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**THE ISRAELI BACKPACKERS. A STUDY IN THE CONTEXTS OF TOURISM  
AND POSTMODERN CONDITION.**

by

**ELIYAHU AVRAHAMI**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Environmental Psychology in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City  
University of New York.**

2001

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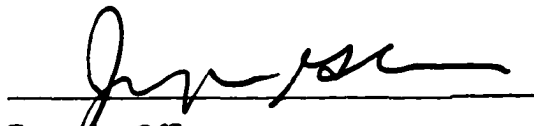
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## Abstract

**THE ISRAELI BACKPACKERS: A STUDY IN THE CONTEXTS  
OF TOURISM AND POSTMODERN CONDITION**

by

**Eliyahu Avrahami**

**Adviser: Professor David Chapin**

**During the past two decades, hundreds of thousands of young Israelis, after completing their military service, journeyed to South America or Asia. These journeys become a common pattern in Israel, and the travelers are known as *backpackers*. This study examines the phenomenon in three contexts: (a) tourism, (b) postmodern Israel, and (c) the journey as a rite of passage.**

**Using a phenomenological approach, seventeen backpackers were interviewed with a structured questionnaire containing open- and close-ended questions. The findings suggest that the way in which people perceive places is based on their experience in that place and elsewhere. Experience of a place is affected by the presence of other people, the road used to arrive there, weather, cultural events, and all features that co-exist in the traveler's "perception system."**

Two Weberian ideal types of backpackers were identified: the “seeker” and the “adventurer.” The seekers’ journey can be perceived as a tool that is used to search for the self. The seeker experiences the journey as walking along the road; as a process. Adventurers concentrate on reaching new summits, and emphasize the number of experiences had per time unit. The respondents were more like seekers than adventurers.

Respondents tend to utilize postmodern life strategies, e.g., short-term commitments, fragmentation of time. At the same time they still hold the modernist’s dreams of tenured jobs, family, children, suburban home. The backpackers’ narrative was examined, and analyzed as a tool to help in acquiring identity.

Rite of passage is understood here as a learning process. The backpackers’ journey can be seen as the group’s self-made ritual, wherein people acquire new roles in Israeli society. The rite of passage is seen as acting to conform initiates to society’s needs and norms. Consequently although the respondents experimented with defying the rules during their journey, once back in Israel they conformed to society.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When my mother was 16 years old, the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia. Because she was Jewish, she was forced to postpone her studies. At 17 years old she escaped the Nazi regime, and arrived in Israel, at that time still called Palestine. She had been placed in a kibbutz, and never had a chance to complete her high school education, or to attend a trade school. For her, my education, as well as my children's education, became a sacred issue in such a way that academic achievement overshadows any other achievement in our lives. This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Aviva Alef. Her love and support have always been unconditional, and accompanied me all my life.

I am deeply grateful to my committee members, Professor Leanne Rivlin, Professor Joseph Glick, and the chairperson, Professor David Chapin, who supported me along the long process of this study. Many improvements are due to the comments of my committee. I started working with them before they were officially my committee and through their feedback I was able to avoid many hurdles.

Professor David Chapin was the first faculty member I met before deciding to join the Environmental Psychology program. Through the years our way had intersected in some courses and seminars, all of which were interesting and productive, providing me with positive intellectual challenges. Above all I enjoyed David's curiosity that resonates with mine. I couldn't choose a better advisor to work with on this project. Now, it is my pleasure to close the circle, having David be the last faculty member to approve and sign my dissertation.

I am grateful to my outside readers, Professor Catherine Silver and Professor Vita Rabinowitz, for taking part in this process. It was in Professor Silver's class that I became interested in social identity and the influence of the shift into the postmodern condition on people's identity. Some of the reading for her class, such as Bauman's writings, turned out to be pivotal in this work. Many thanks to Professor Rabinowitz who volunteered to be my friendly reader early in the pilot study of this work. Vita's many positive feedbacks were great support and encouragement.

Thanks and appreciation to my friend Florence Levine, who helped me along the process, and was always ready to be a friendly reader. Her effort to reduce my Hebrew "accent" in my writing is highly appreciated. I hope that one day I can help her in her journey toward her doctoral degree.

Many thanks and love to my daughters Michal and Yael who were my "secretaries," distributing the fliers, and coordinating most of the interviews in New York and Haifa. To my son Tsachi who tried to teach me how to do nothing and everything at the same time. To my wife Edna who encouraged me to choose this specific topic for the study when I suffered a moment of weakness, and was inclined to choose a less interesting but easier project.

Many thanks to colleagues and friends have helped me along the long process of doing this dissertation. Professor Rivka Eisikovits, from the University of Haifa, was very helpful in directing me to relevant readings, which became central to this work. Rivka and her spouse, Professor Zvi Eisikovits, were very supportive, encouraging my plan in academia, providing advice and good wishes. Professor Michelle Fine from

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Two very good friends of mine, Israel and Bella Shepher, were involved in my dream, years ago, to go for my doctoral studies, and were happy for me when I finally started the program. They liked my idea to write about the backpackers. We spent long hours discussing the issue from psychological and anthropological perspectives. They both died recently, and I miss them both.

Last but not least, I want to express my deepest appreciation to the young men and women who volunteered to be interviewed for this study. They allowed me to take time out from their busy schedules, opening a window to their dreams and hopes, to their thoughts and feelings. This study could not have been successfully executed without their honest and open response, without their good will and cooperation. I am proud of the trust they gave me, to be their voice, to carry their narrative.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, hundreds of thousands of young Israelis, after completing their three to four years of compulsory military service, eagerly prepared themselves for a journey to South America or Asia. They had neither a rigid time frame for the journey nor did they always have a detailed plan. This phenomenon became a topic of great interest in Israel, and was well established in Israeli discourse of the 1990s. In South America, these men and women travelers are known as *mochileros* (in Spanish, *mochila* is a bag or backpack), and for many years this name was used in Israel. Recently, the Hebrew word *tarmila'im*, a direct translation of "backpackers," has been used in both the spoken language and in some academic publications. In this work I shall use the English term *backpackers* (see definition in Appendix D).

During the past decade, the ubiquity of backpackers caught the attention of academia, eliciting a number of studies of the phenomenon (Bar-Hamburger, 2000; Heical, 2000; Leon, 2000; Maoz, 2000; Mevorach, 1997; Noy, 2000; Simchai, 1998; Yaakobson, 1987). In this research I study the phenomenon in three contexts: (a) the theoretical context of tourism, examining the meaning of places visited by the backpackers; (b) the Israeli postmodern context; and (c) comparing the journey of the backpacker to the traditional rite-of-passage.

I first began thinking about the backpacking phenomenon as a rite-of-passage in 1992, when I audited an introductory anthropology class taught by Professor Carmeli, which my daughter Michal was taking during her freshman year at the University of

Haifa in Israel. When introduced to the concept of the *rite of passage*, I murmured that "one day, when I have the time, it will be interesting to study the backpacker phenomenon as a rite of passage." Later, when I had to choose a subject for my dissertation, I realized that the time had come. I have three grown children who all made their journeys, and friends whose children were backpackers, all of which added to my curiosity about the nature of this phenomenon as a common middle-class Israeli experience.

In this study, I take a phenomenological approach, and have based the research on face-to-face interaction with the respondents. The interview protocol (Appendix A) consists of open-ended and closed questions, in order to probe people's experience and thoughts about the phenomenon of backpacking. A pilot study was completed in 1999, as part of my work on my "second year paper." The interview protocol was revised, based on my experience and conclusions. The pilot study was focused on one feature only, the shift from modern to post-modern strategies and the "dreams" of the respondent.

In this study, the term *journey* has broader implications than the purely spatial. A journey may suggest "travel or passage from one place to another; from youth to maturity; and through time" (Mish, 1994, p. 632). In contrast, the term *trip* refers to physical space, moving from one "tangible" place to another. Hence, the term "journey" is used to add metaphoric meaning and inner-psyche process to the act of moving from one place to another. Unless otherwise defined, the terms "trip" and "travel" are used to describe the concrete and actual act of moving from one place to another.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Backpackers in the Contexts of Israeli Society and Tourism

##### Backpackers in the Israeli Context

The idea of a nation-state of Israel originated at the end of the nineteenth century as part of the nationalistic movements that were sweeping Europe. Credit for envisioning a modern Jewish state goes to Theodore Herzl, who established the Zionist movement and organized the first Zionist Congress, meeting in Basle, Switzerland in 1897. The basic tenet of Zionism was that the only solution for the so-called “Jewish problem” was the establishment of a Jewish nation-state in Zion, i.e., Israel, in what was then Palestine. Herzl strongly believed that with the meeting in Basle he established the Jewish nation (Herzl, 1953), and history has proven it so (Ben-Gurion, “Introduction,” Herzl, 1953). In *Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*, first published in 1896 (Herzl, 1953), Herzl envisioned a nation-state based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, on technology and common sense. Such a state would solve the Jewish problem by using the tools of the nineteenth century European movement of nationalism.

Although both a scholar and a member of the bourgeoisie, Herzl adopted and adapted ideas from the socialist movement that was competing with nationalism at that time. For example, in *Judenstaat* Herzl suggested that the national flag be white, ornamented with seven golden stars, white to represent purity and the seven stars to symbolize seven working hours per day: if the socialists fought for an eight-hour work day, the Jewish state would provide its citizens with even better conditions. In the introduction to *Judenstaat*, Herzl claimed to describe a vision, not a utopia. He suggested



and utilized practical ideas to fulfill the Jewish utopian dream of "next year in Jerusalem." He was aware that financing the new nation-state by means of regular finance instruments, in a country of desert and swampland, would not be a practical solution. Intuitively, Herzl understood that the "free market" would be unable and-or unwilling to handle such a visionary project. Consequently, he established a not-for-profit bank. Until today, about 90% of the land in Israel belongs to the state and not to private owners, as the Jewish National Fund, the fund-raising arm of the Zionist movement which purchased the land, leases it to people for only 50 years at a time.

From the earliest years of the Zionist movement through the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and up to the early 1970s, the most politically powerful parties were socialist in orientation. This political structure influenced public discourse, the ethos and the myths of the new State of Israel. Unlike society in the United States, where individualism is emphasized in public life, the collective was important in the Israeli ethos as well as in Israeli law (Kni-Paz, 1993). Over the years, Israel has become much like a European social-democrat country. John Kennedy's phrase, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," still applies to the Israeli ethos. However, under the postmodern condition in Israel, this notion can no longer be taken for granted. "In [contemporary] Israel there is a social ethos and [a] bourgeois capitalistic reality" (Ramon, in Kadosh, 2000, p. 16; my translation). The process of "globalization" has led to the privatization of many hitherto publicly controlled industries in Israel, and free-market rules have taken over the essential collective priorities (Kni-Paz, 1993).

The Zionist ethos, and subsequently the Israeli ethos, defines the ideal Zionist as

one who makes *aliyah* literally ascension, an essentially religious term used to describe the act of permanent immigration of a Jew to Israel (Cohen, 1979, p. 191). An even more literal translation is “moving up,” with connotations of moving to a superior state. The word *yeridah*, literally “going down” with negative connotations, is used to for the emigration of an Israeli from Israel, rather than using the more generic term for emigration [*hagirah*]. Zionism requires commitment to one center, that of Israel as a geographic, spiritual, historical, and cultural center of the Jewish people. But the most important defining feature in being a Zionist is making *aliyah*. Herzl (1953) asserted that Baron Hirsch had failed to establish a Jewish settlement in Argentina, because he was placing people in a location to which they had no historical, emotional, or spiritual attachment, and hence which had no meaning to them. In sociological terms, Herzl was saying that Argentina was not a “center” for the Jewish people, and thus he concluded that Zion (the land of Israel) was the only place where Jewish settlement would succeed.

Like postmodernism, post-Zionism accepts a pluralistic approach, having different centers located in different geographical locations. In the postmodern, post-Zionist era, what was an ethos of a one center that was a “melting pot” for the new nation, fragmented into a complex of self-segregated groups no longer ready to deal with their potential solidarity or any common denominator (Caldron, in Milner, 2000). By so doing, the commitment to the Zionist ethos diminishes. For example, if in the past most young Israelis were willing to accept compulsory military service, today many find ways to evade this duty. In recent years, about 20% of the age cohort (18 years old) of new recruits, have evaded this duty, and about 20% of those who start do not complete their service (Shavit, 2000). Shavit points out three processes that have accelerated in recent

years: (a) before entering the service, young people tend to be more concerned with self-actualization and less with their contribution to the community; (b) society is now more forgiving of evasion; and (c) the exempt status of yeshiva students (Orthodox Jewish students at religious schools) causes feelings of inequality (Abu'av, in Shavit, 2000). In June of 2000, the Orthodox members of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) pushed through a bill eradicating compulsory military service for all (Shelach, 2000).

Western postmodernism “reflects the political center’s inability to transmit a uniform message of value systems, norms, and beliefs about which the majority can be unified” (Kni-Paz, 1993, p. 418; my translation). Like other Western countries (and despite geographical location in Asia, its sociological location is essentially in the West), Israel has gone through a similar process, experiencing the same phenomenon, despite being a society that for years has been under siege, resulting in strong centralized state institutions. The Israeli institutions, says Kni-Paz, were established in such a way that recruiting the collective to accomplish national goals was possible. The legitimization of centralization came from two fundamental needs: (a) the need to establish a new and unified nation from an aggregate of people from different countries and with different languages and cultures; and (b) the constant need to protect the young country from its enemies, i.e., other states in the region.

With its roots in the European Enlightenment, the new country became an Israeli version of the European social-democrat approach (Kni-Paz, 1993). This holds that the state has the obligation, not merely the right, to implement changes designed to improve society, not the well-being of the free market. The postmodern pattern in Israeli society has been one of pluralism and fragmentation, weakening the political and social centers.

As in the rest of the Western world, the collective message is being diluted. People tend to prefer local news over global news, and the more the mass media expand, providing people with a huge number of options, the smaller is the collective communication experience.

Another example is the Israeli hi-tech industry that has adopted the management culture of California's Silicon Valley. It is an industry for young people, and those in their 40s become "unqualified," not qualified to deal with rapid technological changes, according to Fruham, the Vice President of Intel International and President of Intel Israel (Doron, 2000). American management's (alleged) panaceas invaded Israel and have been used (and abused) since the early 1970s, e.g., *Management by Objective*, *Total Quality Management*, or *Zero Defects*, to mention but a few. The recent American managerial best seller, *Who Moved my Cheese?* (Johnson, 1998) is no exception. The author uses an allegory to portray the postmodern condition in which the world is rapidly changed while people go on with "business as usual." The mice in the allegory are accustomed to find cheese in a particular place in the labyrinth every day. One day, they find that there is no cheese there. One of the mice complains about the situation and stubbornly continues to go to the old feeding spot, while the other mouse, after a time, starts searching for cheese in other places until he finds it. Shortly before his retirement, the Israeli military surgeon-general complained about the implicit message of this book and the way it reflected on the armed forces. He said that three different high-ranking officials had given him copies of the book. Neither the Israeli military nor the State of Israel, he contended, can abandon their collective orientation, particularly because of the constant security threats Israel encounters every day.

Despite the trend towards fragmentation, the question of national security still unites Israeli society (Kni-Paz, 1993). For many, Israel is *home* even if they have been living abroad for many years. Maget (1997) studied the meaning of *home* for Israelis who had emigrated to Canada, and noted that nearly all of his male respondents and some of the female respondents defined Israel as “home” and Canada as the place where they are living. In sociological terms, their center is in Israel. Another aspect of these centers is the concept of *place attachment* or *place identity*, as described in “Place identity,” p. 50. In terms of the Israeli ethos, their home is in Israel, and their identity is attached to Israel as homeland and spiritual center. After more than 20 years living in Canada, they still identify themselves as “Israelis,” and not as “Canadian-Israelis.” Maget also looked at Japanese immigrants to Canada. The Japanese, both men and women, as well as some of the Israeli women, reported that home is in Canada. They distinguished between “home,” “homeland,” and “identity.” What is it in the personality of Israeli men that makes their identity different from the women’s? Perhaps it is their military service in their young adulthood, occurring at that phase in development where one’s identity is being set (Erikson, 1968).

It should be kept in mind that Israel is geographically a small country; before the Six Day War (1967) in some parts barely five miles wide, and the length only 250 miles. Moreover, until recently enemy countries surrounded Israel on the north, east, and south, while on the west lay the Mediterranean Sea. For many years, the only way to leave Israel was by sea or by air, which contributed to a sense of claustrophobia among Israelis. The country’s small size, being surrounded by enemies, and the Zionist tradition all contributed to a high level of political involvement. More than 70% of the registered

voters participated in the last general elections. Although the population recently reached six million (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2000), there is still a sense of being a small village in which everyone knows everyone. Thus, when people are killed or injured in a terrorist attack, many people feel it personally as either a relative or a neighbor or an associate, or a relative of one of them, is involved, or because the attack occurred at a place they or those they know frequently go to that location. Rather than the apocryphal “six degrees of separation” (originally coined by S. Milgram), it seems that in Israel there are three degrees at most.

The news media in Israel contribute to the pressure and stress. Years before CNN, Israeli radio stations broadcast the news every half hour so that by switching between stations one can find a news magazine around the clock. Many Israelis are addicted to the news. As for the content of the news reports, there is never a dull moment! Reports dealing with terror, security, and political thunderstorms are broadcast repeatedly, creating “new news” even if nothing is really new. Second only to security issues in causing stress for Israelis is news about relations between religion and the state, and religious-secular relations. All contribute to the level of alienation and the increased number of Israelis who give up and emigrate, mostly to the United States. It has been estimated that at least half a million Israelis are now residents in the United States, many of them young professionals. As well, many Israelis feel the need for an annual “time out” abroad, as a means of keeping their sanity in a pressure cooker of a country. For example, in 1999, out of a population of only six million, 1,806,000 Israelis, aged 15 and over, departed via Ben Gurion Airport as “tourists” (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2000, p. 4-6). Thus it is not traveling abroad, but the distinct features of that travel, which are

unique to the journey of the backpackers.

Finally, Lieblich (1990) claims that the Israeli experience of entering adulthood is unique (at least for men). This uniqueness results from the specific culture and the ubiquity of military service. The age cohort of 18-21, which roughly correlates to that period Erikson (1968) describes as being used for a moratorium between childhood and adulthood to evaluate roles and characteristics, enters military service with its rigidity and demands (Lieblich, 1990). Lieblich concludes that their maturation is achieved in terms of *being* rather than *doing*, because it is while in the service they have to struggle with existential questions. Most of Lieblich's respondents reported that their self confidence was strengthened while in the service, and they took this positive experience as a tool for the future. Unlike American youngsters in the same age group, the "college age" group in the States, they did not rebel against their parents. Despite the physical distance from their parents while in the service, the emotional connection and involvement in one another's lives strengthened and intensified. Only about 25% of Lieblich's respondents reported experiencing disappointment and feelings of failure regarding their ability to handle challenges and achieve goals in the service. Lieblich concludes that, unlike American youngsters of the same age group, Israeli youth who serve in the military have a chance for *individuation*, but have to delay their *separation* to a later time. She found the Israelis in her study to be mature adults without the constraint of emotional detachment from their parents.

In general, the usual path from childhood to adulthood in Israel includes preschool, grade school, high school (including passing the matriculation examinations) or trade-school, university, entering a profession or occupation, and having a family.

Some of the respondents in this study called this path *maslul* (see Appendix E, Glossary).

**Backpackers in the Context of Tourism**

The back-packer phenomenon has been in existence for about twenty years. Its roots can be found in one of the many types of modern international tourism in the West, as discussed by Cohen (1972). Cohen proposed a typology of four different tourist roles: (1) the organized mass tourist, (2) the individual mass tourist, (3) the explorer, and (d) the drifter. These roles are Weberian ideal types located along a continuum of experiences, with “familiarity” at one pole and “novelty” at the other. In Cohen’s model, the level of organization defines the tourist’s experience. For “[T]he *organized mass tourist* . . . familiarity is at a maximum, novelty at a minimum” (p. 167). Here organized mass tourism is at one pole, the explorer and the drifter at the other pole (see Table 1).

Table 1

**The Familiarity vs. Novelty Continuum (Cohen, 1972) in regard to *Places*.**

Places are either familiar or anticipated. If the place is too “exotic,” it is viewed from an “environmental bubble.” Places may be familiar through study, anticipation and expectations, e.g., through a common narrative.	Familiarity ●————● Novelty	The place is remote, “bizarre,” having unfamiliar characteristics.

The *drifters* of the 1960s avoided the organized institutions, hotels, and transportation that were used by organized tourism. They did not hold any schedule or fixed route for their travel, and were part of a subculture that challenged the tenets of their society (see Table 2). Both the explorers and the drifters are sub-group that can be distinguished from the mass-tourism group.

Table 2

The Explorer vs. Drifter Continuum (Cohen, 1972) in regard to *Places*.

Place is valued if there is no mass-tourism. The place is valued by its authenticity, being unfamiliar to most of the people.	Explorer ●————● Drifter	Place is valued if the drifter is the only outsider there; when it is remote; and when it hosts a generally different culture.

*Drifters* have gone through a series of changes since the 1960s and are now in the process of *institutionalization* (Riley, 1988). They still keep a distance from organized tourism and its time frame, attraction based scheduling, and detachment from the host culture. However, they have gone through a process of creating their own attractions and norms. *Drifting* has become a movement in which status and prestige is determined by the way a tourist follows the group's norms. For example, how close to the local cost of living the person manages to be, how detached from organized tourism's attractions, how detached the person is from a fixed time frame. Nevertheless, Riley points out, drifters

have increased the degree of structure in their tours. Now they do tend to have a brief schedule, and do tend to gather in defined places along their routes. Keeping a tight budget, Riley indicates, is an essential characteristic of this type of tourism. How does this apply to the backpackers? Their extremely low budget behavior is called in Hebrew *hitkalvut* or “doggyness,” i.e., to become and behave like a dog.

Boorstin (1962) has distinguished between *tourists* and *travelers*. The tourist is looking for a light experience, a surface experience; he or she is looking for a series of altercations and events which become a superficial, “as-if” or “make-believe” experience. supplementing the real thing to the loss of authentic reality. An authentic real life does not appear in tourist attractions. Fjellman (1992) describes one such mass tourism phenomenon, in its extreme form, in describing the tourist experience at Walt Disney World (WDW):

We are told constantly how to feel about each WDW venue. They are called attractions; we are guests; Disney workers are cast members. ...The language for describing our experience is preempted by the Company. Everything is magical. Guidebooks, advertisements, and commemorative literature drip with description. This is “exhilarating”; that is “wonderful” or “amazing.” We are told what is whimsical: “You don’t want to miss X”; “everybody loves Y”; “we all become children at Z.” (Fjellman, 1992, p. 13)

The tourist industry in general, and tourist guides in the field in particular, take over the tourists’ responsibility for creating their experiences.

Tourists want safety and comfort and they pay for these features with lack of authenticity, i.e., with detachment from the authentic cultures of the places they visit.

Tourists narrow the scale of feelings and experience they may have in a given space. They put themselves in a bubble and stay in it for emotional and physical safety throughout their trips. Thus, for example, it can be said that American tourists carry a “Little America” with them wherever they go.

*Travelers*, unlike *tourists*, are traveling more individually, and are able to have more connection with authentic people and cultures, i.e., the traveler has a chance to interact with common people, not only with employees of the tourism industry (Boorstin, 1962). Here, in Boorstin’s discussion, a continuum of authenticity defines the two ideal types, the *tourist* and the *traveler*.

Mass tourism, in its search for authenticity, even if it is a set-up, may push the envelope by using the experience of the drifters or the explorers, to approach new places they never before dared to go (Cohen, 1972). Recently, for example, the *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro have been set up and prepared for mass tourism (Hart, 2000). The *favelas* provide tourist information stations and special (safe) transportation for exploring the slums, areas once explored only by the *travelers* (Boorstin, 1962), or by the *explorer* and the *drifter* (Cohen, 1972).

The tourism and advertising industries are fully aware of the distinction between *traveler* and *tourist* as social constructs, and try to promote tourism as a product of the traveler’s experience. In a random sampling at a Barnes & Noble store, I picked up the June, 2000, issue of *Condé Nast Travelers: Truth in Travel*. On page 146, Radisson Seven Seas advertises that, “Tourists see the world. Travelers experience it.” On page 84 there is the suggestion to “relax Cayman Island style.” Even reports in a magazine whose subtitle claims it is *Truth in Travel* try to sell tourism as a traveler’s experience. For

example, Adam Platt (2000) describes his experience at St. Lucia in the Caribbean as: “Three degrees of *exploration*. First, the cruise ship. Second, the resort. Third, the villa” (p. 134. Italics added). To convince the reader that no mass tourism is present, there is a photograph of the author lying on the bed, in the villa, with the first-person statement that he is alone, experiencing solitude. The reader is not supposed to wonder who took the picture. Later, Platt underlines the point of a non-tourist experience by writing that: “Two days at the villa, and I was *no tourist*” (p. 141. Italics added). The above examples suggest that Boorstin’s (1962) distinction between the tourist and the traveler, and the different connotations of each, are based on empirical observation, that the distinction is understood by laypeople, and that it is acknowledged and widely used by the tourist industry.

Cohen (1979) defined and distinguished five forms of modern tourism, ranging from *tourist* at one pole of a continuum and *pilgrim* at the other. The relation of this continuum to people’s centers and the way they experience centers is at the heart of the discussion. “[E]very society possesses a center, which is the charismatic nexus of its supreme, ultimate moral values” (Cohen, 1979, p. 180). People may have “multiple centers, e.g., political, religious or cultural” and “in modern society these centers do not necessarily overlap, and their paramount symbols may be differentially located” (p. 181). Thus, for example, a spiritual center such as Jerusalem or Mecca may be located in a place other than where the individual lives. Attachment to a center influences one’s experience of a place and one’s conception of that space, as summarized in Table 3.

In Cohen’s model, the first mode of a tourist’s experience is the “Recreational Mode.” In this mode, tourists move from their center to reinforce adherence to the center

of their society's culture. The social function of the trip is to recharge the tourist's batteries, so to speak. Consequently, the meaning of the trip is the (re)constitution of the tourist's center. If the "pilgrim is newly born or re-created at the [religious or spiritual] center, the tourist is merely 'recreated'" (p. 184). The tourist is not expected to experience authenticity, and is aware of watching a well-produced show. The unrealistic or unauthentic features experienced on a tour, as in the theater, reflect a legitimate way to present the unpleasant realities of society.

Table 3

The Pilgrim vs. Tourist Continuum (Cohen, 1979) in regard to *Places*.

The pilgrim is moving from the periphery toward her or his cultural <i>center</i> .	Pilgrim ● ————— ●	Tourist	The tourist is moving from her or his cultural <i>center</i> toward the periphery.
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The "diversionary mode" is "the meaningless pleasure of a center-less person" (p. 186). The experience here is similar to that of the recreational mode's tourist, but this person is *not interested in adhering to ties to his or her center*. Such persons experience alienation to their center and the trip is a means of escaping the boredom and meaninglessness of everyday life. This type of tourist doesn't try to reach into or experience other centers, and thus it can be said that the "diversionary tourist moves in a center-less space" (p. 186).

In the "experiential mode," tourists are likely to be younger members of the middle class of a postmodern society. They are aware of their alienation, and postponing

the option of revolution. Through tourism, they may search for meaning in the lives of other people (MacCannell, in Cohen, 1979). Feeling alienated toward their own society, they believe authentic experience is possibly only by breaking the routine and banality of the everyday life of their center. These tourists present a search similar to the religious search of the pilgrim. The differences are twofold. First, the pilgrim is traveling *toward* his or her spiritual center but the (experiential) tourist is traveling *away from* his or her society's center. Secondly, the pilgrim feels close to others in the center but the tourist is always a stranger, even in the midst of an authentic experience. The pilgrims' implicit goal is a oneness in experience; the tourists witness but remain separate.

The "experimental mode" includes people who are *seekers*, similar to but more extremist than *drifters* (Cohen, 1972). It is not clear for exactly what the seekers are looking. For some, what is found may become a way of life; others may move from a kibbutz in Israel to an ashram in India, always refusing full commitment to any of these places, i.e., to any center.

The "existential mode" is characterized by the traveler who is fully committed to an "elective spiritual center" which is "external to the mainstream of his native society and culture" (Cohen, 1979, p. 190). The center for the existential tourist is not the center of the culture of origin; rather it is an elective center, one that is chosen and to which the existential tourist converts. This tourist makes a "journey from chaos into another cosmos, from meaningless to authentic existence" (p. 190). People in this mode may be committed to more than one center. For example, some American Jews may have Israel as their elective spiritual center and the United States as their everyday cultural center.

As suggested in recent studies, the backpackers phenomenon has already been

established, if not fully institutionalized. They go to certain places that are “in” and they carry “Little Israel” with them (Mevorach, 1997; Noy, 2000; Simchai, 19998). To answer the demand of the Israeli backpackers, some poor neighborhoods in the East and in South America are providing them with Israeli food, and Hebrew-speaking local services (Simchai, 1998). Thus, the continuum model described above provides one theoretical framework for the discussion of the phenomenon under study.

*Conformism* is another continuum along which tourism can be described, that is, the degree to which the tourists conform to or rebel against their society of origin. Drifters (Cohen, 1972) are part of the culture of “anti” or rebellion, and thus are looking for more integration with the host culture of their destination. However, Cohen wrote later (1984), being “tourists” means that people are on a circuitous route that sooner or later brings them back to their point of (country of) origin, which indicates a certain amount of conformity.

Writing more than fifteen years after Cohen (1972) and almost two decades after the 1960's drifters phenomenon, Riley (1988) argues with Cohen's observations, claiming that “long-term budget travelers” are no longer part of the culture of rebellion. Not only are they well educated, they keep to certain safety rules in their trips, e.g., sticking to a budget. Even their drug use is within their cohort's standard limits. The trip, Riley writes, is a delay, a temporary moratorium from their duties as adults, a delay in carrying out their role in society. They postpone their responsibilities and duties and use the trip as a legitimate and accepted means of a self-imposed moratorium.

The British aristocrats of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries who took the “Grand Tour” as the last part of their education, the American ex-patriots

who moved to Paris between the two World Wars, and pilgrims throughout history, all were looking for meaning in their lives, utilizing their travel as a means of searching. Turner (1973) suggests that modern tourism deals with the same goal. Turner describes tourism as an experience of detachment from the country of origin in order to experience something that will change the person who makes the journey, that will provide new meaning to the traveler's life. Turner, coining the term *liminality* in regard to the second phase of the rite of passage (Turner, 1977) claims that the modern tourist experience is truly liminal. In previous centuries, Turner asserts, people went on pilgrimage for similar reasons: so their lives would have new meaning. Modern travelers are going through analogous experiences of detachment from the culture of origin—*rite of separation*—through the journey—*liminality*—to ultimate acquiring a new social role—the *rite of aggregation*. The liminal stage is characterized by only vague attachment to norms and values, as the individual is no longer in the previous role but has not yet transformed into the new one. Both cases, the pilgrim and the secular traveler are moving from one location in life to another. Accomplishing this process, they are going back to their place of origin. Turner (1973) points out that the secular person is living a secular life in one place, but may have a spiritual or emotional attachment to another, i.e., may have another center.

### The Backpackers in Recent Studies

Yaakobson (1987) first used the term *tarmila'im* (from the Hebrew word for backpack) to describe the Israeli backpackers. Not until the latter part of the 1990s did the word *tarmila'im* enter into the spoken language. In recent years, social and behavioral

scholars have studied the phenomenon, suggesting that the backpackers are not one homogeneous group.

Yaakobson described the journeys of the backpackers as “secular pilgrimages.” For many, he added, the journey is a rite of passage, one that takes place before young people are established in their society. For some, the journey is a challenge, a self-test of surviving difficult conditions, or is simply the challenge of being, for the first time in their lives, totally independent. The participants in Yaakobson’s study were drawn toward the centers of other cultures, only to return to their center in Israeli society. Yaakobson distinguishes between the Israeli backpackers and the young American and European travelers of the 1960s, the drifters who had been characterized as a “protest movement” (or a protest in movement). The drifters of the 1960s saw themselves as rejecting their society’s norms and values. The Israeli youngsters, on the other hand, are not rejecting the norms and values of their society. Their journeys are an attempt at a solution that will improve their ability to enter back into Israeli society as adults. Thus, Yaakobson concluded that the journey functions as a rite-of-passage.

The most comprehensive study of the backpackers was done by Mevorach (1997), using a random sample of 4,071 young Israelis who had completed military service during 1988 and 1991. He sent them letters in which he asked them to participate in his study. One of the goals of his study (the first phase) was to determine the main demographic characteristics of those who made a lengthy trip after completing military service. In the second phase, Mevorach sent a questionnaire to the 1,005 who had replied to his initial letter.<sup>1</sup> All respondents were under the age of 24 years (the targeted sample)

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<sup>1</sup>Mevorach’s study, using a mail questionnaire technique, demonstrates the weakness of such a method.

and had served a full term in the military. All had completed twelve years of formal education. The vast majority, 92.2%, had been born in Israel, and the majority came from middle-class families. Comparing people from the same age group who completed service at the same time but did not travel, Mevorach noted some major demographic differences between the backpackers and those who did not travel. The backpackers were more likely to be secular, come from a better economic condition at home, have a higher educational background, and were likely to be Ashkenazi (having European ancestors).

Mevorach's study also addressed qualitative issues. The findings show four areas of typical change in the travelers as compared to the non-travelers. For many, the trip was a boundary-less time-space, intertwined with the influence of local cultures that moved with a slow pace, and did not idolize materialistic achievements. Second, some travelers had conflicts with their parents who hadn't blessed the journey, but in most cases relations with their parents were re-evaluated and even restructured. Third, there were changes in the backpackers' relations with and attitude toward Israel, and fourth, there were changes in their attitude toward the use of drugs. This last issue, drug use, is a criterion by which Leon (2000) distinguishes two groups or varieties of backpackers in India.

Leon did his fieldwork in India, and he estimated that about one-third of the backpackers belonged to a group named *Ista'im*. (ISTA is a large student travel agency in Israel.) A second third are the *Karhanistim*, derived from the "Trance" subculture's slang, meaning "wild party"; the verb [to] *le'hitkarchen* means to use drugs continuously—in

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Only about 25% of the sample population responded to his request. Thus, generalizations may be made about those who responded, but not about those who did not respond or participate. The problems inherent in a self-administered mail questionnaire or one administered to self-selecting volunteer respondents are

Arabic, *karhana* means bordello.<sup>2</sup> The final third of backpackers lie somewhere on the continuum between the two groups. The Karhanistim usually settle in one place for a long period of time, and spend their time doing drugs (mainly Ecstasy, but also LSD and other hallucinogens and lesser drugs like cannabis and hashish), Trance music and Trance parties, and concern themselves with nothing else.

Table 4

The Karhanistim vs. Istaim Continuum (Leon, 2000) in regard to *Places*.

A place has no value in itself. It is a container for particular activities of drug-use, Trans-music, and parties. The place is "good" as long as the authorities or neighbors do not interrupt its activities.	Karhanistim	● — — ●	Istaim	The place is a container of "time", experiences and attractions, as well as experimenting with boundaries and rule-breaking.
			[This group has been described by Simchai (1998) and Mevorach (1997)]	
		[People on these poles do not mix with the "opposite" group]		

The Ista'im are looking for different kinds of experiences and have different goals for their journey. They use places as "containers" for experimentation in rule-breaking. Places may be part of their "must" list, arranged by the group narrative (Noy, 2000). The Ista'im may try drugs as part of their "must" checklist, those experiences that one should try, but drug use is not their main concern. They may try drugs as part of the effort to re-examine boundaries, limits, and rules (see Table 4), but they are aware of what they are

discussed in Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup>"Trance" parties are like the "Rave" parties in the United States.

doing (Simchai, 2000). The two groups do not blend, and even when they are sharing the same place, they tend to stay among people of “their kind” (Leon, 2000), each group speaking its own jargon, practicing and recreating its own narrative. (Thus the visual presentations in Table 4, Figure 4, and Figure 6 present the continuum as “broken.”)

The backpackers’ narrative is at the center of Noy’s (2000) study. Noy claims that although each person has individual stories, at the social level these stories melt into a cultural and social “meta-narrative,” that is, a common or shared narrative, that distinguishes the phenomenon of the Israeli backpackers. The experiences during the trip are influenced by more than just external interactions—e.g., the trek, bungee jumping, etc.—but also result from internal processes. The meta-narrative, or collective narrative, is created through thousands of interactions among and between people who made the journey, people who made the journey and those who did not, and people who made the journey and people who plan to do so. Consequently, even as the airplane is taking off from Israel, the novice back-packer already carries with him or her parts of the narrative. Each back-packer has expectations, advice from veterans, particular equipment purchased for the trip, together with his or her own genuine here-and-now experience. The individual’s unique experience will be added to the meta-narrative’s “melting pot” when the individual returns to Israel. These interactions— between the novice and the veteran, the “just-came-back” and the “not-yet-gone-out,” the teller and the listener—create the backpackers’ reality, and thus, they affect the individual’s experiences, and the experience of those experiences, during the journey.

The experience of the backpackers, Simchai (2000) asserts, is unique. A major

component in this experience is the challenge of societal values, questioning the taken-for-granted social order, and evaluating where they, the backpackers, stand in that order. Simchai agrees with Noy (2000) that the backpackers' perception of their journey is established well before take-off by the meta-narrative of the Israeli backpackers. An experience felt strongly by the backpackers is "freedom" (Simchai, 2000). This feeling of freedom is the summit of their journey, and it provides meaning to the journey. They experiment with right vs. wrong, permitted vs. prohibited, and temptation vs. danger. Simchai concluded that the learning experience of the backpackers is attained by utilizing their choices and the feeling of independence that follows the act of choice.

The long term influence of the journey's experience on the lives of veteran backpackers is at the center of Heical's (2000) work. She studied people in their thirties who had traveled to the Orient during their twenties. She compared two groups, secular and religious backpackers. Both secularists and religious reported that issues of identity and attachment to Israeli society had been central to their inner process throughout their journeys. For secularists, the journey was a meaningful experience that directly influenced their lives. The religious respondents, on the other hand, did not find the trips as meaningful, reporting the trips had only marginal influence on their current lives. Heical suggests that the difference results from the fact that such trips are not the norm in religious society, but are a deviant pattern. Therefore, the travelers, once back in their original social milieu, were constrained to show that rather than "betraying" their community, the experience had reinforced their belief in and acceptance of the religious norms and values of their community. Although traveling abroad for the journey was a nonconformist act in their subculture, they wanted to show that the trip had not

influenced devotion to their religious life or to their belief system.

Backpackers in their thirties are at the center of Maoz's (2000) work. Although most studies of backpackers focus on those traveling while in their twenties, Maoz focuses on those who did not make their journeys immediately after military service. Unlike the journeys of the younger backpackers, who travel with groups and keep their "social bubble" about them, people in their thirties tend to travel alone. They tend to stay in one place for a lengthy period of time, weeks or even months, creating routines, taking time to deal with their inner processes. Until they actually went on their journey, these older backpackers tended to conform to societal norms and mores, trying to answer society's expectations. The journey was the first attempt to make a change, to break boundaries and to deal with a meaningful mental and spiritual process.

Backpackers may stop in particular places for a long period of time for various reasons. It may simply be that the person has spent all of his or her money, and now has to work in order to save for the next stage of the trip; it may be someone wants to stay in an ashram for a while; or a person may wish to experience the host culture more deeply than possible in a short stay. Following Clifford's idea of "traveling-in-dwelling," Bloch-Tzemach (2000) studied Israelis who had chosen to stay in Japan for a while, during or after the long trip after military service. This particular experience can be characterized in a series of dualisms: settling vs. travel, change vs. routine, the feeling of belonging vs. the feeling of strangeness, and the benefit aspects vs. the emotional aspects.

Finally, a number of researchers have addressed the issue of drug use during the backpackers' journeys (Bar-Hamburger, 2000; Leon, 2000; Mevorach, 1997; Simchai, 1988, 2000). Bar-Hamburger (2000), chief scientist of the Israeli Authority Against Drug

Use, found in her study that 36% of the former back-packer in her sample of university students had used drugs during their trips, compared to only 16% of the students who hadn't traveled. Readiness to use drugs and actual use of drugs is positively correlated. Readiness might be initiated by the meta-narrative (Noy, 2000) or the experimentation with freedom (Simchai, 2000), both of which build up the novice's expectations. Among those who hesitated about using drugs, 64% used drugs once they were on the trips, compared to 34% who hesitated and then used drugs among non-backpackers (Bar-Hamburger, 2000). Bar-Hamburger estimated that about 30,000 Israelis go on these journeys annually, and that about 2% of them, or 600, are coming back suffering from psychotic symptoms resulting from drug use. Some of them may never recover and remain in a psychiatric hospital for the rest of their lives.<sup>3</sup>

### The Postmodern Condition: An Ever-changing Environment

#### Some Aspects of Postmodernism

*Postmodernism* is an inclusive term that some claim was constructed by "intellectuals" for their own purpose; that it deals with epistemology and academia (Audi, 1995; Bauman, 1988; Craig, 1998). Postmodernity challenges modernity, offering an epistemological skepticism toward enlightenment-modernism and its positivist approach. Positivism originated in the axioms of the Enlightenment, promising that one ultimate truth exists, that the world is one, that knowledge will solve all human problems, and that objectivity is possible (Audi, 1995; Chadwick, 1998; Craig, 1998; Funkenstein &

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<sup>3</sup>In her article, Bar-Hamburger does not provide details about the type or kind of drugs used. In the case of those who became psychotic, it may be the result of using the "Thai mushroom," or of overdosing on psychedelic drugs such as LSD or Ecstasy.

Steinsaltz, 1987). The positivist notion has been replaced by ideas of relativism, multiple truths, and pluralism.

Postmodernism is seen in architecture, art, and the social sciences (Lyotard, 1984; Jameson, 1991) and is perceived as both a cultural movement and a cultural transformation in Western societies (Huysseveldt, in Harvey, 1990). Jameson (1991) refers to postmodernity as *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, in which culture becomes part of the commodification process and thus, part of the process that is characterized by faster turnover (time) for capital and production (Harvey, 1990). This turnover, Jameson (1991) writes, is valid for cultural artifacts as well. Furthermore, Jameson ascribes the postmodern shift to a crisis in our experience of space and time, in which spatial categories dominate those of time, a shift to the postmodern hyperspace of the “global village.” Harvey (1990) agrees with this argument, and points to the shift from “Fordism” to “flexible accumulation” in which the investor’s money is spinning around the globe, looking for an appropriate place to land and grow.

Many agree that postmodernism is about cultural change, if not cultural revolution, starting in the early 1970s (Betz, 1992; Heller, 1993; Jameson, 1991; Lyotard, 1984). “If modern culture was largely dominated by academia, the culture of postmodernism is shaped by the masses via television” (Featherstone, in Betz, 1992, p. 96). In this way, television has created a new world with new heroes, and the consumers are living “beyond normatively and classification in aesthetic hallucination of reality” (p. 96). Heller (1993) considers postmodernism the third wave in a transformation process initiated after the Second World War. The first wave was *existentialism*, which started soon after the war and lasted until the mid-1950s, when

young people in Europe adopted Sartre's message. Existentialism as a movement was the *revolt of subjectivity* against the ossification of bourgeois forms of life. The second wave was the *alienation* generation, which reached its peak in 1968. It occurred during a high point of prosperity in the economy, filled with unachieved social possibilities. The experience of the alienated generation was the twilight of subjectivity and freedom, and freedom remained the main value. The members of the alienation generation were committed to collectivity and the search for freedom was a collective search (unlike the individualistic existentialism). *Postmodernism* is the third wave, that originated in 1968. "Postmodernism as a cultural movement has a simple enough message: *anything goes*" (Heller, 1993, p. 503. Italics added).

Postmodernity is about change. The metanarratives that rules the Western world since the Enlightenment, were converted into an endless number of small or local narratives (Lyotard, 1984), reciprocate with cultural fragmentation (Connor, 1989; Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1991). During modernity, legitimation was the product of scholars and intellectuals (Bauman, 1988), upholding positivism as the canonical epistemological approach (Audi, 1995). It was an ideology that sustained, both directly and indirectly, the West's hegemony, providing legitimation to colonialism and capitalism. Postmodernity, however, suggests a new kind of epistemology, the phenomenological approach, along with subjectivity, the attitude of anything goes, and a new historical approach (cultural history) (Belsey, 1993). As a culturally based movement, it suggests awareness of ethnocentrism and grass-roots (or populism), rather than elitism, as characterizing modern arts and architectural design (Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1991).

Harvey (1990) places the beginning of postmodernism in architecture in 1972, when the “Pruitt-Igoe housing development in St. Louis was dynamited as an uninhabitable environment for the low-income people it housed” (p. 39). Le Corbusier (1998), who represents high-modernism in architecture, wrote in his manifesto *Toward Architecture* that art is not for the masses, but for the elite. He preached the idea of a building as a “machine for modern living,” and searched for the beauty and efficiency that he perceived (interchangeably) in complex machines like airplanes and automobiles. Le Corbusier perceived a habitation as “house” not as “home.” Consequently, the rebels of postmodernism claim that it is time “to build for *people* rather than for *Man*” (Harvey, 1990, p. 40. *Italics added*). Harvey points to modernism’s tendency to plan and develop while focusing on the large-scale metropolitan area, holding rational and efficient ideas derived from the “international style’s” functionalism.

The postmodern architect may see the urban fabric as fragmented, a collage of new buildings superimposed on older ones (Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1991). Postmodern design shifts from the elite to the populist. Aesthetics is now the power to shape the design, not necessarily social projects. In this view, the city consists of urban communities, which differ from one another, and each may be perceived as a “city within a city” (Krier, in Harvey, 1990, p. 67). The fragmentation that characterizes postmodernity in other fields appears in postmodern architecture in a similar way. Fragmentation results from the end of the unified meta-language that “breaks into highly differentiated discourses” (Harvey, 1990, p. 82).

These multi-languages and multi-discourses may lead to confusion, as Jameson (1991) points out when he describes the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. This

building, Jameson writes, is a popular building, and people come to see and visit it. It is a total space, a kind of miniature city, a city within a city. Its glass skin helps to keep the interior invisible from the outside, while reflecting, like a mirror, the neighborhoods around it. By so doing, the building is connected to the city around it; the people outside do not see the building only, but also see other buildings as mirrored by the glass skin. This is in contrast, Jameson writes, to Le Corbusier's *pilotis* project that "separate[s] the Utopian space of the modern from the segregated and fallen city fabric" (p. 41).

The Bonaventure Hotel includes a large shopping area, or mall, and from the beginning it was clear that people couldn't find their way about in this space—a similar situation occurred in Dizengof Center in Tel-Aviv (Berger, 1998). The confusion, the bewilderment, is not a coincidence, but rather an inherent characteristic of postmodernity. The problem, according to Jameson (1991), is that in our minds we have not yet created the right "maps" for the "global multinational and decentered communication network." In Disneyland, the most important concern of the operators (and designers) is the "motion," the lines, the people in motion, moving from one attraction to another (Fjellman, 1992). Places such as these have been designed for the "stroller," the postmodernist who acts on the mall as if it were a stage (Bauman, 1996). It has to deal with the shorter turnover time of late capitalism, which in this case aims to bring consumers to as many attractions as possible during their stay—to keep the flow moving, to accelerate the turnover. The designer of the Bonaventure Hotel didn't make a mistake, Jameson (1991) said, but rather a *leisure space* in the postmodern context.

Finally, it is widely agreed that linguistics leads the current trend in contemporary philosophy, and that it has paved the way to the concept of postmodernism (Audi, 1995;

Chadwick, 1998; Craig, 1998). As well, linguistics has provided us with the concepts of *discourse* and *narrative*, that shape the way we read contemporary social maps.

Postmodernism is a complex phenomenon with numerous aspects. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide a comprehensive description of postmodernism. Here, the focus is on the postmodern condition, concentrating on the social and economic condition of the past thirty years.

### The Postmodern Condition

The main feature of the postmodern world is *uncertainty*, resulting from a high rate of change in the economy, social structure, belief systems, and culture. The titles *The Age of Uncertainty* (Galbraith, 1978) and *Power Shift* (Toffler, 1990) metaphorically present the contemporary condition. Uncertainty comes into view in people's experience of their environment, changes in aspects of time and space (Harvey, 1990), and the fragmentation of time (Bauman, 1996; Betz, 1992). The old certainties were a source of "realistic expectations." For example, fifty years ago, acquisition of a profession guaranteed lifetime job security (Galbraith, 1978), but today such security is an unrealistic expectation. In fact, Galbraith portrays the emergence of uncertainty as an outcome of the industrial revolution. It is the pace of change in recent years that has accentuated uncertainty into what Toffler (1971) called "future shock."

Lyotard (1984) focused on the metanarratives that in the past (during modernity) had provided us with acceptable maps of the world. Postmodernity is defined by incredulity toward metanarratives and promises no true map. This uncertainty, in which maps no longer fit the social landscape, is a source of concern about identity (Jenkins, 1996).

The power held by the old industries has been turned over to the information, services, and entertainment industries (Betz, 1992; Lyotard, 1984; Toffler, 1990), as a transition from a manufacturing to a service economy (Betz, 1992; Harvey, 1990). This transition includes a shift from the large-scale production line (Fordism) that produced uniform products to a “flexible accumulation” economy that produces small batches of products and services aimed at a variety of specific niches (Friedman, 1999/2000; Harvey, 1990; Toffler, 1990). This flexibility serves to shorten the turnover time of capital. Capital started to move around the globe, in the search for opportunities to produce faster and cheaper, in turn contributing to people’s feelings of uncertainty. The result was to “accentuate volatility and ephemerality of fashions, products, production techniques, labor processes, ideas and ideologies, values and established practices” (Harvey, 1990, p. 285). The rapid turnover time contributes to time fragmentation, another characteristics of the postmodern condition (Bauman, 1996; Harvey, 1990). As a result, people need to be able to deal with short-term planning.

“Power is distributed across a global network of multinational corporations and communicational structures” (Connor, 1989, p. 227). Corporations no longer need to look for legitimation to maintain power (Harvey, 1990; Mongardini, 1992; Toffler, 1990). Instead, people are controlled by seduction or repression, or a combination of the two (Fjellman, 1992; Toffler, 1990). The “power shift” also means a shift toward more seduction, as it is more effective and more efficient than repression (Toffler, 1990); “soma” is more effective than “the guillotine” (Fjellman, 1992). Moreover, the maps by which we see the world were created by powers that are external to the democratic system. People tend to be indifferent to this phenomenon or unaware of the situation. The

new colonialism is a cultural one, based mainly on consumerism and seduction. It is supported by a high level of comodification, and very few resist the process (Schor, 1998). This comodification is epitomized by the advertising industry that tries to sell products by selling identities (Jenkins, 1996).

The postmodern cultural revolution is soothed by the seductive soma, and few want to fight for any ideology. Smith, Bethel, Gallagher and Gordon (1996) point out that the *culture wars* as described by the media are a myth. "The important issues for the mass of Americans . . . remain economic and social, not culture war issues" (p. 1). Activities that are covered by television, such as a cultural war, are in fact engaged in by a small number of people who wish (like any guerilla movement) that the masses will follow them. Using a contemporary term, they are trying to impose their narrative on the masses, to influence other people's ethos and belief systems.

Another of Toffler's (1990) terms, "the third wave," suggests a shift from *nationalism*, in which the basic macroeconomic unit is the nation-state, to the *globalization* of the information age. This is an economic change, in which the "global gains power at the expense of the *national*" (Sassen, 1998, p. xix, Italics added). One of the major political trends, writes Michael Reisch (2000), is that:

[E]conomic globalization has dramatically altered the ability of governments to ameliorate the social cost of a basically unfettered market. It affects what might constitute a publicly funded social safety net and who will create it in the future... The political effect of globalization requires us to adjust our thinking in two seemingly contradictory ways. We need to look beyond national boundaries in our search for policy solutions and focus increased attention on local efforts, with the goal of rebuilding social protections on a state-by-state, even a community-by-community basis. (pp. 293-294)

The meaning of this aspect of the process, which reflects the postmodern characteristic of fragmentation, is that some cities became partners or took the place of the nation-state in

new macroeconomic trends, and through the process of globalization (Sassen, 1998).

Sassen's (1998) and Harvey's (1990) ideas about the influence of globalization on the everyday life of cities are illustrated in Dave Barry's humorous, but well grounded, description of driving in Miami:

The driving here, that's a little unnerving. My theory is that everybody drives according to the laws of his or her individual country of origin. So they're all obeying some law, but it's not necessarily the same law. (In Mann, 2000, p.57).

How do the above changes affect people, and how do people react? Two main aspects are addressed here: the influence of the postmodern condition on people's sense of self, and the strategies people use to deal with the postmodern condition.

#### Some Aspects of the Self in the Postmodern Condition

Gergen's (1991) *The Saturated Self* and Cushman's (1990) *The Empty Self* are two metaphoric views of the self in the contemporary era. The two metaphors, although suggesting a contradictory vision, are both rooted in the same features of the postmodern condition. The post-World War II condition, particularly in the United States society is characterized by the absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning that form the "empty self" (Cushman, 1990). Western "self-contained individualism" is the last phase of the self's historical development. As a cultural artifact, the self is a product "of the social construction of each particular era" (p. 601), and the post-World War II self in America is no exception. The new economy and the loss of community after the war constructed the empty self, so necessary to be a participant in "the consumer-based economy" (p. 603). The decline of the extended family unit contributed to the shift of the

self into the “locus of salvation” and led to the “never ending search for ‘self actualization’ and ‘growth’” (p. 603). Inner emptiness manifested itself in low self-esteem, eating disorders, value confusion, drug abuse, and chronic consumerism. An absence of personal meaning led people to search for a guru, and for psychotherapy, that only worsened the situation.

Hillman and Ventura (1993) agreed with this observation, entitling their book *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse*. Their main critique points out the obsessive attention paid to the “inner child” by psychotherapists in the USA during the 1970s and 1980s. Long term psychotherapies allowed and legitimated people staying in touch with and emotionally remaining their “inner children,” despite the fact that a democratic society needs mature citizens to maintain itself.

The shift from the sexually restricted self (dating to Victorian times) to the empty self occurred at the same time as the American economy was shifting from a savings economy to a debtor economy. Both shifts answered political goals of regulating the economy and controlling the population (Cushman, 1990). This movement was contemporary with an increased rate of capital turnover (Harvey, 1990), and resulting in a rejection of the delayed gratification life strategy that had characterized modernity (Bauman, 1996).

Technological inventions in communication, the mass media, tourism, and entertainment, saturated us with harmonious and alien voices alike. Consequently, the self that in the past had possessed real and identifiable characteristics is now dismantled (Gergen, 1991). Gergen describes a discussion between a modernist mother and her

postmodernist teenage daughter. The mother didn't want to buy a particular dress because "it just isn't me." The daughter's response is: "But Mom, that isn't the point. With that dress you would really *be* somebody" (p. 139). In her postmodern world, the daughter has no individual essence "to which she remains true or committed" (p. 139). In his discussion, Gergen asserts that the "fully *saturated self* becomes *no self at all*" (p. 7. *Italics added*). Thus, the daughter's self could be described as *empty*.

The simple self of romanticism and modernity is now a complicated entity, as represented by our language that had added many terms describing the self over the past century. Terms such as low self-esteem, depression, identity crisis, anorexia, paranoid, and authoritarian, have all entered into our common language, not just for specialists but also for laypersons. Many of these terms are dealing with mental deficiencies; all are constructs of our culture. In a spiral model, Gergen (1991) said, people learn these terms and internalize them, then the professionals become more precise and create new definitions, which in turn are acquired by the people. According to this perspective, our great-grandfathers didn't know he had an unconscious, nor that he suffered from an inferiority complex, and he loved his mother simply as a boy loves his mother. We are saturated by all these traits attributed to our *selves*. Moreover, in the postmodern condition, we are "bombarded with ever increasing intensity by images of others" (p. 15). Through this exposure, we develop a *postmodern consciousness*, no longer feeling secure or experiencing a secure sense of self, and thus we experience fear and insecurity about our identity. This is how the *saturated self* becomes an *empty* one.

Not only does the contemporary era provide people with more alternatives in employment, education, and culture, new technological successes suggest still more

alternatives in the biological and physical aspects of life. For example, parenthood is now defined by genetic tests with high reliability (well over 99%) and legal instruments have had to be adjusted, or to deviate from old axioms (Stone, 1996). A construct like “gender,” that in modernity was defined by chromosomes, is now redefined and the term’s relevancy even challenged: “The homosexual challenges a second critical criterion for determining gender: sexual preference” (Gergen, 1991, p. 144). Where Sartre (1989) portrayed a situation in which society is a mirror to the individual to use in the process of building an identity, the multicultural, fragmented society suggests a multiplicity of mirrors from which the individual needs to choose; postmodernity provides many new narratives from which to choose in order to construct one’s identity.

Bauman (1996), dealing with what he terms *a Short History of Identity* suggests that a *pilgrim* is the metaphor used to describe the identity of the modernist. Identity construction depends on the requirements of the era and thus the problem that identity building approaches.

Indeed, if the *modern* ‘problem of identity’ was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* ‘problem of identity’ is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open. In the case of identity, as in other cases, the catchword of modernity was creation; the catchword of postmodernity is recycling... The main identity-bound anxiety of modern times was the worry about durability; it is the concern with commitment-avoidance today.

(Bauman, 1996, P. 18. Italics added)

Modernity, Bauman says, gave the pilgrim of old Christianity, “a new prominence and a seminally novel twist” (p. 19). For the pilgrim, “the true place is always some distance, some time away. Wherever the pilgrim may be now, it is now where he ought to be, and not where he dreams of being” (p. 20). This stems from the Judeo-Christian culture, says Sennett (in Bauman, 1996), which “is at its very roots, about experience of spiritual

dislocation and homelessness. . . . Our faith began at odds with place” (p. 20).

The desert is where the pilgrim feels safe. The desert puts a distance between a person and his or her duties and society’s expectations of that person. In society, mainly in modern cities, the individual is framed by the buildings, the horizon is hidden by the buildings, and one is supposed to do what one is supposed to do in this *place*. One should do what the *place* requires the individual to do. The desert, through modernity, was a *place* of land not yet sliced into multiple *places*; thus it was a land of self-creation. In a desert, one can look back, see one’s footprints, and see them as a *road*. In modern life, there was *before* and *after*, and one’s *progress* was *toward*. Such a world had certainties, and in such a world saving for the future has meaning, and delayed gratification was a good and effective life strategy.

“The world is not hospitable to the pilgrim any more” (p. 23) because it has successfully turned the “space in which identity was to be built into a desert” and in the sands of the desert “the real problem is *not how to build identity, but how to preserve it*” (p. 23. Italics added). In contemporary times, when the media flood us with all kinds of information, and privacy is threatened, it might be said that the modern city’s doors, that once separated home from desert, do not exist anymore, that *IN* and *OUT* are blended, and the “saturated self” (Gergen, 1991) makes a fixed identity an illusion.

If the pilgrim was a metaphor for a modern life strategy, there are four metaphors to describe postmodern strategies: *Stroller*, *Vagabond*, *Tourist*, and *Player* (Bauman, 1996). None of these types or styles is new, but previously they existed on the margins of society. In postmodernity, they have become the center. The pure types do not exist and the description here is qualitative, aimed at helping to illustrate the distinctions (see Table

5). The focus here is on the *tourist* type.

Table 5

The Pilgrim vs. Tourist Continuum (Bauman, 1996) in regard to *Places*.

The pilgrim's place is a	Pilgrim	●————●	Tourist	All places are "alike",
"desert" that is not yet divided into places.	(Modernist)		(Post-modernist)	interchangeable,
Only the desert can host the spiritual search and can sustain a life-long identity. Modern cities (by Protestant ethics)				having materialistic characteristics. The
brought the desert up to people's doorstep. The pilgrim is moving				desert is able to enter (or already succeeds)
"from" a place "to" a place, and his or her destination can be				to enter into the house and thus, it no longer
distinguished from other places. The pilgrim is culturally,				exists as a contrast to <i>places</i> . Not only are
emotionally, and spiritually attached to the place of his destination.				all places
				interchangeable, they also hold a sense of
				uncertainty. Moving to places has a purpose:
				To experience differences and
				novelty. There is no attachment to places
				on the tourist's route.

Like the vagabond, the tourist is on the move. "Like the vagabond, he is everywhere, he goes *in*, but nowhere *of* the place he is in" (Bauman, 1996, p. 29). There are two main differences between the *tourist* and the vagabond. First, the tourist has *purpose* for his or her moves (or so the tourist thinks). These movements are "in order to" and only secondly (if at all) "because of."

The purpose is a new experience...experiences of difference and novelty... The tourists want to immerse themselves in a strange and bizarre element... on condition, though, that it will not stick to the skin and thus can be shaken off whenever they wish... [they can be recognized] by the profusion of safety cushions and well marked escape routes. (p. 29).

Secondly, the tourist (unlike the "homeless vagabond") has a home to which he or she can return at the end of the journey, once the present adventure is over. "Home" is part of the safety package, but "it is the placidity of home that sends the tourist to seek new adventure" (p. 30). "'Home' lingers at the horizon of the tourist life like an uncanny combination of shelter and prison. The tourist's favorite slogan is 'I need more space.' And space is the last thing one would find at home" (p. 31).

To survive the new constellation, it is essential to adopt new strategies; playing by the old strategies will leave the player behind (Bauman, 1996; Friedman, 1999/2000; Harvey, 1990; Toffler, 1990). Thus, time fragmentation can be approached by a strategy of short-term commitments (Bauman, 1996). Reduction of commitment to one's workplace and the initiation of self-employment help one deal with the flexible accumulation (of capital) (Harvey, 1990; Toffler, 1990). Readiness to change one's profession and skills is another solution to this condition. In times when "all that is solid melts into air" (originally Marx's statement about modernity) avoiding emotional attachments to people, places, ideologies, or causes is a good strategy (Bauman, 1996).

Modernism's promise of certainties called for delayed gratification, but this strategy became a bad one for postmodern times. Saving or investing time in acquiring skills that require a long training period are bad investments. In short, the postmodern condition can most efficiently be approached with no commitments to the future, to the job, or even to one's country. The ultimate individualism!

### Narratives as Tool for Acquiring Identity

The term *narrative*, widely used in the social sciences, is relatively new. It originated in the postmodern literature, initiated by linguistics (Audi, 1995; Betz, 1992; Lyotard, 1984), reflecting the phenomenological approach. Although the *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (Mish, 1994) defines "narrative" as "something that is narrated: STORY" (p. 772), the term has a more complex meaning in linguistics. The core elements of a *narrative* are "story" and "discourse" (Asher, 1994). Although narratives are not necessarily verbal, the current study uses verbal narratives only. The *story* "meant a basic description of the fundamental events of a story, in their natural chronological order, with an accompanying and equally skeletal inventory of the roles of the characters in that story" (p. 2680). The *discourse* "is that version of the core story that is actually realized in an actual" (p. 2680) transformation of the original modality, e.g., a novel that is now a stage play. "[D]iscourse is understood as the artistic and individualized working with and around the genres, the conventions, the basic story, patterns, in the distinctive style, voices, or manners of different authors" (p. 2681). Thus, the text as told by the teller becomes a narrative only by the addressee's "action" or the perceiver's subjectivity, which filters the story and transforms it. Defining narrative,

Crystal (1994) points out that narrative is an application of the linguistic study of discourse. “A narrative is seen as a recapitulation of past experience in which language is used to structure a sequence of (*real or fictitious*) events” (p. 224. Italics added).

“Formally,” write Levinson and Ember (1996), who defined the term from the viewpoint of cultural anthropology using a phenomenological approach, the term narrative “refers to the form of *message* in contrast to the term ‘story,’ which is used to refer to the *content*” (p. 836. Italics added). It is an “utterance that is containing two or more sequentially ordered units,” and thus it reports a “sequence of *events*” (p. 836. Italics added). The authors emphasized the term “events” rather than “experience” to bring to mind that:

[*N*]arratives construct realities... In particular, narrative events have specific beginnings, middles, and (usually) ends, whereas experience does not occur within these bounded categories. Narrative involves a selection process in which particular experiences are given *structure* and *meaning* by being taken out of the flow of experience. Experience does not have beginnings or endings, but narrative does, and by giving narrative structure to experiences, those *experiences* are endowed with *meaning*. (Levinson & Ember, 1996, pp. 836-837. Italics added).

The term “discourse” has many definitions, as different disciplines use it for their own purposes and in their own instruments. In addition, diversity of definition can be found within each discipline (Asher, 1994). As a mass noun, discourse generally means language *use* or language-*in-use*” and “as a count noun (‘a discourse’), it means a relatively discrete subset of a whole language, used for specific social or institutional purposes” (p. 940). In regard to linguistics and in its mass noun connection, discourse “refers to *connected* speech or writing occurring at supersentential levels (at levels greater than the single sentence)” (p. 940). As a domain of language use, discourse is structured by common assumptions, and hence there may be competing discourses, and discourse

may be changed over time. This view is in agreement with Lyotard (1984), who argued that in postmodernity, the metanarratives that had ruled the Western world since the Enlightenment were converted into an endless number of “small” or local narratives, into competing small narratives.

The *story*, or the “true” sequence of events, is colored by the discourse’s filter to support ideologies that interact with discourses. For example, says Leo (2000), today each interest group in the USA is trying to plead its case, its “‘voice’ or ‘narrative,’ without many scruples about whether the narratives are literally true” (p. 22). If in the phenomenological winning approach of postmodernity - unlike modernity’s positivism - one truth doesn’t exist (Audi, 1995), then different groups find that each has the right to express its “emotional truth” regardless of “true facts.” Leo (2000) uses illustrations of fake hate crimes on American campuses. Leo points out, for example, that if there is a pattern of whites who are abusing African-Americans, or gays and lesbians who are being abused by homophobics, a student may feel that it is appropriate to fake a hate crime to accentuate his or her group’s narrative.

An Israeli example of this postmodern phenomenon is the rise of ethnic groups from the ashes of the melting pot. The melting pot, which obtained its legitimation from the Israeli ethos, or what Lyotard (1984) called the Israeli “meta-narrative,” has been replaced by many “small” narratives, each of which is competing to enter into the new ethos. During the past twenty years, two more holidays have been added to the Israeli calendar, the *Saharana* and the *Mimuna*. The former was a unique celebration of the Jews in Iran, the latter a unique celebration of the Jews in Morocco. The new ideology of diversity—anti-thesis to the melting pot thesis—gave these ethnic groups access to the

national ethos, and now these events are well covered by the media, and, needless to say, politicians go to these celebrations to kiss children and any other moving targets. This access to the nation's consensus did not come about without an effort, first by the Moroccan Jews in Israel, and then by the Iranians. In doing so, these two subcultures received legitimation in a culture that hitherto had been dominated by people who came from Europe and had adopted European philosophy, ideas, and cultural features.

This points to another aspect of narratives, as used in the social sciences and in particular, in ethnography. The "narrative also contains authoritative claims, though they may be hidden by the narrative forms" (Levinson & Ember, 1996, p. 839). Lyotard (1984) addressed this issue when he wrote about the legitimation of utterances, e.g., when the speaker declares where he or she acquired the knowledge or how the speaker's role legitimized a statement. Likewise, narrators may "identify how they know what they know" (Levinson & Ember, 1996, p. 839), instead of speaking with the alleged authority of a Mr. Know-it-all. Within the phenomenological approach, narratives deal with events within particular contexts, "and [do] not suggest that something is always and everywhere true. Instead, narrative asserts only that 'this happened'" (p. 839).

Leo (2000) in journalism and Noy (2000) in academia define narrative not only as a "process" but also in terms of a "tool" with which to build one's identity. Once the narrative is shaped into a myth or ethos, it defines people's maps, it defines their sense of belonging, and thus influences their identities. In the case of modern myths— such as those created to support nationalistic movements or the big twentieth century ideologies such as communism, fascism, Nazism, and capitalism—"leaders" have forced changes in myths and created new ones (Bacharach, 1980). In such case the myth is used for

propaganda, to support an ideology that otherwise might be questioned and thus, if kept intact, unchanged.

Fluser (quoted in Bacharach, 1980) explained that millions followed the big ideologies because of emotional need. During the European process of secularization, people's souls became "hungry," and hungry souls need food.

The soul needs food: and not only emotional food derived from emotions that could be called mythical; it needs food also from the brain [the rational entity]. The soul is impatient: and when the brain is not enough –or when the person doesn't direct it properly – the soul pushes the brain to provide immediate gratification. The stressed brain takes whatever possible at that moment, and provides the soul with inappropriate nutrition, which is unhealthy from the mental perspective. (Fluser in Bacharach, 1980, p. 8. My translation)

Nationalism and the big ideologies during modernity were substitutes for religion in feeding the souls of the masses. The fading of the meta-narratives, however, created a vacuum into which the small group narrative could enter, in order to provide the souls with the needed sustenance: to allow the souls a new substance from which identity could sprout. Not only are the narratives part of the identity building process, but reciprocally they provide part of the puzzle that makes the map with which people perceive the world.

### Identity—Three Aspects

#### Ego Identity

For some writers, the terms "self" and "identity" are interchangeable. Reber (1985) defines self as in writing that: "one of the more dominant aspects of human experience is the compelling sense of one's unique existence, what philosophers have traditionally called the issue of *personal identity* or of the *self*" (p. 675. Italics added).

Bootzin, Acocella and Alloy (1993) suggest that self is "the individual's image of himself

or herself” (p. G-18). Kohut (in Bootzin et al., 1993) proposed that the self is the core of the personality. Rogers (in Bootzin et al., 1993) defines the self as one’s image of oneself. Here, I use the definition by Heels and Lock, who define the self as the “concept of the individual as articulated by [the] indigenous psychology of a particular cultural group, the shared understanding within a culture of ‘what it is to be human’” (in Cushman, 1990, p. 599). This definition points to two important elements of the following discussion, the acknowledgement that self and identity are culturally constructed, and the Eriksonian definition of identity as a “sense of self.”

Erikson (1968) defined the term “identity” as a sense of the self. A neo-Freudian, Erikson placed this construct within a general psychoanalytic framework, as part of the developmental outcome of child to person. Developmental theories in psychology— such as “self psychology” or “ego psychology”—deal mainly with mother-child and object-child interactions. “Objects,” other than the mother, are perceived as “metaphoric mothers” (Bootzin et al., 1993). In the 1960s, Erikson developed his model of psychosocial development, differentiating it from the classical Freudian psychosexual model, and suggested that identity should be studied as a social construct, the result of a process of struggle, crisis, and commitments involved in identity building, as part of the process of adaptation to society’s requirements. In the Eriksonian model, the individual goes through different developmental stages, each of which includes a crisis and ends with a personality attribute or feature. Identity is the end-product of the fifth stage— puberty and adolescence—and the unsuccessful result of this crisis is *role confusion*.

Lieblich (1990), who studied Israeli men’s entry into adulthood through the military service, did a comparative study of the literature about similar processes in other

nations. In particular, she examined the literature dealing with the American (USA) situation. She noted some fundamental differences: e.g., unlike Americans, who experience a moratorium at young adulthood (as described by Erikson), the Israelis, aged 18-21, had skipped this phase. Liebllich concluded that the cultural and social context of each society, the shared social values and institutions at any given period of time, influence human psychological development. Therefore, she asserted, reaching a conclusion about one culture from a study of another may be counterproductive, ineffective, and deceptive.

Erikson (1968) defined *ego identity* as *an integrated, unique, and autonomous sense of self*. This description serves as an operational definition in the following discussion. In Erikson's psychosocial model, identity is built through a process of *choices* and *decisions*, with respect to the occupational and ideological role *alternatives* provided by society. This process results in a "crisis" prior to the individual's commitment(s) to his or her identity (and roles). For many social psychologists and sociologists, identity has meaning only in the social-cultural context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Flick, 1998; Jenkins, 1996). Identity answers the questions of "who are we?" or "who am I?" and "where do I belong?" Identity deals with *similarity* and *difference* (Jenkins, 1996). As a result, it deals with the question, "who are the other people?"

### Social Identity

Much of the contemporary criticism of Freud and Erikson, who upheld positivism, is derived from the phenomenological and feminist approaches. The critique claims that the theories of both Freud and Erikson were derived from their personal

histories and social affiliations. It alleges that Erikson's theory applies only to white middle class males (Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989). The feminist critique is central to the postmodern discourse and originated exactly at this point. For example, in reviewing any research paper or monograph, it is important to query who or what is left out, and how the research was socially influenced (Stewart, 1994); how the self is implicated continuously through the mediation of discourse, in power (Parker, 1989).

Erikson viewed identity as a psychosocial entity. Many contemporary writers emphasize the social or the cultural influence on identity building (Hall, 1996; Jenkins, 1996). The emphasis is on identity in its environmental and, in particular, social contexts. Hence, the "metaphoric mother" of object-relations theory is viewed as a product of the mother's own culture, class, and ethnicity (Hall, 1996). Mead (1962) distinguished between the *me* as the socialized part of the self, and the *I* as the non-socialized or biological part. Thus for Mead, the self is both object and subject, a reflection of society, in other words, a social construction. In Mead's view, one needs others to define oneself; there is no self (or identity) without others.

During the second half of the twentieth century linguistics had a strong influence on philosophy and the social sciences; i.e., a critical role is played by linguistic constructs in social life (Audi, 1995; Craig, 1998; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Thus, "texts" are involved in the creation of one's identity, as social representations are manifested by text through ongoing discourses. Postmodern thought puts emphasis on discourses and narratives as the main vehicles of identity building (and of social life in general). The core elements of a *narrative* are "story" and "discourse" (Asher, 1994). By definition, discourse involves at least two people (or entities) and thus it is argued here that a

narrative is constructed by the “social,” the plural, while a story could refer to an individual, one person only, the singular (see definition in Appendix D). From an analytic approach, it may be said that the narratives, texts, and lullabies that influence children’s development are cultural constructs or cultural representations; even the Freudian ego-ideal is about identification with cultural ideals.

Thus, all identities are social identities, if only because identity is about meaning, and meaning is an outcome of agreement or disagreement (Jenkins, 1996). Identities are constructed within a discourse with society, and through differences (Hall, 1996; Jenkins, 1996); they are constructed through a process, and hence they are experienced as *becoming or being*.

The term “social representations” (Flick, 1998; Oyserman & Markus, 1998) needs to be defined, insofar as social representations are assumed to take a central role in identity building. Social representations aim to “make something unfamiliar . . . familiar” (Flick, 1998, p. 7). One of the main agents of these representations is language. The social representations mold the self and the identity of each individual accordingly. Analogous to a mental map in one’s mind, which is stored there regardless of changes in the real world (Milgram & Jodelet, 1970), social representations exist and persist in the individual’s mind. They differ from one group (culture or society) to another (Oyserman & Markus, 1998) and therefore they do not present only one “reality” of the world. Moreover, big cities comprise many groups and subcultures, each of which has its own social representations. This perspective points to another critique of “Eriksonian identity” (ego-identity). Erikson concentrated on one set of social representations, and thus there is a strong implication that the Eriksonian model is not universal (Slugoski & Ginsburg,

1989).

Finally, just as the individual is part of his or her social and cultural frame, the individual and society are also located in a “real” place. This place contributes to the individual’s cultural frame, to the sense of self, in other words, to one’s place identity.

### Place Identity

Place identity is “a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person, consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives” and it represents one’s “memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience” that relate to one’s physical setting “that defines the day-to-day existence of every human being” (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminof, 1983, p. 59). In this view, place identity is constructed out of “place attachment(s).” Place attachment has been connected to the development of the self, and is mostly bound to past experience. Thus, the here and now is influenced by the past, as place attachment affects one’s life experience on different levels and in different ways (Hummon, 1992). Brown and Perkins (1992) suggest a definition of place attachment:

**Place attachment** involves positively experienced bonds, sometimes occurring without awareness, that are developed over time from the behavioral, affective, and cognitive ties between individuals and/or groups and their sociophysical environment. These bonds provide a framework for both individual and communal aspects of identity and have both stabilizing and dynamic features (Brown & Perkins, 1992, p. 284).

In keeping with the analytic perspective (although *attachment* had never been defined directly in the psychoanalytic literature), Chawla (1992) points to the similarity between place and other objects. Chawla presents place attachment in terms of

psychoanalytic and object relations theories. The place and things become objects by a process of development in which the place is perceived as an extension of the child's relations with the mother. Place attachment can bring pleasure and pain. The object (place) becomes significant because it makes satisfaction possible, and the child becomes attached to the object or place. It must be noted that places and objects do not substitute for the role of the mother; rather they answer an authentic need. Both are especially important in creating social and spatial maps.

The central assumption of Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminof (1983) is that the development of self identity is not only by distinguishing between "me" and others, but also between "me" and other objects, things, spaces, and places—e.g., between "me" and my mother, between "me" and my room. The primary function of the self is integrative; i.e., the self organizes and unifies a person's behavior and experience in different situations and conditions: it works as a system. Use of the term "me" in the Proshansky et. al. argument implies the social aspect of the discussion. The "me" (in contrast to the "I") is "that aspect of the self that represents those components of one's total self that derive from the environment" (Reber, 1985, p. 424). Mead defined the "me" in "similar fashion but with, predictably, a stronger focus upon the social aspects" (p. 424).

The process of identification of self from others, from objects and from the physical world, is compounded by the others' responses or the interactions between the child (or adult) and the environment as a whole (Rivlin, 1992). Sometimes we cannot define where the "place" ends and the "people" start, e.g., the influence of school. Although the core family has much influence on the child's development, it is the particular culture that "defines much of what is experienced" (p. 5).

As the terms “environment” or “culture” have broad meanings, Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggests a concentric model of environmental influences on development. He asserts that an “Understanding of human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting...”(p. 514). Bronfenbrenner defines a setting as a *place* with particular physical features, in which the participant engages in particular activities in a particular role for a particular period of time.

Bronfenbrenner’s environmental concentric model for development (starting in the center) comprises: (a) a microsystem, the complex of relations between the developing person and the environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g., home, school, workplace); (b) a mesosystem, consisting of the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life; (c) an exosystem, which is an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific *social structures*, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate setting in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what is found there; (d) and the macrosystem, referring not to any specific context affecting the life of a particular person, but to general prototypes, existing in the culture or subculture that sets the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This model implies that different identities may be developed at different levels of interaction. Place identity, however, stands next to self identity (or ego identity) and social identity, and it can be broken down to community identity, urban identity, national identity, and so

on.

Proshansky et al. (1983) look at place identity as part of a cognitive system. As such, it influences what one thinks, feels, and perceives in one's transactions with the environment through different situations. Consequently, place identity may influence one's identity as a country boy, city boy, or inner-city (ghetto) boy, and so on. Having any one of these identities, it becomes as well part of the "belief system," and thus influences the way the individual reacts to different places and situations throughout life. The movie *Crocodile Dundee* presented us with the difficulties and misconceptions of an Australian "country boy" who comes to New York, and "city boys" who find themselves in the Australian Outback. In both cases, their cognitive maps didn't fit into the new terrain they encountered.

Lalli (1988), who studies *urban identity*, defines three kinds of identity:

(a) personal continuity—familiarity with the urban environment and its relation to personal experience; (b) *external presentation*—the differentiating function or urban identity and the positive self-evaluation related to it (pride of place: I'm proud to live in Mannheim); and (c) *general identification*—a sense of being at home, of having roots in the town. Lalli concluded that general identification is, to a large extent, the result of concrete experiences in the urban environment and that "urban identity was shown to have a strong impact on residents' perceptions of urban quality" (p. 310).

Hummon (1992), defines *Community attachment* as "emotional ties to the local area [that] is best conceptualized as one facet of community sentiment along with community satisfaction and local feelings expressed through processes of community identification" (p. 260). He added that *Community sentiment* is defined as "complexly

determined, the product of people's perception of the local community, their social position in both the local community and the larger society, and the objective qualities of the community, both as built and social environment" (p. 261). *Community satisfaction* is an outcome of spatial and social contexts. *Community identity* comes from four fundamental sources: (a) biographical experience; (b) communities are imbued with public meaning and serve as symbolic locales with distinct cultural identities; (c) various social identities can become embodied in and communicated through the local environment; and (d) the relations between community sentiment and community mobility.

Beisel (1980), using the psychohistory approach, deals with the rise of *national identity*. Nations are seen as developing in a process similar to that of individuals, but the process is longer. Only when the *nation* reaches early adulthood, are people ready to go and fight for the flag with patriotic enthusiasm. As with individuals, who project their "shadows" on others, "the German nation meant that Germandom had to be defined in negative terms by projecting onto the French all the negative qualities the Germans despised in themselves" (p. 6). Beisel based his discussion on the Freudian model of the relation between the libido and maternal-paternal-child interaction.

In summation, a broader context for development is the whole environment. Holding with this approach, the developmental process is molded by the environment through multilevel interactions, which are involved in the complex process of building the individual's identity and attachments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Erikson, 1968; Lerner, 1995; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). From this perspective, "place" represents the individual's society and culture. Place is also a physical entity that embodies spiritual

and emotional meanings. This concrete and metaphoric place is where the child grows up and where the child's identity develops in a never-ending process (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Brown & Perkins, 1992). The process of identity and attachment building is characterized by transactions and is probabilistic in nature (Lerner, 1995). In this environmental context, different factors contribute to the individual's sense of freedom of choice: privacy, territoriality, and crowding (Proshansky, Ittelson, & Rivlin, 1970). Place identity, however, is a substructure of self identity (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Finally, identity and place identity may be threatened by disruptions, disasters, physical change, voluntary or mandated relocation, aging, and strangers, to mention but some of the many possibilities. In "Disruptions in Place Attachment," Brown and Perkins (1992) suggest a three stages model for the disruption process: (a) predisruption, (b) disruption, and (c) postdisruption. When place attachments are disrupted, individuals struggle to define their losses in order to identify the types of connections that will provide them with a meaningful relationship to the world.

"If you want to understand something, try to change it," said W. F. Dearbon, Bronfenbrenner's teacher (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 517). It can be said that such disruptions, changes in people's lives, provide good opportunity to study place attachment and identity.

In a case of relocation after a disaster (a flood), one person who had been relocated said, "It's a much nicer home than what I had before. But it is a *house*, it is not a *home*. Before I had a home" (Kai Erikson, in Rivlin, 1982, p. 77. Italics added). Making the distinction between "house" and "home" reflects the speaker's "place attachment" to his original location.

Similar feelings have been expressed when people have had to be relocated during an urban renewal or gentrification process. It is not only nostalgia for the old place, but a real loss of community connections and roles individuals had in the old neighborhood (Rivlin, 1982). Fried (1963) documented the negative experiences of people forced to move to a new location. Although the new residence was better in purely physical terms, those who had been relocated felt they had lost some “group identity” (Fried’s term) and that their “spatial identity” (Fried’s term) had been disrupted. They were in real mourning, as if they had lost a close and dear friend. Brown and Perkins (1992) describe a similar mourning process among people who had to relocate after an environmental disaster. If successfully completed, the mourning process may eventually result in reestablishing attachments.

Disruption can also be caused by “invasion.” Memmi (1965) described changes in colonized people under the rule of the colonizers. This process, Memmi noted, is not unidirectional. The colonizers, who had relocated more or less voluntarily to a foreign place, also had to reestablish their identity. The interaction between the new rulers and the indigenous population involved negative influences on both sides. The colonizers felt the loss of their homeland and, more importantly, their culture and identity. The colonized suffered disruption to their social and national identity as well as their self-identity. Each side was a mirror to the other, and the message reflected from both was: You are strangers; you are *others*. Thus, each side was a source of negative projections that evoked stigmas and hatred.

A significant aspect of relocation is the forced assumption of the status of *stranger*. The accompanying role change is crucial in modernity, when millions migrated

from small communities and the countryside to cities. Cities are characterized by the fact that they are inhabited by strangers. A stranger is “any person who is personally unknown to the actor of reference” (Simmel, 1971, p. 18). Most people can recognize at most only a few hundred or thousand “others,” but cities include several thousands or millions of people; thus most city dwellers are strangers to one another. Lofland (1973) distinguishes between two settings: *community life* and *public life*. Cities, says Lofland, are characterized by public life that involves engaging strangers. In the public life setting, the actor can see the strangers, which enable him or her to screen and place the strangers in the immediate consciousness.

Postmodernity is characterized by encounters with strange cultures, not merely strange individuals (Harvey, 1990; Jenkins, 1996; Lyotard, 1984). The process of globalization influences the big cities, and raises the question “whose city is it?” (Sassen, 1998). Big cities have become the target for the new global economy and for waves of immigrants. Now, more than ever, the city is a place of strangers, as the new financial elite colonizes old and new residents alike (Harvey, 1990; Sassen, 1998). How does this influence people’s identity and sense of identity? Lower levels of loyalty and commitment to state and city are the result of this change of power (Bauman, 1996; Harvey, 1990). Commitment, as Erikson (1968) noted, is the end result of the identity building process.

Sennett (1974) pointed out that the mechanism we use to live in the city is *civility*, i.e., “the activity which protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each other’s company” (p. 264). This civility is now in jeopardy as it requires commitment to the city and its social structure. When different groups have different

cultures and social representations, and some groups are restricted from having any power, the identity of members of those groups is that of a stranger in their own city, and hence their commitment to civility is in question.

Most of the previous ideas and terms were constructed during modernity and by its axioms. The postmodern condition sets up an ever- and rapidly changing environment, which presents people with a new set of problems and beliefs. Where Beisel (1980) was dealing with the rise of nationalism, the past thirty years have moved us toward *globalization*. Where Lalli deals with urban identity, based largely on long term residency and tradition, the new era has confronted city dwellers with numerous changes in the social and economic landscape, as cities respond to the shift to globalization (Sassen, 1998). The level of identification provided to the citizens in Lalli's (1988) study is probably irrelevant to the millions of immigrants who dwell in the new global cities. In fact, the shift to the global city influences both sides of the gentrification process (Sassen, 1998). It influences as well the sense of community that Hummon (1992) studied. In the global city, people from different cultures have different perceptions of "civility;" they hold different sets of social representations. Social representations help determine the way one perceives the world, the way one evaluates the world, and learns about life and one's place in that world. In the next section, dealing with the *rite of passage*, I suggest a "universal" pattern of learning, including the acquisition of role and identity, through the *tragic rhythm of action*.

### Rite of Passage

The Dionysian rituals, which essentially had six parts, were based on the changes of the season and fertility cycles (Shepher, 1996). Burke coined the term *The Tragic*

*Rhythm of Action* (Ferguson, 1953) to describe the next evolutionary stage of these rituals. The rhythm includes three concentrated parts, derived from the “myth of the year’s spirit,” as in the Dionysian rituals. The three parts of the rhythm are *Death*, *Suffering*, and *Rebirth*. “They may also be called, for convenience, *Purpose*, *Passion* (or suffering) and *Perception*” (p. 31. Italics added). This three phase structure can be found in most cultures in many different rituals of transition (Van Gennep, 1960), all of which aim to teach fundamental skills, knowledge and other issues to the members of a defined society.

*Death* here does not have the negative connotations as it usually has in Western culture. On the contrary, death is an essential act before *rebirth* can occur. The rhythm of the universe, nature, and periodic cycles, all follow one another (Shepher, 1996). Consequently, winter represents *death* and spring is the metaphorical *rebirth*, when the seeds that have lain buried in the earth sprout and are reborn. This explanation facilitated human understanding of the world, acceptance of nature’s role, and being part of the universe. Therefore, many cultures have given serious attention to this cycle, in order that their members learn and understand the nature of the world around them. Van Gennep (1960) called this process *rite of passage*. Leach has pointed out a similarity between different rituals, each of which includes a three-phase structure that comprises a *rite of separation*, a *marginal state*, and a *rite of aggregation* (Leach, 1976).

The rite of passage deals with change, with a shift from one status to another. One of the functions of the rite is to help people go through a major change. Help is needed, as organisms (and people) tend to seek homeostasis and resist change (Bootzin et al., 1993). The word “change” itself is supported by the “tragic rhythm of action,” because, as

Nietzsche writes, each change should start with the *death* of the “old” to enable the “new” to arise (Shihor, 1989). In the West, over the past hundred years, psychotherapy has become a way of helping people (who can afford it) go through changes or to change something in their psyche. “The passing years,” says Yalom, “have taught us that psychotherapy effects *growth or change* but that ‘cure’ is an illusion” (Yalom, 1985, p. xi. Italics added).

Western psychotherapy depends on its social constructs and its cultural beliefs. For example, the “ego” and the “unconscious” have become part of the real world to many in Western culture, in much the same way that the world of the spirits is real in shamanistic societies (Levi-Straus, 1963). Consequently, it has been claimed that psychotherapy targets a particular subculture, mainly the middle class (Hillman & Ventura, 1993).

Leach (1976) was aware of the metaphoric meaning of the rite’s pattern. “*Death and rebirth symbolism is appropriate to all rites of transition and is palpably manifest in a wide variety of cases . . . the child must die before the adult can be born*” (p. 76. Italic added). Thus, the main idea of the *tragic rhythm of action* and the initiation rite rest on the same basic structural foundation. Turner (1977) pointed out that during the marginal state, which he preferred to call *liminality*, “[T]hey [the initiates] are in a sense ‘dead’ to the world, and liminality has many symbols of death” (p. 37).

The first phase of the rite, the metaphoric *death*, includes symbolic rituals in order to fulfill the rite of separation. The initiates must part from their initial social status, according the ritual of the specific culture, initiates move from one place to another, change their clothing, sacrifice an animal, and remove “dirt” by shaving or washing, etc.

(Leach, 1976). By performing the ritual, the initiates move into the marginal state in order that they may be changed.

Once in the marginal state, the *liminality*, the initiates have lost their previous status but have not yet acquired the new status. They are neither in the old area nor in the new one, but in the liminal realm filled with struggles, fears, uncertainty, and where occasionally time loses its conventional meaning (Turner, 1977). Here we are in “an interval of social timelessness” (Leach, 1976, p. 34). In addition, the initiates, the situation, or both become sacred, holy, dangerous and so on. Thus, finding oneself in “no place,” outside society and society’s time, results in the unclear status of an undefined position, e.g., the initiate is neither adult nor child.

The last phase is the *rite of aggregation* with the society, while occupying the new status (Leach, 1976). Now the new member is supposed to be ready to function efficiently in his or her new status (role) (Turner, 1977). In this phase, which includes its own rituals, the initiate is set to enter society, e.g., society receives its child back as an adult. Even though most attention is given to the middle phase, it is essential that proper ritual be performed for this last part. There is danger that an inappropriate rite of aggregation may impair the process and harm the initiate, and in so doing, will also undermine the community (Leach, 1976).

Jung (1970) saw *rebirth* as an archetype, and he wrote about “five different forms of *rebirths*” (p. 47. Italics added). Psychologically, *rebirth* is an experience that merges “entirely [in the] *psychic* reality” (p. 50. Italics added), and one way to experience the transcendence of life is by rituals. This is the “experience of the initiate who takes part in a sacred rite which reveals to him the perpetual continuation of life through

transformation and renewal” (p. 51). Thus, tribal members who participate in the rituals of initiation, the *rite of passage*, can experience the rebirth as an “experience induced by ritual” (p. 51).

Jung claimed that rebirth is one of the “primordial affirmations of mankind” (p. 50) and thus is an archetype. It can be found, Jung asserted, among people all along the spectrum, and therefore “there must be a psychic event underlying these affirmations” (p. 50). Utilizing Jungian logic in this discussion, and taking into account the continuity through the ages of the three-part pattern of learning, it is suggested that this pattern is universal. In this instance, being “universal” means that the pattern answers a psychic need, that is, that the pattern is molded into psychic channels, leading to *learning* in an appropriate and efficient way,

Finally, a basic point in thinking of the rite of passage is recognizing that knowledge from the second phase is to be *applied* in a specific role in society. It is claimed here that the rite of passage is characterized by offering only one clear option: in an agrarian or hunting-gathering society it is to be a hunter, a shepherd, a housewife, whatever the one role is that the rite is intended to produce. The identity crisis Erikson discusses can be seen as resulting from the multiple choices modern society offers to middle-class adolescents and young adults.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Using the term “rite of passage” (Leach, 1976; Van Gennep, 1960) in a contemporary context appears artificial if it is not substantiated. The rite of passage fits readily into a non-complex, non-urban society that includes no “strangers” (Simmel, 1971). Rites of passage were typically institutionalized in small societies where relationships among the members are of a person-to-person and face-to-face type, a society in which individualism, especially the American variety of individualism, is unknown. In non-complex societies, the rite of passage is intended to create a new role rather than a new ego-identity. In such a society, the initiate is faced with only one path, or one new role to acquire through the rite. In contrast, complex modern and postmodern societies provide initiate with a *handful (or more) of alternatives from which to choose*. When I use the term *rite of passage* in this work, I am referring to its metaphoric level, and shall be using the three-phase structure as a framework for analyzing the change and learning process of the backpackers.

## Chapter III

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GOALS

The main goal of this study is the examination of the phenomenon of the Israeli backpackers. This study focuses on three aspects of this phenomenon: (a) backpackers in the context of tourism, examining the meaning of places the backpackers visit; (b) an examination of the phenomenon within the context of post-modern Israel; and (c) a comparison of the journeys of the backpackers to the traditional rite of passage.

A *place* is not simply a stand-alone physical entity or geographic location. Places represent cultures and are seen as containers for culture. The traveler, going to concrete, specific places is going *from* and *to centers* (Cohen, 1979). These centers may be spiritual, political, economic, cultural, or national centers, sacred or secular. By being a center, a place, in its literal aspect (its physical and geographical essence) gets meaning. In psychological terms, it may be said that people project the meaning of a center upon the actual place.

Different types of tourists have different experiences of places as centers (Cohen, 1972, 1979). The backpackers' narrative (Noy, 2000) includes particular places that become a requirement on the backpackers' "must-do" list. These places may become centers, i.e., they elicit specific projections on particular places. The phenomenological approach leads us to be interested in how travelers experience places. "By giving narrative structure to experiences, those experiences are endowed with *meaning*" (Levinson & Ember, 1996, p. 837.) Once places have been endowed with meaning, they are no longer interchangeable.

It has been claimed that in the postmodern era, places become interchangeable (Harvey, 1990; Sassen, 1998). Not only are the places interchangeable from an economic point of view, but contemporary tourists have a huge number of options regarding their destinations. However, if the backpackers' routes are influenced by their narratives, they may relinquish the multiplicity of options, because not all places are interchangeable.

From these perspectives, the study was designed to answer the following questions: (a) How do the backpackers experience places along their journey and what role do these places take in the process? (b) How much interest do the backpackers have in exploring the places they visit? (c) To what degree are they searching for authenticity? (d) What are the meanings of the places along their routes? (e) How much, if at all, some people carry a "Little Israel" within them (f) Are places along the route interchangeable? (g) How do backpackers experience places along their routes and consequently, where is the backpackers phenomenon located on the "tourism map?"

For the backpackers, coming from the privileged or the elite classes of Israeli society as many if not most of them do, their environment includes many options from which to choose, more alternatives for education, profession, and culture. This very act of choosing is what makes the identity building process a *crisis* (Erikson, 1968). The study's respondents were born in to the postmodern era (late 1970s) and grew up knowing no other time. They are likely to take leadership roles or to take responsibilities while in the military service (Mevorach, 1997). Therefore, it was interesting to discover the following issues: (a) What are their commitments and loyalties? (b) How do they feel, and what do they think about issues like *home* and *family*? (c) How do they define their social map? (d) Are places (such as Israel, their city, or a neighborhood) parts of their

social maps? From these perspectives, this study attempted to answer the questions: (a) Does the backpackers phenomenon represent an example of post-modern people utilizing postmodern strategies? (b) Is this phenomenon a variation of conformist patterns that simply utilize the era's opportunities (e.g., the availability of low-cost travel)? (c) Is the phenomenon a tool to acquire identity at will? (d) Do these postmodern backpackers keep their loyalty and commitment to Israel, Israeli society, and their communities?

Initially, it was assumed that in the post-modern world, societies are no longer able to provide their young people with a traditional rite of passage (Leach, 1976; Van Gennep, 1960), a traditional rite of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Not only are the goals for the rite not widely accepted, but in a culture whose morals are guided by commodification, young people are less likely or unwilling to accept the guidelines and advice of their elders. If society cannot provide an up-to-date rite of passage, then people create one for themselves. Thus, various groups create rites to answer their own strongest needs, not the needs of the greater society. Following these perspectives, the study also aimed to answer the question: (a) Can the backpackers phenomenon be perceived as a (group) self-made rite of passage? (b) Are the journeys of the backpackers the liminality phase of the rite, aiming to resolve the process by conforming to societal norms?

## Chapter IV

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

#### Respondents

The research for this study was inspired by and reflects the phenomenological approach, and is based on face-to-face interaction with the respondents. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) comprises both closed- and open-ended questions designed to probe people's experience and thoughts about the backpacker phenomenon. In addition, the respondents were asked to share their thoughts and to provide descriptive information.

A total of 17 backpackers were interviewed. The respondents were men and women aged 22 to 27 years old at the time they were interviewed. All but one (Rami) had completed at least one journey when interviewed. All had completed military service, three years for enlistees and four years for officers. All freely volunteered to participate in this study.

Four backpackers, two women and two men, were interviewed in New York City during the winter of 1998. They all had completed at least one journey and were living in New York in order to save money either for another trip or before returning to Israel. One backpacker was interviewed in New York in the fall of 2000. Seven people were interviewed during the winter of 1999 in Haifa, Israel. In the spring of 2000, six people were interviewed in Haifa. One of the backpackers (Oren) is an employee of the *Lametail* store that provides service to the pack-packers (see Chapter VII and Appendix C). Oren was interviewed both as a backpacker and as an expert, providing much

information about Lametayel and the backpacker phenomenon.

In addition, three scholars who are studying the backpacker phenomenon were interviewed before and during the Annual Conference of the Israeli Anthropological Association held in Jerusalem, Israel in May, 2000. Simchai, Noy, and Leon presented their work at the conference, and were kind enough to discuss with me the backpackers phenomenon. I also interviewed three parents of backpackers, and discussed the phenomenon with an additional five Israelis from a variety of professions, all of whom responded enthusiastically. I have learned from all of them, and although they are not directly quoted in this work, they added to my knowledge and understanding of the backpackers phenomenon.

Respondents were recruited based on their willingness, desire, and enthusiasm to share the experience of their journeys. I acknowledged the desire people have to tell their stories in the flyers I posted in two New York Israeli nightclubs and at the University of Haifa. "You have so much to tell, and nobody wants to listen?" the notices asked, suggesting that "I'll be there, willing to listen." Some respondents came as a direct response to the flyers, and others were brought to the study by the snowball effect of a friend bringing a friend.

### Research Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview that included closed- and open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Each interview lasted one to two hours. Coffee, tea, or a soft drink and cake were offered, a common Israeli custom, in order to help create a calm and friendly atmosphere during the interview. Most of the interviews were

conducted in a cafeteria or café; a few were held in private homes. At the beginning of each interview session, I explained the purpose of the interview and asked for permission to record the session. All granted permission, and the interviews were tape recorded. In almost all interviews, discussion lasted after the questions on the interview protocol had been answered. Sessions lasted for an additional hour or two (three in the cases of Efi and Yosi). Much of the data was gathered and much of my understanding developed in these informal talks.

When talking about drugs and their commitment to Israel, a few of the respondents asked that I not quote them. Such requests were fully respected. To assure anonymity, all respondent names were changed, and other identifying details, such as the name of the community where they grew up, were eliminated. A pseudonym was designated for each respondent, and only the pseudonyms appear on all written and printed materials in this project, including the Hebrew transcripts and the English translation.

In addition to answering straightforward questions, the respondents were asked to complete a drawing exercise according to a projective technique called *social atom* based on Moreno's work (in Fox, 1987). It was presented to them as "I'm in the center of my world." They were asked to draw a *map* in the center of which they put themselves, surrounding themselves with groups to which they felt connected. An example of this type of *map* is presented in Appendix B. Later, respondents were asked to describe the map's content. These maps were analyzed as part of compiling respondent profiles.

## Data Analysis

The main goal of the data analysis was to investigate common themes addressed by the respondents during the interviews (Spradley, 1979). As well, the analysis looked at similarities and differences in the respondents' behavior during their journeys, and the strategies used during and after the journeys. The issues of identity change and commitment to Israel, their future families, their future professions, and their (core) families and friends were explored at this stage of the study.

Because all interviews were conducted in Hebrew, the first step was to transcribe the Hebrew materials and then translate the transcripts into English. The Hebrew transcripts were prepared "by respondent," i.e., answers by each given respondent were in a separate transcription. The English translation was done "by question," i.e., all the answers to an individual question were translated at one time and assembled together, then the answers to the next question, and so on. This approach facilitated my starting of the analysis at that early stage. With the transcripts on computer, a search for key words and terms became a form of content analysis, in order to trace any patterns or similarities found among the respondents.

It is important to bear in mind that there are limitations to translation. For example, in Hebrew the word *ba'it* is used for "home," "building," and for "house." It is the context that defines which meaning is being used. Additionally, there are words that cannot be translated literally, either because they are slang or, even more so, when they are culturally loaded words. The Glossary in Appendix E suggests some explanations for such words frequently employed by the respondents.

In the process of searching for meanings, expressions, key words and ideas,

common expressions, words, and phrases were highlighted in different colors. Once this was done, the pages were placed on the floor, creating a picture or visual pattern that facilitated understanding and insight. As well, for example, while dealing with the rite of passage, color coding was also done, each color being used to highlight another aspect of the concept.

The color-coding was done three times, using three approaches. First, there was coloring by intuition, marking statements, phrases, or words that caught my attention. This approach provided me with a general view of what might be found in the data. Second, the transcripts were colored according to the research questions. This resulted in a map that directed me in covering all the questions, and indicated where I might go beyond the original question. The third coloring was done in regard to the preliminary table of contents. Analyzing the data, using these approaches, resulted in the findings and conclusions.

In general, analysis was aimed at finding two kinds of attributes. First, I listened to the recorded interviews and read the transcripts in order to find features similar to those appearing in the literature, to determine whether my respondents' behavior corresponded with existing theories and whether and to what extent there were any deviations. Second, I attempted to study the materials while having the research questions firmly in mind. I did give attention to issues or features that did not necessarily answer any direct research question. Although a qualitative study, the data were sufficient to permit making some generalizations, to see the whole picture. They permitted me to make comparative statements ("most of the respondents" or "all but one") as more precise statistical statements are irrelevant to this type of study with this limited sample.

All the generalizations, however, are based on respondents' accounts, what they said throughout the interviews.

In Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, many quotations from the interviews have been inserted to illustrate the findings, discussions, and conclusions. Sometimes the same utterance supports different arguments in different chapters. This is the nature of such study, in which data are derived from people's actual statements. As well, for didactic purposes, different arguments are supported by a different number of quotations, at different lengths. This approach is not meant to imply that the importance of an argument is confirmed by the number of quotations used to support it. Rather, I tried to sustain each argument with a variety of examples, that is, respondent comments, when relevant. Thus, the quotations represent the variety of responses, but have no quantitative value.

Finally, using a statement in more than one place has the advantage of flexibility, giving credit and respect to the richness of the tales. In addition, to present the multidimensionality of the respondents, a short profile of each respondent is presented in Chapter V, based on the full interview and discussion with that respondent.

## Chapter V

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### Structure of Analysis, Arguments, and Discussions

The analysis, arguments, and discussions in this study follow the order of the original research questions. The backpackers phenomenon is studied here in three different contexts: tourism (theory), postmodern Israel, and rite of passage. They are presented, analyzed, and discussed in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII respectively.

Chapter VI deals with the backpackers phenomenon in terms of theories of tourism. Chapter VI begins with an examination of the way in which the respondents experienced places, and addresses the issue of the interchangeability of places. The issues of attractions along the routes and place alternatives are presented as part of looking at interchangeability. It is assumed that experiencing a place is a more complex process than simply observing that place's physical features. Analysis of the respondents' accounts of their journeys supported this assumption, providing details of the features that are involved in experiencing places. The issue is again addressed in Chapter IX.

Backpackers as a phenomenon of tourism are analyzed as Chapter VI continues with an examination of different theories of tourism, particularly those looking at the way travelers relate to and experience places. For didactic purposes, these theories are presented as continua (see Tables 1 through 5 in Chapter II, Review of the Literature). Respondents are located on these qualitative continua in accordance with their behavior. Finally, an additional continuum of types is conceived, with *adventurer* at one pole and *seeker* at the other (see Table 6). The adventurer, or trekker, is the person who keeps a

tight schedule and aims to achieve the maximum number of experiences in a given period of time. Adventurers are more interested in being on the summit than in being on the road traveling toward a place. The seeker is more likely to be a *road person*, one who is searching for the self, experiencing the road as part of the process. The tourism map, and the location of the backpackers on that map, is presented in Figure 6.

The postmodern condition influences all of us, directly or indirectly. The respondents' behavior, as describes in chapter VII, suggests that they react to the new era, holding with postmodern strategies while still keeping the dreams of modernity. Chapter VII examines the respondents' loyalty to Israel, and suggests the presence of ambivalent feelings. This ambivalence becomes vivid in the analysis of the backpackers' narrative.

Narrative is defined here as a story told through discourse (see Appendix D, Definitions). In the postmodern era, narratives have become a powerful tool aiding in acquiring a sense of common identity by members of minorities, similar to the way people acquired their view of the world, and their place in that world, through the meta-narratives of modernity (Lyotard, 1984). Narratives influence social life around the globe, and the backpackers, as a group, create their own narrative. Chapter VII examines the backpackers' narrative as a tool for acquiring identity. Acquiring an identity is always a loaded issue, and in this study, many respondents, while dealing with their identity as Israelis, exhibited emotional responses. The respondents' readiness to participate in this study, despite the lack of material benefit, is seen here as an expression of their wish to present their narrative, to state: "This is who I am!"

Being an Israeli is, for some, a matter of ambivalence, if only because this place contains *home* and the *others*. Home is discussed in Chapter VII, and it appears that the

experience of home is colored by the postmodern condition. Feeling at home is a matter of great concern for many. From this perspective, competing narratives can be seen as the struggle of individuals and groups to feel at home in a given place or state. Elements that make a place a home are analyzed in this chapter.

This study grew out of the notion that being a backpacker could be visualized as a contemporary *rite of passage*. A rite of passage is defined here as a learning process, through which the individual acquires a new role in society (see Appendix D, Definitions). The backpackers are journeying to learn, to acquire the role of a mature and responsible member of society. In Chapter VIII, the journey of the backpackers is analyzed as a form of *liminality*, the second phase of the rite of passage. This phase, it is contended, provides the backpackers with a learning space. The main goal of the rite of passage is to the acquisition by the initiates of a new role in society. Consequently, a successful rite of passage ends, from society's point of view, with the initiate conforming to society. It is implied that the rite of passage aims of ensuring a population of people conforming to society's requirements, needs, and expectations. From the accounts of this study's respondents, they are doing exactly that, conforming to the structure of Israeli society and to its cultural requisites.

Chapters VI, VII, and VIII address the research questions in the order of their presentation. This was done for convenience of presentation and clarity in reading the results. However, there are many points of interaction between and among the three main topics. Chapter IX, Conclusions, is an attempt to discuss the matters with what might be termed an "inter-topic" approach. Three main issues are discussed in that chapter. The way in which we experience places is addressed in Chapter IX with a multidimensional

approach, in which a place is seen as not defined merely by its physical features. Place is experienced not only by its here-and-now state of being, but by the experiencer's past experiences, expectations, and anticipations. In other words, the individual's state of mind at a given time influences that individual's experience of place.

Through the data analysis, it became evident that the respondents were ambivalent in their behavior and thoughts. This ambivalence was more evident in statements made in response to most of the questions asked during the interviews, for example in regard to home, Israel, traveling in groups, authenticity, and so on. This issue is discussed in Chapter IX, and ends with the recommendation to "Embrace the ambivalence."

The argument presented is that narrative is a means of acquiring individual as well as group identity. The end of modernity's mega-narratives, and the flourishing "mini-narratives" of postmodernity are discussed in Chapter IX. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that some of the ambivalence is inherent in the respondents' attitude toward Israel, and that it can be explained and adapted by the competition and struggle between narratives.

### The Respondents' Profiles

The respondents' profiles are portraits of each individual who participated in this study. The profiles are derived from an analysis of the interviews as well as the informal talks that followed. To maintain confidentiality, not all information obtained is presented as, for example, specifying the town or kibbutz where a respondent grew up might identify that respondent. In addition, as a practicing therapist, I tried to avoid that level of interpretation that involves analyzing the individual's personality. Thus, these profiles

reflect interview responses to the goals of the study.

### Rachel

Rachel was 25 years old at the time of the interview. She was interviewed in New York during the winter of 1998, after she had completed two journeys. She planned to go on another before returning to Israel. She had completed her full term of military service.

On her first tour, Rachel traveled with her boyfriend, and found it a “trip.” she said that on that first trip, she didn’t experience any personal, inner process, nor did she socialize much with anyone other than the boyfriend. The second time she traveled, she did so on her own, and found that the many interactions she had with strangers were a great learning experience. While talking with me, Rachel tended to project her issues onto others; e.g., she said, “Someone with no close friends can discover that on the journey... and comes back [from the journey] different.” This is clearly one of her issues, as she rated interactions with others, including those whom she never would have met in Israel, as one of the best parts of the journey. She also projected her health problems, mentioning that despite the difficult conditions she had no asthma attacks during her five months journeying. As well, she claimed that the restlessness that had plagued her all her life didn’t accompany her on the journey.

Through projection Rachel also mentioned her goals for the journey: searching for self, searching for meaning. She saw the journey as a learning process in which, for example, she learned to open up to others, and to not judge others by their status, academic degree, place of living, and so on. She evaluated the risks that she took on the journey as comparatively low, like the risks in Israel, but with a weaker safety net; that is,

there were no means of rescue available along the rafting course. Risk taking was not central to her experience, but rather a compromise she made in order to make the journey memorable. Had she wanted to avoid all risk, she said, "I would have traveled to Europe."

Being at the center of her own world, she placed positive relations close to her: family, friends, Israelis, and "good people" in that order. Excluded from her world, or having only negative influence on her, are orthodox Jews, conformists, and "filth people" [*Chel'ot*]. She retained no friends from the first trip on which she traveled with her boyfriend. She does have friends from the second trip which she made alone. As well, her learning process took place on the second journey. She learned about time, life as a process, and that mistakes can be made but they must be accepted as part of the nature of things.

Rachel went on the journey to be far from Israel and her family, and yet it was on the journey that her family became important to her. Her home is her family, and her family of orientation is in Israel. She planned to return to Israel and there establish her own family of husband and children there. The reason? "I want my children to have a grandmother."

Rachel's summary of the journeys: peace of mind, tranquility, and great experience.

### Lea

Lea was 25½ at the time of the interview. She had been stationed in Tel Aviv, serving as an officer in a service unit, and started thinking about the journey when still in

the service, when one of her friends went on a trip. Lea made two journeys, one for 2½ months before the start of the academic year, and the second during the break between the two years. She was interviewed in New York during the winter of 1998, and the aim of her stay in the USA was to take (and qualify in) the examination for CPA (she had been graduated in economics in Israel).

The journeys were a great experience for Lea. "The first time was amazing, the second was even better." During the journeys she experienced happiness "I had never experienced," peace of mind, and disconnection from those things from which she had wanted to be disconnected (home, mother). It was the first time in her life she was by herself, as during the service she had lived at home.

Her learning process started while she was still in the service. As an officer, she was in charge of 250 women soldiers, primarily coming from lower socioeconomic groups. Later on the journey, that earlier experience helped her to open up to people with whom she was not ready to socialize in Israel. She went on the journeys to search for her self, and didn't like the *trekkers* (adventurers) who, she claimed, "spoiled the atmosphere." Another reason for the journeys was to disconnect from Israel and the stress there, as well as from the stress her parents put on her about career and having a family (marriage and children).

Lea took some "natural" risks such as using local transportation in India. However, when traveling into a jungle, she used a guide, and while on a trek, she walked with a group. She also mentioned drug use as a risk that backpackers take.

The journeys were clearly a learning process, in which she utilized independence and openness, and discovered she is sociable and that people can open up to her. She

claimed to be looking for experience, saying “I don’t want property but experience,” although in the end she did study accounting, suggesting that she learned how to conform to society while still maintaining a certain amount of independence, going on the journey twice. Lea left home whenever she could , but returned to her parents when she needed to prepare full time for the CPA examination.

Home for Lea is a place to which she could always return, where she always can get support, regardless of what she may have done, even if she did stupid things. On the other hand, home still put pressure on her, demanding that she still do certain things. Thus, while describing her world, the word she uses for the relationship with her family is “problematic.” However, “right now,” Lea said, “Israel is home, because my family is there.” Unlike some other respondents, Lea noted that her attachment to Israel was stronger before her journey.

Lea’s summary of the journey: Happiness, peace of mind, tranquility, and freedom.

### Yosi

Yosi was 23 years old when he was interviewed in New York during the winter of 1998. He had already completed a trip to Mexico, and had been working and traveling in the USA for six months. He had served three years in the armed forces instructing medics. Yosi became friends with Efi when they both were doing their military service, and the two traveled together. In Houston, Texas, he and Efi worked selling ice cream, a job they obtained through an advertisement posted in a Lametayel store in Israel. Yosi started thinking about the journey in his last two years in high school, and even more

during the last six months of his military service. Yosi looks at making the journey as an inevitable process, knowing that if he had not done it he would have regrets for the rest of his life.

Yosi traveled mostly with Israelis because of language barriers and cultural differences. Nonetheless, he described his encounters with other Israelis abroad as a different experience, because he interacted with people from different social groups with which he never had interacted in Israel. He described the journey as something he needed after doing his service, and as a pause between the “serious phase in life” before becoming bourgeois, before conforming to society, before losing the freedom to do whatever he wanted to do.

Yosi is aware that he has gone through a process of change that began in the service and has continued throughout the journey. Before traveling, he was naive (or innocent). Now, he said, he is much more independent, and is more mature and knows what path in life he wants to follow. He dreams about being a famous moviemaker, but he is also aware of reality and knows he will never be famous. He is looking forward to having a family and children and a tenured job.

In Yosi’s world, the closest group is made of “friends” and then a group of “friends from the journey.” His family comes third. However, for Yosi home is family and friends in that order, as well as language. Thus, Israel is home for him, even though he is aware of negative aspects of Israeli society. Home is a protected place, where he can always return, where he feels comfort, and where there are people he knows. Although living in New York, he was ready to go to Israel to fight should it be necessary.

## Efi

Efi was 22 years old at the time he was interviewed in New York. It was the winter of 1998, and he had completed a trip to Mexico and been working and traveling in the USA for six months. He and Yosi became friends when they were in the service, and they traveled together. Efi served for three years as a medic instructor. In Houston, Texas, he and Yosi worked together selling ice cream, a job they'd gotten through an advertisement in a Lametayel store in Israel. Efi started thinking about the journey while in high school, and more frequently and seriously during his last months in service.

One of Efi's goals was to live and travel with people from other countries, but finally, for convenience, he traveled with many Israelis. Language was a barrier in Mexico. Efi showed his ethnocentrism when he called a group of young Mexicans "enlightened" simply because they could speak English. In New York, Efi (and Yosi) rented an apartment with two Americans, only to discover that his world and their world were different. In New York, he has met many Israelis, some from social groups and classes he'd never have met in Israel.

Efi commented that others travel as a search for freedom, after the tough structure of the armed forces. As for himself, he had lived in New Jersey as a child (from 10 to 11 years old) and had always wanted to go back to the States. The journey was a learning experience, and he learned to be more careful and assertive. Before the journey, he was naive and gave others the power to control his life. After the journey, he understood that from his parents and society he had obtained the tools for dealing with life. The price he is paying is that he is now dealing with a reality in which not everyone has his best wishes or interest at heart. He has also changed his mind about the price of being

mature—becoming a bourgeois—and he now can see that being bourgeois also has a positive side. Once he has established a family, the bourgeois role may be a positive one. He has realized that freedom and the lack of commitment on the journey are not desirable features for (future) family life.

At the time of the interview, Efi's home was associated with a physical entity, his parents' house. As a second thought, he mentioned that home is a place where people wish for his well-being, where others want him to come, and where others want him. "It's more the people," Efi commented, "than a physical place." While seeing himself at the center of his world, the closest groups were first his (a few) close friends and his core family of parents and brothers.

Ambivalence characterizes his relations with Israel. He was born there, but does not feel a strong commitment to the state. He is not happy about being identified as an Israeli. To avoid frustration, he prefers being disconnected from the all of Israeli society. His own world is "Efi-land," that includes two discotheque, three pubs, the seashore, girls, and his family. "Most Israelis," Efi admits, "are not like me." On the other hand, although currently living in New York City, he freely says that in case of war, he would return to Israel to fight.

His dream was to be a musician, a drummer, but he is aware that he was not fully committed to that goal, and is going to try another avenue. Now he just wants to be happy, to wake up in the morning with a smile. He sees himself as a mature person, his own master, losing naivete and being independent, taking his fate in his own hands.

Efi's summary of the journey: Freedom and disconnection, no commitments, going with the flow, independence, and a learning experience.

## Amir

Amir was 26 years old at the time of the interview. He had served four years as an officer in the Air Force. He was born and raised on kibbutz, and at the time of the interview was a computer science student at the University of Haifa. He had traveled in Nepal, India, and New Zealand for seven months. He had started to dream about the journey at the age of twelve.

Amir mentioned that when he started to gather information for the journey, people were happy to help him and to provide tips. His first month on the journey was planned according to the backpackers narrative, and only later was it spontaneous, “a personal story.” He made an effort to travel by himself, having partners only as a matter of convenience, for example while trekking or when he bought an automobile in New Zealand. Preparations for the seder (ritual Passover dinner) in Katmandu with thousands of Israelis impelled him to go on a trek.

Amir has a love-hate relationship with Israelis. He doesn't like many of the political parties, and feels alienated toward them. He is ready to consider emigration if “the disgraceful political situation” worsens. On the other hand, he accepts the fact that he is a Jew, although he did not choose to be one, and that he is an Israeli. At the same time, he is proud that he did not hesitate to return to Israel and his kibbutz after the journey. Moreover, he is taking responsibility for Israelis abroad, feeling shame for their behavior. When asked about his identity, he exhibited confusion, quoting a Hebrew song: “They say that I am, is not who I am, so who am I anyway?” He says that he is a Jew, with reservations, i.e., he didn't choose being one any more than he chose his identification number. He added that his identity includes his wishes and aspirations

about what he wants to achieve, as well as what society should aspire to.

Home for Amir is his kibbutz, a place with roots, where there are trees that grew up with him. While at the center of his world, the closest groups are his family and friends. A little further is what he wishes to see around him in the world, a kind of utopian society. He rejects two of the political streams in Israel, orthodox Jews and the right wing.

The journey made Amir more apathetic toward things that make him angry, such as politics. He said that he didn't change dramatically, but did become less aggressive and calmer. He acquired new perspectives toward the world around him. The reason for his travel was not to have a learning experience; rather he was inspired by his curiosity and wish to see landscapes, nature, and new cultures. During his journey he did take some risks, such as using local transportation in the East. Sometimes risks were unplanned, such as changes in the weather during a trek. He said that he had had great experiences, not necessarily where or when he had expected them. For example, there was an encounter with an immigration clerk in India who didn't speak any English and who couldn't do simple arithmetic calculations; a "Wow!" when reaching the summit of a mountain; meeting an elderly English lady who had fought with the Gurka during World War II, and who invited him to a colonial English club which was antithetical to its surroundings.

Amir's summary of the journey: An experience, "I have been changed. Now I don't look at things in such a black and white manner; it polished me, not that I'm perfect now."

## Meir

Meir was 25 years old at the time of the interview. He had completed four years of service as an officer in the headquarters of a field unit. He had only a limited time for his trip because he did it while on leave of absence from the Army. he traveled for five and a half months to Australia and New Zealand, including short trips to Fiji and the USA.

He had expected that during the journey he would be changed, and would be able to make decisions about his future, e.g., whether to make the military his profession or to become a civilian. He had expected to have an insight, an epiphany. He didn't find an answer, perhaps because he was not close to the "seeker" pole exemplified by the searching-for-the-self type of backpacker. Rather, Meir was closer to the "adventurer" type of backpacker, a trekker who was in competition with himself, attempting to achieve a maximum number of experiences over time. He did not, however, see himself as an adventurer, claiming to be a calm person who avoids risks and remote places.

Meir looked at the journey as a form of conformity, a needed item in the resume. People are going on the journey, he said, before they are absorbed into society's institutions. As for himself, Meir claimed, the journey cleared his head, and he would like to take one more journey before "the final straight line" that would last for the rest of his life. That straight line would be characterized by commitments to his future spouse and children, commitments that would conflict with what Meir termed his instinct to do whatever he wanted whenever he wanted.

Meir was ambivalent about Israel. He didn't like the image of the Israeli tourist who, he asserted, "is not a positive figure." Thus, because Israelis in New Zealand were

going bungee jumping, Meir refused to join them. On the other hand, when he arrived in New Zealand he went straight to the Israeli embassy to read the newspapers from home. He discovered that someone from his division had been killed in a terrorist attack. To avoid such contacts, Meir made a concerted attempt to isolate himself, entering his tent, zipping it shut, and leaving out the rest of the world. The tent became his home for the journey. He wanted to maintain this isolation, and thus maintained contact with his parents only because of a sense of obligation, not because of any felt need. Home for Meir is a place where he can have his own corner, without being disturbed.

Meir's summary of the journey: "An experience I wouldn't trade for all the money in the world. It was my first time of independence, of being my own master; visual and cultural experiences; a calm atmosphere."

### Alon

Alon was 27 years old at the time of the interview. He had served four years as an officer in a field unit. He began thinking about the journey at the age of 13, when newspaper articles highlighted the backpackers phenomenon. He was an "atlas boy," an avid reader of atlases and maps, who dreamed about the places he finally visited on his journey. He also was a young leader in a youth movement that dealt with nature and treks.

Alon took two journeys, the first lasted for eight months, to India, Nepal, Thailand, New Zealand, Thailand (again), and Hong Kong. The second trip lasted for four and a half months, and was to the USA, Mexico, Guatemala and (again) the USA. Alon didn't plan his trips in detail. "The only restrictions I had," he said, "were monetary

[budget], visas, and airline tickets.” He defined himself as a “seeker,” a searching for the self-type of traveler, a hedonist who searched intensively for experience. He preferred spontaneity, making decisions on the spot. Most of the time he traveled alone, not staying with any group for any length of time. He didn’t have much contact with locals, mainly because of language barriers, and he did interact with non-Israeli travelers.

He said that during the journeys he didn’t take any risks. However, “Once I traveled on the top of a bus, but there [India] it is routine. If you sit, and don’t stand up, it not at all dangerous, as long as the bus doesn’t roll over.” He was serious about this, and didn’t smile when he mentioned the possibility of a bus rolling over.

At the center of his world, the closest groups were his family, and friends from the youth movement. Home for him, Alon said, is a place where he can be real and doesn’t have to pretend or play games. He missed his home during the journeys, and used to write (but not call) frequently to his parents. Nonetheless, this longing was not strong enough to make him return sooner than planned.

During the journeys, Alon took his time and had patience to talk with people. Once back in Israel, he is again rushing about in “Western style,” as he put it. However, he says he has changed, claiming he has much more confidence and a more clearly defined identity. Now Alon utilizes what he has learned by “letting reality decide” his future. He dreams about having good relationships with a future spouse and a satisfactory job, not in an office. He is aware that he cannot convey the experiences of his journeys to others, but is comforted by having had those experiences.

Alon’s summary of the journey: “It was worth every penny. It was an extensive experience, and one day on the journey was equal to one week in Israel.”

## Moshe

Moshe was 27 years old at the time of the interview. He traveled for six months to the USA, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and then back to the USA. He completed full service, spending three years in the Navy. Although he had started to think about taking the journey at the age of 16, Moshe hadn't planned this trip. He had gone to the USA to visit his girlfriend and then, when three of his childhood friends gathered in the USA for their trip, decided to take the opportunity to join them, leaving himself only one week for preparation.

For Moshe the journey was a chance to take a break from the adult life he was already leading. Soon after demobilizing from the service, he became manager of a company, and later ran his own business. He used the journey as a stage on which he might observe the behavior of others, and for looking inside and learning about himself. He learned about life and about qualities he had acquired from his parents; he learned what comprised his identity. The journey was a catalyst, "kind of a therapy, longer than usual," Moshe said.

Moshe is the only one of the respondents who took part in political life to make changes instead of just complaining about the status quo. He served in the reserves for about one month each year, with a sense of commitment to Israel. However, throughout the interview he restricted his commitments by phrases such as "now," "as long as I'm here," "as long as," and so on. The only unconditional, unlimited commitment Moshe was willing to acknowledge was his commitment to his future spouse and children. For him, home is in Israel.

Home for Moshe is the place where the heart is, the place which is his comfort-zone, as in his parents' house or in the houses of his friends, where he can come and sleep, where he feels good. During the journey, he disconnected himself, without consciously longing for home. "My home," Moshe said, "was my backpack." While at the center of his world, his family is always close to him, together with people "who are coming and going." In the here and now, he mentioned family, friends, and me (the interviewer) as being in the closest sphere to the center.

He is a "road" type of person, and used the word "flow" to describe his attitude in life and during the journey. He described himself as a "search for self" type of backpacker, a seeker who looks for the road, not the summit (see the backpackers' continuum in chapter VI). However, Moshe added, as the road includes summits, he has, reciprocally, some features of the "adventurer" type of traveler; i.e., the search for the self includes the experiencing of adventures. As for other travelers, Moshe observed that some wanted to escape from Israel, some wanted to experience the change they had noticed in those returning from a journey, and some went on the trip to find a guru. That was not his way, however. He said that if you go and encounter a guru, you are at the beginning of a road. On the other hand, if you are going in order to find a guru, you are going the long way, only to find that the summit is here, at home.

Moshe's summary of the journey: "It was a meaningful stage in my development: I became mature, emotionally and spiritually. It was a time-out. I learned what my parents didn't teach me, to look at each individual as [if he or she were] the whole world."

## Avi

Avi was 22 at the time of the interview, after three years service in a field unit. Before the journey, he had worked for six months with troubled teenagers. He traveled for six months to Nepal, Tibet, and India. He had wanted to go to South America where, as he said, “the officers and paratroopers are going . . . all those I appreciated as serious trekkers went to South America.” Because of time constraints (the beginning of the academic session), he traveled to the East. He had started to think about the trip while a young boy in grammar school, as all his older cousins had traveled. His parents were part of the pioneering backpackers phenomenon, traveling to Japan in the 1970s, and they encouraged him to make his journey. Because he kept in contact with home during his journey, his parents and younger brother were able to mark his route on a map they had at home. His parents also arranged his admission to university while he was still traveling.

Although his initial desire had been to go to South America, Avi was attracted to Buddhism and the Himalayas. He went on the journey as a seeker, i.e., to find himself, and wanted to attend an ashram with a meditation course. He tended to travel alone, and even while trekking with a group, often found himself in the front or the back of the group. He tried to socialize with travelers from other countries, but didn’t find it more exciting than interacting with Israelis. Coming from another country, he commented, doesn’t mean that there are interesting subjects of conversation; there is no escape from the banality of small talk. “The Australians are talking about beer all the time, and the New Zealanders are talking about how much they don’t like the Australians, and the Canadians are trying to convince you they are not like the Americans.”

Closest to the center of his world are his family and close friends. A little further away are people who have similar values, and then comes the rest of the world. There are groups from which Avi feels distant, and even Israel is far from his center. He feels that it will be difficult for him to raise a family in Israel. Although by choice he is doing his duty by serving in the reserves, he is doing so without enthusiasm. Having his own family and children is not on his short-term wish list, nor is it part of his dream for the near future.

For Avi, home is a place that always will accept him, regardless of what he may do; in return, he is accepting of home. At the time of the interview, his home was his parents' house. He has a warm feeling about his home, and has always experienced it as a "very good home."

He went on the journey in order to learn, and found that learning means change. During his time in the service, he had been changed according to the system's requirements. During the journey he had been changed according to the nature of the journey. That is, by being alone for a large part of the time, he feels that he was able to go through a more meaningful change. His journey did involve risk taking, e.g., going on a trek alone, and experimenting with drugs.

Avi's summary of the journey: "I have changed during the journey. Before, during the service, I was an embittered soldier. Now, I am more interested in people. Searching for self or for meaning is an active process, although it can be done while sitting in the same place for three months."

## Yoav

Yoav was 23 years old at the time of the interview. He had completed his military service in a field unit and in an office. He traveled in India for six months, and for one month in Australia. At the end of his high school studies, he already “knew” (Yoav’s term, i.e., “expected”) that he would travel after the service. Two months before beginning his travels, he started to gather information from veteran backpackers, but he did not plan the journey in detail.

He started to travel with a friend, and later his girlfriend joined him. He commented that, “You never travel really alone, and along the route, you meet here and there the same 15 people. You learn to know this group and finally, when you meet with them, you feel that you have come home.” For Yoav, home is “your friends.” His home is in Israel, in the town where his parents live, their house, and his friends there. This “at home feeling,” he said, “is the reason people travel in groups.” Consequently, while at the center of his world, the closest groups comprised his family, in particular his brother, his friends from his hometown, and his girlfriend. A little further removed were people with similar political orientation, then people of his age, and then the “people of Israel.”

Although he had never doubted the tie, while in the East he realized that he has a strong connection to Israel, because “that is the way I was educated.” He discovered that he is a patriot, and it became clear that if while on his journey Israel would be at war, he would return there immediately. Distance gave him a better perspective from which to realize his relationship to Israel, his homeland.

## Sari

Sari was 23 at the time of the interview. She had completed three years of military service as an officer on a base located in the occupied territories. She traveled in South America for six months, visiting Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. She had actually started thinking about going on a journey to the East when in the eighth grade, because she was interested in yoga and in meditation.

During her time in the service, her dream faded because her parents discouraged her from going on the journey. They pressured her to register in a technical institute and it was decided that she would study engineering in the next academic year. She felt suffocated, that her life was taking a wrong path, one she hadn't chosen. Her struggle for independence started when she began working at a demanding job that consumed much of her time. After working hours, she spent her time with coworkers and her boyfriend, disconnecting herself from home. At that point, she decided to go on a journey as an act of rebellion.

Sari looked at the journey, the going out, as a necessary phase in separation from home (from her parents), a preliminary act preceding the real struggle after the journey. Rebelling against her parents, she deliberately took many risks, starting her travel alone in Colombia, a country to which few Israelis traveled because of its reputation as too dangerous. She was aware that choosing Colombia as a starting point was not a rational act, but she felt she needed to do something extreme. Although a person with many fears, she eventually became addicted to risks "but not self destruction," parachuting, going bungee jumping, and visiting amusement parks. Every day she searched for her limits and boundaries.

Although she had been an officer in the military, Sari said that the responsibility and level of decisions she took on the trip were far more significant than those in the service. At school and throughout her military career, the institutional structure of the system supported her, and she was never alone. On the journey, she made all the decisions by herself. Although she traveled with others most of the time, she felt it was her personal journey. "For Israelis," Sari observed, the travel "is not exactly alone, but the experiences are personal." Although the journey was an act of rebellion against her parents (home), one of the most difficult things she experienced was being disconnected from home, which she described as "a hard feeling of homelessness, a feeling of mental and emotional detachment."

While at the center of her world, the closest group is her family, i.e., her parents and her grandfather. Further, there two close female friends, poets and actors, four male friends, and her extended family. Home for Sari is people, all those to whom she can return to acquire confidence. During the journey, her diary was her home.

Until the journey, she perceived herself as a child who is going and returning to her mother, knowing that she always can return home and all will be okay. During the journey, that concept of home was shaken. She has learned that her parents are not perfect, and that everything has a price.

If during her time in the service, she was supported by the system's institutional framework and structure, during the journey she had ultimate responsibility for her actions. She began asking herself what is it that she needed and wanted in her life. This search gave her the courage to return home, and to change her registration at the university from engineering to psychology, despite parental pressure.

Sari was dreaming about happiness, with an inner sense of satisfaction. She dreams about being a professional clinical psychologist, something that will fulfill her soul, and about a house and home that will make her happy. The house of her dreams will include a spouse, dog, garden, and children. For Sari, the most important issue regarding the future is the need to constantly keep a sense of “happening,” that things have happened, are happening, and will happen, in order to avoid the banality of life, which leads to conformity, routine, and aging. For Sari, aging means submission to routine and conventional living.

Sari summarized her journey: It was a learning experience, part of a personal growth process. After her journey, she found that “I am home.”

### Rami

Rami was 25 at the time of the interview. He had served for five years as an officer in a field unit. Rami is the only participant in this study who has not made the journey. He had planned to travel with his girlfriends once he completed his service, but his father died. Rami decided to remain at home, to help his mother, and to be there for his younger brother who was just recruited into the service. Two years later, he was planning to go to South America for a short period of time, only two months.

All of Rami’s friends have traveled, and he is familiar with their memoirs. He has seen their photographs and listened to their stories. Other than Ran, he is the only respondent who gave detailed descriptions of places when asked to describe pictures from the journey (in Rami’s case, his friend’s journeys). He described a few of his cousin’s pictures, providing a graphic description of the place. From his friend’s stories, he

learned about the nature of the backpacker experience, and the various attractions and paths. He was aware of the drug problem, and the different types of travelers. He did not plan to be a seeker; rather, he was to be an adventurer, having a list of things to do and see, and goals he wanted to achieve in the short time allocated for the trip. He planned, however, to spend some time in Brazil, looking for his roots by visiting his deceased father's country of birth.

Being at the center of his world, the closest person to him was his brother and then his girlfriend and family (mother and sister). A little further away were friends. A group to which he felt a negative connection and had negative relations was the Orthodox Jews in Israel and throughout the world. Rami criticized the behavior of the Israeli travelers while traveling in Israel, and hoped that it would be different abroad. He had a commitment to Israel, and was concerned about the image of Israelis abroad. His commitment was to his family first, to his personal needs last.

His dream was to be a professional civil engineer, to live in a suburb near Haifa, and to have a family, wife and children, of his own. By making the journey, he aims to fulfill another dream, even if circumstances constrain the journey to be shorter than originally intended. If he does not fulfill this dream, Rami felt that he would have a feeling of missing an experience he would carry about as unfinished business.

### Ruth

Ruth was 22 years old at the time of the interview. She had completed three years of military service as an officer and had been in charge of female soldiers in the headquarters of a service unit. She perceived the trip as a path [*Mas'ul*] that includes high

school, military service, the trip, studies at university, and work. It is clear that she holds with this conformist path. She traveled in the East for four months, visiting Thailand, Laos, Burma, Cambodia, and Vietnam, returning to Israel earlier than planned because her boyfriend had come to Thailand and asked her to return, even though she still had the funds and the desire to remain in the East.

For the most part, for convenience she traveled with groups of Israelis, even though one of her goals had been to be exposed to other cultures and people. She didn't stick to the most inexpensive budget possible, as do many backpackers, because she preferred to spend a few more dollars per night and sleep in cleaner, more decent guesthouses. When she encountered travelers from other countries, she found a large cultural gap and differences in their fields of interest. She perceived them as not being as mature as younger Israelis who served in field units. She made this distinction about Israelis who had served in service units as well.

When preparing for the trip, Ruth didn't go to the Lametayel store, as two of three of her siblings had traveled before, and they gave her all the information needed. She made the regular "Eastern path," without any trekking (e.g., no trek in Nepal). She is essentially the type of traveler who makes a list of things that must be seen and done (a "must list") and checks off attractions and experiences. Thus, for example, although interested in temples, once she had visited three or four temples in a country, she felt she had "got the point" and became bored. She took no risks, and tried to be rational in her behavior.

For Ruth, home is the family network, her room, a place to which she could return even after an absence of four months. She had become accustomed to being far from

home during her period in the service, and didn't miss home while on her journey. She contacted her parents, but infrequently. She contacted her boyfriend, who wasn't traveling, every day or so. When her boyfriend came to visit her and bring her back home, he brought with him a pot of couscous her mother had cooked, with a special sauce she loves. Her boyfriend brought her Israeli snacks. Ruth said that she ate local foods, but sometimes longed for the Israeli flavors.

Ruth searched for authenticity, but was aware that for a tourist, authenticity is hard to achieve. For example, she called the Sunday market in Bangkok a "Hong Kong market," because the majority of the merchandise was marked "made in Hong Kong." The pictures in the brochures may be pretty, she observed, but when you visit a remote tribe, you find a souvenir stall in front of each hut. There is more authenticity, she mentioned, in Laos and Vietnam, than there is in the cities.

Ruth perceived the journey as an event "before life," before she would have established herself with a job and a family. She dreamed about having a successful career in a law firm, having her own apartment, and perhaps a family and children. She saw Israel as her place, the base from which she goes out and to which she returns.

### Oren

Oren was 25 years old at the time of the interview. He had served four years as an officer in a field unit. As a teenager, he belonged to a youth movement that deals with nature and hiking, and he was a young leader in that movement. At the time of the interview, he was working at the Lametayel store in Haifa. In addition to the personal interview, he provided much information about the backpackers phenomenon. Five years

before entering the service, Oren knew that he would go on a trip with a friend. Later, he asked the friend where he wanted to go, and the answer was New Zealand. Oren opened an atlas and located New Zealand, and for six months thereafter prepared for the journey, attending lectures at Lametayel, buying equipment, etc. Ultimately, he traveled to the Far East, Australia and New Zealand.

During the year before the interview, he took a course in preparation for the “Psychometric test” (the Israeli version of the American Graduate Record Examination that is used for undergraduate studies) and planned to enter university in the coming year. He planned to make another journey, to Nepal for three months, before establishing himself in the regular path of academic studies, job, and family. Then, he said, “It is over.” At this stage, he said, you have to become mature, to take care of yourself, to establish a family, and to carry on with life. He dreamed that he would be able to go on a trip even ten years later, and perhaps twenty or thirty years in the future. He dreamed of climbing Mount Everest. He dreamed of being married with children, and of taking his family on a trip to the East. His father did travel, coming to New Zealand, and Oren and his father traveled together there for a while.

Oren is committed to Israel. He is concerned about the negative image of Israeli travelers abroad, and about the Israelis’ alleged “uncivilized behavior.” He is aware that travelers from other countries have negative reputations as well, but he wants to change the Israeli image. During his journey he was amazed by the fact that it didn’t seem to matter just how remote a place was, when he visited, other Israelis were always there; that he met Israeli backpackers wherever he went.

For Oren, the journey was a learning experience. He learned that returning to

Israel is a new beginning. He learned to be patient. He learned to free himself of his inhibitions and to be happy, not to be serious all the time. As an officer in the army he had learned how to manage things. During the journey, he learned how to manage his life. He learned that he could be alone; i.e., that he doesn't need others around him in order to stay on track. He learned that it is okay to make mistakes, as long as you are ready to pay the price for those mistakes. He commented that he now applied what he learned to everyday life in Israel, despite the routine.

Summarizing the journey, Oren mentioned that it was a great experience, although it did have its ups and downs. It was a great learning experience. "It was an experience that I cannot describe in words."

### Mira

Mira was 21 years old at the time of the interview. She had completed her military service as a medic in a hospital near Tel Aviv. She traveled to Chile, Argentina, Brazil (including the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro), Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela in a period of eight months. At the end of her journey, she moved to Florida, to work and save money for the next trip, and then went to New York for the last two weeks before returning to Israel to take the GRE. Once she had completed the examination, because she had several months free before the beginning of the academic year, she planned to go on another trip.

For Mira, the main experience was freedom, and many times throughout the interview she used the word "choice." She had gathered information about the East and South America, and chose the latter. She changed the groups with which she traveled,

saying, "It was my choice." She chose not to create a tight schedule for her trip, preferring to make decisions in accord with her feelings at each place. She held with the "road" approach, and found that the walking, the struggle, the effort, all made the summit more meaningful once attained. In fact, she discovered that the road is the meaning. That she had this insight astonished her, because her mother had told her exactly that, many times in the past.

Her goal for the journey was to have a variety of experiences, including encounters with people from other places and cultures. Despite this intention, ultimately most of the time she traveled with other Israelis. She found it boring, if not inconvenient, to interact with others who didn't share her culture. She took risks, deliberately, to overcome her fears, going rafting and parachuting, and went to Brazil although she had been told it was dangerous, especially during carnival time in Rio.

Being at the center of her world, the closest group to her is her family, then Israel, her childhood friends, and friends from the trip. Compared to the map she would have drawn before the journey, she moved both her family and Israel closer to her. Home, for Mira, is her mother, her dog, and a place she is confident will remain there for her, not moving from one place to another, but always would be there, waiting for her.

During her journey, Mira made many telephone calls, talking with her mother. She shared her experiences with her mother, claiming that she had nobody with whom to share, even though people were around all the time. Mira commented that during the journey, her mother became her best friend.

When asked to describe a place, she always described "everything around," but did not describe the physical appearance of that place. She would describe the way to that

place, the experience and interactions with others in the place, or what she had learned there. Learning was the strongest experience for Mira. She experienced her journey as an important element in the process of maturing, a process during which she learned about herself. This learning was the result of many struggles, such as taking a long hike in the mountains, or experiencing a lack of privacy. Mira learned that she doesn't have to prove anything to others; that the higher the challenge, the greater the achievement; and that the way to awareness is paved with hardship.

As to the future, Mira hoped to marry and have children, but not to lose herself. She dreamed about having a job that would allow her to move around and not be fixed in any one location. When the day comes, she intends to take full responsibility for her children, and concurrently take care of her own personal growth. She was committed to Israel, and the time she spent in the USA made her realize that the period of military service plays a positive role in the development toward maturity.

For Mira, the key words defining her journey were: freedom, experience, choice, learning, and home.

### Ran

Ran was 23 years old at the time of the interview. He completed three years of service as a noncommissioned officer in a field unit, but held a service role. His first trip was to Australia, for surfing, where he remained for seven months. On the way back to Israel, he stopped for one month on an island in Thailand. Once back in Israel, he immediately decided to make another trip, this time to India, where he stayed for three months.

Ran is one of the few respondents who interacted frequently with local people along his journey. Other travelers perceived the Indian habit of approaching foreign visitors on the street and speaking with them as somehow annoying and something to be avoided; Ran, on the other hand, enjoyed these contacts. He visited the homes of local people, sitting and chatting with them throughout the night, communicating with them despite the language barrier. Ran ate local food, and some of his most memorable experiences involved eating and socializing with people in Thailand and India.

Ran is clearly a “road,” not a “summit” type of traveler. Many times during the interview he mentioned that he made decisions such as to remain in a place or to move on by “listening to the wind,” that is, by listening to an inner voice or feeling that guided him. “On the journey,” Ran explained, “there is no summit. The road is what counts, and it is fun.” He learned that “when you walk on the road, don’t try to control everything; don’t try to know how it is going to end.” Consequently, he could not describe how he sees himself ten years in the future, nor could he define his dreams.

Ran saw the change that he underwent during the journeys as the result of a self-learning process. He became more mature and is aware of the consequences of his actions. Before the first trip, he characterized himself as being childish, happier, and kindhearted. The journeys gave him the opportunity to handle challenges every day, without the support of his family, even when it came to as banal an issue as buying a used car in Australia. At the time of the interview, his family and his friends were close to him, and he defined home as his parents’ house. Home, Ran said, is a place where he has his own corner, “where everything is permitted.” During his second journey, he called home every week and maintained contact with his brother and sister by e-mail.

During the journey, Ran learned to love the land and nature, and about human beings. He learned about people from other cultures, and was prepared to take that knowledge back home. He also discovered that he has a warm feeling towards Israel, a big love for Israel and the physical land of Israel. Although he learned about the road, and the importance of ambiguity, his return to Israel from the second journey was problematic. Ran explained that there is a difference between not knowing what he was going to do the next day while on the journey, and not knowing what he is going to do tomorrow, once back in Israel.

He took risks during the journey, one of which was experimenting with drug use. He said he learned his lesson the hard way: part of the difficulties surrounding his second “landing” back in Israel resulted from using drugs.

Ran summarizes his journeys: “It was the strongest experience in my life [and one] that shaped me. It is something that will stay with me for the rest of my life.”

### Saar

Saar was 24 years old at the time of the interview. He had served full time as a soldier in a field unit. He started to plan his trip immediately after completing the service. First he went to Chicago, to work and save money for a trip to South America. He worked in Chicago for five months and then changed his plans and returned to Israel. When two of his friends decided to travel to China, at the last minute he decided to join them, and they spent two months traveling in China and Mongolia. Later, before starting his studies at the university, he went to South America for two months with his girlfriend.

Saar was very disappointed in China; he felt it lacked authenticity. As a result, he

and his friends moved on to Mongolia. According to Saar, this is the last authentic place on earth, the only place where people are not drinking Coca-Cola and eating hamburgers. In Mongolia he was able to interact with authentic people, i.e., those who weren't local residents busy selling services to tourists. For Saar, eating Macdonald's in Chicago is an authentic experience. Having Macdonald's in China deprived him of having an authentic experience.

He didn't go on the trips as part of a search for himself, and he didn't experience much change in his self. The greatest change he experienced was while in the service, and now, after completing the journeys, he experienced another change, that involved in maturing, learning to deal with work, studies, and being on his own. While at the center of his world, the closest group was his core family and then good friends. He mentioned, however, that he doesn't like to have intense contact with his family, and visits them only once every two to three weeks, which is close enough for him.

For Saar, home is the place where he is comfortable with himself and where he feels comfortable staying. Saar moved from his hometown to another town for his studies, and recently his parents moved to a new apartment, so his physical home is not located in either of the places. He explained that home, "in the physical sense, is where emotionally I feel like king of the world, but today it doesn't exist anywhere."

Saar visualized the backpackers phenomenon as part of the Israeli path (*maslut*), as an "instruction manual" by which people are guided. He did not like the idea of going together on the same route, to the same places, following routes that tended to become "Little Israel." Nonetheless, for convenience, he took exactly those routes. Oddly, he considered the American experience to be the most authentic experience of all. He met

and interacted with authentic Americans, in the workplace, and in jazz clubs. Although most of his visit was spent only in Chicago, he felt that he knew America better, that he has experienced the authentic America.

**Chapter VI**  
**PLACES AND DESTINATIONS: BACKPACKERS**  
**IN THE LIGHT OF TOURISM**

**Places, Attractions, and Place Alternatives**

**Experiencing Place**

Analyzing the backpackers' experience of place, we see that the physical, concrete place never stands alone. When respondents were asked to describe some memorable place (a segment in their journey), they rarely described its full physical dimensions. Almost all the place descriptions included cultural issues and reference to the local inhabitants. In only a few cases did a respondent describe the scenery, the landscape, or the view per se. When the latter was described, the place was a stage from which the respondent gazed at the landscape. Some respondents were asked to describe a concrete place, and did so, they needed reminders. Some respondents were either unable to choose a place or describe one, or in attempting to provide a physical description shifted the description to what was associated with that place, such as the road leading to it, or the people living there, or events that occurred there. In fact, no respondent focused on the physical description of a place, or on one place only. Some of the answers to the

question<sup>1</sup>, “Please describe the most memorable segment of your journey in detail,” were as follows:

**Ruth:** Simply all Vietnam was . . . [*Can you describe a specific place in Vietnam?*] No, because in Vietnam every place is different . . . I can tell you that the most disgusting place is the capital, Hanoi. Disgusting. But every [other] place you arrived was pleasant [*nechmad*].

**Mira:** [*Please describe Cuzco.*] The city is one of the best. Beautiful city, from there you go to Machu-Pichu, which is the most beautiful trek in South America. There you have rafting, which is level 5-½, one of the highest in the world. [*Please describe the place.*] The old city of Machu-Pichu is hidden in the mountains. The trek there is four days walking, and has very steep ascents. There are options for two days and one day [treks] including a train ride. But most backpackers who like to travel and understand the wonder [*nifla*] of going toward a goal; most do the four days. Unfortunately, I did only the two days, as I was sick. And yet, I refused to do the one-day trek.

**Ran:** Hampey, in central India, near the shore, not on the beach. A place . . . I arrived by bus from Goa, and at the middle of the way we stopped and we had to catch another bus, and we arrived. Then we traveled by rickshaw -- with a woman that I met before -- we arrived at Hampey . . . the entrance [led] to a walk-zone [*pedestrian, car-free zone*] that you had to pay entrance fees, because they had an event there. The principal attraction of Hampey is that there are ruins there of one of the most ancient cities in India; it's all full of temples. On each hill there is a small temple. [*Can you be more specific in your description?*] We had . . . there were not many tourists [there]. There was our guesthouse in which there were the one woman I knew and three French people and an Israeli, and one more. There was another guesthouse, in which we went to eat, and every day we went to travel, and each direction you choose you saw a different world. One direction is toward the antiques, the other direction is the Volders cities -- hills of gravel, and among them there are springs and small villages. There, I had a point [place] with special attachment and it is called Omntzeltza, “One Hill.” It takes one and a half-hour to walk and there is a temple up there. I had been there three times, and each time it was such an interesting experience. Once we came, it was an amazing sunset, and then we met people who invited us to eat dinner with them. We stayed and [eventually] it was the temple's dinner and everybody sang “Hari Krishna.”

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<sup>1</sup>Specific questions by the interviewer are bracketed and italicized [*sic.*], as are comments by the interviewer.

Another time we arrived in the middle of the night and we wanted to sleep there, and they told us to go because we could not sleep there, and before we left, there was one *baba* [man; father; a low rank spiritual leader] there who told us that before we leave, we could come and visit. This is a place that I was attached to because of the [nature of the] place as it is, and the people [with whom] I had been there, and also the *mama* [woman, mother; the *baba*'s wife] who hosted us, and all the events.

**Saar:** In regard to the travel experience, Mongolia was the only place where I didn't feel that I'm only a bus ride away from Haifa.

When the respondents were asked to show and describe a picture, in many cases the scenery was not central, i.e., not at the "focus" of the description. Respondents talked about their experiences at the place pictured, and the meaning of the event, providing but few facts, if any, about the place itself. The landscapes appeared simply as decor, a set for the scene in a play. In Gestalt psychology's terms, in their descriptions the physical place was mostly in the *background*, not the *figure* of the experience.

**Mira:** [*The first picture is*] From the party in Colombia. Me dancing toward the sunrise. It was a party on an island. . . Another picture in Bolivia. Landscape. The place of desert salt that all Israelis [*kol am Yisrael, lit. all the people of Israel*] go to, to be photographed. But there are also lagoons there, the pink, the green, and the purple. It is really green, really purple, amazing.

**Ran:** Let's make it "pictures within my head" as my camera didn't function. The first picture [*place*] . . . in fact, the first two pictures of the first part of the journey . . . [are] along the beach. One is a hill, a cliff by the beach, with about 20 eagles above, and the sunset.

The second picture is in Goa, in Omega Beach -- it is a beach shaped like the letter omega . . . with . . . I'm standing there with the backpack on my back, leaving the beach, waiting for the dolphins to come. And it is something special that happened, because it is a beach that is supposed to have dolphins, and each morning I went to watch and they didn't come, and then, right before I left was the first time that I was able to see them.

The second place [third picture] is [the] landscape from the guesthouse. Rice fields and a river.

The third place, it burns . . . [Ran stopped the description.]

The fourth place [fourth picture] [is at] Ankrichawa, an island in the middle of a river, one of the biggest rivers in India . . . [People are] standing on the stairs in the river and there is a religious ceremony, a band that plays on over the loudspeakers, and all are standing and singing with them [with the band]. throwing candles in the water.

The last picture [is] the last place where I was. As I arrived, I met a person who was in the ashram that I had been, a local person, and he took me to such a place, which is kind of a mountain, with many springs and rivers coming from it, and from this place the river that I told you about comes from. There is a cliff there, with a spring with flowing water. And down there, there are clouds and a rainbow.

Often, places were mentioned as a container for the experience. In this sense, the place could be one item in the backpackers' must-list or a nameless place. The place suggests something that the backpacker wanted to experience to the fullest. The experience could be concrete, like a place that provides life within nature, or simply a shell within which one can have peace of mind and go through an internal process.

**Rachel** You learn to take your time. You come to a village [in India. *She did not mention the name of the place*] and in the morning you decide whether you stay there. After three weeks you may move on to the next place.

**Amir:** There are things that you want to see, curiosity. In India, curiosity for something totally different from how it looks from here [Israel]. It's a place that had been built in patches that were gathered through 200 years of the British regime. You move there from one place to another, from 4000 B.C. to 700 A.C.: different religions, different foods.

**Yoav:** At the beginning you gaze at sights, scenes [*mar'ot*]. Later when I arrived at Varanase, it was very powerful, because powerful things [*experiences*] happened to me. Even by gaining understanding about death and non-death, that from their

point of view it is death and reincarnation. It is not the place, but the atmosphere that matters.

The last quotations suggest that this nameless village in India was meaningful, at least as a container for Rachel's experience and the internal process through which she went during her journey. As well, it is suggested that Varanase was meaningful for Yoav, as he experienced and learned something in this place. He mentioned this in response to the request to "sum up the trip in any way you want," and it was his choice to mention this particular place where he went through a strong or meaningful experience. The learning experience, as described by Yoav, uses a time-space container; that is, Varanase is the place (or space), the stage for learning, as the time flow influenced the learning, e.g., with its before-after feature. Sometimes this experience is unexpected, a surprise despite the homework the backpacker may have done during the preparation period. During that phase, it is more than likely that the future backpacker will get a list of places he must visit, a list that comprises essentially a list of attractions where meaningful experiences are expected to occur.

### Attractions Along the Way

The attractions along the way are, in most cases, well-traveled locations that backpackers usually visit. They learned about these places from previous generations of travelers, and in turn will provide that information to the next generation. (See discussion

about the backpackers' narrative.) Some backpackers feel they are going on a predetermined path (*maslul*, see Appendix E, Glossary) that like a railroad track gives the driver (the traveler) no room for individuality or improvisation. Many have in mind a "must list" that includes attractions such as full moon parties in Thailand, treks in Nepal, and ashrams in India.

**Ruth:** There are recommendations for guesthouses. I didn't go [on the trip] with too many recommendations. There is also a tour guide that you carry: you get the name of the place only, only the name of the street in which there are cheaper guesthouses, and you [have to] start to search.

**Oren:** If you look at the average backpacker, who is [just] discharged from the service, he is looking, first of all, for the cheapest thing [alternative], which is the East, then South America, and then [*the most expensive*] New Zealand. There are different segments of the population [that go] to each destination. People who are looking for more "nature" and "foot-hiking," are most likely to include New Zealand in their *maslul*. Let me tell you how [people are] traveling. There is this book [*a travel logbook*] and they make a check mark for "I was in this place, I was in that place" [that they planned ahead]. This [characterizes] the beginning of the trip. Soon [they] find that this is not the way to travel.

**Mira:** [*In response to the request to describe a place*] The place of salt desert that all Israelis [*kol am Yisrael*] go to, to be photographed.

The issue of authenticity (see Appendix D- Definitions) is one of concern to many backpackers. They are aware they are going to well traveled places, places that other backpackers have visited. They don't like fitting the image of the mass tourism tourist, but they go to these "tourist spots" and "routes" because of the price that the explorer (Cohen's [1972] term) has to pay while exploring the unknown. Saar in particular addressed this issue.

**Saar:** There were connections [with locals] in China and in South America. But these connections are based on [the fact] that you are a tourist and they are the locals. When you go to tourism places [tourist attractions] you encounter those who are working with tourists . . . [even in] Mongolia, we did the same path [*maslul*] as those who go to Mongolia. But Mongolia is not on the common path. But even we didn't choose something that was not on the path. [We did] the same round . . .

The more I travel, the more it seems to me that it is difficult to travel otherwise [not on the common path]. On one hand [we] want to be authentic [to visit authentic places], but it is very difficult to go to a place where nobody has been before. The remote places, there's a reason nobody has been there. When you go off the [routine] path, you have to be prepared that the trip will be tough, so finally, all but professionals are taking the same paths [*maslulim*].

Authenticity may be achieved by encounters with local people along the journey.

To reach a reasonable level of authenticity requires avoiding the local tourist industry workers, but this level of authenticity is difficult to achieve. Language is probably the biggest barrier to meaningful encounters. Thus, in many cases the respondents preferred to stay in their tourist bubble, or in this case, an Israeli bubble, rather than stress themselves with a foreign language, or to struggle with the requirements of other cultures. It seems, however, that the respondents were divided between those who made the effort to make contact with local residents and to eat local food, and those who avoided the effort, and paid for lack of effort with lack of authenticity.

**Rachel:** It was [for me] less contacts than I wished. . . . Here and there a family invited [me]. In New York, there are many types of people, and therefore I came here. [*Rachel was interviewed in New York, after she'd made two journeys.*]

**Lea:** In the East, I had many contacts with local people. In South America I was scared of them, and also I had a language barrier [Spanish]. But they deterred me, including stories about robbery [that had happened to other backpackers in the

past]. In India, they “stick” [to you] and so, you learn about them. There are also charming people in Thailand and Nepal. [The journey’s goal was] to know [visit and learn] another culture, [and] different concepts of life.

**Efi:** At the beginning, because of language [barriers], we had a low level of connection. On the fourth day, we [Efi and Yosi] met young Mexicans who spoke English -- they were more enlightened [Efi’s term, in Hebrew *na’or*]; they understand English. Beyond that [we had a] low level of communication [with the locals]. . . . We didn’t [want to] be [travel] with Israelis. It [the desire] became stronger in New York. We wanted to live in New York the way Americans are living. Currently, we share an apartment with two Americans, our age, but these are two different worlds.

**Amir:** About the locals, I met them daily. Long encounters with locals happened in trains: When you sit together for twenty to thirty hours with the same people, [and] some were English speaking, and [then] it [helped to] established communication.

**Avi:** In the East, the local people are giving you services. In India, there are many conversations, because they nag you and initiate conversation. The conversations repeated themselves.

**Sari:** There were some connections with locals. Language? I knew it [Spanish] on a basic level. There was a deep interaction in a city in Peru [*with an English-speaking young woman*], but generally there was a sense of severance: limited communication. Although you see them daily, there is no link.

**Ruth:** [Others, they] eat everything. On [their] first day in Bangkok they already eat in the street with no problems. But you eat according to the message of your stomach. In most of the places, you are not eating. You eat [your only choice is] a lot of rice; everything is based on rice. Sometimes there is a [emotional] crisis and you have to eat Western food.

Efi referred to Mexicans who speak English as “enlightened,” not as “educated” people. This ethnocentric outlook appears to characterize many of the respondents. Sari, for example, did have one meaningful interaction in Peru, but it was with an English-speaking local woman. This is another example of the backpacker’s ambivalence. Here

*ambivalence* means “simultaneous and contradictory attitude[s] or feelings (as attraction and repulsion) toward an object, person, or action” and “continual fluctuation (as between one thing and its opposite)” (Mish, 1994), holding both (seemingly opposite) items simultaneously. Here, people expressed the wish to learn about other cultures, going abroad, yet concurrently they remained in an Israeli bubble. In this way, attractions visited along the path had a lower level of authenticity, even though most of the respondents stated that they valued that quality. In reality, the backpacker compromised the search for novelty and authenticity, trading those qualities for convenience and safety by following the backpackers’ path, which includes the group’s attractions and a must-list of things to do. In this sense they were similar to Riley’s (1988) type of *drifters*, who create their own itinerary; attraction list and routes.

### Place Alternatives

For most respondents, place alternatives were limited to sites along the backpackers’ path [*maslul*. See Appendix E - glossary]. However, there is more than one path. Analysis of the interviews finds four clear paths. The first path is the Eastern path, which includes India, Thailand, Burma, Tibet, Laos, Vietnam, and Nepal. China may be included in this path. The second path is the South American one, and includes Brazil, Peru, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, and other South and Central American countries. Australia and New Zealand make up the third path, which may include other destinations

from the Eastern path. The fourth path is America [USA] and may include Mexico or Canada. These paths are not fixed, and different travelers may execute different variations. The arrival in America usually has two main goals: to travel, and to earn and save money for future trips. The following are samples of the backpackers' path. Note that these paths are strictly geographical. Other aspects of the paths, such as cultural aspects or identity issues, or who is traveling where, are discussed in "The Backpacker's Location on the Tourism Map (below in this chapter, and in Chapter VII, under "The Backpackers' Narrative").

**Yosi:** [We traveled] one month in Mexico, and before that, half a year in Houston, Texas (we sold ice cream, finding the job through the Lametayel store's billboard).

**Meir:** I started in Australia and New Zealand (the most of the time, three months), two weeks in Fiji, and some days in the USA.

**Yoav:** I traveled for six months in India, two months in Nepal, and finally one month in Australia.

**Sari:** Half a year in South America: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.

**Ruth:** I traveled for four months in Thailand, Laos, Burma, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

**Mira:** I traveled in South America and finally [I worked] in the USA. I started in Chile and then I moved to Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela.

Sometimes people arbitrarily chose alternatives along a given path. For example, when Ruth was waiting in Bangkok for three different visas, she went to the first country that issued an entry permit. Another way to choose is by listening to stories told by

someone who just came from a place, and making a impulsive decision to go there.

Sometimes the choice is based on a planned, calendar-based plot, for example, going to the Carnival in Rio.

**Meir:** You woke up in the morning and you felt either vigor or no vigor. What [you are] wanting to gaze is a personal preference [*ta'am*, taste], the weather, etc. The goal of [my] travel was to [have] maximum experiences [of] atmosphere, culture (not drugs), and doing nothing while being in a place for two weeks. It was wonderful [*meshage'a* – It was crazy].

**Avi:** I had a master plan and objectives like a meditation course. Besides that, everything was open.

**Yoav:** [We planned] details on the last two months before the trip. We went to Lametayel and we talked with those who had been there [the East] in order to find basic details, [for example] how it is in Bombay, but not a detailed plan.

**Mira:** All the time you hear stories, and between the stories about the East and about South America, I chose South America. A simple reason, people. People who travel to the East, at least according to the stories, tend to sit in one place, to use drugs, and [to deal with] spiritual matters. To South America, [people are] going more for travel and recreational activities [*biluy'im*]. That was my choice.

**Ran:** I went to Australia to surf . . . it was not a regular backpacker's journey. I stayed there to work and met a girl. I used to go back and forth. Finally [unplanned, and on the way back to Israel], I arrived in Thailand and wandered around an island. When I came back [to Israel] I decided to make a backpacker's journey to India. I talked with close friends who had been there . . . [finally] when I arrived in India I knew nothing. I had no defined plan.

Later in this chapter (The Backpackers Location on the Tourism Map), discussion will deal with the backpackers' continuum, describing the travelers' attitudes and tendency toward their journeys. On this continuum, one pole represents the *seeker*, a person who is looking at the *road*, and the other pole represents the *adventurer*, the person looking at

the *summit* or destination. The respondents in this study were located along the continuum, and their attitudes toward place alternatives varied accordingly.

For the person focused on the destination (the *summit*), a place has a unique characteristics and is significant. It could be a specific trek in Tibet or a specific tribe in Laos. The road to the location is justified only by the peak experience, once the place is reached. For example, the view from a summit in the Himalayas is worth the many days of hardship in climbing the steep slope to that summit. For this type of traveler, places are not interchangeable<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, for the individual who is concerned about the road and not the destination, no particular place has a priori a better quality than any other. This approach suggests that the journey is a process in which surprise and the unknown are essential ingredients and crucial for the quality of experience. For this type of traveler, places along the route are likely to be interchangeable, at least before they have actually been visited and experienced. For example, Ruth's decision where to go was an arbitrary one, suggesting interchangeability.

**Amir:** The trip was planned by the calendar and the weather. I started in October doing treks in Nepal, then [in November I went] to India, from the Varanase belt to the south, and from there to New Zealand.

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<sup>2</sup>*Interchangeable* and *interchangeability* are used here in their pre ante (beforehand) meaning. In the case of a tourist, interchangeability is observed when the individual chooses one resort out of twenty possible Caribbean locations only because it provides a good deal, or has a vacancy on a particular week during the high season. Once the individual has visited a place, it may acquire meanings that distinguish it from other places, and then it no longer is interchangeable with all other places. For further details, refer to Appendix D - Definitions.

**Meir:** I had a plan and goals. I'm a person who sticks with plans, and there was a motive of competition against myself. I achieved the maximum. I didn't waste time, and I didn't miss [any] experiences, [I got] the maximum that was possible to get from the trip, to feel that you get the essence [of the journey]. It is not easy, each time a new place, new bed, new people, especially in countries that aren't easy to travel to like China or India.

**Sari:** For me the idea [purpose] of this journey was to withdraw the sense of duties. I'm looking to the road. I had been changed. During the journey I acquired the ability to isolate myself. To watch myself as a person who acts in unfamiliar places and situations all the time.

**Ruth:** You stay in Bangkok and apply for [three] visas [to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Burma]. When we [the Israelis who had applied for the visas] got the visa to Vietnam, we moved there.

**Mira:** The walk was better than the place itself. I'm sure that if I had arrived at the place by train, as [some] people do, I wouldn't have been so excited, as I was, thanks to this walk. You simply understand how people had lived in the mountains, how they kept themselves safe from others, how difficult it was for them. And after all this effort [or strain], when you arrive, it is simply amazing.

[*Can you please tell me more about the road vs. the summit?*] This is something that my mother said all [her] life, and you don't feel it until you feel it by [your] feet, that you have to walk toward your goal and enjoy the road, and only then, the goal becomes more beautiful.

**Ran:** You learn that when you are walking on the road, you shouldn't try to control everything, nor to know how it is going to end.

### Discussion

It is almost banal to say that tourists go from one place to another. Yet this is exactly what tourists do. In the growing tourism industry, potential tourists are bombarded

with information about numerous destination, attractions, or locations, designed to seduce the tourist to choose one place over another. This effort, in itself, suggests that for the average tourist, places are, pre ante, interchangeable (see definition in Appendix D).

According to theory, in the postmodern conditions, places become interchangeable. In the global economy (Harvey, 1990; Sassen, 1998) all places, cities, countries, or states have to compete for each investment. For the investors, places are interchangeable; the “investors’ initiatives” provided or available are most likely to define where the investor will invest. Nike is a good example of a company that has moved its production facilities from one place to another according to changed initiatives and conditions around the globe.

Reciprocally, the postmodernist, or the *tourist* as Bauman (1996) calls it, has no preferences or attachments to the places being visited. Although theoretically sound, the interchangeability of places is hard to define and measure. Most of the respondents in this study described places in terms of “experience,” which only added to the level of complexity when comparing one place with another. Thus, such comparisons must be made with reservations. Analyzing the respondents’ answers, both approaches were found; in some cases places were perceived as interchangeable, and in other cases they acquired unique meaning.

Analyzing the interviews, it became clear that many features that constructed “place,” many features that contribute to the meaning of a place. However, when asked to describe a place, each respondent concentrated on only a few features only. In terms of

Gestalt psychology, it may be said that all the features that constructed a place are in the *background* while one feature is in the position of *figure*. The phenomenon influences the nature of the individual's experience in and of a place, and the meaning of that place for the person.

In some of the backpackers' descriptions, places acquired meaning by being containers for experience, or containers for an internal process. In such cases, the concrete physical places tended to be in the background, the set, not the focus of the experience. For example, coming into a village in India lacking any meaningful features to distinguish it from other villages, suggests that this place is interchangeable. Rachel's decision to stay in this particular place, and staying there for three weeks, was not because of any uniqueness of the place, but rather from her inner readiness to hold back, to rest, to go with the flow, to be immersed in the local atmosphere. The decision may be based on previous experiences along the journey. When Rachel mentioned that her decision to stay in a place had happened the morning after arriving, by an inner feeling, having no particular reason, it hints that initially this "no-name" little Indian village (she didn't mention its name) could be *any* little Indian village in the region. The meaning of the place emerged from Rachel's internal process. This internal process, however, does not occur a vacuum, and therefore, it is influenced by the setting of the place, its physical features, people, and events occurring there.

Even when it comes to the description of a trek in the Himalayas, it seems that this trek could be interchangeable with other treks; with other alternatives. After all, not one of all the respondents who mentioned such a feature in their journey mentioned a specific name for any trek. They talk in terms of “trekking in Nepal,” not even as a countable noun, “a (specific) trek in Nepal.”

Another aspect of place interchangeability is the backpackers’ must-list that includes specific names, locations, and attractions. On the one hand, it might be said that being on the list, having a defined name, address, and expectations (see discussion of the backpackers’ narrative) makes the specific place unique, and thus not interchangeable. On the other hand, many of the respondents voiced reservations about the must-list and the implication that it is a mass tourism list, a mass backpackers’ list. Mass tourism lists, by their nature designed for the many, provide deceptive messages about the distinctiveness of places. After all, the mass tourism lists are essentially advertisements and brochures, attempting to highlight some particular place out of the pack of many similar places. For example, when vacationing in the Caribbean, brochures about all the islands suggest similar deals including hotel, seashore, and meals. Thus, before actually being there the assumption is strong that “a Hilton is a Hilton is a Hilton,” whether in St. Lucia, Barbados, or Santa Dominica. In this sense, the islands are alternatives that are equally valued and thus, interchangeable.

Most of the respondents followed the backpackers' must list, at least to a degree. Unlike the mass tourism travelers, whose schedules were fixed by a pre-designed itinerary, most of the respondents permitted themselves to take their time, making a difference. For example, Yoav had Varanase (an Indian holy place) on his must-list of places to visit. Varanase is not the only holy place in India that he could chose to visit, nor is it the only place where Hindus are baptized in the Ganges. Yoav's first reaction to Varanase was one of disgust. It was only one of many other places in India that he could chose, where the poor are crowded together, starving and dying on the streets, where the odor is difficult for a Western traveler to bear, the streets are filthy, and the food too dangerous to be consumed. Only after some days in Varanase, by allowing himself to be open and to experience the place in full, did Yoav acquire insight into its uniqueness, and did the place acquire new meaning and become meaningful to Yoav. Only then, did Varanase become non-interchangeable; only then did it shift from being simply an entry on a list of places to see, into a meaningful place along Yoav's personal journey. Similarly, Rachel gained her personal insight in a nameless village in India. In both cases, meaningfulness was achieved despite the initial experience, and despite concrete features of the places. The shift from being an interchangeable place into a non-interchangeable one depends on the individual's psychological and emotional internal process. The shift is derived as well from the individual's attitudes and readiness to perceive the journey as a process along the road, rather than a series of summits along the must-list.

When at the journey, or life in general, are viewed as walking along a road, the individual is more likely to accept surprises and the unknown, and to experience places as a sequence of points along a line, as a flow rather than a set of peaks and valleys. Going on the road means that the traveler trusts the process, accepts that things will just happen, that any change in a plan is welcome, and changes are perceived positively. This approach contributes to the interchangeability of places, as people tend to be indifferent, pre ante, about places they haven't experienced or places that have no a priori special meaning.

Most of the respondents tended to hold with the road approach. Only a few were near the summit pole of the continuum. In such cases, the summit people tried to move from one particular place to another, following a relatively structured schedule. Their experiences were concentrated around summits, i.e., the particular places or destinations, such as the top of a mountain or a full moon party. Change in a well-planned itinerary was seen as a positive challenge that added to the value of conquering the summit. In other words, the summit person experienced the peaks; the road person experienced the gaps between the peaks. If for the summit person the uniqueness of a place mattered, the road person was looking for the internal process's projection to provide meaning to the anonymity of the place.

In regard to the road vs. summit continuum, the road person might experience a specific occasion along the flow. It might be a carnival in Rio de Janeiro, rafting, or a specific trek. Almost all the respondents, whether road or summit type, had a few

predefined destinations in their plans, even if not following a rigid schedule. To experience Carnival in Rio, it was necessary to be in Rio on a definite date; to experience a *seder* (ritual Passover dinner) in Katmandu, it was necessary to be in Katmandu on a certain day. It also means that the individual is ready to follow the masses for those predefined destinations. Many of the respondents were ambivalent about this. On the one hand, they didn't want to be part of the Israeli "herd." On the other hand, they wanted the convenience that the mainstream offers. In Cohen's (1972) terms, they wished to have the "explorer" experience of places, coupled with the "drifter's" behavior (see Table 2).

Some felt that being a drifter is a necessary compromise, as mentioned by Saar. In his case, he and his two traveling companions were very disappointed by the international appearance of China, and they moved on to Mongolia, the "last authentic resort," only to follow the path of those few "explorers" who had already traveled to Mongolia. Most of the respondents were bound to the convenience of the main road, the convenience of the mass backpackers' route. Sometimes, as Ruth put it, they missed the home atmosphere and Israeli food, and went deliberately to places where they could enjoy an Israeli menu. In both cases, a "little Israel" was carried in their backpacks, shadowing the explorer experience, bringing their experiences closer to the mass tourism experience, creating the backpackers' mass tourism behavior, and were similar to Riley's (1988) drifters.

The next chapter deals with the backpackers' postmodern strategies while holding modern dreams. Here, in regard to the explore vs. drifter features, it might be said that

they romanticized the dream of being explorers, while carrying on with the behavior of the mass tourists.

### The Backpackers Location on the Tourism Map

#### The Backpackers' Location on Existing Continua

Several continua were presented in Chapter II, "Review of the Literature," each continuum illustrating a different theory about how tourists experience places. Reference will be made to these continua, using them to locate the backpackers on the tourism map. Analyzing the backpackers' answers facilitated locating this group along each of the continua.

Please bear in mind that in a qualitative study in general, and given the nature of continua in particular, no precise point can be drawn on any continuum. The term continuum by itself suggests that in the real world people are never pure type, i.e., people are never the "Weberian ideal type" represented at each of the continuum's poles. To illustrate this point, we can refer to Jung's discussion of *archetypes*, for example, the *Animus* and the *Anima*. According to Jung, the male has many features of the *Animus* archetype, and few of the *Anima*; the female has many features from the *Anima* archetype and few from the *Animus*. Consequently, the *Anima* and the *Animus* coexist in the human unconsciousness (Kaufmann, 1989). Likewise, the person who is a *seeker* (see Figure 6) utilizes more features of a *seeker* on his or her journey than features of an *adventurer*.

Thus, the lines in Figures 1 to 6 do not represent any measurable quantity. In these graphic representations, a longer line means that the respondents as travelers exhibited a behavior in which they used more features of the archetype pole, or the Weberian ideal type, than they did of the opposite pole or archetype. No line in these figures is scaled, nor can they be quantitatively measured. In the following discussion, the term “Weberian ideal type” is used, as it suggests a broader implication and is connected to the social aspect of the discussion.

Cohen (1972) proposed a “typology of four tourist roles” (p. 167): (a) organized mass-tourism, (b) individual mass-tourism, (c) the explorer, and (d) the drifter. These roles are located along a continuum of experiences, in which the organized and the individual-mass-tourism tourists are most likely to be located near the “familiarity” pole. The explorer and the drifter are more likely to be close to the “novelty” pole. In this model, the tourist’s desired experience determines and defines the tourist role. Near the familiarity pole, places are experienced from within an environmental bubble, for safety and convenience. Places on the mass-tourist’s itinerary are either familiar or anticipated, providing no “terrible surprises” or unbearable inconveniences, if any. The places may be familiar through study, e.g., books, brochures, videos, lectures, television programs, advertisements, and so on. The places and the tourist’s experiences are shaped by the tourism industry, which prepares the tour (and the places) to be easily digested.

In contrast, the tourist who is looking for novelty pays with inconvenience when dealing with places and cultures that have unfamiliar characteristics (Cohen, 1972). The “novelty” places are likely to be remote and bizarre, providing a relatively high level of difficulty. The advantage of places of novelty is that they are “less orchestrated” by the tourism industry, and thus tend to be experienced as “more authentic.”

Almost all the respondents in this study were aware that they had made some compromises in this area. They would have preferred novelty and authenticity, but in actuality achieved it only to a degree. Not only did they carry “little Israel” with them, as evidenced in the certain level of ethnocentrism expressed, they also had some reservations about connecting with local people or travelers from other countries. All went on a path (*maslul*) that had been made by others, and thus has been contaminated by the free enterprise local tourism industry. The backpackers frequented guesthouses and restaurants where Hebrew was spoken, and gathered together with other Israelis. Most of the respondents are closer to the familiarity pole on the continuum, but not the mass tourism familiarity. They are closer to the backpackers’ familiarity or, as described by Riley (1988), the familiarity of the drifters.

**Amir:** While the herd mentality (*edri’yute*) leads the Europeans to the Spanish shores, the Israelis are going to Thailand’s shore and India.

**Avi:** For example, [many] people went to Goa after a report [about the place] in a newspaper in 1994. People are doing a clear path, New Delhi, Varanase . . . people are staying in the same guesthouse[s].

**Oren:** Let me tell you how people are traveling. There is this book [a travel logbook] and they check marks for; I was in this place, I was in that place [that

they planned ahead]. This [characterizes] the beginning of the trip. Soon [they] find out that this is not the way to travel.

**Mira:** [I went to] Panata in south Brazil, a month after the carnival. Thus, of course, the place was full of Israelis. It is amazing that along the route Brazilians knew Hebrew. They simply learned it because there are many, many, many Israelis.

**Saar:** When you go to tourism places you encounter those who are working with tourists. They want to get from you what you generally have, money, and this is the basis [of any relationship]. [It is a] very touristy [world], similar in all the places except in Mongolia. You have contact with people who are interested in selling something to you, even not directly . . . there are almost no contacts with locals, but in Mongolia . . . I have found that except in Mongolia, people everywhere are the same . . . drinking Coca-Cola. The faces are changed but the hamburgers remain the same.

- -- A pole of the continuum. It symbolizes a traveler *Weberian ideal type* which includes features that are utilized by travelers, who are closer to this pole.
- — -- The continuum line. **THIS LINE IS NOT SCALED.** The length of this line represents the strength of the back-packers' tendency to utilize the pole's features.
- -- The **relative location** of the back-packers along the continuum.

Familiarity ● — — — — □ — — ● Novelty (Cohen, 1972)

**Figure 1.** The Back-packers Location on the Familiarity vs. Novelty Continuum (Cohen, 1972).

Figure 1 summarizes the location of the respondents on the Familiarity vs. Novelty continuum. Most of the respondents are located closer to the novelty pole, i.e., they utilize

more features of novelty than of familiarity. It is important to bear in mind that the issue of novelty is compared, in this case, to mass tourism tourists, and there are a few reservations about this location. This issue will be discussed below, in the discussion of the explorer vs. drifter continuum. Examining Cohen's (1972) model, and analyzing the interviews in this study, it seems that the backpackers are not of the two mass tourism types. Therefore, the second continuum to be checked is the Explorer vs. Drifter.

According to this model, the explorer values a place if there are neither mass tourists there nor the features of mass tourism that create a safety bubble or a tourists' bubble, isolating the tourist from authentic experience of a place. Consequently, a place is valued by the explorer according to its level of authenticity and to the degree it is unfamiliar to the masses. The explorer is one who explores new places that have not been "polluted" by all types of tourists. Following the explorer to places not yet discovered by the mass tourism industry, the drifter values a place if he or she is the only outsider there, if the place is remote and not easily accessible, and if it contains a different culture or cultures.

Generally, all the respondents tended to avoid mass tourism attractions, services, and places. At the same time, they did visit attractions such as the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. However, they differ from Cohen's drifters and are more in accord with Riley's (1988) description of "drifters." Since the 1960s, Riley observed, drifters went through a process of creating their own attractions and norms. They are trying to stay within a low budget, close to the locals' cost of living, aim to be detached from organized or mass

tourism's attractions and from any fixed time frame. Through the decades, drifters have increased the level of structure in their tours, having a simple schedule, tending to gather in predefined places along their routes. It seems that the behavior of most of the respondents complied with this description. Only a few were close to the explorer type.

**Lea:** I talked to people who had been there. Before the first [trip ], I visited Lametayel [and my preparation also included] immunization. I asked many questions because I had time limitations.

**Meir:** Reasons? Because friends had traveled. It is clear that if you can afford it, why not? [Other] Officers around me did it. I had a plan and goals. I wanted Australia and New Zealand as a break from the past, not an adventure. The language was important; therefore I didn't go to South America. I didn't look for remote places. There is a lot of conformity here, because all are going out; it is part of the path [*masluf*].

**Ruth:** Some invest a lot of time in India. I was not interested in entering India. I told you, I didn't agree to sleep in places . . . in "junk places" [*be'horim*], too much [dirty and inconvenient]. I was not a typical [backpacker]. [It was better for me] to add \$2-3 [per night] and sleep in a more normal place.

**Oren:** If you look at the average backpacker, who has been discharged from the service, he is looking, first of all, for the cheapest thing, which is the East, then South America, and then New Zealand. People who are looking for more nature and foot hiking are most likely to include New Zealand in their path [*masluf*]. This is the place for travelers [who want] to walk and things like that. In the East [it] is less likely to find these things but [if they are] it's less organized and less order, except in Nepal. Those who are doing the East tour are coming to Nepal during the trekking season. The East tour [*sivuv*] [includes] doing Thailand, India. Sometimes Thailand includes also Laos and Cambodia, going down to India and to Nepal in the trek season. Generally, those who go to Nepal are people who look for cheap places. They also look for some culture.

**Saar:** About South America. Many people that we know had been there, so I didn't go to Lametayel, because I could meet people every day . . . [The trip to South America] was not planned in detail when we left Israel, but we knew what we wanted [to do]; there was a [trip] skeleton [outline]; I knew what others had done, and I said that I'll do what the others did.

Figure 2 summarizes the location of the respondents on the Explorer vs. Drifter continuum. Most of the respondents are located just off center to the drifter pole, and only a few closer to the explorer. This means that most of the respondents utilized more drifter features than explorer features. The drifters' institutionalization reduces the novelty level that characterized the first generation of drifters (Riley, 1988), and now, only the explorer is close to the novelty pole.

- -- A pole of the continuum. It symbolizes a traveler *Weberian ideal type* which includes features that are utilized by travelers, who are closer to this pole.
- ■ ■ -- The continuum line. **THIS LINE IS NOT SCALED.** The length of this line represents the strength of the back-packers' tendency to utilize the pole's features.
- -- The relative location of the back-packers along the continuum.

Explorer      ●■■■■□■■■● Drifter (Cohen, 1972; Riley, 1988)

**Figure 2.** The Back-packers Location on the Explorer vs. Drifter Continuum (Cohen 1972; Riley, 1988).

Cohen (1979) discusses the "pilgrim" and "tourist" metaphors, pointing out the different ways each type of tourist experiences places and "centers." Pilgrims move from

the periphery to their cultural center. Tourists, on the other hand, move from their cultural center to the periphery. The respondents in this study are more likely to be tourists. Not only is Israel and the Israeli culture their center, they also carry “little Israel” with them. People mentioned that they went on the journey to learn about other cultures and to encounter locals. In actuality, they encountered locals along their path only as “strangers,” and many had no meaningful encounters because of language barriers and a feeling of strangeness. For example, even those who planned to attend a program in an ashram, didn’t view the ashram as a spiritual center, and did not keep in contact with the ashram after returning to Israel. Those for whom the ashram is the cultural or spiritual center are not in this group of respondents; they stay in the ashram for many years, and some never return to Israel.

**Amir:** There are things you want to see, curiosity. In India, curiosity for something totally different from how it looks from here. You move there from one place to another, from 4000 B.C. to 400 A.D., different religions, different foods. There are several cultures with amazingly different levels . . . an ancient culture like us. About the locals, I met them daily. Long encounters with locals happened in trains, when you sit together for twenty to thirty hours with the same people, and if some were English speaking, it makes [enables] communication.

**Avi:** In the East, the local people are giving you services. In India there are many conversations, because they nag you and initiate conversations. The conversation repeated itself. In meditation courses and during the treks it happened to [that you might] sleep in people’s [locals’] houses. This wasn’t the priority [of my journey]. During the journey, I had a strong connection with my home [parents]. My parents also arranged admission [to university] for me.

**Yoav:** The Indians, as a generalization, lack confidence. When you are coming from our world you use it, bargaining and paying 20 rupee for the first bid [request] of 200 rupee. At the beginning, you are restless, nervous because we are living in [and carry with us] the Western world box. I think that it is not positive or

negative but a different way of seeing. When you open yourself to things you enjoy, you are no longer watching things as a tourist who sees them [the locals and their behavior] as funny. It becomes part of the issue to be in the moment [*regia*]. Not that for the long run a European can live in the Indian culture, which is so slow, but it is good for a short time. One of the reasons that Israelis travel together . . . is the belonging.

Figure 3 summarizes the location of the respondents on the Pilgrim vs. Tourist (Cohen, 1979) continuum. Most of the respondents are located close to the tourist pole, and none are close to the pilgrim pole. This means that all the respondents exhibited more “tourist” features and only a few exhibited even a few “pilgrim” features, e.g., deliberately planning and going to an ashram for a meditation course.

- -- A pole of the continuum. It symbolizes a traveler *Weberian ideal type* which includes features that are utilized by travelers, who are closer to this pole.
- ■ -- The continuum line. **THIS LINE IS NOT SCALED.** The length of this line represents the strength of the back-packers’ tendency to utilize the pole’s features.
- -- The relative location of the back-packers along the continuum.

Pilgrim      ●■■■■■■■■□● Tourist (Cohen, 1979)

Figure 3. The Back-packers Location on the Pilgrim vs. Tourist Continuum (Cohen 1979).

From a different perspective, Bauman (1996) portrays a continuum that uses similar terms, Pilgrim vs. Tourist, but here the terms are metaphors for the modernist and the postmodernist respectively. The pilgrim's place is a "desert" that could host the pilgrim's spiritual search and long-term identity. The pilgrim is both emotionally and spiritually attached to the place of his or her destination. As well, pilgrims see places as non-interchangeable; they are able to distinguish places. In other words, the pilgrim is going "from" a defined place "to" a defined place, both of which are distinguished from all other places and from each other.

Places are more likely to be interchangeable for Bauman's tourist. Places do not have spiritual meaning; rather, they have materialistic characteristics. Tourists have no attachment to places they visit, and the purpose of the trip is to experience difference and novelty. As well, tourists hold "home" as a safeguard, a safety net in case something goes wrong during the trip.

Most of the respondents in this study are closer to the tourist pole than to the pilgrim pole. Few showed attachment to locals whom they met on the journey; instead, they tended to hang around with other Israelis. Most of them lacked attachment to the physical places they visited, and they saw physical places as interchangeable. All kept home as a safety net; some were even ready to pay for the safety net by maintaining contact with their homes during the journey; for some, maintaining contact with home and

parents was not a strong need. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII in the section entitled “A Place Called Home.”

**Rachel:** It was [for me] less contact [with locals] than I wished . . . here and there a family invited [you in]. Israelis stick to other Israelis. Most people are joined with Israelis.

**Yosi:** Beyond that [we had a] low level of communication [with the locals]. Mostly we communicated with other Israelis. Of course there were cultural events with Israelis.

**Meir:** During the journey home was my parents. I felt a commitment to write home [parents], but it was not my need. I could travel without writing.

**Avi:** [I traveled] half and half with people from other countries [and Israelis], but as the time passed by, I was inclined toward Israelis. In meditation courses and during the treks [I] happened to sleep in [local] people’s houses, [but] this wasn’t the priority [of my journey]. . . . [My parents] also helped me register at the university while I was on the journey.

**Ruth:** The goal is [my goals were] to see landscape, new cultures, something different . . . to see waterfalls. After three [of them] you get the point and you don’t want to see [waterfalls] any more. [The waterfall could be] a little bit higher, a little bit lower, [all are] the same.

**Oren:** I had an open ticket. There are people [backpackers] with a general idea [itinerary for] flying, generally to Thailand. The only fixed thing [I had] is the ticket from Israel.

**Saar:** Mongolia is the most authentic place that exists. A place in which you don’t feel that although there are different faces, the world is running at the same way, according to the same rules. I went to the second trip before the beginning of my academic studies.

Figure 4 summarizes the location of the respondents on the Pilgrim vs. Tourist (Bauman, 1996) continuum. Most of the respondents are located closer to the tourist pole,



Trance music, Trance parties, and drugs.<sup>3</sup> They value a place only so long as it provides a container for their activities, and it is defined as “good” as long as the locals and the local police do not disturb or otherwise curb their activities.

The Istaim have a different agenda. They are often moving from place to place. For the Istaim, a place is a container for examining boundaries, limits, and rules, as well as being a container for “time,” i.e., internal process. A place is a container for attractions and experiences, as well as being a container in which one can pause and relax. The Istaim may use drugs, but it is as part of the list of things to try, or as a means of checking boundaries, not as any main goal of their journey. According to Leon (2000), the two groups do not blend, and they carry different narratives:

Avi: To the East, is a trip of fun. Drugs are available after being in the service with no drugs. [They are] cheap and the service is inexpensive, they [the locals] serve you 20 hours a day. [There is also] the “social stigma” [*here is a positive connotation of doing something society stigmatizes*] . . . [and thus] people without traveling background [are traveling]. People want to relax, to have leisure [*linfosh*], the atmosphere is not kind of “walking” but to sit [stay in one place] and watch the street for five months. Relaxation and drugs [go] together. [You travel] to South America to prove yourself. The Israelis compete about who made more treks. In the East, who made more drugs. People feel that they deserve a vacation [*kofesh*] after the service: [the sequence is] work [to save money], vacation abroad, and [academic] study, and therefore it is a vacation not a trip. It is obvious that it is [done according to] socioeconomic level, middle-class plus. And it [is possible to] define those who are coming to South America, Australia, and the lower [socioeconomic level people go to] Thailand, that included people who didn’t serve in the armed forces and criminals from Natania [a city near Tel Aviv with the stigma of having many criminals]. They are going with \$3000 to a place in Thailand and burn it on [using] drugs, coming back to Israel very satisfied. You

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<sup>3</sup>This is similar to the world of the *Rave* parties in the United States, with the emphasis on loud, often discordant music, flashing lights, and drugs.

can recognize them early on the plane [to Thailand]. Nobody [among these people] lost his way and comes to Tibet where there are no *Pat-Pong* [a Thai bordello] and [no] drugs. In the East, the minority are backpackers [travelers who move from one place to another]. . . . Once there were people for longer periods of time, for a journey not vacation. In the East, there are not many [people going for treks], maybe [more] in South America. In the East, more [people] want to pass the time, and [aim at] self-searching. I know somebody [female] who was in Varanase for three months, searching for understanding. The most I felt that it happened to me was in a trek in Tibet, and [during] the meditation [course]. To my friend, it happened in Varanase. [On the other hand] another friend used drugs for one and a half months in India; he didn't search for insights but entertainment.

**Mira:** There are those who traveled because their friends traveled. There are those who travel because they want to see places. But for most people, the goal is to learn [how] to deal with freedom.

All the respondents in this study are Istaim. This is a given outcome, derived from the research design. The Karhanistim do not respond to calls for research volunteers.

While talking about this with Leon, he told me that the only way to talk with the Karhanistim is to be a participant observer, literally. That means being less than 30 years old, dressing in a certain way, wearing an earring, and being able to talk about drug experiences and Trance music. By definition, I am unqualified. However, the respondents were able to recognize and define the "other group" or groups, and many mentioned that there is not only one type of backpacker. Comparing the analysis of this study's interviews with the findings of Mevorach (1997) and Simchai (1998), it appears that the respondents in all three studies are close to the Istaim pole. This is not surprising, as all three studies used volunteers for respondents.

Figure 5 summarizes the location of the respondents on the Karhanistim vs. Istaim (Leon, 2000) continuum. All this study's respondents are located closer to the Istaim pole, and none are close to the Karhanistim polar extreme. People in the two groups do not mix with each other (Leon, 2000), and thus, for a didactic purpose, the continuum is broken. For many of the respondents, drug use was on their list of activities to try, and many did experiment with drugs, although that was not a major goal of their journey. However, for most of this study's respondents, drug use was simply a boundary check, one they could easily perform while being far from home.

- -- A pole of the continuum. It symbolizes a traveler *Weberian ideal type* which includes features that are utilized by travelers, who are closer to this pole.
- ■ -- The continuum line. **THIS LINE IS NOT SCALED.** The length of this line represents the strength of the back-packers' tendency to utilize the pole's features.
- -- The relative location of the back-packers along the continuum.

Karhanistim ●■■■ ■■■□● Istaim (Leon, 2000)  
 [The Istaim also described by Simchai (1998) and Mevorach (1997)]

**Figure 5.** The Back-packers Location on the Karhanistim vs. Istaim "Continuum" (Leon, 2000).

### Discussion: The Backpackers' Continuum

Backpackers, as represented by the respondents in this study, have been described according to five continua, each of which was derived from previous studies and theories. Here a new continuum is suggested, one based on the interviews. The two polar extremes of this continuum are "Adventurer" and "Seeker." Each pole represents a Weberian ideal type of travelers, or backpackers in this case. The following description is a distillation of the many features of each type, for didactic purposes. In real life, there is no pure Weberian ideal type, and consequently, each respondent utilized some features characteristic of one pole and some features characteristic of the other. Each respondent was a unique mixture of features of the two poles. Nobody is a pure seeker or a pure adventurer; no one uses all the features of any pole.

I chose to call the first type the *seeker*. The seeker, or the *pathfinder*, is looking for a learning experience, personal growth, and/or insights, all of which the seeker sees as an internal process. The seeker holds with a life approach, according to which the *road* is more important than the *summit*. Seekers tend to take their time, not rushing from one attraction to another. They may stay in a place for a long period of time, experiencing that place in its depth, taking time in a place, and thus, the initial experience may take a 180-degree turn. The seeker's internal process is dealing with identity, self-understanding, and better understanding the world, as well as finding some meaning in an uncertain world. The majority of the respondents showed the views of the seeker in their answers.

**Efi:** I discovered [learned] that there are more bad people and bad situations than I had thought [anticipated], who are not looking out for my well-being [*she'yehiye li tov*]; rather they want their well-being at my expense [*al heshboni*]. It is a sad, unfortunate conclusion, but it is good that it is here [that it becomes clear to me] because this is life.

**Amir:** To summarize the journey: I have had an experience. It answered the needs of the beginning of the journey [initial expectations]. I started to see that [I] relate different to things, [with] less obvious [rigidity]. It answered [my] expectations for curiosity. This is the importance [of the journey], not in [terms of] good or bad, rather in the sense of "I have to go on this mountain."

**Meir:** You woke up in the morning and you felt either vigor or no vigor. The goal of the travel was to have maximum experience, culture (not drugs), [and] the doing nothing of being in one place for two weeks. It was wonderful [*meshage'a*] . . . For me, the journey was, among other things, cleaning my head, maybe in order to be open to new things. . . . I was waiting for some enlightenment, but I turned back to the same doubt [*hitlablut*].

**Alon:** Coming to a place, [and] if there are nice people there, staying. If it is a depressed place, moving to another place. When finished [*keshenigmar*] moving to another place. . . . [About the continuum] I am more the "searching for self" than a "trekker." More the hedonistic issue, looking for intense experiences.

**Moshe:** I would have used the word "flow." Did you [ever] feel that you are within a river, or climbing a mountain? Where you are going to locate yourself [on the continuum]? [*In response to a question about the continuum:*] It is reasonable to define a continuum. I am looking for the "road" [not the summit]. There are summits on the road, it is part of the road [the nature of the road] so I'm somewhere in the middle, [but] I tend more to the road.

**Avi:** During the journey I have changed my direction from [what I had in mind after] the service. During the service I had been changed by the system's direction. One the journey, the nature, character [of each person] changes differently. For example, those who are traveling with a big group of Israelis experience less change. Those who traveled alone, like me, were changed [more] and get more from the journey.

**Mira:** The walk was better than the place itself. . . . I'm sure that if I had arrived at the place by train, as [some] people do, I wouldn't have been so excited, as I had been, thanks to this walk. And after all this effort [or strain], when you arrive, it is

simply amazing. . . . My mother used to say it all the time, but she was talking about relationship between people, that you have to conquer the summer [and] not simply arrive there. And always it sounded to me like rubbish. And I learned it through [my] feet.

The second Weberian ideal type of backpacker is the *adventurer*, or the *trekker* as some of the respondents called this type of backpacker, who holds with a different approach to the journey. This type of traveler is more likely to be a “summit” person, placing emphasis on a defined destination rather than on the road there. In this case, a trek is seen as a summit as well, along the entire journey. The adventurer considers staying in a *nameless* small village in India a waste of time, as there is nothing to do there, nothing to see. The adventurer is likely to have a *must list* of things to do and places to see, and comply with that list, checking it item by item. There is another aspect to the adventurer. Adventurers simply like to travel, including foot hiking and mountain climbing. For a seeker, a trek in Nepal may be simply one entry on the list of things that should be done. The adventurer’s journey is all about treks, going out into nature, climbing mountains and crossing rivers, entering the jungle and scuba diving. Like the explorer, the adventurer is looking for remote places, far from the crowd, mass tourists and drifters alike. A few of the respondents were close to this type of backpacker. However, some of the respondents who were seekers were able to identify adventurers on their journey, and the seekers were unhappy about traveling with trekkers.

**Rachel:** There are trekkers who look for danger and challenge.

**Lea:** [In response to Rachel] They [the trekkers] spoiled the atmosphere [and mood].

**Efi:** There are two groups [of backpackers]: One, the essence is drugs. It is not expensive and it is far from home. Two, [the goal of the second group is to] travel. They go into jungles, etcetera. Only a small percent [of the backpackers are trekkers]. I think that in recent years it is popular to at least try drugs. Most backpackers are not trekkers. Many rent an apartment in Goa; they experience no more than two places in India.

**Meir:** I had a plan and goals. I'm a person who sticks with plans, and it was a motive of competition against myself. I had achieved the maximum. I didn't waste time, and I didn't miss [any] experiences. [I got] the maximum that was possible to get from the trip, to feel that you get the essence [of the journey].

**Avi:** To the East is a trip of fun. To South America [you travel] to prove yourself. The Israelis compete about who made more treks; in the East [about] who did more drugs. I didn't go there because I wanted to be a trekker, [not for] searching for myself, rather [as] somebody who came to learn, and somebody who came to travel.

The adventurer, like the explorer, values a place for its authenticity, being remote and far from mass tourism and the drifters. The place is a destination and the road is valued if it includes "hurdles" along the particular route. Overcoming these hurdles, challenges, and unexpected problems, all add to the place's value and attraction, and each such hurdle may become a summit. For the adventurer, the most difficult the struggle, the more glorious the sight from the summit, the more desirable the summit.

The seeker is looking for the road, not the summit, and values a place if it intertwines with the road. The place is a container for experiences, for an internal process.

It allows experiments with rule breaking and boundary testing. Places provide containers in which time flows at a different pace than time at home. In terms of the rite of passage, the place is a container for *liminality* (Turner, 1977) or what Erikson (1968) called the *moratorium*. Finally, if the place is different enough from home, it becomes a catalyst to the seeker's internal process, and this is why the alternative name for the seeker is *pathfinder*.

Table 6 summarizes the Adventurer vs. Seeker continuum. Most of the respondents in this study are closer to the seeker pole, although a few are closer to the adventurer. Bear in mind that this table represents only the respondents in this particular study, only one of many subgroups of the backpacker phenomenon.

It is clear that the *seeker* shares some features with the *Istaim* (Leon, 2000) and the *drifters* (Cohen, 1972; Riley, 1988), as well as the *tourist's* feature of Cohen (1979) and the *tourist* of Bauman (1996). None of the respondents utilized Karhanistim characteristics.

Table 6

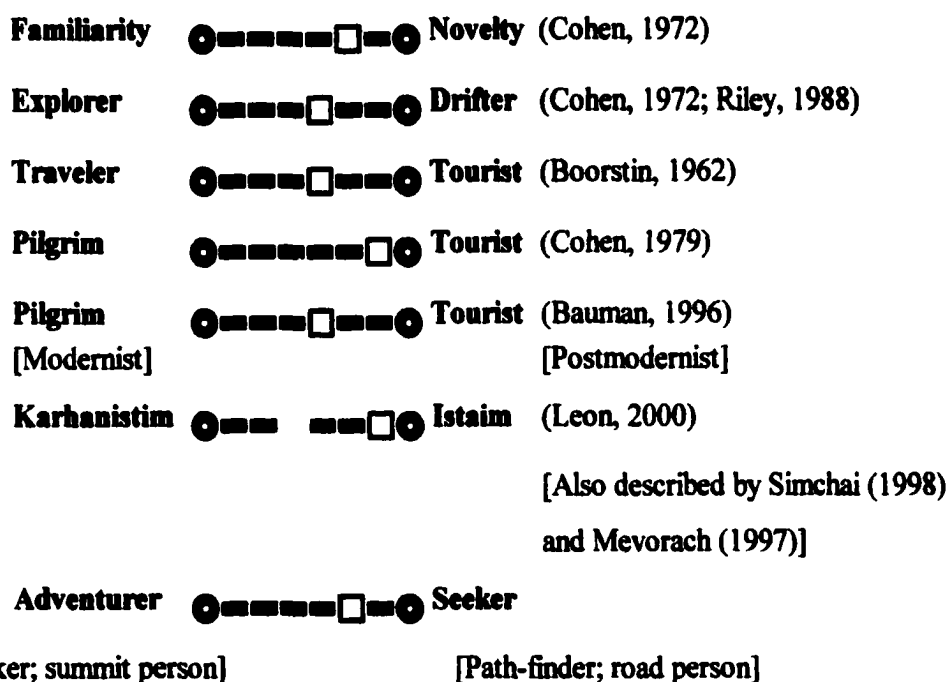
**The Adventurer vs. Seeker Continuum in Regard to Places**

<p>Place is, for the most part, a destination. Authenticity of the place is important and “hurdles” along the route are welcomed; overcoming challenges is a goal in itself and thus, the more difficult the terrain, the more it becomes desirable, and the more glorious the sight from the summit. Change in a plan is perceived as a challenge</p>	<p><b>Adventurer</b> [Trekker]</p> <p>● ————— ●</p> <p><b>Seeker</b> [Path-finder]</p>	<p>The place is mostly part of the road rather than a destination; The road is a process, and thus things happen, when the time comes. It is a container for the liminality/moratorium process or phase of development. It is a container that allows experimenting in breaking rules and boundaries, with relative safety.</p>
<p>Search for adventures and Nature attractions</p>		<p>Search for self or identity as an internal process</p>

Figure 6 summarizes all the previous continua, presenting them as a “tourism map” comprising previous studies and theories. The adventurer vs. seeker continuum was conceived after analyzing the interviews, and is presented as a completion of the map. Doing so, the relevant location of the respondents, as a sample of backpackers, is

presented on this tourism map. It provides a visual presentation of the backpackers who volunteered to take part in this study, exhibiting their tendencies and behaviors as tourists.

- -- A pole of the continuum. It symbolizes a traveler *Weberian ideal type* which includes features that are utilized by travelers, who are closer to this pole.
- ■ ■ -- The continuum line. **THIS LINE IS NOT SCALED.** The length of this line represents the strength of the back-packers' tendency to utilize the pole's features.
- -- The **relative location** of the back-packers along the continuum.



**Figure 6.** The Back-packers Location on the "Tourism Map."

The tourism map is constructed of six continua. It provides a visual representation of where the respondents are located on each continuum and thus provides a qualitative sense of their tendencies as travelers. No respondent backpacker is an absolute Weberian ideal type, located at either polar extreme. Thus, even those who came closer to the adventurer pole, e.g., tending to be a summit person not a road person searching for the self, in retrospect found the trip to be a journey, i.e., a process. They found that they had learned something, and they bring the journey's experiences back home with them. On the other hand, even the road people who are closer to the seeker extreme looked for a few summits, i.e., specific attractions on the *must list* of things to be done or seen, that they wanted to accomplish. For all, the journey was a stage on which they struggled and rehearsed new roles and new identities.

## Chapter VII

### BACKPACKERS IN THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT

#### Postmodern Strategies, Modern Dreams

This chapter is focused on the shift from modern to postmodern strategies in order to match up with contemporary life. In postmodern times, according to Bauman (1996), the rules of the game have been changed through the game itself. People have reduced their commitments, responsibilities, and loyalties, and have subscribed to the slogan “one day at a time” (p. 24).

In this view, the study participants represent a sample of postmodern individuals who utilize postmodern strategies. They prefer short-term commitments, and while searching for a variety of exciting experiences are constantly redefining their identities as part of their search for themselves. From this study, I became aware that the majority of the interviewees had adapted their behavior and strategies to the new age of uncertainty. Nonetheless, their dreams were little changed from those of their predecessors.

#### Postmodern Strategies

All the respondents in this study presented postmodern life strategies (Bauman, 1996), distinguished mainly by their attitudes toward short-term commitments, time fragmentation, and low levels of loyalty. Short term commitments were demonstrated in four categories: (a) commitments to peers or groups during the trips, (b) commitment to present or future profession or occupation, (c) commitment toward the State of Israel, and (d) commitment toward their future families.

The respondents were accustomed to traveling in groups. However, the composition of these groups frequently changed. For example, Moshe started his trip with three friends with whom he had originally made preparations for the trip, but during the trip he separated from his partners and joined other groups on an ad hoc basis.

According to the respondents, an original group might break up while hitchhiking, or when members of the group set different agendas during the trip. This grouping and regrouping is a process that might start sometime during the planning phase, or on the airplane to a given destination, or upon arrival in a new place. When the pace of an individual differs from the pace of the group, this individual might detach him or herself from the group and look for another crew with which to proceed, when ready. Couples, married and unmarried, were the exception, for they were examining their relationship throughout the entire journey. The respondents gave different explanations for this phenomenon.

**Amir:** I traveled alone. I planned to go alone and to find somebody [to travel with]. There were many who were looking for partners. I looked for partners in Nepal because of the trekking, because the trekking requires it. In India I was alone but for short times, up to ten days, I was with one or more when our routes intersected.

**Meir:** Mostly [I traveled] alone or with one or two people. I'm not a typical example; most Israelis traveled in groups.

**Moshe:** On the border to Argentina we separated. Two of us took a bus, and two (including me) hitchhiked. I separated from my friend right away and I met him later in Brazil. While hitchhiking, I was with one Belgian and a Swedish couple. We shared the driving.

**Yoav:** I started with one friend and then my girlfriend came, and [then] another person. Always there are larger groups of people. I didn't understand it until I traveled alone. You do not travel with them all the time but in different places

[along the route] you encounter the same fifteen people. You learn about them during the trip.

**Sari:** I went alone. I traveled with others there. The trip was mine; I didn't share it with anybody that came with me. With Israelis it is not totally alone, but it is a personal experience. The groups are most likely Israelis. It reminds us of home.

The way they acted regarding the grouping issue is, partially, in contrast to Israeli tradition. In Israel, friendships last for years. It is not unusual to find groups of friends in their fifties or sixties who first met early in primary or high school or during military service. In fact, many of the backpackers found their initial group in that way. However, some people mentioned that during the journey they had the chance to meet Israelis from other socioeconomic strata, with whom they would not have associated while in Israel. This was noticed and mentioned as a great lesson, or part of the process, they experienced during the journey. The short-term commitment to any group is in contrast to the Israeli tendency of gathering, a "herd phenomenon" or "herding together" as some have called it.

**Rachel:** Israelis are stacked with Israelis. It is a core of three or four people that expands and shrinks all the time.

**Lea:** I made the trip with a partner [both are female]. We joined groups for treks and in cities. People who landed together met each other later. It is called a "wave," mostly Israelis but not all. As an Israeli, you cannot be alone, even if you want to.

**Efi:** We aimed [he made the trip with Yosi] *not to be with Israelis*. In New York, we wanted to see how the locals are living, and currently we share an apartment with two Americans. We also meet Israelis [in New York] . . . people that we would never meet in Israel, because also in Israel people are going to places in which they meet people who are [socially and culturally] like them.

**Alon:** Generally, I *was alone*. But most of the time [I was] with another one or two [persons]. For short times, I [traveled] was in group[s] . . . not necessarily Israelis. *Israelis are gathering like a herd*.

**Moshe:** I started [my trip] in Chile with four friends -- we had known each other since kindergarten. In Chile there are many treks . . . we wanted a maximum of nature . . . we didn't have problems with the group. . . . After we separated, I spent time with other groups, some of them were not Israelis.

Some of the respondents see themselves as "different," that is, they preferred to travel alone, although most of the other Israelis traveled in groups. "Israelis are gathering like a herd," Alon said, and immediately added that he is not like them. Grouping may be justified, for example, when it comes to treks in Nepal, because of the safety issue. However, when being with a group along the trek, the respondents tried to be with non-Israelis. Another justification for grouping is the opportunity for interactions between socioeconomic strata, as mentioned by Efi. However rationalized, the grouping phenomenon exists, and Rachel called it "core" while Lea called it a "wave." They justified being in a group as part of the nature of backpackers; it is the normal behavior of backpackers.

The journey is perceived as a fragment of time, a band of time-out, in between childhood and "real life." This issue is discussed in the context of the rite of passage. Here, the emphasis is on the fragmentation of time throughout the journey. This fragmentation was not planned; rather it was part of the freedom the backpackers experienced during the journey. The sequence of places, and the length of time they stayed in each place, was sometimes arbitrary, imposed on the backpackers by chance or offered as an opportunity; sometimes it was the result of an individual's momentary mood. In all cases, the fragments, or "episodes" in Bauman's terminology (1996), were taken one at a time, each to be experienced as a unique experience.

**Efi:** The journey is a break before you start the serious phase of life. . . . [Not all was planned] and I have an open [air] ticket for a year [he was interviewed in New York], until May, and I would go back depending on what might have happened.

**Moshe:** Nothing had been planned. . . . I have no ambitions or goals. I went on the trip because I couldn't ignore the opportunity.

**Yoav:** The breakthrough of barriers after the army. The army is a mold [or structure]. Now you [I] do things without reason, simply because I do them. . . . It is the distance that gives a chance to see different [things], to live on a different time [scale] and in different place[s].

**Ruth:** I arrived [there] and I was carried by the flow. [In] Thailand . . . I knew that I want to be in the islands. We went to the islands. We came back. Then I started to travel. . . . Bangkok is a base from which you go to other places. A visa to Thailand is free of charge, so you are coming and going to Bangkok. You are waiting for the visa to the next country, and meantime you take a rest or go shopping... You get ten days only to visit Burma [on your visa].

**Oren:** The routine in Israel brings you back, for example, in regard to time, but not totally. It becomes a routine again. There [on the journey] you wake up in the morning and have no commitments.

**Mira:** [Panata] was one of the most exciting places on my journey. After three days I decided to stay and I stayed [there] for about three weeks.

Efi uses the word "break" or "pause" [*hafsaka*] as something that stopped the flow of life, the flow that was taking him from childhood to adulthood. He talked in terms of "time out" or liminality. Ruth, who was going with the flow, stopped at different points along her route, and noted the fragmentation of the flow. Yoav and Oren differentiated between time in Israel and time during the journey. During the journey, time belonged to the traveler. In Israel, whether at school, in the service, or as an adult, one needs to comply with society and its "public time." Therefore, the fragmentation of time became a desired quality of the journey. The journey became a time out before entering the future life as an adult member of society.

Thinking about their future professions and employment, the respondents revealed no commitment to any future employer. Sometimes, they showed no commitment toward the profession they had acquired or would acquire as university students. They expected that their profession would provide a good income and, for some, flexibility. Others put “self actualization” as the most important feature of the future profession, and even here, flexibility was highly appreciated.

**Efi:** I have no idea. I’m attracted by advertising, marketing, and communication... I have had a dream for many years, [that] I am a drummer, player. I dream that this is going to be my life, a life of playing, but I was not committed enough [for my dream].

**Meir:** This question has bothered me for the past five years. What I study [Middle East studies] it’s what I’m interested in [now] and will inspire me, but it’s not clear what about employment. But I found other things that I’m interested in. . . . I am not taking too many commitments but I’m going on the planned route [*telem*], which is anticipated. [I] like the army, it was a frame for self-actualization that I couldn’t find in other frames, including Middle East studies. In theory, it is [re-enlisting] an option . . . I have no doubt about my ability. Everything I might want [to do] I’m talented enough [to do], but the problem is I don’t know what I want; what I want to do [as a profession].

**Yoav:** I don’t know for sure what practically I’m going to do but I’m sure that I will deal with people. That is where I feel good, that I’m alive, that I am taking and giving a lot. I don’t know what [my] profession is going to be. *Right now*, I am studying psychology and by *inertia* it [I] will end up with [an] M.A., but I don’t know enough [about psychology] in and out. I hope I will not come home at 8:00 p.m. [from work], going to sleep after *mabat* [the news on television] at 9:00 p.m. The dream is to find a system in which I will not be in such a situation. [The] everyday [routine] could erode me. I will not be like that. I would not enjoy life like that.

**Sari:** Later, I would like to find professional independence, clinical psychology . . . and I will be satisfied and I [would] feel that it fulfilled me.

**Ruth:** I’ll have a degree in law, or economics, or both. [My] aspiration is to work in a successful [law] office and to be settled.

**Mira:** [My dream is] that my job will allow me to move from one place to another and to not be fastened [to one place]. . . . One day I will accept full responsibility, but I don't want to lose myself.

### Loyalty to Israel

While on the journey, when Israeli backpackers meet each other, they usually talk about Israel and the news. If possible, some may go to the nearest Israeli embassy or consulate to read the newspapers. This obsession with the news is characteristic of many Israelis. It is a phenomenon that is reinforced in a country where the news is broadcast every half hour and deals mostly with politics and national security issues (long before CNN started with this trend in the USA). Many people listen to the news "obsessively," ten times daily or practically continuously, as in other countries people may become stock market news addicts. Some backpackers, on the other hand, go in the opposite direction, looking for relief from this involvement, at least during the trip. Keeping track of the news reports suggests a certain level of involvement with the Israeli experience. It presents a paradox involving level of loyalty.

**Meir:** During the trip, the first think when you meet Israelis is to transfer information about Israel [and] about what has happened. For example, when I was in New Zealand I heard about the doctor from my unit who was killed in a terrorist attack. When we came to New Zealand, we went to the embassy to read [the] newspapers, and we felt "where we are, and where are they" [a Hebrew expression]; the friends are in Israel. I felt more Israeli.

**Ruth:** When somebody is coming [from Israel] you ask him: "What's new?" I remember being in Vietnam, and the news we received was that Ofra Haza [a singer] has passed away . . . or when soldiers had been killed [on the Israeli border] you hear that. . . . The Internet is convenient, there is a site for Channel 2 [television] that provides you with the news . . . with friends I contacted by e-mail.

As might be expected in the postmodern era, the young Israelis show a lower level of loyalty to Israel than previous generations, as is suggested by the growing percentage of those who evade military service (Shavit, 2000). Inspired by the European nationalism of the nineteenth century, Israel had been constructed as the Jewish nation, to be a shelter for all the Jewish people in the world. Consequently, the Israeli ethos supported (and supports) Jewish newcomers. Since the 1980s, Israel has become more open to the world and the global village. In due course, people have become aware that options exist. The free and open media eroded parts of the Israeli ethos and mythos. In the beginning, the needs and rights of society were the priority (Kni-Paz, 1993). Now, individual rights and needs have outshone society's rights, which no longer can be taken for granted; now individual rights and society's rights are struggling for a new balance. This became evident when the respondents were asked, "What is *home* for you?"

**Yosi:** If tomorrow there were to be a war, I would go back to Israel although I feel a minority there. . . . I'm considering staying in the USA.

**Efi:** I don't feel very Israeli. The important things in Israel are reduced to people that I like. [To be] an Israeli is people, places, and commitments. . . . if tomorrow Israel were involved in a war I would go back [to fight]. I don't know where it comes from, I'm not happy when [people] recognize me as an Israeli. Serving in the military is a problematic issue today, when you have MTV. You serve [your country] and see that others [in other countries] are not interested in these things. They are going to the university, they have girlfriends, and they are not bothered by a friend who is injured or killed [in the service]. The three years in the military [ages 18 to 21] are probably the best in life, [the service] is not normal in the Western world.

**Meir:** To be an Israeli is an option. If the situation should worsen, and I'd feel bad, I'd go to another place [country] . . . according to self-actualization . . . I'm at the center after all.

**Amir:** If the situation in Israel continues in the current direction [right wing and clerical parties in power], I will go [to another country].

**Moshe:** Here [Israel] is the core [*gar'in*], family, friends, city [Haifa], but everything is open [to be changed]. I'm a Jew but I didn't choose it. I didn't choose my identification number either. There are some political streams in Israel toward which I feel total rejection.

**Yoav:** When I was in the military I wanted to contribute to the state, but to contribute your entire life is another thing. During the trip I have learned that it is important to achieve [your potential] . . . I'm not going to give more time for the service but [instead] I'll get my graduate studies.

Only a few mentioned Israel as an entity unto itself. For most of the respondents, Israel is also home, people, relationships, and specific places. Many had a love-hate relationship toward Israel, and some, such as Efi and Yosi, felt like a "minority" in their own homeland. Some felt uncomfortable with the social, moral, and political situation. However, they were ready to return to defend their home if necessary. About staying in Israel? The answer was positive, but with reservations, and conditions. Self-actualization, personal growth, personal happiness, and generally "the dream" have priority over patriotism.

### Modern Dreams

Several common themes are evident from the analysis of answers to the question, "What is your dream?" It became obvious that people could distinguish between their dreams and what they called "reality," i.e., their estimates of the probability of reaching those dreams. In some cases, people showed ambiguity about their dreams or goals, mainly about choice of profession. The following is a set of features that was decoded from the respondents' interviews.

**Yosi:** There is a dream and there is a reality. The dream is to be a famous movie maker, to make movies.

**Amir:** I'm not going to fulfill my dream, to play in the NBA. This dream had dropped down at 17 years old. [Now] my dreams are more realistic. About a certain level that I wish to accomplish in my standard of living.

**Alon:** I don't know. [I dream] that I will have a good partnership [with a wife] and a job that I will enjoy, but I haven't decided what kind of job yet. It seems that reality will make the decision for me.

**Yoav:** I don't know what [my] profession is going to be. Right now I am studying psychology and by inertia it will end up with [an] M.A., but I don't know enough [about psychology] in and out.

“Profession” or “job” was the most common ingredient in their dreams. In many cases, this involved ambiguous thoughts, pros and cons, and an evaluation of the chances of getting into the desired field, e.g., clinical psychology. In this case, the profession feature was immersed in uncertainty. A choice of profession has to deal with another quality, self-fulfillment or self-actualization. The respondents wanted to enter professions that they would like, that would help them maintain their independence and standard of living. Self-actualization appears to have priority over economics, that is, high income or money per se. The right profession, though, brings not only self-fulfillment but also a sense of freedom and the desired life style.

In the context of this study, it is not surprising to observe that some people mentioned future trips as part of their dreams. In some ways, possible future trips appear as part of an economic feature, i.e., the wish to be financially able to take annual trips. Many exhibited a sense of reality check about their dreams, e.g., recognizing the fact that

once settled with children, one could not go off on a journey as one wishes, because there are commitments to family well-being.

**Amir:** I wish to accomplish [achieve] a standard of living, that for example will allow me to make another trip some 15 or 20 years from now, to whatever will be called at that time “the trip.”

**Meir:** Dream . . . If I would win the lottery, I would travel, travel, travel, not being committed to anything.

**Oren:** A dream to take my children to India. I see myself traveling [in the future], but [I’ll be] established, traveling with my family.

Commitments that were described previously in this work, especially to future families, were mentioned by many in response to the question, “What is your dream?” In this case, all showed a high level of commitment to their future children for an unlimited time. Two of the respondents mentioned that this commitment had been acquired by emulating their parents’ commitments. “Family” and “home” were almost synonymous in the respondents’ narratives.

**Efi:** I’m not interesting in having [a] family, a commitment that right now I can’t see myself taking, but probably I will.

**Moshe:** [I dream of having] a wife that I will be in love with and happy children that get all that they need.

**Yoav:** Commitment to children [is] for the long run. You learn it at home so you can see where it comes from. My parents are committed to [their] children [even] after 18 [years old].

**Mira:** One day I will accept full responsibility, but I don’t want to lose myself. [*Do you intend to have children?*] Certainly. I want to be with them as much as possible, but not so as to lose myself.

It is written in a Jewish *Midrash* (rabbinical commentary) that “a nice wife, nice home, and nice furnishings, give one peace of mind.” The respondents appear to accept

this wisdom. "Home" was second only to "profession" as a common feature in their dreams. Generally this home appeared as both metaphoric and concrete (or physical), and seemed to be placed in the Israeli equivalent of American suburbia. The environmental setting was far from the big city, and it included a small garden planted in an unpolluted atmosphere. The "home-ness" appeared in more metaphorical presentations such as "wife" or "husband," "children" or "love," and within the family. Feelings of love or of "being happy" were also presented as part of many dreams. These positive feelings were mentioned in relation to the future in general, and to profession, family, and home in particular.

### Discussion

In this chapter, the issue of change is explored in relation to the respondents' narratives. The young people in this study demonstrated changes in life strategies while their dreams did not change. According to the psychosocial approach, change and transition across the lifespan are normal (Erikson, 1968; Newman & Newman, 1995). Change of behavior is the basis of behavioral psychology, and change of the belief system is central to cognitive psychology (Ellis & Whitely, 1979; Newman & Newman, 1995). Moreno (in Fox, 1987) emphasized change as an essential vehicle for survival, change that could be achieved by creativity and spontaneity.

According to the psychosocial concept, change in the belief system may occur via the mechanism of social learning (Newman & Newman, 1995). Rokeach (1972) claims there are five levels of belief system: primitive, deep personal experience, authority,

peripheral, and, least important, inconsequential belief. According to Rokeach's model, dreams are part of the primitive beliefs, acquired from society in general, and from the parents in particular. Consequently, the content of dreams does not change much while passing through generations. In other words, primitive beliefs, unlike those acquired by experience, tend to resist change.

Identity can be changed across the lifespan, but personality is more likely to be fixed at the age of five or six (Bootzin, et al., 1993), going through minor changes or adjustments until the age of twenty or twenty-five at which point personality is "set like plaster" (Costa & McCrae, in Pervin & John, 1997). Personality determines the individual's belief system that in turn determines the individual's dream. For example, when the respondents described their "dream house," they described a European house, not a Middle-Eastern or an Israeli one.

Israel is located in the Middle East, with short rainy winters and long hot and dry summers. Viewing the Israeli suburbs from an architectural point of view, it is evident that the design of many of the houses originated in Europe, from which the first Jewish settlers came, some fifty to a hundred years ago. Many of the buildings in Israel have steeply pitched red roofs. This design is common in Europe, in order to handle heavy snowfall in winter, but not in the Middle East, where for generations people sat on flat roofs throughout the long summer nights in hopes of catching a breeze. The lawns and flower gardens are also alien to the dry Israeli climate, with its limited water supply. Most of the respondents described exactly this "European pastoral" as part of their dreams, associating the future home with a house, and garden, and a family including a spouse and children.

This suggests that place attachment may be initiated not only by a physical homeland but also by a spiritual or a cultural homeland, i.e., in this case Europe.

The respondents exhibited the shift of behavior toward a postmodern strategy, complying with Bauman's (1996) description of the phenomenon. Bauman's metaphor for a contemporary person is a "tourist," characterized by a low level of commitment and loyalty to profession, workplace, neighborhood, homeland, or even family. This tourist is looking for experiences, dividing time into short terms (time fragmentation) and as a traveler, he or she has little or no involvement in the countries through which he or she travels. These features were clearly exhibited by the respondents in this study.

During their travels, the backpackers' involvement with local populations was limited. The backpackers broke the trip up into relatively short periods of time and did not commit to any group with which they traveled. Although some admitted to disliking their (place) identity as Israelis, they retained the safety net Bauman (1996) and Cohen (1972) describe. The safety net was the home in Israel as a place to which they could always return if and when things go wrong. Further, most of the respondents had no rigid timetable or any detailed plans during their trips.

The 1990s job market in the global village completed the course of the 1980s by dichotomizing the wage market. Many middle level management positions have been eliminated and the job market distribution is skewed to dual peaks at both ends. A widening gap divides the many who hold low wage jobs (e.g., service jobs, as in fast food eateries) and those who hold knowledge-based jobs, primarily in technology, marketing, and finance. The middle class has shrunk, moving toward both extremes (Friedman, 1999,

2000; Harvey, 1990; Toffler, 1990) and the situation in Israel is no exception. In such a world, loyalty and commitment to one's employer is a poor strategy (Bauman, 1996). None of the respondents mentioned job security for life as part of future plans, expectations, or dreams. For most, self-actualization has priority over loyalty to a future job or to Israel.

Likewise, globalization has influenced everyone in the world (Friedman, 1999, 2000), and this condition makes loyalty and commitment to the homeland a bad strategy (Bauman, 1996). The loyalty that was exemplified by the saying, "my country right or wrong" was probably derived from a primitive belief system (Rokeach, 1972). This aphorism achieved popularity during what Toffler (1990) called the "second wave," the wave of European nationalism. This study's respondents in New York, who claimed that were there to be war in Israel tomorrow they would rush back to fight, demonstrated this kind of loyalty. However, when it comes to self-actualization, that is, considerations of profession, job, or family, Israel has to compete with other countries as a desirable place, and this loyalty is derived from what Rokeach (1972) termed the "deep personal" or "peripheral" belief system. The respondents presented a lower level of place attachment to Israel than to the Israeli ethos. Their attitude toward Israel is ambiguous. Although they are strongly committed to returning to protect the state if needed. This commitment is not necessarily strong enough for them to want to build their future, unconditionally, in that place. Therefore, they do not feel bad or guilty about contemplating emigration, although they do feel bad when contemplating divorce or abandonment of any future children.

During their travels, many tried to break the Israeli connection by joining travelers from other countries, contingent upon those travelers' English language skills. None of the Israeli backpackers remained with the same group or core group throughout the entire trip (with the exception of couples). The respondents changed their groupings frequently, basing the change upon immediate, or sometimes even impulsive, plans. This is consistent with their tendency to break time into short terms, what Bauman (1996) called *time fragmentation*, which he considered a postmodern strategy, the "one day at a time" strategy. This behavior is in contrast to feature of Israeli culture, according to which people tend to remain in close contact with friends throughout their lives. In contrast to an enmeshed society that seems similar to a small Italian village, the backpackers' journeys were executed in an individualistic manner, emphasizing a personal self-searching process. In this process, the group or homeland played only a secondary role.

Although all the respondents were raised in Israel while it was still very much of a welfare state, they did not show any commitment to the Israeli version of the European social-democrat socioeconomic system. Their self-actualization preceded social commitments. In Hillman's terms (Hillman & Ventura, 1992), they are more likely to nourish the "inner child" than to assume adult responsibilities in order to sustain a democratic society, or to sustain a reasonable level of social responsibility, once a cornerstone for the new nation of Israel. For example, only one respondent, Moshe, was politically active.

Only a few of the respondents took Israel "for granted," as a place they unconditionally chose to live in, a place to live and to build their homes and families. The

political situation in Israel is the people's main concern, much more than the regional agitation. The internal political situation is an example of postmodern fragmentation. In the May 1999 Israeli elections, 33 parties participated, many of which were constructed along ethnic or religious lines. Unlike during the age of nationalism (the second wave in Toffler's [1990] thesis), identification with Israel or as Israelis is no longer without any doubt. Only six of the seventeen respondents mentioned "the state of Israel" or the "people of Israel" in their sociometric maps – "I'm in the center of my world." Compared with the Israeli ethos, these results can be interpreted as a relatively low level of commitment or, from a nationalistic perspective, a low level of loyalty.

Efi and Yosi felt like a "minority" in Israel. Amir and Meir loathed the political situation and were considering emigration. All four were perceived, only twenty years ago, as part of the majority. Now, when there are 33 political parties in Israel, many of which have been established on an ethnic or a religious basis, the postmodern fragmentation is evident. In such a condition, all groups are minorities. Thus, people who traditionally belonged to the majority feel that "someone has stolen my country from me" (an Israeli expression). Having "equal worth," no group is willing to agree on a common definition of "civility," a definition which once had been set by the majority's meta-narrative. Paradoxically, the fragmentation that allows minority groups to raise their voices and be heard, which promises to increase people's feeling of belonging, has had the opposite reaction, i.e., alienation of many. This issue is discussed further in below in Chapter VII, The backpackers' Narrative, and in Chapter IX, Conclusions.

However, almost all the respondents asserted that if a war were to begin in Israel while they were abroad, they would make every effort to go back as soon as possible to defend their country. This points to a high level of loyalty. In terms of place identity, this paradox points out the ambiguity of “what it is to be an Israeli” and the love-hate relationship of the respondents with their homeland. Analysis of the interviews suggest that their place attachments are most likely based on their core families, friends, and defined small places, not simply Israel per se.

Another approach views the backpackers’ dreams as verification of their conforming with society. All the respondents in this study, but Ran, were students at the time they were interviewed, or had completed their undergraduate studies, or had been accepted into a university for the academic year following the interview. All saw higher education as a necessary prerequisite for full membership in society, for acquiring a profession that would enable them to support themselves and their future families. Most of the respondents saw themselves in the future as family members. None of them talked about being a single parent or (with the exception of Efi) a bachelor. Further, with the exception of Moshe who had already participated in political activity on the municipal level, none expressed any desire to work toward social change. Only a few rebelled against their parents, about choosing a profession or making the trip. These findings are consistent with those of Mevorach (1997) and Simchai (2000), who both concluded that the backpackers, upon returning to Israel, show a high level of conformity to Israeli society. Most expressed the wish finally to be settled down in Israel. Conformity is discussed further in Chapter VIII.

Most of the respondents' dreams include a final phase of settling in their own homes, a phase when they would be settled after finding out what they wanted to do and whom to marry. This is the back-into-society phase, assuming a new role after the journey, and completing their academic studies. For any society, getting settled is a cornerstone in its well-being. The anticipated getting settled, however, was not in the near future for the respondents. Here is where ambivalence is evident: to settle, to fulfill one's dreams, one needs to commit (modernity), yet "commitments" is a weak strategy for the postmodernist. In other words, the backpacker behaves in a postmodern way while dreaming modern dreams. They are strolling through the world while dreaming about home.

### The Backpackers' Narrative

#### Tracing the Backpackers' Narrative

The best place to start tracing the backpackers' narrative is in any of the four *Lametayel* stores. The first store in the chain opened in Tel-Aviv more than twenty years ago, and its activity expanded along with the backpacker phenomenon. The name *Lametayel* means "for the traveler," and when first opened, Lametayel provided customers with the usual travelers' equipment. From the beginning, the store's staff tried to shape the service as a friendly club, cozy and informative. Over the years, the place has become an institution, a "pilgrimage center" for backpackers before they go on their trips, a center for the backpacker culture, and part of their narrative. Today, in each of the Lametayel stores

there is an area where people may gather, sit and socialize, listen to lectures or simply sit and read relevant material. Central to this material are the “travelers’ books,” in which veteran backpackers share their experience, advice, addresses, notes, and other tips for the trip. These travelers’ books are arranged by continent, i.e., South America, Southeast Asia, Australia, and so on, and sometimes a country deserves a book of its own. The “books” are actually binders provided by the store, to which updated information is added continuously by veteran backpackers and the store employees (all of whom are former backpackers). For a detailed example of the content of the travelers’ books, refer to Appendix C.

In answer to the managerial question, “What business are we in?” the Lametayel answer is “Shaping and wrapping the travelers experience . . . and yes, we sell goods and services too.” All the respondents in this study were aware of, and informed about, the Lametayel institution. Those who were closest to Riley’s (1988) drifters had visited the store at least once, or knew of the option even if they used different resources.

**Lea:** I talked to people who have been there. Before the first [trip] I visited Lametayel. I asked many questions because I had time limitations.

**Yosi:** [Planning] for details [took part] on the last two months before [the takeoff]. We went to Lametayel and talked with those who had been there [in our destinations].

**Efi:** We [Efi and Yosi] had talked with people who had been there. Not everything had been planned ahead. There are things that you flow with.

**Meir:** From my [service] discharge to the trip [took] three weeks. I went to Lametayel [as] I didn’t know anybody who traveled to New Zealand and Australia.

Those travelers I found to be closest to Cohen’s (1972) explorers expressed reservations or, through gesture and intonation, conveyed that going to the Lametayel is

not “cool.” They said that they were not interested in mass production, or that they had better and more “decent” sources of information.

**Amir:** It is easy to get tips . . . everybody was happy to give tips. [He did not mention Lametayel as a place where he went for the tips.]

**Sari:** I went for a while to Lametayel and I took the immunizations, but the most preparations were that I was not at home. [Her parents discouraged her journey.]

**Ruth:** I’m not a typical traveler, because I didn’t gather information. I mean, there are lectures in Lametayel that you go to hear, but Amnon [her brother] gave the lectures [about the East] so I read it at home. I had enough information at home. Also Tamar [her sister] and Amnon were on the trip [before] so I had no problem getting all the information that I wanted from them. [Ruth is the youngest sibling of four.]

However, for both types of travelers, the stores are there. Lametayel is central to the common narrative, and having the rite of passage structure in mind, it is part of the first phase of the journey. At the end, some backpacker veterans go back to the store, enacting the new role of “tellers,” eager to share their experience. Some share their experience with friends, peers, and strangers who approach them for stories and advice.

From the narrative perspective, the first phase for the novice backpacker is the last for the veteran (Noy, 2000). This junction is central to the narrative’s vitality, shifting it into an interaction with a new generation. This interaction has been central to the Lametayel strategy and activities, from the very beginning. The flyers in the stores and the travelers’ books encourage veterans to add their experience to the backpackers’ narrative. The travelers’ books, for example, have a standard statement on the first page:

The travelers’ book that you hold is a sacred book that has been written by travelers who came back, intended for those who plan to go, and it was done with a genuine aspiration in order to achieve mutual support and travelers’ friendship.

(My translation. See also Appendix C.)

Even people who expressed reservations about going with the masses to Lametayel did interact with veteran backpackers, mostly of the explorer type. They also gathered information from other sources, such as books, journals and, recently, from the Internet. Lametayel has already entered the dot-com age, and has a website.

**Amir:** The final preparation, three months, [including buying] equipment needed for treks, a bag, shoes, and sleeping bag. The question “to take or not to take?” is very meaningful, to take or not a set of buttons and threads [sewing kit]. It is easy to get tips; there was no one who was not happy to give [you] tips, [even for] an hour and a half, when asked. The tips are on the level of: It is better [to do, to see, to buy] XYZ instead of YZX. The tips came from the person’s experience and thus they are personal. It was justified to plan for details and to have priorities. After one month into the trip, you are [you feel] more free [boundless, *hufshi*]. This is a personal story.

**Amir:** I participated in events in which veteran travelers shared their experiences, many in my local environment.

As the phenomenon was established, people became conscious of the journey and anticipated being part of it at a younger age. Some pointed out that they started thinking about and even planning the trip during service, or while in high school. For most of the respondents, the journey was seen as part of their life pattern, *maslul*. (See Appendix E, Glossary). Here *maslul* means a path of one’s life that includes high school, the service, the journey, and adult life.

**Yosi:** [I started to think about the trip] in high school, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. It crystallized before the end of the service.

**Efi:** [I started to think about the trip] in high school; I knew that after military service [I would go] . . . through the end of the service it crystallized with Yosi. [They served in the same unit and traveled together.]

**Amir:** I started to think about it at 12 or 13 years old, in the wider context. The first stage of preparation was two years before the journey. The second stage, on a specific level, was three months before the journey. The journey was in my mind since early age, but not in details. I recognized the phenomenon as local [Israeli]; people from previous graduation classes did it.

**Meir:** When my older brother made his journey I was in the service, in a phase that you don't think about it. . . . When he came back it was clear to me that this is an experience one cannot give up.

**Alon:** [I started to think about the trip] at 13 years old, when I read articles in papers. The truth is that even before, I was an "atlas kid," reading maps. I wanted to be there. Finally, I have really been in some of the places!

Within the journey's milestone, preparation is a defined phase, ending when the airplane departs from Israel. At this point, the novice backpacker was already conscious of, and well informed about, the backpackers' common narrative. The novice already had a plan, whether detailed or brief. In either case, the backpacker has heard stories from those who traveled previously. Even those who claimed to go without a plan had one, as tickets had to be purchased to defined destinations, immunizations were needed, foreign currency had to be purchased (Israeli currency is not accepted in many places), and to have some luggage. In this context, even the decision not to plan, is a plan.

**Rachel:** I talked with people, somebody you know and did it [the journey] but not too much because [I wanted to keep] spontaneity. I took immunization shots. There are two types of travelers: (a) those who are going with a detailed schedule and plan, and (b) those [who] let it flow, going with the flow of things.

**Efi:** We [with Yosi] had talked with people who had been there . . . Not everything had planned ahead . . . There are things that you flow with.

**Alon:** It was more on the spontaneous side. I used to wake up in the morning and make a decision if I'm going to continue [with the trip]. I had a master plan [i.e.], air tickets, visas, and money. There was a master plan and I kept it, but beside that [for details] I used to decide during the journey.

**Mira:** It was my choice that for this trip I would plan nothing, except for Chile -- that was the first country in which I landed. I simply flow with the events. I had been in a lecture in Lametayel, and exactly from them I had learned that you learn everything [on your own]; that you experience at the place. Whatever they may tell you, whatever they may say, everything could be changed. And this [wisdom] had been proved to be valid right on the first day. My first flight had been delayed for two days. And here [at that point] you understand that from now on everything simply flows, simply as it is supposed to flow, [not necessarily] as you think [thought] that if you will plan everything it will be on time.

Once the person started planning, he or she had already started a personal process, started to sustain a mini-narrative. The stories, the readings at Lametayel, or other forms of information gathering, created expectations and, in many cases, imaginary trips within the novice's mind. Next, on the airplane, the novice was likely to meet other travelers and the last minute stories, feedback and advice continued throughout the flight. This process continued throughout the journeys, getting tips, advice, and information in every backpacker's interaction.

**Amir:** It is easy to get tips. The tips are at the level of, it is better [to do/to see/to buy] XYZ instead of YZX. The tips come from the person's experience.

**Avi:** People are doing a clear route [or path]: New Delhi, Varanasi . . . for example, people [had started] went to Goa after journal articles [about the place] had been published [in Israel].

**Ruth:** In Israel, if somebody [that you don't know] comes to you and asks a question, [I am] not sure that you will be nice to him. In the East, there is no such thing [behavior] not to be nice. I mean, you will walk and hear that somebody speaks Hebrew, so you will stop and say hello to him... Even if they didn't sleep all night. If they know that you are going to a place they already came from, they will sit and talk with you.

Upon returning to Israel, the backpackers are in the last phase of the rite of passage, the *rite of aggregation*, or returning to society. It is in this phase, Mevorach (1997) and Simchai (1998) found that the backpackers are most likely to conform to

society's values and order. For a broader discussion of conformity, see chapter VIII, "Rite of Passage."

As for the narrative, according to the respondents, at this phase they become veterans and exhibited their desire to tell their story. Family members are the first targets, but that outlet has a short life. The family already has heard the story, accompanied by photo albums filled with pictures. The real fun was to interact with other backpackers who share similar experiences. Another desirable outlet was to tell the stories and give advice to people who were in the first phase, that of information collection.

**Ruth:** I didn't go to Lametayel to hear lectures. My brother and sister had traveled before, so I had all the information from them.

**Oren:** Recently I served in the [military] reserves, and I met my soldiers [Oren had been their commander during the last phase of his service and their first] who were still in the regular [compulsory] service, and who were going to be discharged soon. They told me, "We are going to follow you. We also are going to apply the path of Australia, New Zealand, and the East."

The narrative can be traced as well through the *must list*, i.e., the list of places or experiences that one "must" see or do, in order to experience the journey in full. The list may include going to an ashram, bungee jumping, a trek in Tibet, or a full moon party in Thailand. All are attractions that the veterans passed on to the novice through stories, pictures, video, or the travelers' books.

**Amir:** It is easy to get tips. There was no one who was not happy to give [you] tips, [even for] one and a half-hour, when the person had been asked to.

**Oren:** Let me tell you how [people are] traveling. There is this book [a travel logbook], and they marked [checked] "✓" [standing] for: I was in this place. I was in that place [that they planned ahead]. This [habit characterizes] is the beginning of the trip. Soon [they] find that this is not the way to travel. . . . The Eastern tour

[path, *sivuv*] [includes] doing Thailand, India. Sometimes Thailand includes also Laos and Cambodia, going down to India and to Nepal on the treks' season.

**Mira:** I attended a surfing parachute course, *recommended by a friend*. When I came to the course and asked about this person, he was hospitalized because of doing this activity... For example, to enter Brazil. *What everybody says* is that it is very dangerous.

Most of the respondents in this study claimed to be something other than the average (or regular) Israeli tourist and even distinguished themselves from the average backpacker. They used terms that imply "I" or "we" vs. "they," trying to differentiate themselves in terms of civility, traveling behaviors, and attitudes. The "others" might be other Israelis or travelers from other countries. This issue became emotional when the respondents talked about the behavior and attitude of other Israelis.

**Amir:** I'm disturbed (*mafri'a li*) that there are "Israeli hotels" in India. I'm annoyed that [it is] said that this is an Israeli hotel or that all the Israelis are crooks [*manyakim*], [or, for example, that there are] Hebrew graffiti in Nepal, for example, "Yehudit Ravitz." [*Amir presents here a collective attachment and thus collective guilt that characterizes in particular those who were raised on kibbutz.*]; that people are going to a particular hotel because it is "Israeli." It disturbed me on the trip, for example, the story that Israelis are going to Goa [and] taking drugs. [I'm aware that] it is not only Israelis [but] it disturbs me when [they] say: "You are an Israeli, you are so and so," and I must prove otherwise.

**Yoav:** I would have been interested in *why*, or what happened to the Israelis there, that they are different from the others, going together. Why do we do it? Why are we the only ones who feel that if we had paid a little bit more we have been screwed; that we get the third floor instead of the second floor [in a hotel].

**Oren:** They [in New Zealand] admire us [Israelis] because we are a very young country, and we struggled with all the Arab countries around us. On the other hand, we approached a [female] New Zealander who was in shock [because of the Israelis' behavior]... Also the [Israeli] phenomenon [*keta*] of honor [or respect, *kavod*], [e.g.] they screw you: You paid 50 [for whatever the product]. And in Nepal I have found that there is a price for a local person, a price for a tourist, and a price for an Israeli; the price for an Israeli is in-between the local's and the tourist's prices. In one place I asked how much it [the service] costs, and

[immediately] I gave them the money. They told me, "It's impossible. You are an Israeli, you are supposed to bargain [argue] with us." This is a phenomenon. All the time [Israelis are] arguing, [having in mind that] they cheat us [*doofkim otanu*]. For example, in a village, or in Katmandu there are signs, "Israelis are not invited," and [the notes are] also in Hebrew. [They have a] simple reason. I'll give you an example. I sleep in a guesthouse in Katmandu. A room costs about NIS 5 [\$1.25] for a night, or some may cost [a little] more. Israelis are coming there [with the attitude of] "this is my father's hotel" [Hebrew expression]. This is an attitude that I cannot understand. [They] play loud music. I slept on the top floor, they on the ground floor. They play Hebrew music throughout the night. There are some barbarian behaviors. Israelis are walking in groups and making noise.

**Mira:** I wake up in the morning and go around to see all the animals. As good Israelis, we tend to make noise, and sometimes we miss [the experience of] things in nature, but those who choose to go in order to see, kept silent, mostly the Europeans. That's what they are doing. Always quiet, going to see. They are not organized in groups.

### Discussion

Initially, the backpackers' narrative was neither part of the original research questions nor an issue of inquiry. Thus, although mentioned briefly, it was not discussed at length in the proposal's "Literature Review." The decision to add this section was made later, after hearing Noy's (2000) presentation of his paper at the Annual Conference of the Israeli Anthropological Association in Jerusalem. Analyzing the interviews in the light of "narrative" opened a new avenue for this study. Reciprocally, more reading was required to frame the analysis and discussion. For more detail, please refer to Chapter II, "Literature Review," and to Appendix D, "Definitions."

The backpackers' narrative is at the center of Noy's (2000) study. He claims that although each person has his or her own stories, at the social level, these stories melt into a cultural-social collective narrative that distinguishes the Israeli backpacker phenomenon.

Experiences during the trip are influenced by external interactions such as trekking or bungee jumping, and also result from internal processes. The backpackers' collective narrative, as described by Noy, is created by the thousands of interactions between people who made the journey, people who made the journey and those who did not, and people who made the journey and those who plan to do so. Consequently, on the plane leaving Israel, the novice backpacker already carries parts of the backpackers' meta-narrative, retaining expectations, advice, particular equipment purchased for the trip, together with his or her own genuine here-and-now experience. The individual's unique experience will be added to the meta-narrative's "melting pot" once the individual returns to Israel. These interactions between the novice and the veteran, the recently returned and those who have not yet gone out, the teller and the listener create the backpackers' reality and thus influence the individual's experiences during the journey.

Today, each identified group in the United States is trying to plead its case, its voice or narrative (Leo, 2000). Leo describes narrative as not only a process but also as a "tool" to build one's identity. Conceptualizing the above arguments, and accomplishing the interviews with my respondents, I suggest, in this case, to view a narrative as an inchoate, not yet formed, myth or part of the ethos.

The interviews suggest that the respondents' identities, as Israelis, colored the way they encountered the world, even though some were aware of their ethnocentrism. For all respondents, it was important how others view Israelis, and for all, this issue shaped the way they experienced their journeys. It was important for them not only to change the

behavior of other Israelis, in terms of civility, but also to change the way others read the “Israeli map” in their encounters with Israeli tourists, travelers, and backpackers.

The issue of identity was one of the more emotional ones throughout the interviews. It was very important for the respondents to distinguish themselves from the crowd, from other Israelis, and from other backpackers. For some of them, it was also very important to challenge the bad reputation of the Israeli tourist, the one who not only takes towels from hotels, but disconnects faucets from hotel bathrooms and takes them home. The respondents criticized such Israeli characteristics, exhibited by Israeli travelers abroad. They wanted their message to be heard: We are not all like that! I am not like that!

It has been said that identity answers the questions of “who are we?” or “who am I?” and “where do I belong?” Identity deals with *similarity* and *difference* (Jenkins, 1996). Thus, it deals with the question, “who are the other people?” The backpackers’ narrative provides answers to these questions. Throughout the interviews, there were many comments that dealt exactly with the issue “who are they?” in order to answer “who am I?” Some respondents exhibited ambiguous feelings about being Israeli, while comparing themselves to other Israelis. Almost all compared themselves to travelers from other countries, and in many cases the conclusion was in favor of traveling with Israelis. The rationale given was that it is easier to be with Israelis because of the language, shared culture, and the Israeli tradition of mutual help. On the negative side, the respondents mentioned rudeness, uncivilized barbarian behavior, lack of privacy, and the “Israeli herd syndrome.” Some accepted, with reservations, the negative aspects of the Israeli tourist,

and some were deeply concerned about the image of Israelis that has been set by the “barbarians.”

In Lametayel stores there are copies of a petition that potential travelers are asked to read and sign. The petition contains a declaration of awareness of the importance of behaving nicely abroad. This is an affirmation in which the future travelers promise to behave with civility, an appropriate attitude, to respect the cultures of others, and to struggle to improve the image of the Israeli traveler. By so doing, Lametayel’s staff hopes that people from other countries will change their attitudes toward Israelis. At the same time, the effort aims to affect the Israelis’ identity. It aims to have the Israelis on the international map show more positive colors. If some years ago, the Israeli quest was to be “on the map” of the civilized world, today people care about their image and location on that map.

Not all have a strong need to shape the map; not all are aware of how the map is shaped. However, one thing in common to all the respondents in my study, as well as those in the Mevorach (1998) and Simchai (1998) studies, the wish that their story would be heard, a story that is part of the backpackers’ narrative. In a lecture in a psychopathology class at Lesley College, Dr. Morfugo mentioned that Hannah Arendt wrote that each person has a story that should be told. This insight provides an explanation for the respondents’ need to tell their story and to intertwine it with the group story.

I believe that wanting to have their story told, partly explains the willingness of respondents to participate in the studies in the first place. That they responded positively

to the researchers' plea because they were ready to share their stories, and to expose their identities and dreams. All the respondents in this study spoke of their identities by saying, one way or another, this is me, this is my national attachment, this is my story, and this is my home.

### A Place Called Home

"What is *home* for you?" was asked early in the pilot study interview protocol. It preceded the question "what is your dream?" The first two respondents in the pilot study added dream features to their answers about home. As a result, the dream question was added to the interview protocol. As mentioned in Appendix E, "Glossary," the Hebrew word *ba'it* can mean "home" or "house" or "building," but it was clear that none of the respondents misinterpreted the question "what is *ba'it* for you?" as architects might design a building. In this section, the respondents' experience of their homes, and what makes a place a home is examined. As well, this section examines home as a source of identity, and how the fact the respondents were far from home during their journeys had influenced the identity building process.

#### The Elements That Constitute Home

All the respondents distinguished between "home," "house," and "building," and their descriptions of *home* included both concrete and abstract features. As abstract qualities they mentioned family, support, warmth, people, place, a place where one can be "real," a place that involves good feelings, acceptance, security, and contentment. When

they mentioned “people” or “places” they didn’t always do so in a clear, concrete manner. Thus home could be a place where one feels secure, home could be people with whom one feels good. The same term may be used in one context as abstract and in another context as concrete. For example, the house one intends building for oneself is concrete when it comes to the design, and abstract when one is dreaming about it. Some mentioned Israel as a concrete home, others mentioned a kibbutz, Tel Aviv, New York, the personal backpack, parents’ house, and so on. It seems natural, when talking of home, to have this mix of concrete and abstract features, because home carries emotional and metaphoric meanings far beyond its material characteristics.

**Rachel:** Home is family (*abstract*) [not “my family” - *concrete*]. When I will have my own family (*abstract*), it will be my home. Home is love, warmth, support . . . to be what you are and still being accepted even if you are not nice (*abstract*) [your behavior - *lo nechmad*]. Therefore I’ll built my home/house [*ba’it*] probably in Israel (*concrete*).

**Lea:** Home is a place to where you always can come back to (*abstract*) and always you will be supported by (*abstract*), no matter what you are going to do. Right now, there is a connection between Israel (*concrete*) and home.

**Yosi:** Home is a protected place, where you are able, always, to come back to (*abstract*), in which I have good feelings and people that I know. Israel (*concrete*) is home for me.

**Efi:** Home right now is a physical association, an ordinary house/home with the parents (*concrete*). On second thought ,it is a place in which there are people who are interested in my well-being [*rotzim be’tovati*] (*abstract*). It refers to the people (*abstract*), not a concrete place [building].

**Amir:** Home is always the kibbutz (*concrete*) [where he was born]. It is a place where your roots are (*abstract*). There are trees that grew when you grew up, this is home (*concrete*).

**Meir:** The place where I have my own corner (*abstract*). In current situation I have mom and dad and girlfriend (*concrete*). It depends on the period of time. There are periods of time in which I need my parents, and then home is in Tel Aviv

*(concrete)*. It is a place where I can do whatever I want without interruption  
*(abstract)*.

**Alon:** It is a place that you can be real, you don't have to play games, to be what [others expect you to be] *(abstract)*.

**Moshe:** Maybe a place in which I feel comfort *(abstract)*. Home is feeling [sense - *tchusha*] *(abstract)*.

**Avi:** Home is a place that always will accept you *(abstract)*, in any case, whatever you will happen to do. It is a mutual support *(abstract)*. My home is in [named suburb] with my parents *(concrete)*.

**Yoav:** Your friends are your home *(abstract)*, When you are going to [name of his hometown] you are going home *(concrete)*. It is together, the place, the parents' house, and friends *(concrete)*.

**Sari:** [Home is] all of those that you are going back to, to get [sense of] security, confidence [*bitachon*] *(abstract)*.

**Ruth:** The family nest, my room [in her parents' apartment] *(concrete)*. A place that you return to *(abstract)* and it doesn't matter if you are not being there for four months or one month.

**Mira:** It is my mother, and my [female] dog *(concrete)*, and the place in which I know that it is a place that will remain yours *(abstract)*.

A complementary view to the concrete vs. abstract dichotomy is the physical vs. metaphoric comparison. In this case, the respondent mentioned places that are tangible, such as Israel, New York, or other defined locations. Most often, home requires a place, a building, or a country, to be the physical container for home activities. Sometimes the material is needed to provide safety and emotional needs such as security or a substantial infrastructure for shelter and comfort. On the other hand, terms like family, feelings, friends, relationships, and others (other people) are used in a metaphoric manner.

**Rachel:** Home is family *(metaphoric)*. There is no connection between Israel *(physical)* and home *(metaphoric)*, but Israel as a social environment *(metaphoric)*

... [However] when I'm thinking about family I'm thinking about Israel (*physical*) because of my family.

**Yosi:** Home is a protected place (*metaphoric and physical*), where you are able, always, to come back to (*physical*) . . . in which I have good feelings (*metaphoric*) and people that I know. Israel (*physical*) is home for me . . . although I feel a minority in Israel (*metaphoric*).

**Efi:** Home right now, is a physical association (*physical*), an ordinary house/home with the parents (*physical*). On second thought, it is a place in which there are people who are interesting in my well-being (*metaphoric*) . . . I do not feel "too Israeli" (*metaphoric*).

**Amir:** Home is always the kibbutz (*physical*) [where he was born]. It is a place where your roots are (*metaphoric*).

**Moshe:** Maybe a place (*physical*) in which I feel comfort (*metaphoric*). In many places (*physical*) I feel (*metaphoric*) at home. Home is the place where the heart is; a good feeling (*metaphoric*).

It is not surprising that home is referred to in both metaphoric and physical terms.

After all, dealing with home involves dealing with emotions and feelings that have nothing to do with a contractor constructing a building. The respondents mentioned many feelings when describing home: warmth, acceptance, support, belonging, love, fear, happiness, and so on. For them, home is an emotional entity that comprises family, friends, and positive feelings. Those feelings and emotions were sharpened during the journeys, and, in many cases, the backpackers' relations with their homes and families had been redefined.

**Alon:** During the trip the issue of home was raised, but not strong enough to bring me back [to stop the journey] . . . sometimes I felt a longing.

**Moshe:** Home is the place where the heart is; a good feeling. . . . [During the trip] I was detached without longing.

**Avi:** During the trip I had strong contact [relationship - *ksharim*] with my parents, not merely by the frequency of phone calls. My parents *did not* experience the trip

as a nightmare [as other parents do]; rather, they had a world map at home and there marked where I am, for my younger brother.

**Yoav:** Your friends are your home. . . . [During the journey] moving from one place to another has a contrast; there is an expectation and anxiety of the unknown . . . . When there are people who are your friends they become your shelter, that if [when] you see Haim and Arnon there it reduces the anxiety.

**Sari:** [Home is] all of those that you are going back to, to get [sense of] security [confidence – *bitachon*]. During the trip . . . [I felt] feeling of lack of home.

**Mira:** During the journey there was much contact with home, more than ever. People were laughing at me but I used to talk [by phone] with my mother almost every two or three days, in a hysterical manner. It was very important for me. Also, as a lone traveler you have nobody to share your inner problems with. Thus, mother becomes your best friend. It was important to me.

A clear characteristic of home is its permanence, or durability, that is, in the respondent's mind *home* is always there, past, present, and future. People talked about home as a place that has continuity through time; a place that does exist (present), where they have roots (past), and a place that will be there for them (future). It seems that one of the reasons that home provides feelings of security, comfort, and confidence, is derived from this aspect of home: home is there for the person, whenever needed. As well, home provides unconditional love, affection, respect, understanding, and acceptance, throughout one's life. According to the respondents, this acceptance is on a continuum, backward (past) and forward (future).

**Yosi:** Home is a protected place, where you are able, always, to come back to (*present*). . . . If I'll not succeed abroad [he was in the USA during the interview], I'll always have [could] come back with no fear (*future*). . . . I grew up there (*past*) and I feel that I'm bound to it.

**Amir:** Home is always the kibbutz (*present*). . . . It is a place where your roots (*past*) are (and *present*).

**Avi:** Home is a place (*present*) that always will accept you (*future*), in any case, whatever you will happen to do. . . . During the trip I had strong contact/relationship [*ksharim*] with my parents (*past*), not merely by the frequency of phone calls.

**Mira:** A place . . . that it doesn't move from one place to another (*present*), that it will wait for you (*future*).

Generally speaking, home is perceived as positive and desirable, but it also carries some burdens. On one hand, home provides acceptance and support, and on the other hand, it requires commitments and certain behaviors. In some cases, home, that is, the family and parents, didn't approve of the journey. In other cases, home may require that the young adult will eventually choose a certain profession, marry, and conform to society's norms. As for the journey, home expectations may include frequent contact, by telephone, surface mail, or e-mail.

**Rachel:** Home is love, warmth, support . . . to be what you are and still being accepted even if you are not nice, etc. . . . It could also be a burdensome that pushes you to do things. My mother wants me to do things [like having, or acquiring a profession, getting married, and having children].

**Lea:** Home is a place to where you . . . and always you will be supported by, no matter what you are going to do.

**Meir:** During the trip, home was my parents. . . . I felt a commitment to write home [parents], but it was not my need, I could travel without writing.

**Ruth:** I made a phone call once a week, if there were telephones there; if not, once in two weeks [here, in the interview, came a long story about the difficulties of getting telephone service in some countries] . . . [On the other hand,] with my boyfriend, I use to talk almost every day by phone, in places where it was possible.

Finally, home is a source of identity. In this case, Israel contributes to the respondents' identity, and the question of having a home in Israel has already been discussed in the previous two chapters. The respondents relate to home as "my" and "I".

However, sometimes during their talks, they switch from first to second, or to third person, referring to home, or their experiences, as you, “your” or “they.” Dealing with the question how or why people use this manner of speech is beyond the scope of this study. Thus, there are no explanations or interpretations here about the phenomenon. The respondents not only redefined their relationships with their families, but also redefined their relationship with Israel. Doing so, they were at the heart of their own personal process of identity building.

**Rachel:** When I’m thinking about family, I’m thinking about Israel because of my family . . . Therefore I’ll build my home/house [*baif*] probably in Israel. . . . I want my children to have a grandmother.

**Yosi:** Here [in Israel] . . . there are family, friends, [and] language. I grew up there and I feel that I’m bound to it in spite of my attempt to deny the negative things that happened there [Israel], but I’m bound and nothing could change it. In a case of war [interviewed in New York], I’ll be on the plane [going back to take part], although I feel a minority in Israel.

**Efi:** I do not feel “too [much] Israeli.” The important things in Israel were narrowed down to the people I love. If tomorrow there will be a war, I’ll be there [interviewed in New York]. I don’t know where this feeling comes from . . . not always I’m happy when others identify me as an Israeli.

**Moshe:** During the trip I found out [that I have] my “soloist” personality. I was detached without longing. My home was my backpack.

**Sari:** During the trip [my] diary was the [my] only home. [I felt] feeling of a lack of home. I didn’t have anchor. The diary is me [*ani*].

### Discussion

Place attachment occurs as the product of a long-term process. The younger the person, the deeper he or she will be influenced by this process. The object-relation model

suggests that objects, and in this case places, are substitutes for the concrete and metaphoric mother. Through separation and individuation, young children learn to distinguish between themselves and the mother, or object. Not before this process is accomplished, are children able, mentally and psychologically, to possess objects like “my room,” “my teddy bear,” “my family,” and so on.

An abstract entity such as “my country” may be acquired as an object, only when children achieve the ability to perceive abstractions, although it may be achieved through concrete objects such as flags, songs, maps, events, Independence Day, and so forth. Once this ability is obtained, people are able to perceive abstractions as real concrete entities. Sometimes an attachment to an abstraction, or a metaphor such as homeland or country, may be stronger than the attachment to a concrete, physical object like a house or a bicycle. Likewise, respondents exhibited a willingness to protect Israel, by risking their lives in war. The same people are not ready to spend any time in political or voluntary activity, to shape the life and civility of their homeland. The only exception is their concern for the image of the Israeli tourist or traveler, as this image touches a sensitive concern, their own identity. Their identity as Israelis seems to be, in some cases, an open wound.

Many respondents exhibited a love-hate relationship with Israel. Experiencing the Israeli reality, they feel alienation toward large parts of the Israeli experience, Israeli politics and cultural features alike. Some feel that they are a minority; they experience rejection by the masses or the Israeli “herd,” and at the same time they reject the masses. They are ambivalent, because reciprocally they feel that their roots are in this homeland for which they are ready to die in case of war. In contradistinction to the Israeli ethos (the

Zionist ethos), they do not condemn those who have decided to emigrate to other countries. Some even consider emigration for themselves, and yet, they recognize that their home is in Israel.

For all the respondents, their home is located in Israel, as a concrete place. A few mentioned it metaphorically, e. g., Ran, who said that Israel is now his “mother.” This home comprises concrete and metaphoric, abstract features. Home is associated with the core family and friends. Above all, home is about feelings and emotions, a place in which one feels comfortable, secure, and safe. This is a place that is accepting of the person and the person’s behavior, even if they do not meet expectations. Home is where you feel loved, the recipient of an unconditional love. Home is a place where you feel the acceptance and support that the others are “transmitting” to you.

Lieblich (1990) concludes that, unlike American youngsters in the age group of 18-21 years old, Israelis do not rebel against their parents. Being in the military service during those years, unlike the American who are in college, strengthens the emotional connection and involvement between the family and the young Israeli. Only a few of the respondents had rebelled against their parents after the service. The journeys, in most cases, contributed to the quality of the relationship between the backpackers and their families, their home.

When it comes to relationships with the family, it is always a matter of give and take. Consequently, there are some burdens involved in the backpackers dealing with their families. In regard to the journey, it appears as an issue of communication, i.e., the backpackers maintain contact with their homes during the journey. Many established this

contact via the telephone, others by letters, and some by e-mail. Some made this contact with pleasure. Others saw it as a burden, a nag, and the price they had to pay in order to keep the home as a safety net. For example, one respondent mentioned that she called home every one or two weeks, when it was possible. Then she gave a speech for about five or ten minutes, describing the difficulties in obtaining telephone service in some countries along the route of her trip, explaining why she hadn't called home more frequently. In the next sentence, she said that she had called her boyfriend every day! However, most of the respondents, even if they didn't have a strong need for these connections, made frequent telephone calls, being aware that it was their parents' need.

Bauman (1996) characterized the "tourist" (postmodernist) as one who has a home to which he or she can return at the end of the journey, when the present adventure is over. Tourists hold with their homes as a safety net. Tourists keep safety cushions as well as marked escape routes. In this case, every respondent during the journey had an airline ticket back to Israel. As well, the respondents had the addresses and telephone numbers of the Israeli embassies along their route. The Israeli embassies function as a piece of home and a safety net.

The service the Israeli embassies provide to the backpackers is unique. Not only do they provide a place to come and read Israeli newspapers, and to receive regular consular services (e.g., in the case of a lost passport), they also keep mail for the backpackers, post warnings about dangerous attractions and sites in the region. They distribute this information to other embassies and, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Lametayel stores. They also help anyone in trouble who needs to be evacuated in an

emergency, e.g., unconsciousness as the result of drug use, or an accident. The respondents were aware of this safety net, whether or not they used it. Additionally, the respondents felt they could return home at any time; regardless of success or failure in their journeys or in life, their homes would always be there for them.

In an age of uncertainty, one of the most important messages home transmits is of its durability. In the minds of the respondents, home is going to be there, for them, forever. Much of the comfort home suggests is derived from this quality. Home is an island of certainty in an ocean of vagueness, insecurity, and uncertainty.

## Chapter VIII

### THE BACKPACKERS' JOURNEY AS A RITE OF PASSAGE: BACK TO CONFORMITY

#### Journey Within a Learning Space

In the review of the literature (Chapter II), the *rite of passage* was presented as a learning process. Looked at in that light, the purpose of the rite is concrete, "learning." Learning is conceptualized here as a process of change, if only in the sense of changing the level of knowledge. It is contended here that the backpackers' journey is the group's self made rite of passage, and learning is at the heart of the process. Analyzing the respondents' interviews shows that six elements (or subjects) were raised when addressing the rite of passage as learning process.

Because it is essential to the rite of passage, the first element presented is "learning and change." The second element found by the analysis is the "search for self," something mentioned by many respondents as either goal or the content of their learning.

Turner (1977), who coined the term *liminality* for dealing with the second phase of the rite of passage, asserts that the modern tourist experience fits into the second phase of the rite of passage. *Liminality*, the third element in the analysis, is where the learning process takes place, perceived as a container for the learning process. The boundaries of the container are drawn by the *rite of separation* and the subsequent *rite of aggregation*,

presented here as the fourth element. This container, the liminality, provides the backpackers with freedom and choices, the fifth subject here analyzed.

Finally, when the rite comes to completion, those undergoing the rite are prepared to adhere to their new role in society. As a result of the tribal rite of passage, the initiate is ready to conform to society. Thus, *conformity* is the sixth subject analyzed in this chapter.

### Learning and Change

It can be said that we are learning throughout our lives, and thus learning is not an experience exclusive to the rite of passage. It is reasonable to assume that insofar as all the respondents had completed their army service before going on the journey, all had experienced a learning process there. Nonetheless, some respondents made a clear distinction between the nature and content of their learning during the service, and their learning during the journey.

It should be emphasized that during the interviews, the interviewees were not asked a direct question about learning, such as, "What have you learned on the journey?" However, respondents were asked to describe themselves before and after the journey. Almost all refer to learning when they answered the question or when they summarized the journey.

**Oren:** [During the journey] I learned, as well, to listen to others, to listen to others' stories, to learn from others' experience. Although learning from debriefings [in the army] was a fundamental [activity] in my unit, it is different. When you are a commander, you learn from debriefings, you get your conclusions, and you apply [it]. Not always do you apply something that you accept [or agree] with; in the military, sometimes you do things that look irrational to you. **In the military, I learned how to manage things. Here [during the journey], I learned how to manage life.** [I have learned about] nature, to know the soil, to listen and to get others' ideas. I had an open mind also [while doing my] service, but in the

journey I applied it. I learned many things that the service had taken from me. If the army “educated” me in one way, the journey turned me not to do things [the army way]. For example, I can stand on a table and dance, something I didn’t allow myself as an officer, [being aware that] maybe my soldiers will pass by. I have found that I can relax and be happy, not being serious all the time. I returned [from the journey] a totally non-serious person.

**Sari:** Responsibilities in the service are different [she was an officer]. You have regulations and if something goes really wrong you call a higher rank officer. During the journey I was alone, making all the decisions myself. . . [unlike the service, for me] the trip was essential for the leaving home process. The journey helped me to separate myself as an independent unit. It was a complicated process because I didn’t know how to do that.

**Mira:** If in the service you learned to deal with structure, on the journey you learned to deal with freedom. And only then, I think, are you able to return again to the university’s structure. I have learned from the road, since the service I have learned it. I knew that I have to go out.

One of the things that people learned on the journey is to deal with freedom, to make choices on their own. Sari had been an officer, and occasionally she was the officer-on-duty on her base throughout a weekend. And yet, she doesn’t compare the responsibility and the complexity of the decisions she had to make during her service with those of her trip. Since her childhood, the journey was the first and only time she was detached from higher-ranking officers, teachers, or parents. Many respondents cited this “freedom” as something they had to learn to deal with. As Mira said, “On the journey, you have to learn to deal with freedom.”

Not only did people learn about dealing with freedom, they also learned about themselves, their limitations, strengths, and weaknesses, they learned about life and death, and how to deal with anger. They learned about the “road” and the “summit” and how to

walk through life, giving different events the “right” proportions, they learned how to comply with society’s requirements without losing their own voice.

**Efi:** If before [the trip] I thought that freedom from structures [means that] it is a state [in which] I owe nobody, I found that in any place you owe something to somebody. Today I know life better. . . I have learned to be more careful, to be assertive [*la’amod al sheli*]. I found out that I can deal [*lehitmoded*] with life, that I had acquired tools from society and parents. . . I have found that it has also a negative aspect, the price of losing [my] the innocence, [my previous perception] that all are nice [people].

**Amir:** It gives a perspective for things, to accept things in lower volume, more on issues of hard feelings [*mirmur*] and anger.

**Avi:** After the journey, because of [my] experiences, [I’m] talking to people that otherwise I wouldn’t talk with... and meditation courses, there is a change. . . . There are those who want to learn something.

**Yoav:** At the beginning, you see sights. . . . It is not the place but the atmosphere that matters. At the beginning it was dirt or nice view. Later it became different. It is not easy to go to Varanase as [your] first place [destination] without previous experience, with the corpses and the odor. Later it doesn’t matter that you were rubbed by a cow; it disturbs the beginner . . . later it is [no longer] . . . important, you learn that money value is different. You knew it before but now things have a [different] proportion. About time: we traveled and the bus’s engine fell down. We sat in a Chie-shop [Tea house] for twelve hours and people sat relaxed and with a smile, waiting. In Israel [drivers are] blowing the horn after five minutes in a traffic jam. From [a] distance it looks different, the experiences and self-learning. It is the distance that gives a chance to see [things] differently, to live in a different time [scale] and a different place that allows assessment about what I’m doing here [in Israel]. . . . The most important is that I have learned there, is the issue of Buddha.

**Sari:** I have been changed. During the journey I acquired the ability to isolate myself. To watch myself as a person who acts in unfamiliar places and situations all the time.

**Oren:** The truth, I managed [to keep] a diary. I recommended it to each traveler. That’s how you learn. You see the change that you are in [the process]. I learned to be patient. I learned it through photography. . . . I have learned that I’m a Zionist. I had tried to advertise Israel positively. . . . Everybody learns. I learned that I can get along with myself and I don’t need my society’s social milieu. . . . Everybody learns, these are personal experiences.

**Mira:** Before the journey I was much more a girl who took [things] the hard way and sometimes lost proportion, in both directions, happiness and sadness. [I have learned] to find the fine line between what I want and what the society around me wants. After the journey I have settled it. Before, the line was vague. I have learned to find the right boundaries. The journey is difficult. There are so many difficult experiences.

**Ran:** You also learn how to travel, learn about yourself, about your freedom, when you are far [from Israel, home] you feel this sense. It is something that you become mature with. . . . You learn that if you are walking on the road, don't try to control everything; not to know how it is going to end.

Mira perceives the journey as a process of personal growth through learning. She is aware of the price one has to pay for this growth. Ran and Efi are aware of the price too, but have no doubt it is worth the price, as the result is maturity. For the respondents, the personal process, which includes the search for self, is a kind of learning experience they do not want to trade or lose.

### Search for Self

Many respondents had mentioned the search for self as a learning process. The journey as a learning space acts as a catalyst for personal growth. Journey features like freedom, time out, being far from Israel, and the Eastern tranquility, all played a role in the search for the self process. Among the different learning experiences, learning about one's self was highly valued by the respondents. Sari said, "The journey helped me to separate myself as an independent unit." It is clearly an experience of searching for identity, answering the respondents' question, "who am I?" As such, this search is a strong need and thus, many respondents explicitly mentioned the search for self, using different words.

**Rachel:** The country had developed and therefore youngsters are looking for meaning.

**Lea:** [*Why did others make the journey?*] Many claimed: “To find myself.”

**Yosi:** During the service, and in particular during the journey, I had been changed, [acquired] more maturity, more independence, knowing where I want to go, what profession [I want to acquire].

**Moshe:** This is a search for the self, an experiential development of something that our parents didn't know [how] to teach us. [For example, parents may direct you:] you should study a profession and work, but not to know, to understand [*lehakir*] the complexity [according to which] every person is the whole world. During the journey I have been crystallized [*hitgabashiti*] and I checked back on my life. [It was] a pause of [my] lifespan into a lower gear. [It was a process of] crystallizing [my] beliefs. Where I came from? What was the contribution of each parent? How I'm standing [performing] across [compared with] my childhood friends; communication; socialization... . It will be true to say that [the journey] it was a catalyst, kind of a personal therapy, longer than usual, and I came back a different person, ready to have more personal growth [*hitpathut ishit*].

**Avi:** Search is an active act. A trek could be passive. To stay three months in Burnasi could be active. The same is with drugs, it could change [you] or not. First it was an experiment I would never trade for all the money [or fortune] in the world [*kol hon sh'ba'olam*].

**Rami:** My friends had traveled and it sounded like a unique experience. There are no doubts that if somebody had traveled more than three or four months he becomes more independent. . . . they say “If I had traveled alone for four months I want now my own apartment, my own quietness.”

**Ruth:** I didn't need this search for myself, maybe, there are those who need [it]. And then, maybe [they] are stuck for a longer time in India and learn meditations and all what is there. . . . No, I didn't go to the East for find myself. I knew exactly what I wanted to do [in my life].

**Mira:** [I have learned] that the more you struggle with things, the more you are aware about yourself, start to appreciate yourself and then it is easier [to deal] with rejections and refusals [*seruvim*]. I simply knew that when I'll go, I'll come back more whole, complete [*shlema*].

**Ran:** Before the first trip I was much more a child than now. I was happy, kind [*tov lev* -- good heart], but I didn't know and didn't love myself as much as after the journey.

The backpackers, while in the pre-journey phase, were aware of the changes in the veteran backpackers, and were looking forward to similar experience. Rami, the only respondent who had not yet traveled at the time of the interview, was clearly tuned into his friends' stories, and was aware of the changes they went through. Ruth, who claimed that she didn't "aspire" to any search for self, used the synonymous "find myself." However, she was aware that this is exactly what others were doing.

In order to reach this objective, most of the respondents said that distance from home and the journey's atmosphere were important, if not crucial, for the success of the process. Some of them had been asked specifically if they thought they could go through the process in Israel, and all but Moshe answered that it would be impossible. They pointed to the importance of detachment from Israel in general, and from home in particular, as prerequisite to sustaining a psychological space in which the process can take place. From their interviews, it was clear that they see the journey as a container for this process, one that always involves struggle and inconvenience.

### Liminality's Container

Liminality, the second phase of the rite of passage, is where the initiate has to struggle with the learning process (Leach, 1976). In tribal society, this phase is executed in a remote or separate place where only the initiate(s) and the instructor(s) are allowed to reside. This separation exists in different cultures, at least at the metaphoric level. For example, for Orthodox Jews, when a woman is *nida*, i.e., in menstruating, she is required to sleep in a bed separate from her husband, until the rite of aggregation, immersion in a *mikve* (a ritual bath) has been completed.

The liminality phase is a pause in the stream of life, a break or intermission in which the individual learns by experience, by trial and error, or simply by making mistakes. This is a time “after” and “before,” a period in-between the two roles in society, in which the initiate does not take an active part. Many respondents described their journey in terms of liminality: they described the journey as a “sphere,” a time-space sphere for the learning process.

**Yosi:** I think that this is a need after the three years in the service. . . . an intermission [*hafsaka*] before you start the serious stage of life -- it is true in my case as well . . . intermission before the study [at the university], job, etc., a stage of [already being bourgeois, in which you can do whatever you want.

**Efi:** This is a need after the pressure of the service, it is after a tough structure [in which] you owe to nobody.

**Moshe:** It is easy to go for six months when the responsibilities and connections are weaker. Right now six months in my life are more than before.

**Meir:** [I wish to have] one more trip before the final path [*yeshoret sofut*] that [will] last for the rest of [my/our] life.

**Avi:** People feel that they deserve a vacation [*hofesh*] after the service . . . and therefore it is a vacation not a trip.

**Sari:** Many [are going] because there is a stage in their life that they have to leave everything and to think about everything in remote control [*shalat rachok*]. There were people in different stages in their life, before and after the army, before and after marriage, before and after having a job . . . A wish for time out to think about things from a distance.

**Oren:** Today there is such a “mold” [*shtantz*]: You are recruited and discharged, you work and you fly . . . Secondly, I told [myself] enough! Before starting the real life, that in Israel, life is all the time competitive . . . so the last time that you may travel is between the first and the second [academic] degree, if you shouldn't work; so I had [took] my chance before I start life. The moment you enter the wheel [pattern or path or *maslul*] of university, it means that you enter work, family, and that it, it's over [*nigmar*].

**Ruth:** It is clear that you feel a need to make a break in your life, and to go now [to the trip] rather than after your studies or to leave a job.

**Mira:** Becoming mature, this is the best word [to describe the personal process]. So much to learn about yourself, a lot of struggle [*hitmodedut*] with things that I never thought I will struggle with. It is hard, difficult. The journey is difficult. There are so many difficult experiences. The journey as a space for freedom. There is a phenomenon about the nice [or good] children, [female] officers, good girls, arrived to take risks, to challenge boundaries.

Many saw the journey in terms of before and after, an in-between, a time out “before you start the serious stage of life,” as Yosi put it; “before the final path,” according to Meir; “before starting the real life,” as Oren said. Unlike a tribal rite of passage, the respondents were not enthusiastic about moving toward the “final path,” being mature citizens of Israeli society, acquiring a new identity. Many experienced difficulty in going back to “real life” when the rite ended, and the time for the rite of aggregation had come. They accepted it as their fate -- “accept” means they did not try to change the situation -- but they cherished the struggle and difficulties throughout the liminality, while moving on the journey. The before and after features in the respondents’ comments suggest that they distinguished their journeys as an in-between. For the respondents, this in-between, the liminality, took place within clear boundaries of time and space, starting after a separation process and ending with a predefined back to home process.

#### Separation and Aggregation: Framing the Learning Space

In the classical rite of passage, entering liminality is done through a rite of separation. It is both a metaphoric and a concrete separation, a separation from the old role, and separation from the everyday life space of the community. Upon completion of

the learning in the liminality, when the initiate is ready, a rite of aggregation is used to bring the initiate back to society in a new role.

The respondents made their rite of separation with metaphoric and concrete measures. They all prepared for their journeys by collecting information, buying equipment, buying airplane tickets, being immunized, and so on. The preparation also had psychological features. People started to think and to dream about the journey early in high school or during the long service. "It was clear" to them that after completing their service they would go on a trip. These anticipations are evidence of the assumption that the backpacker phenomenon has already been established in the Israeli society.

Some referred to the first days or months abroad as a difficult time, a time for adjustment as well as a time to deal with the emotions involved in separation from home. Having the "boarding-pass," the traveler is moving alone to the gates area, leaving behind family and friends who escorted him or her to the airport. Now the traveler is "alone." Then, the aircraft takeoff may be seen as the next concrete event, part of the rite of separation that is followed by the landing in a foreign country. As well, the first day, week, or month is a period of time in which the individual struggles with the new experience: taking care of himself or herself, by himself or herself. The tendency to gather in groups of Israelis may be explained, in part, by this issue.

**Lea:** During the service, about a year before the discharge when a friend of mind was discharged. Practically about half-year after the discharge . . . I talked with people who have been there. Before the first [trip] I visited Lametayel. [My preparation also included] immunization.

**Efi:** At high school I knew that after the military service [I will go]. . . . through the end of the service it had been crystallized.

**Amir:** I started to think about it at 12 or 13 years old, in the wide context. The first stage of preparation was two years before the journey. The second stage, in a specific level, was three months before the journey. The journey was in my mind since early age, but not in details. . . . The final preparation, three months, [included buying] equipment needed for treks, a backpack, shoes, and a sleeping-bag.

**Meir:** When my older brother made his journey, I had been in the service, in a phase that you don't think about it. . . . When he came back it was clear to me that this is an experience one cannot give up!

**Sari:** since the eighth grade I thought [about the journey] the idea of a journey, total freedom, boundless to nowhere.

**Oren:** Landing abroad is the most tough [experience] thing. Personally, I flew alone. I landed in Melbourne. I stepped out from the airport. Now, my English level is high, [and yet] I was in shock; I couldn't say a word. I arrived in a new place . . . But [on the journey] you arrived at a city you do not know; it is not Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, or Haifa, where you grew up. You arrived in the evening. I couldn't understand their English. It took me three days to figure out that I'm abroad. . . . To land alone in China, and I heard it also from others who traveled: "Only with another person." . . . Being abroad I [was] disconnected from reality. The routine in Israel brings you back, for example, in regard to "time," but not totally. It becomes a routine again.

**Mira:** I started to think before the service, while in twelfth grade. . . . To my relief, a mother of a good friend of mine was waiting for me there [the first landing in Chile]. So I lived with her for four days. But all the issues of finding friends [or companions] for the trip, to decide when to start the travel, with whom to continue [to travel] and with whom not, all these were very difficult [or complicated - *mesubach*].

The rite of aggregation, or landing back in Israel, is not an easy task. During the journey, the respondents had had great experiences, "the experience of their lives," and now they had to come back to the banal, stressful reality of everyday life in Israel. Mentally, and sometimes physically, they had adapted to a different pace of life, a different experience of time, freedom, and independence. Now they were expected to re-adapt themselves to the Western style of life and the Israeli pressure cooker. Some respondents

had needed a month or even several months for re-adaptation. Some had to do it even more rapidly, as they returned only a few weeks if not a few days before the beginning of the academic year. Some mentioned that they dealt with re-adaptation and readjustment by pushing themselves to find a job within a few weeks in order to deal with the situation in a kind of “shock therapy.” Nonetheless, most of the respondents, although re-established at the time of the interviews, were dreaming about another journey at the same time as they were dealing, quite successfully, with reality.

**Yosi:** It is over, the meaningful chapter is over, later there will be [short] stories [trips].

**Meir:** I knew people who stretched the journey as long as they could, to postpone coming back. I did things to the last moment.

**Alon:** Memories are what count. I’m in the nostalgic phase. I spent much money and it was worth every penny, [including] the fears before, and the tough landing [process back in Israel]; tough landing of coming from tranquility into the daily reality, from the journey’s spontaneity. A day on the trip was like a week in Israel, regarding events and experiences.

**Yoav:** There are the stages of coming back. Now I’m back and I become nervous again. Six months ago I spoke slower; now even I start to pack my stuff half an hour before the end of the class. . . . I’m longing for India, although I wouldn’t go back [there] now.

**Ruth:** [the back to Israel experience: I did it] as fast as possible. To go to the routine in order to get out of the depression of coming back. . . . When I came back I started to work immediately to reduce the coming back depression.

**Oren:** Every person who comes back after a period of time, for example, seven months, a year, the first three months of coming back [the adjustment - *klita*] in Israel is difficult, complicated, regardless of drug [use on the journey]. I remember myself when I returned. . . . I, within two weeks I started to work because if not, I wouldn’t find myself. But it has nothing to do with drugs. I was clean of that . . . The routine in Israel brings you back.

**Ran:** The first return [to Israel] was easy; it wasn’t a regular return but to save money for the next time. It was joyful, to meet with family and friends, to go to work. The second return was different because it is [it means] to go back [for good] and to work, I start looking at [the future] . . . here I am.

[About landing back in Israel] I don't want to deal with it too much. . . . The landing was troublesome because I came back and I didn't know what I'm, going to do [he is not planning to study at the university].

**Saar:** Now I'm starting to struggle with work, and with yourself [myself].

For the respondents, one of the greatest experiences during the journey was freedom. Landing back in Israel meant coming back to the "mold," to the "daily reality" as Alon said, or the "routine in Israel," as Oren commented. "After all," Oren said, "being abroad I [was] disconnected from reality," the familiar reality in Israel. As many defined "freedom" as their greatest experience on the journey, it is obvious that the landing, to a certain degree, meant for the respondents putting "society's handcuffs" back on their wrists. Although by their own free will and choice, the respondents experienced the return as anticlimactic after the journey's strong experience of freedom.

### Freedom and Choice

Freedom was emphasized by almost all the respondents when they described their experiences during the journey, or when they were asked what they had learned. Freedom had been used as their main tool, throughout the learning process. Freedom allowed them to break boundaries and to experiment with different behaviors, different lifestyles, and different philosophies of life. This freedom provided them with more choice as well as more responsibility. They saw freedom as a tool to achieve maturity and to achieve learning.

Until they took off on their journey, they had been under the supervision of parents, teachers, and (in the service) commanders; thus their choices, and the range of possible decisions, were limited. Making a choice is not only an act of freedom, it is an ingredient in the process of building an identity. Thus the journey may be seen as a self-administered test the backpackers used to help answer the basic identity question of “who am I?”

**Lea:** Freedom, to be in another place, far away from Israel, to feel the freedom. Happiness that I never experienced. Tranquility, freedom, disconnection from things I wanted to disconnect from. . . . There’s a sense of pressure in Israel. Parents who want you to “promote” yourself. The security situation there [in Israel], you don’t have it [in the USA]; there, you detached yourself.

**Yosi:** I think that this is a need after the three years service. Freedom. Independence. Release of the army tension. You are your own master . . . going around and seeing the world.

**Efi:** This is a need after the pressure of the service; it is after a tough structure.

**Meir:** Disconnect from everything. I couldn’t make it here [the process in Israel]. You see how people are different. This is the first period of freedom. At home and in the service you do not make decisions for yourself. On the journey you are free like a bird [*tsipor dror*]; you want to go yes [or] no . . . to stay . . . you are free. [On the journey] I’m [I was] my own master.

**Alon:** A lot [it is] a matter of freedom. Everything that you want to do, there is no taboo. People have time.

**Yoav:** The breakthrough of barriers after the army. The army is a mold [or structure – *shtantz*]. Now you do things without reason, simply because I do them. Not a rational reason.

**Sari:** Some people are going for the experience of the post-army. I think there are also psychological needs. After the service or the university, you should do this and that, and here people need the freedom.

**Mira:** But for most people, the goal is to learn [how] to deal with freedom. To escape and see other people. Freedom from the Israeli mentality. Freedom from the dictated thoughts and actions [*taktivim*] and what must [or should - *tsarich*] be; freedom to learn all what is needed. To be alone. . . . The travel as a space for

freedom. . . . There is a phenomenon about the nice [or good] children, [female] officers, good girls, arrived to take risks, to challenge boundaries; they broke the social pressure structure. It is not only about grass, this, everybody is using. Ecstasy! The freaks, they do not use; they have nothing to prove. The good girls broke the boundaries. There is a social pressure to use [drugs].

**Ran:** You also learn how to travel, you learn about yourself, about your freedom... when you are far [from Israel or home] you feel this sense. It is something that you become mature with.

Many respondents mentioned drugs as an item on the must-list, a peer pressure issue, or something people wanted to experience as a boundary test. Here the freedom means being away from home and the small village eye syndrome. Some respondents, although they did discuss drugs, asked me not to quote them. Back in Israel, they do not feel as free to talk about drugs as when on their journey. Mira, for example, told me that one of the most amazing things she had learned was that “good boys or girls” used drugs heavily. To Mira, good boys and girls meant they had been officers in the army, carried much responsibility, and followed society’s expectations for them.

For many, the journey is a means of getting rid of the strict rules of school and, later, the service, and thus, the journey provides freedom to be, as Meir put it, “my own master.” It is a disconnection from commitments, an escape from social “mold” requirements and structure, not only in the army, but also in Israeli society in general. In the liminality-space there is freedom, or, to paraphrase Alon, there are no taboos. The fact that all the respondents returned to Israel -- including those who were interviewed in New York -- points out that this period of time was only an in-between segment, a time out, or a vacation before the next phase of life. According to the Israeli ethos, by returning to Israel the respondents performed the ultimate act of conformity to Israeli society.

**Back to Society: The Convenience of Conformity**

Any rite of passage aims at having initiates conform to the standards and requirements of the tribe, or society, or group. Looking at the backpackers' journey as a rite of passage, we see no exception. Even those respondents who had reservations about or criticisms of Israel and Israeli society were ready to accept Israel as a given environment; only a few considered emigration. (This study was conducted with backpackers who returned to Israel after their journey). The boldest statements pointing out conformity were those mentioning a given path [*maslul*], real life, or some phase of institutionalization in the speaker's life. The respondents accepted these features as the next stage of their lives, after the journey, upon completion of learning within the liminality.

The backpackers accepted the path that led them back to Israel to resume adult responsibilities and to become mature citizens of society. Although they might dream of being Peter Pan, they did not rebel against adulthood and its implications. They talked about it in terms of a "final path" or "institutionalization," speaking with a fatalistic acceptance, accepting the pattern into which society had molded them, and by which they had been produced.

**Yosi:** [The journey is an] intermission [*hafsaka*] before you start the serious stage of life -- it is true in my case as well.

**Meir:** There is a lot of conformism [in this phenomenon]. . . School, service in the army, trip -- it becomes normal . . . It is part of the path [*maslul*]. . . . Everybody needs it in his resume. . . . This is [the last chance] before you are institutionalized. . . . [I wish to have] one more trip before the final path [*yeshoret sofit*] that lasts for the rest of [my or our] life. [It is] not so much black and white, but it will be

difficult to make [a trip to] South America after the institutionalization [*hitmasdut*].

**Ruth:** I have had a known path [*maslut*]. It isn't important to me what I'm going to study, where I want to live, or these kinds of things. I will go to study law.

**Oren:** Today there is such a mold [*shtantz*]: During your [high school] studies [you go to] Cyprus and Greece. You are recruited and discharged, you work, and you fly . . . Secondly, I told [myself] enough! Before starting the real life, that in Israel life is competitive all the time, nothing to do about it, so the last time that you may travel is between the first and the second [academic] degree, if you shouldn't work, so I had [took] my chance before I start life.

Going back home is another mode of conforming. This phase influences liminality's learning process. People may plan their timetables in order to return in time for the academic year. They may come back or postpone a trip because of an employment opportunity. Once back at home, no respondent revolted because of the need to work and to support himself or herself; all the respondents clearly distinguished the no commitments attitude on the journey from the need to re-shoulder commitments once they had returned to Israel. In other words, all the respondents accepted their new status -- no longer a child, no longer in a moratorium -- and the roles attached.

**Lea:** There is also a financial concern. I have a backup [support] at home . . . but I don't want property but experience. [But she studied accounting.]

**Amir:** Let's start from "home." It was clear that I'm going back home; that I'm going back to Ben Gurion Airport and to "XXXX" [the name of his kibbutz].

**Meir:** Reasons, because [other] friends made the trip. School, army, trip [as a path - *maslut*] it sounds normal. . . . In my case I had a timeframe. There are people [back-packers] who [had been on the journey] didn't stay within a timeframe and others who had it, like those who get a leave of absence from the service [*HALA"T*] or [already admitted to] the university.

**Alon:** My ticket was limited to one year, and I returned after eight months because there was a chance to get a job. The second time [trip] had been designed [to take

place] before the beginning of my studies [at the university]. I did [completed] the admission in order not to change my mind. Finally I came back a month earlier.

**Avi:** [After the journey] I came to [the University of] Haifa and not to the program [*B.A. mitsta'ynim*] in Jerusalem. And I will work with people. For me it is the awareness and meditation which counts. . . . People came [as travelers] for two or three months before starting their study at the university.

**Yoav:** People from other countries have other points of view. They are older and make a break in their [stream of] life, at around 35 years old, **not before life** [as Israelis do]. They also do it several times, three or four times, and for us it is **the trip of our life**.

**Ruth:** [Ten years from now] I'll have a degree in law or economics, or both. The [my] goal is to work in a successful [law] office; that I'll be settled; that I will have my own apartment, and everything. . . . [I'll be] married with children.

**Mira:** I hope to be married, but to find a husband who will be able to be like me. [A] marriage that will not be too suffocating; that it will include friendship; that he will understand my need for freedom, for traveling, for going and watching. . . . That also my job will allow me to move from one place to another and not to be fastened [to one place]. . . . One day I will accept full responsibility, but I don't want to lose myself.

**SAAR:** Now I'm starting to struggle with work, and with yourself [myself]. . . . **Enough! You have to be mature**, to take care of yourself, to establish a family, to go ahead. You cannot do whatever you want [anymore]. There are problems [or concerns] of money and making a living, things like that, once you are committed. . . . If after three years, [upon completing an undergraduate degree, someone] will offer me a job in hi-tech, as a physicist, although it is rare [they look for a graduate degree], so I will give up the trip [that I plan for] after the undergraduate studies.

A line of similarity is drawn between the discussion about conformity and the respondents' "dreams" (see Chapter VII). In both cases respondents are talking about having home, children, profession, and happiness, Ruth, for example, wants to be a lawyer and to work in a well-established law office. She puts career first and only after the future establishment does she consider having children. She mentioned children only after being directly questioned. Doing so she conformed with her generation's agenda, holding with

the postmodern strategies (see Chapter VII). Saar said, **“Enough! You have to be mature, to take care of yourself, to establish a family, to go ahead.”** “You have to,” he said, not “I wish,” “I want,” or “it will be nice.” This points out the huge influence that society has on its subjects. Hence, while answering a question about his dream, Saar said, **“you have to.”** This statement is an utterance of acceptance of society power, acceptance as conformity. In this way or another, all the respondents stated a similar message of conformity.

#### **Discussion: Breaking the Rules, Dwelling in Conformity**

The respondents in this study tend to comply with society’s main requirements. Their dreams and actions are strong evidence for this observation. This conformity had been found in previous studies (Mevorach, 1997; Simchai, 1998), and had been observed by many people with whom I talked about the backpackers phenomenon. In many cases conformity had been mentioned with disrespect or contempt as if the backpackers had breached some contract according to which they promised to be different, to rebel, to find the ultimate new answer. It was not the content but the tone of the utterances that said, **“After all, they are only regular people; they are dwelling deeply in conformity.”**

This attitude, looking down on conformity in regard to the backpackers, seems to be rooted in a wrong comparison or misconception about the backpackers phenomenon. It grouped together the first backpackers who traveled more than 20 years ago, with contemporary travelers. It grouped together those who go to the East for a long-term Ashram practice, with trekkers. Moreover, this contemptuous attitude toward conformity has two points of origin. The first originated in the Zionist ethos of the pioneer (*haluts*),

a person who continuously reaches new frontiers, establishing new projects, never letting himself dwell in the comfort of conformity.

The second source of contempt is derived from the postmodern message of diversity. One of the aspects of diversity is breaching concepts, social constructs, narratives, and conformity. The feminist movement, or the first homosexuals and lesbians who went out of the closet are clear examples of the contemporary era's pioneers, if not revolutionaries, who challenge conformity. Art critiques and artists are another example; as they have been shifted to the center as celebrities, they promote anti-conformity as a bon ton. In postmodern art, when one needs a gimmick to survive, the non-conformist is perceived as a winner. For the majority of the people, however, this is a deceptive message, if only because only a few can be non-conformists to give this construct a meaning. For example, the Bohemian can flourish only in the support of the mass's conformity.

Thus, this attitude probably ignores two aspects of the journey. First, the journey as rite of passage, and second, the journey as a search for identity; both are not mutually excluded. In the tribal rite of passage, the initiate was guided into a clear path through liminality, toward a defined new role in society. In a complex Western society, the pace of change eliminates any chance to adapt to an efficient mechanism that deals with the ever-growing and ever-changing professions and tasks that a person needs to deal in industrial and post-industrial society.

In this light, dealing with the backpackers' journey as a rite of passage that aims to define one's role and identity, a different attitude toward conformity is needed. After all, the function of the rite of passage in society is to provide a vehicle toward conformity

(i.e., to answer society's need). Society's rules, constructs, and generally, culture are all features that provide a comfort zone, at least to the point in which one knows how to read the map and effectively use it. In this state of being, evolution, unlike revolution, constitutes a small change at a time, while the mainstream is marginally influenced. In *The Age of Uncertainty* (Galbraith, 1978), this stability contributes to one's sense of certainty in the world, contributes to one's sense of homeostasis, which for most people is a desirable state of being. Along this line, the backpackers' journey is perceived as a positive tool that grants the young people an opportunity to deal with their search for identity, finding their place in society.

Riley (1988) argues that the "long-term budget travelers" are not part of the culture of rebellion anymore. They are well-educated people who are keeping to their budget, and are paying attention to safety roles in their trips. Even their drug use is within their cohort's standards. For them, said Riley, the trip is a delay, a temporary moratorium from their duties as adults, a delay in carrying out their role in society; they postpone their responsibilities and duties using the trip as a legitimate accepted means for their moratorium.

Turner (1977) claims that the modern tourist experience fits into the rite of passage's second phase, the liminality. In previous centuries, said Turner (1973), people went on a pilgrimage for similar reasons. The modern travelers are going through analogous experiences of detachment from their culture of origin--the rite of separation--throughout the journey--the liminality--toward the phase of acquiring a new social role--the rite of aggregation. In both cases, the pilgrim and the secular traveler are moving from one place to another. Accomplishing the process, they are going back to their place

of origin. Being a "tourist," said Cohen (1984), means that people are on a circuitous route that sooner or later will bring them back to their country of origin, which proves a certain amount of conformity.

It is not a surprise that respondents talked about their journey as the experience of their life; some mentioned the search for self as the main goal of their journey. For many, the changes in the Israeli society (i.e., turning into the postmodern era. Kni-Paz, [1993]), made the old rite of passage, which was service in the Army, less meaningful as a rite of passage. Today about 40% of the age brackets do not serve in the Army, compared to less than 20% in the past (Shavit, 2000; Shelach, 2000). As well, the terms of the service have been changed. Now parents' involvement in their children's service reaches new heights, e.g., calling the training base commander, with complains about the order and the content of the training. As well, it is estimated that about 50% of the people who serve come home to sleep almost every night -- it is called "near to home service [*kala'b*]" -- and they are at home almost every weekend. These conditions are far from the hardships that characterize the liminality phase.

It is clear that the backpackers phenomenon was not initiated by nor originate with the Israeli establishment. It started with a few, the "explorers" (Cohen's term, 1972), and through the years more and more have taken this path. Today, many view it as a path (*maslul* - see Glossary), a stage along the maturation process. For some, it is a necessary "entry" in their resume, equal to the service. In any case, it is clear that the young Israelis established the phenomenon by themselves as a self-made rite of passage. In many cases, the parents did not bless the journey (Mevorach, 1997), and the backpackers did it "despite" not "because" of society's agenda.

One of the main issues in the parents' antagonism is the risky terrain and environment in which the journeys take place. Another is the risk(s) some backpackers take deliberately, including drug use risks. The media in Israel used to publish incidents in which backpackers had been killed or injured and needed to be rescued. Stories about backpackers who had overdosed on drugs and been hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital added to parental concern. But for the backpackers, experiencing drugs is part of their freedom. This is part of the boundaries check they all praised in their interviews. For example, Alon said: "A lot [it is] a matter of freedom. Everything that you want to do; **there is no taboo.**"

This "no taboo" or rules breaking is essential to the process of learning in the rite-of-passage setting. In its metaphoric meaning, entering into the liminality phase means the death of the old, death of the old rule, identity, and sometimes even the old feature of one's personality. *Oedipus Rex* provides us with such an example. In order to gain insight, the "old Oedipus," the one with the arrogant personality, should die. Only then can he listen to Teiresias, the old blind prophet who could see the truth that Oedipus' arrogance had prevented him from seeing. Later, being in the liminality, Oedipus learned, as pointed out by Shepher (1996), about his own identity, about his parents, and the power of the Gods, about his sensations and feelings, which he ignored, until his eyes closed and the eyes of his spirit were opened.

The backpackers' journey is much less dramatic, but no less meaningful. Being in the liminality is an unusual experience; it is a realm where there are struggles, fears, uncertainty, and occasionally, time loses its regular meaning (Turner, 1977). Here, we are in "an interval of social timelessness" (Leach, 1976, p. 34). This is exactly what many

respondents mentioned, i.e., that time in the East or time during the journey had a different pace, intensity, and value. They mentioned that the back-to-Israel experience had been influenced by the different approaches to time, and the need to adapt their inner clock to the public clock. Alon said: "A day in the journey was like a week in Israel." "The routine in Israel brings you back," said Oren, "for example, in regard to 'time' but not totally." This "not totally" means that something has been learned, something has been changed.

Learning means change, and it means that the backpackers are coming back "different"; it means that back to conformity is not intact. They are coming back with the new learning that makes the process, from society's point of view, an evolutionary process. Amir summarized his journey: "I [have learned] started to see that [I] relate differently to things, less apparent [or unquestionable – *muvaan me'elav*]." Ran said: "Something stays [with you]. You learn that if you are walking on the road, don't try to control everything; not to know how it is going to end." During the journey, he breached society's taboo, using drugs excessively. Now in recovery, Ran is working, and highly appreciates the support and love he gets from his family. He broke the rules, and is back to the safety-net of conformity. He went on the journey as a need, first to surf on Australian waves, next as a backpacker in search of self, only to find that this rite of passage has another aspect, the dangerous side. But risks and danger, to a certain degree, make the journey desirable in the first place. They are part of the learning process, which is what many of the backpackers are looking for.

Rami did not make the journey. He was ready to do so after the service, already at the heart of his preparations, and then there was a tragedy; his father died. He postponed

the journey for two years, taking care of the responsibility at home. Now, at the “last moment” before he begins his studies at the university, he plans to go on a trip, even if for only two months. All his friends did it already, and he is attentive to the backpackers' narratives. Besides Ran, he is the only respondent who described pictures from the journey in details, pictures taken by his friends. He feels that this is his last chance because:

**Rami:** This is a phase in life that you still feel young [enough] to do this [type of] trip. If you don't do it now, then soon you are in your studies, and you are an old person, 26-27 years old, and it is too late for backpack travel. [At that age] you already start to be established in life.

By his decisions and action, Rami had clearly conformed to society's (and his family's) expectations, and he missed the liminality with its breaking-the-rules temptation.

Risk-taking is part of breaking the rules and both contribute to the journey's appeal. In Erikson's (1968) terms, they are part of the struggle, part of the moratorium young people may take from society's mainstream life and requirements. The moratorium is defined here as liminality, and people are going into it by their own will. This is a prominent difference from the tribal rite of passage, where initiates go into liminality by society's requirement and blessing. In the backpackers' case, they go because of the temptation and because “everybody” goes on the trip. “Everybody” here means friends and others from the same age cohort, but not the entire society. As well, “everybody” on the journey takes a certain amount of risks and behaves in a certain way, breaking certain rules. Once the phenomenon is established, it can be said that now the backpackers adhere to the new (their) fashion of “group conformity.” And here the circle is closed. The first backpackers, more than 20 years ago, were the “pioneers” who opened the road

**for their followers in a non-conformist manner, initiating the self-made rite of passage.**

**Contemporary backpackers are more likely to dwell in conformity. They conform both to their own group's rite of passage and to society's expectations, settling down in the end of the process.**

## Chapter IX

### CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted using a qualitative methodology to reflect the phenomenological approach that inspires the research. The focus of data collection and subsequent analysis was the experience of a sample of young adults throughout their journey, as a process. All conclusions, such as they are, are based on information gathered from the participants (respondents) in the study.

It has been estimated that about 30,000 Israelis travel annually as backpackers (Bar-Hamburger, 2000; Sade & Shezaf, 1998). The backpackers do not constitute a homogeneous population, but rather comprise numerous subgroups (Bloch-Tzemach, 2000; Heical, 2000; Leon, 2000; Maoz, 2000; Simchai, 2000). Thus, the conclusions derived from the respondents in this one study are not necessarily generalizable to the entire population of backpackers. Studies conducted by Mevorach (1997) and Simchai (1998) used respondents similar in background details to those in the current study. My study looks at this subgroup from a slightly different theoretical perspective, and the study's findings can be assumed to have heuristic value. In all three studies, respondents were volunteers who received no monetary reward for participating.

A basic question asked of any research design is who are the people who volunteer to participate and answer questions. In other words, are 100 individuals, out of a population of 1,000, who agree to answer a questionnaire, a good representation of the

entire group? To what degree does the self-selection of the sample bias the results of the study? This study does not attempt to answer that methodological question. One insight about the respondents in the current study did occur: All the respondents wanted their story to be heard. This may sound like a trivial insight, but it is one that although seldom mentioned in reports and papers, is likely to be applicable to the respondents of other studies as well.

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study are similar to those Mevorach (1997) studied. The respondents are likely to be Ashkenazi (their ancestors came from Europe). All were graduated from high school, and all but one plan to study or already have matriculated at a university. All came from middle-class families. During their military service they served either in field units, where they were either officers or held highly responsible positions, or they held officer and responsible positions in service units. Bearing in mind that only about 10% of the troops serve in field units, and only about 8% are officers, this may suggest a clue about who volunteers to participate in a study or who answers questionnaires. Certainly these are not the average or typical Israeli.

The respondents themselves are aware of the existence of subgroups and what those differences can mean. They know, for example, that former officers and veterans of elite units tend to visit South America, while veterans from regular infantry units tend to go to the East. The respondents recognized clearly that there are different varieties or subgroups of backpackers, some of which were described in Chapter II, "Review of the Literature." Within this sample of respondents, two trends of traveling coexist and were observed; two tendencies in the nature of their journeys. Descriptions of these tendencies

were elicited during the first four interviews, and their presence and ubiquity confirmed during the remainder of the interviews and the analysis of the data collected. The trends or tendencies were first perceived as metaphors, “road” and “summit.” That is, there are those who are most concerned with the road, with the traveling as a process rather than with the place to be reached, and their complements whose emphasis is on the end of the road, the summit rather than the road taken to reach that summit. Later, the travelers were categorized as *seekers* and *adventurers*. The type, seeker or adventurer, and whether a *road approach* or a *summit approach* is taken determines the traveler’s experience at and of any particular place, and the meaning of that place for the person. The two orientations exist in each traveler, and no respondent was a pure Weberian ideal type, i.e., seekers exhibited a few features of the adventurer, and adventurers exhibited a few seeker features.

The coexistence of traits or characteristics within the personality, shown also in regard to issues as home and the question of commitment to Israel, appears as ambivalence. Some of the non-backpacker and backpacker respondents regarded ambivalence as a negative trait, in much the same way as other respondents regarded conformity. During the discussion and analysis of the data, both ambivalence and conformity were peeled away, and it became clear that “this is the nature of things.” No society can survive without a certain level of conformity. In the society characterized by modernity, conformity was guided by that society’s meta-narrative of a given place and time. In the postmodern condition, the meta-narratives have broken up into many mini-narratives, and the question to which narrative out of many the individual will conform

becomes problematic. Equally problematic is the question of just how the individual becomes attached to one narrative or another.

I have mentioned a certain degree of ambivalence as being common among the respondents. It became clear from an analysis of the data that the commitment of Israelis to Israel can no longer be taken for granted. Questioning one's commitments may be relatively common in the Western world, but in Israel it raises many concerns. For example, in regard to the conflict with the Palestinians, it is clear that although the Palestinian narrative (or position) is generally speaking unified and intact, that of Israeli society is fragmented into many narratives, each of which view the conflict from a different perspective, suggesting a different solution. As the conflict persists, this is an issue that Israeli policy makers must take into serious consideration. Although the respondents, once back in Israel, tend to conform to societal demands, loyalty to Israel is not high when measured in terms of willingness to make long term commitments. The journey, as a *rite of passage*, with liminality occurring far from Israel, crystallized the issue.

Most of the respondents mentioned *learning* as a great, if not the greatest, experience of their entire journey. The rite of passage involves a learning process, and the journeys of the respondents were analyzed in that light, as well as looking at the rite in terms of three component phases, to see if these backpackers' journey could be defined as a rite of passage. Analysis of the data confirms this presumption, portraying the journey as a self-made and self-initiated rite, one that was neither defined nor initiated by the broader society. This rite provides the backpackers with a time and space structure, as the rite of

passage's liminality -- a sphere in which rule breaking, boundary checking, and searching for one's self may occur. The rite is aimed at teaching initiates to be mature, adult citizens in a postmodern society, one that requires frequent decision making and adjustment to change; to a society that requires of its members the ability to walk on a "road," accepting changes and surprises, and dealing with them competently. Many of the respondents in this study mentioned just those features as their learning experience.

As tourists, one of the experiences that the backpackers mentioned was "authenticity." The dictionary suggests : "Authentic: ...2 b: conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features... 3: not false or imitation: REAL"... GENUINE implies actual character not counterfeited, imitated, or adulterated (Mish, 1994, p. 77). As authenticity is a sensation or a perception of experience, a precise definition is unavailable. In searching for authenticity, the respondents referred to an image they had about the specific culture that they visited. Thus, before arriving at a place they have expectations about how "genuine the places and locals in the places are supposed to be, i.e., to what extent are the places and locals part of the "tourists' bubble" -- the setting for tourists -- and they experience authenticity accordingly. If they learned that the locals that they observed are using "regular" dress, running their business regardless of the presence of tourists, then they experience a higher level of authenticity. On the other hand, coming to a remote village where there are souvenir-stalls in front of the villagers' huts, is perceived as unauthentic experience.

In the age of globalization, many, who had expectations that their authentic experience will be similar to the nineteenth century anthropologists who arrived at remote

places, are disappointed when they realized that their romantic dream about “genuine” cultures is unrealistic. Globalization means that very few cultures are now isolated from the “global village,” and thus, locals along the tourist’s route, are “Westernized,” either by having MacDonald’s in their remote village, or at least by having clothes or accessories “made in Hong Kong.” In this study, Saar represents the backpackers’ sense of authenticity. For Saar, eating MacDonald’s in Chicago is an authentic experience. Having a MacDonald’s site in China deprived him of having an authentic sensation and he was disappointed.

The research questions in this research have been answered. However, this study did not aspire to be a comprehensive study about the phenomenon, probing for all its features and aspects. Hence, there are some other issues that had not been questioned and thus, “overlooked” during the analysis. For example, the economical issue had been mentioned briefly by the respondents. In their answers they didn’t emphasize it as if it was not part of the preparations. No one mentioned working and saving money for the trip in response to the question about the preparation phase of the journey. Some mentioned it as part of the journey, like Yosi and Efi who worked in Texas, or Mira who worked in Florida. The general backpackers’ practice is that after completing the service, people are working in Israel, or the USA for several months to save about \$3000 to \$4000 for the trip. Those who were officers, and served an extra year, had saved the money during this year (in which they were paid a “real” salary, not only pocket-money).

Only a few of the respondents had mentioned “sex” as part of the journey experience. Few mentioned that they first experienced sex or meaningful relationships

during their journey, but without details. In one case, during the after-the-interview talk, one female respondent mentioned male backpackers (males) in Bolivia who experience sex with local females. I did not probe into this issue, mostly because I did not feel comfortable to do it, and I didn't perceive it as part of the "contract" that was agreed upon with the respondents before the interview.

Likewise, the issue of drug-use during the journey had been mentioned briefly. As I have been working with drug addicts for six years, it was easy for me to talk with the people about this issue. However, when the respondents spoke about their personal experiences, they asked not to be quoted about this matter. I kept my word and the issue is not discussed here in any specific manner, nor had it highlighted as a negative aspect of the backpackers phenomenon.

The issue of gender was not the intention of this study. Although already existed in the Israeli discourse, it is not as central as it is in the American (USA) culture. Thus, no gender consideration was implemented in the research design. For example, there were "only" five female respondents out of the seventeen respondents. In order to arrived at a conclusion about gender divergence among the backpackers, different design is needed.

Three groups of research questions guided this study. Each group of questions has been analyzed and discussed above. During the analysis of the interviews, however, many points of interaction between the three main topics became apparent. Consequently, three "inter-topic" issues crystallized: (a) the way people experience places, (b) the ambivalence people feel about issues such as home or socialization, and (c) the central role of

narratives in the process of searching for identity. These issues are addressed in the sections below.

### On Experiencing Places

What is a *park*? It is simply an arrangement of trees, flowers, and grass? A park is more than that. For people, a park is a social construct with much broader connotations than the botanical description, much more than its physical description. In fact, *park*, or generally a *place* is the aggregate of all experienced, which may be experienced, in the physical place. *Park* is the place's potentials and affordability, as perceived, anticipated, and used (or consumed) by people. Anticipation is based on what the individual knows and/or has previously experienced in the place. During the interviews and analysis of them, it became apparent that this view of *places* was salient for the respondents.

During the interviews, each respondent was asked to describe, in detail, the most memorable segment of his or her journey (see Appendix A, - Interview Protocol). No respondent restricted description of a place to the purely physical aspects. All descriptions included much more. Respondents described the local people at the place, other tourists present, the road to the place, events occurring there, the history of the place, the culture, smells, weather, environmental conditions, sound, behavior of others, and still other features. Indeed, while interviewing, it was necessary to "insist" that the respondents describe physical appearance, but I was not always successful. Even when the respondents were asked to show photographs and describe the scenes in the photographs, the results

were similar. For example, when Mira described the colorful lagoons in Bolivia, she added that all the Israelis were going there to be photographed. In describing Panata in Brazil, her second sentence was about Israelis, and the Brazilians who speak Hebrew. Another picture she chose to show me was of herself dancing in front of the sunrise at a party on an island. She added to her short description that, "It was a total [sense of] freedom." Ran described a location in India by talking about people who celebrate their religion singing "Hari Krishna" and his experience of eating with the ashram's Mama. Ran, who could only describe "pictures in my [his] head" because his camera wasn't functioning, was actually the only respondent who did give detailed physical descriptions of places visited, in addition to the other features. The rest of the respondents provided minimal physical description but provided long descriptions of other features of their experience in a given place.

In this Internet era, as well as having other means of providing *virtual reality*, these observations raise the question of whether a picture of a place, even a three-dimensional picture, can be a good or adequate substitute for physically visiting the place. By *virtual reality* is meant experiencing a phenomenon through some instrument, e.g., listening to a live concert through a receiver set rather than in the concert hall itself. Even the best hi-fidelity system cannot transmit all of one's experiences in the concert hall. It is clear from the interviewees' responses that even a three dimensional virtual reality picture will depict and provide only one-dimensional experience. Even the best high resolution image cannot provide the full experience of approaching a place in person, whether on foot, by train, or by any other means. The picture lacks the excitement of preparing for the

trip, the hardship of the trek leading to the place, or the experience of interacting with people while on route, say on a train or bus. The picture does not transmit odor, or the sound in a temple, or the feel of the wind caressing a sweating face after a difficult climb to the top of a mountain. In short, sight is only one sense of the many with which people perceive places. Moreover, the individual's mind and belief system take part in actual experience as well. For example, when Amir described India, he described its cultural diversity, describing India as a place where you can find cultures that originated "from 4000 B.C. to 700 A.C.; different religions, different foods."

For the environmental psychologist, two lessons are to be learned here. First, dealing with "virtual reality" may provide accurate information about places, but it lacks the level of experience of "genuine" reality, of the place itself. Compared to real journeys, virtual reality lacks the quality of authenticity. Any photograph, movie, video, or three-dimensional hologram is well orchestrated by producers and directors, photographers and computer experts. Adam Platt (2000) described his experience at St. Lucia (in the Caribbean). To convince readers that there was no mass tourism there, a photograph is presented of the author, lying in bed, in a villa, and a first person statement alleges that Platt is alone, experiencing solitude. The reader is not supposed to wonder who took the photograph. Even a visit to a real tourist site, one that has been orchestrated for tourists, provides a higher degree of authenticity.

"The culture of postmodernism is shaped by the masses via television" (Betz, 1992, p. 95). In this way, television has created a new world with new heroes, and consumers are living "beyond normatively and classification in aesthetic hallucination of

reality” (Featherstone, in Betz, 1992, p. 96). The postmodern environment suggests many “virtual features,” even “virtual identity.” For example, after some years of the sitcom series “Seinfeld,” someone approached the media, claiming that he is the “real, authentic Kramer.” Recently, Mr. Kenny Kramer, “won the Libertarian Party nomination for mayor” in New York (Gittrich, 2001). Beyond the gimmick, this is an example of how a virtual character can become real in peoples minds, to the point that a real person claims royalties for a fictional character. It is important to bear in mind that stretching the concept of authenticity to the extreme will suggest that (as tourist) no authenticity can be achieved or experienced on a trip anyhow. Even the “explorer” who goes on a trip to a remote tribe in the mountains, finally approaches foreigner-local interactions, not a relationship between locals that hold a full scale of authentic relations. The experiences of the respondents, with a more realistic approach, show that true reality, “real-reality,” physically going to the places, provides a much higher level of authenticity than any existing virtual reality presentation.<sup>1</sup>

The second lesson for the environmental psychologist is that the individual’s experience of a place or places is complex, and not easily detected. This means that while searching for one’s experience of place, many factors must be considered, some not directly connected to the actual contemporary physical condition of the place. Any place

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<sup>1</sup>To simplify: The tourist who observes a pilgrim at the pilgrimage *center* may have an authentic experience, but the tourist cannot experience the authenticity that the pilgrim experiences.

has a history, and as a result of the individual's anticipations and expectations, a future.

Both past and future affect the individual's attitude while experiencing a place.

The individual at a place has his or her own history, or story, which affects the nature of the experience of that place. The aphorism, "you cannot cross the same river twice," means simply that the second time at the river, you have already experienced the river, and your mind in regard to that river is no longer a *tabula rasa*. Now you will have a new experience, albeit influenced by the previous one. Thus, it is argued that experiencing places is multi-dimensional. Consequently, any study that aims at probing "the meaning of places," needs to use a sophisticated design, and probably an in-depth interview, since the meaning of place initiates by the places-person history and expectation; by their narrative.

What is a park? It is the place's narrative.

### Embrace the Ambivalence

When Charles Darwin answered the question, "who survives?" he argued that it is neither the strongest nor the most intelligent who survives; rather, it is the one who is most capable of adapting to change. The ubiquity of change is at the heart of Darwinian evolution theory, which can also be described as adaptation to environmental change(s). Moreno titled one of his books *Who Shall Survive?* (Moreno, 1993), arguing that the survivors are those who can react to a changed environment by changing their behavior, using their spontaneity to handle the social construct in an ever-changing world.

Dealing with behavioral and emotional change is not easy. In general, people tend to resist change, even for the better. Despite the Enlightenment belief, knowledge *per se* does not automatically alter behavior; the many physicians and nurses who still smoke cigarettes are perfect examples. After all, these medical personnel have more knowledge about the damage caused by cigarette smoking than the average layperson, and yet many of them continue to smoke. Nietzsche (Shihor, 1989) explained that the reason people tend to avoid change as stringently as they try to avoid death is because any change, an alteration in the present, means the death of the old. Thus, any change, whether for good or for ill, is a painful process. In psychological terms, any change means a shift away from *homeostasis*, and homeostasis is the desired state of being for any living creature, fauna or flora. For many people, this homeostasis may be seen as a familiar compromise, one in which they are comfortable remaining. Moreover, homeostasis is defined by the psyche as a comfort zone, even when to the outside observer it might appear to be a “battle zone.”

Hence, it is not unusual that when the environment changes, people try to hold to their old habits and dreams, and, for the most part, tend to do so. The pilot study for this study dealt with the backpackers holding with the dreams of modernity while at the same time they were adapting to the new era, i.e., carrying out postmodern life strategies. This duality was not one of the phenomena initially targeted; rather, it became more relevant and salient during the data analysis phase. As the study progressed, it became evident that the respondents' behavior, as revealed in their own reports, is characterized by this ambivalence. For purposes of this study, ambivalence is defined as “simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings (as attraction and repulsion) toward an object, person,

or action” and “continual fluctuation (as between one thing and its opposite)” (Mish, 1994). Discussion about the many continua that make up the tourism map is characterized by this ambivalence. For example, the individual may hold with many features of *drifter* behavior and at the same time upon some features of the *explorer*. In graphic presentation, the individual may be closer to the drifter end of the continuum, but in actuality, features of both poles appear concurrently.

In the discussion of the different continua, the backpackers’ location along each continuum was determined and graphically presented. Such presentation, however, was done for didactic purposes and convenience. In actuality, being close to one polar extreme does not mean being distant from the other. Rather, it means that during the journey, the individual enacted more features from the proximal pole and fewer features from the more distant or remote pole. What is presented is the location of the person’s ambivalence.

As tourists, the majority of the backpacker participants in this study want to be near the *explorer* pole of the continuum, although in fact they are closer to the *drifter* pole. Many expressed the desire to visit places that were not “polluted” by other tourists and the tourist industry. They also had wanted to be far from the crowd and far from other Israelis, in order to experience authenticity. In fact, they followed the “herd,” traveling a well-paved route, an Israeli backpackers’ route. They did so for reasons of safety and convenience, and from fear of the unknown. Issues of safety, convenience, and fear of the unknown also influenced their journey in groups.

For many respondents, *freedom* was the most vivid experience felt along the journey, and was mentioned as something they needed (not simply wanted) after their long

period of service. Although the respondents spoke of freedom in the psychological sense, it was also a concrete freedom, such as the freedom to choose the group with which the backpacker traveled. True, in an ideal world, most respondents indicated they'd have preferred to travel alone, but at least, unlike the army or with the family, they could choose with whom they would be traveling. Traveling with others was justified, and rationalized, by safety considerations; for example, going on a trek in Nepal or attending Carnival in Rio were situations considered unsafe to be alone. All the respondents traveled with other Israelis, at least for some time. Some did not feel comfortable with non-Israeli travelers because of language and cultural differences. All recognized the advantages of traveling with non-Israelis, but in practice few did it for any lengthy period. All claimed they wanted to learn about others and other cultures, and yet they chose to associate with other Israelis. This was a compromise that limited the extent of authenticity they could truly experience.

For the purpose of authenticity, the backpackers search for novelty, the unpolluted-by-mass-tourism places, which means reaching the most remote places. Getting to those remote places is too risky for many, and so they compromise on the matter of familiarity. In this case, familiarity means that the backpackers follow routes taken by other backpackers. They have a *must list* (that must be accomplished before returning to Israel) of places and experiences, made by veteran backpackers, and they offer the (slightly modified) list to the next generation of backpackers. Thus, the routes become Israeli routes, and the locals along the path provide services accordingly. Some service providers learn basic Hebrew and to prepare an Israeli menu; some even advertise in Hebrew.

Although the backpackers believe they are consciously avoiding the mass tourism attractions and routes in the effort to achieve a higher level of authenticity, in actuality they have created their own mass tourism designed for backpackers, as they trade novelty and adventure for familiarity and safety.

Most of the respondents did not behave like adventurers. True, they took risks, but those were calculated risks, and when something was too risky, the backpackers rationalized avoidance. They compared risks they took on the journey to risks taken in Israel. Some risky activities do appear on their must lists. For example, Mira took a five-day rafting trip for which no means of rescue existed along the river. On the other hand, when at all possible, the backpackers did take safety measures. For example, when she went to Carnival in Rio, Mira went with friends so she was never alone. This was advice she received from reading the must list, i.e., from part of the backpackers' narrative.

Simply by using local services out of the safety cocoon created for mass tourism, the backpackers are taking more risks than the mass tourists. For example, riding a public bus in India can be risky, but after a while, the bus rider becomes acclimated and considers it "normal." The far lower cost of riding a bus when compared to train fare or airfare is the ultimate decision maker. Some backpackers tried to avoid local food to play it safe; others, after a short period of adjustment, didn't restrict a food source at all. Thus, it appears that although the backpackers do look for safety, the longer they have been on the journey, the more lackadaisical and less cautious they became. Nonetheless, they keep their safety net intact.

Israel, and being with other Israelis, was a major feature of the backpackers' safety net. At the same time, being far away from Israel and Israeli culture was a major component of the journey as a rite of passage. Breaking away from the rigid and restrictive boundaries of school, parents, and the army, and going on a journey far from Israel, is a desired and desirable experience. People tend to feel that they "deserve" such an escape, as a time out or as a treat. Most of the backpackers see being away from Israel as a kind of freedom that allows them to deal with themselves without constant scrutiny from family and society. It allows them to remove their masks and experiment with whatever might be the "real me," mainly unfulfilled potentials. All the backpackers appreciated this freedom and considered it a positive experience. At the same time, they tended to travel with other Israelis. Some tried to maintain contact with Israel by visiting the Israeli Embassy to receive their mail and to read Israeli newspapers. All the respondents mentioned being in frequent communication with home (parents and friends), by mail, telephone, and e-mail. Over the Internet they received the regular news, sports news, and updates on the Israeli stock exchange. Additionally, from newcomer backpackers, more recently arrived than they, who carried the most up-to-date information, the respondents got additional news, and sometimes Israeli favors such as snacks, journals, or simply a homemade dish that had been sent by "dear mother."

Ambivalence towards Israel is reflected when the respondents mentioned reservations about Israel and about being Israeli. Some mentioned feeling like a minority, i.e., a sense of alienation toward the majority in Israel. Some were disgusted with Israeli politics. Some simply did not like to be identified as Israelis or were ashamed of what they

believed to be the stigma of being an Israeli abroad. Concurrently, they were going back to Israel by choice, and some asserted they were ready to return and protect the country should it be necessary.

Feelings of being a minority by those who not long ago saw themselves, and are still so perceived by others, as members of the majority, is inherent to the postmodern condition. The postmodern “anything goes” and the “politically correct” ideation of the equality of differences, all promote fragmentation of society, and fragmentation of cultural and political life. If in modernity, society held with dominant meta-narratives (Leotard, 1984), postmodern fragmentation resulted from the end of the unified meta-language that “breaks into highly differentiated discourses” (Harvey, 1990, p. 82), i.e., differentiated narratives. The many mini-narratives that characterize postmodernity compete and struggle with one another. Under this condition, each person attempts to have the narrative of his or her group heard and accepted first, even before considering the possibility of any common denominator with others existing. Today, less and less can any group see itself as the “dominant majority,” at least not by members of that group. Where affirmative action and social promotion favor minorities, members of the previous dominant majority are personally hurt.

When minority groups challenge “civility,” members of the previous majority group feel that “the barbarians are here,” and that their homeland “has been stolen.” When new mini-narratives influence the national ethos, in many cases it is on account of and by destroying segments of the old ethos and myths, pointing a finger of blame on the previously dominant majority group as the villain. This is how the African-American

narrative portrays whites, how the feminist narrative views men, and how the Sefardic narratives in Israel view the Ashkenazi, who once dominated and determined the Israeli narrative. A narrative, by its very nature, is an ideology, and thus incorporates the request of "Please do not confuse me with facts." Therefore the individuals or groups are powerless when it comes to defending themselves rationally from a narrative's stigma. Individuals may find themselves victims of accusation according to which, as the Hebrew expression says, they have first to prove they have no sister, when that sister is accused of being in the "sex for sale" business. The backpackers, as Mevorach (1997) pointed out, are most likely to be from the middle class or higher economically, and Ashkenazim (their ancestors came from Europe). Some of them criticize Israel, some feel strongly alienated, and yet Israel is their homeland and they don't want to give up on it.

As middle-class, well-educated people, most of the respondents held command or had responsible duties during the service. It seems as if the backpackers are equipped with the tools to handle the stresses and strains of the postmodern situation. They deal with time in short intervals, have some reservations in regard to their of commitment toward future or current employment, and uphold the postmodern slogan of "one day at a time." At the same time, they still hold with modern dreams, wishing to have family and children, a house in the suburbs, and a satisfying profession. Paradoxically, it is the profession that links them to reality; all but one of the respondents are students or plan to be so in the near future. Through their professional or pre-professional studies, they are making a long-term investment in the present, planning for the future, which may be a bad postmodern strategy but is a good modern one (Bauman, 1996).

The various aspects of ambivalence that have been pointed out here, are all results of a process of adaptation in response to a changed environment. When change is required and executed, and yet homeostasis of the organism is desired, tension is inevitable. This tension causes internal friction, when one part of the self is changed and another remains unchanged. Sometimes, ambivalence produces ambiguity, and sometimes confusion; sometimes ambiguity is the result of a situation, that is unclear, unfamiliar, or conflicting. A revolution is a state in which ambiguity and conflicting ideas are “in the air.” After all, in almost any revolution most participants are in agreement as to what they dislike, but disagree about what they like. The bloodshed among the supporters of many revolutions, after the victory, is evidence of this notion.

The backpackers’ behavior is evidence not of a revolution, but rather of evolutionary change, a little at a time. Ambivalence is the price one pays for evolutionary change. Being aware of the high cost of any revolution at the macro level as well as at the individual level, the conclusion and cry is “Embrace the ambivalence.”

### Creating a Narrative in the Search for Identity

The respondents’ location on the tourism map places them closer to the *seeker* pole than to the *adventurer* pole. This means that they accept more features of the seeker type of traveler than of the adventurer. (See Figure 6, page 146 above.) The main feature of the seeker is the search for self, or the search for identity. The journey as liminality

provides the backpackers with a learning environment, far from home and far from the everyday life and environment.

In particular, the journey as liminality is the first opportunity the backpackers have to be on their own and to struggle with decision making and responsibility. Being on their own evokes strong feelings associated with the learning process. This defines the first part of the journey, and, to a degree, exists throughout the entire journey. The search for the self, for a sense of valid identity, is far more than a decision-making drill. According to their responses, the respondents learned to deal with different cultures, with strangers, and with Israelis from other social groups with whom they had never interacted in Israel. The backpackers learned about time, and how to adopt a different approach to time and its passage. They learned about the road and the summit, and that they had a right to make mistakes. And they learned about their identity as Israelis.

All the respondents identified themselves as Israelis, having a strong attachment to Israel. This attachment influences their identity, and not all are happy with this identity. Some accepted it with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. "Nothing you can do about it! You are going back to Israel," as Alon commented. Others criticize not only Israelis in general, but Israeli travelers in particular. They try to differentiate themselves from the mass, the noisy, uncivilized travelers who evoke a negative image stigmatizing all Israelis abroad. In the respondents' personal stories, the message in many cases was, "I am not like them." This is a direct answer to the basic identity question of "who am I?" The personal stories are woven into the backpackers' narrative through the many interactions among backpackers.

The narrative is defined here as a group's construct, acknowledging that a narrative is a story developed through discourse, which is a social action (see Appendix D, "Definitions"). Thus, the narrative is the group's tale. It is argued here that the backpackers' narrative influences and affects their journey, and is influenced and affected by the journey, creating a framework for the search for identity. After all, identity is not only an answer to the quest for "who am I?" but also for the questions "where do I belong?" and "what group do I belong to?"

Examining the backpackers' journey as a rite of passage, their narrative plays the role of mentor or coach. If in a tribal rite of passage, the veterans or the holy men are coaching the novice throughout liminality, the narrative fulfills this role throughout the journey. The narrative provides the novice backpacker with a "must-list" of places to see and experiences to encounter. It tells the novice about anticipated events as well as the anticipated experiences, sometimes including warning, sometimes describing temptations, sometimes with a message of peer pressure: "You must go there!" "You must do that!" "You can't miss this!" These messages, and the information available at the Lametayel stores (and in the travelers' book) all frame the initial experience for the novice.

The narrative is not only an instrument for planning and traveling convenience, but it is a tool for acquiring identity. As such, it is also a tool that promotes the group image and the group self-image into the public ethos; it is a tool that allows the individual's voice to be heard through his or her group's narrative. In this context, the backpackers via their narrative play a major role in creating their own rite of passage, and maintaining it until it is accepted by society, entering the national ethos.

The hard feelings that some respondents have toward other Israelis can be explained in this context. The other Israelis belong to other groups, having their own agendas and narratives. They may not be concerned about the stigma or how others perceive Israeli tourists. Perhaps these others do not feel that they belong to or are responsible for Israel, or both. However, statements about the others are emotionally loaded, as the behavior of the others affects the respondents' identity as Israelis. In a wider context, this is part of the competing mini-narratives that characterize the postmodern condition. Friedman (1999, 2000) in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* uses the olive tree as a symbol for competing narratives that are struggling for their place on the national and international stages.

Olive trees are important. They represent everything that roots us, anchors us, identifies us and locate us in the world--whether it be belonging to a family, a community, a tribe, a nation, a religion, or, most of all, *a place called home*. . . . We fight so intensely at times over our olive trees because, at their best, they provide the feeling of self-esteem and belonging that are as essential for human survival as food in the belly. . . . But while the olive trees are essential to our very being, an attachment to one's olive trees, when taken to excess, can lead into forging identities, bonds and communities based on exclusion of others (pp. 31-32. Italics added)

It should be clear that the struggle about the olive trees is not unique for different national or ethnic groups, but that it characterizes struggle among groups in general. The narrative struggle is not simply about power and money, but, as suggested by Friedman, it is a struggle about who is going to feel at home. Some of the respondents, who had mentioned that they felt like a "minority" in Israel, are certainly deprived of feeling at home in their homeland. Although they are not actively promoting their narrative in Israel (with the exception of one respondent who has become active in politics), all were ready

to spend time and effort participating in this study. They wanted their story to be heard, their message to be declared. Each one came to the interviews with a clear statement: This is who I am.

Finally, on a personal note. In terms of postmodern culture, in which media and academia alike are eager to destroy myths and ethos, this work might be perceived as a “fairy-tell.” Both media and academia tend to scrutinize mythos and narratives, pointing out their inconsistency or negative aspects, as long as it is acceptable by the politically correct “tyranny.” Almost all articles and reports in the Israeli media that relate to the backpackers phenomenon, focus on fatal accidents during the backpackers journeys, or on the fatal consequences of using drugs. Here, there are “bad guys” and no negative aspects of the phenomenon have been highlighted. I concentrated on the backpackers’ narrative, which one day, maybe 20 or 30 years in the future, will be an Israeli myth. As such it includes straggle, confusion, ambiguity, and personal attitude toward “facts.” Throughout the interviews, the statement “this is who I am” had been explicitly or implicitly mentioned. It is not my intention to smash the narrative, pointing out “inconsistencies” or denial. My goal was to study the phenomenon through the backpackers’ eyes; through their experience. But first and foremost I didn’t try to impose my narrative, morality and beliefs on their stories. On the contrary. I tried to find the “pro” for the respondents’ behavior. For example, when some people mentioned conformity as a “negative” feature it triggered me to think and to read more, to find the positive, if not the natural aspect of this feature. And above all, I was “involved” even if for a short period of time in their world

without the academic distance which is necessary in a experimental, statistically base research. Doing so, I was able to be closer to the role of “mind recorder” which is, theoretically, the best tool for a phenomenological research.

The respondents in this study shared their stories with me. They wanted their stories to be told, their narrative to be heard. I am sincerely thankful to all of them for sharing their stories with me. Through the long course of this study, I have learned to love them. I have learned their stories by heart, and they touched my heart. I found myself identifying with their narrative, with their ambivalence, with their doubts, and with their hope. In writing this thesis, I became their advocate, and in doing so, gave their narrative a voice.

**APPENDIXES**

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## Appendix A

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR THE BACKPACKERS

[All interviews were conducted in Hebrew. All translations are mine. All names were changed to ensure anonymity.]

1. **What is your name; Age.**
2. **In what unit did you serve in the military and for how long?**
3. **Please give me some details about your journey: when, where, for how long.**
4. **When did you first start thinking about the journey?**

Note: Q. #4 is to be asked if the information is not being provided in full previously.

5. **Please describe how you made the preparations, gathered information etc. Did you make a tight schedule, for the journey or only an outline of main milestones? Looking back at your journey, can you describe it in terms of “steps” and process?**
6. **Did you make the journey alone? With a group? If a group, were the others Israelis? Did your companion-change over the course of the trips?**
7. **Did you made contact with any “local” people? What was your relation with the local people?**
8. **What are the reasons that other people made the journey? [If relevant: “Could they achieve their goal by staying in Israel?”]**

Note: Q. #8 and Q. #9 may be asked at once. I aim to separate it but am aware of the possibility that respondents will “mix” it. This is a point in which flexibility is needed in the guided interview.

**9. Please describe *your* “reasons” for the journey.**

**10. Did you take risk(s) through the journey?**

**11. Please describe briefly some event (meaningful) in your life, as milestones or as making some difference.**

**12. (a) Please imagine that you are now a *short time before* the journey. Please present yourself, starting with “I am...” (as for the short time before the journey). (b) Please present yourself, starting with “I am...”, as for the time *after the journey*.**

**13. Please draw the “I’m at the center of the my world” (a social-atom map) for groups/institutions/organizations that you feel you belong to, or are affiliated with.**

Directions: Draw a symbol of yourself at the center of the page. Around it, draw symbols for groups with whom you are affiliated or feel close to emotionally. Draw the groups in a distance that is related to how close (emotionally) you feel to each of them.

Note: At the end of this task, the respondent will be asked to describe the “map”. The description will be recorded as part of the interview.

**14. (a) What is “home” for you? Has your journey affected your sense of “home”?**

**Where is your home to be placed?**

**(b) What is your “dream”? [Or how do you imagine yourself ten years from now?]**

Note: At this stage the respondents will be asked to verify their commitments to Israel, family, profession and so on.

**15. Please describe the most memorable segment of your journey in detail. [For example, you may start from the airport upon arrival: what did you do, where did you go first, what next, where did you go next, etc.]**

**16. Please show me three pictures that represent the journey. Please describe what is in these pictures. [It could be pictures with the most significant meanings or simply pictures that symbolized the journey more than other pictures. If you don't have the pictures with you, please recall them and describe them the best you can.]**

**17. Please sum up the journey in any way you want.**

Note: At this point, if this issue had not been addressed yet, ask: How did you experience your “landing” [return to Israel]? I.e., the back-to-Israel or back-to-“normal-life” experience.

**18. I want to make clear that I covered all aspects of this study. If there is any issue I didn't cover, please suggest to me other questions I should ask?**

Thank you!

## Appendix B

## SOCIOMETRIC MAP

## I'm at the center of my world – An example

This is an **example** of a possible sociometric map. This map portrays relations to different groups, as experienced by the respondent who made the map. Different respondents may draw different maps in terms of content, style, and shape. Following the drawing, the respondent will be asked to describe the map and this description will be taped.

---

△ -- Positive connection/attachment

▲ -- Negative connection/attachment

○ -- Me

▲ *Bad Israelis*

△ *Friends from school*

*My family*

△

○ *Me*

*Few close friends* △

*Friends from the service* △

▲ *Orthodox Jews*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### MATERIALS FROM LAMETAYEL

The following is the contents of one book, dedicated to travelers to South America [my translation]:

\* The book begins with a message from the Lametayel staff: "This sacred book that you hold in your hand has been written by travelers who have completed the journey and have returned, and is intended for those who plan to go on a journey. It has been written with a genuine aspiration to [provide] mutual support and travelers' friendship. The writers who have contributed to this book bear responsibility for their writing [Lametayel bears no responsibility for the content of the book]. Please do not remove any material from this book, and please treat it with respect. Sincerely, Lametayel employees."

\* "Note changes in timetables, prices and places mentioned in this book. One should be aware that all of the information is based on personal experiences. Numbers and data are not ultimately 'truth.'"

\* A table of preferable and non-preferable months to visit a country.

\* General advice page, for example: A Spanish dictionary; how to carry money (traveler checks vs. cash); emergency money (Dollars) to be carried underneath your clothing; leave money and valuable items in the hotel safe; open an E-mail; good camera; no need to bring shampoo and toilet paper; where to buy presents and how to send them

**("do not carry them with you on the trip"); verify availability of hot water at the hotel; check out the person with whom you are planning to travel.**

**\* There are separate pages for each country, providing detailed information: the capital; the currency; points of interest; hotels; markets; restaurants; how to travel by bus.**

**\* There are short articles about the geology, geomorphology, and the culture of each area.**

**\* For religious [observant] travelers, specific information regarding the food [Kosher], places to eat, and so on is provided:**

**\* A fax [letter]:**

**"From: Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**To: Lametayel stores**

**Attention: Travelers who are going to Peru**

**Sender: Amir Ofek--Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Subject: Sand-ski in Ika--a danger to the travelers.**

**A second event happened recently, within few months, in which an Israeli traveler had been injured while sand-skiing in the area of Ika [a city], about 3 hours South of Lima. In both cases the travelers suffered serious injuries and it was only a miracle that they are not paralyzed. We want to warn you that Sand-ski is not covered by insurance.**

**Please use the information and forward it at will.**

- \* A letter from travelers who had taken advice from this book, and now add their advice and up-to-date information.
  
- \* A warning letter, dated August 28, 1998, written by the second secretary [an official rank] at the Israeli Embassy in Quito, Ecuador. The letter is addressed to all the Israeli Embassies in South America, about an unsafe bungee site. The letter ended with "for your information and for the travelers' information."
  
- \* A recommendation of a Spanish school in Ecuador.
  
- \* A copy of a newspaper article about Ecuador.
  
- \* An advertisement for a hotel, named "Garden of Eden" in Quito, Ecuador. It includes the name of the hotel in Hebrew.
  
- \* An advertisement for an Israeli health ranch in the jungle, including (a handwritten) recommendation and a statement, "we have been there and enjoyed it."

**Note:** At this point, I had gone through only one half of the folder.

Lametayel stores provide flyers that include information and promote services for the backpackers. The following are examples of these flyers [my translation]:

\* Double-faced flyers, arranged by continent: there are flyers for Central and South America, Africa, and the Far East (including Australia and New Zealand). On one side are addresses for all the Israeli embassies and consulates in the region, including telephone and fax numbers. The other side includes five advertisements (all in Hebrew. My translation):

\* "Lametayel service for those who plan to go to . . . [name of the continent]. The key for successful travel--lectures given at Lametayel branches, daily in the afternoon. You can have a monthly ticket for all Lametayel branches." The flyer includes details about the subject of each lecture, location, and date.

\* "You want to get letters from your parents and friends? Leave this instruction and address flyer with them. Letters to . . . [name of continent] are better sent to the Israeli embassy [in South America] or a central post office OGPO [in Africa]." There are samples of how the envelopes are addressed. "Important! In some countries the embassy forwards the letters to the travelers' center in the local Jewish community. You need to check it [this issue] with the embassy. Don't forget--write the traveler's name on the envelope, in Hebrew. Underline the family name and the initial [examples

of addressed envelopes are on this side of the flyer, one for the embassy address (type) and one for the General Post Office address.]

- \* **"Insurance 669.** Risk Insurance 669 for locating, rescue and adventurous sport. Israel!!! A unique policy that covers locating and rescue for adventurous sports like: diving, mountain climbing, sneppling, water skiing and water bikes etc." More details are provided on this flyer.
- \* "Danger, theft, illness, injury . . . things that may happen abroad. . . . The unique calling card for the Israeli traveler abroad with 'emergency call' to centers in Israel and around the globe. . . ."
- \* "The travelers' books that serve you before your trip will be happy to be updated-- letters, recommendations, and warnings. Thank you. The Lametayel's staff is ready to serve you with any extra information, and wishes you a good voyage--and don't forget to write home."
- \* "Just . . . don't forget!!!" A flyer made by Lametayel, in a checklist form, which includes: Main equipment; Secondary equipment; special items for the Far East; special items for South America; first aid; sundries; documents; and immunization. Each of the above topics includes ten or more items. It also includes scheduled lectures about different treks and offers of Lametayel's free and for sale information and services.

\* "Recommendations from Lametayel to the Lametayel [traveler], how to plan the trip according to the weather." It is arranged as a table in which the columns are: name of the country, recommended months for traveling, possible months for traveling, and months not recommended for traveling.

## Appendix D

### DEFINITIONS

*Operational definitions* are widely used in research and statistical studies. “It [the operational definition] aims to spell out precisely how the concept will be measured” (Rubin & Rubin, 1993, p. 133). Definitions in general are more important in descriptive research than in the case of explanatory research. Moreover, “a descriptive . . . depends entirely on the operational definitions used” (p.134). For example, in studying the phenomenon of unemployment, a definition is needed to clarify “unemployed” status. Is a student defined as unemployed? A prisoner? A housewife? Operational definitions were widely used during modernity, as a positivist requirement to search for “one truth,” assuming that “reality and truth” could be found “out there” (Bernard, 1995, p. 14). Thus, together with conceptual definitions, the definitions contribute to establishing one scientific language and acceptable “dictionary.” The definitions for this study are found throughout the chapter dealing with Data Analysis.

Definitions are essential, as well, when there are many interpretations of a work, a phrase, a term or an idea -- where it is essential to know which particular view the researcher is using. The term *phenomenology* is a good example.

The phenomenological approach, used in this study, assumes that knowledge is driven by perception and experience. It assumes that the scientific methods, used to study the physical world, as “inappropriate for the study of human thought and action” (Husserl, in Bernard, 1995, p. 14). This subjective perception questioned the “one truth” notion, and even the existence of “truth” in general (Lyotard, 1984). In this approach,

one's perception is determined by social representation, mainly by one's culture and through language (Flick, 1998; Hall, 1996; Jenkins, 1996). The phenomenological approach assumes no superiority of one culture over another. The main approach in phenomenology questions people's experience and perception, and asks people to report what they feel, experience, and think at a given moment about the phenomenon under study.<sup>1</sup>

Among its other qualities, postmodernism is a shift from positivism to phenomenology (Audi, 1995). According to this view, individuals are *making* rather than *finding* truth (R. Rorty, in Chadwick, 1998). The postmodern is characterized by a heterogeneous cultural landscape, in which different cultures and groups hold different social representations. The modern landscape was perceived as a much more homogeneous space (Sassan, 1998; Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989). Under these circumstances, it is now, more than ever, a time to take measures to avoid the Tower of Babel crisis. Thus definitions are needed in any academic discussion.

### Backpackers

The term *backpackers* refers to the aggregate of hundreds of thousands of young Israelis who completed a journey, usually to South America or Asia, after their service in the army, and those who are currently on a journey. Every year, a new generation of backpackers is going to travel abroad with one big backpack to carry all the things

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<sup>1</sup> A *given moment* can be literally a study in real time--following a respondent with a video camera and microphone--or, as in this study, searching for past experience during a here-and-now interview.

needed. Through the years, a few people had traveled abroad, but since the early 1980s the phenomenon has expanded to include about 30,000 people annually (Bar-Hamburg, 2000).

As noted in the literature review, the backpackers are not a homogeneous group. The very term *backpacker* is an umbrella for different groups of the same age cohort who experience the journeys. This study is dealing with that subgroup which Yaakobson (1987) called *secular pilgrims*; this is also the group studied by Mevorach (1997) and Simchai (1998). The respondents in my study were between 23 and 27 years old. Hereafter, the term *backpackers* will refer to this subgroup. Subgroups excluded from this study are people going on the trip solely to use drugs, people who are going on a spiritual search only and who spend all their time in an ashram, and people who did not return to Israel after the journey.<sup>2</sup>

### Identity

For some writers, the terms *self* and *identity* are interchangeable. Reber (1985) defined *self* as “one of the more dominant aspects of human experience is the compelling

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<sup>2</sup>Bauman (1996) defines four types of postmodernists: the “tourist,” the “vagabond,” the “stroller,” and the “player,” all of which existed in modernity and even before, but always as marginal phenomena. For example, the upper-class young travelers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not at the center of the social life of the time, nor were the young Americans who moved to Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Bauman points out that the four types had shifted into the center during the end of modernity and the beginning of postmodernity. Likewise, there were backpackers in Israel previously, but they were marginal as well. During the past twenty years, this phenomenon has shifted and become a central Israeli experience. Affordability of air travel and tourism have contributed to the increased number of backpackers during the last twenty years.

sense of one's unique existence, what philosophers had traditionally called the issue of *personal identity* or of the *self*" (p. 675. Italics added). Erikson (1968) defined the term *identity* as a sense of the *self*. Erikson formed his psycho-social model, to distinguish it from the Freudian psychosocial model, suggesting that identity should be studied as a social construct, as a process of struggle, crisis, and commitments, involved in identity building: a process of adaptation to society's requirements. In the Eriksonian model, the child (or person) goes through different developmental stages, each of which includes a "crisis" and ends with a personality attribute or feature. *Identity* is the end-product of the fifth stage "puberty and adolescence" and the unsuccessful resolution of this crisis is "role confusion." Following Erikson, in this study *ego identity* is defined as *an integrated, unique, and autonomous sense of self*.

### Narrative

The core elements of a *narrative* are story and discourse (Asher, 1994). Although a narrative is not necessarily a verbal one, this study utilizes verbal narratives only. Formally, say Levinson and Ember (1966)--who defined the term from a cultural anthropological and phenomenological approach—the term narrative "refers to the form of *message* in contrast to the term 'story,' which is used to refer to the *content*" (p. 836. Italics added). "Narrative involves a selection process in which particular experiences are given *structure* and *meaning* by being taken out of the flow of experience" (pp. 836-837. Italics added). The *story*, or the "true" sequence of events, is colored by the discourse's "filter" to support ideologies, beliefs systems, and the public ethos.

A narrative can be an individual's story, through discourse, e.g., as when one writes an autobiography. Therefore, narrative could be perceived as one's story, a "singular." However, it is argued that narrative, being involved with discourse, is originated in the "plural." It is argued that discourse is social interaction, either when writing or telling an autobiographic account, or delivering a monologue, telling one's story to another person.

Psychologically, in any discourses at least two "entities" are involved--not necessarily concrete people. In the case of the monologue or the unpublished autobiography, the "plural" of the discourse can be detected as a "dialogue" between the "I" and the "Me" (Mead, 1962). When delivering a monologue, I am telling a story to others; their presence exists, either concretely or in my mind, as implied by the world "delivering." While interacting with the "others," I use my *persona* (Jung's term) or "mask" and probably tell a different story than I would if telling it to "I," to myself alone. Consequently, even when writing an autobiography, "others" are involved, if only as "passive" readers, through the function of the "me." Moreover, even passive readers or potential readers are always involved, as I, the "story teller" am concerned about my social image, about society as a mirror reflecting my image. Writing an autobiography is clearly a message I send to the reader, dealing with how I want others to perceive and evaluate me. Doing so, the others are deeply involved in the discourse. Thus, it is argued that the discourse is a "social" act, transforming the content of the story, creating the narrative's message, and providing meaning to the story.

### Place Identity

Place identity is “a sub-structure of the self-identity [or ego-] of the person, consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives . . . and it represents one’s ‘memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to’ one’s physical setting “that defines the day-to-day existence of every human being” (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983, p. 59). Thus place identity is constructed by place attachment(s). Place attachment has been connected to development of the *self*, and is intimately bound to past experience.

### Place Interchangeability

Place interchangeability refers to tourists’ perception. It is widely accepted that places become interchangeable in the time of globalization, from the economic and investment perspective (Harvey, 1990; Friedman, 1999/2000; Toffler, 1990). The process of comodification influences the tourism industry, as well as the rest of society. The Boeing 747 revolution was the technical milestone that denoted the mass tourism phenomenon as we know it today. The growing number of tourists requires a huge number of new hotels, resorts, attractions, and sites to accommodate the millions with leisure time who can now afford to go on vacation. For mass tourism, each of these places provides a “tourism bubble,” as a comfort and safety measure (Cohen, 1972). The growing number of “bubbles” is one of the reasons tourism places become interchangeable.

For the potential tourist, who wants to take a break on a tropical seashore during the cold winter at home, there are thousands of resorts to consider. All these places compete to attract the potential tourist by distinguishing themselves from the rest. Assuming that promotional materials are professionally equal in their ability to persuade, then for the potential tourist, all places are alike. These places may include Hilton, Holiday-Inn, and other corporate-owned hotels. These places may include crowded beaches, and only in their brochures can a couple walk alone toward the sunset. Thus, *pre ante*, the individual's decision where to go is most likely based on gimmicks and deals which the potential tourist considers and evaluates before writing a check. Hence, these places are interchangeable. Here, it means that the potential tourist has alternatives, which are, *pre ante*, equal in their potential or attraction; none of the alternatives have a special meaning for the potential traveler or tourist.

This is not to say that there are no places like Paris or Niagara Falls that have a unique image and therefore attract tourists from all over the world. The brochures, advertisements, and commercials are trying to do exactly this, to create and promote the places' images, for potential tourists. Once a person has visited a place chosen mainly because it offered a good deal, that place may acquire meaning for the tourist during the vacation. Now, when considering another "getaway," the name of the first resort will have lost its anonymity; the potential tourist already has memories about the place.

"Paris" conveys an *a priori* meaning; it is the "city of lovers." An unknown place where the individual enjoyed a honeymoon, for example, may be perceived as an "island for lovers" the next time the individual plans a vacation. Just as you "cannot step into the same river twice," because the first time, it was just a river, like many other rivers, but

the second time, it is a familiar river, one that exists on your cognitive map. The first step established the river's uniqueness; it is no longer interchangeable.

Interchangeability of places, for the tourist, is defined here as the *pre ante* state of mind. It is the potential tourist's perception of a place while planning a vacation or a trip; it consists of perceptions held before experience.

### Postmodern Condition

The main feature of the postmodern era is uncertainty. *The Age of Uncertainty* (Galbraith, 1978) and *The Power Shift* (Toffler, 1990) are two titles metaphorically representing the contemporary condition. For Galbraith (1978), this uncertainty had started to emerge in modernity, since the industrial revolution. It is the pace and totality of the changes in recent decades that increased the uncertainty to the level of "epidemic." The uncertainty has resulted from a high rate of change in the economy, social structure, belief systems, and so on, in people's experience of their environment (Mongadini, 1992). As well, people experience change in aspects of time and space (Harvey, 1990), and this is a condition in which people experience cultural fragmentation. This fragmentation results from "opening our eyes to the futility of modern dreams of universalism" (Bauman, 1998, p. 226). In this condition, the problem is "how to secure communication and mutual understanding between cultures" (p. 226). It is a condition in which the old method of production, "Fordism," has changed to "flexible accumulation" (Harvey, 1990). Subjectivism, the "anything goes" perspective, and multiculturalism characterize postmodernity. The power held by the old industries (mainly production) has shifted to information, services, and entertainment industries, and the finance industry

became the most powerful one (Betz, 1992; Lyotard, 1984; Toffler, 1990). It is widely agreed that the late 1960s or the early 1970s saw the beginning of the postmodern era.

### Rite of Passage

Rites of transition or initiation rites, as *rite of passage* (Van-Gennep, 1960) take the initiate on a journey, one in which the starting point is an initial condition named status-A, through a marginal state, to status-B, which becomes a final, new, “normal” social condition. *Rites of passage* or rites of transition have existed since ancient times. Transitions are common in various communities in order to facilitate “movement across social boundaries from one social status to another” (Leach, 1976, p. 77). Leach pointed out the similarity between different rituals, each of which includes a three-phase structure: (a) rite of separation, (b) marginal state, and (c) rite of aggregation.

## Appendix E

## GLOSSARY

This glossary contains words and phrase used in this dissertation, as well as Hebrew words and phrases that have no direct translation to English. The Hebrew words used in the dissertation are in bold italics [*sic.*] to distinguish them from English or other languages.

***Aretz - Israel.*** The word *aretz* is used as a noun to refer to Israel. The literal meaning is “country,” “state,” or “land,” and very rarely “ground.” In the spoken language, it is a short form of *ertez yisrael*, meaning the Land of Israel, or the State of Israel. In general, in this dissertation I have used the term “Israel” to maintain the fluency of the text.

***Bait - Home.*** In Hebrew, the word *bait* stands for home, house, or building. The meaning of the word is derived from the context and intonation of a sentence; in this study, the term was always used in the meaning of “home.”

***Maslul - Path.*** The word *maslul* literally means a path, track, or road. Over the past 20-30 years, it has acquired another meaning in the modern Hebrew. In the military, it is used to refer to going along the defined stages of education-preparation-training to become a soldier in a field unit or an officer. Thus the *maslul* may include several phases, each of which has predefined goals and activities. For example: boot camp, being a freshman soldier in a unit, a non-commissioned officers command course, corporal, officer’s course (similar to OCS in the United States), platoon commander. This use of the term has now spread to other areas of life, and here it is used to refer to a pattern of

stages in the individual's life. For example: birth, kindergarten, school, high school, service, university, job, family. I used the word "path" followed by *maslul* to describe this meaning of the word.

***Tzava* - (military) Service.** The word *tzava* means "the army," armed forces, "defense forces," and "military." It is used to refer to the Israel armed forces in general, with no distinction between ground forces, navy, or air force. In the spoken language, one might say *asiti tzava*, literally "I did the armed forces," but the meaning is: I served in the armed forces. As well, one might say *Keshhaiti ba'tzava*, meaning "When I was in the Army," i.e., "When I was serving in the armed forces." In this work the English word "service" has been used to refer to the Israeli armed forces whether as noun or adverb. It stands for "military service" as well.

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