or the view of the informant is referred to as an ‘emic’ view. The interpretation of this information or the explicit approach by the academic is called the ‘etic’ perspective. As H. Bernard noticed, however, ‘it is important to seek the emic perspective … but … [one will have to] constantly … switch back and forth between the emic and etic perspectives’ (2002: 430).

In this project outlining the lay perceptions of the soldiers, for example the way they talk about Palestinian civilians, and analysing this material to draw conclusions that can help achieve the goals of the research, does exactly this. The socio-economic, religious and political background of the soldiers influences these lay perceptions and are, therefore, taken into account.
Models and repertoires: theories of meanings

Within this study the concept of ‘cultural repertoires’ is used in order to analyse the collected data. For this one needs to understand how people understand and organize the world around them. Historically, anthropologists have been involved in researching how human beings, as culture-bearers, give meaning to the world around them through, for example, public symbols. However, these theories often neglected to include thought (social cognitions, representations) in their analysis of meaning. The new traditions within cognitive anthropology aim to fill that gap. This approach, looking at ‘meaning giving’ from a shared or social point of view, ‘is the study of the relation between human society and human thought’ (D’Andrade 1995a: 1).

An important focus of recent cognitive anthropology is the way people internalize the constructs and regularities of society. This means that thoughts and feelings are seen as part of culture and should be included in its study.

Several cognitive anthropological works use the concept of schema that can be defined as ‘culturally shared mental construct[s]’ (D’Andrade 1995a: 132). Others have called these constructs models, repertoires or toolkits (Swidler 1986). These are the building blocks of cultural understanding and meaning-giving. C. Strauss and N. Quinn state that a meaning is an interpretation evoked by an object at a given time and place (Strauss and Quinn 1994, 1997). Therefore, meanings differ constantly, depending on the circumstances and also on our past experience (Strauss and Quinn 1997). The fact that these constructs and meanings are shared makes this theory a social one, distinct from most psychological theories.

This project does not aim to be a study in cognitive anthropology but it uses the conceptual tools developed by this discipline to unravel the way Israeli soldiers make moral sense of the world around them and of the situations they find themselves in. The term cultural repertoires is used to trace and point out the schemas as well as the acquired and shared ideas and meanings they will refer to and that they elaborate in situations of moral challenge and dilemma. Analysis of these cultural repertoires can help to explain how these soldiers organize and understand the world around them and how they structure their behaviour.

Choices made

In every piece of research certain choices are made which then have to be explained by the researcher. Here I will explain the choices I made during this project to make clear why specific points of view were taken in favour of others.
When conducting anthropological research into moralities, some dangers have to be taken into account. In this section I want to clarify the stance of the anthropological researcher with regard to the study of issues of morality.

To speak of compartmentalized moralities and different moralities for different cultures, as anthropologists often do, brings one onto the debate on cultural relativism. For a long time anthropologists have been known to espouse a position of cultural relativism from which moral judgments on the values and practices of specific cultures are suspended. When one then speaks of ‘different moralities’ within a certain culture, for example, should one take the same relativistic approach? The anthropologist M. Carrithers answers this question very simply: ‘cultural relativism yes, but moral relativism no’ (2005: 434). Carrithers maintains that, as an anthropologist, one should first of all take the moral stance of ‘recognition of the worth of others’ (ibid: 437). To gain access to the field of research and to gain information, the researcher needs to engage in personal relationships that are morally charged. This inescapably gives the work of anthropology, unlike that of other social sciences, a moral touch. However, an important point in his analysis is that the anthropologist’s position is an ironic one, by which he means ‘the awareness that there are two or more perspectives bearing on a matter’ (ibid: 435). There is a place for moral judgment as long as it is ‘nuanced, careful, and humble’ (ibid: 446), thus acknowledging the other’s but also one’s own opinions and morality.

Anthropologists such as Scheper-Hughes (1992b) even go a step further and insist on the importance of advocacy within anthropology. They see the main task of anthropological work as one of giving the weak and the oppressed a voice, not just hearing them and understanding their situation. Within this debate on the moral character of anthropology, R. D’Andrade takes the opposite stance. In anthropological studies that make such moral judgments about oppression and power relations their main concern, as for Scheper-Hughes, D’Andrade sees a danger of lack of objectivity on the part of the researcher. In his view, a methodological attitude of objectivity is needed to gain empirical knowledge. ‘Moral models [of anthropology]’, he writes, ‘are counterproductive in discovering how the world works’ (1995b: 402). D’Andrade does not reject political or moral engagement but suggests that within the actual research this should not play a role.

This project on soldiers’ moralities deals with difficult issues that soldiers face within a conflict situation. I agree with D’Andrade that the anthropologist should adhere to an objective point of view and objective procedures during the research. However, I do believe every researcher inevitably brings his or her subjectivity, and thus moral stance, to the field.
Within this project, therefore, the subjectivity of the researcher is acknowledged, precisely in order to avoid the research being inadvertently influenced by her moral point of view. Attention will be paid to the moralities of soldiers in a-symmetrical conflict: while dominant and powerful in their relations with civilians, soldiers make moral and behavioural choices of their own in situations of tension and danger, influenced by emotional and physical factors. In understanding thoroughly how these young men see their surroundings and their behaviour, the lives and ideas of these soldiers are valued and taken seriously. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be critiqued.

**Explaining away/legitimizing**

I would here like to clarify some issues so as to avoid misunderstandings. As has already been written in Chapter 1, the often harsh behaviour of Israeli soldiers towards Palestinians is often explained as being the outcome of the lack of values of a specific person and, as such, is explained away, especially by the state and the military. However, activists who fight for the improvement of the lives of Palestinians often also make use of the same kind of discourse. They dismiss the behaviour of all soldiers as being immoral and the story ends there. The soldiers either just do not have values or they are the victims of a state with no values.

In my eyes, this seems to be too simplistic; I want to see what processes are at play when soldiers serve duty to the state in the OPT. My goal is to gain a deeper understanding of how these soldiers explain what they do in their own language and how they explain their activities and choose between what they perceive as right or wrong.

It is, thus, important for me to emphasize here that I do not try to explain away the behaviour of soldiers or to legitimize it. Furthermore, I am not trying to make the soldiers into victims or to contribute to the ‘normalization’ of the situation in the OPT and the behaviour of soldiers. In this work I want to give attention to processes at play when real people find themselves in real and very challenging situations evoking behavioural dilemmas and power abuse. It is my opinion that the specific context the soldiers find themselves in explains much of their, at times, excessive behaviour. Responsibility for this should, hence, not only be searched for within them but also with reference to the state and the society in conflict that produce this context.

**Men, women and gendered language**

This research is about men within their military surroundings. It was a conscious decision to interview only men, even though due to compulsory military service in Israel there are also many
female soldiers. The goal of the study was to look at soldiers performing combat duty within the OPT and female soldiers still have a very limited place in functions of this kind. There are increasingly more women serving within the OPT but they mostly perform supportive tasks, or form part of Border Police units which are trained by the Israeli Police Force, not by the military.

U. Klein (1999a, 1999b, 2002) has noted that the militarization of societies, especially in the case of Israel, is a gendered process; C. Enloe has also written on a militarized masculinity (1989). Concerning the Israeli case, O. Sasson-Levy has written extensively about masculinity and the body within the military (2002, 2003a, 2007) and about women in masculine military roles (2003b). In her work she shows how masculinity is reproducing national identities within the Israeli context. The hegemonic masculinity of Israeli combat soldiers and the centrality of this within Israeli ideal citizenship ‘assumes a central role in shaping a hierarchal order of gendered and civic identities that reflects and reproduces social stratification and reconstructs differential modes of participation in, and belonging to, the Israeli state’ (Sasson-Levy 2002: 357). It is, thus, obvious that gender issues are very central when speaking about military identities.

However, when one then wants to focus on the experiences of Israeli combat soldiers there seems no choice but to look at male soldiers. The language of this work is consequently gendered. At no point is the use of masculine pronouns meant to indicate both feminine and masculine options. These pronouns are meant to solely denote the masculine.

2.3 Methodology

Methods of research are our tools for studying reality. It is, then, important to make clear how the researcher perceives this reality. The epistemological stance within this project is an interpretive one. This means that the researcher and the social world are perceived to influence one another and are not thought of as independent entities. The methods that come with such a stance are qualitative in nature. These methods are not only meant to predict, but also to understand results on a deeper level.

Firstly, this choice for qualitative methods has been made because in the field of anthropology it is believed that such methods are best-suited to bring us closer to understanding the ways people give meanings to the world around them. To answer the research questions of this project, qualitative methods have been used as these are open-ended and are not restricted to certain themes or concepts.

Secondly, as this research raises issues about the attitudes of people, it deals with results that cannot be fully measured in a quantitative sense. Qualitative methods can help us understand the distribution of attitudes and moral reasonings. Furthermore, through observation, qualitative
methods can help us identify real versus ideal behaviour (Scrimshaw 1990). What does one say about his/her behaviour and how does one ‘really’ behave?

Finally, the interpretative approach used in this study is inherently inductive as it was led by themes and repertoires that came up from the data. Insights were gained through this data, not by testing already existing theoretical approaches, giving me the opportunity to identify important themes and attitudes and take them to a deeper level.

Fieldwork
Fieldwork for this research was carried out in separate periods between March 2005 and August 2007. During this fieldwork interviews were conducted, trips were made to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and military installations were visited in order to observe the situation on the ground.

The fieldwork period was divided in three parts, one exploratory part and two additional periods of data collection in Israel. The main reason this division was made was to have the possibility to reflect on the data between periods so as to be able to take new insights gained through this reflection on to another period of data collection. This approach fits with the inductive strategy that was used (for more details, see the section on ‘grounded theory’ below).

Sensitive information
As stated before, anthropologists engage in moral relationships with their informants, the people they research (Carrithers 2005). To gain a deep understanding of the way these informants see the world around them, a relation of trust must be built up. One has to be careful not to breach this trust by carelessly dealing with information that has been entrusted to the researcher. Within this project, the degree of sensitivity of the information acquired by the researcher is high. Stories on violence by soldiers, activities of the Israeli Defence Forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and confessions of misbehaviour were collected. Hence there was a need to take precautions concerning the releasing of this information.

First of all, all informants who were interviewed remained anonymous. Everyone was given a code for reference purposes and in the final texts they were given pseudonyms. The rank and function within the military have, at times, been displayed, however, as the Israeli military is a large institution and numerous people with the same rank and function exist – the anonymity of the informants is guaranteed.

Furthermore, all interviews were conducted one on one in private spaces, for example private houses or cafeterias where both parties were convinced that their conversation was not being overheard. This was, again, done to ensure the anonymity of the informants.
**Grounded theory**

The methodological approach of grounded theory is, in fact, the way many anthropologists work without giving their approach any such name. What this means is that texts, such as interviews or fieldwork notes, are analysed to draw out themes or sensitize concepts (Wester and Peters 2004). This is done in an inductive way which entails ‘open coding’ whereby the text leads the researcher to make a hypothesis, not the other way around. Grounded theory allows themes to emerge which are important to informants and which are not imposed by the researcher. These themes or codes are then linked to theories that already exist on the subject. ‘During this process, you come to understand more and more deeply how whatever you’re studying really works’ (Bernard 2002: 463).

For this project this means that the interviews conducted were analysed with the software program ‘ATLAS.ti’, which helps to code texts and make connections between themes. It was then possible to ‘discover patterns of behaviour or thought in a set of texts’ (ibid: 464). The texts of the interviews were carefully transcribed and analysed together with other written texts from different sources. The texts were then coded by giving parts of the text one or more ‘codes’ that were seen as central to those parts. Examples of such codes are ‘misbehaviour by soldiers’, ‘professionalism’, ‘checkpoints’ or ‘Palestinians’. The codes were decided on solely from the data at hand. Later, these codes were brought together in the form of cultural repertoires. These shared ideas on certain issues, for example on Palestinian citizens or on the work at the checkpoint, are the core values of the soldiers’ moralities.

**Interviews**

To outline the ‘emic’ discourse used by soldiers when speaking about their experiences in the field, twenty-nine in-depth interviews were conducted with Israeli men who during their obligatory draft period had served in combat units that had been active in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the Second Intifada. By the time of the research, these soldiers numbered in the tens of thousands, making for a large pool of potential informants. Some of the interviewees served as officers and quite a large section served as (junior) commanders. They came from several units that were defined by the IDF as combat units, included different ranks and had performed different kinds of activities during their service. Consequently, the research setting was not one particular geographically bounded setting such as a village, a city neighbourhood or a commercial enterprise, such a setting normally being a characteristic of most anthropological works.
All informants, furthermore, had been confronted with conflicts in which civilians played a major role, where most tasks were constabulary-oriented and where morally unclear situations abounded. These men had been released from military service for not more than five years, so as to prevent their memories from their service period having faded.

The interviewees were asked questions about their military career, specific incidents during this career and about their overall experience as soldiers in the IDF. The interviewees were also asked to describe operations they had carried out and their daily routine.

These interviews were semi-structured which means that they were ‘open-ended, but follow a general script and cover a list of topics’ (Bernard 2002: 203). The objectives of the interview were clear to the interviewee, however. The questions were adjusted during the interview to fit the information that was collected. Instead of answering a list of questions, the interviewees were given the chance to tell their story in their own way. Thereafter, I would ask subtle follow-up questions to further explore some subjects, for example ‘How did you feel when this happened?’ or ‘Have you thought about this experience a lot after your service?’

Approximately twenty ‘unstructured interviews’ were also conducted, these being, in Bernard’s words ‘based on a clear plan that you keep constantly in mind, but are also characterized by a minimum control over people’s responses’ (ibid: 205). These are conversations with people where a lot of important information is gained, but that are not ‘official’ sit-down interviews.

Besides the interviews, twenty-one complete testimonies and 149 edited ‘descriptions of incidents’ collected by the organization Breaking the Silence were made available to me in an unedited form. These valuable texts were then analysed in the same way as the interviews were in order to identify central themes and the issues soldiers found important while keeping in mind the differences between both data collections. The interviews from the archives of Breaking the Silence were mostly conducted by other ex-combatants and the answers they received were expected to be different from the ones I received, since the identity of the researcher plays a role here. This adds to the importance of the use of such material collected by a third party as this can yield new and different insights. For more on the influence of the researcher on her research, see the section below.

**Observation and Participant observation**

26 Breaking the Silence is an organization of Israeli ex-combatants that collects the testimonies of soldiers who have served within the OPT. Testimonies collected by this organization are coded as ‘BS’.
Approximately ten trips were made to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank) in order to get a realistic view of the soldiers in the setting of their daily work. These trips were more observational than participant: due to military restrictions on outsiders and civilians it is impossible to linger extensively at checkpoints or military installations. During these trips I crossed many checkpoints of different shapes and sizes, I walked through Palestinian cities, I occasionally had a chance to talk to the local population and I drove through the Palestinian landscape for many hours. Furthermore, I witnessed several demonstrations by Palestinians and by Israeli activists against the occupation and the appropriation of Palestinian lands. The observations gained from these visits were very important in learning more about soldiers’ behaviour, especially when compared to what soldiers said about their experiences – they give an extra dimension to what one has been told. In the case of discrepancies between behaviour and what was said, the question can be raised of why soldiers’ statements do not reflect their practice. These discrepancies were not perceived as untruthful but, rather, as very insightful. The observations were also important to ‘get a feel’ for the landscape, the smells, noises and the weather Israeli soldiers experience while working in the OPT.

Even though participant observation is an anthropological method of the first order, in this project it necessarily occupied a somewhat marginal place, as participating in the daily life of soldiers on duty was not feasible. The military in any country is usually a closed system that is hard for researchers to get into. The Israeli military is no different. As Ben-Ari, Maman and Z. Rozenhek (2000) state: ‘the IDF combines relative closure to research by external scholars with a number of internal arms that carry out research and only rarely release or publish their findings in publicly accessible forms’ (2000: 95). The decision to interview recently discharged soldiers who had served within the Occupied Palestinian Territories after the beginning of the second Intifada made for a huge pool of potential informants. This method is a proven one, often used by Israeli researchers on military issues (see, for example, Lomsky-Feder 1998; Lieblich 1989; Helman 1993; Ben-Ari 1998).

Other sources
Media sources were systematically examined, in particular two Israeli daily newspapers, ‘Haaretz’ and ‘Yediot Aharonot’, the former being a quality paper and the latter more popular. In this way it was possible to see how matters of morality and the military were discussed within different segments of Israeli society and how the general public reacted through letters to the editor and through internet forums.
Other texts that were used for this research were conversations between soldiers in recently blooming internet forums. In these forums, soldiers and those that are about to be conscripted raise all kinds of problems and questions to be discussed. Their analyses made it possible to draw out general themes that are important for soldiers in the IDF and gave new insights into the attitudes of those that were about to be conscripted.

Furthermore, testimonies of soldiers about their service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories that were collected by projects like the ‘Soldier Testimony Project’ of Maryland University and organizations like Breaking the Silence were analysed, as mentioned before. These anonymous testimonies, that cover all kinds of experiences, helped to draw out the moral reasonings of these soldiers when speaking about their service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Film documentaries like ‘One Shot’ by Nurit Kedar, ‘Checkpoint’ by Yoav Shamir, ‘Aftershock’ by Yariv Horowiz and others by filmmakers such as Avi Moghrabi were also studied. These documentaries show the situation within the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the experiences of soldiers in ways that cannot be found elsewhere and were, as such, very insightful for this project.

Apart from material from the conflict in Israel/Palestinian Territories, materials from the Vietnam War and the current conflict in Iraq were also examined. After the Vietnam War, in particular, and also today during the war in Iraq, a lot of material written by soldiers about their experiences has been published, which greatly helps in gaining insights on moral reasonings by soldiers (see, for example, Hynes 1997; Buzzell 2005; Hartley 2006).27 Both in the Vietnam War and in Iraq, soldiers have dealt extensively with civilians.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of different methods within one project. The benefit of using several methods is the variety of data that can be collected from different sources. Within this research the analysis of written texts from newspapers and internet sites contributed to the insights I obtained about the context within which the research took place. From analysis of newspapers, for example, public debates came to the fore, these being very telling about the background of the informants: the Israeli soldiers. This sharpened my insights into the society they live in and of which they are a product. There is, moreover, a reverse influence of these media texts on the way

the informants perceive their reality. An understanding of the moralities of these Israeli soldiers could not be accomplished without understanding them within their social contexts.

Using several different methods can also result in data that is conflicting. However, the data that constitutes the core of the analysis are the interviews and testimonies. These are the starting point of the research from which cultural repertoires were distilled. Other sources, such as observations, were used to test these results and to see if there were similarities or differences that needed further examination. As I said before, though, discrepancies were looked upon as insightful and were investigated as such.

The role of the researcher in the research

As ‘the social role of the participant observer and the images which respondents have of him [sic] have a decisive influence on the character of the data collected’ (Vidich as quoted in Monaghan 2000: 4), it is important to take a reflective stance to see in what ways the researcher’s identity or perceived identity influences her research. This is unavoidable and should therefore not be bypassed; an acknowledgement of this fact should be taken into consideration. A few identity traits of the researcher and their effects will be discussed here.

The first issue is doing research within an all-male setting as a woman. Because I did not use the classical methods of participatory observation, it was not necessary for me to ‘go native’ and live with my research group in one and the same space. This would also have been hard to accomplish, as my informants were not connected to each other in any way other than their military experiences and all came from different military units. The all-male setting was, then, not a geographically bounded one.

However, being a woman certainly had an effect on doing research among young men. Although my age was generally about seven to eight years older than the interviewees, a certain tension could at times be sensed. Furthermore, being a woman also meant I could never have experienced what they had experienced even if I had served in the military myself, which is not the case. In order to make the interviewees explain themselves without using too much (for me) incomprehensible military jargon, I often commented that they should tell me about their experiences as if I was a blank slate. This possibly added to their view of me as an outsider to their military experiences.

Although being a woman who has not served in the military, I am an Israeli citizen, a fact that made the research in many respects easier. First of all, the young interviewees were glad to be able to speak in their native tongue about their experiences. This was obviously easier for them than speaking in English. Furthermore, their often used military jargon would have been
difficult to translate. Additionally, as an Israeli I belonged to their immediate national in-group, as opposed to, for example, foreign journalists and tourists. I shared a common national culture with them which, for instance, made it possible for them to refer to popular TV programs or famous national figures.

As an academic, however, I was immediately categorized as a ‘leftist’ on the political scale and this, at times, influenced the answers given and was once even given as a reason for agreeing to be interviewed. The informant in question agreed to speak to me, because he saw it as his task to defend the Israeli military against the negative reports coming from the foreign press; talking to me would be an opportunity to ‘show it’s not that bad’. Being an Israeli, doing research on such a topic as I was, meant that there was no escaping political opinions. However, as mentioned before, during the research and the interviews I tried to put myself in a neutral position as much as was realistically possible.

2.4 Outline of the chapters

Here I will give a short outline of the rest of this study. Chapter 3 is the first analytical chapter of the thesis and it will, in a way, set the scene for the remainder of the work. In this chapter I look closely at the arenas Israeli soldiers work in during their service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Such arenas are, for example, the checkpoints, arrest operations or patrols. I will describe these arenas and their specific settings and characteristics, including issues of routine and relationships of power.

In Chapter 4, I will take the knowledge gained in Chapter 3 and discuss the implications of the work arenas of soldiers on three different levels: the emotional, the physical and the cognitive.

In Chapter 5, these implications will come together when I discuss the processes of moral numbing Israeli soldiers go through. I will look at the issue of detachment and cognitive blurring in this respect.

After having discussed the nature of the work the soldiers perform and its effect on their behaviour, Part 3 of this work will deal with the way soldiers talk about their experiences and especially the way they explain or legitimize these and create moral differences between them and the Palestinian ‘other’.

In Chapter 6, I will proceed with the discussion of the discursive strategies used by the soldiers. Finally, I will discuss what I will call the ‘instrumental morality’ existing in these discourses in Chapter 7. There I will show how the reasoning and actions of soldiers are often led
by selfish or group-related motivations while the ‘other’, the Palestinian, is hardly taken into consideration. Morality, in these cases, is turned inwards and has an instrumental character.