

Critiquing the School Counselling Discourse: Policy Analysis of Israeli School Counselling Regulations

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INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research aims to critique the policies and discursive formation of Israeli School Counselling.

Israeli school counselling is a mental health profession that adopts the American school counselling model of promoting students' socioemotional, educational, and career choices (Erhard, 2014). American school counselling policies have been impacted by political-economic interests before and after its expansion to international regions (see Remley & Herlihy, 2014).

Despite current information, knowledge about the historical-cultural context of this profession is limited. Critiquing the policies and regulations of school counselling is essential to grasping its ontology and unpacking the *power modalities* that shape its discourse.

Research Purpose and Question

This research applies Foucauldian genealogy and power/knowledge lenses to answer the following question: How have political, economic, and social values historically formed the Israeli school counselling discourse?

METHODOLOGY

I utilized **Foucauldian genealogy** (1972-1978/1980) as a methodology to critique the Israeli school counselling discursive formation and the 'history of the present' of the Israeli SC discourse (Anaïs, 2013; Foucault, 1980; Garland, 2014).

A total of **109 documents** were used, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of this research. The collected data came mainly from 1) legislation, educational, and school counselling policies from official Israeli archives and 2) articles and books on school counselling, education, sociology, and Israeli economics and politics.

FINDINGS

Thematic and discourse analysis showed that Israeli school counselling policies and regulations were formed by **global and contextual political-economic values, including economic productivity, nationalism, and armament technology, instead of primarily supporting students' interests**. Israeli school counselling's policies have restricted the freedom of school counsellors and turned them into subjugated employees who perpetuate the interests of those in power.

Theme One: Political-Economic Benefits of the Assimilation and Integration Policies of School Counselling

The Israeli government formed school counselling in 1960 to help realize the following political-economic agendas: 1) socially assimilating *Mizrahi* (Oriental) immigrants into the Israeli Western culture, and 2) orienting Mizrahi immigrants to agricultural and industrial occupations. These school counselling practices are **enmeshed in the Israeli interest of economic growth** (see Smilanski, 1957; The State's Archive, 1960, meeting 107).

A similar school counselling model was practiced in the United States before the First World War to promote American economic development (see Davis, 1969; Remley & Herlihy, 2014).

Theme Two: Israeli SC and the Policies of Zionist Identity and Citizenship

From the 1970s onwards, Israeli school counselling has adopted **armament technology** practices. School counselling still includes topics of Zionist national identity such as preparation for the Israeli army service, national crises and wars, and learning armament-technological specializations. This shift in school counselling services has significantly promoted Israeli economic growth (Swirski, 2005).

Figure 1

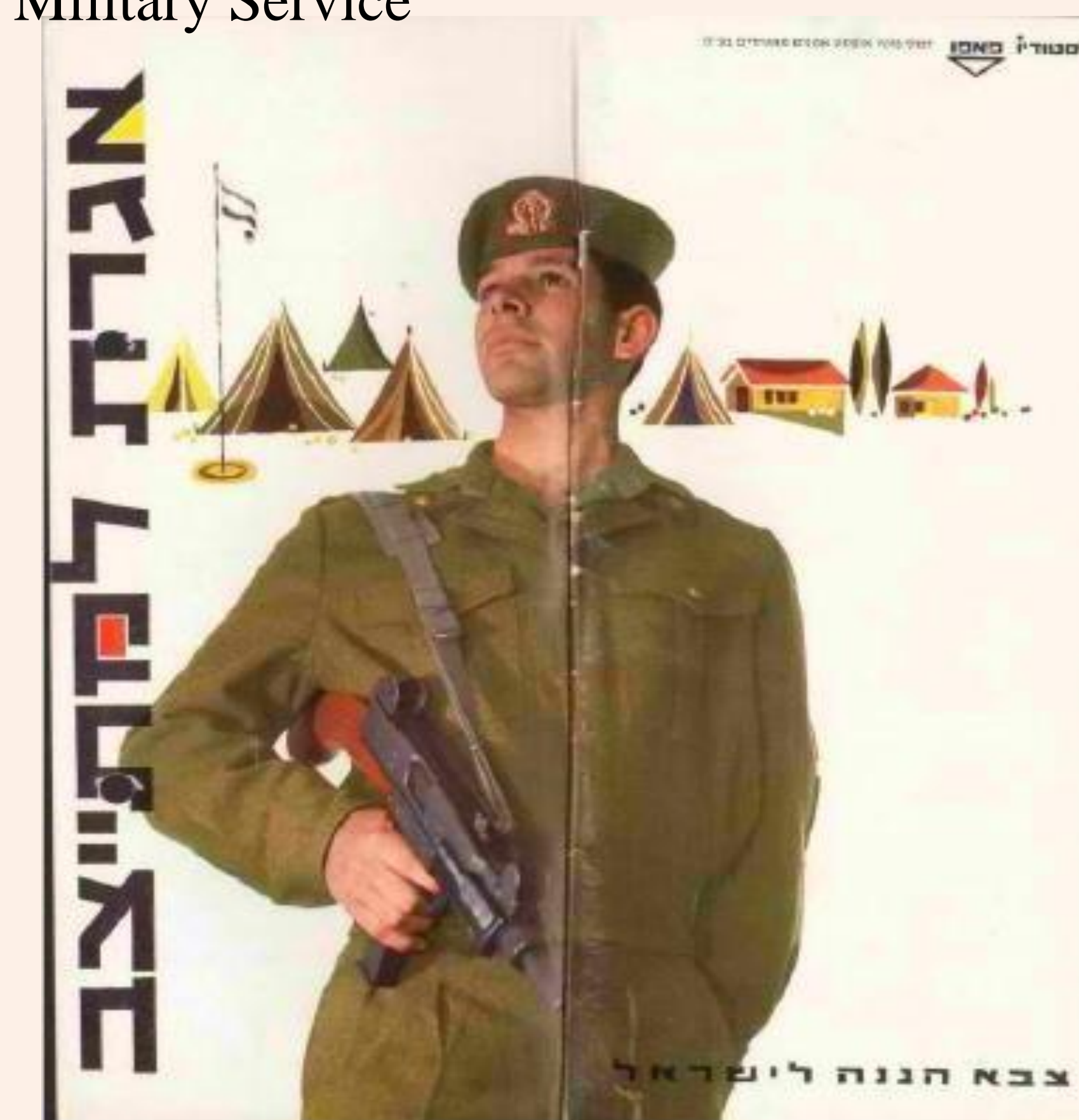
A flier encouraging students to learn electronic radio with the IDF.



Translation: "Learn electronic radio in coordination with Tsahal [IDF]."
 Source: The Ministry of Education, 1970-1972/2017, p. 299.

Figure 2

A flier advertising a school counselling tv show of Preparation for Military Service



Translation: "A newsletter for military attendance. The Israeli Defense Forces." (The Ministry of Education, 1970-1972/2017, p. 306.)

Theme Three: Neoliberalism, Disciplining and Controlling School Counselling

While increasing its mental health, educational, and career orientation services, Israeli school counselling faced governmental funding cuts that restricted its practices. Despite the neoliberal policies of increased privatization, **the Israeli government prohibited Israeli school counsellors from working in private workplaces**, separated from the Ministry of Education.

The Israeli educational system is a **political apparatus** that shapes the Israeli consciousness (Al-Haj, 1995; Swirski, 2002). Despite their continuous demands to gain independence from the Ministry of Education, Israeli School Counselling regulations still require counsellors to be teachers and members of the Ministry of Education (Israelashvili & Wegman- Rozi, 2012; Psychological and counselling services, 2009).

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to deconstruct Israeli school counselling by exploring the impacts of social, political, and economic forces on its policies and regulations.

The findings shed the light on how Israeli school counselling has been impacted by global and local political-economic agendas, forming its definition and services. The findings are aligned with the arguments of critical counselling researchers (e.g., Carter, 2004; Kose, 2017; Rallis & Carry, 2017) suggesting that counselling has been heavily impacted by political economic interests more than the health needs of students. These influences make school counsellors what Foucault (1977) terms *subsidiary authority* that reproduces the interests of those in power and control society.

Contribution

While my focus was on the Israeli context, this study makes a significant contribution to the international mental health literature. By providing scholars and professionals with epistemological and methodological lenses to re-examine mental health regulations, I aim to foster a global critical dialogue on mental health discourses. Critiquing mental health disciplines is crucial, not only for grasping their present, but also for unpacking the power modalities that shape their discourses and guiding their future development.

Key-references

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