

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY IN DIASPORA:  
JEWISH ISRAELI MIGRANTS IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Sally Frankental

Thesis Presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Social Anthropology

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

March, 1998

The University of Cape Town has been given  
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole  
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is indebted to the generosity of spirit of the informants who opened their homes, hearts and minds to me and were willing to share their doubts and fears as well as their joys - and their opinions. Their own concern with many of the themes addressed in this study encouraged me to see the project through to completion when, at times, my energy and resolve seemed to falter.

The research was initially formulated under the supervision of Professor John Sharp, now of the University of Stellenbosch, and I thank him for his wise counsel, particularly in the early phase of the work. The project was completed under the supervision of Professor Pamela Reynolds whom I thank for her unfailing patience and her constructive criticism.

I wish also to thank the participants in the Anthropology Seminar at the University of Cape Town, past and present, for creating and sustaining a forum conducive to the fruitful exchange of ideas. Particular thanks are due to the members of the 1995 graduate-student discussion group, whose joint critical abilities helped me regain focus when the complexity of the task at hand seemed overwhelming. They also provided some of the most intellectually stimulating conversations I have ever had the privilege to experience.

Fiona Ross and Richard Mendelsohn generously made time in busy schedules to read earlier drafts. I am most grateful for their careful reading and insightful commentary. Special thanks are due to Milton Shain who gave unstintingly of his time, knowledge, and fine critical eye throughout the long process of producing this work, and whose moral support in no small measure ensured its completion. Special thanks are also due to Jenny Harris and Yigal Laskov without whose practical assistance and faith in me the task could not have been accomplished.

Finally, my grateful thanks go to Tzvi, Amir and Yaron, my long-suffering husband and sons, for their patience, encouragement and support throughout.

I wish to record my thanks to the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town, for the grant awarded me. The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this work, or conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

Sally Frankental  
Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Cape Town

March, 1998

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY IN DIASPORA:  
JEWISH ISRAELI MIGRANTS IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted through systematic participant-observation from July 1994 to December 1996. Basic socio-demographic data were recorded and revealed considerable heterogeneity within the population. Formal and informal interviews, three focus group interviews and (selected) informants' diaries provided additional material.

The study examines the construction of identity in diaspora and explores the relationships of individuals to places, groups and nation-states. Jews are shown to be the most salient local social category and language, cultural style and a sense of transience are shown to be the most significant boundary markers. The migrants' sharpest differentiation from local Jews is manifested in attitudes towards, and practice of, religion. Whether a partner is South African or Israeli was shown to be the single most important factor influencing patterns of interaction.

Most studies treat Israelis abroad as immigrants while noting their insistence on transiency. Such studies also emphasize ambivalence and discomfort. In a South Africa still deeply divided by race and class, the migrants' status as middle-class whites greatly facilitates their integration. Their strong and self-confident identification as Israeli and their ongoing connectedness to Israeli society underlines distinctiveness. The combination of engagement with the local while maintaining distinctiveness, as well as past familiarity with multicultural and multilingual reality is utilized to negotiate the present, and results in a lived reality of 'comfortable contradiction' in the present. This condition accommodates multi-locality, multiple identifications and allegiances, and a simultaneous sense of both permanence and transience.

The migrants' conflation of ethnic-religious and 'national' dimensions of identification (Jewishness and Israeliness), born in a particular societal context, leads, paradoxically, to distinguishing between membership of a nation and citizenship of a state. This distinction, it is argued, together with the migrants' middle-class status, further facilitates the comfortable contradiction of their transmigrant position. It is argued that while their instrumental engagement with diaspora and their understanding of responsible citizenship resembles past patterns of Jewish migration and adaptation, the absence of specifically Israeli (ethnic) communal structures suggests a departure from past patterns. The migrants' confidence in a sovereign independent nation-state and in their own identity, removes the sense of vulnerability that permeates most diaspora Jewish communities.

These processes enable the migrants to live as 'normalized' Jews in a post-Zionist, post-modern, globalized world characterized by increasing electronic connectedness, mobility and hybridity. The ways in which the migrants in this study have negotiated and defined their place in the world suggests that a strong national identity is compatible with a cosmopolitan orientation to multicultural reality.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
CHAPTERS	
INTRODUCTION: Contextualizing The Study.....	1
1 JEWISH ISRAELIS AS MIGRANTS, ISRAELI MIGRANTS AS JEWS: A Review of Selected Literature.....	11
2 SITUATING SELF, METHODOLOGY, AND PARTIALPROFILE OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION.....	31
3 DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL: SETTLERS OR SOJOURNERS?.....	47
4 BOUNDARY MARKING AND STEREOTYPING: THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE.....	89
5 EVERYDAY DIFFERENCE AND THE MEANING OF HOME'.....	132
6 SHIFTING NETWORKS: ETHNICITY IN LOCAL CONTEXT.....	164
7 CONCLUSIONS: Towards the 21st Century: Reflections on 'Transnationalism' and Multiculturalism.....	209
<i>Postscript</i> .....	228
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	229

## LIST OF TABLE

Table	Page
1. Total Immigrants and Israeli Immigrants to South Africa, 1950 – 1996 .....	7
2. Israeli Migrants to and from South Africa, 1950 – 1996 .....	8
2.1 Adult Israeli Population by Gender, Year of Arrival and Age at Arrival, Cape Town, 1996 .....	42
2.2 Year of Arrival and Age at Arrival, Cape Town Sample 1985 and Cape Town Population 1996. (Percentages) .....	43
2.3 Adult Israeli Population by Gender and Country of Birth, Cape Town, 1996 .....	43
2.4 Citizenship of 320 Adult members of Israeli Households, Cape Town, 1996 .....	44
2.5 Religion and Citizenship of 136 Spouses/Partners, by Gender, Cape Town, 1996 .....	45
2.6 Children in Israeli Households, by Age and Country of Birth, Cape Town, 1996 .....	46
2.7 Children of Israeli Migrants NOT in Households in 1996 .....	46
3.1 Adult Research Population by Year of Arrival and Years of Education, Cape Town 1996 .....	52
3.2 Occupations of Economically Active Israelis by Year of Arrival and Gender, Cape Town, 1996 .....	53
3.3 Economically Active South African Jews (1991) and Israelis, Cape Town (1985 & 1996), by Occupation. (Percentages) .....	54
3.4 Employment Status of Adult Research Population, Cape Town 1996 .....	54
4.1 Religious Observance of Research Population, Cape Town, 1996. (Percentages) .....	118

## INTRODUCTION

### CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

#### **The Global Context**

The 'two constitutive trends of global reality' (Friedman, 1990) at the end of the twentieth century lead, simultaneously and seemingly paradoxically, towards both cultural homogenization and heterogenization. The former is propelled by a variety of globalizing forces (Featherstone, 1990) such as the spread of consumer capitalism, the consolidation of regional economic cooperation, the growth and reach of multinational corporations and agencies which cut across regional formations, and, critically, by the electronic revolution. The last has dramatically altered the effects of space and time on human interaction: geographic distance and time differentials are rendered largely irrelevant for a growing multiplicity of human endeavours.

Throughout the century, wars and political realignments (of which the cessation of the Cold War, the dismantling of the former Soviet bloc and the return of Hong Kong to Chinese governance are but the most recent major manifestations) have led to profound dislocation and relocation of large numbers of individuals and groups in many parts of the world. These processes have rendered highly problematic the concepts of state, territory, nation, citizenry, history and memory. More importantly, the nature of the relationships between these constructs, as well as the relationship of individuals and groups to them, is undergoing radical transformation.

In some parts of the globe the heterogeneity of 'the local' - the cosmopolitanism of great metropolitan cities, or the market places of Africa and the Middle and Far East, for example - is long-established and taken for granted, despite intermittent eruptions into open conflict. In others the increasing presence of 'strangers' - guest-workers, refugees, expatriates, migrants - is a newer phenomenon, with differing social consequences in different places. Conflicts in many arenas - former Yugoslavia, Indonesia and central Africa, for example - are represented, by participants and observers alike, as an inevitable clash between clearly identifiable collectivities based on differences assumed to be incompatible at best and irreconcilable at worst.

How human 'difference' is construed and acted upon in different places by varying groups thus continues to influence human interaction (and interest social scientists) whatever the bases of differentiation. Race and class remain important differentiating criteria, but in addition, the feminist movement has revolutionized gender awareness, and increased mobility has refocused debates about 'multiculturalism' (Stolcke, 1995; Hollinger, 1995) and minority rights (Kymlicka, 1995).

Ideas about the value of that which is shared by members of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) of all shapes, sizes and ages, also remain as powerful as ever. Indeed, in many places, including South Africa, the processes outlined above as well as the rate of urbanization, the pace of innovation and the concomitant fracturing of social relationships, have led to intense and urgent searching for 'community'. The increase in the number of cult movements and the rise in fundamentalism within the framework of several established religions are as much products of the search for community as is the heightened ethnic, or national, consciousness - often not benign - that we witness today.

The movement of people, families and masses and especially individuals, is sometimes a consequence of and sometimes a trigger for this 'searching'. Whether migration is by choice or force, dislocation and disruption of personal and collective histories and structures contribute to profound alienation and loss of identity for many. In such circumstances new interactions, new 'imaginings', lead to transformation, re-visioning and, sometimes, the (re)'invention' of new communities. At the very least, the structure, content and meaning of identity for individuals and groups is deeply affected as they negotiate their relationship to both 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai, 1990) and 'imagined' communities.

However, not all individuals or groups experience alienation or strangeness to the same extent. Middle-class voluntary migrants, the subjects of this thesis, face constraints and opportunities rather different from those confronting refugees and guestworkers. The globalizing trends identified above together with the relatively greater affluence of such migrants has led to a considerable increase, world-wide, in their number in recent years (Castles & Miller, 1995). Their social position affords easier access to a wide variety of means of communication which, in turn, influence the ways in which they situate themselves and are perceived by others in the new settings. The interaction patterns, perceptions and feelings of Jewish Israelis in Cape Town constitute the subject matter of the present work, a

case study of the ways in which the broad processes outlined above are played out by a specific population in a particular context.

## **THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

### **The Wider 'Host' Society**

The state of population flows between sending and receiving countries is always dependent on the social, economic and political conditions prevailing in each, as well as on the nature of the relationship between them. During the 1970s and 1980s in particular, when both Israel and South Africa were viewed by many as 'pariah states', the relationship between the two governments was closer than at any previous time (Beit Hallahmi, 1983; Chazan, 1983; Osia, 1981; Shimoni, 1988). According to Arkin (1984:89), the relationship in that period was 'part of a mutually beneficial long-term policy of effective collaboration along several parallel fronts', and not based on the need to meet 'some sudden and temporary emergency'.

While the 'mutually beneficial' claim was hotly contested by significant segments in both societies, the growing interaction led to increased mutual public awareness and interest in both countries. Since South Africa's successful transition to full democracy, and despite (earlier) local Jewish apprehension about detrimental pressure from sources inimical to Israel who had supported the African National Congress struggle against apartheid<sup>1</sup>, the new government has maintained an amicable stance towards Israel, facilitated no doubt by the Middle East Peace Process. This cordial state of affairs is reflected in increased trade and tourism, and in the greater frequency of media coverage in both countries, including substantial articles and programmes of general interest, and not merely headline-making news items.

During the apartheid era Israelis were as welcome as all skilled and educated white immigrants. Opportunities offered through the (now discontinued) financial rand acted as an economic incentive for some, including some Israelis. The new government has not, to date, changed the relatively open immigration policy, although it is under review at the time of writing due largely to concern about the increasing presence of 'illegal' immigrants. Israeli

---

<sup>1</sup>For example, Libya.

immigrants are thus neither favoured nor discouraged and are subject to the same facilities and constraints as any other immigrants.

### **The Local Jewish Community**

The South African Jewish community is comprised of all those Jews who acknowledge their Jewishness in some way. They do so by choice through a range of means, utilized singly or in combination: by affiliating to a communal organisation, by sending their children to a Jewish school, by observing Jewish rituals and/or customs, or simply by associating mainly with other Jews and not denying their Jewishness.

The main concerns of organised Jewry in South Africa are similar to those of all diaspora Jewish communities: protecting the rights and interests of all Jews vis-a-vis the wider society, preserving the Jewish heritage through a range of religious and educational institutions, safeguarding the welfare of Jews through charitable and other organisations, and promoting Zionism and maintaining strong links with Israel. The South African community differs from other diaspora communities in the greater degree of cohesiveness in its internal organisation, and in the degree of consensus and intensity regarding its Zionist commitment (Shimoni, 1980). These differences stem partly from the community's relatively homogeneous origins and partly from its position as an identifiable minority of whites within the formerly dominant white minority in a highly ethnically conscious wider society.

As will become evident in later chapters, the existence of a local Jewish community is relevant to the diaspora experience of the Israeli Jewish migrants in a variety of ways. At the very least it provides a range of Jewish and Israel-related services and cultural activities for those who wish to utilize them.

Since the beginnings of the political transition to majority rule in South Africa, Jews, like everyone else in the country but most particularly the whites, have grown increasingly anxious about prospects for the future. In one sense little has changed: Jews continue to live in the (formerly) 'white' suburbs, to be over-represented in the professions, and to maintain above-average education and income levels (A. Arkin, 1984; Dubb, 1994; Frankental & Shain, 1993). All Jewish communal institutions continue to function - some are expanding - and their traditionally strong support for Israel has not been threatened despite increased, sometimes militant, criticism of Israel's policies and despite the (new) presence in South

Africa of Palestinian representatives. Yet Jews share with all South Africans the sense of profound change. While they certainly welcome the relatively peaceful transition to constitutional democracy, including the Bill of Rights which guarantees the freedoms of religion, association and expression, they are fully aware that the decades of protected privilege by virtue of a white skin belong to the past.

While many Jews, like many others, are optimistic about the future and foresee expanded prospects in an open society, others are less certain and more fearful. Their anxieties operate on two levels, the personal and the communal. At the personal level they worry about the growing crime rate, about the impact of affirmative action on job prospects for their children, about standards of education, and more generally and diffusely, about the impact of the recent changes on their middle-class and relatively affluent life-styles. At the Jewish communal level, many are apprehensive about the continued adequacy of the material base and future leadership capacity of their institutions. They recognise that the community is diminishing in its human and material resources, both because it is aging<sup>2</sup> and because of emigration<sup>3</sup>.

Against this background of simultaneous continuity and profound change, one might expect that an influx of Israeli Jews would be actively welcomed as a source of enrichment, particularly as there is some evidence that the community is turning inward, focusing increasingly on specifically Jewish matters (Frankental and Shain, 1993:11). However, as will be shown, this is not the case.

Alternatively, one might expect the presence of increasing numbers of Israelis in South Africa to create a dilemma for the local community. Given the fact of near universal

---

<sup>2</sup>According to Dubb (1994:117 & 122), between 1970 and 1980 the 65+ age cohort had increased from 11.7% to 17.2% of the total Jewish population and the number of those aged 75+ had virtually doubled. By 1991 the total Jewish population (estimated at 92 000 - 106 000 [ibid:4]) had declined by about 10% and those aged 65+ by about 17%. However, the proportion of those aged 75+ had grown from 5.8% to 7.3%. As Dubb notes (p. 118), this is the group most likely to require public assistance. In addition, large-scale emigration of younger people over the same period has left many elderly without the support of their children.

<sup>3</sup>The most recent migration estimates, compiled from a variety of sources in 1991 (see Dubb 1994: Chapters 1 & 2), show 21 000 Jewish emigrants for the period 1970-1980 (17.8% of the Jewish population in the 1970 census) and 18 000 emigrants for the period 1980-1990/1 (15.2% of the Jewish population in the 1980 census). 22 500 immigrants and return migrants entered the country between 1970-1990/1. Dubb also shows (ibid:3) that in 1991 Jews constituted 0.3% of all South Africans and about 2% of whites, representing a decline from the 0.5% and 2.6%, respectively, in 1980. Furthermore, by 1991 there had been significant net losses in the 0-9 and 25-34 age groups.

Jewish support for Israel, and the approval of Zionist efforts at recruitment for *aliya*<sup>4</sup>, together with a clear commitment to Jewish continuity, should Israelis be shunned as deserters, or welcomed in an effort to keep them within the Jewish fold, simultaneously enriching the local community? Although some office-holders in Zionist organisations have, in their individual capacities, expressed concern about this matter, unlike in the United States (Cohen, 1986; Levi, 1986), there has been no formal debate within local Zionist circles, nor any attempt to devise communal policy regarding Israelis<sup>5</sup>. The only decision taken (on instruction from the Jewish Agency, the Zionist body in Israel that deals with *aliya*) is that returning Israelis seeking assistance must do so through the Israeli embassy and not through the *aliya* offices of the South African Zionist Federation<sup>6</sup>. No communal functions or organisations cater specifically for Israelis, and no Jewish organisation has made any special effort to recruit Israelis.

## ISRAELI MIGRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Demographically, Israeli Jews in South Africa constitute a tiny minority, barely visible within the Jewish minority, which in turn constitutes only about two percent of the minority white population (Dubb, 1994). Although total Jewish immigration to South Africa since 1970 is small in absolute numbers, Israeli-born Jews made up 21.2% of that total between 1970 and 1979, and 61.4% between 1980 and 1991 (ibid). In addition, given that at least some of the accompanying adults were Israeli nationals, though not born in Israel, this immigration constitutes a not insignificant influx into a community diminishing in size and proportion since the 1970s.

---

<sup>4</sup>The Hebrew terms for migration to and from Israel, *aliya* and *yerida*, are biblical in origin and are different from the terms used for migration in general. The term *oleh*, immigrant to Israel, means 'one who goes up' (to the Holy Land) thereby fulfilling the Zionist injunction; the term *yored*, 'one who goes down' designates the (Jewish) Israeli who leaves Israel, and implies desertion. The terms themselves therefore have both emotional and ideological connotations. See Kass and Lipset (1982), Sobel (1986) and Shokeid (1988) for discussion of *yerida* as a 'problem', and for its treatment in the Israeli media.

<sup>5</sup>Personal communication with the executive directors of the Western Province Zionist Council and the Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Council). According to one official, an attempt was made in the 1970s to form an Israeli discussion group. It met a few times but never attracted many members and petered out within a few months.

<sup>6</sup>Personal communication, Consul, Israel Embassy, Pretoria.

Several difficulties arise in attempting to compute the number of Israelis in South Africa and popular estimates are usually grossly inflated<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, from official sources, DellaPergola & Dubb (1988) estimated the number at over 6 000 in 1987, and Dubb (1994:17) estimated a maximum of 9 634 legally resident in South Africa in 1991. While South Africa attracts only a very small proportion of all Israeli emigrants (the majority choose North America), Table 1 shows the increase in the proportion of Israelis in the total number of immigrants to South Africa in recent years. These figures are based on the category 'by country of previous permanent residence' and thus probably include some returning South Africans.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Total Immigrants<sup>a</sup> and Israeli Immigrants to South Africa, 1950 - 1996**

Year	Total immigrants	Israeli immigrants	Israelis as % of Total
1950 - 1959	156,366	457	0.08
1960 - 1969	333,378	1007	0.29
1970 - 1979	328,944	1,765	0.30
1980 - 1989	219,868	4,030	1.75
1990 - 1996	62,257	2,321	4.04

(a) According to the Department of Statistics, 'Immigrants are persons who, according to statements compiled at the time of entry into South Africa, intend to reside in South Africa permanently' (Report No. 19-01-10, 1982).

Sources: CSS Report 19-01-11 (1983-1985)  
CSS Report 03-51-01 (1986-1993)  
CSS Statistical Release P0351, May 1997

Table 2 summarizes the available published data on Israel-South Africa migration flows and shows a net positive balance for South Africa. Close examination of the yearly figures shows several ups and downs in the size of Israeli migration, through a long-term

<sup>7</sup>For a full description of these difficulties, and attempts at resolution, see DellaPergola and Dubb (1988), Frankental (1989), Dubb (1994).

upward trend. Immigration peaked in 1990 with 945 immigrants with Israel as 'country of previous residence', of whom 772 were Israeli-born, and 914 had Israeli citizenship. Of the total number of immigrants for the years 1990-96, 66.8% (51.7% Israeli-born and 64.8% Israeli citizens) arrived during 1990 and 1991. The yearly figures show a marked decrease since then with 50 arriving from Israel in 1996, the last year for which figures are available. Although Table 2 shows a net positive balance for South Africa for the years 1990-1996, the yearly figures show that emigration to Israel has exceeded immigration since 1994. Total emigration for the years 1994-1996 was 623, while total immigration for the same period was 201<sup>8</sup>.

**TABLE 2.**  
**Israeli Migrants to and from South Africa, 1950 - 1996**

Year	Immigrants to South Africa			Emigrants from South Africa		
	Israel country of previous residence	Israel born	Israel Citizen-ship	Israel country of destina-tion	Israel born	Israel Citizen-ship
1950 - 1959	457	278	402			
1960 - 1969	1,007	574	388	269	59	48
1970 - 1979	1,765	1,178	1,640	2,818	324	396
1980 - 1989	4,030	2,628	2,053	2,025	362	436
1990 - 1996	2,321			872		

Sources: CSS Report 19-01-11 (1983-1985)  
CSS Report 03-51-01 (1986-1993)  
CSS Statistical Release P0351, May 1997

Such fluctuations always reflect, among other things, specific events in the country of departure. Informants report that prior to the 1950s most of the arrivals from Israel/Palestine came to join relatives - often siblings - who had immigrated to South Africa earlier, directly

<sup>8</sup>Since 1994 the official migration statistics are no longer broken down into the categories 'country of previous residence', 'country of birth', 'citizenship'. The figures can thus be misleading. For example, in 1990, 67 persons emigrated to Israel, of whom only a quarter were either born in Israel or held Israeli citizenship. In addition, it is well-known that official emigration figures under-represent emigration. Many migrants simply do not report their real intentions, while others intend returning but do not.

from Europe<sup>9</sup>. Some were also brides who had married South Africans serving in the Middle East during World War II. The increase during the 1950s is assumed to include returning South Africans who had remained in Palestine after the war and had participated in the Israeli War of Independence of 1948. The increase in the mid-1960s coincides with a period of severe economic recession in Israel.

Of the 1,765 Israeli immigrants of the 1970s, 42% arrived during 1975 and 1976, a period of low morale in Israel in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It is noteworthy that the increase continued despite the 1976 Soweto uprising in South Africa. While an increased proportion of Israeli-born and Israeli citizens is to be expected as the years pass since the establishment of the state, the trend also reflects relative lack of concern with political events in South Africa. This observation is further supported by the significant increase in Israeli immigration during the 1980s, a decade characterized by school boycotts, repeated Declarations of Emergency, and considerable general civil unrest in South Africa.

While the Gulf War of 1991 and the uncertainties initiated by the beginnings of the Middle East peace process may have operated as 'push' factors for increased migration, fieldwork evidence suggests that since the late 1980s the 'pull' factors of perceived economic opportunities in South Africa, particularly during the political transition, have been more significant motivators. However, many Israelis are known to have returned to Israel just before the 1994 elections (the official figure is 288 emigrants to Israel in 1994), and, as indicated, immigration has decreased each year since the peak of 1990.

### **The Socio-Geographic Context of Cape Town**

Cape Town is a coastal city on a peninsula with a total population of about half a million<sup>10</sup> (Cape Metropolitan Council, 1998). Under the apartheid government, two key pieces of legislation, the Population Registration Act of 1950 and the Group Areas Act of the same year, were strictly enforced to ensure the segregation of residential areas for different

---

<sup>9</sup>The 1996 Cape Town research population contains only one migrant who arrived before 1950. Others are known to have come, but have since died or returned.

<sup>10</sup>According to the Central Statistical Services, who provided figures received from the Cape Metropolitan Council, the population of the City of Cape Town was 348 440 in 1996. However, if 'Cape Town' is considered to include the southern peninsula and the coastal settlements around Table Bay, the population rises to 632 860. If some of the northern suburbs are included, the population rises further to 1 555 810. Most Capetonians would include at least some of the additional areas in their mental map of 'Cape Town'.

ranked segments of the population, as classified under the Acts (see West, 1988). In the Western Cape, where Cape Town is situated, influx controls were strictly enforced against black Africans in order to maintain the region as a Coloured Labour Preference Area. The city and its immediate environs were thus divided into clear residential and commercial zones, although labour was permitted wherever needed. Given the discriminatory hierarchical structure enforced through legislation, white Group Areas were environmentally well-situated and well-serviced, while all others were poorly-serviced (if at all), and poverty-stricken. In addition, the failure of apartheid policies and their slow dissolution (de facto if not de jure) during the 1970s and 1980s, led to the establishment of large illegal squatter settlements, some adjacent to legal black townships, others dotted around the Peninsula wherever there was open land. Despite the abolition of both the Acts and Influx Control under the new democratic government, the historical concentrations and conditions remain.

As Jews were classified white under the old regime, they lived and worked in white 'group areas'. According to Dubb (1994:44), there were approximately 27 000 Jews in the Cape Town area in 1980, and 22 000 in 1991, concentrated in a small number of non-contiguous residential areas (ibid:35). Israelis were classified white under the old system and about half resided in the white suburbs along the Atlantic coast, with the remainder dispersed throughout the Peninsula, though in the main favouring suburbs with Jewish concentrations (Dubb, pers.com., 1997). Fieldwork evidence suggests, however, that most Israelis did not choose to live in Sea Point, one of the Atlantic seaboard suburbs, because of the concentration of Jews there, but rather because of its proximity to the city centre and because it is the most cosmopolitan of Cape Town's suburbs. In addition, it is an area which offers many different types of rental accommodation.

Although the Israelis have not created residential ghettos and are dispersed across the Peninsula, fieldwork evidence suggests that most have never entered a black or coloured residential area (or home)<sup>11</sup>. Like most expatriates (see E.Cohen, 1977:27-33), whole areas of the city are excluded from their 'mental maps'; they behave territorially even though they neither occupy nor constitute a bounded unit.

---

<sup>11</sup>See West, op. cit. for a discussion of the category 'coloured'.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**JEWISH ISRAELIS AS MIGRANTS, ISRAELI MIGRANTS AS JEWS**  
**A Review of Selected Literature**

**ISRAELI JEWS ABROAD**

The published literature on the migration of Israeli Jews can be grouped into three related but distinguishable sets: interpretations of the phenomenon from the perspective of the interests of the Israeli state and its Zionist ideology; analyses of the numbers, motivations and socio-demographic characteristics of Israeli migrants, mainly to the United States; and detailed studies of actual migrant populations in the US.

**Migration as *Yerida***

The first set of writings focuses on emigration from Israel, labelled *yerida* (descent). The very term connotes ideological issues as does its opposite, *aliya* (ascent), as both are distinct from the Hebrew word for migration-in-general, *hagira*. These terms are not merely technical or religious, despite biblical origins<sup>1</sup>. They have been incorporated into all Jewish discourse on the subject, so that even English-speakers refer to immigration to Israel as 'going on *aliya*' or 'making *aliya*'. The terms *yerida* or *yordim* - those who go down - are always used negatively to imply desertion, abandonment, deviance, betrayal. This stigmatised connotation stems from the Zionist premise that settling in 'the promised land' was an ultimate positive value for Jews. Furthermore, the relatively non-populist appeal of Zionist ideals among world Jewry in the pre-state era, resulted in relatively few settlers, who were perceived as beleaguered, both in terms of Arab (and world) hostility and in terms of the difficult task they set themselves of 'building the land'. Zionism and *aliya* were thus always perceived as difficult but noble endeavours, undertaken with the purposes of both Jewish self-realization and national 'salvation' (Cohen, 1995), that is, on behalf of all Jews. Leaving Israel, *yerida*, is thus seen as a rejection of noble ideals and an abrogation of (Jewish/Zionist) responsibility.

In Israel, in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, many observers and analysts were taking stock of their own society, including questioning the reasons for what was perceived as major emigration. Sobel (1986), reviewing the then current concern with this

---

<sup>1</sup>See Genesis 12:10, regarding Abraham's departure for Egypt, and Genesis 46:4, for God's promise to Jacob.

phenomenon, concludes: 'No matter how many articles or research reports are published attempting to demonstrate that in statistical and comparative terms there is no problem, it would appear that something of a consensus has emerged to the effect that a serious problem does exist' (ibid:15). The 'serious problem' was viewed as such from the perspective of the Israeli state. The perceived 'dangers' were: (1) the loss of the Jewish majority necessary for the state to continue to live up to the aims of its founders to be both Jewish and democratic<sup>2</sup>, and (2) the implied challenge to Zionist ideology if many were seen to be leaving the 'home' which had promised an end to historical Jewish 'homelessness' (Eisen, 1986; Sobel, 1986b).

Various interpretations of emigration from Israel have been suggested by Israeli social scientists and intellectuals. One theme considers the phenomenon in terms of personal instrumental motivation, that is, unfulfilled and unrealizable economic aspirations in a small society with blocked mobility (Lamdani, 1983; Sobel, 1986). Freedman (1986) considers economic explanations inadequate and gives primacy to feelings of belonging (ibid:273). He suggests that significant segments (mainly secular) of the population feel increasingly alienated due to a changes he identifies as a decrease in humanistic and universalistic values and a trend towards 'territorial theocracy' (ibid:279-281). A closely related theme associates *yerida* with ideological shifts and social changes such as the decline in the pioneering spirit and growing consumerism (Friedberg, 1988). In this context Cohen (1986) has considered the connection between emigration and the Arab-Israeli conflict and Segre, relating more directly to an explicitly Jewish theme, explains it as the consequence of an identity 'crisis' among Israeli citizens who have 'lost the particular ingredients of traditional Jewish culture' (Segre, 1980:141).

The motivations for migration as reported by Israelis in Cape Town reflect several of the foregoing interpretations. However, while they are well aware of the conflicts in Israeli society about the nature of the state, and well informed about the positions of competing interests and world-views they do not suggest an identity crisis, either in personal terms or in their assessment of Israelis in Israel.

---

<sup>2</sup>See Avishai (1985) for an analysis of what he calls the 'tragedy' of Zionism, by which he means a progressive undermining of the democratic ideals of the state's founders.

## Migration as the Re(creation) of Diaspora and Marginality

A final theme in this set of writings considers *yerida* in terms of a diaspora syndrome, deeply implanted in the Jewish mind and personality - in Sobel's words the 'long established and assiduously defended love affair with marginality' (1986:50). A B Yehoshua, the most forceful proponent of this idea, condemns the emigrants as reaffirming the 'virus' and 'neurosis' of diaspora existence:

What reveals itself here is a behavior of a clearly neurotic sort: the nation hates the Golah [diaspora] and dreams of Eretz Israel [Land of Israel] ... but at the same time all its historical activity is preoccupied with one end: how to endure Exile, how to continue to maintain this hated existence. (Yehoshua, 1981: 38-39)

The notion of diaspora as a 'hated existence' relates to the ideological Zionist precept of the 'negation of the diaspora', which, as Rotenstreich has noted, 'has an evaluative, not a factual meaning' (1986:18). That is, 'the Diaspora is negated in terms of its possible [Jewish] creativity' (ibid:19), but is acknowledged as a fact. Several scholars clearly perceive emigration from Israel as a mark of the 'failure' of Zionism, and attempt to explain it by reference to '... an undiminished consciousness of the Jewish historical preference for marginality over rootedness, time over space ...'<sup>3</sup> (Sobel,1986:5). In the same vein, Sobel argues (ibid:229) that migration '... represents a deviant rather than a normative act in the history of most societies' but 'this is not the case with the Jews ...'. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that Israeli emigration may be one manifestation of Jewish inability to deal with the realities and responsibilities of sovereignty (see also Biale, 1986). Sobel clearly fears the consequences for the Israeli state of such a generational or historical predisposition (ibid:230). Israelis in Cape Town, as shown in the present study, do not share his fears.

The foregoing interpretations indicate that Israeli official, intellectual and public opinion remains hostile towards Jewish Israeli emigration and deeply disturbed by its moral and practical implications for Israeli society. Sobel's 1986 book-length study of prospective emigrants is more focused on the migrants themselves, but his analysis is essentially a

---

<sup>3</sup>The phrase 'time over space' refers to diaspora Jews' spatial insecurity over many centuries, and their orientation in their daily lives towards the clock and the calendar: times of prayer, timing of life-cycle rituals, periods of joy, mourning, fasting, the timing of festivals, etc. (see Levine, 1986 for a succinct summary of this orientation.)

critique of Israeli society. The current study suggests that the salience and valence of migration conceptualized as *yerida* have declined in the 1990s for the migrants themselves.

The notion of marginality referred to by Sobel resonates with the theme of alienation common to all writing about migration. However, while the registering of a new environment as strange and acknowledging one's self in it as a stranger seems to be a universal consequence of migration, it should not be assumed that the recognition leads inevitably to alienation. The concept of 'marginality' itself requires careful contextual scrutiny. Being marginalized by others (in terms of structures and/or attitudes) has quite different consequences from exercising agency in choosing to be 'different' in some respects. Claiming or asserting cultural particularity in addition to acknowledging the shared aspects of living in a common society is an increasingly notable feature of the 'multicultural moment'. It is akin to Bhabha's notion of a 'third space' (1990) and is captured in the insistence by actors on a 'both ... and' capacity (see Rogers, 1996:5), rather than inhabiting an 'either ... or' or a 'between' condition.

### **Israelis in the United States**

The second set of writings identified at the outset is essentially concerned with the motivations and socio-demographic characteristics of the migrants and their adaptation to the new setting - to the United States in general and to the American Jewish community in particular. Some authors (Ritterband, 1969; Elizur, 1980) concentrate on particular populations, such as students and professionals, and are concerned with the prospects for their return. Kass and Lipset (1982) emphasise the migrants' sense of guilt about leaving Israel (a sense I prefer to represent as ambivalence), and, like all who write about Israelis abroad, note the migrants' self-representation as sojourners. Most observers (for example, Kass and Lipset (ibid)) also found that the Israelis scored high on Jewish identity measures, and low on institutional affiliation and most (for example, Lamdani, 1983; Ritterband, 1986) include consideration of the numbers of Israelis abroad and the reasons for their emigration, irrespective of the specific focus of their research.

In their comprehensive review of Israelis in the United States, Gold and Phillips (1996:51-63) discuss the complexities of establishing 'who is an Israeli?' as well as the non-comparability of the sample designs of many of the published studies. Most scholars also

conceptualize the subjects of their research as 'immigrants' (for example, Rosenthal and Auerbach, 1992; Mittelberg and Waters, 1992). The ideological discomfort for local Jews engendered by the presence of large numbers of Israelis in the US is discussed by Steven Cohen (1986) in his analysis of the policy discussions on this issue within the American Jewish Committee.

### **Shifting Frameworks of Analysis**

The third set of writings identified above focuses on the migrants themselves. Shokeid's ethnography of a sample of Israelis in New York (1988) concentrates on the dilemmas, strategies and paradoxes revealed in the migrants' 'management and negotiation of an Israeli ethnic reality and cultural identity' (ibid:11). Shokeid too gives centrality to the notion of *yerida* and shows its effects on the self-perceptions of the migrants and on the ways in which they conduct their lives abroad. He treats the Israelis as an ethnic category and concludes that Israeli ethnicity is 'mainly sustained as an affective modality' (ibid:213) which is 'far less demanding than other forms of ethnic expression' but which nevertheless 'endows [them with] a satisfactory self-perception of personal integrity' (ibid:214). Sobel's book-length (1986) study is based on interviews with Jewish Israelis preparing to emigrate to the US and is thus concerned with their perceptions of Israeli society and their motivations for leaving and does not deal with their post-migration situation.

The end of the 1980s saw both an unprecedented influx of Jews to Israel from the former Soviet Union and the beginnings of the Middle East Peace Process. Whether or not these factors soothed the anxieties of those observers who had worried about the detrimental effects of emigration on Israeli society, Israeli media and academic attention to the topic nevertheless waned. Studies of Israelis abroad since then (for example, Gold, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Uriely, 1992, 1994) have been less concerned with *yerida* as a central or primary defining concept for the migrants' identity, while not ignoring its importance. The later works have, rather, emphasised more general concerns of migration and ethnic research, viz, patterns of economic cooperation (Gold, 1994a), social and cultural integration into the wider society (Gold, 1994b; Rosenthal and Auerbach, 1992; Uriely 1995), engagement with the American Jewish community (Mittelberg & Waters, 1992; Gold 1994b; Uriely, 1995), the

degree to which Israelis operate as a community (Gold, 1994b), and internal differentiation along status and class lines (Uriely, 1994 & 1995).

Each of the studies mentioned provides valuable insights about the behaviour and identification patterns of Israelis abroad, many of which are critically assessed and incorporated into the current study. However, several issues only touched on or taken for granted in these studies are developed more fully in the present work. Some of these issues relate specifically to the particularistic components - Jewishness and Israeliness - of the migrants' identity, namely: (1) socialization processes and the influence of hegemonic Zionist myths and values in those processes prior to migration (Dominguez, 1989; Liebman & Cohen, 1990) - in other words, the 'cultural baggage' and 'naturalized' conceptual categories migrants carry with them; (2) the relationship between the migrants' Jewishness (ethnicity based on cultural production shaped by a religious tradition) (Herman, 1970; Liebman & Katz, 1997; Sobel & Beit-Hallahmi, 1991) and their Israeliness (ethnicity based on nation-state membership) (Dominguez, 1989; Herman, 1970; Handelsman, 1994; Susser & Don-Yehiya, 1994).

In a more recent publication concerned with gender and social capital among Israelis in Los Angeles, Gold (1995) reported clear differences between the adaptive strategies of men and women. He concluded that 'the class position, cultural orientation, and family circumstances' of Israeli women in Los Angeles 'result in their non-participation in income-generating activities' (ibid:296). He also showed how their consequent feelings of isolation led them to play 'central and even dominant' roles in establishing formal and informal Israeli communal organizations (ibid:295). Gold's proposition (1994b) that Israelis in Los Angeles can properly be characterized as a community is convincing. I compare his findings with the data for Cape Town in a later chapter and consider the appropriateness of the characterization 'diaspora community' (see below) for Israelis in Cape Town and Los Angeles respectively. The size, duration and orientation of an identifiable population emerge as key factors in deciding on such a characterization.

Other issues given prominence in the present work relate to more universal aspects of the migrants' identity. The detailed studies by Shokeid and Uriely and the earlier writings by Gold treat the subjects as immigrants, and although connections to and relationships with the society of origin are considered, the authors locate the migrants firmly within their new

settings. Gold's later publications (1996; Gold and Phillips, 1996:96-98) recognize the value of applying a transnational perspective to the study of Israelis abroad. However, the main aim of Gold's thirteen-page 1996 paper is to present an argument in favour of a transnational framework for the study of Israelis abroad, compared with other migration theories, rather than to present a detailed description and analysis of its actual application. The present study, by contrast, treats its subjects as transnational migrants (Basch, et al, 1994; Glick Schiller, et al, 1995; Hannerz, 1996) or expatriates (Cohen, 1977), locating them not within their current or former local worlds, but rather in relation to the various worlds they inhabit simultaneously, as individuals and families. Conceptualizing the migrants in this way, treating the study as a 'particular case of the possible' (Bourdieu, 1984:xi), requires a consideration of some of the major issues raised in the growing literature on mobility in a globalizing world (Anderson, 1992; Appadurai, 1990 & 1991; Featherstone, 1990; Foster, 1991; Hannerz, 1990 & 1996). Prominent among these are the relationship of individuals and groups to the nation, the state, and the nation-state (Anderson, 1983; Connor, 1993; Gellner, 1983 & 1994; Hobsbawm, 1990; Smith, 1994) as well as issues of patriotism and citizenship (Appadurai, 1993; Appiah, 1997; Basch, et al, 1994).

A transnationalism framework also requires consideration of the issue of sojourn (Cohen, 1977; Glick Schiller, et al 1995; Simmel, 1950; Siu, 1952; Uriely, 1994), that is, whether the migrants' move is temporary or permanent. The migrants' self-representation as sojourners is mentioned by all those who have studied Israelis abroad but most (for example, Shokeid (1988)) deal with it mainly in the context of the migrants' reluctance to accept the stigmatized label '*yordim*'. In other words these authors relate the migrants' attitudes to the duration of their stay abroad to a particularistic (ie, Zionist) ideological concept. Uriely on the other hand, claims that 'the 'rhetorical ethnicity' of Israeli 'permanent sojourners' is not just a marginal component ... but a central component of their self-identity' (1994:443). He also claims that they experience 'psychological discomfort' as a result of staying on. Here, while including analysis of the sojourn issue in both these sets of terms, it is also dealt with in relation to middle-class individualistic values (Schweid, 1997) and instrumental strategies, and the issue of purported 'psychological discomfort' is critically assessed.

## 'Normalization'

The interpenetration of particularistic and universalistic issues in interpreting the migrants' reality relates directly to the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the 'two fundamental syntheses' of all varieties of Zionism referred to by Cohen (1995: 203-4): 'secular salvation' and 'universalistic particularism'. These in turn relate to the Zionist notion of 'normalization' (see Shimoni, 1996, especially Chapter 7). The Zionist aim of 'normalizing' the 'Jewish condition' of homelessness (Eisen, 1986) is mentioned by the authors of the studies of Israelis abroad only in passing. 'Normalization' in its original (turn-of-the-century) formulation referred to both the Jewish collective and the Jewish individual, aspiring to create 'a nation like all other nations'<sup>4</sup> as well as a 'new Jew'. Dispersion (diaspora) was the norm (though not normative) for the Jewish collective for two millenia. All streams of Zionist thought concur that the conditions of Jewish existence in that period were 'abnormal', both in the sense of permanent minority status within the societies of the diaspora (ie, powerless, dependent and discriminated against (Biale, 1986)), and in the sense of the 'inversion' of Jewish society's internal structure ('the inverted pyramid'). Zionism, in its limited political aim of the return of the Jewish people to sovereignty in its territorial homeland, and in its broader cultural aim of national rebirth (the revival of Hebrew as a national language, cultural creativity), thus wished to 'correct' both the dependency and the internal structural aspects. In the formative years of the state, it did so in a variety of ways, not least of which was deliberate 'negation of diaspora' (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983; Rotenstreich, 1986; Yehoshua, 1981).

The phenomenon of Israeli Jewish emigration thus raises the question of whether 'normalization' has been achieved. Does Israeli Jewish migration resemble earlier (pre-state) Jewish migrations? Does it signify a return to diaspora-as-a-state-of-mind? Or, by virtue of the fact that a sovereign Jewish nation-state is the point of departure, does it constitute a new phenomenon in Jewish history, bearing closer resemblance to other middle-class transnational

---

<sup>4</sup>Interestingly, although both the terms *goy* and *am* are used to mean 'nation', synonymous with 'a people', in Zionist discourse the phrase 'a nation like all others' is always translated as *am ke'chol ha'amim* and never uses the word *goy*. *Goy*, of course, also means Gentile. Although the referent of *am/amim* in the phrase is clearly 'other', (ie, Gentile) nations, the word does not carry the same immediate association with Gentiles as does *goy*. One might therefore conclude that the Zionist intention was that the state of Israel should be 'like' others in structure, function, sovereignty, legitimacy and the respect to be accorded it - in short, able to take its rightful place among the states of the world - but that it should be 'unlike' others in terms of the 'cultural stuff' of the nation.

migrations? The present study addresses this question directly. It shows the effects on the migrants' identity of having been raised as part of a dominant majority and how internalised ideas about diaspora influence their interactions with Jews and others in diaspora. It also shows generational changes within the migrant population in regard to this issue.

### **The Receiving Society**

In addition to examining the behaviour, ideas and attitudes of the migrants themselves, and the ongoing relevance of the society of origin, the sending society, to their current lived reality, migration studies must also consider the receiving environment. In this case, two contexts are pertinent: the broader South African society, its immigration policies and its treatment of immigrant (cultural) minorities; and the South African Jewish community (Arkin, 1984; Shimoni, 1980 & 1988), treated here as the 'proximal hosts' (Mittelberg & Waters, 1992) of the Israeli migrants. Although fieldwork was conducted during the immediate post-apartheid period, many informants arrived earlier, when apartheid policies were in full force. As will be shown, their classification as whites, though not part of their consciousness on arrival, contributed significantly to the compass of their social interactions in Cape Town. Thus the particularities of South Africa's racialized social structure created an inverse situation to that of very many migrant populations: the Israelis immediately engaged with the dominant, albeit minority, sector of the local population. Within that sector, and in the political climate of South Africa, there was little likelihood of Israeli cultural differences becoming racialized, unlike the situation facing many migrant populations in western democracies (see, for example, Basch, et al, 1994; Bottomley, 1992; Ganguly, 1992; Hollinger, 1995; Kearney, 1995; Kymlicka, 1995; Ong, 1993; Rogers, 1996).

### **Israelis in South Africa**

Very little is known about Israelis in South Africa. An unpublished MA study (Leibovitch, 1984) described the attitudes to their new environment of the Israeli population resident in Pretoria in 1983. The author conducted detailed interviews with (an unspecified number of) members of twenty-three of a total of ninety-eight households. However, she excluded Israelis married to non-Israelis and almost 80 percent of her sample were Israeli embassy staff, students at the local school for veterinary medicine (a field of study then

unavailable in Israel), or on contract to companies. She does not specify whether those on contract (more than half of all Israelis resident in Pretoria at the time) were employed by Israeli or South African companies and it is thus not possible to know whether the preponderance of those on contract was a reflection of the relationship between the two states in that period. She concludes, not surprisingly, that the migrants are 'sojourners' who are satisfied with their material standard of living in South Africa (ibid:178), derive satisfaction from their work, are not disturbed by South Africa's apartheid policies because they do not intend to stay (ibid), but are dissatisfied with their children's education, and are 'not satisfied on the social level' (ibid:85-88).

Dubb (1994) included Israelis in his 1991 socio-demographic survey of South African Jewry and, where available, his findings provide comparative data.

### **Understanding Ethnicity**

As migration is one process that heightens ethnic consciousness, it is necessary to make my understanding of the concept explicit. Notwithstanding the migrants' self-representations in the main in primordialist terms, I share the view of most anthropologists (see Jenkins, 1994, for a succinct overview; also Cornell, 1996) that the content, salience and valence of ethnic identity is constructed in specific situations of social interaction (Okamura, 1981).

The strongly-worded attack on primordialism by Eller and Coughlan (1993) misconstrues the anthropological understanding of ethnicity (particularly in regard to Geertz) by (wrongly) imputing primordialist explanations to social scientists. As a result, Eller and Coughlan tend to dismiss the actors' essentialist models as a significant element in the ways in which ethnicity is expressed and acted upon. Demonstrating that people recognize others as co-ethnics (or co-'nationals') and use a kinship metaphor to describe the felt bonds between them, does not suggest either that such bonds are inevitable or that such relationships are in fact based on kinship. As Connor states, 'the sense of unique descent, of course, need not, and in nearly all cases will not, accord with factual history' (Connor, 1993:382, emphasis in original). Rather, as Anderson suggests, communities - or, more precisely in the case under consideration, identities - are to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1983:13 & 15). Thus the present study explores

the ways in which Jewish Israeliness is 'imagined' and examines the extent to which the actors' models influence their social interactions. As the study shows, the relatively 'low-cost' (Shokeid, 1988; Uriely, 1994) of ethnic identification for Israelis in Cape Town, their classification as whites, and the skills requirements of contemporary South African society, remove the need for this migrant population to exploit ethnic factors for the purposes of political mobilization. Symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979) is thus a more pertinent theoretical perspective for assessing the manner of expression of ethnicity among Jewish Israelis in Cape Town. Gans' perspective is, however, critically evaluated in terms of his under-emphasis on the content of that expression and the scant attention he pays to its meaning for the migrants themselves.

### **TRANSMIGRATION: CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES**

Writing about a dislocated/relocated population at the end of the twentieth century, a period Tololyan has characterized as 'the transnational moment' (1991:4), requires one to question 'the implicit [anthropological] mapping of cultures onto places' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:7).

The 'transnational moment' refers to the 'new forms of economic and political interaction, communication and migration [which] combine to erode the [nation- state's] sharply defined borders' (Tololyan, 1991:5). These processes force nation-states 'to confront the extent to which their borders are porous and their ostensible homogeneity a multicultural heterogeneity' (ibid). Gupta and Ferguson make the important point that 'multiculturalism is both a feeble acknowledgement of the fact that cultures have lost their moorings in definite places and an attempt to subsume this plurality of cultures within the framework of national identity' (1992:7). Gupta's and Ferguson's observation about the hegemonic tendencies of nation-states relates precisely to Homi Bhabha's insistence on distinguishing between 'diversity' and 'difference', and his recognition of the possibility of (cultural) 'incommensurability': '... although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always also a corresponding containment of it' (Rutherford, 1990:208-9).

In anthropology there has been new interest in the flows of culture and populations across state boundaries, a phenomenon Rouse (1991) calls 'transnational migrant circuits'. In

the context of a globalized world, some anthropologists have focused on the ways in which time and space are experienced and represented, and on the kinds of relationship between people, culture, and places near and far (Appadurai, 1991; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Hannerz, 1990). Others have analyzed ways in which migrants are engaged in 'something new': 'deterritorialized nation-state building ... a form of post-colonial nationalism that reflects and reinforces the division of the entire globe into nation-states' (Basch, et al, 1994:269). Yet other scholars are revisiting the concept of diaspora and discovering new facets to this age-old concept (Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1990; Helmreich, 1992; Ong, 1993; Safran, 1991; Tololyan, 1991).

All these authors (and others) are exploring the ways in which culture and identity are produced (created, invented, imagined), reproduced, transformed, outside of but in relation to, their place of origin, and to the world at large. They are also concerned with the ways in which the new settings facilitate or constrain these processes and whether they do so equally and/or equitably for all. In other words, major foci of much recent writing examine the structural position and/or existential condition of people/s conceptualized as 'other', as not 'of the place in which they are found.

### **Conflating State, Nation and Place**

Despite the emphasis on 'entanglement' (Clifford, 1994), interstitiality and hybridity (Bhabha, 1990), and 'articulation' (Massey, 1994), and despite recognizing the steady erosion of (the illusion of) the homogeneity of the 'nation' half of the hyphenated nation-state, relatively little attention has been given to the relevance of the distinction between nation and state for the very people with whom this writing is most concerned. In addition, even when the distinction is acknowledged and recognized as important, the terms and their referents continue to be conflated. Three examples will suffice, though the practice is ubiquitous. Clifford, a writer with particular sensitivity to the nuances of language, explicitly states that 'nation and nation-state are not identical' (1994:307). Yet in pointing to 'a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments', he talks about 'dwelling, and traveling within and across nations' (1994:306, emphasis added), when he clearly means states. Similarly, Kearney, in his insightful discussion on the differences between globalization and transnationalism (1995:548-9), refers to 'national territories', 'demographic processes that take

place within nations', 'national borders' (ibid), when he too means 'states', or in some cases, 'societies'. In his case the usage is particularly surprising as he is the only author to hint at the greater accuracy of the term 'trans-statal' for the phenomena being described.

The third example is directly relevant to a discussion about transmigrants. Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, in an article entitled 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration', define transmigrants as

immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. They are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities, and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside (1995:48).

While I agree, in the main, with the substance of both sentences, and the present study attempts to illustrate this reality, the terms used are problematic. First, 'immigrants' are not simply people who enter a new society. When the term is used as an indication of intent (and usually desire) and not merely as an official, not-always-legal status description, immigrants are people who have left wherever they have come from, with no intention of returning, and every intention of integrating fully into the new society. This is what distinguishes them from refugees, exiles, guestworkers, expatriates, and the like. That the latter, in time, may become immigrants in more than a simple official sense, is not in dispute; but they are not immigrants on arrival. In this sense, the 'transmigrants' in the above definition, and the migrants described in this study, are not immigrants and for that reason I use the term 'migrants' throughout.

Second, the 'transnational' of the title is a misnomer, albeit commonly used and confused as indicated above. The entities the migrants traverse are political states, not nations. The conflation is repeated in the text cited in the term 'international'. The problem is that global discourse has no word that does not include 'nation' for what is meant by 'international', nor for such commonplace concepts as 'national debt', 'national budget', 'multi-national corporation', or even 'The United Nations Organization'. And an appropriate term will not be invented until there is recognition that we need to reappraise (de-construct) our constructs in this regard. Furthermore, many of these concepts are also territorialized, as in 'country' in the text cited. While both states and nations emerged historically in relatively identifiable territories, there is no necessary connection between either states and nations or nations and territories. The historical Jewish diaspora is the classic illustration of the latter.

Malkki (1992), addresses the confusion and conflation of terms in her exploration of the notion of the 'arborescent form' of culture and nation (ibid:29), the linguistic identification of 'nation' with 'country', 'land' and 'soil', and 'this naturalized identity between people and place' (ibid:26). She continues, 'It is when the native is a national native that the metaphysical and moral valuation of roots in the soil becomes especially apparent. In the national order of things, the rooting of peoples is not only normal; it is also perceived as a moral and spiritual need' (ibid:30, emphasis added). For Jews, including Israeli Jews and the migrants in this study, 'the rooting of peoples' was historically not 'normal'. They were a deterritorialized and dispersed nation/ 'imagined community' for 2 000 years - more 'the people of the book' than 'the people of the soil'. Only since the advent of political Zionism at the end of the 19th century, in the climate of nation-state formations, was 'the Land' itself re-valued and the 'return' of the Jews to it perceived as an essential basis for the 'normalization' of 'the Jewish condition', and then only by a minority (Rosenak, 1992; see also Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993). Paradoxically, as reflected in the view of Jonathan Boyarin (1992:126), over time 'the thrust of majority Zionism has been to 'de-Judaize' the Israeli Jews while 'Judaizing' the land'. The first part of this view is critically assessed in the present work.

The significance of the uncritical use of 'nation' for 'state' (though not the reverse) is not only, nor even mainly, semantic. Given the multicultural entanglement of much of the contemporary world, together with the unlikelihood of the unravelling of state structures in the near future, the relationship between state and nation needs to be rethought everywhere, not only in societies which 'host' migrants. For the way in which the relationship between state and nation is construed surely influences the relationship between a state and its inhabitants, whatever the duration of their residence and however they define their reasons for being where they are.

Part of the difficulty in defining such relationships rests on what Verena Stolcke, evaluating 'contemporary cultural fundamentalism' in Europe, calls 'the unresolved contradiction in the modern conception of the nation-state between an organicist and a voluntarist idea of belonging' (Stolcke, 1993:9). In a closely argued piece on national self-determination, Yael Tamir (1991) points out that none of the defining features of a state - territory, sovereignty, power, the creation and control of law - is considered an essential characteristic of the concept 'nation'. She cites Seton-Watson (1977) who defines a state as 'a

legal and political organization with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens'. By contrast, a nation is 'a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness' (in Tamir, 1991:568) - however 'invented' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) or 'imagined' (Anderson, 1983) that solidarity and commonality.

Tamir further points to two different definitions of the nation which she calls 'cultural' and 'democratic' respectively (ibid:580-1), which approximate Stolcke's distinction between organicist and voluntarist ideas of belonging. By comparing the historical processes that accompanied the French and American revolutions, Tamir shows how in the one case the ostensible nation created a state, while in the other the new state created a new nation (ibid:569-570). Over time, membership of a nation and citizenship of a state became conflated everywhere. It is this conflation which makes the presence of migrants, conceptualized as 'foreign nationals', seem so threatening to the purported 'national' solidarity within states conceptualized as nation-states. This thesis will show how preserving the distinction between membership of a nation and citizenship of a state can reduce the tension between the rights and obligations owed to nations and states respectively<sup>5</sup>.

### **Reappraising Notions of 'Diaspora'**

Because of increased migration leading to a proliferation of populations with 'multi-locale attachments' (Clifford, 1994:306), the 'transnational moment' has led to the concept of 'diaspora' gaining currency. For any Jewish population, the concept has particular resonance, given the historical reality of two millenia of dispersal. However, for an Israeli Jewish population of migrants that resonance is doubled: as part of 'the Jewish people' they share knowledge and consciousness of the Jewish diaspora, past and present; as Israelis, socialized to understand the creation of the state of Israel as a collective homecoming (Eisen, 1986), they are fully aware that their current departure from the 'national home' is viewed by some (in Israel and elsewhere) as betrayal, and as a challenge to Zionist ideology. These aspects of the meaning of diaspora for Israelis abroad are elaborated in the body of the thesis. Here the

---

<sup>5</sup>Despite engagement with the notions of 'nation' and 'state', it should be noted that this study is not concerned with the debates about the origins of nations, or with nationalist ideologies or movements. Following Smith (1994:378-383), I believe that national sentiment and identification can (and should) be distinguished from nationalism, and that definitions of nations are not synonymous with explanations of the emergence of nations.

focus is rather on whether current notions of diaspora are appropriate as a framework for understanding Israeli migrants in diaspora.

Safran (1991) identifies the main features of diaspora as: a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship. In the case of Israeli migrants, the voluntary nature of their migration renders the history of their particular dispersal less violent and painful than that of many members of other diaspora populations. But 'diaspora', for Jews and others, does not only mean 'dispersal' (Hebrew, *tfutsot*). It carries with it the idea of 'exile' (Hebrew, *golah* or *galut*), in both its political and metaphysical meanings (Eisen, 1986). (The Yiddish *golus*, from the Hebrew *galut*, almost always referred to place as existential alienation.) As Israelis are voluntary migrants, the notion of exile in a political sense clearly does not apply. Other notions of exile, and alienation are elaborated below.

Safran's identification of alienation in the host society as an attribute of diaspora is related to his last point, that of the collective identity of diaspora populations. Clifford too underlines the communal aspect of diaspora - 'having collective homes away from home' (1994:308, emphasis added) - and makes the point that in this respect diaspora differs from exile in that the latter frequently has an individual focus. As is common among voluntary migrants, Israelis in Cape Town also have an individual focus, and as will be shown, they do not create 'community' at a population-wide level although they do create 'Israeli' networks.

In addition to the issue of community, or collective identity, an important distinction needs to be made regarding the orientation of members of dispersed populations. All such populations have multiple, simultaneous, and intersecting orientations - to here and there, to past, present and future, to co-members of the diaspora, to the 'hosts', and to co-members of the 'nation' elsewhere. The last, for Israeli Jews, is again doubled: 'nation' as all Jews, and 'nation' as Israeli Jews. However, the way in which migrants live their lives in the present is deeply influenced by whether primacy is given to elsewhere and return, or to creating/ recreating culture in diaspora. As Clifford has noted, 'the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement' (1994:308). It is in regard to this aspect that the agency of transmigrants comes to the fore. Irrespective of specific actions

regarding return, the migrants' articulated and implied orientation has significant impact on their self-conceptions, self-positioning, choices, relationships, and behaviour in the present. As will be shown, the primary orientation of the overwhelming majority of Israelis in Cape Town is towards Israel, even while they are deeply embedded in the local. They are in diaspora, but not of it. In this respect they differ markedly from diaspora Jewish communities, all of which, historically and in the present, were/are more concerned with their ability to create (preserve?) culture in diaspora, even while they fully support the existence and development of the Israeli state.

A central issue for many contemporary diaspora communities, Jewish and Gentile, echoes the nineteenth century post-Emancipation diaspora Jewish dilemma: how to be full members of the host society and full Jews. In Britain, for example, Bhabha, Gilroy, and Hall are seeking, in complex ways, to articulate being British and simultaneously something else, something that does not diminish their British-ness. The Israelis in Cape Town share this aspect of what they would call 'a diaspora mentality' but do not recognize it as a dilemma. The seeming paradox of voluntary migrants being oriented towards return but not returning is a major theme of the present study, and as will be shown, the important issue of orientation interrelates with the distinction between membership of a nation and citizenship of a state.

### **Immigrants, Transmigrants, or Expatriates?**

Following the above, the concept of diaspora seems less than adequate as a framework for understanding Israeli transmigration. Conceptualizing Israelis as expatriates, who are also voluntary migrants, may be a more accurate characterization.

In his comprehensive review of expatriates, Eric Cohen (1977) proposes that the 'strangeness' of the new environment is the key element in the experience of expatriates as well as the main problem with which they have to cope. Simmel's image of the stranger (1950) and the quality of 'strangeness' are perhaps the most ubiquitous references in the professional migration literature, whether from the host's perspective or in regard to migrants' strategies of adaptation to the new setting. The 'unassimilable alien' is also a familiar image in popular and political discourse on migrants (see Stolcke, op cit). From the perspective of the expatriate, Cohen distinguishes three dimensions of strangeness: cognitive, in that the host environment does not correspond to the migrants' manner of 'thinking as usual'; normative, in

that the normative expectations of locals may be unacceptable or even repugnant to the migrants; and social, which relates to the migrants' social distance from major, if not most, segments of the host population (Cohen, 1977:15).

Cohen identifies the transiency of expatriates in the host society, as well as their relatively privileged status, as the two most important factors that shape the manner in which expatriates relate to the strangeness they find (1977:17). The factor of transiency is connected to the notion of 'sojourn' (Siu, 1952), also referred to in the quotation from Glick Schiller, et al above, and is related to the issue of orientation. Cohen concedes that expatriates may become "sojourners" or even "settlers" (1977:19) and the diversity he notes within migrant populations in regard to duration of stay is certainly apparent among Israelis in Cape Town.

Despite sharing many similarities, the expatriate communities Cohen surveyed also exhibited important variations. He identified the four key variables as the size of the community, its homo-heterogeneity, the socio-cultural distance between expatriates and their hosts, and whether the communities are 'natural' (random aggregates of individuals who arrived independently at different times for different purposes), or 'planted' communities (under the auspices of one major organization, such as a company or the military) (Cohen, 1977:24-5). As will be shown, the Israeli population in Cape Town shares many features with the 'natural' communities Cohen describes. He also makes the important point that the membership of expatriate communities is in constant flux, although the communities themselves may exist for prolonged periods (1977:18). The findings of the present study suggest that the size and duration of the expatriate population abroad, and the orientation of the migrants, are key variables for understanding local dynamics as well as for assessing whether it is appropriate to describe such populations as diasporic.

Cohen identified privileged status as an attribute of expatriates relative to their hosts. He noted further that the relationships expatriates do establish with locals are usually with the elites of those societies (1977:53), and that some expatriates gain status by their move abroad (ibid:22). Most of the expatriates represented in his survey were middle-class business and professional people from western industrialized states residing in non-western developing countries. The issues of status and strangeness were thus mutually reinforcing indices of both cultural difference and inequality. As will be shown, the relatively narrow social distance between the Israeli migrants and those segments of the Cape Town population among whom

the migrants mostly reside, work, and spend their leisure, ameliorates the oft-cited socio-cultural strangeness in some respects but not in others. The flexibility inherent in the phrase 'in some respects but not in others' is a major element of the 'constitutive entanglement' (Clifford, 1994:327) of the 'transnational [and multicultural] moment'. The flux of cross-cutting forces and cross-cutting ties undermines the tendency (analytical and popular) to view the world in terms of sharp boundaries and/or binary oppositions and/or 'naturalized' distinctions.

Because so many of the world's migrant populations are comprised of people of low socio-economic status whose migration was forced - by economic or political circumstances, or both<sup>6</sup> - the emphasis in many migration studies is on disadvantage, discrimination, pain and loss; in short, on the negative consequences of migration. Migration itself is assumed to be non-normative, aberrant, despite its high and growing incidence. The two sides of the relationship between socio-economic status and socio-cultural strangeness tend to be treated as mutually reinforcing in much migration literature, whether considered from the perspective of the migrants or of the receiving society. Emphases that celebrate cultural difference may mask structured inequalities of class and race; emphasis on structures of inequality may discount the resilience of, and the ways in which, cultural difference is valued. The granting of individual civil rights is no guarantee of respect for collective cultural identity or cultural difference, and conversely, 'making cultural room' (Clifford, 1994:313, emphasis in original) for migrant, diaspora, or indigenous non-dominant populations is no guarantee of equality. The relationship between socio-economic status and socio-cultural difference in the context of the relationship between nation and state is the matrix that requires detailed analysis.

I do not wish, in any way, to diminish or discount the felt pain and loss that always accompany dis-location. Nevertheless it seems to me that viewing the transnational multicultural reality of our times only in terms of the dominated, exploited and oppressed, or only in terms of resistance, courage and resilience (see Rogers, 1996:5 & 15) obscures the possibility of theorizing the phenomenon. Perhaps a study of voluntary middle-class transmigrants, notwithstanding its necessary particularity, can contribute to an understanding

---

<sup>6</sup>Kearney (1995:557) cites an estimated figure of some 100 million people living outside of their natal countries in 1992. He adds that they were 'for the most part ... scattered as a result of wars, unemployment and poverty' (ibid).

of the shared human contradictions and predicaments inherent in the complexity of 'entanglement', precisely because the position/condition of such migrants is not coloured by poverty or victimization.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**SITUATING SELF, METHODOLOGY, AND**  
**PARTIAL PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION**

**SITUATING SELF - 'STRANGER-AS-NATIVE-AS-STRANGER'**

The original idea for research among Jewish Israelis in Cape Town was conceived at a time (1979-80) when the nature of ethnicity was being debated everywhere. The contours of the debate in South Africa, however, were somewhat different from those elsewhere, given the apartheid structural framework of the country and the urgency felt by academics, in English-language universities in particular, to deconstruct the hegemonic racist and essentialist ideologies of the minority white Afrikaner Nationalist government (see Boonzaier & Sharp, 1988; Gordon & Spiegel, 1993). In South Africa, marxist-informed analyses of the political economy received most attention, and attempts to foreground issues of ethnicity were largely perceived as reactionary.

Nevertheless, I believed then (and now) in the importance of challenging popular essentialist notions of ethnicity by demonstrating the constructedness of the concept and the reasons for its resilience in particular situations. My intention at that time was to assess the salience of ethnicity for members of a population I then conceptualized as a defined unit of study, that is, as 'a community'.

The choice of Israeli migrants as subjects emerged from interests and language skills I already had, combined with personal constraints which obliged me to 'do' anthropology 'at home'. Although the small size and political irrelevance of this population posed no threat to state policies - and for that reason the research was unlikely to be unduly constrained - I nevertheless hoped that any theoretical insights and conclusions that emerged would challenge those policies. In short, I hoped to expose the situational determinants that contribute to the construction of ethnic identity. Despite familiarity with the work of Barth (1969), Wallman (1978) and Cohen (1974), all of whom emphasized the importance of the interface between identifiable groups, I recognize in retrospect that my focus then was on the internal dynamics of the proposed study population.

For professional reasons I was unable to undertake the project at that time even while my new responsibility, the establishment of a Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the

university, deepened my knowledge and understanding of the Jewish aspects of the intended research. In 1985 I began a pilot study which was published in 1989 as 'a profile' of Israelis in South Africa. Again, for a combination of personal and professional reasons, I could not resume work on the project until mid-1994. By then, my theoretical concerns had shifted markedly. I was still curious about the ways in which Israeli Jews, socialized in a society in which they were members of the dominant majority, would behave in diaspora, where they were a minority within a (Jewish) minority within an (English-speaking) minority within a white minority. However, during the course of fieldwork, the possibilities raised by the migrants modes of adaptation to the world of the 1990s, together with more recent ideas about hybridity, multiculturalism, and transnationalism, significantly influenced the foci of the research and the interpretation of the findings.

Of course over a fifteen-year period it is not only theoretical and professional interests that change, but also one's politics, ideologies, and social position. My understanding of my own positioning in relation to the population to be studied had become increasingly complex with the passage of time.

While still conceptualizing this project for the first time, I was directed by Samuel Heilman to his article 'Jewish Sociologist: Native-as-stranger' (1980). Based on his work as a researcher of the modern orthodox synagogue of which he was a member, the article explores the advantages and disadvantages of doing participant-observation at home. Over time, and with the article still unread, I internalized the title, incorrectly, as 'native-as-stranger, stranger-as-native', subconsciously tailoring it to the as-yet dimly perceived dilemma of my own situatedness in relation to the subjects of my research. During the course of fieldwork I gradually came to realize that my recasting of Heilman's title derived from my struggle to categorize myself as either native or stranger in relation to my position as participant-observer among Israelis in Cape Town, and tangentially, as participant-observer among South Africans, especially Jews, in Cape Town. By the end of fieldwork I came to accept that, in varying degrees at different times, I was both insider and outsider to both categories but with opposite starting points: native-as-stranger-as-native among South Africans; stranger-as-native-as-stranger among Israelis.

The struggle to evaluate my position vis-a-vis the research subjects stems from entrenched notions about the nature and scope of the fieldwork enterprise. Notwithstanding

radical reconfigurations over the past decade of the meaning of fieldwork as the central (defining?) activity in anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Hastrup, 1990), several conventions are still taken for granted by the discipline and its practitioners. Central among these is the notion that the anthropologist goes elsewhere, away from 'home', and 'subjects herself to a world beyond her competence' (Hastrup, 1990:48). The explicit purpose of ethnography, the outcome of fieldwork, is to record, as honestly and faithfully as possible, the ways of being, doing, thinking and feeling of alien others, and to represent those specificities effectively to a wider audience in order to illuminate various aspects of the human condition. Traditional anthropological fieldwork thus rests on the premise that the (fieldwork) world entered is alien, other, different from that of the researcher. Despite anthropology's foundational project of challenging accepted or assumed 'truths' - myths, conventions, stereotypes - and positing a common humanity, and despite the discipline's greater sensitivity today to the problems of representation and the 'impossibility' of cultural translation in the writing of culture (Clifford, 1986; Hastrup, 1990:55), the assumed cultural difference of the field remains that which excites anthropological curiosity and propels fieldwork. Indeed, according to Hastrup (1990:47), 'Anthropology cements the exaggeration; the "other" culture is described as everything one's own culture is not', and again, 'Difference always mattered more than similarity in the writing of cultures. What goes on to the anthropological map is exaggerated difference' (ibid:55). The sought cultural difference was embodied in the 'others' who inhabit the alien field...

The requirement to enter an alien world led to a second taken-for-granted convention of fieldwork: the need to establish rapport with subjects, the 'others', in order to learn their culture, including, of course, their language. Notwithstanding Marcus' recent critique (1997) of the presumed innocence of rapport and his suggestion that in addition (ie, not instead of), ethnographers need to take the concept of complicity seriously, establishing rapport nevertheless remains a central requirement, perhaps priority, of successful fieldwork practice. The defining method of anthropological participant-observation/observant-participation - learning by watching and listening while doing - is the means by which anthropologists establish rapport and overcome their outsider status. The method rests on the dual assumptions that (a) participation can be learned by outsiders, and (b) their very outsidersness facilitates simultaneous detachment. The discipline's insistence on entering a foreign world

implies, however, that detachment and distance cannot be learned. In the words of the pioneer of participant-observation, 'certain subtle peculiarities, which make an impression as long as they are novel, cease to be noticed as soon as they become familiar' (Malinowski, 1961 [1922]:21).

But what if 'the field' were 'home', had long been (at least part of) the researcher's home? What if rapport preceded formal, systematic fieldwork? What if the subjects' language, life-style, even class position, were already familiar, indeed shared, at least partly? What if the world to be studied was presumed to be within, and not beyond, the researcher's competence? What if rapport, language facility, and familiarity with the fieldwork landscape were the very ingredients that qualified the particular researcher to undertake the particular study? Would such unconventional fieldwork ingredients compromise the integrity of the research and its results?

In many ways this is the situation faced by so-called native anthropologists when doing fieldwork at home in their native setting (see Jackson, 1987). However, my situation differed in two major aspects. First, many anthropologists who purportedly work at home, in fact work in those parts that are not actually their home in some major respect - for example, urbanites in rural areas, WASPS among 'ethnics', middle-class 'haves' among disadvantaged 'have-nots', or the many examples of 'studying up' mentioned by Laura Nader (1974). In other words, their field is a conceptually carved out terrain of otherness even while its location, its larger context, and possibly its language, may be 'known'. In my case, the field was indeed home - the place where I live, work, raised a family, where my ancestors are buried. Many of the subjects were friends, acquaintances, or friends of friends. My earlier work had also been 'at home', among elderly urban whites, some resident in institutions, some not, and mostly middle-class (virtually inevitable, given South Africa's colour-distorted class structure). However, the 'otherness' of the subjects of that research was a function of their position in the life-cycle relative to my own at that time.

Secondly, and more pertinently for a study of Israeli migrants, I am not an Israeli. I was born to South African-born parents, and raised and educated (mostly) in Cape Town. To that extent my relationship to and with my field resembles the work of all anthropologists who have studied immigrants ('ethnics'). However, the matter is not that simple. I grew up within several simultaneous contradictions: by virtue of a white skin, inevitably part of the

privileged dominant sector of South African society, yet socialized, by parents and schooling, to reject the exclusivist ideology and inhumane practices of its ruling Afrikaner segment, and encouraged to identify with the 'civilized' English-speaking minority (with no indication, in my youth, of its complicity with apartheid). At the same time, I was socialized both formally and informally, to be a self-conscious and affirming Jew and Zionist, encouraged to identify with and perpetuate 'the Jewish tradition', while ever reminded of the vulnerability of being a member of an identifiable minority.

Thus in my youth multiple-consciousness was a 'natural' condition of being, neither remarkable nor problematic. Indeed, when faced with others' perception of my 'difference' (as a Girl Guide, on the sports field, at university) I was intrigued rather than discomforted. However, as a South African, as a voracious reader, and because of the socialization processes mentioned, I could not but become increasingly aware that multiple-identity (and ambivalence) were specifically (locally) situated, a consequence of personal, historical and political social forces. Indeed, I have little doubt that it was this dawning awareness that drew me to anthropology in the first place.

In relation to the subjects of this study however, the matter is further complicated by the following: motivated by Zionist ideology, I have migrated to Israel twice, the first time young enough to become sufficiently proficient in Hebrew to be identified as an Israeli by native Hebrew speakers, unless they are told otherwise. My husband is an Israeli citizen and both my sons have dual South African-Israeli citizenship, speak Hebrew and have each spent some years in Israel. My own family thus qualifies for inclusion in the study population.

While it has been said that all anthropologists in some sense study (or at least learn about) themselves and/or their own society through the fieldwork experience, the duality is more overt, profound, and disturbing when the field is home. For in addition to the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions confronting all participant-observers, I had to counter years of emotional identification with Israel and Israelis. I have lived in Cape Town for most of my life but since my first return from Israel, have associated with both Israelis and South Africans as an insider. Having enjoyed unquestioning acceptance as an Israeli by many Israelis in both places, I had, over time, developed a flippant response to their surprise when/if they learned of my 'otherness' - namely, 'I am an Israeli in spirit, all the rest is historical accident'. Honesty of self-representation in the field was not a problem: a

South African Jew who had lived in Israel and was a student of contemporary Jewish life. However, I was obliged to interrogate my own past flippant self-identification, not only to understand it better, but in order to ensure that it did not interfere with my new role as observer of, as well as participant in, Israeli life in Cape Town.

Concern about the validity of my observations and heightened consciousness of my own situatedness faced me at the outset and accompanied me throughout fieldwork and beyond. In a sense such a situation requires the obverse of usual practice: rather than focusing on becoming familiar, I had to practise seeing anew, becoming a stranger. The proportions of energy spent on 'data collection' and reflection respectively, tended to be reversed, both because the field was at hand, and because the reflection, the distancing, was what allowed perspective. Instead of learning new behaviours, meanings, ways of speaking and relating, I had to unlearn old ways of looking at those very phenomena, to interrogate the familiar, and be especially conscious of what I took for granted. To the well-known tradition of fieldwork, 'with its need to articulate and sustain a double-consciousness' (Boyarin, 1992:xiii), as well as awareness of the ubiquitous dangers of ethnocentrism, I needed to add an acute consciousness of, and vigilance against, the possibility of blurring the anthropological gaze with long-held, un(sub)consciously-held, past interpretations and understandings.

Furthermore, as Strathern has noted, working 'at home' is not simply a matter of place or 'impossible measurements of degrees of familiarity' (1995:16). She raises the issue of working among equals (as does Cheater in the same volume) by asking whether 'investigator/investigated are equally at home, as it were, with the kinds of premises about social life which inform anthropological enquiry' (ibid). While the Israeli informants in this study were not trained social scientists, they certainly had 'theories', about the Israeli and South African societies and about their own attitudes to and relationships with both. They also used concepts such as 'community', 'class', 'minority', and the like, although, as Geertz points out in his discussion of 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' concepts, people do not, 'except fleetingly and on occasion, recognize that there are any "concepts" involved at all' (Geertz, 1983:58). Many, if not all, anthropologists have been presented with local theories and explanations about the way the world works. Interpreting those representations when they are novel and foreign, however, is a quite different matter from interpreting them when packaged in familiar concepts. Moreover, in far-from-home fieldwork settings the novel and

foreign qualities of native theories are 'data' to be collected dispassionately. They are unlikely to engage one's personal beliefs, values and political positions in the same ways as they do when they are part of one's own world. Indeed, one might reverse Strathern's question and ask whether working 'at home' means that researcher and subjects are equally at home with the kinds of premises the subjects bring to the conversation.

During the course of the research, I was repeatedly struck by the extent of many informants' reflexivity and by the similarities between their lives and the lives of anthropologists when doing fieldwork. Rather than crossing from one cultural space to another, when entering the 'new' world both anthropologists and transmigrants develop a double consciousness, an ability to interact in simultaneous though separated-in-space worlds. That ability is constituted by a layering and melding, an intermingling of successive experiences, a mapping of one space and time onto another, so creating a constantly hybridizing new self, which is at no stage a finished 'product', but is constantly in the making, becoming .... The transformative element is common to both and, I believe, to all categories of migrant. For anthropologists however, fieldwork is 'a liminal phase for both subject and object' (Hastrup, 1990:50). It is a passing phase from which they return 'home'. Israelis in Cape Town are not only transformed by the processes they experience, they live inside that transformation. It is one of their 'homes'; it is the condition of their present.

I have tried to guard against over-rapport, and its opposite danger, alienation, by relentlessly scrutinizing my every action, observation and interpretation, indeed even the questions asked, for interference from my own values and predilections. I have learned that Malinowski's comment regarding the difficulties of entering a new world can be applied equally to distancing, to becoming an outsider: 'I am not certain if this is equally easy for everyone ... but though the degree of success varies, the attempt is possible for everyone' (1961 [1922]:21). The degree of my success will be judged by the reader.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Field research for this study was conducted among Jewish Israelis in Cape Town, South Africa from July 1994 to December 1996. As indicated in the previous section, the study is very much a case of 'doing fieldwork at home'. Thus, while systematic data collection took place over a particular 30-month period, prior experiences and knowledge have

inevitably found their way into the following pages. In the main, the detailed descriptions of people and events are drawn from notes, records, observations and reflections compiled during the period of formal research. Where additional comment rests on prior knowledge, this is made clear in the text.

Much of the actual observation and participation was carried out by simply 'hanging out' at places where some Israelis are known to meet and by attending public gatherings and events at which Israelis might be present - for example, the annual Jewish communal Israel Independence Day celebrations. Chance encounters, formal and informal visits to informants' homes, and theirs to mine, provided additional sites of interpersonal interaction as well as opportunities for participation in a variety of social networks. However, the urban and suburban spread of the population, and the complete absence of specifically Israeli formal organisations, necessitated conducting more interviews than I might have done, had the population not been so heterogeneous and fragmented. The interviews were particularly important in the early stages of fieldwork, and especially with informants who were hitherto unknown to me. Thus in addition to the detailed but informal and unscheduled 'interviews' (more precisely, extended conversations), I conducted wide-ranging in-depth formal interviews with 67 informants.

During the summer of 1994/5 and the winter of 1995 I requested each of fifteen female informants to keep diaries of their daily activities and interactions for one week during each period. For this purpose an 'ordinary' week was selected, one with no Jewish festivals and during the school term. The fifteen women were of varying ages, had arrived in Cape Town at different times, and were assumed to participate in different social networks. They were asked to record all activities and interactions, including the most mundane, such as a visit to the dentist. I then reviewed the 'diaries' with the informants, often with the participation of other members of the household. In the ensuing discussion and elaboration of the items and persons recorded, a wealth of detail was added, including not only information and gossip but also opinions, attitudes and feelings. To avoid any negative consequences from this study, an effort has been made to protect informants' identities and pseudonyms are used for all cases. In a few instances this has resulted in the omission of descriptive information (for example, an informant's occupation) that might have been illuminating for the reader but which would have compromised my promise of anonymity.

As is evident from the tables presented below, a considerable proportion of the migrants' children are high school pupils or young adults. While the study focussed on the parent generation, it was nevertheless considered important to explore at least some aspects of migration and identity with the younger generation. Thus, in addition to informal (and sometimes formal) conversations with groups of young adults encountered in coffee bars and restaurants, I conducted three focus group discussions: one group comprised 'children' born or raised in Cape Town; another in which all participants had attended school in Israel; and a third composed of young adults who were themselves migrants, together with others who had migrated with their parents. The findings are reported in Chapter 6.

### **Identifying the Population**

As there are no reliable statistical data for Israelis in Cape Town (or in South Africa), it was pointless to attempt to draw a research sample. The intention was, rather, to reach the total number of identifiable Israelis in Cape Town. Thus in addition to utilizing the snowball method to trace Israelis, lists were obtained from schools, synagogues, other Jewish communal organizations, and the Cape Town Jewish 'communal register'. The last is compiled by a Jewish fund-raising organization from institutional sources, from personal knowledge, and from the personal columns of the local press (births, marriages and deaths). While the list is the best available, it is certainly not reliable. In addition, there is no guarantee that migrant Israelis would necessarily affiliate to Jewish communal organizations (although the fieldwork eventually showed that most school-age children of migrants did attend the local Jewish school). It was thus no surprise that the snowball method identified 63 households whose members did not appear on any of the lists mentioned, as well as several families and individuals listed as Israelis who were not Israeli.

The 'yield' exposed the range of criteria that could be used to identify 'Israelis', and several categories emerged<sup>1</sup>:

- (a) those who 'felt' Israeli but were neither born in Israel nor held Israeli citizenship;
- (b) Israeli citizens, irrespective of place of birth, who were in South Africa on contract as

---

<sup>1</sup>See Ritterband (1986) for a discussion of some of the complexities in identifying and enumerating Israelis abroad.

official *shlichim* (emissaries)<sup>2</sup>;

(c) those born in Israel but no longer Israeli citizens;

(d) Israeli citizens born elsewhere, including South Africa;

(e) Israeli citizens born in Israel.

It was decided that as the primary interest of the research was in adult Jewish Israelis who had voluntarily migrated from Israel, category (a) should be excluded as a defining criterion, at least in the first instance. Similarly, although *shlichim* are clearly Israeli, often according to both birth and citizenship, they too are excluded from the research population as they are the only persons whose duration of stay is clearly defined by external criteria and not merely by intention at time of arrival. During the research period, one unmarried emissary and six married *shlichim* with their spouses and thirteen children were resident in Cape Town. Five of the seven had returned to Israel by the end of 1996. The degree to which individuals in categories (a) and (b) interact with the migrants, and the degree to which the migrants identify such individuals as Israelis will become evident in the chapters that follow.

On the other hand, place of birth or formal citizenship alone were also not considered adequate eligibility criteria for a study concerned with the formation and transformation of the identity of migrants, and with their adaptive strategies, in a new setting. Some migrants born in Israel left as infants and those resident in the parental household are excluded from 'the research population', although they are part of 'the field' (see below). Others, born elsewhere, were Israeli citizens although they had lived in Israel for only two or three years. An additional criterion - ten years residence in Israel - was thus added.

It is also necessary to distinguish 'the field' from the research population. The field included all persons encountered relevant to those defined as Israelis according to the eligibility criteria, such as non-Israeli spouses, other relatives, work associates, neighbours, friends. Unless otherwise explicitly indicated however, all references to respondents, informants, Israelis, migrants, refer to Israelis as defined above. With the exception of *shlichim* and 'children' in the parental household, the research population therefore includes all those born in Israel and resident there for ten years, and all Israeli citizens who were

---

<sup>2</sup>*Shlichim* are official (but not embassy staff) emissaries sent abroad by a variety of Israeli Zionist organizations to serve Zionist youth movements and associations or to teach in Jewish schools. All are on 2-3 year non-renewable contracts which oblige them to return to Israel at the end of the specified period.

resident in Israel for ten years. All tabulations refer to the population so defined, unless otherwise indicated.

### **PARTIAL PROFILE OF THE POPULATION AND THEIR CHILDREN (age, years of arrival, citizenship, marital status, religion)**

Basic data were collected for a total of 184 households in which there was at least one Israeli as defined by the above criteria, and excluding *shlichim*. The households comprised 320 adults, 260 of whom were Israelis according to the above criteria, and 247 children<sup>3</sup>. An additional 130 'children' of migrants lived outside the household, nineteen residing in Cape Town.

Table 2.1 presents the age distribution of the population at the different times of arrival. Table 2.2 compares the 1985 sample with the 1996 population. The comparison shows a marked change in the age structure and also implies fluctuation within the population. Whereas 59% of the 1985 sample were under age 40 at arrival, almost 80% of the 1996 population were under 40 at arrival. A comparison of the details of the two data sets shows that ten of the individuals among the 1960s arrivals in the 1985 sample were older than 49 at arrival, and are absent from the 1996 data set. All have either returned or died. Thus 92.6% of the 1960s arrivals in the current research population all arrived in their twenties. Similarly, 68.6% of the 1970s arrivals in 1985 were aged 30-39 at arrival, whereas in 1996 only 34.8% of the 1970s arrivals were in this age category.

It should be noted however, that despite the larger proportion of younger people at arrival in the total current population, more than a quarter of the arrivals since 1980 were aged 40+ at arrival. Finally, while 73% of the 1960s arrivals recorded in 1985 appear in the 1996 population (27 out of 37 individuals), only 45% of the 1970s arrivals recorded in 1985 were still in Cape Town in 1996 (23 out of 51 individuals).

---

<sup>3</sup> Although the number may appear small as a total population of Israelis found in Cape Town, it is comparable with the studies by Gold (1994b), Shokeid (1988) and Uriely (1995). None of these researchers claim that their sample populations were representative of the total number of Israelis in the respective cities of Los Angeles, New York and Chicago. Gold conducted participant-observation and 80 interviews, and surveyed a further 100 respondents in his Los Angeles study, out of a total population of 14 229 Israelis in Los Angeles County according to the 1990 US census (Gold, 1994b:n.6, p342). Shokeid's sample was composed of 116 'research units', amounting to 174 Israeli adult men and women, in Queens, New York (Shokeid, 1988:18-22), where estimates of the total population range between thirty and forty-five thousand (p.21). Uriely conducted 66 'in-depth interviews' in Chicago.

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Adult Israeli Population by Gender, Year of Arrival and Age at Arrival**  
**Cape Town, 1996**

	Total				1940 - 1949			1950 - 1959			1960 - 1969			1970 - 1979			1980 - 1989			1990 - 1996		
	M	F	T	%	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Total	137	123	260	100.0	0	1	1	0	6	6	17	10	27	13	10	23	65	47	112	42	49	91
%	52.7	47.3	100.0		0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	63.0	37.0	100.0	56.5	43.5	100.0	58.0	42.0	100.0	46.2	53.8	100.0
Age																						
10-19	4	4	8	3.1					2	2				2	1	3	1	1	2	1		1
20-29	58	54	112	43.1		1	1		3	3	15	10	25	7	4	11	24	15	39	12	21	33
30-39	42	40	82	31.5					1	1				3	5	8	28	21	49	11	13	24
40-49	20	19	39	15.0							2		2	1		1	8	8	16	9	11	20
50-59	10	6	16	6.2													4	2	6	6	4	10
60-69	3		3	1.2																3		3

Note: The eight Israelis who were under 19 at arrival in Cape Town are now in independent households. Six aged between 10-19 came with their parents, two came alone as teenagers.

**TABLE 2.2**

**Year of Arrival and Age at Arrival, Cape Town Sample 1985 and Cape Town Population 1996 (Percentages).**

Year of Arrival	1985 Sample	1996 Population	Age of Arrival	1985 Sample	1996 Population
	N=193 100%	N=260 100%		N=193 100%	N=260 100%
1940 - 1949	no data	0.4	0 - 19	no data	3.0
1950 - 1959	no data	2.3	20 - 29	11.4	43.1
1960 - 1969	19.2	10.4	30 - 39	47.7	31.6
1970 - 1979	26.4	8.8	40 - 49	30.6	15.0
1980 - (84) 89	(54.4)	43.1	50 - 59	7.2	6.1
1990 - 1996	-	35.0	60 - 69	3.1	1.2

These data together with additional fieldwork evidence (see Chapter 3), suggest that increased tourism to South Africa by both younger single Israelis and older married couples, precipitates the perception of educational or economic opportunities in South Africa.

As noted in the discussion on identifying the population, country of birth or citizenship alone were insufficient eligibility criteria for the purposes of this research. The heterogeneity of the population according to these criteria is presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

**TABLE 2.3**

**Adult Israeli Population by Gender and Country of Birth, Cape Town, 1996.**

	N	%	Israel	South Africa	Elsewhere
<b>Total</b>	260	100	154	31	75
<b>%</b>			59.2	11.9	28.9
<b>Male</b>	137	52.7	100% 53.2	100% 35.5	100% 58.6
<b>Female</b>	123	47.3	46.8	64.5	41.4

**Note:** The 75 Israelis born elsewhere were born in 24 different countries. Of these, 32 arrived in Israel under the age of 10.

As Table 2.3 shows, 40.8% of the total adult population were not born in Israel. Their migration to South Africa thus constitutes a second migration, although in the case of the 11.9% born in South Africa this might be characterized more accurately as return migration. 8.8% of the total migrated to South Africa more than once, 14 of the 23 arriving in different decades. (Table 1 records the more recent arrival date.) Seven individuals (none South African born) migrated to countries other than Israel or South Africa as adults prior to this migration. This is not necessarily reflected in the citizenship details shown below. The complexity of these individual life-history details is apparent in just a few examples: two Israeli-born individuals with Israel-USA citizenship lived in the US for several years; one Israeli-born individual with Israeli citizenship only lived on and off in Sweden for twelve years; two individuals, each born in different countries, hold Israeli citizenship only and lived in three other countries before arriving in South Africa fifteen years ago. In addition, in some cases a second citizenship was acquired through marriage and not through migration.

**TABLE 2.4**  
**Citizenship of 320 Adult members of Israeli Households,**  
**Cape Town, 1996.**

Sole citizenship		Dual citizenship	
Total	218	Total	102
%	68.1	%	31.9
Israeli	145	Israeli + South African	85
South African	65	Israeli + Other <sup>b</sup>	12
Other <sup>a</sup>	8	South African + Other <sup>c</sup>	5

**Notes:**

(a) Argentinian, 4 British, German, Italian, Swiss

(b) 3 x + Argentinian; 3 x + USA; 3 x + French; 1 each + Denmark, Chile, Lithuania

(c) 2 x + Swiss; 1 each + Irish, USA, British

As will be shown in later chapters, the informants relate to their formal citizenship status of countries other than Israel in instrumental rather than identity terms. The citizenship (and religion) of spouses/partners (Table 2.5), however, begins to suggest potential relationships with locals. That 36% of all marriages were to South Africans, is compatible

with the data provided for the United States (Gold and Phillips, 1996:69). Marriage to a South African as a 'pull' factor is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

**TABLE 2.5**  
**Religion and Citizenship of 136 Spouses / Partners, by Gender,**  
**Cape Town, 1996.**

	Jewish		Not Jewish		Convert <sup>b</sup>		Total	
<b>Total</b>	122		10		4		136	
<b>%</b>	89.7		7.4		2.9		100.0	
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	
<b>Total</b>	54	68	5	5	1	3	136	100.0
<b>Sole Citizenship</b>								
Israeli <sup>a</sup>	20	19	-	-	-	-	39	28.7
S. African	14	26	4	3	-	-	49	36.0
Other	1	2	1	1	1	-	6	4.4
<b>Dual Citizenship</b>								
Israeli & S. African	16	13					29	21.3
Israeli & Other	3	6					9	6.6
S. African & Other	-	2	-	1	-	1	4	2.9

**Notes:**

- (a) The gender division for these 39 marriages is arbitrary as all 78 individuals in this category have Israeli citizenship only.  
 (b) Two conversions were Orthodox and two Reform.

All children born in South Africa are automatically South African citizens. However, according to Israeli law, all children born to an Israeli citizen, irrespective of country of residence, are automatically Israeli citizens. As South Africa and Israel both permit dual citizenship, the legality of automatic dual citizenship is not a problem for individuals<sup>4</sup>. I have preferred to categorize the children as 'children of Israelis' rather than 'Israelis' and present the data regarding age, country of birth and country of residence in Tables 2.6 and 2.7.

<sup>4</sup> As all Israeli citizens over the age of 18 are obliged to do national service in Israel, South African born children of Israelis over the age of 18 have sometimes been unable to spend extended periods in Israel if they were not willing to do national service, or were not registered for formal study courses.

**TABLE 2.6**  
**Children in Israeli Households, by Age and Country of Birth, Cape Town, 1996.**

	Total	%	0 - 1	1 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34
<b>Total</b>	249	100	6	30	53	66	43	37	12	2
<b>%</b>		100	2.4	12.0	21.3	26.5	17.3	14.9	4.8	0.8
<b>Israel</b>	110	44.2	2	1	23	33	28	14	8	1
<b>S. Africa</b>	135	54.2	4	29	29	31	15	23	3	1
<b>Elsewhere</b>	4	1.6			1	2			1	

Table 2.7 shows the current country of residence of the migrants' children not resident in their parents' households. While no conclusions can be drawn from this data about the children's (or the adults') country of residence in the long term, and 62.2% of the children are under the age of 15 and therefore dependent on parental decisions, nevertheless 40% of the children live outside South Africa, excluding those who never came or who resided for a short while only.

**TABLE 2.7**  
**Children of Israeli Migrants NOT in Households in 1996**

	Total	Israel	Cape Town	South Africa	Elsewhere
<b>Born</b>	130	55	-	65	10
<b>%</b>	100	42.3	-	50.0	7.7
<b>Resident</b>	130	58	19	27	26
<b>%</b>	100	44.5	14.5	20.8	20.2

**Notes**

1. 15 of the 130 (1 born USA; 2 born Iran; 12 born Israel) never came to South Africa. 5 now reside in the USA; 10 now reside in Israel.
2. 17 of the 130 (9 born in South Africa; 8 born in Israel) lived in South Africa for a short while only.
3. Of the 55 born in Israel, 12 never came to South Africa and 8 were in South Africa for a short while.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL: SETTLERS OR SOJOURNERS?

One general characteristic of Jewish Israeli migrants in Cape Town, shared with Israelis in the United States (Gold, 1994a; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Shokeid, 1988; Uriely, 1994), is the voluntary nature of their migration. They are not refugees of any kind, nor guest-workers, nor members of a persecuted or victimized minority in their country of origin. Unlike many voluntary migrants, the Israelis in Cape Town are not poor, rural labour migrants (see Eades, 1987), employees of multinational corporations, or part of a 'brain drain' from Israel, although the population does include some migrants who were originally contract-workers and others for whom work-related frustration acted as a push factor.

They are, rather, in many respects, typical of middle-class expatriates of the late twentieth-century globalizing world, labelled 'transnational migrants' or 'transmigrants' in recent literature (for example, Basch et al, 1994; Bottomley, 1992; Hannerz, 1996). They closely resemble the 'natural communities' of expatriates Cohen describes as 'mere ecological aggregates of individuals who came to live in ... the host society ... for different purposes and at different times' (1977:25). Like many such migrants, their motivations for relocating themselves and their families are complex, diverse, sometimes idiosyncratic, and almost always in the hope of economic improvement. Their economic situation in Israel was certainly not dire, and many insisted that they were 'not lacking anything' in Israel, a claim elaborated below.

Yet in other respects, Jewish Israeli emigrants in Cape Town can be distinguished from both the expatriates described by Cohen (1977) and from many 'transnationals'<sup>1</sup> (Basch, et al, 1994; Glick Schiller et al, 1995).

Cohen (1977:19-24) emphasizes the privileged status and socio-cultural distance of most expatriates in relation to the host society. Relative to the majority of South Africans, both aspects indeed apply to Israeli migrants in Cape Town. However, as will become clear from the data presented below, there is little social distance between them and the white middle-class South Africans among whom the migrants reside, work and conduct their

---

<sup>1</sup>On the accuracy or appropriateness of this term, see Chapter 1.

everyday lives. Differences perceived as 'cultural' are elaborated in later chapters.

Furthermore, many migrants described in the literature on transnationalism are disadvantaged in the host societies to which they migrate in terms of race. As this aspect does not apply to Israelis in Cape Town, other distinctions between Jewish Israelis and most middle-class transmigrants are considered here.

First, many of the latter were physically and psychologically rooted in their countries of origin, with little consciousness or personal experience of past migration(s). Moreover, with the exception of North Americans and Australians (Bottomley, 1992:62) - and certainly not all of them - most are not wont to think of their countries of origin as 'immigrant societies'. By contrast, of the Israeli-born respondents, 63.2% are the first generation born in Israel, 27.1% second generation, 4.9% third generation, and 3.5% had one immigrant parent. One informant told me with great pride that he was a seventh generation *sabra*<sup>2</sup>, emphasizing the consciousness all Israelis have of migration and immigration. As indicated in the previous chapter, for many their relocation to South Africa was not a first migration. Moreover, the history of Jewish dispersion, the Zionist aim of 'the ingathering of the exiles', and the ongoing significance of successive waves of immigrants in the formation and transformation of Israeli society, as well as the existence of a Ministry of Absorption to deal with the settlement of new immigrants, all contribute to an acute awareness of migrants and migration for anyone who has lived in Israel.

Second, the great majority of middle-class contemporary transmigrants can be classified in one of two categories: either they move from or between long-established nation-states, historically 'evolved' rather than ideologically created, with identities and traditions perceived as belonging to place and the particular people in it long before the 'nation-state' itself became a formal unit (see Anthony Smith, 1981:85); or they move from newly independent post-colonial states to the long-established nation-states of their erstwhile colonizers - a to-ing and fro-ing between periphery and centre. For Israeli Jews, the establishment of the new state in 1948 is within the personal memories of many, and has been impressed upon all, albeit with different interpretations, as a revolutionary occurrence in the

---

<sup>2</sup>Literally, a prickly pear. It is the Hebrew term given to those born in Israel, and in Zionist mythology is claimed to represent the character of the new (pioneering) Jew: prickly on the outside and soft and sweet on the inside.

history of 'the Jewish people (nation)' (*ha'am hayehudi*) (see Shimoni, 1995). Both the newness and the (projected as positive) revolutionary aspects have been consistently underlined in Israeli and Jewish public consciousness throughout the state's short history. These emphases, in addition to their ideological Zionist underpinnings, were perceived to be politically necessary in the face of ongoing contestation regarding the state's legitimacy. The intensity of the contestation has only recently been (partly) reduced.

Some might interpret emigration from Israel as a departure from the 'centre' to the 'periphery', the countries of the contemporary Jewish diaspora to which they for the most part move<sup>3</sup>. In this interpretation the direction of movement is the reverse of the periphery-centre movement alluded to above. More importantly, the countries of the contemporary diaspora were not colonizers of Israel, nor, with the exception of the United States and South Africa (and perhaps France, for a limited period), did they conduct 'special relationships' with Israel. However, the state is perceived, both by its Jewish citizens and by most Jews, as the political embodiment in modern nation-state form of part of 'the Jewish people' (nation), and thus has an ongoing permanent special relationship with world Jewry.

Third, and closely related to the previous two elements, is the Israeli state's ongoing striving - also debated and contested and therefore in the public domain - towards realization of the Zionist goal of 'normalization': to be a nation 'like all others'. For the Zionist founders of the Israeli state that meant, among other things, the end of the Jewish diaspora through the return of the dispersed 'nation' to its homeland. Such a notion is not common to most transmigrants, except perhaps, ironically, for Palestinians. Thus attitudes to and ideas about migration, including emigration from Israel (*yerida*), are bound up with historical and contemporary notions of Jewish exile and dispersion (see Eisen 1986; Levine, 1986). They are directly relevant to the lived experiences of Israeli migrants in Cape Town both because they were internalised during socialisation in Israel and thus constitute a major part of the 'cultural baggage' the migrants brought with them, and because they continue to influence the migrants' reflections, emotions and behaviour in the new setting.

---

<sup>3</sup>Notwithstanding major changes in Israel-diaspora relations since 1967, the issue of whether Israel is indeed conceptualised as 'the centre' of world Jewry, and the diaspora the periphery, has always been and still is a major point of contention, between Zionists and non-Zionists in an earlier period (see Avineri, 1981; Hertzberg, 1973; Vital, 1990; Shimoni, 1995), and between Israelis and diaspora Jews today (Eisen, 1986: Chapter 7; Shimoni, 1995; Yehoshua, 1981 & 1986).

The factors outlined above distinguishing the research population from most other transmigrants, relate to the complexities of the Israeli migrants' simultaneous membership in both the deterritorialized nation of 'the Jewish people' and the territorial (Jewish) nation-state. They are elaborated in Chapter 4 of the present study through an analysis of the conceptual categories the migrants use to make sense of their lives in Cape Town. Details of the ways in which their middle-class status influences the migrants' lives are discussed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the relatively narrow social distance between the migrants and the host society, apparent from the educational and employment characteristics shown below, is shown to be relevant to the composition of local social networks.

The various themes outlined earlier, namely, globalizing factors influencing increased middle-class migration, internalized ideas and attitudes about *yerida*, the relationship between South Africa and Israel, and the characteristics of what Mittelberg and Waters (1992) refer to as 'proximal hosts', in this case the local Jewish community, together comprise the context in which Israeli migration to South Africa occurs. Contextual factors, however, cannot explain why some people migrate and others do not, nor can they explain the particular choices individuals make. The extensive migration literature supports Jansen's observation that 'in a majority of cases the actual migrants themselves do not know the answer to the question' (1969:65). Nevertheless, it is with the migrants themselves that the enquiry must begin.

This chapter adds socio-demographic characteristics to the profile of the resident Israeli population presented in Chapter 2, and discusses the informants' reported motivations for leaving Israel, choosing South Africa as destination, and staying on. The heterogeneity of the population apparent in the profile is also evident in relation to each of these aspects, and will be reflected in many of the themes taken up in later chapters. Notwithstanding the manifest heterogeneity, the migrants also share undiminished strong emotional attachment and commitment to Israel and self-confidence about their Jewish Israeli identity.

## **EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION**

As indicated in Chapter 1, the 'strangeness' noted by so many migrants and scholars of migration, results not only from differences in race and language, or from perceptions of cognitive and normative differences between migrants and locals, but also from socio-

economic disparities between them. In many countries where there are concentrations of guestworkers for example, such disparities underlie much of the differentiation by locals although the differences are more often represented (and prejudices expressed) as 'cultural' (see for example, Stolcke, 1995). The education levels of migrants, their occupations, and their employment status are thus relevant to their own and others' perceptions of the social distance between them.

As shown in Table 3.1, the migrants are an educated population by any standard. As presented in Table 3.1, the proportions in the category 8-12 years are not strictly comparable with those given for South African Jews and whites (essentially the 'hosts' of this migrant population) by Dubb (1994:99). Thus 36.6% of Israelis in Cape Town in 1996 had 8-12 years of education at arrival. In 1991 27.9% of whites and 43.8% of Jews had twelve years of education (Dubb, 1994:99) compared with 33% and 35% respectively of the 1980s and 1990s Israeli arrivals with 8-12 years education. Relative to whites, the migrants had significantly more years of education; relative to Jews, the proportion with university degrees was roughly equivalent: in 1991 13.8% of whites had non-graduate diplomas and 10.1% had university degrees, while 18.7% of Jews had diplomas and 32.1% degrees, the last rising to 44.4% for the 30-44 age category (ibid). The 32.8% of migrants with non-university tertiary education reflects the emphasis of Israeli education policies over many years as well as non-military educational opportunities offered through the army during national service. Although years of education are not shown by gender, 4% of the women were post-graduate students, 21.9%, excluding the students, held university degrees, and 22.8% had non-degree diplomas.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**Adult Research Population by Year of Arrival and Years of Education,**  
**Cape Town 1996**

Year of arrival	Total Numbers	%	Years of Education			
			<8	8-12	Non-University >12	University
1940 - 49	1	100			1	
1950 - 59	6	100		3	2	1
1960 - 69	27	100	7.4	51.9	29.6	11.1
1970 - 79	23	100	4.3	39.1	34.8	21.8
1980 - 89	112	100	0.9	33.0	33.9	32.2
1990 - 96	91	100	2.1	35.2	28.6	34.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>28.2</b>

Table 3.2 shows the occupations of 207 economically active migrants (excluding adult children who live in parental households), and Table 3.3 compares the occupations of the migrants with South African Jews and with the 1985 sample of Israelis in Cape Town. In 1985 74.6% of the sample were economically active; in 1996, 79.6%. Table 3.4 shows the employment status of the population. It is noteworthy that 36 of the 38 listed as 'unemployed' are full-time housewives by choice.



**TABLE 3.3**  
**Economically Active South African Jews (1991) and Israelis,**  
**Cape Town (1985 & 1996), by Occupation (Percentages).**

	Jews 1991 <sup>a</sup>	Israelis 1985 <sup>b</sup>	Israelis 1996
Professional/Technical	29.8	28.5	26.6
Management	22.0	14.4	44.0
Clerical/Sales	32.4	32.0	18.8
Services	3.2	5.5	8.2
Artisans & Related	12.6	18.0	2.4

**Notes:**

(a) Source: Dubb, 1994: 100

(b) Source: Frankental, 1989: 275

**TABLE 3.4**  
**Employment Status of Adult Research Population,**  
**Cape Town 1996.**

	Male	Female	Total	%
Self employed	73	12	85	32.7
Employed	45	46	91	35.0
With spouse/relative	9	19	28	10.8
Employed part-time	-	3	3	1.2
Unemployed	2	36	38	14.6
Retired	6	1	7	2.7
Student	2	6	8	3.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While the proportions of professional/technical and service occupations show relatively little change, the clerical and artisan categories show marked decreases and the professional and managerial category a marked increase. The changes reflect the increase in the number of self-employed among former artisans and clerical and sales persons. These internationally accepted occupational categories mask the differences between, for example, a business owner with a staff of five, the owner of a large factory, and a senior executive in a large corporation. It should also be noted that while 41% of professional Jews were self-employed in 1991 (Dubb, 1994:105), only 18% of the professional Israelis were self-employed. It is also noteworthy that while a third of the population are self-employed, another 10.8% work with relatives so that at least some of the latter could also be classified as self-employed. In addition, four of the retired men retired from their own businesses and a fifth from a relative's business.

Two further related points require attention. All the detailed studies of Israelis abroad distinguish the migrant populations internally in terms of the ethnic categories Sephardi<sup>4</sup> and Ashkenazi (Gold, 1994; Shokeid, 1988; Uriely, 1994 & 1995), and relate these distinctions to socio-economic differences within the migrant populations. They also point to the socio-economic differentials within Israeli society in terms of Ashkenazim and Sephardim (see Smooha, 1978 & 1984; Ben-Rafael, 1982; Ben-Rafael & Sharot, 1991). This research population includes eight Sephardi couples, 34 couples where one partner is Sephardi, 10 Sephardim who are single, and nine persons with one Sephardi parent. The two lowest income families in the population are both Sephardi, with none of the four adults having tertiary education, and two of the young Sephardi singles have no tertiary education. Other than these instances, there were no socio-economic distinctions that correlated with these ethnic differentials.

However, a less measurable observation can be suggested. It is clearly not possible to know what the socio-economic status of the migrants might have been had they stayed in Israel. However, it is possible to suggest, on the basis of their parents' occupations, their own former occupations and former places of residence, that at least some of the migrants,

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Sephardim' (also known in Israel as 'orientals') is the traditional classificatory term for Jews who are descended from the Jews who lived in Spain and Portugal prior to their expulsion in 1492. Today the term is used for Jews who themselves or whose antecedents come from Muslim countries and who reside predominantly in Israel and France. The term 'Ashkenazim' is used for Jews originally from eastern and central Europe who today reside predominantly in Israel, Latin America and English-speaking countries.

Sephardi and Ashkenazi, improved their socio-economic status considerably by coming to South Africa. On the same evidence, it is also possible that their children's life chances improved more rapidly. Acceptance into the white middle-class in South Africa (by non-Jews on the basis of colour, and by Jews on the basis of Jewish ethnicity), the ability to afford quality private education for their children<sup>5</sup>, and, in a few cases, 'marrying up', has afforded some migrants more rapid upward social mobility than might have been the case had they stayed in Israel. I estimate this to have occurred for about ten percent of the Israelis in Cape Town (particularly among the now well-established earlier arrivals).

### MOTIVATIONS FOR LEAVING

Everyone who has studied Israeli migrants notes their reluctance to define themselves unambiguously as immigrants, emigrants, or *yordim* (Gold, 1994a; Shokeid, 1988; Sobel, 1986; Uriely, 1994). I consider the applicability of the description 'sojourner' to Israelis abroad in greater detail below. Here it is sufficient to note that an intention to return 'sometime' was expressed by almost every respondent and influenced many aspects of their individual migration experiences, including reported motivations for leaving.

It is as difficult to establish specific and unambiguous motivation for the decision to migrate as it is to distinguish between 'push' and 'pull' factors contributing to the decision. As Sobel found in his discussions with Israelis applying to immigrate to the US, 'there were about as many reasons for departures as there were emigrants' (1986:10). Some observers have suggested that migrants in general have a particular predisposition, such as a spirit of adventure, or a readiness to take risks (see Shokeid, 1988:208; Sobel, 1986:227). While that might apply to Israelis who left without any contacts in their place of destination, the majority in Cape Town, even some who came as tourists without any intention of staying, had such contacts prior to arrival, and most came with a plan of sorts. In several cases informants suggested that they had 'often' or 'always' thought about leaving. However, close perusal of life histories, and in particular, occupational histories or business fortunes, suggests rather that particular events, usually mis-fortune, often acted as triggers.

---

<sup>5</sup>The private Jewish school in Cape Town accepts all Jewish children. Parents unable to pay full fees are assisted by the school and other Jewish communal organizations.

Sobel cites Petersen (1970:63) that '[a] principal cause of emigration is prior emigration', and Berliner (1977:459), who observes that the children of migrants are more likely to be migrants themselves because 'the inertia threshold is likely to be lower' (cited in Sobel, 1986:229-30). If migration were indeed solely related to a generational or historical predisposition, it should affect virtually every Israeli citizen as so many were themselves immigrants or children of immigrants. This is clearly not the case.

However, it does seem likely that an awareness of what migration entails, including personal or vicarious familiarity with other places and conditions, might facilitate migration, even if it is not a sole cause. Such awareness can be viewed as an ingredient of cosmopolitanism. Hannerz (1990) considers cosmopolitanism an orientation, a perspective, a state of mind of a particular kind. It entails a 'relationship to a plurality of cultures', 'a stance, an attitude towards diversity itself, a willingness to engage the 'other' and otherness (ibid:238-9). All the migrants in this study have direct or indirect experience of migration and its consequences, both painful and joyful. The socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of Israeli society constitutes the reality into which they were born or immigrated, a heterogeneity or cosmopolitanism taken for granted as 'natural'. The majority could well echo Marianne Hirsch, 'For me displacement and bilingualism preceded emigration, they are the conditions into which I was born' (Hirsch 1994:77).

As shown in Table 2.1, Chapter 2, 40.8% of the adult Israelis in this study were born in 24 different countries, excluding South Africa. Some arrived in Israel at a very young age, others in adolescence or adulthood; some as a consequence of traumatic dislocation, others voluntarily. The majority of all the migrants older than 35 and many of the younger ones too are the children or grandchildren of immigrants to Israel, many of the latter Holocaust survivors. More than a quarter have parents, siblings or children who live in countries other than Israel or South Africa. Many have more distant relatives who, with greater or lesser intensity, are or have been in ongoing interaction with these migrants or their parents. All have been raised in families whose family (hi)stories are composed of the pain and loss of parting - from relatives and friends, from place and landscape, and from familiar sights and sounds and ways of doing and being, through death or distance, through trauma or circumstance, or even through choice<sup>6</sup>. All have witnessed or experienced the struggle to

---

<sup>6</sup> A most poignant consequence of these kinds of multi-losses, the helplessness to which they often give rise,

survive the pain, to deal with it, to integrate the loss into the fabric of living through maintaining connection where possible, or by keeping memories alive.

In the public domain, by virtue of having been raised in Israel, all have witnessed or experienced the joy of reunited families, of siblings who discover each other after decades of separation, of the coming together in Israel, as family members and as members of 'the Jewish family', from places as far apart as America, Ethiopia, Lithuania or Yemen. All the media in Israel give prominence to personal stories of this kind. Given that the state has been in existence for less than 50 years and that no decade since its founding has been without its 'wave' of immigrants, no-one who has lived there can escape exposure to the powerful emotions evoked by these (hi)stories.

Israelis in Cape Town are thus versed in cosmopolitanism in Hannerz' sense. They are experienced in its practice even though hegemonic Zionist state policy had, until recently, a consciously homogenizing ideology. Their cosmopolitanism is both constituted by and constitutive of their experienced realities - constituted by Israeli society's socio-cultural diversity and multilingualism, and constitutive of the ways that past interacts with the here and now.

### **Reported Motivation for Leaving**

The most common categories of stated motivation for leaving, in no particular order, were the desire for adventure and change, financial problems, disillusion, family pressures and contract work as triggers for departure; and perceived economic or study opportunities, a South African partner or romantic interest as reasons for choosing South Africa as destination. For most migrants, particularly but not only for those who migrated in family units, the actual decision to leave resulted from a combination of several factors. The data presented below were gleaned mainly from life-histories. However, as informants were often reporting on decisions taken in the distant past and the possibility, indeed likelihood, of post hoc rationalization was always present, where possible corroboration was sought from friends and relatives and even from gossip.

---

and the changes they can engender in inter-generational relationships, is captured in the simple sentence of a Polish mother to her adolescent daughter Eva, when living in Canada: 'In Poland I would have known how to bring you up' (from Hoffman, 1989 *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* quoted in Bammer 1994:101).

Only seven families in the research population originally came to Cape Town on limited-period contracts and remained in Cape Town beyond the period. Local contacts established during the contract period facilitated finding subsequent employment or setting up independent businesses. Four families in this category have been in South Africa for more than thirty years. Several others known to have come on contract have since moved to Johannesburg or have returned to Israel after several years in South Africa. The fluctuation in the population reflected in the tables showing 'years of arrival' contributes to the sense of non-permanence that many respondents articulate despite having been resident for many years, and in some cases for several decades. In the 1960s contract migrants usually worked for an Israeli shipping company; in the 1970s, they were often kibbutz members working for irrigation companies. Since then the range of Israeli companies operating in or with South Africa has widened considerably, with most employees resident in Johannesburg.

For some wealthier migrants, usually self-employed in both Israel and South Africa, business-related financial problems were primary push factors. These are now commonly presented as the 'fault' of Israeli bureaucracy (see Gold, 1994a:128; Uriely, 1994:437). It is common gossip among Israelis in Cape Town that Yossi, for example, left Israel owing a large sum in income tax. Yossi, however, 59, and in Cape Town eight years, now explains matters as, 'Today it is impossible to do business in Israel. The bureaucracy is always looking for ways to make your life difficult and to catch you out.' Several others blame 'bureaucracy' and their frustration is evident in the remembered details as they tell their stories. David, for example, recited a long list of 'bureaucratic red tape' that had made him abandon plans for the expansion of his factory and, he claims, eventually frustrated him sufficiently to cause him to sell up and leave.

Not everyone blames 'bureaucracy' however. Some refer to other kinds of difficulties related to work or doing business in Israel. Ohad, for example, 35 and in Cape Town six years, had spent three years in the United States. He describes how easy it had been to establish his own business there after working illegally (for an Israeli-owned company) for just six months. Missing his family and friends, he returned to Israel and tried several business ventures but claims,

It just didn't work out. Whatever I tried, there was always a hitch. I tried a partnership - the bank agreed to give me a loan - but it came through too late and the partner couldn't wait. When I had enough money for something else,

the landlord reneged on the lease. Afterwards I found a job I liked, with not bad prospects - and the owner went bankrupt. So I just decided - enough!

Ohad's experience is not unusual. Many entrepreneurs or job-seekers experience frustration before finding appropriate opportunities. His impatience, however, was compounded by the comparative ease he had experienced in the US. Ohad had served in an elite military unit for several years beyond compulsory national service and expected assistance from former colleagues on his return to Israel. He reported feeling 'disillusion' when this was not forthcoming. Frustration and disappointment, together with his prior migration experience, made a second migration an attractive option.

No respondents reported scarcity of jobs in Israel as a direct cause of migration. Rather, their judgement about job prospects in Israel tended to be coloured by their perceptions of economic opportunities abroad, most commonly through reports received from migrant friends or relatives. Although few migrants had recruited relatives or friends in Israel to work for or with them in Cape Town, several had encouraged friends or relatives to come and some had provided affidavits or testimonials to the authorities in support of the prospective newcomers' application for permission to work in South Africa.

Unlike the situation of many Israelis in the US (Lipset & Kass, 1982; Ritterband, 1978; Shokeid, 1988) few came specifically for study purposes. In one case both husband and wife wished to enter a field not offered in Israel and applied to an American university as well. In other cases, the prospective students, all married men with children, decided through discussion with friends, and after investigating practicalities, that with families to support, it would be cheaper and easier to study and work abroad, than in Israel. Others explored study opportunities in South Africa while visiting as tourists. Having known many Israelis in Cape Town before commencing formal systematic fieldwork, I know that many more, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the resident Israeli population, have lived in South Africa for variable periods for study purposes. In the main, these have been graduate students or working professionals adding specialist qualifications. Their temporary presence, like that of the transferees mentioned above, has, over time, added to the demographic fluctuation noted earlier.

Other informants, having lost jobs, sought change and certainly economic improvement. Yechezkiel, for example, was among those who claimed to have 'always' wished to experience foreign lands as more than a mere tourist. This was confirmed by his

wife and children. Yet no-one in the family had ever made any concrete effort to explore possibilities abroad until Yechezkiel was retrenched from his job of fifteen years.

Among younger migrants - those less firmly established in Israel, often newly demobilised after compulsory national army service - motivation for leaving seems most often to have been a desire to travel and experience other places, with little or no advance planning, and usually no intention to settle. In a few cases, Israelis established relationships abroad with young South Africans and followed them to Cape Town when the South Africans returned. In a few cases, problems with family or the break-up of a relationship were given as reasons for leaving. Raffi, a young single man from a large and close-knit family had established his own business in Israel which was 'going not badly' but he felt 'burdened' by family obligations and also felt that the family was pressurising him to 'find a wife and start a family' before he was ready to do so. Raffi, now 34, has been in Cape Town eight years, lives on and off with his gentile girlfriend unbeknown to his family, and is equivocating about marriage because she is not Jewish. I return to this topic in later chapters.

In general, although most migrants can and do give reasons for leaving Israel, the 'facts' they supply can often not be verified and indeed often contradict the story as told by their spouses or friends. What does emerge is that the desire to leave Israel, or expressed frustration with life there, is not acted upon unless some opportunity is thought feasible, whether such opportunity occurs by chance or is sought. Contacts with friends and family abroad provide knowledge about such opportunities, as do global media such as CNN or, more recently, the Internet.

While stated reasons for leaving Israel vary, many informants echo the *nitkanu* ('we got stuck') of respondents in New York (Shokeid, 1988:53) and Los Angeles (Gold, 1992) as reasons for staying 'meanwhile'. Specific reasons for 'getting stuck' range from 'the children are happy at school and it would be a pity to disrupt them right now', to the more frequent acknowledgement that material goals have not been met as expected. Whether such reasons are assessed as excuses, rationalizations or objectively valid reasons for delaying return, depends on the perspective of the observer. Use of the term *nitkanu* nevertheless suggests that the speakers intend to imply cause or circumstance of staying as beyond their control, and certainly indicates reluctance to acknowledge any finality about their status as

emigrant/immigrant. Such migrants are, as described in the title of Shokeid's study, 'Children of Circumstances'.

Also evident is the primacy of practical, instrumental, mainly economic, considerations<sup>7</sup> for the individual and his/her family unit over ideologically or philosophically based considerations regarding the needs of 'the Zionist/ Jewish state'. Stating the matter this way does not imply no ideological or philosophical consideration of Israel's needs; it merely highlights the migrants' emphases. Indeed Appiah (1997) has recently discussed the notion of 'cosmopolitan patriotism', a concept which describes deep commitment to the 'patria', merged with a 'cosmopolitan [personal] orientation' (Hannerz, 1990) - an attitude eminently applicable to a large proportion of Israelis in Cape Town. I would argue that this situation reflects confidence about the migrants' relationship to the Israeli state, contrary to the 'neurosis' proposed by Yehoshua (1981), as well as reflecting the shift in values discussed by Schweid (1997:153-7) and Wistrich & Ohana (1995:viii) away from the collective to an emphasis on self-realization. That is, in word and deed, the Israelis express confidence in the viability and endurance of the Israeli state, value that state positively, and feel free to exercise their personal current residential preference, albeit expressed as temporary. The almost universal insistence on the impermanence of their presence in Cape Town however, requires further exploration and is elaborated in the final section of this chapter.

Instrumental motivation for migration and little emotional attachment to South Africa, irrespective of official declarations of intent, were reflected in formal citizenship status. 55.8% of the adult migrants had Israeli citizenship only, with permanent resident status in South Africa. One migrant kept his tourist status for six years, renewing the visa as often as permitted while in Cape Town and leaving the country periodically when the visa could no longer be renewed locally (see the case of Itay, Chapter 6). Of the adult migrants, 6.5% held dual citizenship with a country other than South Africa before the current migration, usually as a result of a previous move or marriage to a non-Israeli. The automatic dual citizenship of children born in South Africa to an Israeli parent was explained in the previous chapter.

---

<sup>7</sup>Of course I have no way of verifying the actual considerations at the time they occurred. I base my observations and conclusions on the content of, and manner in which, these were reported during fieldwork, both during direct interviewing and during less structured interactions in the field.

In almost every case respondents explained their decision to apply for South African citizenship in instrumental terms as more convenient, and most, unsolicited, explicitly denied feelings of emotional attachment. Yitzchak, for example, resident in Cape Town twelve years, responded in a manner typical of many: 'I never thought about it [taking South African citizenship]. What for? - it's not my country. But towards the elections I thought maybe it's right to vote if you live here, specially with all the changes.' When long-standing residents without South African citizenship (ie, with permanent resident status only) were questioned about it, the responses in every case were couched in terms of emotional attachment to Israel. In a few cases this was accompanied by an impassioned statement that acquiring a second nationality or relinquishing Israeli nationality<sup>8</sup>, would make the speaker 'feel like a traitor'.

Instrumental and pragmatic attitudes were underlined by the fact that in no case were respondents concerned about the morality of applying to immigrate to South Africa when their real intentions regarding permanency were either contrary or less than clear. Similarly, in no case in any period of arrival was South Africa's apartheid society viewed as personally problematic. The most common response to this issue was, 'It's their problem. It's not my state.' The migrants' perceptions about and attitudes to South African society, as well as their integration into and accommodation to it, are elaborated in later chapters.

## **CHOOSING CAPE TOWN - AND STAYING**

Choice of destination is easier to document. Choosing South Africa was not usually consequent upon a prior decision to leave, followed by a cold rational look at the world to find a place most appropriate for the migrants' abilities, circumstances and goals. This was true for the few who wished to study outside of Israel, applied to several institutions in different countries and found South African offers the most attractive. But for most, as is the case for many categories of migrant, the choice of Cape Town was usually based on family or friendship connections, even casual acquaintanceships, and thus some knowledge, however superficial, of the conditions and possibilities available. Choosing South Africa was frequently the result of a visit, as tourists, to Israeli or South African friends or relatives

---

<sup>8</sup>An Israeli citizen who wishes to relinquish citizenship must apply in writing to the Ministry of the Interior, stating the reasons for the request (Source: Consul, Israel Embassy, Pretoria). Most migrants do not consider rejecting Israeli citizenship and the formal act of rejection required is repugnant to them.

resident in Cape Town. In all periods, despite the rapid changes occurring in South Africa in recent decades, the relatively easy and relaxed life-styles the visitors encountered in (white) South Africa were seen as attractive. Furthermore, friends and relatives often encouraged such visitors to consider 'coming to South Africa for a while' and offers of assistance were not unusual. Obviously comparatively few Israeli tourists, even those with friends and family resident in South Africa, decide to migrate, which indicates the presence of other factors for those who do.

Thus in most cases, especially those of family units, the decision to migrate to South Africa evolved out of personal circumstances at the time, combined with prior thoughts about leaving, as well as chance or sought-for information about prospects in South Africa. Of course there is some irony, of which several informants were aware, in the fact that consideration of South Africa as destination sometimes arose out of meeting South African immigrants to Israel. One example is the case of Sara and Doron who had travelled extensively after their army service and studies, and who were feeling 'restless' in Israel despite having purchased their apartment and having good jobs. They became friendly with their newly-arrived South African neighbours and were intrigued by what they heard of the country. They visited, met the neighbours' family and friends, and decided to 'try it for a few years'. They have now been in Cape Town for four years, have a two-year-old daughter and plan to have another two children before returning. In Cape Town the family manages well on one salary whereas in Israel both parents need to work. For Sara this is a major reason for staying until the children are old enough for school.

Sara's assessment of comparative financial ease in South Africa was mentioned by many informants, irrespective of their given reasons for migration. Often these were young, singles or couples, usually those who had been in Cape Town for only a year or two. All in this category stated that it was much easier to save money in South Africa, whether for a down payment on an apartment in Israel, or simply for electrical goods or household furnishings which are cheaper in South Africa. A large proportion related to 'quality of life' constraints in Israel. Nili, in Cape Town two years, married with one pre-school child, put it as follows:

[It's] not that you can't save *ba'aretz*<sup>9</sup>. Of course it's possible. But it demands that both of us work more than one job. If you have children that's really difficult .... The life in Israel is so intense. Noise, bustle, all the time, everywhere, not to speak of bureaucracy and traffic jams. Here you can enjoy while you save. Cars are cheap, relatively, and there is almost no traffic on the roads. *Ba'aretz*, not enough that you have two jobs, you waste a lot of time because of the terrible traffic.

Many migrants, in many social contexts, made direct or oblique reference to issues of ease. Relative material ease, such as merchandise prices, access to credit facilities, rental rates and/or housing prices relative to value in comparison with Israel, and the like, was an oft repeated theme. But reference to 'quality of life' factors - tension, intensity, pace, noise, bustle, litter, population density, crowded roads, interfering bureaucracy - and their implied opposites in Cape Town, was at least equally ubiquitous. Both these factors, relative material ease and quality of life issues, were mentioned with much greater frequency than war, threat of war, military reserve duty, or political turmoil, the factors that most outsiders and/or potential immigrants to Israel consider central, and primary deterrents, to life there. Yet few informants indicated material ease or quality of life as primary motivation for leaving Israel. Rather, these seem to be the key underlying factors delaying or deferring return, after experiencing alternative life-styles abroad. I return to this issue in the section below on 'Staying'.

### **Marriage to a South African**

A larger proportion than reported by Shokeid (1988) for a sample of Israelis in New York are or were married to South Africans. For never-married migrants to marry locals is not surprising, given the small size of the total Israeli population in Cape Town, and given the existence of a local Jewish community so that religious considerations do not 'require' a bride from 'home' (as is the case for many Muslim, Hindu and Greek Orthodox transmigrants). However, most 'mixed' marriages between Israelis and Jewish South Africans were between

---

<sup>9</sup>All the migrants use *ba'aretz*, 'in the Land', to refer to Israel and I have not translated it in the quotations. The usage is common to all Israelis and not unusual for non-Israeli Hebrew-speakers. Correspondingly, 'abroad' is phrased as *chutz la'aretz*, 'outside of the Land'. While the usage is unselfconscious and does not signal any particular ideological or political position (unlike the differential use of terms for the West Bank and Gaza), it does nevertheless point to the Zionist success in creating a linguistic/cognitive map which distinguishes clearly between 'the Land', meaning 'our' land, and everywhere else. This kind of language usage thus, in most cases, also demarcates Israeliness.

partners who had met in Israel. Somewhat ironically this may well reflect the strong Zionist commitment of South African Jewry, reflected also in the large proportion, relative to other diaspora communities, who have visited Israel.

Marriage to a South African clearly influences choice of destination once there is a decision to leave Israel. In three cases, of women now older than sixty, they had met their spouses when the latter were serving in the Middle East during World War 2 or during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. In each case the men had had to return to South Africa to settle family affairs and the intention had been that the couple return to Israel once family obligations had been discharged. However, all had stayed on, and as time passed intentions of returning receded. Two of the women had 'used' their Israeliness to work as Hebrew teachers. All are fully integrated into South African middle-class life, with many friends and acquaintances within the local, mainly Jewish, population. They are also friends, and their friendship is, at least in part, a function of their Israeliness, expressed largely through use of Hebrew and an interaction style they claim as 'Israeli'.

Several of the informants married to South Africans met their spouses in South Africa some when they visited friends or relatives, some when they came to South Africa on business. For a minority of such couples the decision to live in South Africa after marriage was never in question. Where the spouse is Jewish, or converted to Judaism, the Israeli partner in these marriages continues to visit Israel regularly, with his/her South African spouse and children and maintains contact with relatives and friends there. The frequency and intensity of such connections varies considerably, and depends on many factors, such as the non-Israeli spouse's knowledge of and attitudes to Israel and Israelis, whether the Israeli partner's parents are still living, and the degree to which the couple can afford airfares and/or long-distance phone-calls. For the most part, such 'mixed' couples send their children to the local Jewish school. Their social interactions with the local Jewish community and the wider society resemble the interaction patterns of local Jews of their class and predilections (see Frankental and Shain, 1986) more closely than those of couples where both spouses are Israeli (see Chapter 6).

However, the pattern is somewhat different among ten households I have come across<sup>10</sup> where the partner is not Jewish. In these cases too the Israeli partner maintains

---

<sup>10</sup>I say 'come across' because there may be other such couples in Cape Town who were not found because

relationships with friends and relatives in Israel. None of the children in these households attends the Jewish school, and only three of the non-Jews have met their partners' parents. A gentile divorcee was previously married to an Israeli who has since left South Africa, and she maintains contact with his parents 'because we like each other and because they are my children's grandparents'. None in this category interacts with local Jewish communal structures in any way and the few Jews among their friends tend to be married to Gentiles.

Among some of the informants who had met their spouses in South Africa, the couple had either considered living in Israel, or had indeed done so and returned. In some but not all of these families, issues of patriotism, 'social investment', long-term goals, and even language were ongoing sources of tension between the spouses, and of confusion or ambivalence for the children (see Fogelman, 1996). The possibility of emigrating to Israel 'sometime' is still on the family agenda for most in this category.

The majority of Israeli-South African couples however, had met in Israel, most often when the South African partner had settled there. Once such couples decided to leave Israel, South Africa was an obvious choice. However, precisely because the South African partner had chosen to live in Israel, whether for ideological reasons or simply because he/she had 'landed up there' and chosen to stay, the decision to leave was often not shared with equal whole-heartedness by both partners. Shirley, for example, had gone to Israel for Zionist ideological reasons, was happy there and expected to stay. Her father learned that Yakov, her husband, was keen to start his own business and offered to put up the capital in South Africa. Her mother encouraged the move, claiming it would be much easier to raise a family in South Africa. Shirley says they came with a five-year plan to gain business experience and accumulate some capital and then return:

Thirty years later we're still here, the kids are grown up, and Tali [the oldest daughter] lives in Israel ... I've never stopped wanting to be there. But what can you do? Family is more important than anything. Yakov's happy here, even though he misses lots of things about Israel. And he's done well. So who knows? - maybe we'll retire there.

Several older couples who have been in Cape Town for many years indicated an intention to return to Israel on retirement. Many with adult children who have emigrated or

---

they do not interact with anyone in the research population and are not included in the lists of any Jewish organization.

are considering emigration (not necessarily to Israel), indicated that if all the children left they would retire in Israel.

Several South African-Israeli couples reported coming to South Africa unexpectedly for specific exigencies, usually family illness or family-business related (like the three older women referred to earlier) which then extended, 'and we got stuck here'. Whether the Israeli spouse is unhappy or resentful about his/her situation depends on many factors including personality, 'Zionist' attitudes, family and friendship relationships in both countries, career or economic well-being, and the like. It is certainly not possible to predict solely from 'the facts' of migration, whether living out of Israel is contentious or a source of friction in any particular family. Where this is a source of friction, the dissatisfied partner may be the South African, rather than the Israeli, as in the case of Shirley and Yakov above.

Selwyn's and Idit's case exemplifies the conflict between ideology and career frustration. Selwyn emigrated to Israel as part of a group of ideologically motivated and committed newly-qualified young professionals, all of whom were graduates of both the local Jewish day school and a Zionist youth group. Selwyn met and married Israeli-born Idit in Israel, but 'became disillusioned with the whole medical system, especially blocked promotion opportunities'. On a visit to South Africa, he and Idit explored work opportunities and decided to relocate. They have now been in South Africa for sixteen years, have three daughters, are successful in their respective fields, maintain relationships with friends and relatives in Israel through frequent visits, have ongoing interest in Israeli affairs, but are settled in South Africa with no intention of leaving. Idit is 'sure' she would not have been as successful in her field [fashion] in Israel - 'too much competition' - and enjoys the relative ease of life in South Africa. Selwyn has regrets and says that on visits to Israel, he 'catches' himself wondering how things would have turned out had they stayed, 'but I admonish myself not to even think about it. I'm too old and too comfortable to start all over again. And it would not be easy - that I know!'. The couple's 15-year old daughter spent three months in Israel as part of a school tour and is keen to live there. While the aspirations of a 15 year old are no indication of future action, her parents claim they would not object.

Ideology (and perhaps disillusion) are not the only reasons for South Africans choosing to live in Israel, or to return to South Africa. Two not un-typical examples, with similar ingredients but opposite results in satisfaction terms, are those of Michael and Merle

respectively. Both were pupils at the local Jewish day school and both had attended Jewish youth movements, though 'more for social than ideological reasons'. Both travelled abroad after completing university studies, included Israel in their respective itineraries, and intended returning to South Africa. Both enjoyed Israel, found jobs and, in due course, married Israelis.

About eighteen months after marrying, Michael and Sarit visited Cape Town. Impulsively, at the end of the holiday they decided to 'try South Africa for a while', though only Sarit went back to Israel to see to their apartment and to break the news to her family. They agree that they might have changed their minds if Michael had returned with her at that time. Both sets of parents discouraged the couple's decision, in both cases because they were worried about South Africa's future.

Ten years and two children later, Michael and Sarit are still in Cape Town. They share positive views about life in both countries, maintain strong connections with relatives and friends in Israel, and visit at least once a year. Their children attend the Jewish school. Their friends are South African and Israeli, many 'mixed' couples like themselves, and they believe they could live as well and as happily in either country, but see no reason to move, 'unless things here deteriorate badly.' They would not consider emigration to a third country.

Merle's story played out rather differently. Although she had not planned to immigrate to Israel, she was living and working there, happily, when she met Doron. They came to Cape Town for their wedding but the thought of setting up home in South Africa simply never arose. However, according to both, over time and especially after each visit to South Africa Merle found herself increasingly dissatisfied with life in Israel. The couple assessed their situation seriously, and after much discussion with family and friends and much resistance from Doron, they agreed to 'try' South Africa. They arrived one month before the 1991 Gulf War which was, according to Doron,

a nightmare. I was like a madman - how could I be abroad in a time of war? I couldn't think about anything else. The only thing that half comforted me was that my mother every time told me how happy she was that at least one of her children was safe.

Merle claims to 'love Israel' and is in favour of Jews settling there, but 'It's not for everyone, and it's definitely not for me. I'm just lucky Doron is prepared to live wherever I am, specially because I know his heart is really there'. Doron is less sanguine about their situation and about South Africa's long-term future. He works for a large company and, with Merle's agreement, is hoping for a transfer to Australia. He is resigned to living out of Israel,

but 'it doesn't make me happy and I have to visit at least once a year. It's expensive, but I must'. He subscribes to two Israeli newspapers - 'to get different perspectives' - and follows events in Israel very closely. He hopes they will return '... one day. Maybe when we can afford to live like lots of South Africans, in Ramat Hasharon or Ra'anana [relatively affluent towns, with many former South Africans]. Meanwhile Ori [their son] must learn Hebrew, to talk to my parents and so he won't be like a new immigrant.'

## **STAYING**

Notwithstanding the contingency evident in many of the above quotations and the reluctance of the majority to acknowledge permanent settlement in Cape Town, many migrants have been resident for many years.

The migrants' 'explanations' for staying were most commonly expressed in the overlapping themes of (i) as yet unfulfilled material aims and (ii) the ease of life in Cape Town, implicitly or explicitly compared with 'quality of life' in Israel. Both themes reflect the instrumental strategies and primacy of personal satisfaction referred to earlier and also, as shown below, frequently relate to the issue of returning.

### **(i) Material Goals**

As indicated, some migrants stress specific material goals as well as the relative ease of saving. Others, usually those who have been in Cape Town longer, refute the latter as, in Nitza's words, '... an illusion - they think they'll find gold in the streets. Maybe it was so once; today it's not so simple.' Nitza and Boaz came to Cape Town eight years ago, in response to a job offer from Boaz' (Israeli) uncle, with a plan to purchase a flat in Israel and return within five years. Having saved enough to buy a flat in their seventh year, they are now working and saving to buy 'all sorts of things for the flat.' In other words, targets change over time and staying is seen as the easiest and quickest way to achieve those targets.

Owning property in Israel was a recurring theme amongst all categories of respondents. Some, like Sara and Doron above, impart the fact of home ownership in Israel with a sense of pride, if somewhat defensively, as if they have to apologize: 'We didn't come here just to make money - we had everything in Israel, a flat, a good job ...' [always a 'good'

job]. Others state it as their primary reason for being in Cape Town and emphasize that owning property there ensures both refuge and connection.

The following was part of Ofer's response to a question about work. He is a young bachelor, the youngest of three children of his father's first marriage. He came to Cape Town three years ago to work with his father, whose second wife is South African:

First of all obviously it helps my father if I work overtime ... But mainly I want the money! I'm saving to buy a flat *ba'aretz*. I'm not naive. I think this country has a great future but who knows whether we will always be welcome? Jewish history is a powerful teacher. We have learnt over thousands of years that we, the Jews, are not always welcome, even in places we think of as home. Look at Poland, Germany ... So now we have Israel. Sure Israel will always accept us, also without anything. But there it's also a 'rat-race'. Better to be independent and secure.

Shlomo went to study in France with his wife and their two Israeli-born young children. They returned to Israel for a short while and Shlomo then took up 'an excellent offer' in Namibia. Two years later they moved to Johannesburg for better schools for the children. Sixteen years ago they moved to Cape Town where Shlomo and Chaya each run independent small businesses. They own property in Cape Town, including the house they live in, and an apartment in Israel. Shlomo commented: 'We dragged the kids here. It was our decision, not theirs. If they return, and they have their own home, they'll feel they belong.'

I return to the topic of 'home' in Chapter 5. Here, the examples are of material goals oriented towards Israel, towards return. Purchasing a home locally would seem to suggest intention to settle, as well as indicating adequate income. (It should be noted that mortgage payments are not tax deductible in South Africa and that purchasing a home, rather than renting, is the norm in Israel.) While it is obvious that the more recently arrived, especially the singles, would be more likely to rent, an intention to settle, or the period abroad are not the only factors that influences people's decisions.

Most of the migrants separate considerations of return from the pragmatism of buying a house locally. Some, like Nitza above, explicitly view their stay as sojourn, and purchase property in Israel rather than Cape Town, as soon as they can afford to do so. Some who rent in Cape Town own residences in Israel and acknowledge that they could afford to buy 'much better' accommodation here if they sold, but are unwilling to do so. In Yael's words: 'I have to know that I have a home at home. It's not so important when I get there; but it is important

that I have a home when I get there.' Only one informant had sold an apartment in Israel in order to start a business in Cape Town, and regretted it bitterly:

A friend didn't stop nagging us to come. He sold us wonderful stories about opportunities here. Also about the financial rand. So we sold the flat and came. What a *fashla!* [error]. He made money - I don't know how - but not us. We lost almost everything ... [We are] returning home. It's going to be very hard - without a flat, without a job, but better to do it now, while [we are] young enough to start anew.

Duration in Cape Town is sometimes the impetus for buying a home. Raya and Ami came to Cape Town as students and stayed on despite Raya's resistance. She hopes they will return and has refused to sell their apartment in Israel. However, once the children were born and the return date uncertain, 'it was logical to buy'. Period of residence, with the accompanying feeling of being settled, is however not always the major impetus for purchasing a home. Sara and Baruch, for example, have been in Cape Town only two years and bought a house within six months of arrival. They are in their forties, with children, and also own an apartment in Israel. Baruch's attitude:

Compared with Israel, housing is very cheap here. We like to live nicely and we could afford to buy something that suited us. I don't believe in rent - only the landlord gets rich .... It's only a house. We'll sell when we are ready to return, and I'm sure we won't lose.

For Yoav and Adina on the other hand, the issue of purchasing a home in Cape Town is more complex. They are a professional couple in their forties and have been in Cape Town ten years. They are well aware that it is probably economically rational to purchase rather than pay high rentals for the kind of accommodation they like. However, they have always viewed buying a house in Cape Town as, in Adina's words, 'too concrete, a symbol of the beginning of roots here', a commitment neither was willing to make. After some years they considered buying a house but shelved the idea when they began investigating returning. Once they decided to stay 'meanwhile', they again began the search. In the process, however, old debates about whether and/or when to return re-surfaced. As a result, they remain in rented accommodation, acutely aware of their own indecision.

The theme of not buying anything 'unless appropriate for Israel' was also often repeated, in both word and deed. It is one of the ways in which the remembered past connects to an imagined future through the present. When entering an Israeli home for the first time I was often told, 'We haven't got much and it's not specially attractive. We intend buying new

[furniture] just before we leave.' However, the future does not always turn out as expected, or even as planned for. Having been both 'native as stranger' and 'stranger as native' among migrant Israelis for so long, has enabled me to see many plans for returning home become extended stays in this home. As Dafna, who has been here five years, told me somewhat wistfully:

Now-now we bought everything you see - the best, exactly as we planned. But life does its own thing [*hachayim osim et shelahem*] ... Chaim is happy here ... the kids are settled ... In no way could we live on this standard *ba'aretz* on his salary. So the flat in Eilat will have to wait. It seems we're not returning this year after all.

Only four of the married couples have expressed the attitude that, in Tami's words, 'We may as well live decently while we're here. We'll worry about the future when it arrives.' Even then, in one or other formulation, I learnt that 'besides, what we've bought will be suitable also *ba'aretz*.' A larger proportion of the younger migrants, mostly single and more recently arrived, share Tami's attitude and are keen to acquire 'the latest' everything as soon as they can afford it, without mentioning returning.

## (ii) Ease of Living

References to ease of living and quality of life factors occurred in many contexts and not only in situations overtly comparing the two settings or debating return. The explicit connection between these issues and delaying return are mine, triggered by the decision of Yoav and Adina, mentioned above, not to return despite having debated the possibility for many months and having explored potential schools for their children and job opportunities for themselves.

Yoav and Adina, both Israeli-born, maintain active contact with a wide variety of relatives, friends and colleagues in Israel and the US. They own property in Israel, including an apartment in an upmarket residential area, and have adequate financial resources. In their own opinion, their 'findings' regarding schools and jobs were satisfactory. Adina expressed her strong feelings about wanting to return more frequently and directly than her husband:

It's hard for me, the whole subject. I try not to let it interfere with day-to-day life. Even if I think about it all the time. That is, I get on with life: family, work, friends ... I can't completely reconcile to the idea that we might not return. It's a very painful thought. And it's difficult to speak about, because at the moment Yoav wants to stay even though we feel more or less the same about *ha'aretz*.

Yoav has articulated some of his ambivalence about staying or returning. He is a good example of the majority of migrants who live comfortably with the contradictions in their lives most of the time, with more or less frequent periods of discomfort, usually triggered by a particular event or circumstance which highlights the contradictions.

I participated in this family's deliberations over many months as a friend. These were not business meetings with a formal agenda and a set of propositions for debate, although on occasion our conversations took that tone, particularly as pressure mounted to make a decision because of the children's schooling. My fieldwork notes reflect my own attempts to understand the unarticulated assumptions and projections underlying the expressed contingency. In due course these unanswered questions led me to explore my notes about other families with whom I was not on as intimate terms.

Of course not all families' objective financial and occupational circumstances are as good, but many are. I attempted to assess this issue for thirty-seven couples after eliminating the following categories: those with very complex business interests in Cape Town, those with clearly articulated relatively short-term financial goals, those who did not own residences in Israel, and those with limited skills and financial resources. Also excluded were singles and the eight<sup>11</sup> who categorically rejected ever returning to Israel, though several in this category did not exclude the possibility of leaving South Africa. In other words, the sub-category comprised married migrants who both expressed a desire to return and whose objective life-situations indicated that return was feasible. In every case 'quality of life' issues triggered equivocation about returning. Thus a combination of comfortable material and work circumstances in Cape Town, positive overall evaluation of life in Israel, confidence about their ability to return, and ambivalence about South Africa's long-term future resulted in equivocation about an optimal time for the migrants' own return to Israel, suggesting that these families were indeed in a state of comfortable contradiction.

Among women, the ready availability of relatively cheap domestic labour was often mentioned as an 'ease of living' item. Some women who employed part-time domestic workers had done so in Israel too; others had been unable to afford the luxury there. Proportionately fewer families in which both partners were Israeli employed full-time

---

<sup>11</sup>Four of the eight were married to non-Jewish South Africans, and one divorced man had been married three times, each time to a non-Jewish non-South African.

domestic workers than in families where only one spouse was Israeli, irrespective of the wife's nationality. Almost all the women who employed domestic help claimed they did so 'to help with the children' and for housework; most did the cooking themselves. A few were explicit about the availability and low cost of domestic labour being a primary and positive factor in their assessment of the ease of living in South Africa compared with Israel, and in some cases, in comparison with other countries. Two attitudes regarding domestic workers were frequently, though not universally, expressed: an aversion to employing a full-time live-in domestic worker, viewed as 'a stranger in my house'; and a claim that Israelis treat domestic workers better than South Africans do. Chana, one of the widows mentioned earlier and a long-standing resident, expressed both views:

In the beginning I was too Israeli to take a domestic worker. We had no children so what for a strange person in the house to do my work? Later, when I was working full-time and there were two children, I learnt from the locals and made myself an easier life. I remember a big argument with Harry [her late husband, a South African]. He was always against apartheid and thought domestic labour was exploitation. But I persuaded him that as long as you paid a decent wage and you relate to the person as a human being, it is respectable work like any work. I won when I told him he simply doesn't respect women's work .... Twenty years I had a helper, full-time, lived in the house, and we became good friends. She retired when we moved to Cape Town, with a pension we organized, which I'm sure most South Africans don't even think to do. In Cape Town we had to have help when Harry became ill and now I employ a domestic worker for three hours a week because I'm old.

Despite the claim that Israelis treat domestic employees well, Raya, mentioned above, was the only Israeli woman who took a special and personal interest in her black domestic worker. She employed the first domestic worker part-time 'actually to look after the children. It made me uncomfortable to have a stranger in the house, doing my work.' Later, having taken the trouble to learn about the worker's circumstances, she was appalled to discover that her children lived hundreds of miles away with their grandmother. Raya made a concerted effort to learn about apartheid and employed the worker on a full-time, live-in basis because, 'You should have seen where she lived! Intolerable!'. She pays for the worker's three children to visit their mother during the longer school holidays twice a year, and has invited the oldest child to come and live with his mother in order to attend a better school in Cape Town.

One explanation of the attitude 'we're here now, who knows what tomorrow will bring?', so frequently expressed by so many respondents who otherwise shared very little, probably lies partly in the migration experience itself. If one has moved countries at least

once, the prospect of another move is less daunting and if that move means 'going home', perhaps even less so. However, I also believe that Israelis are well versed in living-in-the-present. Ongoing political turmoil, frequent wars and the perpetual threat of war, periodic sudden currency devaluations, years of rampant inflation and intermittent waves of mass immigration have prepared Israelis in the art of living with unpredictability, uncertainty and disruption.

One common technique for coping with the discomfort of insecurity, of always expecting the unexpected, is to keep abreast of the news. On the hour news broadcasts are heard in buses, supermarkets and workplaces and tuning in to the news is a normal part of every Israeli's daily routine. Another mechanism is simply to focus on the present, a feeling that one must enjoy what one can while one can. This is not to suggest that Israelis in general are hedonistic or irresponsible (although it is common knowledge that in Israel savings levels are low and personal bank overdrafts high), but rather that, in general, they are practised in dealing with uncertainty. Some of the migrants in Cape Town included this factor among their quality-of-life observations. Zvi, for example, a veteran of three Israeli wars, and in Cape Town fourteen years, commented: '*Ba'aretz* [one] learns to live with fear and tension. Tomorrow, even today, there can be an incident [*takrit*] or even a war. You can't be frightened all the time, so you get used to it, and you live for today.' Dina commented on more mundane matters - price increases in Cape Town: 'This is nothing. We're used to it. In Israel [in the seventies] I never knew the price of bread or milk. Why ask - it changed from day to day.' Certainly the rapid pace of change that so many South Africans comment on since the political transition does not seem rapid to most of the Israelis. Most find life in Cape Town relaxed, slow-paced; some value that, others do not. Chana, quoted above, put it thus: 'Israel bustles [*toseset*], everything [is] alive. I love it when I'm there but I don't think I could live at that pace now. There are too many pressures. I'm too many years here.'

Whereas Ze'ev, also a long-standing resident, commented:

I work hard here, I'm busy all the time. But we're half dead here. [We] don't know [how] to live. There, I'm alive. There's always something new - you never know what will be tomorrow .... It's true [*nachon*] there are tensions. So what? You live with it, you don't know otherwise [*acheret*]. But there's something positive in all that tension: there's energy, and I miss it here.

A final point regarding material goals and ease of living relates these to ideological issues and the 'stigma' of *yerida*. A large number of migrants, of all ages, stages in the life-

cycle, and among both long-standing residents and more recent arrivals, couched discussion about staying in terms of 'danger' or 'temptation': of being seduced by 'the easy life', 'the flesh-pots', of staying beyond the original period intended. Such terms were sometimes used in discussions among Israelis as accusations of 'base' materialism, implying or making explicit judgement about the 'nobler' values and aims of the Zionist state. This was often met with a derisive 'ach! *tziomut!*' - the Hebrew word for Zionism, which in colloquial usage has come to mean Zionist propaganda - and often led to acrimonious debate. At other times, usually in interview situations, such terms were accompanied by shame-faced smiles, some respondents acknowledging and defending their material goals, others claiming or implying awareness of the 'danger' and insisting 'it won't happen to me/us'.

It should be noted that on all occasions I deliberately avoided both the term *yerida* and any reference to 'guilt', unless introduced by the respondent. My avoidance of such concepts was a conscious attempt to assess their salience for the migrants themselves. Given the emphasis on 'the stigma of *yerida*' by other scholars, most notably Shokeid (1988), it was important to ascertain whether this focus (a) had changed since the mid-eighties, (b) was related to the particularities of the settings, namely, Cape Town and the US, and (c) whether consciousness around these issues differentiated the population internally and influenced behaviour. These themes are revisited directly and indirectly throughout the study and are addressed in preliminary fashion below.

## **SETTLERS OR SOJOURNERS?**

Although the majority of Israelis originally intended their stay in South Africa to be temporary, many are now well established in Cape Town for all practical purposes. Even those who have clear intentions of returning within a specified period do not, as it were, put their lives 'on hold'. The question of whether they consider themselves settlers or sojourners thus relates more to a general state of mind, an orientation and attitude, and to issues of attachment and commitment, rather than to matters of ordinary everyday living. Indeed, most migrants live comfortably in the present, while simultaneously remaining attached to the past and planning for the future. There is nothing remarkable in this: most people, migrants included, retain aspects of their past as they move through the life-cycle and plan for the future in terms of careers, family developments and life-goals. For most however, these

changes are continuous in space. For the Israelis in Cape Town, again like most transnational migrants, the simultaneous embeddedness in different places seems paradoxical, likely to give rise to severe ambivalence and discomfort. Yet, as I have tried to show, most display comfortable contradiction and matter-of-factness, not anxiety, about impending moves or simply not being completely settled.

The sense of contingency that permeates so many of the migrants' own conversations, even among those who acknowledge the unlikelihood of their leaving, is captured in the repeated use of conditional phrases such as 'unless things deteriorate here', 'we'll see how things develop', 'meanwhile', 'who knows what will be tomorrow', and the like. This sense is exacerbated in South Africa, compared with the United States for example, because reference to emigration is topical in so many forums, including the popular media. Many socio-political and economic analyses of the transformation processes South African society is currently undergoing refer explicitly to emigration in their discussions about skills shortages, increased crime, and the like. The Central Statistical Service regularly publishes immigration/emigration figures and has shown net emigration for each of the past three years (Statistical Release P0351, 1997). Each report is given prominence in the media. Jewish organisations and institutions too comment on shrinking memberships and diminishing funds, and debate the future viability of the organised community. The relative merits of one or other potential emigration destination, ease of access, 'green card' applications, a plethora of press advertisements for seminars for 'prospective emigrants', and in the case of Jews, details about Israel or other diaspora communities, are commonplace and ubiquitous topics of conversation. Israelis are as exposed to these debates as anyone in South Africa who reads a newspaper or listens to the news. They are less anxious about the possibility of leaving than many South Africans, both because they already have experience of relocation and because they know they can return to Israel.

In this respect they resemble the expatriate communities comprehensively reviewed by Cohen (1977). They maintain a consciousness of 'difference' from locals, are oriented, in many ways, towards 'home', know they can return, and do not perceive themselves as settlers although many do become permanent sojourners (see Uriely, 1994). Writing in the mid-seventies, Cohen focused mainly on colonial expatriates and employees of multinational companies, usually privileged minorities within the host society. Although Israelis in Cape

Town do not constitute an elite, they share many of the characteristics noted for expatriates. Cohen identified four key variables that differentiate expatriate communities: size and homogeneity of the expatriate community, socio-cultural distance between expatriates and hosts, and 'natural' versus 'planted' communities - ie, 'mere ecological aggregates of individuals who came to live in a locality ... for different purposes and at different times ...' versus those 'established under the auspices of one major organization, a company or the military' (ibid:24-25). Despite Cohen's emphasis on the relatively high status of expatriates, and the more formal organisational structures of the communities surveyed, Israelis in Cape Town exhibit very similar orientations, self-perceptions and even interaction patterns to the 'natural' communities he describes. I discuss these similarities in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Here I focus on the transiency Cohen considers one key element defining expatriates. He distinguishes 'transients' from 'sojourners' in terms of the specificity of purpose the 'transient' has on arrival and the short duration of the intended stay, but concedes that many extend their stay indefinitely and 'may become 'sojourners' or even 'settlers' (1977:18-19). Bonacich's well-known 'Theory of Middleman Minorities' (1973) shows how most 'middlemen' begin as sojourners - that is, consider their stay in the host country as temporary - and become de facto settlers who remain ambivalent towards their place of residence. Over time their economic specialisation results in high internal solidarity and they conduct their lives within ethnic enclaves. Both high status expatriates (relative to the majority population in the host country) and low status middlemen often encounter hostility (or active discrimination) from the local population, one factor that limits interaction between them.

Israelis in Cape Town share with all these categories of migrant what Cohen calls a 'psychological sense of impermanency' (1977:17), and Uriely (1994) terms 'sojourner orientation'. At any given time, some Israelis can be defined as 'transients', at least at time of arrival. Some are sojourners in the literal sense of having definite plans to leave within a specified period, although by definition this can only be ascertained once they leave, once stated intention to return is implemented. The Israelis do not constitute a middleman minority because they do not display the internal group solidarity and economic specialization, or suffer the hostility from locals, characteristic of such groups. Gold (1994b) found a higher level of group cohesion, a sense of community, as well as more evidence of ethnic economic

cooperation (Gold, 1904a) in Los Angeles than I have found in Cape Town, and more than Uriely and Shokeid in Chicago and New York respectively. I attribute the differences to the size and settlement density of the Los Angeles population and return to a critical assessment of these factors in later chapters.

The vast majority of Israelis in Cape Town can be considered permanent sojourners in orientation (Uriely, 1994). Of these, the 'sojourner orientation' of the overwhelming majority relates to returning to Israel. The remaining small minority, arguably 'settlers', also express contingency but can be differentiated into those who would prefer to remain in South Africa; those who would not return to Israel but would consider emigrating to a third country if conditions in South Africa deteriorated for them; and those who claim they could live equally happily in Israel, see no reason to leave South Africa 'at this time' and would not consider a third country if they did leave.

The findings presented by Uriely in his 1994 article 'The Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners: The Case of Israeli Immigrants in the Chicago Area' are similar to the findings of the present study in many respects: Israelis maintain a distinctive ethnic identity and strong commitment to their country of origin (ibid:441) but do not create impermeable social boundaries; their "rhetorical ethnicity" ... is not just a marginal component of their self-identity, as it is for those who practise "symbolic ethnicity", but a central component of their self-identity' (p.443); their migration experiences constitute a "dynamic process" in which different stages can be identified by reference to changing orientations towards the host country (p.438).

Uriely's research is based on 'a field study of two discrete status groups of Israeli immigrants in the Chicago area' (p.431) and his typology of 'orientations toward place of residence' (p.435) - viz, 'sojourner', 'permanent sojourner' and 'settler' is correlated with the status he accords each group. The orientation categories are differentiated in terms of 'general intentions' versus 'concrete plans' to return to the homeland. Of the higher status group, consisting of 'highly educated professionals', mostly of Ashkenazi descent, 82% are defined as 'permanent sojourners', 6% as 'sojourners', and 12% as 'settlers' (p.432). By contrast, of the lower status group, 'self-employed in non-professional occupations', without a college education and mostly of Sephardi descent (ibid), 26% are defined as 'permanent sojourners', none as 'sojourner' and 74% as 'settlers' (p.435).

However, compared with the data for Cape Town, Uriely's conceptualization gives rise to several problems. As indicated, the Israeli population in Cape Town contains relatively few people on contract to companies or Jewish organisations and relatively few students - ie, those with fixed term programmes and therefore likely to have 'concrete plans' for return. In any case, given that his intention is to investigate the sojourner orientation of those who remain in the host country (1994:431), the above categories should be excluded from the typology. Secondly, for those who do remain, what distinguishes a 'general intention' from a 'concrete plan' to return? Presumably the distinction is based on the informants' stated time-limit for the stay. The Cape Town data show clearly, however, that intended time-limits often change as targets and life circumstances change.

More importantly for the purposes of this discussion, I have not found significant differences between higher and lower education and/or income level categories in relation to 'sojourner orientation'. Nor have I found such differences between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. More important differentiating criteria with regard to sojourner orientation are: age at arrival, marital status, stage in the life-cycle, period abroad, whether the migrants arrived with specific material goals, and most importantly, whether a spouse is South African or Israeli<sup>12</sup>. As indicated, uncertainty about the future and emigration are ubiquitous topics among many segments of South Africa's population. However, within the research population, the categories least likely to have concrete plans for return (or emigration elsewhere) are young, single, recently arrived migrants, with few plans of any kind; older married migrants with school-age children; and those who have been in Cape Town for longer than ten years but are not yet nearing retirement age. Of the last, those married to South Africans are even less likely to have concrete plans for moving. These conclusions highlight individual variation and the very personal nature of responses to migration as well as the difficulty of generalising, even for particular categories.

While the findings for Cape Town confirm many of the details reported by Uriely, I disagree with his overall interpretation in two major respects. Uriely states that 'the state of being a 'permanent sojourner' involves elements of psychological discomfort' (1994:439, emphasis added). My findings agree with this bland formulation. However the tone of his article gives great weight to discomfort. My findings show that while ambivalence is certainly

---

<sup>12</sup>Uriely provides no evidence on the citizenship of the spouses in his sample.

present, most Israelis, most of the time, manage the ambivalence in relative 'psychological comfort', experiencing acute discomfort only in response to particular events or circumstances. Some such 'trigger' events or circumstances encountered in the course of this research were: the death of a parent or close relative in Israel, the death of a spouse (and in two cases, a child) in Cape Town, the prospective marriage of a child to a gentile, tragic events in Israel (for example, suicide bomb attacks), a child's intention to serve in the Israeli army or settle in Israel, the general mood of uncertainty about the future among white South Africans immediately prior to the 1994 elections, when several Israeli families did return. In addition, many families debate staying or returning more frequently, explicitly and heatedly at life-cycle transition points such as the birth of a child, completion of particular phases of formal schooling, retirement, and the like. It is in anticipation of such turning points that 'general plans' to return often become 'concrete'. However, it is clear that similar events or circumstances do not necessarily evoke similar responses, even among people in the same objective sociological categories.

Uriely further states (p.439) that 'One aspect of discomfort is the sense permanent sojourners have of being full members of neither the country of origin nor of the host country.' Again, this bland statement masks too much. I found no evidence that Israelis in Cape Town have a 'sense of being excluded from membership in their country of origin' (ibid). Rather, I found a high sense of connectedness, to friends and relatives and to the country in general, for all categories of migrants from all periods of arrival. One dividing line however, relates to the length of time the migrants have lived abroad. Those who have been out of Israel for longest claim to feel welcome and 'at home' when they visit, but acknowledge their own judgemental attitudes regarding the quality of life issues described above. That is, they feel comfortable and cope well in both places despite experiencing loss in terms of absent relationships in each place in reference to the other (but see Chapter 5). Indeed, from my observations, the more recently arrived as well as the wealthier migrants of all periods, 'live' in both places without discomfort. During the course of any given year, several migrants in Cape Town spend extended periods in Israel, and some claim that circumstances permitting, this would be their ideal. For example, one professional couple with school-age children extend the children's winter vacation and spend two months of every northern summer in Israel in their own apartment, which is simply closed for the rest of the year. Raya,

mentioned above, visits Israel with her school-age children every southern summer, when the children attend Israeli schools. Some wealthier migrants cannot be away from business for extended periods, but visit several times a year, timing their visits to coincide with family events or festivals. I do not wish to suggest that frequent travel or extended visits are undertaken by the majority. The flight from Cape Town to Israel is expensive, though only eight hours, and the majority arrange a visit once a year or once in two years, with a few managing only rare trips. However, none of the informants in this study report feeling alienated from Israeli society, although many are highly critical of many aspects, as are their compatriots in Israel. Some do report feeling heightened dislocation immediately after their return to Cape Town.

Two additional factors help make sense of the seeming discrepancy or paradox regarding the migrants' 'permanent sojourner' orientation and their behaviour. The first is to appreciate the degree to which contemporary telephonic and electronic technology facilitate communication for this socio-economic class of migrant. All the Israelis in Cape Town communicate with Israel regularly and frequently by phone and fax. Many also communicate via e-mail, and a growing proportion own the machinery needed to connect visually via the Internet.

The second factor is analytical and entails distinguishing cognitive and affective dimensions from behavioural, distinguishing 'objective' facts from their meaning for the people themselves. To the outside observer, there often seems to be a marked discrepancy, suggesting dissonance, between behaviour, attitudes and feelings. Meaning, and its implications for discomfort however, can only be deduced from a careful examination of the relationships between all three dimensions. The purchase of property locally, for example, might be interpreted as evidence of a 'settler' orientation. Yet this might in fact be a strategic act towards return. Yigal and Ofra, for example, recently purchased and equipped an upmarket guest-house at considerable expense. Yigal holds a senior position in a large local corporation and earns well. They have lived in South Africa for sixteen years and in Cape Town for ten, have two young children and do not own an apartment in Israel. They each have adult children from previous marriages, resident in Israel and the United States, and consider it necessary to hold a family reunion in Israel once a year. They intend returning within three years. According to Yigal,

I earn enough to live well, but not enough also to go home every year and also to acquire an apartment .... Ofra can work now - the children are big enough - so the guest-house is her responsibility. Actually, it's our ticket home. Tourism is developing nicely in Cape Town and the [property] prices in this area are only going up. The chances are good that we will be in Israel about three years from now. Come and visit!

For Yigal and Ofra, the three dimensions have been integrated into an instrumental plan of action that feels both sensible and comfortable. Like most Israelis in Cape Town, their emotional attachment is to Israel. Cognitively and behaviourally they relate to both worlds. Like others, they do experience what might be termed 'dual loyalty', but each aspect of the 'duo' is of a different kind. Their emotional loyalties and sense of belonging relate to the 'nation' - in this case, at two levels: to the Israeli nation, a Jewish nation-state, at least in its self-perception, and to 'the Jewish people', a deterritorialized nation. Their civic loyalties, rights and obligations are firmly embedded, for the most part, within the local, with some extension to Israel in terms of legal and property rights.

My disagreement with Urieli regarding discomfort and 'partial' membership therefore, rests not so much on the facts of full or partial membership of each society but rather on the interpretation of the meaning of those facts for the actors themselves. I would replace his formulation of 'discomfort [in the sense of] being full members of neither country' (ibid) with 'comfortable contradiction at being partial members of both'. The remainder of the present study aims to demonstrate this thesis.

### ***Yerida***

While the concepts 'sojourner orientation' and 'permanent sojourners' can be applied to many migrant populations, and in my view, are particularly apt for understanding the increasing numbers of middle-class migrants labelled 'transnationals', the concept of *yerida* is particular to Jewish Israelis. The stigma associated with the concept was exacerbated by a much-quoted comment by the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin (later retracted, but still remembered by many) that emigrants, *yordim*, were *nefolet shel nemushot*, dregs of the earth. While it is questionable whether Jewish emigration from Israel was ever an objective threat to the viability of the Zionist project, it was certainly a challenge to the Zionist critique of Jewish history. Public debate around the subject is far less intense today, especially since the

influx of so many immigrants from the former Soviet Union, but it does arise from time to time and is relevant to many Israelis in Cape Town.

As indicated earlier, the notion of *yerida* was discussed explicitly during fieldwork only when the term was introduced by the respondents. Uriely's finding that 'they express high sensitivity towards the *yordim* stigma' (1994:439) certainly confirms Shokeid's 1988 study. The suggestion in both works, however, is not only that Israelis feel guilty about living outside Israel, or resent or reject the appellation, but also that the concept is central to their existential state. While the data for Israelis in Cape Town confirm 'sensitivity', they raise doubts regarding the concept's centrality for the majority and suggest that its salience is essentially confined to an older generational cohort. This is not to suggest that leaving Israel is perceived as an ideologically neutral act. As I show below, many of the ideological implications of leaving Israel have been internalized. However, the generational shift in terminology often indicates a shift in values away from an emphasis on the primacy of the collective good, as mentioned earlier.

Although a few of the younger migrants used the term, and several related to Rabin's remark, the subject was most often raised by older migrants, usually ideologically sophisticated and politically aware. (Level of education is not a good indicator of these characteristics.) Younger ideologically sophisticated and politically aware migrants tended to formulate their comments about leaving Israel in more universalistic political terms without explicit reference to *yerida*. The less ideologically informed - though not necessarily less politicized - were often dismissive of such concerns.

Ami, for example, mentioned earlier, was the only Israeli who used ideological arguments as justification for staying out of Israel, though many others shared his political views. He and Raya had both been active in the Peace Now movement (a left-wing activist organization in Israel). While being careful to confirm his support for 'a Jewish state in principle, and Zionist ideology in general', Ami spoke at length, frequently, about his disillusion with 'what's happening in Israel and what Israel has become' adding, 'I have no desire to associate with Israelis here - they're not the kind of Israelis I admire.' Though Raya agreed with Ami's views in separate conversations with me, in his presence she consistently argued that there could be no political or social changes of the kind Ami advocated 'if people like us leave.' She also challenged him frequently about the inequities in South Africa, to

which he consistently replied, 'It's not my country. They have to solve their problems themselves.'

Those who explicitly raised the concept of *yerida* almost always denied that the description applied to them personally because they 'intend returning'. They echoed the contingency described in detail above. Dina, 51, in South Africa eight years, typified many others when she articulated the matter thus:

I don't accept the designation *yored*. For the moment we live here. Who knows where we will be in another year - maybe we'll be back *ba'arets*. A *yored* is a person who wants to leave Israel because it is Israel. We left because it suited us. We are Israelis, even the younger sons who studied here, and we will always be Israelis.

Dina and her husband and four sons are participants in a strong 'fully Israeli' social network in Cape Town (see Chapter 6). Her formulation echoes the strong assertion of Israeliness common to most informants, emphasizes impermanence and personal motivation, and captures the essence of the meaning of *yored*, as an Israeli who deliberately rejects Israeli society.

Others concurred with Ze'ev's formulation. Ze'ev is 59 and, as mentioned earlier is wealthy and visits Israel often. He and his South African wife are participants in several 'fully Israeli' and 'mixed' networks and he is a core member of an all-male, all-Israeli group. He emphasizes circumstance and impermanence despite having lived in Cape Town for more than twenty-five years. He also introduces the notion of an Israeli as a 'normal person', which I discuss more fully in the next chapter.

What's the meaning of *yored* today? It's a word that belongs to history, to Zionism. Zionism is finished; it succeeded and that's it. Now we have a state, and I'm an Israeli, not a Zionist. I live here already twenty-five years. Why? Because that's the way it came out. My wife is South African, my children were born here .... We have property *ba'arets* - my daughter lives in the house we built there, on land of my Zionist father. If [people] want to call me a *yored*, so be it. I'm an Israeli, a normal person, who lives in another country because it suits me for now. Tomorrow? - who knows?

Several of those who did apply the designation to themselves have been in Cape Town for many years, were often married to South Africans, and did so in ways reminiscent of Rivka, 57, in Cape Town 32 years. Rivka has a small network of Israeli friends and participates in several larger networks of local Jews. Like Dina, for Rivka 'real' *yordim* reject Israel:

It's obvious that I'm a *yoredet*. I have been here for more than thirty years and I more or less know that I won't go back unless the situation here becomes intolerable for me, personally ... What does *yored* mean? Do I denigrate Israel? - Never. On the contrary, I care very much. I am all the time interested, worried. I contribute money, I get angry with others when they besmirch [*mashmitzim*] the state. My late husband worked tirelessly for Israel. My children visit relatives *ba'arets* often and they know the country well. I'm an Israeli; Israel is my country. I simply don't live there - I'm a citizen from afar.

Although Rivka worked at her profession for several years, for most of her time in Cape Town she has been a housewife. She has never been active in formal Jewish communal organisations but often attends Israel-related Jewish events. Several Israeli women who have been in Cape Town for more than fifteen years and only one of whom (now widowed) was married to an Israeli, are reluctant to apply the term *yored* to themselves, but acknowledge the unlikelihood of their returning to Israel. Several work for Jewish communal institutions and construe this as 'service for the good of Israel', and hence as countervailing evidence to accusations of *yerida*. Women used the term with reference to themselves more often than men with phrases such as, 'I suppose I'm a *yoredet*'. If men introduced the concept at all, it was usually followed immediately by denial of some kind, for example, '[people] talk about *yordim* but ...'. A common formulation among younger migrants, one that doesn't use the term, was 'I didn't leave [*lo azavti*], I only went out [*rak yatzati*] for a while'.

Many informants, in various contexts but usually in Israeli company, criticise and complain about many aspects of life in Israel. (Some joke that complaining is the national sport.) And yet so many insisted that their own lives in Israel were good in both material and other terms, and that life in general is good in Israel, that this contradiction can only be understood in relation to the internalization of basic Zionist values, including the connotations of *yerida*, whether explicitly articulated or only implied. The contradiction is managed (rather than resolved) by the migrants themselves in various ways: for some, the notion of *yerida* has outlived its utility and the state is seen as viable, not fragile, though not yet completely secure. For others, individualistic values are believed to take legitimate precedence over collective strivings, often expressed as, 'People must do what they want.' Yet others do not mention *yerida* at all and talk about 'leaving' or going out' of Israel.

It seems to me that the many informants who stressed their own 'good circumstances' before migration were implying a right to choose (in this case, to move), rather than a need to leave. For some, guilt feelings because of assumptions of being accused of *yerida* (whether or

not the actual term was used), were assuaged by stating intention to return; for others, the potential for improving personal circumstances was presented as a moral right, if not obligation, to self and family, thus justifying *yerida* in the simple sense of leaving. In the latter case, it seemed that admission of poor personal circumstances in Israel would somehow lay blame on the state for being unable to provide adequately for all its citizens; and blaming the state would imply that leaving constituted *yerida*. Thus asserting personal 'good circumstances' in Israel, put the speaker beyond accusations of disloyalty.

The heterogeneity of the population and the wide variety of responses in relation to specific issues underline the value of detailed long-term field studies if 'the migration experience' is to be understood and its implications not merely assumed. Nevertheless, despite the variety, several shared tendencies do emerge, in addition to the strong and confident assertions of 'being Israeli' mentioned earlier:

- \* the pragmatism and instrumentality underlying motivations for leaving Israel, choosing South Africa, and staying;
- \* the ongoing influence of values and attitudes internalised in the country of origin, expressed in attitudes to *yerida* and an ability to live-in-the-present;
- \* simultaneous embeddedness in both societies, albeit in varying aspects, leading to the contingency inherent in a permanent sojourner orientation; and
- \* the manner of dealing with that contingency, labelled here 'comfortable contradiction'.

The following three chapters elaborate the issues of ethnic expression and solidarity alluded to here. Chapter 4 explores the conceptual categories the migrants use in defining self and a range of 'others', with particular reference to the meaning of 'being Jewish' in a diaspora setting. Chapter 5 extends the range of conceptual boundaries examined and the meanings migrants attach to the notion of 'home'. Chapter 6 describes local social networks and assesses the extent to which the migrants 'create community' or integrate into the wider society. As will become evident, the internal heterogeneity of the population and the themes introduced here resonate throughout.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**BOUNDARY MARKING AND STEREOTYPING:**  
**THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE**

The previous chapters presented some of the major socio-demographic characteristics of the research population and outlined the diversity of the informants' subjective motivations for leaving Israel, coming to South Africa and choosing to stay. Certain attitudes, values and life-skills acquired before migration were shown to have continued relevance both for the migrants' ability to adapt to the new setting and for their individual interpretations of their current situation. Prominent among the shared qualities were: positive emotional attachment to Israel, first-hand experience of multiculturalism (including multilingualism), an attitude I described as living-in-the-present, and ambivalence about their permanence in South Africa. A striking shared feature was the strong assertion of 'being Israeli' as a primary ingredient of identity, of consciousness of self. Although the content and meaning of the label are certainly not uniform, either for the migrants or in the view of others, every informant applied the label unhesitatingly to him/herself and acknowledged the presence of others in Cape Town with whom the label was shared.

The strong assertion of Israeliness has been noted by all researchers of Israelis abroad (Gold, 1994; Kass & Lipset, 1982; Shokeid, 1988; Uriely, 1994 & 1995). Uriely (1994) describes the assertion and the associated feelings and behaviours among Israelis in Chicago as 'rhetorical ethnicity' and views it as one type within the category Gans (1979) termed 'symbolic ethnicity'. Shokeid describes the same phenomena for Israelis in New York as 'affective ethnicity' (1988: Chapter 9) and 'one-night stand ethnicity' (1993). I return to an evaluation of the applicability of these descriptions of ethnicity to Israelis in Cape Town in Chapter 6.

Attaching a label to self or others is a cognitive act of categorization, of differentiating self from others, irrespective of the criteria or the specific purposes of differentiation. Labelling indicates the labeller's awareness<sup>1</sup> of diversity, and includes specifying both those

---

<sup>1</sup>See Hastrup (1995) for a detailed discussion of the difference between consciousness and awareness, the primary distinction being the relative explicitness of 'awareness' (ibid:183). I use the term here because the label is articulated, thus making explicit a deliberate selection from alternatives.

imagined

who are like and those who are unlike 'me/us'. It also indicates the individual's selection of the criterion/a by which to organize diversity. In the process, a conceptual boundary is created between self and others. The selection of criteria for conceptualizing boundaries will depend on the relationship between the actor's objective situation, his/her subjective evaluation of it, and on societal norms. For example, us-them (or less polarized) distinctions in a work place may rest on differences of rank, competence, dedication, ideological attitudes to these, or indeed on racial, ethnic or kinship criteria which, in industrialized societies are usually considered inappropriate to a work setting. Furthermore, the composition of 'us' and 'them' can and does fluctuate, depending on the purpose of any particular interaction. Selecting ethnic criteria (or criteria perceived as ethnic) for distinguishing individuals or groups is thus not inevitable, and it is incumbent on the student of groups that define themselves and/or are defined by others as ethnic, to demonstrate the salience of ethnicity relative to other criteria of self-and-other identification.

The findings of this study indicate that defining themselves as Israeli is indeed salient, even central, to the informants in Cape Town, and that ethnicity is a dominant trope in their understanding of the world. The findings also suggest that the formative influences on the construction of Israeliness, that is, its formulation, content and meaning, occurred prior to migration, accompany the migrants to the new setting, and operate as the lens through which that setting is perceived, organized and interpreted. While modifications certainly occur, especially with the passage of time, the similarity of articulated conceptions of Israeliness among the migrants is remarkable and suggests the operation of powerful socializing processes in the country of origin. However, precisely because those specific processes are absent in the new setting, it is questionable whether the particular conceptions can be transmitted to the next generation.

Ever since Barth's seminal work on ethnicity (1969), there has been an appreciation of the value of focusing an analytical gaze on the boundaries between populations, rather than merely on 'the cultural stuff' (p.15) the categories are deemed to 'own' or manifest. Following Barth, it is also clear that conceptual boundaries persist, sometimes despite, sometimes because of, contact and interaction across them. However, as Cornell (1996) points out, the focus on boundary construction led in two directions, which can be seen as complementary: an emphasis on 'situational ethnicity' (Okamura, 1981), a search for 'those societal conditions

and resultant positional interests that have encouraged, compelled or inhibited organization along ethnic boundaries' (Cornell, 1996:266); and, in response to 'circumstantial factors' (ibid), an emphasis on the agency of social actors in the construction of their identities.

This chapter emphasizes the relationship between situational (external) and constructionist (internal) conceptions of ethnicity. It thus accepts the notion, implicit in the discussion of categorization above, that the production, reproduction and transformation of social boundaries is a contrastive two-way process between interacting groups (Cornell, 1996; Epstein, 1978; Hagendoorn, 1993). The complexity of these processes is underlined when one appreciates the multiplicity of everyday interactions and ingredients, not all of which are 'ethnic' or perceived as 'ethnic', that feed into identity formation. However, the description that follows re-emphasizes 'the stuff', the content of identity-categories identified by the actors, in order to show how personal and collective histories, that is, categorizations and experiences from the past, mediate the understanding and the effects of the present in the present.

Chapters 4 and 5 are thus primarily concerned with the ways in which, and the criteria by which, the Israeli population in Cape Town is marked off - by its members and by 'outsiders' - from the wider society. The findings suggest that while definitions of self and other are both triggered and modified in interactive situations, the criteria utilized draw upon conceptual categories internalized before migration. This chapter focuses on the historical underpinnings of the categories, and provides ethnographic description from the religious domain. Chapter 5 considers issues beyond religion and relates them to conceptions of 'home'.

Such 'marking off', whether deliberate or not, occurs in two senses. On the one hand, both Israelis and others generalize about Israelis and others as collectives, as if each identified category were a closed group with shared characteristics. On the other hand, most recognition and acknowledgement of difference (and sameness) and, more importantly, the identification of particular ways of doing and ways of being as different, occur in face-to-face interactions and relationships, by individuals with individuals. Yet, as Jenkins has noted,

... it only makes sense to talk of ethnicity in an individual sense when the identity being defined and its expression refer to a recognizable socially-constructed identity and draw upon a repertoire of culturally-specified practices ... these processes are necessarily transactional and social (even in the individual case) because they presuppose both an audience, without whom



they make no sense, and an externally derived framework of meaning.  
(Jenkins, 1994:199)

Although the shared aspects of the informants' conceptions and categorizations are emphasized here, internal differentiation is also apparent. The diversity reflects the agency and reflexivity of individuals as they negotiate everyday reality and extract personal meaning from it.

## **'THE ISRAELIS' AS A CONCEPTUAL CATEGORY**

### **Categorization By Non-Israelis**

As shown, Israelis comprise a very small proportion of all whites and a small proportion of all immigrants. Despite some residential clustering in mixed neighbourhoods with relatively high concentrations of local Jews in both Johannesburg and Cape Town (where most are resident), their numbers are insufficient to create either Israeli 'ghettos' or distinctive occupational niches. They come to South Africa as individuals and families, utilizing the conventional channels open to all immigrants. Of course, like all immigrants, Israelis are distinguished by the state for statistical purposes but I have no evidence, from informants or from any other source, to suggest that being identified by others as Israeli affects their access to residence, occupation, or membership of organizations, or exposes them to negative discrimination in any sphere. There have been occasional press reports of criminal activities which have identified Israelis but these have not evoked xenophobic or other negative reactions from the general populace. Nor have there been television or radio programmes about Israelis as a local 'ethnic community', as there have been about Greeks, Jews, Indians and Portuguese.

In the socio-demographic terms that reflect South Africa's past (and perhaps continuing) preoccupation with population classification, Jewish Israelis can be described as a minority within an ethno-religious minority of Jews, within a 'racial' minority of whites. Given the deeply entrenched consciousness about 'racial' and socio-cultural differences in South Africa, notwithstanding the recent transformation to a constitutional democracy which enshrines equal citizenship for all, and given that the Israeli state is commonly labelled 'the Jewish state' in all media, it would not be surprising if non-Jewish South Africans were to associate Israeli migrants with local Jews. Yet there is no evidence of this as a generalizing tendency at the societal (macro) level. It would seem that the migrant population is either too

small, or too successful at keeping a low profile, to have drawn attention to itself as an 'ethnic group'. The main contacts Israelis have with non-Jewish South Africans are official - regarding visas, work permits and the like - and through business and work associations. There is no evidence to indicate that they are regarded in either sphere as a category sharing particular characteristics or as closely associated with Jews, who are considered to be a minority collective with shared attributes.

South African Jews, on the other hand, clearly perceive Israelis as a sub-category of Jews 'other' than themselves. Many Jews, but most particularly those actively engaged in communal affairs, often refer to 'the Israelis' as if they constitute a well defined entity<sup>2</sup>. Most local Jews are aware of an Israeli presence in Cape Town through personal experience - meeting an Israeli mother through children at school, hearing Hebrew spoken in the supermarket, discovering that the new neighbours are Israeli, and the like. Some Jews have more experience of Israelis than others: they visit Israel, have relatives there, are involved with voluntary organizations whose work is centred on Israel, or are graduates of the local Jewish school which has an active interest in Israel and in Zionist education. Such Jews often express differences between themselves and all Israelis, local migrants or Israelis in Israel, irrespective of whether they are personally acquainted with any or not. Most local Jews identify with Israel and Zionism and express admiration for Israeli achievements, and many are ideological Zionists (see Arkin, 1984; Dubb, 1994; Shimoni, 1980 & 1988). Attitudes to Israelis, however, are often couched in well-established popular stereotypes to do with behaviour and with assumed values and beliefs. As with all stereotypes, depictions of 'the other' imply comparison with self. The content of Jewish South Africans' assumptions and stereotypes about Israelis is often accepted by Israelis. The Israelis' interpretations however, evaluate the behaviours, values and beliefs rather differently. For example, both categories comment that Israelis are often uninhibited in their speech and public behaviour. South African Jews often describe this as 'loud, crude and unacceptable'; Israelis depict the same behaviour as 'forthright, spontaneous and honest'.

---

<sup>2</sup>For example, the June 1996 issue of the *Cape Jewish Chronicle* carried an article about a communal function held on the occasion of the Israeli elections in which the author commented on the presence of 'an unusually large number from the Israeli community'.

Despite the tendency of local Jews to create organizations or committees for anything they consider pertinent to Jews, there is no specific organized communal body whose exclusive brief it is to deal with Israeli migrants, although all local communal institutions are as accessible to Israelis as they are to any other Jews. Local Jewish communal organizations and their officials, lay and professional, comment on the 'non-involvement' of 'the Israelis' in communal affairs but it is clearly not a major concern. Some women's organizations have attempted to recruit Israeli members, with virtually no success, but have also not made this a central concern.

As pointed out in the Introduction, the local Jewish community exhibits strong Zionist commitment. It also recognizes that it is diminishing due to aging and emigration. The absence of explicit communal policy regarding the migrants and the lack of concerted effort to incorporate them into communal organizations therefore seems surprising. Yet, paradoxically, it would seem that in focusing its energies on internal restructuring and the funding of welfare services, the leadership has avoided or ignored the ideological (Zionist) dilemma, and overlooked the population that could potentially contribute to local Jewish life both socially and culturally. One explanation must be that Israeli migrants are not perceived as able or willing to contribute to the community, in either material or human resource terms.

### **Israeli Categorization of 'Israelis' in Cape Town**

Although no informants ever used the term 'community' to refer to Israelis, frequent reference to 'the Israelis' certainly indicates consciousness of the presence of a category of persons identifiable by the label. Most references to a collective occur during discussions about various others and are couched in distancing stereotypical terms. South African Jews, referred to as 'the Jews', 'South Africans', or 'locals', are the contrastive category most often invoked. In such conversations distinction between 'us' and 'them' occurs around specific issues, often, but not only, to do with religion. For example, 'They must belong to a shul [synagogue] - what else makes them Jewish? They need religion, we don't'; or 'Israelis don't need to contribute money to the IUA [Israel United Appeal, a fundraising organisation] - we have already given blood ...'. In these commonplace comparisons Israelis are generalized as an undifferentiated category of persons with shared attributes.

Informants also often differentiate themselves from particular groups of Israelis - for example, 'I'm not interested in those Israelis [who meet regularly at a well-known cafe] - I don't think most of them would be my friends in Israel, so why should I be friendly with them here - just because they are Israelis?' or 'They [young, single, newcomers] get into trouble and give Israelis a bad name. I'm not interested in associating with them'. Both examples acknowledge perception of Israelis as a category and display awareness of differences within the category. However, the criteria applied internally privilege personal judgement and choice and are thus of a different order from the generalizations made when comparisons are drawn with non-Israelis. Out-group comparisons utilize ethnic criteria and imply sameness within each category; internal distinctions deconstruct the category and utilize criteria of personal judgement.

While categorizing, stereotyping and generalization abound, and are evidence of ethnic consciousness and reflexivity, much is made of difference in these comments and little of internal Israeli solidarity.

### **'Conceptual Baggage': Categories Internalized in Israel**

The migrants share a sense of Jewish and Israeli historical particularity despite the diversity of socio-demographic characteristics, personal histories, practices, intentions and adaptive strategies reflected in these pages. The starting point for the self-understanding of Jewish Israeli migrants is thus located in the shared understanding of Jewish history as interpreted and acted upon in the formation of the Israeli state.

Particular aspects of Jewish history are directly pertinent both to the migrants' attitudes and behaviour in diaspora, and to the more general issues addressed in the present study. Foremost among them is the maintenance of the idea, throughout the millenia of diaspora, of *klal yisrael*, variously translated as 'the Jewish people' or 'the Jewish collective', and synonymous in popular usage with the phrases *am yisrael*, 'the nation Israel' and *ha'am hayehudi*, 'the Jewish People' (nation). This is not to suggest that pre-modern Jewry was monolithic or homogeneous. The social, geographical, linguistic, political, and even religious diversity of pre-modern Jewry has been well documented. All historians of the Jews agree, however, that Jewish life in the pre-modern era was sufficiently distinct from its surroundings and sufficiently alike everywhere, to enable all Jews to conceive of themselves as members of

a de-territorialized nation, an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). While the substance of Jewish distinctiveness was generated within relatively closed Jewish communities, insider/outsider distinctions were everywhere reinforced by external constraints. The minority and dependent status, and thus relative powerlessness, of diaspora Jewry is also not in dispute. Even Biale's (1986) strong challenge to entrenched notions of Jewish powerlessness addresses the degree, rather than the condition, of powerlessness and shows fluctuations in degree in different times and places. Thus throughout pre-modern dispersal, Jews had experienced, simultaneously, sporadic migration (often resulting from persecution), minority status, 'entanglement' with others (Clifford, 1994) resulting in acute group-consciousness, and a highly developed notion of peoplehood/nationhood. Furthermore, widespread literacy (at least relative to others of their status), and movement and correspondence (rabbinic Responsa) between Jewish communities, confirmed Jews' knowledge and support of each other.

The onset of modernity initiated far-reaching transformations in Jewish life but the ideas and experiences outlined above were remembered and sustained. They constituted what Susser and Don Yehiya call 'a congenital patrimony' (1994:198). The Zionist movement, the ideological precursor to the state of Israel, was one among several Jewish responses to the changed conditions of modernity (see Avineri, 1981; Hertzberg, 1973; Vital, 1982). Although born during the post-revolutionary period of European emancipation and enlightenment, the era of emergent nation-states (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Smith, 1986), Jewish nationalism was not created or constituted by it. Rather, European nationalism activated a pre-existing Jewish national identity (Susser & Don Yehiya, 1994) so that Zionism was conceptualized as the national liberation movement of 'the Jewish People'. In terms of Jewish history, the movement was itself a revolution in the sense that its members desired to shape their lives themselves, in this world, rather than wait for the messiah or the hereafter. But it was 'a revolution in rethinking the common national self-understanding rather than one in which this national identity was newly called into being' (ibid:198).

All versions of Zionist ideology shared the aim of 'normalizing' the Jewish condition in the world. In its broadest terms that meant the return of Jews (*kibbutz galuyot*, the ingathering of the exiles) to their ancestral homeland to live an independent Jewish existence. The notion of 'normalization' emanated from the perception of national Jewish life in

diaspora as 'abnormal' (Eisen, 1986; Levine, 1984; Rotenstreich, 1986; Yehoshua, 1981): a nation de-territorialized and powerless, with an inverted (abnormal) social structure, and speaking the languages of its hosts. The depiction of the collective as abnormal was extended to the individual; thus a 'new' Hebrew-speaking Jew had to be created to counteract the behaviours and values of diaspora Jews, evaluated negatively as defensive responses to (mostly hostile) non-Jewish society.

Just fifty years after the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897, and just two years after the devastating experience of the Nazi-perpetrated genocide in which a third of world Jewry was brutally murdered, the newly formed United Nations voted for the partition of British Mandatory Palestine. The vote cleared the way for the establishment of an independent sovereign Jewish state in part of the ancestral homeland. Deeply cognizant of Jewish history, the Zionist founders of the state insisted on a state that was both Jewish, to re-establish independent sovereignty and to be a refuge for all Jews, and democratic, to counter potentially negative consequences for minorities within an ethnic state.

Immediately after the Declaration of Independence in 1948, and despite wars and perpetual threat of war, the Zionist founders set about creating the structural and symbolic apparatus of a modern state as well as implementing Zionist ideology. Immigrants from a great many countries, including Holocaust survivors and other displaced European Jews, flooded into the new state (the Jewish population doubled within the first three and a half years<sup>3</sup>). Given the diversity of backgrounds from which the new immigrants came, and given the aim of creating a new society, the task of *mizug galuyot*, the 'melding' of the exiles, was pursued with vigour in accordance with (socialist) Zionist values. In the deliberate re-socializing processes, socio-cultural differences were muted, shared memories emphasized, major events, narratives and symbols of the collective history reinterpreted, and new symbols created (Eisenstadt, 1967; Liebman & Don Yehiya, 1983). In most countries, the processes involved in the creation of institutions and procedures for a new state - including the promotion of a national language and the creation of new school curricula - would be called nation-building. However, in Israeli socio-political history the process is known as *mamlachtiyut*, 'statism'. The term accurately reflects perceived reality: the 'nation' already existed; it was the state that needed to be built.

---

<sup>3</sup>Encyclopaedia Judaica, 9:378

Like all nationalisms, Zionism had a sense of mission, in this case two-fold (and contradictory). On the one hand, the new entity was to be exemplary, '*or lagoyim*' ('a light unto the nations'); on the other, the aim was to normalize both the Jewish condition and the Jews, to create a 'nation like all others', 'the others' understood as modern democratic nation-states. The population, however, was even more heterogeneous than the 'native' populations of nineteenth century emergent European nation-states. As Handelman (1994) points out, the primacy and equivalence given to both ethnicity (Jewishness) and democracy (full and equal citizenship for all inhabitants) in the Israeli Declaration of Independence created contradictions with profound consequences for relationships between the Jewish majority and the significant non-Jewish Arab minority (ibid:441; see also E.Cohen, 1989). The embeddedness of the religious component in the distinction between Jews and Arabs as well as the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict has deepened the cleavage between these segments of Israeli society.

The first-order identity distinction in Israeli society, that between Jews and non-Jews, is thus the same as the ethnic boundary for Jews in diaspora both historically and currently. Its salience and valence, however, is reversed in Israel by virtue of Jews being a dominant majority. In Israel these distinctions, essentially between Jews and Arabs, are construed as differences of 'nationality' (*le'om*) (Handelman, 1994), understood in socio-cultural terms and differentiated from citizenship (*eZRACHUT*). While the term *le'om* is used mainly for bureaucratic purposes such as census forms and identity documents, there is no doubt that the classification encodes differences perceived as essential (primordial) for both Arabs and Jews, and that it promotes inequality between the categories (ibid; also Dominguez, 1989). The concept of ethnicity (*etnityut/adatiyut*), at least in popular usage, is limited to Jews, and ideologically, though not empirically, connotes egalitarianism among Jewish 'ethnic groups' (Handelman, 1994; Dominguez, 1989). In Kymlicka's terms (1995), the Israeli state is thus both multinational and polyethnic. In the early years of mass immigration ethnicity was popularly conceptualized in terms of country of origin and referred to in those terms - ie, Russians, Poles, Yemenites, Moroccans, etc.. Over time, a complex transformation has taken place: so-called 'western' Jews have been homogenized into 'Ashkenazim' (with a later re-disaggregation of 'Russians' in response to the mass immigration from the former Soviet

Union), and 'Sephardim' or '*edot ha'mizrach*' (so-called 'orientals'), more often distinguished further by country of origin than their Ashkenazi counterparts.

For Israeli Jews, including the migrants in this study, the nation-state of Israel is thus perceived as the political embodiment, the only reliable sanctuary, for the nation, conceptualized in ethnic, communalistic - ie, socio-cultural and not political - terms (Connor, 1993; Tamir, 1991). The 'nation', labelled 'Israeli', is imagined as Jewish Israelis, and the conflation of Jewishness with Israeliness (Herman, 1970) is extended to the entire collectivity so imagined. Non-Jewish Israelis enter the Israelis' consciousness and discourse only when the conversation is explicitly political, and the terms used then are 'Israeli Arabs', sometimes 'our Arabs', or 'citizens of Israel' when referring to all non-Jews. The distinction between citizenship and nation - more precisely, between citizenry and nation (that is, people, and not simply abstract concepts) - is thus both implicit and explicit. The distinction is further underlined by the experiences of war, or threat of war, where the perceived enemies, at least for Israeli Jews, are the neighbouring Arab states and their allies. This fact complicates relationships between Jewish and Arab citizens and, in the eyes of Jews, casts doubt - justified or not - on the allegiance to the state of its Arab citizens. A further complication is the lack of clarity, on the part of all concerned, about whether the primary identity of Israeli Arabs is as Arab Israelis (ie, those resident within the pre-1967 borders and thus entitled to equal citizenship status according to Israeli law), or whether their identification is with (currently stateless) Palestinians<sup>4</sup>. The latter 'complication' is clearly beyond the scope of this study.

The consequences and contradictions of these Israeli realities for the purpose of understanding the migrants' categorization of the world are: (1) that socio-cultural identity is believed to embody primordial qualities; yet, (2) that socio-cultural identity can be learned/inculcated, the proof being the successful 'absorption' of millions of immigrants and their transformation into Israelis; (3) that all Jews constitute 'the nation' at one level; yet (4) that the Israeli state is a Jewish state purposefully created to normalize Jews and 'the Jewish condition' and is thus distinguishable from diaspora Jewish communities, the latter evaluated

---

<sup>4</sup>Some observers, especially Arab writers, use the terms 'Palestinian citizens' and 'non-citizen Palestinians' (see Peled, 1990; Lavie, 1992). The terminology used to describe these categories will no doubt change once a Palestinian state is established.

more negatively in the early years of the state than later; (5) that for Jewish Israelis the distinction between citizenry and nation, born in the pre-state diaspora and nurtured through hegemonic Zionist socialization processes, has been successfully naturalized - that is, is taken for granted; (6) that the idea of a state that distinguishes citizenry from nation and is defined as democratic (and is believed to operate as such) has also been internalized. The model can (and does) accommodate conceptual dissonance through notions (rhetoric?) of majority-minority relationships, with acceptance - albeit implicit - of the relative powerlessness of minorities. Irrespective of the degree to which democratic goals are believed to have been achieved in Israel, understanding Jewish history and Zionist aims in the ways outlined confirms the lived personal experiences of Israeli Jews. Moreover, and importantly, as indicated earlier this conception of inter-group relations resonates with all interpretations of pre-modern, and, in terms of powerful Holocaust memory, even modern, Jewish history. As shown below, the model is projected: identifiable groups are conceptualized in essentialist terms, and relationships between them are understood in terms of minority-majority categorization. Neither aspect of the model necessarily includes negative evaluation of individuals or groups understood as different from self.

## **MAKING SENSE OF THE NEW SETTING**

The small number of Israelis who came to Cape Town prior to the 1980s found a city and country that accepted them as middle-class whites. Although coloured and black African<sup>5</sup> townships were clearly visible at the outskirts of the city, the effective state segregation policies then in place made it possible, indeed easy, for whites to avoid or ignore the appalling social and economic consequences of apartheid. The degrading effects were less conspicuous - unless one wished to see/know - in the Western Cape than in other parts of the country because of the state's determined application of Influx Control regulations against black Africans in its attempts to keep the Cape a Coloured Labour Preference Area (see Saunders, 1983:41).

---

<sup>5</sup>See West (1988) for a description of the complex classificatory terminology used to differentiate the South African population under the Population Registration Act of 1950 and for a discussion of the difficulties in applying the classification.

The relatively unpublicised relationships between Israel and South Africa in those decades, the relatively muted local criticism of the apartheid state, and the materialist, instrumental, family-related and accident-of-circumstance motivations for migration described in the previous chapter, combined to produce a migrant population largely ignorant of, and indifferent to, the local political struggles and moral dilemmas of the period. Those migrants who interacted with local Jews (11.5% of those who arrived prior to 1980 were married to South African Jews at that time) would not, for the most part, have seen or heard strong moral outrage or activist anti-government behaviour by Jews (Frankental & Shain, 1993; Shain & Frankental, 1997)<sup>6</sup>.

During those decades I was a student and later a member of faculty at a local university which prided itself on its anti-apartheid stance. I also taught with *shlichim* at local Jewish schools during the period, was married to an Israeli, knew most of the Israelis in town, and had close personal relationships with several among them. Many of the Israelis resident in Cape Town then have since returned to Israel. My recollections of the period have no doubt been influenced by the present research but I do not recall much engagement with South African matters among the migrants of the period. All the Israelis I knew at the time professed rejection of the injustices of apartheid and of racism in general, and acknowledged that the regime was immoral and inhumane. They showed little, if any, consciousness about the moral implications of being a bystander, and, indeed, explicitly denied that apartheid could have any relevance for them, personally. The majority at that time considered their stay in Cape Town temporary and their energies and orientations were directed towards returning. The Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 were the public matters of greatest concern. Many of the 1960s migrants still registered as army reservists went to Israel during the weeks before the 1967 war, and several families returned to Israel immediately after that war.

The 1976 Soweto uprising marked the end of the possibility for whites to avoid South African realities. For blacks, of course, avoidance had never been possible. By then television had been introduced, and, though one could still be ignorant, it was no longer possible for anyone who followed the news to be oblivious to the confrontation between the state and its opponents, or to the potential for further serious conflict. The emigration of Israelis (and other

---

<sup>6</sup>See *Jewish Affairs* 52 (1) 1997, entitled 'Jews and Apartheid', for seventeen essays reflecting diverse views on the nature of the relationship between Jews and apartheid.

South Africans) during the late 1970s was evidence of growing apprehension. Yet at the same time, in the wake of low morale in Israel following the Yom Kippur War of 1973, migrants continued coming to South Africa during that period, suggesting relative lack of concern with political events and uncertainties in South Africa (Frankental, 1989:269-70)<sup>7</sup>.

During the mid-eighties I conducted a small study among Israelis in Cape Town (Frankental, 1989) which recorded the results of the survey but not the detailed ethnography. Mindful of the significant changes in both countries since that time, I nevertheless reviewed my fieldwork notes and interviews of the period, and where applicable, compared responses and opinions about South African society for those informants still resident. One outstanding feature of the earlier record was the similarity of terms, concepts and sentiments used to describe perceived reality. The most frequent refrain was 'It's not my country. It's their [South Africans'] problem, not mine', accompanied by assertions of intention to return to Israel within specified periods. The formulation is still common among migrants who have been in Cape Town for relatively short periods. In other words, while recognizing 'problems', they express instrumental short-term motivation for being in South Africa and deny any emotional attachment, commitment or obligation to the country. The refrain becomes less common the longer the migrants have been in Cape Town but is not replaced with statements of commitment (see below).

An additional trope frequently invoked during the earlier period, but completely absent from the present record, was the frequent reference to 'tribes' [referring to black Africans] and Afrikaners. The research population in the 1980s included several bachelors and families (since returned) contracted to Israeli irrigation companies, often kibbutz-based, and the men travelled extensively within the country. There were significant differences between these informants and the majority in relation to the issues under discussion here. The majority were largely indifferent; the apartheid structure of society and the political issues then unfolding held little interest for them.

My records reflect general agreement among informants that the country 'belonged' to the majority of its inhabitants, that is, to black Africans, by virtue of their number; that the lack of democracy was immoral; and that if blacks ever rebelled and took power, whites had reason to fear retribution because of their treatment of blacks. Some informants expressed the

---

<sup>7</sup>See discussion and tables on migration to and from South Africa in the Introduction.

view that peaceful resolution was impossible because of white oppression of blacks; some believed that accommodation was impossible because of incompatible cultural differences. Both these categories considered 'partition'<sup>8</sup> the best solution, but recommended that it should be implemented equitably and more rapidly. Most informants, however, had virtually no knowledge of apartheid laws and their consequences for the majority of South Africans, nor did they appreciate the degree of inequality between whites and everyone else. In several instances my notes reflect my own disgust (and in some cases surprise, at seemingly well-informed respondents) when they did not know that South Africa had no compulsory education, or that not everyone had access to such basic items as water and electricity. In no case did informants (in the majority category) themselves directly compare South African and Israeli problems. When I raised the topic, the validity of the comparison was always emphatically rejected, usually in terms of Jewish historical rights and/or antisemitism and/or the democratic rights of Arab Israeli citizens and/or the 'modernization', implying improvement, of Arab society as a consequence of the creation of Israel. My fieldwork of the period however, reflects very little spontaneous discussion about these topics among Israelis, and where it occurred, there was seldom reference to any implications these matters might have for them. The topic usually arose in response to some recent event, and was discussed in the same way as any news item.

The irrigation-systems salesmen, some of whom had lived elsewhere in Africa, showed much greater knowledge about South African society, were more sympathetic to the dilemma of Afrikaners, 'who have nowhere else to go and who have built the country', claimed to have 'seen' deep 'tribal' divides in their travels around the country, and often drew comparisons with Israel. Although business competitors, these individuals and families formed a loose friendship network which included my husband and myself and a few other Israelis. South Africa and its problems were often discussed and debated in this group and a wide variety of strongly-held views expressed, but there was no engagement with the issues as personally meaningful. After participating in one such gathering, my notes record 'The evening at Sima's and Ami's house was like a university seminar: everyone present trying to prove the correctness of their own opinions and theories. The difference, of course, was the

---

<sup>8</sup>'Partition' was the term used, familiar to Israelis from their own history under the British Mandate. The contemporary South African term was 'separate development'.

intensity of the debate and the absence of academic niceties - like allowing someone to finish a sentence before putting forward their own view. But South Africa's problems are clearly not important to them. They're interested because they're here now, but they don't care which way it goes in the end.'

The current research population reflected different emphases. Everyone who had been in the country for more than twenty years voted in the general election of 1994 and the majority of those eligible voted in the provincial and local elections of 1995. Most claim to approve the political transformation but, like many South Africans, are worried about personal security and the economic future of the country. The ambivalence about returning or staying discussed in the previous chapter, felt more by some migrants than others, revolved mainly around the tensions between affective commitment to Israel and the material and life-style ease of South Africa but also indicated increasing concern about the uncertainties of South Africa's future. In this limited sense, the unfolding transformation of South African society is considered personally relevant.

Another arena of personal engagement relates to changes in local government. The 1995 provincial and local government elections took place during the (traditional) week of mourning for an Israeli who had died suddenly and unexpectedly. Visiting the family on the day of the elections, I found a large gathering of Israelis, mostly middle-aged. The conversation, muted in the circumstances, consisted of only two topics: reminiscences and expressions of sorrow about the deceased, and serious exchanges about the elections. The latter were not detached analyses of the issues and the candidates; rather, they were exchanges in which the participants showed they were well-informed, emotionally involved, and deeply interested in the election outcome. Although addressing party-political positions on bread-and-butter issues, the terms of the discourse and the conceptual categories employed, were still couched in us-them and minority-majority terms, though with greater recognition of class (rather than 'cultural') factors, than in the past. For example: 'How can the ANC candidate in our area represent us adequately? Yes, he's white, and middle-class, but to have credibility in his party he will have to focus on the problems of the vagrants and the homeless.' And, 'I agree that the new government has to deal with the conditions in the townships. It's a huge problem ... it will take years to solve. And meanwhile? Must the areas of the minority deteriorate? After all, we pay most of the country's taxes.' The migrants of the nineties are

thus more engaged with the issues that affect them personally as citizens than in earlier decades. However, while they understand that the success or failure of the transformation process has direct implications for their own well-being, their concern with these matters remains focused on instrumental self-interest.

The informants are not reticent about their attitudes and do not pretend a concern for the general long-term well-being of 'the nation'. Rather, they claim the rights of citizens on the basis of having fulfilled the obligations they consider appropriate for citizens. They continue to use the language of identity and belonging (to South Africa) for segments of the population other than themselves. That is to say, while they express a wide variety of opinions about the wisdom of particular policies, they consider it the legitimate right of the black majority to make policy. The more politically sophisticated are aware of the difficulty experienced by some in accepting the reversal of power and authority. They are not, however, particularly sympathetic. At one Sunday morning gathering (see Chapter 6), Avi summarized very clearly the attitudes I encountered most frequently during fieldwork. To nods of agreement around the table, he held forth:

Whoever feels it is his country, must do what we did *ba'aretz*: he must work for it and fight for it. The colour of the government is not important .... Everyone talks about the Afrikaners - that it's their country too and they have nowhere else to go. So why are so many going to Australia? And coloureds too. Whoever feels he belongs, must prove he belongs. What? Didn't we give blood and sweat? There's no other way to build. If it's yours, you have to believe in it, and you have to do the work.

Motti, a close friend of Avi, called out, 'Nu, Avi, so why are you here? They don't need your blood and sweat *ba'aretz*?' Through the ensuing laughter Avi replied: 'Meanwhile I'm sitting here. I've given enough blood and sweat; now I give money. Let the next generation give the sweat - let's hope not blood. How long will I sit here? I don't think my grave will be here.'

Most of the conversation that particular morning was about political developments and changes in South Africa although the images, metaphors and sentiments were drawn from familiar and shared past experience of elsewhere. Avi's use of generalized impersonal statements about 'owning' or 'belonging to' South Africa distance him, and by implication those included in the 'we', from those feelings. Although neither the words nor their tone explicitly deny identification with South Africa, the moment the notions of owning and belonging were introduced, the focus shifted to Israel.

## **THE 'PROXIMAL HOST' MODEL**

Mittelberg and Waters (1992) present what they call the 'proximal host model' to describe a process of possible identity formation following migration. The model suggests that the identity of recent immigrants in the host country is influenced by the existence of a proximal host group, that is, the ethnic group to which the newcomers are assigned by natives of the host country. Recent immigrants might reject their identification with the group or might integrate into the wider society through assimilation into the proximal host group. Waters' (1990) findings from her work amongst West Indian immigrants to the United States, suggest that the socio-economic background of the newcomers and the social status of the proximal host group are the relevant factors. She found that the children of middle-class West Indian immigrants rejected their racial identification with African Americans, and distinguished themselves from other Americans on the basis of ethnic or national origin; whereas the children of working-class West Indian immigrants identified with African Americans.

The first issue arising from Mittelberg's and Waters' observations and pertinent to the current study, the assignment of newcomers to a particular category by locals, was discussed above. I suggested that non-Jewish South Africans are oblivious or indifferent to the presence of Israelis and that Jewish South Africans are aware of their presence and have opinions about them, but in the main have not attempted to incorporate the migrants into communal structures. This thesis will show that in regard to integration, the Israelis' self-definition is more salient than categorization by others.

A second issue arising from the 'proximal host model' relates to the extent to which socio-economic criteria differentiate the research population, whether measured by objective criteria, or by emic (insider) and/or etic (outsider) perceptions. As indicated in earlier chapters, the local Israeli population can be differentiated both internally and in relation to local Jews. Unlike Israeli migrants in Chicago (Uriely, 1995) and Los Angeles (Gold, 1994a), networks within the population are not based on distinctions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. While some migrants certainly express negative attitudes towards other Israelis, usually based on assumptions about educational levels and /or values, such remarks are rarely couched in 'ethnic' (ie, Sephardi-Ashkenazi) terms. Furthermore disparaging remarks in class terms are not restricted to Israelis. Although socio-economic criteria certainly play a role in

choosing friends, many networks are comprised of people with very different educational backgrounds and material resources. Both from interviews and from observing the identity of members of social networks, internal differentiation among Israelis rests more on universal criteria such as age, common interest, cultural 'style', and other perceived differences within a perceived shared 'Israeliness', than on socio-economic distinctions per se. The small size of the population is a contributing factor to the relative lack of internal differentiation in these terms.

As shown, in relation to South African Jews Israelis are as likely to be self-employed, are distributed similarly across occupational categories, and income levels are related more to the length of time the migrants have been in South Africa than to standard of education or specific occupations. The relatively high socio-economic status of local Jews (A. Arkin, 1984; Dubb, 1994) is certainly acknowledged by the migrants, and some individuals, particularly those married to South Africans, have utilized family and friendship connections for economic purposes. However, there is no indication that the socio-economic status of Jews acts as an incentive for Israelis to seek assimilation into the local community.

Yet the local Jewish community can be regarded as the proximal host for Jewish Israelis in certain respects. All the informants in this study acknowledge their Jewishness in some way, some with considerable ambivalence (see below). All are as interested and informed about Jews elsewhere in the diaspora as most South African Jews. In other words, the migrants see themselves as part of the larger 'imagined community', 'the Jewish People', which includes South African Jewry, even if this is not at the centre of their consciousness.

The identification with world Jewry and the concomitant expectations regarding mutual obligation, draw on the concept of *klal yisrael* and include what Liebman and Cohen (1990) term 'Jewish familism'. The family has always been important in Jewish life in both sociological and value terms, and the kinship metaphor extends to communities and to 'the nation' (ibid; see also Connor, 1993; Elazar, 1983; Tamir, 1991). For Jewish Israelis, awareness of diaspora Jewish communities and the obligations of 'the Jewish state' towards them are ubiquitous issues, embedded in school curricula, enshrined in the Zionist mission of 'the ingathering of the exiles', and frequently, often vehemently, debated. Acceptance of such obligations exists in uncomfortable tension with a second Zionist position, 'negation of the diaspora' - hence the debates.

For diaspora Jews, the sense of mutual obligation among all Jews is central to what Jonathan Woocher (1986), referring to American Jewry, terms their 'civil religion'. This holds for South African Jews too although given their geographical position, small number and strong Zionist commitment, their activities tend to focus more on Israel and local Jewish need than on diaspora communities, even while their consciousness certainly includes those communities. However, as this study shows, Israeli migrants in Cape Town, despite having internalised both the kinship metaphor and the legitimacy of the claims of mutual obligation, do little either to express or operationalize them in relation to local Jews.

Certainly the history of Jewish migration in all periods and places - except, I suggest, contemporary Israeli migration - records the assimilation of newcomers into local Jewish communities where they existed. For example, the major divides in the earliest period of contact between German and East European Jewry in America, or the tensions between the earliest English and German Jews and the later large wave of East Europeans in South Africa, disappeared within a short time.

One might therefore expect that if the Israelis remained in South Africa long enough, they too would 'disappear' as an identifiable population. However, there are four major differences between the examples cited (and others) and the population under consideration here. First, and most importantly, these migrants emigrated from a Jewish state, unlike Jewish migrants of the past two millenia. The implications of having been socialized within a dominant Jewish majority in a sovereign Jewish state are demonstrated throughout this study.

Second, most Jewish migrants of the past as well as many contemporary migrants, including South African emigrants, left their places of origin with no intention of ever returning, and few did. As indicated in the previous chapter, almost all the Israelis in Cape Town express the intention of returning 'sometime'. Whether they eventually operationalize that intention or not - and some have been in South Africa for more than thirty years - consciousness of being 'permanent sojourners' surely colours the way they live their lives in the meantime.

Third, as a consequence of their intention to settle, most other Jewish migrants engaged with the local communities they found on arrival, even when that interaction was acrimonious. Indeed, where such conflicts occurred, they were often about how to conduct local communal life, each faction convinced that its way was correct for all. By contrast, the

Israelis in Cape Town, do not and have never influenced or tried to influence Jewish public life, and are conspicuously absent from almost all organised communal activities. Interaction with the local community is mostly limited to private interpersonal relationships. Even those Israelis most integrated through a South African spouse, continue to assert difference and practise distance by choosing other Israelis for their closest relationships beyond family.

Fourth, most other migrants, before and/or until they merge with their 'proximal hosts', build their own community - whether in pockets, as with the *landsmannschaften*, or in order to protect or further their interests, or simply to provide a sense of *Gemeinschaft*. Local Israelis have done none of these. They have not established any specifically Israeli organisations, their personal networks are not interconnected, and, despite many seeking and preferring the company of Israelis, networks are not comprised exclusively of Israelis. Although there is some residential concentration (54% reside in Sea Point, 22% in the southern suburbs) they can be found in many parts of the peninsula. Most importantly, the reference by Israelis to a local Israeli collectivity, is unusual, infrequent, weak and sporadic (ie, not consistent or sustained) - except in reference and in contradistinction to South African Jews. (The degree of interaction and the absence of specifically Israeli organizations is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. The emphasis here is on conceptual categories.)

In what sense then does the local Jewish community serve as 'proximal host' to these Israeli migrants? It does so in two rather different ways of varying relevance for different segments of the migrant population.

For official *shlichim*, the organised community is literally their host as it employs them and is responsible for ensuring that they return to Israel. But as *shlichim* do not intend settling, and as the organisations that brought them have an ideological interest in preventing their permanent immigration, this category is largely irrelevant as a test of the applicability of Mittelberg's and Waters' model. However, when *shlichim* break their contract, or fulfil it and return later, the relationships that were established are often the critical variable in making the decision to migrate. There were several such families in Cape Town in the past who have since returned to Israel. The few examples in this study were all single women who came to South Africa as teachers in Jewish schools, married local men and stayed on. Some migrants call themselves *shlichim* when they come to South Africa for a contract period for Israeli companies, which seems to indicate a reluctance to be viewed as *yordim*. However, as their

work is usually not associated with Jewish communal matters, their relationships with the formal community are no different from those of other migrants, and they do not distance themselves from Israelis whose residence is clearly more established.

The first way in which the organised community operates as proximal host is in the facilities and services it provides for all Jews, including the migrants, who want or need them. Such services include the provision of Jewish education, religious institutions for worship, supervision of kosher foods, maintenance of cemeteries, and conducting life-cycle and other rituals, and welfare services. The last act as a safety-net, though often of last resort for the migrants, as fieldwork shows that in times of need most turn first to other Israelis in Cape Town, and to relatives abroad. The extent to which the migrants avail themselves of such services depends on need and personal predilections. But all are aware of the availability of the various services, which pre-empts the need for the Israelis to create these kinds of institutions.

Mittelberg's and Waters' model suggests that migrants utilize such structures as a means of integrating into the wider society, or indeed, into the proximal host group itself. The category for whom the local community serves more than the purely instrumental purposes described is comprised mainly of those Israelis who are married to South African Jews. But even within this category, which, by definition interacts more with local Jews than singles or families in which both spouses are Israeli, there is virtually no active participation in communal organisations or communal affairs. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 6, most 'mixed' couples' interactions of choice are with other 'mixed' couples. The existence of the proximal host group is also largely irrelevant for the few Israelis who interact more with non-Jews than with Jews.

However, the existence of a local community is relevant for all categories of migrant in this study in another and more profound way. The local community, actual or imagined, and more precisely, individual Jews, serve as a powerful referent for self-definition. As will be shown below, the criteria for comparison draw explicitly on the conceptual categories of differentiation described above and internalized in Israel. Even those (few) informants who deliberately distance themselves from the community, who do not use its services and who avoid interaction with local Jews (and in some cases, with other Israelis) - in the terms of the

model, those who reject identification with the 'proximal host group' - refer to the local community when describing themselves and their own lives in Cape Town.

This was brought home to me most forcefully and explicitly in the early days of fieldwork when I was still 'collecting' Israelis, through a chance encounter with a middle-aged Israeli woman, divorced and childless. My husband and I had gone to meet a visiting American. The visitor mentioned that he was staying with an Israeli friend, whose name was not known to me. When Yael arrived, I mentioned that my work was about Israelis in Cape Town and asked if she would be prepared to talk to me another time. Her immediate response was 'Why not? - sure. But I don't think I'll be any use to you. I'm an Israeli but I'm not religious and I have no connection with Jews or the Jewish community and I don't intend giving them any money.' I hadn't mentioned religion, Jews, community or money. I met with Yael on several occasions and discovered that she asserted Israeliness, maintained connections with Israel, visited frequently and considered her stay in Cape Town 'suitable for the moment'. However, she had no ongoing relationships with Israelis or Jews, knew only one Israeli, and did not plan to return to Israel if she left South Africa. She was thus atypical of the majority in many respects but her first response to my interest in Israelis alerted me to the kinds of assumptions I was to find.

Local Jewry thus serves both as an assumed host, known to be available if required, and as the primary local reference group in relation to identity issues. For the majority the reference function sharpens conceptions of difference rather than serving as a means to ease the way into the new society. The criteria utilized in differentiating are selectively appropriated from narratives and conceptual categories from the past. As Ganguly notes in her description of middle-class expatriate Indians in the US, 'the stories people tell about their pasts have more to do with the continuing shoring up of self-understanding than with historical 'truths'' (1992:30). Indeed, as Avruch notes, 'condensing history is crucial to the production of culture' (1992:625). The cultural baggage, including conceptual categories, that the Israelis bring with them is not jettisoned in their effort to counteract dislocation and even alienation; it is a resource maintained, though modified, in the new setting.

## BOUNDARY FORMATION

### The Significance of Religion

Glazer (1990) has pointed to the need to distinguish analytically between Judaism, the religion, Jewry, the people, and Jewishness, a feeling or condition which has as its referent identification with (usually selective) aspects of Jewish history and traditions. Yet despite publications with titles such as **Judaism Beyond God** (Wine, 1985) and movements such as Secular Humanistic Judaism, there is no doubt that ordinary people, both insiders and outsiders, consider the Judaic (ie, religious) component of Jewishness intrinsic to any conception of Jewishness. The ways in which 'the religious tradition has shaped the others [culture and history]' (Bell, 1961:472), is one of the aspects that complicates comparisons with other groups, except perhaps for Orthodox Greeks. The secularization of religious concepts by the socialist Zionist founders of Israel, and the fact that the Hebrew language does not distinguish between Judaism and Jewishness, further obscures the relationship between Judaism and Jewishness as understood and expressed by the Israelis.

In South Africa the designation 'Jewish' distinguishes Jews from all Gentiles in the minds of both sets, with little attention given to any distinction between ethnic and religious affiliation. In official parlance too the reference is usually religious. The South African equivalent for the North American 'Protestants, Catholics and Jews' is 'Christians, Muslims and Jews' (with Hinduism, African traditional religion and other religions usually ignored). Most Jews use the label 'non-Jew' for 'the other' and accept, at least implicitly, that religion is a component of both referents, irrespective of the speaker's personal religious practices or beliefs.

The migrants most frequently use the label 'the *goyim*' to designate Gentiles. Although the terms *goy/im* are used disparagingly by some, the usual intention is simply to designate non-Jew/s. Yet this term is not unambiguous. The Even Shoshan New [Hebrew] Dictionary (1961:175) offers three meanings for the word: (1) *am, umma*, nation (2) *nochri*, stranger/foreigner; *lo yehudi*, non-Jew, gentile (3) epithet for a Jew who transgresses the commandments of the Torah; unbeliever; or an epithet for a Jew who is ignorant in Jewish matters (my translations). The Grossman-Segal Compendious Hebrew-English Dictionary (1963) translates *am* as 'people, nation, kinsman' (ibid:273), *umma* as 'nationality, nation, race' (ibid:19) and *umot* (pl. of *umma*) *ha'olam* as 'peoples of the world, gentiles' (ibid). None

of these meanings mentions religion per se. While it would be stretching credulity to suggest that the migrants explicitly intend to signify nations or ethnic groups in their use of *goy/im*, the notion of 'the other' as another socio-cultural collectivity is nevertheless deeply embedded within the concept.

Within the South African Jewish community there is formal religious differentiation into Orthodox and Reform<sup>9</sup>, and more recently, a significant growth in ultra-Orthodoxy, most notably in Johannesburg. The numbers affiliated to the latter two streams are small and it is not a gross over-generalization to characterize the local community as Orthodox by affiliation and selectively traditional in practice, albeit with one segment becoming more observant and another more secular in practice in recent years. Internal religious differentiation impacts relatively little on communal affairs as there is a great deal of overlapping membership within communal organizations.

In Israel, however, although the designation 'Jewish' also distinguishes Jews from all Gentiles, the significant societal-level cleavage is between Jews and Arabs, whether the latter are Christians, Muslims or secular. The terms used by most Jewish Israelis are 'Israelis' (for Jews) and 'Arabs'; Arabs use 'Jews' and 'Arabs'. In the context of the history and current reality of the region, the differentiating designations used by Jewish Israelis thus emphasize socio-political distinctions, implicitly national rather than religious.

Yet in at least one official aspect Israeli Jewishness is presented (imposed?) rather differently: One of the ten questions on the Israeli census form asks 'Are you (1) Jewish (2) Moslem (3) Greek Orthodox (4) Greek Catholic (5) Latin (Catholic) (6) Christian - other (specify) (7) Druze (8) other (specify)' (quoted in Dominguez, 1989:154). And, according to Dominguez there is no parallel question such as 'Are you (1) Jewish (2) Arab,' etc.. In other words the most official Israeli definition of 'Jewish' is religious. Despite this, the meaning of the adjective and the question of who has the authority to define its meaning is hotly contested in Israeli society. The 'Who is a Jew?' issue, as it is commonly known, has implications for the Law of Return which guarantees virtually automatic Israeli citizenship (ie, legal civic status) to all Jews. The debates and court cases around 'Who is a Jew?' and the Law of Return (see Handelman, 1994; Herman, 1970) reflect popular confusion (and conflation) around the concepts of *dat*, religion, *ezrachut*, citizenship of the state, and *le'om*,

---

<sup>9</sup>Recently renamed Progressive Judaism but popularly still known as 'Reform'.

translated as 'nationality' and indicating membership of nations conceptualized in terms of peoplehood. The controversies also indicate the complexity and political implicatedness of the concepts with each other<sup>10</sup>.

Within Jewish Israeli society, there has always been significant social differentiation in religious terms but it has grown steadily, and in recent years, exponentially. Religious parties have been coalition partners in every government since the establishment of the state, and the unwritten so-called 'status quo agreement' - which attempts to deal with particularly contentious public religious issues - has been in effect since 1948. Since 1967 however, after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the beginning of religious-nationalist (re)settlement of those territories, the salience of religion, in politics in particular but also in society at large, has increased dramatically. Anti-Zionist Jewish religious groups have entered mainstream state politics and their skilful manipulation of the main coalition-seeking power blocs seriously challenges the so-called 'status quo'. Notwithstanding external perceptions of (the religious homogeneity of) 'the Jewish state', there is no doubt that religious controversy is a pervasive and powerful element in identity formation in Israeli society, increasingly becoming a basic criterion of 'othering' among Israeli Jews.

Israelis in Cape Town, the overwhelming majority of whom describe themselves as 'traditional' or secular (see below), are familiar with these issues and keep abreast of developments through the Israeli newspapers and news-videos they read and watch and through visits to Israel. Discussion and argument about the topic focus mainly on the increasing power, characterized as 'coercion', of religious parties both in party-politics and in changing the ethos of Israeli society. But discussion and argument about these topics occur mainly in the domestic and intra-ethnic domains, and tend to simplify and dichotomize the

---

<sup>10</sup> A good example is to be found in Dominguez' work (Dominguez, 1989:153-158). She describes an exchange with a 'highly educated' (Jewish) Israeli friend, Arye, over her representation of Israeli Jews and Arabs. Dominguez had referred to the census categories and recorded the response of one Arab, who saw the categories as 'a bureaucratic ploy to undermine Arab nationalism', and the response of one Jew, who understood the categories as 'a bureaucratic ploy to undermine Jewish secularism'. Arye had found 'something antisemitic' (ibid:155) in her presentation. According to Dominguez he had ignored various implications of her representation, including the 'Who is a Jew?' issue and the Law of Return, and had been concerned rather with 'what Israeli Jews do or don't do to Arabs' (ibid). Dominguez attributes Arye's 'special sensitivity' (ibid:156) to a 'foreignness about [her] exposition that heightened [her] foreignness' (ibid:157) and concludes that she made the 'cultural "mistake" of not separating the 'external' problem of Jewish-Arab relations from the "internal" problem of disunity and differentiation among Jews in Israel'. She adds, 'I made the mistake of linking otherness to selfhood' (ibid). The present study attempts to elucidate the link.

issues. Like Ganguly's middle-class Indian informants in the US, the Israelis in Cape Town tend to 'repress at least one set of uncertainties by rendering the past in coherent, unequivocal and undoubtedly artificial ways' (Ganguly, 1992:31). 'Disambiguating the past' (ibid) assists in ordering and thus making sense of the present.

### **Local Jews as 'other' for Israeli Migrants**

In his study of Israeli emigrants, Sobel (1986:50) asserts that '... there existed a certain confusion with regard to distinctions between Jewishness and Israeliness', while Shokeid (1988:210), in his study of Israelis in New York, insists that 'The Israeli experience ... sharply separate[d] Israelis and other Jews.'

From the fieldwork for this study it would seem that both authors are right. On the one hand Israelis discuss Jewish topics, issues, concerns as Israeli topics, issues, concerns - suggesting 'confusion'. On the other hand, they explicitly distinguish themselves from Jews, and most particularly from diaspora Jews, as in the following quotations:

1. I'm an Israeli, I cannot become a Jew. I don't know how to think like a Jew.
2. I speak as an Israeli, not as a Jew ...
3. When I meet new people, all sorts of people, they know I'm an Israeli - not a Jew, an Israeli ...
4. I'm an Israeli - I could never be a diaspora Jew.
5. Israelis and South Africans [Jews] are completely different.
6. There's a basic difference in mentality between Israelis and South Africans [Jews], maybe all diaspora Jews.

The apparent contradiction between Sobel's and Shokeid's conceptions lies in the terms of reference and/or the nature of the discourse. Another way to interpret the apparent confusion between Jewish and Israeli matters would be to understand it as the conflation of Jewish with Israeli concerns and vice-versa, and to appreciate the taken-for-grantedness of that conflation<sup>11</sup>. The first and most common evidence for this is the universal use by

---

<sup>11</sup>See Herman (1970) for a full discussion of the issue of overlap. Herman's study was carried out among Israelis in Israel. It showed that degree of religiosity and generational cohort were important variables in the relative weight given to 'feeling Jewish' and 'feeling Israeli', and in the degree of overlap between them. The present study confirms a significant degree of overlap in the Israelis' conceptions of Jewishness and Israeliness as applied to themselves and to other Israelis. However, it also affirms Shokeid's insistence on 'sharp' differentiation, when Israelis are comparing themselves - implicitly or explicitly - with South African Jews.

informants of the label 'Israeli' to mean Jewish Israeli. Qualification is added only when referring to non-Jewish Israeli citizens as in, for example 'Arab Israeli'. While it soon becomes clear in the work of both Sobel and Shokeid referred to above, that their subjects are Israeli Jews, neither author ever bothers to inform the reader that the term 'Israeli' designates only a part of that population, albeit the dominant part.

Evidence abounds to support the observation that Israeli Jews take for granted the intertwined-ness of Jewishness and Israeliness. For example, the causes of the high rate of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage in the US (reported in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey) were widely debated in the Israeli press. There was never any question that this American socio-demographic statistic was of direct relevance and interest to an Israeli readership. Or, despite vastly differing opinions about individual rights or levels of national responsibility regarding Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (including the irony of casting doubt on the very identity for which they were victimized there), all Jewish Israelis take for granted both the legal and moral right of 'Russian' Jews to settle in Israel, and the moral obligation of the state to both rescue and 'absorb' the immigrants. The same is true for the smaller Ethiopian immigration. Or, while there has been a great deal of acrimonious debate about the relationship between religion and state, no Israeli doubts the validity or legitimacy of expending so much political energy on Jewish religious issues. Finally, no contradiction is seen between laying claim in terms of Jewish history to the territories designated Judea and Samaria, while making the emphatic distinctions quoted above between being an Israeli and being a Jew.

What then is the discourse within which the distinction is made? What is the referent for 'Jew'? The most striking fact that emerges when the term 'Jewish' is introduced into any discussion with the respondents, is its immediate association with religion. Given the popular characterization of most Israelis as secular (and many as anti-religious), this almost automatic association seems surprising.

The term 'secular', however, tends to be used very arbitrarily. Only a very small minority of identifying Jews, in Israel or the diaspora, holds a conscious intellectual position on this topic and purposefully rejects notions of the divine or the sacred, and its extensions to *halakha* (Jewish law) and religious ritual practice. Such Jews are, for the most part, knowledgeable in these matters and concerned with 'the state of the nation'. They tend to

emphasize the universalistic and social justice content of 'the tradition', and those among them who recognize the Jewish calendar and the value of ritual tend to interpret or practise these as historical commemorations and/or occasions for strengthening family or national solidarity. The vast majority of the so-called secular, including the respondents in this study, are considered such by themselves and others in terms of practice, and are secular by default rather than by intent: they do not ask themselves what they believe, and practise whatever takes their fancy from whatever they know or remember. Theirs is not a conscious position, but rather an empirically observable phenomenon. It should also be noted that whereas in Israel the response of 'secular' assumes 'secular Jewish', in the diaspora it is expressed as 'Israeli, not Jewish'.

### **Jewish Ritual Practice in the Local Setting**

Table 4.1 shows the degree of the migrants' observance of selected religious practices. As religion was not the main focus of this study, no attempt was made to explore the religiosity of the respondents in terms of beliefs. In terms of practice, there is no single practice in Judaism that unequivocally indicates an individual's religiosity, although sabbath observance of both prescriptive and proscriptive *mitzvot* [religious commandments] is a strong indicator. In this population only seven percent could be considered 'observant' in terms of sabbath observance, and indeed 7.6% defined themselves as observant.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**Religious Observance of Research Population, Cape Town, 1996. (Percentages)**

<b>A. Individual</b> N = 260		<b>Attend</b> <b>Synagogue</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Fast Yom Kippur	58.8	Daily	2.7	-	-	2.3	95.0
Travel on Sabbath	92.7	Friday night	6.2	7.3	19.2	7.7	59.6
Yahrzeit ( N = 109 )	92.7	Saturday	5.0	2.7	11.2	5.4	75.7
<b>Kashrut</b>		Rosh Hashana	27.3	11.2	15.8	-	45.7
Eat in non-kosher places	89.6	Yom Kippur	42.3	16.5	8.9	0.4	31.9
Eat pork	21.5	Other festivals	5.0	5.8	20.4	4.6	64.2
Eat shell-fish out	43.8	<b>Mark in some way</b>					
<b>Synagogue</b>		Yom Hazikaron	13.1	11.5	6.0	0.6	68.8
Member	40.6	Yom Hashoah	7.7	4.5	6.0	0.5	82.3
		Yom Ha'atzmaut	30.3	35.7	16.8	1.1	16.2

<b>B. Home-based</b> N = 184		<b>Sabbath</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Mezuzah	80.4	Candles	38.9	17.2	12.7	3.2	28.0
<b>Kashrut</b>		Kiddush	29.1	11.4	7.6	4.4	47.5
Buy kosher meat	27.1	Special meal	41.1	24.7	15.6	0.6	18.4
Separate utensils	13.6	<b>Sukkot/Shavuot</b>					
Eat pork	10.8	Candles	20.4	16.0	16.6	8.7	38.3
Eat shell-fish	20.6	Kiddush	19.4	10.9	9.7	3.6	56.4
		Special meal	23.0	23.0	23.6	6.1	24.3
		<b>Passover</b>					
		Seder	69.0	19.6	5.4	-	6.0
		Matzot	66.2	21.1	5.4	-	7.6
		Remove chametz	8.7	1.6	5.5	-	84.2
		Chanukah candles	23.0	19.6	24.1	1.7	31.6

Outside of Israel, affiliation to a synagogue more often indicates a desire (or at least willingness) to identify with a particular tradition and its adherents, rather than being a reliable measure of religiosity. And many researchers of Jews have noted the gap between affiliation and attendance. Given the low rates of synagogue attendance noted in Table 4.1, the reported (paid-up) membership of 40.6% seems high. Yet, as I have noted elsewhere in this study, such survey results obscure a great deal of individual variation as well as change over time. For example, several respondents reported feeling 'obliged' to join a synagogue in diaspora although they had never been members or attended in Israel, while others vehemently opposed the idea that either affiliation or attendance was necessary for their own sense of (strong) Jewish identity. Several men who described themselves as secular nevertheless attended Friday night services fairly regularly and some, who observed few *mitzvot*, had made it known that they could be called upon to form a *minyan* [a quorum of ten men, a requirement for certain prayers] should they be needed.

Self-definition is also an unreliable indicator, of both practice and belief. Not only are the labels used imprecise and open to wide interpretation, but religious and non-religious people employ different referents in applying the labels and have different levels of knowledge of religious precepts and demands. Liora, for example, a divorced mother of two primary-school aged children described herself, vehemently, as 'totally secular' (*chiloni muchlat*). Yet she has a *mezuzah* on her front door, usually celebrates the festivals with friends, and participates enthusiastically in her children's preparations for school-related religious activities. Rami, on the other hand, described himself as 'God-fearing, very traditional, quite conservative, actually', though he attends synagogue only on Yom Kippur, eats meat in non-kosher restaurants (though not pork), and even minimal sabbath rituals, such as candle lighting and blessing the bread and wine are not conducted regularly in his home.

It is extremely difficult to compare survey results as not only is there considerable variation in the selection of items, but often different questions are asked about the same items. Similar to results on many surveys, a high proportion displayed a *mezuzah* and only six percent did not participate in a *seder* [Passover ritual meal]. Given the relatively low rates of observance, especially if only the 'always' responses are considered, the high proportion of those who commemorated the death of a spouse or parent was surprising. It would seem to

support other data, in this study and others, which suggest that family is of prime importance to Israelis.

At first glance, it seems that the overall rates of practice as reported in Cape Town are lower, on many items, than those for South African Jews (see Dubb, 1994; Hellig, 1984), Israelis in Israel (see Levy, et al, 1997) and Israelis in the United States (see Gold and Phillips, 1996). For example, 90.8% of South African Jews answered 'yes' to fasting on Yom Kippur (Dubb, 1994:116); 70% of Israeli Jews fasted always, and a further 10% sometimes (Levy et al:12); and on each of three surveys conducted in the United States, more than 70% of Israelis fasted<sup>12</sup>. In Cape Town only 58.8% fasted and only 42.3% attended synagogue always. But 68.1% attended synagogue at least sometimes. Or, for example, more than 70% of Israeli Jews in Israel observed the dietary laws outside the home and more than 60% when abroad (Levy, et al, op. cit) whereas in Cape Town 89.6% eat in non-kosher homes or restaurants and 43.8% eat shellfish outside the home. In Israel 63% refrain from eating pork or seafood (Levy, et al:12) and in Cape Town 56.2% refrain from eating shellfish. But 78.5% refrain from eating pork outside the home in Cape Town and 89.2% never have pork at home. From the fieldwork it seems that the pork taboo is indeed deeply ingrained but in addition, many Israelis associate pork with unhygienic conditions of slaughter and handling. It is noteworthy that 27% of households buy kosher meat (which is more expensive) even though only half that number use separate utensils for meat and milk.

The discrepancy between the frequency of candle-lighting and *kiddush* (the blessing on the wine) is noteworthy. In most South African homes, if candles are lit for the sabbath or festivals the blessing on the wine is more than likely to be read. It seems that in a fair number of Israeli homes this does not occur. It is not because women are more observant than men; it is simply that it is possible to light candles without a blessing and so create a 'special' atmosphere 'without God'. It is not possible to do the same with *kiddush* wine. One other difference from South African practice is also noteworthy: the relatively high observance of Yom Hazikaron, the Day of Remembrance for soldiers fallen in battle. This is not a religious holiday, although special prayers have been written for it, as is the case with Independence Day. Although there are Jewish holy days which have this as a second name, Israelis identify

---

<sup>12</sup>It should be noted that the Israeli results were based on a carefully conducted national survey, whereas one Los Angeles sample consisted of 40 respondents and another of 100.

the day before Yom Ha'atzma'ut, the Day of Independence, as Yom Hazikaron, and it is observed by many, not only those who have lost loved ones. Most South African Jews would be unable to identify the day.

In sum, it seems clear that there is little value in comparing surveys unless the samples can be shown to be representative and the research designs properly comparable. In this case it should be remembered that 3.8% of the population (5.4% of households) are married to non-Jews and 18.5% are single (21.6% of households). The latter datum is relevant in that single people often participate in home-based religious activity (even if for non-religious reasons) in other people's homes, so that their participation in ritual activity, as well as the nature of that activity can only be known through qualitative research. Furthermore, very few respondents in Cape Town were able to answer questions in this domain without qualifications, very often related to children. For example: 'We always did ... when the children were at home'; or, 'We're not really religious but we do it for the children'. One respondent, in South Africa many years and whose late husband was South African, reported that 'We never did anything special for Friday nights unless we had guests. Then we would do the whole South African Friday night thing'.

Because all the respondents are in ongoing contact with their relatives in Israel, and because religious occasions are publicly marked in Israel, all are conscious of these occasions whether or not they observe any of the laws or customs. Every respondent, irrespective of the degree of personal observance, communicates with relatives, and often with friends, in Israel on most of the important dates in the Jewish calendar.

### **Religion and Identity**

No matter how the term 'Jewish' arises, no matter whether the response relates to belief or observance, or whether it is proud and affirming, apologetic, or stridently antagonistic, it is frequently couched in terms of religion, as in the following examples:

a) Full text of the fourth quote, p115 above. The speaker is a 34-year-old bachelor, in Cape Town five years:

My life here is good at the moment, but I belong there not here. I'm an Israeli - I could never be a diaspora Jew. That is to say, they're good Jews, more than me. They go to *shul* [synagogue] and all those things but I'm an Israeli, it won't help [*lo ya'azor*, meaning 'nothing can change that'].

b) Full text of the fifth quote, p115 above, by Rina, a middle-aged married woman, who lived in South Africa with her family in the mid-eighties when her husband was on a research contract. The family returned to Israel at the end of the contract, and the couple and two of their four children returned to Cape Town in 1992:

Israelis and South Africans are completely different. Of course some Israelis are religious, but most are not. For Israelis being Jewish is a cultural thing, national, a kind of national identity, not religious ....

c) A 45-year-old professional man, in Cape Town ten years, married with two children - in a discussion with the author and two others, an Israeli teacher and a South African Jewish teacher, about how to raise children with a sense of Jewish identity:

You see, in Israel it's clear - either you are religious [*dati*] or you're not. When I first came to South Africa, I was told that a certain person keeps kosher [observes religious dietary laws]. Afterwards I saw him driving on *shabbat* [the sabbath]<sup>13</sup> and that looked illogical to me. So I asked him, 'What happened to your kosher?' and he didn't even understand [the connection between dietary and other religious commandments] and I certainly didn't understand then ....

While the association of 'Jew/Jewishness' with religion is striking, the terminology used is also indicative of distancing and differentiation. 'Israeli/s' (*israeli/m*) is always used to refer to Jewish Israelis in Israel or South Africa. The terms *datiim* [the religious] or *haredim* [the ultra-orthodox] - that is, not 'Jew' or 'Jewish' - are used when the conversation is specifically and explicitly about religious Jews in Israel. The term 'Jew/s' (*yehudi/m*), however, always means diaspora Jew/s. For example,

d) Full text of last quote p115 above. The speaker is 61 years old, married with three adult children, and in Cape Town 33 years:

There's a basic difference in the mentality of Israelis and South Africans, maybe all Jews in diaspora. The Israelis are secular and the Jews are involved with *shul* and *kashrut* [dietary laws] and the IUA and if their children will marry *goyim* [Gentiles]. We have to worry about wars and taxes and mortgages and new immigrants, from Russia or Ethiopia or wherever, even South Africa ....

e) Rami, a 26-year-old bachelor, in Cape Town two years, in conversation with the author about making friends:

---

<sup>13</sup>Driving is included in the category of 'work' and is thus prohibited on holy days.

The South Africans, when they hear I'm Israeli, they're immediately friendly - they are sure we're on the same wave-length just because we're Jews. But we're not; we're not even similar - [we] simply don't relate to the world in the same way. I don't exactly know [how] to explain. Maybe something like this: the Jews here are always worrying about something - will the daughter marry a *goy*? is the neighbour antisemitic? All the time they think 'Jew'. We're not like that; we, the Israelis, we don't worry so much - we're Israelis, and Jews, and proud of it, and that's that.

The quotations cited illustrate many of the themes discussed earlier: South African Jews function as a referent for contrastive self-definition, Israeliness and Jewishness are conflated in the informants' self-definitions, and diaspora Jewry is associated with religion. As noted, in Israel the idea of *le'om* incorporates the religious component because it means 'Jewish nationality' for Israeli Jews and signifies the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. It is also distinct from the concept of *eZRACHUT*, citizenship. However, in the encounter with diaspora, the informants, for the first time in most cases, become palpably aware that their *le'om* identity is conflated by others with citizenship through the designation 'Israeli'. Thus, gradually, the more conventional meaning of 'nationality', as identification with a state, is adopted in interaction with others because emphasizing 'Israeliness' allows differentiation from all locals, Jews and non-Jews. Furthermore, although Israeliness incorporates Jewishness in the migrants' self-perception, in Israel Israeliness is self-evident and unproblematic for Jews. There, Jewishness is the multivalent more ambiguous category. In diaspora, Israeliness becomes a conscious category to be reflected upon, debated, and 'explained', among themselves and with others. It is in response to this growing awareness that the Jewishness of Capetonians is articulated by Israelis as synonymous with Judaism and that religion becomes a central trope in distinguishing themselves from local Jews.

What is also implied in some of the quotations cited is a particular understanding of Judaism as Orthodox Judaism - a position summed up in the sentence 'The synagogue I do not attend is Orthodox'. Although only 38% of Jewish Israelis in Israel are 'strictly observant' or 'observant to a great extent' by self-definition (Levy, Levinsohn & Katz, 1997:3), and only 7% in Cape Town, Orthodoxy is nevertheless the referent in discussions of Judaism among Israelis in Israel and in Cape Town. This stems partly from state recognition of Orthodoxy as the official version of 'authentic' Judaism in Israel, with authority over personal status in matters such as marriage and divorce; and partly from the prominence, especially in recent

years, of public conflict over *halakhic* (religious law) issues. Despite the manifest variety of religious categories in Israel (Liebman, 1990; Sobel & Beit-Hallahmi, 1991), most are versions of Orthodoxy. And despite ongoing contestation over the relationship between religion and state, the religious proponents in that conflict are mainly Orthodox (Aronoff, 1989; Liebman, 1990; Liebman & Katz, 1997; Sobel & Beit-Hallahmi, 1991). The so-called 'status quo' agreement between the religious and secular, or more precisely between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox (Liebman, 1990:xiii; Liebman & Katz, 1997), so carefully crafted and upheld during the Ben Gurion era and beyond, has been progressively eroded. While at one level there has always been significant cleavage between the two categories, the status quo agreement in public life and party politics, combined with the closed (ghetto-like) character of ultra-Orthodox life-styles, had, in the past, succeeded in minimizing, or masking, the extent of the cleavage. Since the 'Begin era' (1977) at least, that cleavage has been increasingly exposed.

These Israeli realities are reflected among informants in Cape Town. The younger informants (under-35) are much more likely to be more emphatic in their self-definition as secular, as 'Israeli, not Jewish'; more consistent in describing various processes in Israel as religious 'coercion'; less discriminating about differences between various religious positions; and more disparaging of religious public figures in both countries. They are also more likely to associate Jewishness with religion. The older generation, even some of the ideologically secular among them, is more likely to express greater tolerance of *dati'im* (Orthodox) than of *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox). Older migrants express a much wider variety of opinions about these matters than younger informants and are also more likely to discuss Jewishness as emerging from historical consciousness and 'tradition' and Judaism as part of their 'heritage' (see Dominguez, 1989).

These issues arise during conversations specifically about Israeli politics, in more general conversations about changes the migrants perceive in Israeli society, and in relation to their own attitudes to religion and their own practices. In intra-ethnic interactions the issues are debated vehemently. Their comments about Judaism in Cape Town however, are not only about religion. Religious topics are, rather, a discourse through which to assert the nature of their own identity as distinct from the nature of Jewish identity that they, the Israelis, attribute

to local Jews as a collectivity. The migrants impute a degree of significance to religious matters for South African Jews that the local Jews themselves simply would not recognize.

Except for the tiny proportion of Israelis in Cape Town who define themselves as religious, all categories of informants emphasize formal religious practices - mainly synagogue attendance, dietary laws and sabbath observance - when distinguishing themselves from local Jews. Furthermore, all categories, including the small number of religiously observant, comment frequently on what they consider contradictions in local practice. One example is the remark quoted above in which an informant described not understanding how someone who observed the dietary laws could drive a car on the sabbath. For the informant, observing *kashrut* signified that the man was 'religious'(ie, Orthodox), and for the informant that definition had to include sabbath observance. Many informants, irrespective of their own practices, commented on how 'shocked' they had been when they first arrived in Cape Town, to observe Jews driving to synagogue, particularly on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Liora, self-defined as secular and in Cape Town five years, echoed the attitudes of many in her remarks:

I never go to synagogue except for weddings or barmitzvas but I have some respect! How can they drive to synagogue on Yom Kippur! Either you observe properly [*k'mo she'tzarich*] or not at all. *Ba'aretz* even the secular feel the atmosphere on Yom Kippur. Even if you don't fast and you don't care, you respect others. Here they fast but they drive to synagogue, and all that interests them [is] the nice clothes and who invited them to end the fast. Today it already doesn't amaze me like before but I still can't get used to it. It simply isn't logical.

The reference to 'proper' observance is of course a reference to Orthodox observance. Some informants indicated awareness of the denominational variation in Jewish ritual practice in the diaspora, though few showed any knowledge of the different practices or of theological distinctions. Most phrased their judgements of local practice negatively as 'hypocrisy'. Dina, who has been resident in South Africa for many years and whose late husband was South African, expressed it thus to an Israeli friend:

People can do whatever they want. After all, that's what most do and it doesn't matter what the rabbis say. What irritates me is the way they [South African Jews] pretend that they are Orthodox. Why don't they join the Reform? They make a fuss about Friday nights<sup>14</sup> but they eat anything and actually they do whatever they want. It's all just show.

---

<sup>14</sup>Unlike many Jewish communities, in South Africa the Friday evening sabbath service is better attended

Many informants share Liora's all-or-nothing attitude to religion and ritual observance and Dina's judgement of local behaviour as hypocritical. However, as shown in the table above, their own practice reflects as much selectivity as they report for local Jews. Indeed a surprising number of informants volunteered with pride that they conducted their Passover *seder* [ritual meal] *ke'hilchato* [according to the law]. In the terms of 'the Law', this was manifestly not the case since even basic dietary laws were not observed in most of these homes. What they meant was that they conducted a ceremony, used the symbols of the Passover, and read the Haggadah, rather than merely eating a festive meal. In Nurit's words: 'We make a *seder kehilchato*. They call it a seder but it's just an elaborate meal with matza and kneidlach' [traditional foods]. In all cases, the tone and context of the remark implied comparison with local Jews, and was intended to convey the Israelis' superior knowledge of the 'authentic' tradition.

Where both spouses were Israeli, most informants reported that they behave as they did in Israel in regard to religious practices, and feel no pressure from local Jews to exhibit more public identification by, for example, synagogue attendance. Dina again: 'I am a Jew. I don't have to go to synagogue to prove it. What do I care what others think? I am a Jew in my way. I know who I am - I don't need the approval/endorsement [*ishur*] of anyone else'. In the absence of the public dimension of Judaism, religious practice becomes totally privatized. In the private space of the home individuals and families practice what they choose, based on what they know from 'home' - most often expressed as 'I do what my father/mother did'. Given the diverse family backgrounds of the migrants according to every possible criterion (place of birth; refugees; 'ethnicity'; socialist/ religious/Revisionist Zionist; religious, secular, 'traditional', anti-religious; kibbutz, moshav, city residence, etc.), it is hardly surprising that the specific practices selected, as well as the manner in which and the degree to which they are practised, should be varied. Life-cycle rituals are carried out in the Orthodox tradition, and the sabbath and major festivals are marked (or not) to much the same degree that they would be in Israel.

Two families in the research population who claim to have led totally secular lives in Israel, deliberately initiated selective religious practices soon after arrival in Cape Town

---

than the Saturday service. In many households, even those whose members do not attend synagogue, the home-based sabbath rituals are performed regularly, elaborate meals are served, and guests are often included, especially members of the extended family (See Dubb, 1978 & 1994; Frankental & Shain, 1986).

because they were concerned about the possible dilution of their children's Jewish identity. Some families with school-age children who attend the local Jewish day school report that they began observing certain practices when their children started school, and do them 'for the sake of the children' - that is, so as not to present conflicting values between the home and the school. In three families, parents have made their homes kosher in response to their children's request. Whether such changes will be maintained in the long term cannot be judged from this fieldwork.

In families where one spouse is South African, the forms and degree of religious observance tend to follow local practice. For example, where the wife is the South African, home-based rituals, such as candle-lighting and reciting the blessings on bread and wine on the sabbath and festivals, are usually practised even if the Israeli husband has little knowledge of or interest in these matters. All the Israeli husbands in the 'mixed' marriages have co-operated in these matters and a few have become personally more observant. While most Israeli wives in 'mixed' marriages have also co-operated, a few have refused and none has become personally more observant. The differences shown in Table 4.1 between candle lighting and *kiddush* [blessing on the wine] usually occur in homes where both spouses are Israeli.

Three male informants reported increased synagogue attendance as they grew older. All had been in Cape Town for more than twenty years but all described the gradual change in this sphere as due to an increasingly felt personal need rather than as a response to local norms. More Sephardi males attend synagogue more regularly than either Sephardi women or Ashkenazim of either sex.

Ten (3.7%) of the informants (five men and five women) have non-Jewish partners or spouses and, as indicated in the previous chapter, those in this category have few relationships with other migrants and some have none. The Israeli partners among these couples retain contact with their relatives in Israel, especially at the times of Jewish festivals, and continue to visit but do not intend returning and have disconnected themselves from their pasts. Despite the otherwise total absence of any Jewish practices in these households, three of the four informants whose parents are deceased light a commemorative candle on the anniversary of their parents' deaths although none attends synagogue or recites the kaddish (prayer for the dead).

Uri, one of the three and married to a non-Jewish woman, has three young sons, all of whom are circumcised 'for reasons of health, not religion'. He added that he was glad his wife had agreed because 'I think I would have been uncomfortable if my own sons were not circumcised and I am. It would have been too difficult to explain. Of course, my sons are not Jewish so it actually makes no difference.' According to *halakha*, Jewish law, Uri's sons are not Jewish; according to recent changes in Reform practice, one Jewish parent is sufficient to claim Jewishness. Uri's referent however, is Orthodoxy. Questioned about lighting a candle on the anniversary of his father's death, he responded:

Look, I'm an Israeli. I grew up a certain way. I don't believe in God and I think that religion causes troubles, and wars. But I loved my father - he died before we married - and I know he would have expected me to honour/respect him, exactly as he did for his father all the years. Besides, I'm the only son, so I do it for my mother. I can't lie to her and say I do it if I don't. She always phones me on that day so I must do it. And I don't really mind - it makes a sort of special connection once a year.

Remembering deceased parents seems a particularly powerful imperative - a personal homage using a familiar and traditional form. Several informants who reported that they did not fast on Yom Kippur, would not mind if their children married non-Jews, and claimed that they 'permitted' the celebration of a son's or daughter's bar/batmitzva 'only for the sake of *shlom bayit* [peace in the home] - that is, because their spouses and children insisted - nevertheless commemorated the anniversary of a parent's death. Shoshana's sense of obligation to her deceased mother is particularly poignant, although Shoshana defines herself as 'traditional, not religious' rather than 'secular'. She was born in Poland in 1934, immigrated to Israel in 1938, and has been in South Africa since 1980. She tells of a childhood filled with memorial candles:

My parents both lost everyone [in the Holocaust] - parents, brothers, sisters, my mother's grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins, everyone ... My mother lit memorial candles for everyone she could remember. Some of them, she knew when they died; others she did together, on Yom HaShoah [Holocaust Remembrance Day], each with a candle of his own. [I] don't know whether she felt guilty that she survived, or whether she simply wanted them to be remembered. I never pried. But I and my brother and sister, we knew them all, by name, and who they were to us ....

Shoshana continues her mother's ritual - 'How [could I] not? They have no descendants' - but doubts whether her own children will perpetuate it. Her student daughter, however, told me that the mass *yartzeit* commemoration was a powerful influence in her

decision to study Jewish history, particularly Holocaust history, and that when she completed her studies and lived independently she intended lighting candles for those unknown deceased relatives on Yom HaShoah.

### **Romantic Relationships with Non-Jews**

Four migrants (three men and one woman) are married to converts to Judaism who interact with other Israelis and Jews in the same way as any of the other non-Israeli spouses. Only one of these couples both belongs to a synagogue and attends regularly.

Young singles express a wide variety of opinions about dating non-Jews, from 'why look for trouble' to 'what difference does it make? as long as he/she is a decent human being (*ben adam*).' While the majority claimed they would prefer to marry a Jew, several of the men said they would have to go 'home', that is, to Israel, to find a wife as 'South African women are too pampered'. And four have done so. None of the single women suggested they might favour an Israeli spouse but half said they hoped to marry Jews.

A small minority of parents of young adult children claimed that while they would prefer their children to marry Jews, marrying out would not bother them particularly as long as their children were happy and the prospective in-law was 'a decent person'. However dating non-Jews is certainly a concern for most parents with young adult children, especially those without daughters<sup>15</sup>, and they do try to influence their children against developing romantic relationships with non-Jews. When asked about returning to Israel, several couples with young children replied that they planned to return before their children reached dating age. Several couples also claimed that had they envisaged the prospect of their children marrying out, they would not have left Israel.

During the early days of fieldwork (before I had learned to be more careful), I heard from Sara that her son was planning to marry a non-Jewish woman who was in the process of conversion. I responded that I assumed the young woman was doing so through the Reform synagogue. Sara retorted angrily that 'of course' her future daughter-in-law was converting through the Orthodox. I asked why, as the process takes much longer and is considerably

---

<sup>15</sup>In Jewish law, the child of a Jewish woman is a Jew, irrespective of the religion of the father. As mentioned, Progressive Judaism has introduced what is called 'the principle of patrilineal descent' but, as noted, Reform is not the migrants' referent.

more restrictive than through Reform. Her immediate reply was: 'Because we are Israelis.' My first thought (not expressed) was that she meant that Orthodox conversion avoided problems in Israel, although I knew the family had established a successful family business in Cape Town and was not planning to return 'unless South Africa became intolerable'. However, in conversation she elaborated:

We are not religious but we certainly are traditional. How could we be an Israeli family if one of us was not Jewish? Such a person would always feel a stranger, and actually would be a stranger. None of us thought about Reform, not even for a minute - for us that's not considered a Jew like us ... If she had chosen to convert Reform I wouldn't feel that my future grandchildren [would be] Jews.

Sara and her family buy only kosher meat, do not eat pork at home or in restaurants (but do eat shellfish in restaurants), and are not members of a synagogue although they do attend on certain festivals. For Sara and her husband 'traditional' means carrying out certain rituals in the ways their parents did, observing major festivals with family (and like-minded friends), feeling connected to a collective past, and wishing to perpetuate such activities and feelings into the next generation and beyond. Her spontaneous response was to associate all of those with Israeliness and with Orthodoxy.

The most ubiquitous ritual objects in Israeli homes in Cape Town, as in those of their Israeli and diaspora Jewish counterparts, are candlesticks, a Chanukah candelabra and a *mezuzah* (on the entrance door at least). The most commonly observed practices are life-cycle rituals, the Passover seder and, where parents are deceased, anniversary commemoration of their deaths. As is the case for many other Jews, these objects and practices signify identification as Jews rather than necessarily indicating religious conviction or a sense of divine command.

Irrespective of degree of observance, all informants always communicate with relatives and friends at the times of festivals and life-cycle rituals. Most report that it is at these times that they most strongly feel both the absence of friends and family, and the differences between 'being Jewish' in Israel and in Cape Town. Many families celebrate weddings and barmitzvas, particularly the latter, in both countries. It is clear from their judgemental attitudes to Jewish religious practice in Cape Town that Orthodoxy remains the referent for most Israelis, almost irrespective of the number of years they have been abroad and irrespective of their own degree of religious observance. (Only one family belongs to the

Reform synagogue, and in this family the husband is South African.) Despite the prevalence of judgemental attitudes, the longer the migrants have been in Cape Town the more likely they are to claim to understand that identification with religion is a primary ingredient of Jewish identity for diaspora Jews. However, as they do not consider themselves 'diaspora Jews', the majority continue to articulate rejection of religion as a primary ingredient of their own Jewish identity, despite the evidence to the contrary. From numerous surveys conducted in various diaspora communities, it would seem that the majority of identifying non-Orthodox Jews, and very many of the Orthodox affiliated, behave in a manner very similar to their non-Orthodox Israeli counterparts. Thus while diaspora realities clearly do influence both notions of Judaism and Jewishness, and Jewish ritual practice, the precise ways in which this occurs, and the precise content changes can be documented only on an individual or family basis. In relation to many spheres of life of interest to the current study, knowing the general contours of an informant's life history enabled me to predict with fair accuracy what his/her response might be to a particular issue (tested, of course, against actual responses). This was least true for anything relating to religion or ritual practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVERYDAY DIFFERENCE AND THE MEANING OF 'HOME'

On the evening of Saturday November 5th 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a Jewish Israeli, at a political rally in Tel Aviv. Israelis, Jews, and indeed politicians and ordinary people the world over responded to the event. Below are examples of responses from Israelis in Cape Town in which the aspects emphasized by the informants seem to me to capture many of the identity factors alluded to earlier.

#### **Rabin Assassination: Example #1**

(Reported by Jennifer and Ronit, independently.)

Jennifer (35) and her husband Grant (36) are both South African born. Jennifer emigrated to Israel with her family in her early teens and completed high school, army service and university there. Grant emigrated alone after high school. The couple came to South Africa five years ago to establish a branch of the Israeli company Grant works for, and their two young children were born in South Africa.

Ronit (32) and Alon (35) are both Israeli born and have been in South Africa for six years where their two young children were born. Alon's parents and brothers had established a family business in Cape Town and Alon came to join the business.

The two couples became close friends after the women met by chance at their children's (Jewish) pre-school. Jennifer and Grant speak English at home but are equally comfortable with Hebrew when the four friends are together.

On the evening of the assassination, the foursome had been out together and had returned to Jennifer and Grant's flat for coffee. Casually turning on the television for late night news, all four were deeply shocked on hearing of the assassination. Jennifer: 'There was a moment's stunned silence, and then pandemonium. Ronit started crying, Alon was shouting 'It's not possible, it's not possible', Dani [her older son] woke up crying from all the noise, and at the same time we were all telling each other to keep quiet so we could hear the TV'. Ronit: 'Alon all the time kept walking up and down, shaking his head and asking "'What will be?

What will be?" We simply couldn't believe it. *Ba'aretz!*, Where was the security! I don't know which shock was worse - that Rabin was killed or that an Israeli shot him!

Each in turn immediately telephoned their respective families and some friends in Cape Town and Israel. They sat together talking over the event all night while watching television for all the information they could glean. Ronit called the babysitter and asked her to stay with the children as she felt 'too paralysed to move'.

Several days later the local Jewish community held a commemoration for Rabin and I enquired whether any of the four had attended. Jennifer's reply, in English:

What for? We did our mourning among ourselves. The whole week. It's our tragedy. If I were in Israel I would definitely have gone to Kikar Malchei Yisrael [where the assassination occurred] to put a candle and to sit there, together with everyone. I don't feel the same closeness to the locals. What do they actually know about Rabin? Just that he's the Prime Minister. But for us? - he's one of us - and one of us murdered him'. And in Hebrew: 'Terrible, terrible ... I don't need a meeting of the community - it doesn't speak to me' [ie, it doesn't appeal to me].

Similar sentiments were expressed by Ronit and indeed many others in the days after the event. Distancing from the local community was explicit and the distinctions sharp: us/them, intimacy/distance, knowledge/ignorance, insiders who belong/outsideers who do not.

What particularly interested me in Jennifer's response was her complete and automatic identification of herself as Israeli. She had asserted this on other occasions, manifested it in many observable ways, and indeed had often said, 'Only my accent in English is South African now'. Yet her home language is English, her relationships with her South African family (but not with past school friends) as warm and close as if she had never left, and Grant retains many non-'Israeli' attitudes and modes of behaviour and speech.

Ronit's (unsolicited) observation about Jennifer was equally revealing in this regard: 'It's good we were with Jennifer. [I] don't think I'd have coped if we had been with South Africans. They wouldn't have understood how hard the blow is. Jennifer and I relate exactly the same to what happens *ba'aretz* even if she is ostensibly [*kiv'yachol*] a South African.' When pressed to explain the last 'throw-away' comment, she replied: 'She was born here, no? She only left when she was about thirteen. But for me she's really [*mamash*] an Israeli. Grant less. She's like you. I never think about what she is - she's an Israeli'.

As has been repeatedly shown, most informants insist that there are marked differences between South Africans, including Jews, and Israelis. They find it easy to identify

difference and draw comparisons all the time, consciously or not. They find it rather more difficult to explain how some South Africans are 'like' Israelis. Rina, a perceptive professional middle-aged woman, in South Africa almost twenty years and more self-reflexive than many, suggested the following in conversation with me and a mutual Israeli friend, Rachel. The three of us had met for coffee and were chatting and gossiping fairly aimlessly. Rachel had told a story about another Israeli and ended it with, 'Typically Israeli'. Rina objected, saying that some South Africans were more Israeli than some Israelis and interestingly, chose to elaborate by describing how 'some' Israelis are 'like' South Africans:

It's a matter of orientation. The language helps, but language is not everything. Some Israelis, like [she named several] resemble more the locals. They speak Israeli Hebrew, and speak English with an Israeli accent, and maybe they don't go to shul, but their orientation is to here. [It is] true (*nachon*) that they are still interested in Israel - everyone is interested in his homeland<sup>1</sup>, no? - but all the things that [are] really important to them [are] found here.

Rachel then objected, saying that an Israeli always remains an Israeli and that she hardly knew anyone who fitted Rina's description. Rina retorted:

OK - there aren't so many. But we're talking about what makes an Israeli Israeli. The ones I mentioned, their behaviour is South African. [They have] adopted the behaviour patterns - how they entertain, manners, formality - in short, orientation. They even think like locals: what will others say.

I pressed for a description of what could make a South African like an Israeli. This time Rachel answered: 'To be open, warm, spontaneous. And the heart. It depends where the heart [is]. If the heart is in Israel - there's more chance. But for me, the language determines (*kova'at*) - language, and something that tells me the person knows *ha'aretz*, from inside - the humour, the energy, the tension, the tribulations (*tzarot*).

### **Rabin Assassination: Example #2**

Local Jews were equally appalled by the assassination and organized a memorial gathering during the week that followed. The event, advertised in the general press, was to take place in a communal hall. It drew a capacity audience, including some non-Jews. On arrival the public was informed that the venue had changed to the next door synagogue to

---

<sup>1</sup>Homeland. In Hebrew, *moledet*, root: *yalad*, to give birth, to be born, child. Therefore, place of birth. The word is often used to mean 'the homeland (birthplace) of 'the Jewish People' but is not linguistically related to any of the terms for nation, people, Jews, house, or home. It is also not usually used to ask where someone was born; that would be phrased literally: 'Where were you born?'

allow for evening prayers. As it is an Orthodox synagogue, men and women had to separate, men sitting downstairs and women upstairs. No-one seemed to object to the change.

Adina and Yoav, both professionals in their forties and in Cape Town ten years, were among the very few Israelis present. They had assured several non-Jewish friends and colleagues who enquired about attendance, that it was a public event and they would be perfectly welcome. Yoav and Adina were incensed by the change of venue, by their 'forced separation', and by the, in their view, implied exclusion of non-Jews by turning the memorial gathering into a religious service. Their anger was not based on antagonism towards religion; they define themselves as 'traditional', are members of an Orthodox synagogue, and indeed attend more often than most local Jews. They were concerned that their non-Jewish friends would be unnecessarily discomforted and they were vehement in their condemnation of both the organizers and the content of the programme. They shared the strong view that the event had been 'a shame and disgrace' and not at all appropriate for the occasion or the man it was meant to honour.

In discussion with the couple it became clear that their main objection lay in the content and the tone of the event (that is, a separate issue from the change of venue, etc, above): in their opinion insufficient attention had been given to Rabin's achievements, and the expression of emotion had been inadequate - both in terms of grief, and in terms of horror at the identity of the perpetrator. Yoav exclaimed:

So restrained! So dignified! So English! Where were the feelings? Where was the Jewish emotion? All analysis, concern with the peace process. Fine - I'm also consumed with anxiety (*achul charada*). But the man was murdered! - and one of us did it! an Israeli! a Jew! What a thing! And I must sit in a shul and listen to the rabbis and the *machers* [lay leaders] being self-important. Disgusting!

The following day I contacted Shmuel and Avi, two other informants who had attended, to glean their separate impressions. Both are middle-aged businessmen, in South Africa ten and sixteen years respectively, define themselves as 'traditional', and Avi is an official of the Sephardi synagogue. Neither commented on the change of venue, both considered the occasion dignified, and both were pleased at the good attendance. Shmuel added, matter-of-factly, without derision, 'It was alright (*be'seder*). Typical of diaspora (*galuti tipusi*): formal, official, *korrekt*' (ie, 'proper'). Avi commented equally dispassionately: 'I have no complaints. [One] can't expect more from them. They're Anglo-Saxons [a commonplace

Israeli description for English-speakers], [they] don't show feelings, and certainly not in public'.

I heard impressions of the event from many local Jews throughout the following days. No-one mentioned the change of venue, all thought the occasion suitably dignified and were favourably impressed by the content of the eulogies. Many were particularly pleased by the emphasis of all speakers that the peace process would continue and would not be subverted by the assassination.

The assassination was the main topic of conversation among all Israelis I met during the next few weeks. Some reported being unable to think or talk of anything else. Everyone I spoke to reported conversations they had had with family and friends in Israel, often initiated from Israel as friends and relatives wanted to be sure the migrants were informed. Almost everyone had been sent cuttings of headline news articles from Israeli dailies (not obtainable in Cape Town) and/or video material recorded from Israeli television. The factual news was common knowledge - the point of the calls was commiseration, the need to share feelings, as if sharing somehow eased the pain and horror. The number of calls and the volume of material from Israel indicated to me the degree of connectedness between the migrants and Israel, however long they had been in Cape Town. The ongoing calls from Cape Town underlined what many reported (then, and on each occasion of violent attacks in Israel): whenever bad things happen in Israel, 'comfortable' contradiction vanishes, the distance from 'home' becomes palpable, and the sense of alienation, usually managed successfully, becomes profound.

It is also worth mentioning the responses of the small migrant population prior to and during the Six Day War of 1967. Thirty years ago the local Israeli population was significantly smaller, contained proportionately more *shlichim*, and long-distance communication was not as commonplace as it is today. Virtually the entire Israeli male population resident in Cape Town and Johannesburg and still registered as reservists in Israel, tried to get to Israel, and some managed. To do that in 1967 required assistance from the South African Zionist Federation. Certainly in 1967, and again at the time of each subsequent war (the Yom Kippur war of 1973, the Lebanese engagement of 1982 and its aftermath, the Intifada, and the Gulf War of 1991), the local Jewish community was distressed by events in

Israel and conducted a variety of gatherings and/or fund-raisers to express their collective fears for, and solidarity with, Israel.

The respondents do not question either the sincerity or the legitimacy of diaspora Jewish responses to Israeli events, whether crises or celebrations. But apart from the Federation assistance in 1967, on all these occasions, and many lesser ones in between, Israelis have preferred to express their fears, sadness, concern, anxiety - and, in the case of 1967, joy at the outcome - to and with other Israelis, and have been conspicuously absent from the communal gatherings that marked those events.

## EVERYDAY BOUNDARY-MARKERS

### The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships

The most common and most intensely stated comparisons informants drew with South Africa, related to the quality of interpersonal relationships. Many perceived marked formality in South Africa, and remarked on a sense of freedom in Israel, often associated with neighbourhood life. Without exception, however, the migrants' first response to questions about life in South Africa, was to note how much they miss relatives and friends,

... real friends, that you grew up with. From school, from the neighbourhood, people you served with in the army. [You] can't compare that kind of intimacy with new friends, not even with the best friend. *Ba'aretz* ('in the land'), friends are like family.

The emphasis on absent family members was striking, even for those respondents who indicated quarrelsome relationships with some family members, and particularly when, in one formulation or another, informants mentioned their own sense of independence:

Orit, 32, is married to a non-Jewish South African, has been in Cape Town five years, and recently became a mother. She commented:

I left home, actually, when I enlisted. And I lived in America a year and a half, so that's nine years now, nearly ten. They don't organise my life for me - there shouldn't be misunderstanding. But I miss them [*hem chaserim li*], specially if there's something big, like Talya [the baby], or at the *chagim* [festivals]. You know how it is - family is family, there's no substitute.

Both Golan, 29, and his Israeli wife agree with his sentiments:

We're here only a year but now my little sister has decided to get married, so I have to go ... The money [is] a bit of a problem, but we'll do something ... She's my little sister, I have to be there.

It is not very surprising that recent migrants, particularly those who arrived alone, report feeling the absence of close family. It becomes more interesting when expressed as a particularly Israeli trait (see Liebman & Cohen, 1990:Chapter 2):

Anat, 23, single:

It's strange, I'm here three years and I have lots of good friends, Israelis, South Africans, all sorts. But I still miss the family [*hamishpacha adayin chasera li*], so I have to go home once a year to see them. Many times they drive me crazy when I'm with them, but that's the way it is. Maybe it's Israelis - Lisa [a South African friend] and I talk a lot about our mothers, and we laugh and say they could be sisters even though they've never met, because they both nag, you know, like all Yiddishe mamas. But it's nevertheless different - my parents and my brother and sister, [they] know me. [They] know where I go, and who with. We talk a lot, also laugh a lot. Lisa's mother doesn't know her friends. [They] don't just pop in [*kofzim, stam*], like *ba'aretz*, and make themselves at home.

The last quotation captures several conceptual dichotomies and ambiguities. The phrase 'Yiddishe mama' demonstrates the conflation between Jewishness and Israeliness in that this very Jewish concept is being applied to an Israeli mother. The same phrase also denotes the presumed affinity between Jewish Israelis and diaspora Jews by implying that all Jews have 'Yiddishe mamas'. Yet the speaker insists on differentiating Israelis from South African Jews - in this instance by reference to cultural style and the implied value judgement regarding intimacy.

Respondents with South African relatives praised them and expressed appreciation for assistance, but many agreed with Rachel that '... it's not the same. They're South Africans. Our whole way of relating is entirely different'. In other words, while loyalty to family was always expressed, perceived distinctions were always noted, sometimes explicitly construed as Israeliness, sometimes with the Israeliness of self implicit in the characterization of the others.

The overwhelming majority of respondents, irrespective of age, marital status, or period in Cape Town, identified similar 'trait lists' of local ways of acting and interacting - relative formality, 'closedness', lack of frankness, even hypocrisy - contrasted unfavourably (as with all stereotyping) with imputed Israeli characteristics of informality/ spontaneity, openness, and honesty or straight-forwardness (*dugriut*). Some associated the negative attributes specifically with Jews and/or Jewish matters, others generalized, but all, implicitly or explicitly, were engaged in self-definition of Israeliness, of difference, of boundary

construction, when making such judgements. Ofer, 26 and single echoed many with his complaints about formality:

[You] always have to fix [a meeting]. Even the young people, even if you can contact [them] at the last minute, you still have to call. You can't just appear, like with us. With us, if you're a friend and you feel like visiting, you appear - it doesn't matter if it's after nine!

Nurit, 37, married to an Israeli and in South Africa six years, focussed on the children:

You always have to fix everything before. I'm surprised each child doesn't have a diary ... But that's the way it is here - there's no neighbourhood life [*chayei shchuna*]. Obviously you get used to it - you have to, otherwise your children lose .... Life is wonderful for children *ba'aretz* - they're so free, and also more independent. They're not pampered [*mefunakim*] like here.

Sharon, married to a South African and mother of a two-year old, has been in South Africa four years. She also echoed many with her remarks about frankness and hypocrisy:

They're so false here, two-faced. They say one thing but they mean something else. Not everyone, of course, there's good and bad in every nation [*am*]. For instance, you meet someone and they say, they all say, 'you must come over' - but they never say when, or where. And every time you meet them, they repeat it - but nothing comes out of it. I think they're more honest in business here but I think we're much more honest in our personal relationships. I prefer to know where I stand.

Dalia and Yossi's older son lives in Israel and is married to an Israeli. Another son lives in Cape Town and is married to a South African Jew. After a recent visit to Israel, Dalia commented on the quality of relationships:

Even after 25 years there is still a difference. Friendship between Israelis is somehow more intimate, warmer, deeper - there and here. With the locals, there's something superficial, artificial - even after so many years, and even with good friends. [I] don't know why, but that's the way it is. Even with my daughters-in-law .... [They are] both a hundred percent. But with Sharon [the South African], there's a kind of distance that there isn't with Orna.

Shachar, 43, married to an Israeli and in Cape Town thirteen years, was particularly scathing about South African Jews:

I talk straight [*dugri*] - if they don't like it, too bad [*az lo*]. If they think I'm rude, well, that's their problem if they don't know the difference ... I can't stand this *golah* [diaspora] mentality - everything must always be nice [said and repeated in English] - he's nice, and she's not nice, and it's not nice to do this or that, and 'you must be nice to people'. Why? why **must** I be nice to people? I do my job, I talk straight, I have friends, and there are other people I do business with, and all these relationships are normal. But they're not all the same. With them [SA Jews], you never know what's going on. Because they're

always so **nice**. Nonsense! - they're not always nice, no-one is nice **always**.  
They're false, they have to pretend, they have to show a nice face to the *goyim*.  
We don't have time for such nonsense *ba'aretz*.

Gila, a 55-year old Israeli, in South Africa eight years, had just returned from a visit to Israel. She reported to Dalia (see above) how 'deep' her relationships felt with friends in Israel, even though she saw them so infrequently, compared with her 'superficial' relationships with South Africans, 'even with my good friends'. Dalia responded:

Everyone has acquaintances [*makarim*], and friends [*yedidim*], and a few - usually very few - really good friends [*chaverim*]. Maybe your Israeli friends are childhood friends - that always makes a different kind of bond. I'm sure your close South African friends are also good friends. The thing is, it seems to me that South Africans prefer a certain distance, and they don't like to assess things. Israelis are always criticizing, weighing things up - big things, small things. We put everything under a microscope - also relationships - especially relationships - to fix them or to change them. South Africans don't assess [said in English] so; they don't analyse every little thing. [They] accept more, [they] leave things as they are - you can see it in the whole country - at least among the whites. Maybe that's why you feel it's superficial - it's not so intense ...

Several points of note emerge from the self-and-other constructions of difference by the migrants. First and most noticeable is the degree of similarity amongst the views expressed, the degree to which both images, of self and other, are shared. Also striking is the degree to which the self-image approximates the Zionist ideal of 'the new Jew': free, independent, open and honest, assertive and down-to-earth. The Zionist ideal was, of course, formulated within an ideology of negating the diaspora, and by extension, of negating the traits assumed to characterize diaspora Jews. Here, without for the most part mentioning Jews, Zionism or diaspora, these Israelis provide a self-description (indeed, almost a caricature) which would gladden the hearts of the ideologues of yesteryear.

While virtually identical 'trait lists' were identified by most respondents, not everyone assessed them in the same way. Some expressed admiration, though mostly for public rather than inter-personal behaviour:

They are all so polite - [it's] a pleasure. Everyone waits in the queue, without pushing, without shouts. But I don't think the bureaucracy is better than Israel; one clerk passes you to another exactly like there - the difference is that here everyone accepts it, quietly.

One Israeli shop-owner distinguished between what he called 'Anglo-Saxon manners' and 'Mediterranean behaviour':

I had to fire her [his Israeli assistant]. She didn't know what it was to come on time. Or I had to tell her embarrassing things - like, if you're eating an apple and you go to serve a customer, you can't just go on eating the apple.

And he added with a smile that he is a Sephardi of Moroccan parents, while the assistant is an Ashkenazi 'who is supposed to know better, no?'

Second, while informants reported experiencing dissonance expressed in terms of opposing interaction styles - frankness/pretence, formality/spontaneity, independence of spirit/concern with the opinions of others - and considered these various attributes markers of their Israeliness, the dissonance itself was not viewed as problematic, but simply as a fact of life-away-from-home. Though most were judgemental in their comments, they did not suggest that these identified differences would in any way impede their interactions with non-Israelis, or promote exclusive interaction with Israelis. But when questioned explicitly, most expressed preference for interaction with Israelis. Observation of the composition of social networks on occasions of 'socializing by choice' confirmed that the preference is indeed practised.

Third, in most aspects the immigrants conform to what we have learned about all immigrant groups, especially in the early period after arrival: they miss their families, they enjoy speaking their own language and are quickly comfortable with complete strangers who are also Hebrew-speakers, and they readily formulate a set of stereotypes about 'other/s' which is highly suggestive about their self-definition.

Two aspects, however, do stand out as specifically 'Israeli'. The first relates to the emphasis and positive attitudes respondents expressed towards family and friends. Why should this merit comment? After all, many people have strong positive feelings about their kin, and by definition, about friends. But the intensity of feeling expressed is reminiscent of small face-to-face communities<sup>2</sup> and not usual for members of highly technological, highly urbanized and increasingly consumerist societies (Schoffman et al:1995). I believe these attitudes are closely related to what the respondents call *chayei shchuna* (neighbourhood life) - in other words, to Israel's urban geography and population density. Most of the Israeli urban population lives in apartment blocks in neighbourhoods dotted with small grocery (and other) shops, whose proprietors also live in the area. Because most people own their apartments,

---

<sup>2</sup>Liebman and Cohen (1990:22) refer to Avruch (1981) in making a similar point, although the characterisation there uses the term 'traditional' rather than face-to-face.

which are very expensive relative to earning power, residential mobility is not high. Most children attend state schools which are zoned in neighbourhoods and most extra-curricular activities for school-age youth also take place within neighbourhoods. Immediately after high school the overwhelming majority of the population enlists for two years (women) or three years (men) for compulsory national service - deferment is possible for a tiny elite only, on academic merit, and for some ultra-Orthodox. The result is that strong, intense, long-term bonds are formed both in the neighbourhood and in the army.

The residential norm has been changing rapidly over the past few years as rising affluence in the country has seen the spread of single-family suburban housing, formerly the preserve of only the wealthiest. However, the norm outlined above is still valid for most of the migrants described here, and accounts at least in part for their emphasis on the intimacy of social relationships as a mark of Israeliness which distinguishes them from locals.

Liebman and Cohen (1990:Chapter 2) make a strong case for entrenched notions of familism among both Israeli and American Jews. They also suggest that the intensity of familistic feelings is stronger among Israelis than Americans (ibid:24) not least, as they show, because most interactions are conducted in a familiar, personalistic mode, even in situations which in many other countries would require impersonal, formalistic behaviour. In other words, because Israelis have internalized the idea of kinship (and equality) among all Jews by virtue of their Jewishness, personalistic 'familistic' behaviour, whether expressed as 'warmth, intrusiveness, rudeness, or even violence' (ibid:22), is extended to all Jewish Israelis, and is not restricted to relationships among actual family and friends. The attitudes expressed by the migrants in Cape Town support not only the existence of such attitudes and behavioural norms among Israelis, but also the transfer of these behaviours and sentiments to the new setting where they become markers of Israeliness. The kinship metaphor is also evident in the coherence of South African Jewish communal life and in the sense of obligation and responsibility to and for all Jews evinced by Jewish organizations. In the South African case this sense has been reinforced by societal-level entrenchment of notions of ethnic exclusivity. Yet ironically, while the informants acknowledge 'kinship' with South African Jews, they describe South African Jews as 'formal' by contrast with their self-defined and positively valued informality.

The second aspect that stands out as specifically Israeli relates to the migrants' concern with news about Israel. All migrants show particular interest in news from 'home' but the frequency and intensity of concern of Israelis is probably unique, though understandable in the light of Israel's ongoing security problems. All the migrants expressed dissatisfaction at the paucity of Israeli news easily obtainable in Cape Town, all watch CNN for news of Israel, all communicate directly with Israel - greatly facilitated by electronic technology - whenever and as soon as they hear of any 'incident'. Indeed, I know of no respondent, no matter how long he/she has been out of Israel, who is not apprised of major events within, at most, twenty-four hours of their occurrence.

The intense concern stems partly from habit: in Israel everyone is accustomed to hearing news regularly, and in many cases, every hour. Buses, supermarkets, many offices tune into the headline news for reassurance that nothing disastrous has happened anywhere in the country in the past hour. The concern also relates partly to the small size of the country, coupled with the fact that virtually all Israeli Jews are army reservists for a considerable period of their adult lives. There is thus a good chance they might know someone involved in whatever incident might occur and/or might themselves be called up (via the radio) if some serious action were to take place. For people inexperienced in war, this sounds melodramatic; for ordinary Israelis, it is all too real. The migrants' concern is not diminished by residence in diaspora; indeed, as seen in the responses to Rabin's murder, anxiety is often heightened by physical distance from the actual events.

### **Language as a Primary Boundary Marker**

In many areas of the world, newcomers, migrants or strangers are immediately identifiable by external differences such as physical appearance or dress. Of course it is also true that in many places such differences merely denote the heterogeneity of the local population - almost any street-corner in New York or London, and almost any market-place in Africa, India or the Middle East suffice as examples. Even amongst locals whose physical appearance and dress are essentially similar, subtle differences may denote class or occupation in addition to individual differences in taste and style. Differences in styles of interpersonal communication - for example, physical distance from the speaker - have also been attributed to ethnic origins (Kottak, 1994:40).

For all migrants, a primary daily reminder of relocation and dislocation certainly resides in language. As one informant phrased it, 'I am here twenty years and I know my English is fine but as soon as I open my mouth someone asks me where I'm from'. For almost every category of migrant, relocation entails some language-related change. For those who migrate within areas of a relatively homogeneous country, there may be only minor changes of dialect, accent or local expression. For those who migrate between countries with the same dominant language - English, French, Chinese, among others - the main differences will also be accent and local expressions. Those who migrate from multilingual settings might assimilate linguistic change more readily than those with experience of only one language. For those whose pre-migration language of daily discourse is markedly different from the dominant language in the new setting, language remains a powerful boundary marker. When the original language also has a different alphabet (for example, Russian, Greek, Chinese, Hebrew) and/or is written in a different direction (for example, Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew), as is the case for Israelis, even the daily negotiation of space (for example, street names, bus destinations, public notices) can be a regular reminder of dislocation. In Alice Kaplan's eloquent rendition:

There is no language change without emotional consequences. Principally: loss. That language equals home, as surely as a roof over one's head is a home, and that to be without a language, or to be between languages, is as miserable in its way as to be without bread. (1994:63)

Below I deal with language as one means of evoking feelings of 'home'. Here I am concerned with Hebrew as a boundary marker that distinguishes Israelis from non-Israelis, a marker that signifies affinity among Israelis, and that constitutes a major ingredient of feelings of Israeliness. To the extent that the migrant population can in any sense be called a community, group or collective, language is its prime marker. Like all language communities, the Israelis in this study share, through Hebrew, a world of culturally specific associations and a sense of immediate familiarity. Of course, among native Hebrew-speakers certain usages, particularly slang, will hint at internal differentiation, most notably of class/education. For those migrants who were relatively proficient in English on arrival, as well as for those who have been in South Africa for many years, this boundary, though still significant for identifying 'insiders', is somewhat weaker as a mark of differentiation.

It is worth noting that seventy percent of the 130 (fully Israeli) households use Hebrew as the home language, even though, in some cases, both parents were South African born. The

remainder use both Hebrew and English. In the latter case most parents spontaneously offered 'explanations' for the dual usage - as though not speaking Hebrew only were a betrayal of some sort that required explanation. Those whose stated intention is to be in South Africa for a limited period were determined that one benefit to their children (some expressed this as 'compensation') would be proficiency in English; others claimed that English had 'crept in' as a consequence of it being a more 'natural' medium for their young children but added that they were determined to preserve the children's Hebrew proficiency 'even if only to speak with their grandparents in Israel'. In every case where one parent is not Israeli, the Israeli spontaneously expressed pride at the children's proficiency in Hebrew, or regret at its lack.

Knowledge of Hebrew does not of course guarantee ongoing interaction between its speakers. Friendships and other relationships depend on many additional factors. However, sharing an 'at home-ness' in language certainly facilitates the formation of more durable relationships and is often a first indicator that such relationships are possible. Various settings provided evidence for this phenomenon. Several young mothers first met at their children's nursery school where they overheard other mothers speaking to their children in Hebrew. Several men who participate regularly in the weekly Sunday morning (all male) get-togethers (see Chapter 6), and who are married to South Africans, commented that speaking and hearing Hebrew was one of the most important aspects of those meetings. Chaim, fifty-two, married to a South African and in Cape Town eighteen years, expressed it thus:

The meetings are very informal - we laugh and joke, tell stories and talk nonsense. Sometimes I don't even know everyone. But it's all in Hebrew, you understand, so it's easy, and comfortable. It doesn't matter if I don't know someone - [we] immediately understand one another. Most of the time I hear Hebrew only there, and I'm thirsty for it.

Amnon is thirty and single and has been in Cape Town four years. Most of his friends are young single Israelis who spend their leisure time together. He too emphasizes language:

With the *chevra* [buddies] [we] always speak Hebrew -and the atmosphere is almost like at home. You don't have to explain things. [They] understand you even if you don't finish the sentence .... My jokes in English are not so successful; in Hebrew they always work.

If proficiency in the Hebrew language operates as a boundary marker for Israelis and between Israelis and others, it can also serve to spark interaction with non-Israelis. Ofrat, a 25-year old Israeli who has been in South Africa for two years, and Linda, a Jewish South African, are good friends. Their friendship began at a popular pizza restaurant where Ofrat

was working as a waitress. Linda, who learnt Hebrew as a pupil at the local Jewish school and spent several months after high-school on a kibbutz in Israel, recognised Ofrat's accent and initiated a conversation with her in Hebrew. Although their friendship is conducted mainly in English, Linda is sufficiently proficient in Hebrew to be comfortable when socializing with Ofrat and her Israeli friends who always speak Hebrew when they get together.

'Hanging out' at several eating places in Cape Town during the course of fieldwork provided opportunities to witness first encounters between strangers which, in many cases, later proved to have been the start of ongoing relationships. I also heard many stories of contact being initiated between Israelis and locals, Jewish and non-Jewish, through knowledge of Hebrew. All Jewish Capetonians who have attended the local Jewish school<sup>3</sup> have some level of familiarity with Hebrew. And many young South Africans who have travelled abroad, have spent some time in Israel and learnt some Hebrew. However, for language to operate as a primary ingredient in friendship-formation it must go beyond the simple knowledge of Hebrew words (and the obvious observation that actual relationships are formed when people like each other and find something in common). If the non-Israeli has spent time in Israel and is able to relate to and evoke a variety of experiences of Israel, expressed through the use of particular expressions and contemporary slang, the initial connection is more likely to develop into a relationship. The evocation of a familiar landscape, social as well as physical, the suggestion of shared experience, creates an initial affinity which facilitates interaction.

That accent, vocabulary and fluency - 'at home-ness' in the language - influence perceptions, is something I learned many years before beginning formal fieldwork among Israelis in Cape Town. During a period of two years in Israel, I had conscientiously worked at acquiring an 'authentic' accent, before returning to South Africa. Since then, when speaking Hebrew, it is usually assumed by the listener that I am an Israeli. This seems to relate more to what might be called 'cultural style' than merely to linguistic competence. I have been told, when overheard speaking on the telephone for example, that I change personality when I

---

<sup>3</sup>DellaPergola and Dubb estimated that 55% of all school-age Jewish children in South Africa attend Jewish day schools (1988:100). The headmasters and the various Jewish educational authorities have always claimed a much higher proportion. The proportion for Cape Town in the 1990s is believed to exceed eighty percent. If nursery-schools are included, the proportion is believed to be even higher (pers.com., Headmaster, Herzlia High School, 1997).

change language. One school-teacher informant explained why she related to me as an Israeli as follows: 'I know you're a South African - but that is simply a fact I have filed away somewhere. It's not relevant to our interaction. You talk like an Israeli, behave like an Israeli, think like an Israeli'. When pressed to elaborate, she resorted to a 'linguistic' interpretation which hinted at more than that: 'I think you think in Hebrew. When we speak, I don't at all change vocabulary or speed of speaking, as with other Hebrew speakers. Their Hebrew may be good, but their way of speaking simply isn't Israeli.' (emphasis added).

Migrants who have been out of Israel for many years often intersperse their speech with English words. This occurs even more often in reverse, particularly when no equivalent concept exists in English. I have already mentioned the usual use of *ba'arets*, meaning 'in the Land', and *moledet* to refer to Israel. A second example relates to the form used for the days of the week in Hebrew: 'first day (Sunday), second day', etc. But the seventh day is always *shabbat*, sabbath. Consequently, Saturday night is *motzei shabbat*, the going out of the sabbath, and most migrants use the phrase even when speaking English. This registered for me through a particular encounter, an encounter which also corroborated the 'native as stranger, stranger as native' consciousness of self I outlined in Chapter 2. One of the participants in an international anthropology conference in Cape Town that I attended during fieldwork was an Israeli Arab. Standing behind him at the lunch counter, I asked, in English, about the meaning of his first name. He responded by asking whether I spoke Hebrew. When I answered in Hebrew, the casual impersonal exchange became more intimate almost immediately: we discovered mutual friends and colleagues and the rest of our extensive conversation was conducted entirely in Hebrew and included making arrangements to meet on *motzei shabbat*. Other conference participants were invited to join us and our common language was English. The import of the phrase, however, only registered when, Atzmi, speaking in English, turned to me and said, 'OK. Then we'll meet here at seven on *motzei shabbat*.' Perhaps the use of the phrase would not have registered even then, had the encounter not been so 'entangled', to use Clifford's (1994) term: a Jewish South African and an Arab Israeli in Cape Town, using a Hebrew-language Jewish concept understood only by them although two other Jews were present, one South African, one Argentinian.

Many of the examples and illustrations presented here support Shokeid's emphasis on the 'affective roots of ethnicity' in his description of Israelis in New York (1988:213). He

contrasts their voluntary, sporadic and loose interaction patterns and their ongoing connectedness to Israel through communication, visits and the media (ibid) with what he terms their 'alienation' from 'American Jewry, ... the Jewish religion and its association with Diaspora tradition' (1988:212). He notes that Israeli Jews share ancestors with American Jewish immigrants, but asserts that 'To be born or raised in Israel is an irrevocable act of transformation' (1988:210), so that the Israelis 'cannot easily share the American Jews' satisfaction with the attainment of civil equality while preserving a separate identity'. He insists that 'the creation of a semi-Israeli environment in America [ie, an ethnic enclave] is indeed antithetical and paradoxical to the essence of Israeli identity rooted in a revolutionary denial of Diaspora existence' but notes that 'it seems that this abstention does not handicap their entry into American society' (1988:210-11).

The data for Cape Town suggest that although Israelis reject identification with local Jewry, the latter's presence is a crucial element in the self-definition through which they assiduously attempt to preserve a separate identity. However, they do so as self-confident individuals by drawing on the conceptual categories acquired as members of the majority and dominant sector of the society in which they were socialized. Notwithstanding ambivalence and periodic 'alienation', most migrants most of the time manage these discomforts successfully and comfortably because their reality is very much 'both-and' (Israel and South Africa, like and unlike local Jews, 'rooted' and cosmopolitan) rather than 'either-or'. The absence of specifically Israeli 'ethnocommunal institutions' (Shokeid, 1988:211) facilitates the 'sojourner' rhetoric of the 'permanent sojourner' categorization that seems to fit (see Chapter 3). While personal networks provide the framework for familiar, cognitive and affective 'like home' cultural activities and interaction styles, the local Jewish ethnocommunal institutions serve the functional purposes of Jewish ethnic institutions. Rather than understand the migrants as 'alienated' immigrants as Shokeid does, I interpret their attitudes and behaviour as the ongoing negotiation of transmigrants with the contradictions of the present. The evidence from Cape Town confirms the analytic 'sharp separation' Shokeid notes between the Israeli and earlier Jewish migration experiences as well as the different components of their respective Jewish identities (1988:210). It also supports his attribution of the contrast to their different pre-migration origins - in my terms, the vulnerable, dependent, minority diaspora experience of the Jews, as against the confident, majority, members-of-an-independent state

experience of Jewish Israelis. Shokeid notes the contradictions and, like the migrants, explains them through the conceptual separation of entities constructed in essentialist terms. I view the migrants' lived reality as located in multiple spaces, displaying multiple-identity despite asserting Israeliness ('essence'), and manifesting consummate skill and flexibility in negotiating the unresolvable contradictions of the complex world with its many simultaneous and often opposing claims on the individual. Israeli migrants in Cape Town negotiate the processes of simultaneous implicatedness not by denying felt identity and belonging, but by utilizing conceptual categories that make sense to them, that promote self-confidence, and that provide a firm base from which to navigate the many streams that together comprise their worlds. I suspect the Israelis in New York do the same. Post-modernity, especially for middle-class voluntary migrants, is not an existential space of inevitable conflict between uniformity and hybridity, of fixity or flux. It can be a shifting kaleidoscope whose shapes and hues reflect one another, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes with bright clarity; whose relationships change unpredictably, but whose new patterns can provide fresh pleasure with every shake.

**The Meaning of 'Home' or Are Migrants Really the "'unhomely" inhabitants of the contemporary world'? (Bhaba 1994:271**

Yael opened the door of her new flat in response to my ring at the doorbell. 'I've just popped by for a minute to wish you luck' I said, handing her the traditional bread and salt<sup>4</sup>. 'Yoffi ['great'], feel at home [*targishi babayit*]', she replied, ushering me into the living-room, 'I'll put the kettle on and we can talk'. 'Do you feel at home?' I asked, following her into the kitchen, innocently referring, in my mind, to the new apartment. 'Yes and no' she replied, 'yes and no ...'.

So pensive was her reply, that it determined the tone and substance of our conversation that day, and of many conversations with Yael and many others on other occasions.

But 'feeling at home', with its usual connotation of being comfortable in familiar and therefore presumed-to-be-comforting surroundings, is not the only meaning of 'home'. Nor does this meaning necessarily identify 'home' with one particular place in the world. For most

---

<sup>4</sup>Bread and salt, symbolizing life itself, are traditionally brought to a new home to wish its occupants an auspicious new beginning.

people<sup>5</sup>, and for most Israelis in Cape Town, 'home' is place and space, material and conceptual, people and things, an idea and a sense. The concept, indeed the word, in whatever language, conjures up memories and associations, sights, sounds, scents and tastes. Yet to say this much (or this little) is to say nothing about the centrality of the concept in one's daily life, or its capacity to evoke powerful emotions - positive, negative, ambivalent, ambiguous - or, indeed, to locate it in time and space.

Bammer (1992:vii) points to the 'indeterminate referential quality' of the term 'home': that it may refer, even simultaneously, to a deeply familiar or a foreign place, or it may be no more than a passing point of reference. She notes how this quality has two different, even contradictory, consequences: 'On the one hand, it demythifies 'home' as provisional and relative; its meaning discursively produced by a particular speaker in a particular context for particular ends. ... On the other hand, its very indeterminacy has lent itself to the continual mythification of 'home' as an almost universal site of utopian (be)longing' (emphasis in original). The examples below illustrate the simultaneity of both consequences.

A commonplace way in which migrants, however defined, talk and think about 'home' is to associate the notion with 'country of birth/origin/childhood'<sup>6</sup>, that is, to locate it firmly in the past. One example familiar from English literature, is the colonial/expatriate (ex-patriot?) who speaks frequently and nostalgically of England as home after a lifetime in 'the colonies'. But does this locate 'home' firmly in the past? Even for these fictional Englishmen/women with idealized and situationally 'fixed' memories and imaginings? Surely those very memories and imaginings inform their present lived experience, intermingle with the realities and imaginings of 'here and now', become incorporated in their notions of self (and other), providing, in fact, one of the bases from which comparisons are drawn and judgements formed? - especially judgements about whether the 'here and now' can be called 'home'. As I show below, this is certainly one way in which the migrants in this study relate to 'home'.

Another way in which at-least-once-displaced persons talk and think about 'home', also often associated with country of origin, is to assume that one can have only one home,

---

<sup>5</sup>'Most' here clearly excludes the very many in the world who have never had a 'home' in any of the meanings delineated below, or whose experience of home was so 'momentary' as to be 'known' only in the ache of its absence.

<sup>6</sup>See note (1), this chapter, for the linguistic connection between birth, childhood, homeland.

that everyone has only one 'home proper'. This essentializing conceptualization is connected to the ideas of rootedness, soil, blood and nation discussed in Chapter 1. The limitations of such a conception are immediately obvious: the home(s) of childhood give way to the various homes of adulthood and each carries with it associations of time, place and relationships.

Indeed, all migration experiences undermine the notion that home is unique, singular, although refugees, for example, may experience consecutive homes and may not consider these 'home' at all. The South African literature on forced 'relocations', although describing people in their 'home' country, is replete with examples of multiple shelters, some of which become 'home', however temporary, while others do not<sup>7</sup>. Rouse (1991:8-14) has shown how Mexican migrants re-map their worlds, how home has become plurilocal, both the rural Mexican township and Silicon Valley across the border where they seek work, 'a single community spread across a variety of sites' (ibid:14). The Israelis in Cape Town, however, do not fit Rouse's description. They do not constitute 'a community'; rather, they are an aggregate of individuals for whom the plurilocality of home is 'felt', simultaneously. Some informants, like other middle-class, voluntary transmigrants - the more conventional term is 'transnational migrants' - articulate home as elsewhere, some as 'neither here nor there and yet others as 'both here and there'. Their lived daily reality suggests that because 'home' is not simply 'place', it is in fact an amalgam, comprising both here and there, with 'there' frequently signifying more than one place.

### **Home as Family and Language**

'When you have to go there [home], the way they talk is yours' (John Hollander, 1991:47).

'This is the land in which the mother learns the mother-tongue from her children. This is the land in which the fathers ate sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are excellent'. (From 'This is the Land' [Israel] by Ephraim Kishon)

'Home is family', said Batya, 'but the trouble is, the family is here and there'.

As shown in earlier chapters, the migrants have considerable knowledge and experience, personal and/or vicarious, of family dislocation and separation. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, and despite the high divorce rate in Israel, 'family' is a highly valued,

---

<sup>7</sup>See Jones (1993) for particularly moving descriptions of the effects of these processes on children.

even idealized construct. No matter whether personal experience of family is of affection and warmth or 'tyranny and control' (Douglas, 1991:287), no-one who has lived in Israel can escape exposure to the implication that family togetherness is 'natural', proper, and good. There may be other societies that have experienced both the degree of cultural diversity and the intense focus on family disruption and 're-membering' (Bammer, 1994:92) apparent in Israel, but there can be few where these experiences are forged 'at home'. As mentioned, in Israel Jewish 'familism' (Liebman & Cohen, 1990) is commonly extended, in private and public discourse and in interpersonal interactions, to the (Jewish) Israeli 'nation' and to the dispersed 'Jewish people'.

However, suggesting this degree of shared experience among Israelis does not imply that all relate to family in the same ways or to the same aspects, nor that 'family' is the only way of thinking about 'home'.

Sami was born in Israel, the son of Syrian immigrants. His wife Chaya was born in Germany but raised in Israel, where both children, now aged 27 and 23, were born. The family arrived in South Africa in 1981. Their son has been studying in America for the past five years and their daughter is currently a university student and lives with her parents.

According to Sami,

Home is a place where I live [*gar*, dwell], work, and earn, where my wife and children are. I have lived [*garti*] in many places and I speak many languages and yes, in many ways I feel most at home *ba'aretz*. Mother and my sister live [*chayim*, live] there, and there people speak my language. But I don't think I can afford to return, so what matters most to me is where my children will live [*yichyu*] - and that I don't know yet, so I'm here.

Sami's sentiments express the link, through the present, of past to future and all are associated with family and home, though his own future home as yet has no place. His choice of words is revealing: although the Hebrew roots for 'dwell' and 'live', equally current and colloquial, are often interchanged, Sami uses *gar* consistently to denote where he resides, but *chai* to describe where his mother, sister and children live. Like most of the migrants, he and his wife visit Israel 'as often as we can afford' although in recent years she has alternated these visits with trips to her son in America. They 'speak' to their son almost daily via e-mail, and to Israel by phone 'every few weeks and always before the *chagim*' [festivals]. Chaya claims to have a closer relationship to her family in Israel than Sami to his (a claim made by many of the women in the study), but

in all the years I worked [she recently sold her business] there was never much time for thinking ... Sure I missed them but now I miss them more [*hem chaserim li yoter*], especially with Asher in America, and because of that I find that I miss home [*mitga'aga'at habayita*<sup>8</sup>] more than I have in all the years we've been away.

For Sami and Chaya, wherever they may live, home and family will always be intertwined.

Dafna's experience was quite different. She was born on a kibbutz to a Polish mother and Latvian father, who had immigrated to Palestine as young idealists and had met and married there. Her husband Aaron was born in Germany, raised in Canada and immigrated to a kibbutz for ideological reasons at age seventeen. They left the kibbutz with their three children one year before coming to South Africa in 1990.

I first met Dafna at an evening for Hebrew-speakers addressed by the Israeli ambassador and had never seen her before though I had met her husband. We were introduced by a South African who was speaking to me in English at the time. When I called to ask if I could meet with her again, and reminded her when we'd met, she was reluctant until it became clear that our conversation would be in Hebrew, and then she became enthusiastic. She was one of the few to use the metaphor of 'roots' to describe herself:

I am like a plant without water here ... I can speak enough English to get by, but I can't be me in English. In fact, I can't be me at all ... We only meet Jews, and I can't say what I think about lots of things because of his [Aaron's] work. We simply don't speak the same language. The Jews here don't understand that you can be a Jew without God, and for me there is no God. Understand, I am a Jew. But I'm an Israeli and my roots are *ba'aretz* ... Aaron is happy here. It's as though he needs the politeness and the order. The children have adapted also and are doing well. Apparently this is now home - but the roots are there.

While Aaron and the children are happy in Cape Town, Dafna is very isolated, seemingly by choice. She and Aaron are both only children. His father lives in Canada and her mother on the kibbutz. Her father-in-law is religious and his annual visits are 'a nightmare' because of her uncompromisingly negative attitude to religion and religious ritual. Dafna is

---

<sup>8</sup>In Hebrew, there are various, equally colloquial, ways of expressing missing, yearning, longing. One form is rendered as an action of the speaker, as in *ani mitga'age'a elav*, 'I am missing/yearning for him'. Another makes the missed person the subject, as in *hu chaser li*, translatable as 'I miss him', but literally, 'he is absent to me'. These are different roots, not simply transitive and intransitive forms of the same word. In one sense, speakers who use the latter version are being accurate: the missed person is absent, there is a void not completely fillable by a substitute. Yet in another sense, as some examples show, the absent people, those who so clearly represent a strong sense of 'home', are also 'present'.

also uncomfortable when visiting the kibbutz both because of a 'problematic' relationship with her mother, and because she feels

like a traitor. First we left the kibbutz and afterwards we left the country. The whole kibbutz was my family, always, until the moment we left. Now all I have are a few close friends, there, friends with the same roots. They are my family, they and Aaron and the children.

Dafna is multiply dislocated. She feels 'not me' when speaking English (and her English is poor) and despises the Israelis with whom she could converse: 'What are they doing here? They're only interested in money. I prefer to stay home with the children and the housework'. She avoids relationships beyond the immediate family, and avoids local Jews both because of language and because she is afraid her attitudes to religion might jeopardize Aaron's standing in the Jewish organization where he is employed. Aaron seems unaware of her self-imposed isolation; work and the children seem to be his only concerns. While Dafna claims she would prefer to go 'home' - 'but I never say because Aaron and the children are content' - her alienation is clearly not only a function of being in Cape Town. Hers is the only such case in the entire research population. While some migrants had few or no connections with Israelis or Jews, they led full lives and were engaged with work and interests and relationships within and beyond their families.

In a different conversation with Dafna, about what and where children in Israel learn about the diaspora, she remarked, 'On the kibbutz we didn't have grandparents. Most of the parents had either narrowly escaped the war, and lost everyone, or were survivors who had hardly any relatives anywhere. The kibbutz was our family'. It was the first sentence that prompted me to review earlier notes of meetings with Dafna and helped contextualize her current family relationships and attitudes. Indeed, for many informants of Dafna's generation (she is 49), the three generation family was not the norm, and many felt responsible for again separating the generations, just when families were being rebuilt.

A further example raises different issues of 'family', 'home' and the consequences of migration: Ofer's parents divorced in Israel and his father remarried a South African who had immigrated to Israel. Ofer, now 25 and in Cape Town almost three years, remained in Israel with his mother and two brothers when his father, step-mother and their two children came to South Africa in 1989. But he missed his father who also needed him in the business he had established in Cape Town. Ofer lived with his father for a few months, then shared a flat with some young Israelis and now lives alone. He sees his step-mother as infrequently as possible

but has an excellent relationship with his father whom he sees every day at work, and he communicates regularly with his mother and brothers in Israel. He has many friends, Israelis and locals, Jews and non-Jews. He works hard, has a busy social life and seems fully at home in Cape Town. Yet, for Ofer,

This can't be home, it can't ever be home. Home for me [can] only [be] *ba'arezt*. There I was born, there [are] the real friends, friends you grew up with, friends from the army, even friends you must visit in the cemetery ... I came because I love my father and his children, and he needs me. I hope to make enough to buy a flat *ba'arezt*. There I'll find a wife and build a home. I took my girlfriend to Israel [South African Jewish who knows some Hebrew, his first visit since leaving]. Yo! did I learn a lesson! My friends here warned me not to take her, but I wanted to. Now she's an ex-girlfriend. She couldn't do anything. She made no effort. She didn't understand anything, not only the language ....

Nitza is 33 and the mother of two young children. She and her husband Boaz came to Cape Town in 1989 in response to a job offer from Boaz's uncle who had already been in Cape Town for two years. Soon after arrival Boaz and his uncle quarrelled and Boaz started his own business. In Israel Nitza worked as a history teacher; in Cape Town she is a full-time housewife and mother. When we first met three years ago the couple was planning to return to Israel 'next year'. Since then they have had a third child and now talk of returning when the eldest finishes primary school. Nitza's father died when she was 12 and her mother when she was 18. She and her older sister, who lives in Israel, are very close and communicate daily via email and also talk on the phone often. She is also close to Boaz's parents - 'closer than he is' - and stays with them when she visits Israel.

Family is very important to Nitza. She feels an obligation to have her children grow up near their grandparents, especially as Boaz is an only child. 'The children develop so quickly, they change all the time, and now they speak English. I don't want the children to become strangers to Boaz's parents'. As Marianne Hirsch so succinctly phrases it in 'Pictures of a Displaced Girlhood': But which of those changes are due to chronology, which to geography? (1994:73). Nitza added, 'From a certain point of view, home is wherever you make it. In the end, what's really important? - only family. All the rest [is] a question mark. You can rely on family. Sometimes you quarrel and sometimes you maybe even hate them. But in the end family is family'. This attitude seemed to jar with the gossip I had heard about the quarrel between Boaz and his uncle. A few weeks later the uncle's wife remarked: 'Nitza is really a good girl - young but wise. She came to me before Pesach and said, 'The men

quarrelled - that's how it is in business. Let's make a family seder as usual. Family is family, business is business'. So that's what we did and relations are almost like before. *Kol hakavod la* [all respect to her]'.

### **Home as Dwelling and Neighbourhood**

As shelter and domicile, Israeli homes in Cape Town, like those of any other urban dwellers, can be differentiated according to the usual criteria of income level, proximity to schools if they have children of school-going age, and personal taste and style.

Most Israelis with school-age children send them to the local Jewish day schools and if they can afford it, live close to the schools. All these parents, without exception and without being asked, compared their children's experiences of going to school, and of neighbourhood life, with their own experiences in Israel. Their accounts of how and why they live where and how they do reflect not only the inter-connectedness of 'there' and 'here' but also much ambivalence.

Raya and Ami live in an upmarket suburb within walking distance of both their children's (Jewish) schools. The couple came to South Africa in 1987 for graduate studies, intending to return immediately afterwards. A job offer for Ami changed their plans - 'it's so much easier to get ahead here' - and Ami taught briefly at a local university before starting his own consultancy business in premises within walking distance of their house. Raya, wanting to go 'home', was nevertheless persuaded to stay once Ami agreed to her conditions: not to sell their Israeli apartment and two visits a year to Israel with the children, where they attend Israeli schools. She teaches from home and insisted on living close to the children's schools:

I couldn't bear the thought of jumping into a car every few hours to fetch and carry them. Besides, it makes them more independent and responsible: they have to make their own beds before school and they have to get there on time, just like we did. The children here are too dependent on their mothers.

Ami is a keen diver and hiker and enjoys the ease of access to sea and mountains in the Cape. However, he feels guilty at not raising the children in Israel:

Life is wonderful for children *ba'aretz*. Much more free. Everything is in the neighbourhood; they can come and go with their friends, and it's safe. We looked for the most similar thing so, in South African style, we bought a house with a garden and a pool in a good neighbourhood.

Raya recalls that it hadn't been easy:

We don't have much money, and we lived very modestly before, like students, you know. We never bought anything decent unless we thought it appropriate for Israel ... After I came to terms with the fact that we would stay, I said to Ami 'We can't live on suitcases all our lives' [*al mizvadot* - not 'out of suitcases', but rather 'as if we're about to depart']. So we bought the house - but we didn't sell the apartment *ba'aretz*, so it was hard. Only now, slowly, have we begun to furnish it more or less to our taste.

Not all the migrants in this sub-set own houses, with gardens and pools; nor are all the couples as clear and articulate about the rationale underlying their decisions. However, the themes expressed here were repeated time and again, with detailed and graphic descriptions of the parents' experience of freedom, safety and close inter-personal relationships of 'life in the neighbourhood' (*chayei shchuna*). There was also considerable ambivalence: appreciation of the relative material ease, quiet, and space of Cape Town, and of the perceived politeness and orderliness, while at the same time valuing positively the pace and the interpersonal relationships in Israel, recalled as more intimate, intense and 'honest'.

Since beginning fieldwork, awareness of escalating crime in the country as a whole has become a matter of great concern, and several migrants have indicated that it might cause them to leave 'sooner than planned'. Ironic as it may seem when judged by news reports of bomb blasts in Israel, most migrants consider Israel much safer than today's South Africa. One couple, however, both born in South Africa and resident in Israel seventeen years, returned recently because of the recent spate of 'terrorist' attacks in Israel. They have one teenage daughter, and though the father describes himself as 'probably pathologically overprotective', he couldn't overcome his fears and they have decided to live in Cape Town until the daughter finishes high school. Although burglaries and violent crime have increased in its 'white' suburbs, Cape Town is still considered safer than many other parts of South Africa and the migrants' objective circumstances have not really changed despite the new anxiety.

A further theme to do with 'home' as house/dwelling was mentioned by Raya and Ami and recurs amongst all categories: owning a home in Israel. As indicated in Chapter 3, whether they own property in Israel or not, this is a central concern for everyone. Some impart the fact of home ownership with a sense of pride, if somewhat defensively, as if they have to apologize for being in Cape Town: 'I didn't come here just to make money - I had everything in Israel, a flat, a good job ...'. Others state it as their primary reason for being abroad. Tzachi, 27, came to South Africa on holiday four years ago and 'saw opportunities'.

He returned to Israel, married, and he and his wife now run their own business. He commented:

It's impossible for a young person these days to buy a flat in Israel. And you must buy - rents are in the sky, and there's nothing [available] since the Russians [the large Russian immigration to Israel since 1989.] Here it's much easier. Even if we don't go back for another few years, it's still worth trying to buy. One must have a house 'at home'- it's one way of ensuring [*l'havtiach*] connection, and it's also insurance [*bituach*].

The last two points quoted are the most frequent reasons given for owning property in Israel. Owning property seems to be equated with commitment to Israel, to having a literal stake in 'the Land', to ensuring that 'home', as shelter and refuge, will always be there. In Ofer's words:

I think this country has a great future but who knows whether we will always be welcome? Jewish history is a powerful teacher. We have learnt over thousands of years that we, the Jews, are not always welcome, even in places we think of as home. Look at Poland, Germany ... So now we have Israel ... Sure Israel will always accept us, also without anything. But there [it's] also a 'rat-race'. Better to be independent and secure.

And Ety's version:

We took a chance when we came. We didn't know anyone and we didn't know whether it would work. Yair wanted to sell the flat - he'd heard about financial rands<sup>9</sup>. But I wouldn't let him. You have to have a place to go back to if things don't work out. Right now I'm happy here - but life does its own thing, right? Better to be sure.

### Things ... and Food

Like most migrant households everywhere, the presence of 'elsewhere' is evident - in photographs, artworks, wall calendars, ornaments, books, audio and video tapes in Hebrew, children's toys, and the like. Sometimes the objects are less visible<sup>10</sup> - as in the bath sponges in Nina's bathroom: 'you can't get decent sponges in this country', was her comment; or the drain-covers for the kitchen sink in Sara's house; or the cloths and rubber-wipers used for washing floors in Talya's house: 'The Israeli *smartut* (rag, floor-cloth) is the only thing that cleans tile floors properly', she said, 'I bring new ones every time I go and Rami brings when

---

<sup>9</sup>An exchange control strategy, no longer in operation, that advantaged investors who brought foreign exchange into the country.

<sup>10</sup>I am sufficiently familiar with many Israeli products to recognize them and have many in my own home.

he goes'. In many homes my commenting on these items led to comparing our individual 'standard' shopping lists for visits 'home'. Indeed my familiarity with and preference for many of these simple household (and food) items was often the catalyst in changing the tone of a visit from a relatively formal interview to a chat between 'insiders', not only, but particularly, with women.

The consumerism that has been noted in Israeli society<sup>11</sup> is also evident: in most homes, even in the sparsely furnished households of young, newly arrived singles, music systems, video-recorders, computers, several telephones, at least one of which is portable, often cellular, are clearly visible and virtually every home has a microwave oven and many other labour and time saving devices. There is nothing particularly Israeli about the consumerism of upwardly mobile middle-class suburbanites - except, perhaps, the number and range of these items and the open delight expressed in having 'the latest' or 'this model isn't even available here'.

Many homes also display objects that are specifically Jewish although these are often more prominent in households where the wife is South African. The notable item in this regard are candlesticks, used in 'traditional' Jewish homes every sabbath, and a standard, rather than ornamental, part of the decor. More frequently found in homes where both spouses are Israeli, and also in the homes of several of the singles, are the candelabra used for the Chanukah festival. These are usually of very modern, obviously Israeli design. Eighty percent of households display a *mezuzah*<sup>12</sup>, often very decorative, at least on the entrance doorpost. (I did not always ask whether the *mezuzot* were kosher, but certainly some of the younger migrants did not know what the question meant, which is also true for many South African Jews.)

Israeli food items, some available locally, others acquired from visits and visitors, also bring an Israeli flavour into the South African home. These (and other ethnic) foods have become popular generally and more readily available in Cape Town over the past ten years, so

---

<sup>11</sup>See Jerusalem Report, 24 February, 1994

<sup>12</sup>*Mezuzah* (s), *mezuzot* (pl). The term for the parchment scroll (today often paper), in a metal or wooden box, attached to the right-hand doorposts of dwellings. The scroll contains two excerpts from the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21. Most Jews attach these only to the doorpost at the main entrance; very observant Jews attach these to the doorposts of several, prescribed, rooms. The container can be very simple but is often very ornamental. To be considered kosher, the scroll must be hand-written on parchment by a religiously observant specialist scribe.

that they are no longer a clear marker of Israeliness. Nevertheless Israelis continue to bring particular foods from Israel and the practice does not seem to diminish with the number of years spent abroad. It is also not immediately visible. For example, on my first visit to Ofer, a young bachelor, I was making notes about the content of his flat while he went to make coffee. I had just noted that apart from an Israeli calendar and newspaper next to the telephone, there was nothing Israeli in the living room, when he walked in asking, 'Do you want *shachor mi'ha'aretz* (black (Turkish) coffee from 'the Land'), *nes shel Elite* (instant coffee made by the Israeli Elite company) or Nescafe?'

Not only actual food items, but also the times of meals and the style of table settings and food presentation are constant reminders of Israel in the South African home. For example, the ingredients of the everyday conventional Israeli evening meal are the ubiquitous Israeli salad plus 'whatever there is' (*ma sheyesh*). I have never eaten an 'ordinary' supper in an Israeli home without this particular kind of salad being one of the offerings, and someone always remarks that Israeli vegetables are so much better. Also, the only Israeli women who do not automatically serve two kinds of cake on the same plate without enquiring whether one wants any at all, are the few older women who have lived in Cape Town for more than forty years, and they also have a tea tray prepared if I have come by arrangement. Indeed, when inviting or being invited to tea, or to pop in 'in the afternoon', it is necessary to stipulate whether 'Israeli afternoon', that is 5pm, or South African, 3-4pm. Similarly, one of the reasons Ami, mentioned above, chose to locate his office close to home was in order to eat dinner<sup>13</sup> at a 'normal' hour (2pm).

The particularities of the foregoing illustrations are Israeli. The observation that all migrants behave in these ways for a very long time, perhaps forever, in their new settings is a commonplace. The point I wish to emphasize is the interpenetration of worlds at this very local level; that 'home' in this dimension is simultaneously South African, Israeli and whatever additional particularities individuals have brought from that distant 'home', which in turn is part of their very individual 'Israeliness'.

---

<sup>13</sup>I have translated the Hebrew *aruchat tzohorayim* or *tzohorayim*, for short (lit. 'midday meal') as 'dinner' as it usually means 'main meal of the day'. This can be very confusing for 'foreign' Hebrew-speakers.

## Unconditionality

'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,  
They have to take you in.'  
'I should have called it  
Something you somehow haven't to deserve'.

(From 'Death of the Hired Man' by Robert Frost)

The most fundamental element of 'home', it seems to me from this data, is familiarity. But not simply the kind of instrumental familiarity we all acquire, more or less rapidly, in new surroundings, and not only the kind that is prodded by material reminders of home. Rather a deeper, more enduring kind of familiarity, if elusive to define; the kind that reflects unconditional belonging and acceptance. And this seems true for the most trivial item, such as reading a poster from a moving vehicle without knowing you've read it, simply because it was in your language; to the much more profound level of personal relationships. Indeed, those informants who have local relationships 'like family', are those most 'at home' in both societies. From their own testimony, even if not formulated as such, that is what these migrants seem to be indicating about the meaning of home.

One clue to this notion of unconditionality came from responses to a standard question asked in this kind of study: whom would you turn to if you were in some kind of trouble? Too many people for it to be sheer coincidence, turned the question around, irrespective of whom they identified, by asking, 'You mean, who would I call in the middle of the night? who I know would come without asking questions?' - that is, unconditionally. While I suspect that unconditional acceptance is an essential component of what is meant, universally, by a sense of belonging, this particular formulation also echoes a specifically Israeli theme: the outrageousness of a 'middle of the night' phone call connotes emergency, potential disaster, a tension that permeates Israeli society.

This kind of meaning was expressed in other contexts too: a group of young Israelis at a suburban coffee shop were talking about differences between themselves and South Africans. They did not know me at that time and I was unashamedly eavesdropping. They were joking about what they perceived as local 'rules' and taboos: don't drop in unannounced, don't phone after 9pm, always be nice ('nice' said in English), never say what you mean. One comment summarized the point I am making: 'You can never just be who you are, what you are, *k'mo ba'aretz* (like 'in the land'). *Ba'bayit* (at home) it's different. People take you as you

are, and you become friends, or not.' Whether this generalization fits Israeli society is immaterial. It was their perception of home: unconditional acceptance.

A final example shows how an existential condition, understood in the same terms, can nevertheless be valued (or felt) differently and so take on quite different meaning. Breyten Breytenbach, writing about the existential condition of exile, about alienation, and 'the pain ... [of] being disconnected from normalcy' (Breytenbach 1991:74), continues to what is clearly meant as a positive, optimistic note, when he writes, 'Henceforth you are at home nowhere, and by that token everywhere' (ibid) and '... in the seams and folds of adaptation ... the new nomadic man (sic) of the future is being forged' (ibid:76). Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa writes: 'Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element; an alien element ... not comfortable but home' (quoted in Hirsch 1994:71).

Whereas Jonathan (45), who was born in South Africa and lived in Israel and the US, each for several years, and is now back in South Africa 'for a while' with his Israeli wife and their three American children, feels the same alienation, but to him it means something else:

I have learnt that I can live anywhere, that I can take on the colour and rhythm of anywhere, like a chameleon. But I am at home nowhere, always in between. Nowhere do I feel I can take anything for granted, nowhere do I feel whole. If I allow myself to think about it, I realize what acute discomfort I feel because some part of me is always elsewhere. I only hope that my children can forgive me for making them citizens of the world.

There is nothing either surprising or new in the notion that migrants miss their families, that family separation is usually painful and that people adjust to the loss. However, absence, detachment and loss, however painful, are not the only consequences of migration. The informants' access to the means of instant communication and their ongoing interaction with 'there' and 'here' as they go about their daily lives, suggests that disarticulation is not the only possible consequence of being in a 'space of dispersal' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994). 'Re-articulation - how the local is produced' (ibid:339), is achieved by incorporating the past into the present and relating both to the future through objects, ideas, language and relationships. The 'ties that bind' (Cornell, 1996; Kymlicka, 1995) the informants to one another and to both homes should not, however, be read as if migration and its consequences are the same for everyone, as if there were something universal and inevitable about 'the migration experience'. The 'voices' presented here show very individual ways, coloured by

specific events and experiences, in which families remain implicated in each others' lives, despite distance. Memory, family narratives, and the inter-connectedness of language with meanings of home, family, place, space and time are all invoked, with different emphases by different individuals, in creating a local space that is not merely a displacement, or a transitory condition, to be tolerated, but a meaningful space, in which to live.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SHIFTING NETWORKS: ETHNICITY IN LOCAL CONTEXT

The extensive migration literature has consistently reported how newcomers, particularly in the early period after arrival in the host country, create exclusive or seclusive<sup>1</sup> organizations in an attempt to replicate 'home' and/or to create or reinforce a sense of communal solidarity. Such ethnic organizations usually serve a variety of additional functions and often operate as a means towards integration into the host society, particularly for those who define themselves as immigrants. Depending on the degree to which the host society welcomes or discriminates against particular migrants, some functions, for example, political representation to the authorities, or internal economic co-operation, will be emphasized.

Except for a tiny minority, the Israelis in Cape Town do not seek full integration into the local in the sense of wishing to assimilate, to become 'like' locals, to disappear as Israelis; nor have they created exclusive specifically Israeli institutions. It is in part the absence of formal associations and organizations that has led me to refer to the informants as a population rather than a community. As shown in Chapter 4, awareness of other Israelis in Cape Town leads to generalizations about 'us', differentiating among 'us', and distinguishing between 'us' and 'them', but it has not led to either collective behaviour or actions in the name of a collective. In this respect the migrants resemble the 'natural' expatriates Cohen calls 'communities' but describes as 'mere ecological aggregates of individuals [and families] who came to live in the host society on their own ... for different purposes and at different times' (1977:25). Gans, too, in his seminal paper on 'symbolic ethnicity', suggests that 'it may be more accurate to speak of ethnic aggregates ... since symbolic ethnicity does not depend on ethnic cultures and organizations ...' (1979:16). (I return to a more detailed consideration of Gans' propositions at the end of this chapter.)

Yet most informants do not live their lives as isolated or alienated individuals or families. They participate in social networks which supply opportunities for the exchange of

---

<sup>1</sup>Cohen (1977:42) uses the term 'seclusive' to distinguish the clubs and institutions of middleman minorities from the 'exclusive' clubs and associations of expatriates. Both provide sociability and a sense of solidarity for insiders. However, whereas the former function primarily to seclude low-status middlemen from the hostility of their hosts, the latter are exclusive both in the sense of protecting the privileged status of expatriates and in the sense of excluding outsiders.

'insider' information and strategies for coping with the new environment, as well as providing conviviality and social and emotional support. The relatively narrow social distance between the migrants and the host society facilitates comfortable participation in a variety of networks based on universal criteria such as age, marital status and common interest. The wider cultural distance the migrants perceive between themselves and all others, based on language, cultural style and the conceptual categories used to construct and explain the perceived distance, leads to the formation of networks comprised exclusively, or mainly, of Israelis.

Thus despite the informality of their structure and style, the networks in which most participants are migrants who communicate exclusively in Hebrew, are those which most closely resemble the clubs and associations Cohen notes as an ubiquitous feature of expatriate communities (Cohen, 1977:41). Cohen emphasizes the exclusionary function of expatriate clubs and associations in maintaining the wide socio-cultural distance between expatriates and their hosts in the societies he surveyed. Once a conceptual and social boundary has been created, promoting internal solidarity and excluding 'outsiders' are two sides of the same coin. However, the Israeli migrants in Cape Town are not a privileged sector of the larger (white) society as are the expatriates in Cohen's survey. Thus because the social distance between the migrants and their hosts is not great, the more exclusively Israeli networks function primarily to promote solidarity and reinforce Israeliness, especially for those who migrated as adults, rather than to exclude non-Israelis. The absence of formal, exclusively Israeli organizations in Cape Town, though not conscious or deliberate, allows the migrants to retain a sense of impermanence and 'belonging elsewhere', while participation in local networks reflects their material and social embeddedness in the local. The combination of local participation, ongoing connections to Israel, and the Israeli objects and certain life-style aspects described in earlier chapters, permits a 'here and there', rather than a 'here or there', reality of comfortable contradiction.

## LOCAL NETWORKS

A social network, as the term is used here, is a set of relatively loose and informal social relationships which become discernible as a structure when its members interact more frequently and more intensively with each other than they do with non-members. Such structures are 'loose' in two senses: participation is voluntary, so the size and composition of

networks fluctuate over time; and the individuals who comprise the 'membership' usually participate in several networks, so that the bonds formed within any single network are not exclusive. Despite the fluidity and flexibility of the boundaries, informants' networks could be identified - some relatively stable and enduring over time, others for which 'emergent' or 'embryonic' are more accurate descriptions. The heterogeneity of the population, one factor acting as a disincentive for the creation of an umbrella-type organization, provides a variety of criteria relevant to the formation of networks. Age, marital status, length of time in South Africa, and whether a spouse is Israeli are the most important variables both in the composition of specific social networks and in the degree to which networks are exclusively Israeli.

### **Work-Related Networks: the 'Grapevine', Trust and Gossip**

The workplace is one environment that provides a group of people among whom migrants, especially those with few or no prior contacts in the new setting, can establish new relationships. Yet the workplace featured little in the migrants' stories about creating new relationships in Cape Town, except for the young singles who arrived as tourists, with no clear long-term aims. As noted, most migrants arrived to join friends or relatives, the latter sometimes Israeli, sometimes South African, and many are self-employed. I return to these below. The professionals as well as employees in businesses or companies where they had no prior contacts, obviously interacted regularly with colleagues and formed collegial relationships. Migrants reported these relationships as congenial, but few extended beyond the workplace.

For young singles, however, finding work with an Israeli employer was often the key to social circles beyond work. Many newcomers to Cape Town find accommodation in Sea Point, a coastal residential and commercial area with many apartment blocks, hotels and boarding houses. It is also an area in which many Israelis have small businesses. Time and again I heard stories of chance meetings on the beach, or in a shop, cafe or restaurant, where Hebrew was heard and contact established. I do not know whether all migrants easily find others like themselves, but the Israeli 'grapevine' in Cape Town certainly seems efficient. Ora, for example, came to Cape Town as a tourist with an Israeli friend. They travelled around the country and on arrival in Cape Town, stayed at a backpackers' lodge in Sea Point. The first

people they met were Israeli tourists who had been in Cape Town for a few weeks and who pointed out an Israeli-owned restaurant and an Israeli owned dry-cleaning establishment. Within days, Ora had decided to stay and found work at the restaurant while her friend returned to Israel as scheduled. Through work Ora met the owner's Israeli and local friends and acquaintances (many Jewish) who often 'popped in' to chat and not only to eat. Some became friends, one helped find cheap accommodation, which Ora shared with another Israeli met through her work, and others advised her about local universities once she decided to study in Cape Town. This kind of story was common and for many the early relationships became the core of more intimate social networks. Ora subsequently enrolled at the university and her social circle changed considerably once she met and married her non-Jewish student husband.

Another example of the grapevine in operation also shows the strength of the 'Israeli connection' across generations. Arik, 62, has been in Cape Town for more than thirty years. He and his Israeli wife divorced a few years after they arrived, she returned to Israel with their children and he married a local Jewish woman with whom he has three children. Arik has had many jobs and businesses but in recent years has owned and run a small fast-food business, specializing in Israeli food and situated in a busy shopping centre in Sea Point. He is a gregarious individual and many people, not only customers, stop by to chat, including many Israelis. Arik has the reputation of 'knowing everyone' and often acts as social broker between Israelis who do not know each other. For example, Itay, 28, came to Cape Town to pursue a romantic relationship with a Jewish South African he had met in Israel. She lives with her parents who disapproved of the relationship and did not invite Itay to stay. At her suggestion, he went to look for an apartment in Sea Point and met Arik when he bought lunch. Yair, 34, the owner of a small business in another area, had been passing through Sea Point and also stopped for lunch though he and Arik are casual acquaintances rather than close friends. Arik introduced them, Yair offered Itay a job and Arik offered him accommodation. Itay has never applied for a work permit and so has to leave the country every so often when his current tourist visa can no longer be renewed locally. During the six years since he first arrived, Itay has spent about two months a year in Israel, sometimes taking on short-term casual work, other times just visiting family and friends. In Cape Town he continues to board with Arik's family and to work for Yair, while he waits for his girlfriend to complete her studies before

they decide where to live. Both Arik and Yair treat him 'like family' and he is completely integrated into their (separate) social networks, which, because both have South African partners, are a mix of Israelis and South Africans, the latter mainly, but not only, local Jews. Itay's girlfriend's studies are demanding and the relatively little spare time they have together they spend alone or with her South African Jewish friends. Itay claims to have little in common with them and when he is not with Arik's or Yair's families, socializes with a group of young single Israelis, all of whom met in South Africa and who have become '*chevra*' (buddies). Each member of this group has told me independently, 'I might not have been friendly with all of these people *ba'aretz*.' However, in Itay's words, 'The fact that we're all Israelis of approximately the same age means we have more in common with each other than with anyone else.'

Arik's reputation for 'knowing everyone' makes him a valuable source of information and gossip. For the same reason, many Israelis avoid a close relationship with him. His attitude to Israelis is contradictory. He is emphatic that he would do anything to help any Israeli 'because that's the way it is with us', and 'you can rely on each other because you understand each other'; yet he tells many stories about the untrustworthiness of Israelis as employees, and about disappointments he has had from Israelis 'I thought were my friends'. Protracted participant fieldwork (as against survey research or formal interviewing) provides opportunities to see and hear the conflicting views expressed by the same people in different contexts and conversations. These kinds of contradiction were common, with tales of breach of trust that stressed instrumental, exploitative motivations, conflicting with insistence that all Israelis feel mutually responsible for one another, 'like family'. In a sense the contradictions are opposite sides of the same coin: the kinship metaphor embodies an ideal of trust and reliability which leads to sub-conscious expectations that the ideal will always be met. When not met, the disappointment extends beyond the specific breach, and challenges the ideal itself. Some informants recognized this aspect. Moshe, recounting to me how he had recently been 'stabbed in the back' by a trusted friend who had left the country secretly without repaying loans to several Israelis (a rich resource for the gossip-mongers for many weeks) shrugged and said,

It's not just the money. Israelis in *chutz la'aretz* (abroad) are like family - you trust someone because you are like family. You don't expect to agree about everything and sometimes you quarrel. But you also expect truth, honesty -

that if there's a problem, they will say. When something like this happens, you suddenly remember all kinds of family stories, and that's sad, because if you can't trust family, who can you trust?

As shown, most of the migrants are self-employed and some work with wives and other kin. Although several businesses are in the same fields - plastics, jewellery, lighting, electronics, and food-related, in particular - work-related networks are not formed between businesses, but rather within them. Where several kin members work together, the line between work and social relationships is hardly discernible. For example, Zvi, his wife and their three unmarried sons all work in the family business. Although two of the sons share a separate apartment from their parents and brother, all spend a great deal of leisure time together, as well as doing virtually all their (extensive) business entertaining together. The parents identify some of their business relationships as friendships, and none of these associates is Jewish. Each of the sons (none of whom went to school in Cape Town) has his own friendship network: in one case established through sport, in another through music. Only the youngest son interacts frequently with Israelis of his own age. This family also participates in a 'fully Israeli' network as a family (see below).

Similarly, Dina complains that whenever two or more of 'her men' are together, 'it turns into a business meeting'. Dina's husband and four sons are engaged in different branches of the family business and all work long hours. Two of the four are married with young children and live in close proximity to their parents and each other. Dina described the family as a *chamulah*, the Arabic term for clan, used by many Jewish Israelis to denote Arab or Jewish North African (large) families who live under the same roof or in very close proximity. As in Zvi's case, business entertaining is done together and Dina's family participates in the same 'fully Israeli' network. The unmarried sons have their own friendship networks, exclusively Jewish and including some Israelis. Beyond business, the younger married couples socialize with each other and with other Israeli or 'mixed' couples (see below).

In a third family, also part of the same 'fully Israeli' network, husband, wife, two unmarried daughters, a married son and his wife all work together. Two of these three families were close friends for many years in Israel and came to Cape Town through the encouragement of Arik (described above) who went to school with Dina's husband and

retained contact through all Arik's many years in Cape Town. These three families, together with several others in the same age-group, form a large and relatively stable social network.

Several Israelis have established large (and successful) companies. In some cases these have become large and successful over time; in at least four cases relative newcomers (in Cape Town less than ten years) established large businesses on arrival. The owners display a wide variety of attitudes to the idea of employing Israelis and some have changed over time. For example, shortly after Avi started his business thirty years ago, he brought two of his brothers from Israel, married men with children, to work with him. At that time he was himself a newcomer and felt that he needed people he could 'really trust completely'. Since then, one brother has returned to Israel, the other has his own business in Cape Town and Avi's company has grown and diversified. He employs no kin (except for vacation jobs for his own children) and none of his employees are Israeli though he claims to have neither preference nor aversion to employing them as 'workers are employed on suitability alone'. However, on another occasion, Avi advised an Israeli friend not to employ Israelis: 'They relate to you as a friend, not an employer. If there's a problem, [it] is difficult to say anything. Also they will tell everyone your matters (*inyanim*). With Israelis it's better to be friends, not boss and employee.'

Shimon, on the other hand, was and is always willing to employ Israelis 'to help them to get organized' (*le'histader*) and sees this as 'an obligation to a *landsman*' (someone from the same country). Several Israeli business-people began their working life in Cape Town in Shimon's company and several also obtained loans from him to start their own businesses. His company, however, has also grown and diversified and it is now more difficult to accommodate employees simply because they are Israelis Shimon wishes to help. As a result, these days he more often lends money or acts as a social broker in much the same way as Arik, often including newcomers in his numerous networks until they form their own. In earlier years Shimon and his family and his Israeli employees and their families formed a closely-knit exclusively Israeli social network.

Dov has a different approach. He was a wealthy and successful businessman before migration and he and his wife run a large specialized company. They brought two Israeli families to Cape Town, the men experts in their fields, and the three families do socialize outside work hours, although Dov himself is often absent because he travels a great deal.

However, he is averse to employing Israelis 'just because they are Israelis', and reflected an attitude reported on by Gold among some Israeli migrants in Los Angeles (1994a): 'The Israelis are ambitious. They learn all they can from you, and then steal your clientele.'

As in all work relationships, issues of trust and gossip often cause friction. However, I know of only one relationship in this study population that was severed directly because of work issues, and the kinship and social side of the relationship has since been repaired (see the example of Boaz and his uncle, Chapter 5). Lending money to a friend for business purposes, however, has caused conflict and the dissolution of networks. Some migrants involved in such conflicts in the past have since returned to Israel and are not included in the study. Other kinds of tensions that have led to the dissolution or realignment of social networks are reported below.

### **Young Singles**

Including 'children', the population contained 89 never married adults between the ages of 18 and 35, eleven of whom were migrants in their own right, having come to South Africa as young adults<sup>2</sup>. More than a third were born in South Africa and the remainder came with their families at varying ages. Not surprisingly, and despite the variation across all categories, there were clear differences in interaction patterns and self-definitions between those who had come as independent adults and those born or raised in Cape Town. Those who had migrated alone or with their families in their teens were more likely to assert identification as Israeli.

#### **(i) Young, Single Migrants**

Many young Israelis travel abroad on completion of compulsory national service - indeed it has become something of a rite of passage - and South Africa has become increasingly popular as a travel destination since the 1980s. The number of such tourists in Cape Town at any given time is therefore unknowable and only extended time in the field allows one to distinguish which of the tourists who come for an undefined period in fact stay on. (Impressionistic evidence from Johannesburg suggests that the number who remain there

---

<sup>2</sup>These figures refer to never married adults in 1996. A larger number aged 18-35 migrated alone (see Table 1, Chapter 1) but have since married.

is significantly larger than in Cape Town.) Only those in South Africa for longer than a year have been included in the profile details of the study.

During the course of fieldwork I met many young Israeli tourists and heard of many more. Sometimes they would work in Cape Town for a few months before moving on. Sometimes I would hear from an informant that so-and-so had called from Johannesburg to say he/she had found work and was staying on 'for a while'. It seems that most tourists who remain connect with local Israelis at some point through the grapevine, but this is not always the case. Stopping at a roadside craft-market one day on my homebound route, I identified four young Israelis selling hand-made jewellery. They had been touring southern Africa together for more than a year, selling their wares to pay their way. They had been in Cape Town for about ten days and were living in their van at a campsite on the outskirts of town. When I checked the campsite three weeks later, they had left and to the best of my knowledge none of the informants had come across them.

Roni is an example of the 'unknowable' category 'happened upon'. He came to South Africa to renew contact with a non-Jewish South African he had met in Israel when she was touring there. Their relationship developed, he explored study possibilities, enrolled at a local university where his girlfriend was a student, and was in his second year of study when we met. I bumped into him (literally) in the university library and recognised his accent when we both apologised. Although he acknowledged the presence of local Jews in his courses - 'I don't know how I know they are Jews, I just do' - he had not sought them out in any way and was not interested in doing so. His relationships, both in the university and outside of it, were drawn entirely from his girlfriend's social circles and he didn't know any Israelis in Cape Town. According to Roni, he had not, nor did he wish to, develop friendships with any of the students or tutors in his courses, although he was perfectly friendly towards me whenever we subsequently saw each other on campus. His relationships with family and friends in Israel were maintained through telephone and e-mail communication and he visited Israel at the end of his second year, alone. He did not mark Jewish calendar events in any way - 'they mean nothing to me' - and claimed to be 'open to any possibility' regarding his future:

I'm a very now [*achshavi*] person. At the moment I am concentrating on studying, and I spend all my spare time with Alicia. What will be in the future, I don't know. Israel? [I] also don't know. It's true [*nachon*], the family is there, also friends, but the world is big.

Roni rejected my offer to introduce him to other young Israelis or Jews, 'I don't have any spare time and I'm not particularly interested. For the moment that's not my world.'

A rather different example of network formation occurred in the case of Dani and Aviv. They have been in Cape Town for two years and plan to stay 'until it begins to get boring'. After completing army service, they left Israel with another Israeli friend, all three members of the same kibbutz, to travel and 'see the world'. They began their travels in South Africa because it was in the news at the time, attractive package deals were on offer, and they had met and liked South Africans who had served as volunteer workers on their kibbutz. Prior to departure they contacted one of the volunteers, Mark, a young black South African who had spent some months on their kibbutz as part of a year-long course he had been sent on by his church. When Dani and Aviv arrived, Mark was a post-graduate university student who shared a house near the university with several black university friends. During their first month in Cape Town the three Israelis rented a room in Mark's house, rented a car and saw the sights with Mark as guide, and met and socialised with his friends. They subsequently moved to a flat in Sea Point, found casual work in restaurants and night-clubs where they met many young people including some local Israelis. The third friend returned to Israel after nine months during which time the three had alternately worked and travelled extensively through southern Africa. Dani and Aviv now interact in several circles which have become interconnected through them. They are among the few migrants who have black or coloured friends though more of the tourists-who-stayed have non-Jewish friends than those who were born or raised in Cape Town.

Idit, now a post-graduate student, is also a tourist who stayed, but she is not simply drifting for a while as so many do. After completing army service she toured South Africa with an Israeli friend. In Cape Town, after several conversations with local students met casually at the beach, she applied to a local university where she believed she had a better chance of being accepted for a particular course than at an Israeli university. She knew no-one in Cape Town, but quickly made friends among her classmates once she commenced studying: 'more acquaintances than friends - good for a movie, or a cup of coffee'. By her third year, she had developed a small circle of close friends, all of whom were studying for the same profession, and none of whom were Jews or Israelis. She misses her friends and family in Israel, goes 'home' for two months every year, and her Israeli grandmother, to whom

she is very close, came on a three month visit. Although she has met Israelis and local Jews in Cape Town, 'I have no time for more people. I have a reason to be here - I must finish, and return home. I have a few good friends, and it's enough for me.' Idit has no Jewish or Israeli content in her life in Cape Town beyond her regular contact with Israel and the Israeli newspapers she receives. On the most recent Passover festival however, 'I decided that [it is] not in order that I am becoming so distant from what I am. So I made a seder, invited friends, and explained everything to them. It was nice.'

Ofer is more typical of young singles in Cape Town. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he came to help in his father's business and plans to return. He has consciously sought out young Israelis like himself as well as young local Jews and has a wide circle of friends, including non-Jews:

You can learn from any experience, right? I work like a donkey, to save .... I don't intend living here all my life, but [one] must also enjoy. When I sit in a coffee shop with [names Israeli friends] we could be in Tel Aviv. We have a common language - we talk about the army, places we know, politics .... It's different with the locals - also fun (*kef*) but [we] talk about other things. There are those who even try out their Hebrew on me. They're interested in Israel, even the *goyim* [Gentiles], actually the *goyim* are maybe more interested. So one can say I'm doing Zionist propaganda.

Like Ofer, most of the young singles in Cape Town, mostly male, participate in many networks but form their closest friendships with young Israelis like themselves. Some share accommodation, all support themselves and do the sorts of things that all young people do - work or study, go to the beach, meet friends at popular coffee-bars and restaurants, go to night clubs, and some frequent the casinos<sup>3</sup>. Few have long-term plans to stay but some are very settled; some work for other Israelis, some do casual work and a few have established their own businesses. Gadi is a young professional who associates more with Jews than with Israelis and is the only young Israeli active in Jewish communal affairs through membership of an organization for young Jewish adults. He says, 'Many times staying or returning is a matter of luck. If you meet the right person and she wants to stay, you stay even if you would prefer to live *ba'arets*.'

---

<sup>3</sup>The regulations governing casino operations have been under government review for some time, with considerable confusion (and flexibility) about their legal status so that they are periodically closed by the authorities. Several Israelis have owned casinos which have been popular with certain segments of the study population.

For the most part, the networks of the young singles are loose and shifting and tend to include more non-Jews than the networks of both older, married migrants and those of the children of migrants born or raised in Cape Town. The young singles with Israeli relatives in Cape Town usually work for family and spend more time with older married people than those with South African relatives or no local family. A few, mostly Sephardim, occasionally attend the Sephardi synagogue, usually on festivals. Many claim to feel most comfortable with other Israelis. Gadi spoke for most when he summed it up this way:

I meet lots of people and I have lots of friends, all sorts. When I very much miss home, I go to look for Israelis. Even if I don't so much like all of them - they can be big show-offs, as you know. But when Israelis sit together, it's not important who they are or what they do, there's something special in it. It's not the same with the locals. We have so much in common - even if there is someone I've never seen, [we] relate like friends. [We] simply speak the same language .... [We] always argue, and shout, about politics, about the peace, about sport, even about religion. But that's how Israelis are. [We] always know what the other one is bringing to the table - you know where he's coming from.

Although such sentiments were frequently and emphatically expressed, Israeliness alone is not enough to sustain a cohesive network for long. Gadi himself participates only occasionally, although comfortably, in the all-Israeli (usually all-male) networks of the young singles. Networks split and realign for many reasons: newcomers join, people return to Israel, or move elsewhere, or simply find other interests or other networks. Often someone breaks away from a group because a new girlfriend is not compatible with the group, and rifts also occur over money or accusations of unreliability. Indeed, as Cohen (1976:48) points out, constant association with the same small group of people is likely to lead to frustration, friction and dissension. However, the potential for friction is partially ameliorated by participation in multiple networks.

## **(ii) Young Singles, Born or Raised in Cape Town**

Within this category, there was greater variation in self-definitions than in interaction patterns, and the distinction seemed to relate to whether one or both parents was Israeli as well as the age of the children at arrival. Virtually all children attend the Jewish school, self-

defined as 'national traditional'<sup>4</sup>, where Hebrew is taught and Judaism and Israel are studied, and where discussions, formal and informal, frequently include issues of Jewish identity and continuity. Although none of the children who were born or raised in Cape Town participate in social networks that are exclusively Israeli, all have some Israeli friends. Some of these friendships result from family networks, some were formed independently, usually at school. The variation in friendship patterns, self-definition and attitudes was enormous, even within families, and the data suggest that a separate study of the children of migrants would be valuable. The findings and the examples presented here are the result of my interaction with parents and family networks, as well as a few separate focus groups conducted with some of the young adults.

The variation was striking. Yuval, for example, born and raised in Cape Town, with an Israeli mother and South African father, is a university student. He claims to feel Israeli, cultivates friendships with Israelis of his age although his Hebrew is not very fluent, visits his relatives in Israel for extended periods at least once a year and intends to emigrate on completion of his degree. He also has many South African Jewish friends (he and his siblings all attended the local Jewish school). Yuval is aware that he resembles his mother's Sephardi family in appearance: 'When I look in the mirror every morning, I see an Israeli, and that's how I feel. I like the life there and feel that I belong. There's nothing wrong with my life in Cape Town - I just prefer the life and the people there.' Neither of Yuval's siblings shares his feelings or his preferences and both socialize mainly with South African Jews and intend staying in South Africa 'unless things deteriorate.' The parents have encouraged each child to pursue his or her own direction and plan to have homes in both countries after retiring, a plan indicated by several migrants with adult children who intend emigrating.

Gilad and his two brothers and one sister were also all born in Cape Town, to a South African mother and Israeli father and all attended the Jewish school, where the sister is still a pupil. After graduating from a local university, Gilad went to live and work in Israel where he married an Israeli. The young couple returned to Cape Town in order for Gilad to acquire experience in his father's business and their intention is to return to Israel within three years

---

<sup>4</sup>The 'national' refers to both Zionism and 'the Jewish People'. Although the school is purportedly non-denominational, Orthodoxy is the referent for 'traditional', which reflects the affiliation orientation of most local Jews.

and establish a branch of the business there. His brothers Gad and Rafi are undecided about where they will settle. Rafi is a post-graduate student and Gad works with his father. The brothers are close and share many friends, South African Jews, migrants of their age-group, and children of Israelis, like themselves. Gad has recently become more religious and has begun to talk of studying in Israel. He has also become friendly with a group of young Israeli *yeshiva*<sup>5</sup> students.

Ran, 28, and Liat, 24, are the children of two Israeli parents and came to Cape Town when they were aged fourteen and eleven. Liat has some 'Israeli' friends, children of migrants, and, speaking in English, says of herself,

Other than my name and my accent in Hebrew, I'm a South African. Sometimes I react to something differently from my friends. Really differently. Then I say to myself it's because I'm Israeli. But when I'm in Israel I know I'm a spoilt South African, who likes an easy life ... I like my family there, specially my grandmother, and I'm glad I can talk to her ... If I had to leave South Africa I think I'd go to Australia ... I care about what happens in Israel but living there is not for me.

Her brother Ran, on the other hand, says, 'I'm a proud Israeli, the kind they call aggressive. I was wild at school - they called me 'the wild Israeli' and I liked that.' Ran makes friends easily but his closest friends are also children of Israelis. After graduating from university he lived in Israel for some years, completing army service and working:

I loved everything *ba'aretz*, everything - except the prices. If I'm really honest, I have to admit I behaved like a spoilt child. I was living on overdraft, on my father's account. So I came back, to save, and to grow up a little.

Ran claims that since returning he 'collects' young Israeli migrants and invites them home, especially for festivals, and introduces them to 'nice Jews':

It's easy to forget you're Jewish here .... I want them to stay Jewish, part of the Jewish nation [*am*]. So I invite them ... I don't have non-Jewish friends - I knew some guys when I was a student, but we lost touch. So what. I learnt a lot about myself these last years. I'm more aware now that being Jewish is very

---

<sup>5</sup>Traditionally, a *yeshiva* is an institution for the pursuit of Talmudic studies. Since the Holocaust, and particularly in diaspora, *yeshivot* have become institutions for more general advanced education in Judaism (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16:762-773). The establishment of the first *yeshiva* in Cape Town, in the 1990s, is an indication of the increased religiosity in the local Jewish community referred to earlier. Small groups of young Israeli *yeshiva* students have been brought to Cape Town on one-year contract for the past three years. However, both because of their onerous learning and teaching duties, including acting as religious officiants in other nearby small towns, and because most of their activities are directed towards Jews attracted to the study of religious sources, their presence has had no impact on the largely secular migrant population.

important to me. To preserve [*lishmor*] that in the diaspora [*bagolah*], [you] have to work at it. I even go to shul more often than before.

Sharon came to Cape Town with her family when she was nine. She is a Hebrew teacher, recently married a South African Jew, and at the time of writing they were preparing to emigrate to Australia. Her older brother emigrated to the United States a few years ago, is studying to be a rabbi, and recently married an American. She says:

I'm an Israeli. I know it sounds crazy but that's how I think of myself. That's how I've always thought of myself. Because of that I became a Jewish Studies teacher, even though we're not religious, and I will definitely speak Hebrew to my children. I tried to persuade Michael to settle *ba'aretz* and we went to Israel and Australia before making a final decision. But we both saw it wasn't for him and I decided that if my parents could raise an Israeli in the diaspora, I can too. I have a job there in a Jewish school and there is another young Israeli teacher on the staff, so I believe I will stay in touch with Israel and Israelis.

Yaron, now a fourth-year student, came to Cape Town with his parents and completed the last two years of high school at the local Jewish school. His two older brothers remained in Israel although the oldest, married with one child, is apparently considering joining his father in business. Yaron's parents, both born and raised in Romania, immigrated to Israel in 1962 with the oldest child, then an infant. They know many of the migrants of their age in Cape Town but are friendly with only one couple. They have a particular interest in classical music and unlike most of the migrants, also regularly attend popular lectures of historical or scientific interest. Their small social networks are drawn from like-minded people, mostly non-Jews, that they have met through these interests. However, they do attend synagogue on major festivals and participate in the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day and Israel Independence Day functions organized by the Jewish community. Yaron's closest friend at school was an Israeli who has since returned to Israel: 'It was natural for us to become friends. We were both Israelis, new here, and we had both been to school in Israel. And of course we spoke Hebrew. Luckily for us, it turned out we also had similar interests.' Since leaving school most of Yaron's friends are students with whom he shares professional and leisure interests, and most are non-Jews. He claims to have little in common with young Israelis he has met in Cape Town. However, he maintains relationships with old school friends in Israel, follows Israeli news closely on the Internet and attends lectures and seminars on Jewish topics both in the university and in the Jewish community. He is not sure where he would like to live 'eventually' but is currently considering graduate studies in Israel.

Orli's story is somewhat unusual and she would also have been an 'unknowable' had she not been the daughter of personal friends I knew when they lived in Cape Town. She was born in Cape Town to two Israeli parents who had come to South Africa for professional reasons after three years of study in the United States, where their older daughter was born. Her father's brother, married to a Jewish South African, and his parents were already living in Cape Town. The family moved to Johannesburg when Orli was five and returned to Israel when she was eleven, where she completed high school and army service. Her older sister married a Jewish South African, moved to the US when his family emigrated and on a visit to her sister, Orli met and married her brother-in-law's cousin. The marriage lasted only a short while and on her return to Israel Orli felt very restless and decided to return to South Africa to study. She lived in residence at a college in Johannesburg for three years, during which time she made no attempt to contact friends from her youth: 'I'm an Israeli, the South African kugels<sup>6</sup> didn't interest me. I had to work to support myself and the course was demanding so there wasn't much time to socialize. If I needed to hear Hebrew, I knew where to go to eat or for coffee.' She spent Jewish festivals with her uncle and her friends were co-students. After graduating from college Orli continued studying at a university in Cape Town while working to support herself, and tended to spend her limited spare time with the owners of the restaurant where she worked. Her only Jewish or Israeli contact in Cape Town in five years was with my family although she visited her parents in Israel three times during the period and they visited her twice. Since ending a lengthy relationship with a non-Jewish man, she has begun planning to emigrate to the US, where she has residence rights.

Several adult 'children' born or raised in South Africa have emigrated, to Israel and elsewhere, and many have spent extended periods in Israel. Some claim to 'feel' Israeli wherever they are, others 'feel' South African. None of the 'children' I interacted with expressed (or indicated) feeling conflicted by their multiple allegiances. There was some indication that more of the children of two Israeli parents were likely to 'feel' Israeli. However, as the examples show, there is great variation regarding identity even within the

---

<sup>6</sup>A South African term, originally Jewish but now in popular use, which refers to a stereotype of a fashion-conscious, materialistic, usually vacuous, young woman. Usually derogatory. As the author of a humorous work about 'kugels' noted, 'everyone professes to know them. Nobody admits to being one' (Klevansky, 1982:back cover).

same families. Dror, now 25 and in Cape Town since the age of five, echoed others when he explained:

I'm a South African and an Israeli. I'm just more Israeli *ba'arets* and more South African in South Africa. It's a matter of language, and the people around you. If you're flexible, you fit in. Some of my South African friends want to live in Israel and some of my Israeli friends want to live here. People must do what they want.

Nira, the 16-year-old daughter of one of the few religious families, added a dimension touched on by several of the children born or raised in Cape Town: 'The most important thing to me is to be Jewish. You can be Jewish anywhere but it's easier to be properly Jewish in Israel. Here there are not many people my age who are *shomrei shabbat* (sabbath observers) or even who keep kosher. So that sometimes makes problems'.

While the migrants' children seem to be self-confident and comfortable with themselves in relation to matters of personal identity and adaptations to each country, parents are often less content about their children's behaviour, attitudes and decisions. Niva points to the irony of her situation. She and her late husband came to Cape Town twenty-five years ago on a five-year contract to an Israeli company. They 'got stuck' and after he died she associated less with Israelis, activated her latent interest in Judaism, and her most frequent interactions are now with local Jews while she continues to assert 'being Israeli' as the most important aspect of her self. Her daughter went to live in Israel, completed army service and university there, met and married a British Jew, and the couple now lives in England. Her son has married a local non-Jewish woman and his children are not being raised as Jews. Niva remains in Cape Town because in Israel neither of her children would be close by.

Many parents are pleased when their children decide to settle in Israel but experience the same dilemmas as many South African parents when different children wish to live in different places. Many comment disapprovingly that their children are 'South Africans', are 'spoilt/pampered', 'have it too good' and don't share the parents' values and attitudes. Others are very aware that their children may not have had the same opportunities in Israel (university study is the item most often mentioned). Adina (see Chapter 3) has always been conscious of the differences between Israel and South Africa and would 'willingly return tomorrow' although she has equally consciously avoided regret or recrimination. Hebrew is the family's home language and the children have always been encouraged to read Hebrew. The family visits Israel often and has close relationships with their Israeli relatives. During

her older daughter's final year at high school when she was applying to university, Adina articulated what many imply:

I feel I can't advise her about anything. I don't know about matriculation here and it makes me feel useless. Apparently I always imagined her at Tel Aviv University, going where I went, doing what I did. She is my Israeli daughter but there's no doubt she's also a South African, and that's very strange for me.

### **Family-Centred Friendship Networks**

The networks that comprise interacting nuclear families are the broadest in scope and the most enduring. That the Cape Town migrants value family has already been demonstrated, and the strengthening of the nuclear family among expatriates was a consistent finding among the studies Cohen (1977) examined in compiling his survey. The networks described below indicate the close relationships among kin but also show how non-kin groups create 'like family' networks, sometimes articulated as such. The findings and examples presented here are based on my participation in several of the networks described, and on month-long 'diaries' kept by a few key informants at my request. The 'diaries' recorded dates, individuals met or present, and the nature of particular interactions. Informants were asked to record all their personal activities and interactions for the period, including the most mundane. No additional guide-lines were stipulated but a great deal of detail was added in subsequent joint reviews of the information.

In addition to the demographic factors of age, stage in the life-cycle and time in South Africa, whether a spouse or partner is Israeli and whether a non-Israeli spouse is comfortable with Hebrew, are critical factors in the formation of social networks of choice. Several families form interlocking networks of relationships and several such networks can be found in Cape Town although their precise composition has changed over time. The core 'members' of any one network tend to be at approximately the same stage in the life-cycle and whether one or both partners is Israeli is the variable that differentiates both the ways in which the networks operate and the degree to which Israeliness defines membership.

#### **(i) 'Mixed' networks**

The following is one example of a relatively stable and cohesive network comprising mainly 'mixed' South African-Israeli couples and their children.

Two families, in which the husbands are Israeli and the wives South African, are at the same approximate stage in the life-cycle: the men aged 62 and 56 respectively, the women 55 and 52, and the children, all of whom were born in South Africa, are high school or university students or recent graduates. Avi and Ehud have both been in South Africa for more than thirty years and the couples have been close friends for almost as long. While each couple has friends and associates, particularly business associates, who are not Israeli, much of their leisure time (ie, associations of choice) is spent with other families like themselves - Israeli men, South African women and locally born children. The participants interact frequently by talking on the phone, 'popping in' spontaneously, arranging joint activities such as picnics or parties, and going out together. They share each others' joys and sorrows, and though the core couples have a particularly close friendship, relationships between all 'members' are warm and close. As the children have matured they spend less time with the parent generation but several adult children are usually present at home-based gatherings. At larger gatherings, such as birthdays or festivals, the network includes several families in which both spouses are Israeli, as well as one couple where the wife is Israeli and the Jewish husband not South African.

A few of the 'mixed' couples are clearly 'members' of separate South African Jewish networks although only one couple in this group has more extensive relationships with others, as a couple, than with the network. Judy describes the latter relationships as 'less intimate and spontaneous, more formal', and none of the South Africans has been drawn into the network described here. Formal special occasions, such as weddings or barmitzvas which include local kin and other guests, are not included in this description.

A few of the women are friends who meet without their husbands as well as with them. They also have personal networks of other South African friends, all Jewish, and some of the women are active in local Jewish organisations. Some have tried to involve some of the Israeli women, with little success. More men than women in this network meet each other without their spouses. The men who attend these 'meetings' form a separate network incorporating other Israeli men, which is described more fully below in the section headed 'the Par-le-ment'.

Most interactions within the network do not include kin. In this particular case, Shirley, the wife in one of the core couples is the daughter of a convert to Judaism. She is an

only child and both her parents are deceased. Her extended kin relationships are few, not close, and largely irrelevant in her life. One of her children recently emigrated (to America), one is still a student and the third is considering emigration to Israel. Judy, the wife in the second core couple also has no living parents and her only brother emigrated to England several years ago. She, however, does maintain relationships with her extended family and has a sense of obligation to several elderly aunts and uncles. In the past, Jewish festivals were usually celebrated with the South African family at one gathering, and the network described above, with the inclusion of Judy's Israeli migrant in-laws, her husband's brother and his wife and children, at another. Both core couples recently moved from large houses with gardens and swimming-pools to smaller apartments resulting in fewer gatherings of the entire network at their homes. As all the children have matured, and in some cases married, festivals now tend to be celebrated by sub-sets of the network with the addition of in-laws and children's friends.

Other 'mixed' networks, similar in composition regarding the proportion of migrants, show more time and energy spent on and with the wives' South African kin. The extent and intensity of kinship relationships depends on whether the wives' parents are alive, the size of the extended kin group, and the quality of the wives' (historical) relationships with their kin. The wives in several families in 'mixed' networks are strongly embedded within local kin networks with the result that, although some 'personnel' overlap, the personal networks of these husbands and wives can be distinguished: approximately equal engagement in the mixed networks, more intense engagement by women in kin networks, and more intense engagement by men in exclusively Israeli networks. For the most part, the Israeli husbands have good relationships with their South African kin but interaction occurs mostly in the company of their wives and/or children.

With only one exception, the South African wives in the 'mixed' networks are not career oriented and are not the major income generators in their households. Some work with their husbands in family businesses, some have other employment and certainly contribute to household income; a significant proportion, however, are full-time housewives. The one exception, whose husband has been in Cape Town for more than twenty-five years, is career oriented and the frequency and intensity of this family's social interactions are more or less evenly distributed among five networks: South African kin, Israelis, South African friends,

Jewish and non-Jewish, and colleagues of each spouse, mainly non-Jewish. As a couple they interact only occasionally with other 'mixed' couples. They also have some friends of other nationalities but these are sporadic interactions, not, at least at the time of fieldwork, tending towards embryonic network formation. The husband is part of the 'Par-le-ment' network and the South African wife has dyadic relationships with several Israeli women and one man, who are also participants in the couple's Israeli network. She also participates in several networks of South African friends who are occasionally invited home but who are essentially the wife's network. In recent years, their South African, Israeli and other-nationality friends have met quite frequently at their home, sometimes with the addition of some of the wife's kin, but none of the 'invitees' interact in any other setting.

The above descriptions indicate the relevance of gender in the formation of the social networks of the 'mixed' couples. Where the wives are Israeli, the patterns of association are far less uniform. Some are married to non-South African men with no relatives in Cape Town, and one maintains relationships with her South African parents-in-law although her husband (their son) does not. Some of the Israeli wives have built successful careers and particularly appreciate the relatively cheap domestic labour available in Cape Town. All the Israeli women have some Israeli friends but most do not interact sufficiently regularly with either Israeli or 'mixed' couples for such relationships to be considered participation in a network. In the main the Israeli wives in 'mixed' marriages participate in networks in which their husbands were already active participants, including kin networks, and/or in South African networks initiated jointly. In both cases the members of the more cohesive networks are South African Jews, while the less cohesive groupings are usually based on business-related associations, or particular interests, such as hiking or music, where ethnic affiliation is irrelevant.

The three older widows identified in an earlier chapter also constitute a friendship network which sometimes includes a few younger Israeli women married to (or divorced from) South Africans. This group meets relatively infrequently by comparison with the 'mixed' networks described above and the individuals' personal networks beyond the group are as varied as their personalities. Two work for Jewish organisations which employ other Israelis as well but neither has close relationships with the Israelis outside work. All have some Israeli friends, but not all consider Israelis their closest friends. One woman would not

or could not distinguish among her friends, even in response to the classic question of whom she would turn to in need:

My late husband was my best friend in every sense. But I am fortunate. I have many good friends, all kinds, married, single, Israelis, South Africans, wonderful neighbours, a wonderful daughter. Who I would turn to would depend on the specific need - and don't forget, I still have parents in Israel. In the past, when I needed emotional support, all my friends here were my support-group. Actually, for a while, [they] were with me so much that the relationships between them became almost like family relationships.

While most of the Israeli women indeed named an Israeli as the person they would most likely turn to in need, one said she would turn to her employer (they had formed a special bond on discovering that both were children of Holocaust survivors), and another indicated her late husband's partner.

#### **(ii) 'Fully Israeli' families**

The designation 'fully Israeli' is a misnomer in a literal sense. As indicated, thirty percent of the adults were not born in Israel although the majority grew up there and all consider 'being Israeli' their primary identity and their only national allegiance of consequence, despite many (33%) having dual South African-Israeli citizenship. Furthermore, 56% of the children living in parental households were born in South Africa. As indicated earlier, the children expressed very diverse views and feelings about the degree of their 'Israeliness'. None however, rejected the label as a valid, if partial, description of their identity. As with the 'mixed' networks, the fully Israeli networks tend to be composed of people at a similar stage in the life-cycle. In addition, however, period of arrival was also a significant factor in distinguishing some networks.

Several Israeli families (parents and adult children) work together and some employ members of their extended family, also migrants. Several also employ non-kin Israelis. These families tend to be extremely close-knit and many of their leisure relationships are conducted with the same people, all ages mixing easily. Dina's family, described above in the section on work-related networks, is particularly close-knit. All four sons were born in Israel but the younger two attended the Jewish school in Cape Town and participate in South African Jewish networks. The older brothers both married in Israel before migration and came to South Africa at different times. The younger couples have independent circles of friends, mostly other Israelis, 'mixed' couples, or South Africans 'who are like Israelis'. However, all

the sons and the daughters-in-law spend a considerable amount of leisure and holiday time with the parents. This family is wealthy and its various members travel to Israel more frequently than most migrants. The father often attends gatherings of 'the Par-le-ment' while his wife, a full-time housewife, seems to have only one close friend of her own in Cape Town, another Israeli:

I'm not the type to sit in coffee-bars all day. Most of my friends among the Israeli women work and I'm not particularly interested in the others. They all gossip; they look for the bad, and their gossip is malicious (*m'lay'at tinah*). I don't need that; it irritates. I go to gym and yoga and do what I need to do and that fills my days very nicely ... I don't need to be with people all the time. One of the sons usually pops in during the day, and the grand-children, and Baruch [her husband] sometimes comes home, or sometimes he brings people. It's enough. My life *ba'aretz* was more or less the same. There of course [is] my mother, and my sisters, and of course some good friends, and I didn't have a full-time domestic worker. But also there I spent much time with myself (*im atzmi*) ... Dalia [an Israeli friend] once persuaded me to go to a meeting of Bnoth Zion [a women's Zionist organisation] but once was enough for me! I admire what they do for Israel but I have nothing in common with them. It simply isn't for me. Even *ba'aretz* I was not a member of WIZO [an equivalent women's organisation].

With the exception of those noted below under the heading 'isolated' families, all the 'fully' Israeli families of all age groups spend more leisure time with other Israelis than with anyone else. In terms of frequency of interaction, only one of the men interacts regularly with South Africans outside of work, and that is because he is a committee member of one of the synagogues. Individuals and families participate in several networks, to different degrees and for different purposes. Three younger families, for example, all with small children, and all in Cape Town less than five years, can often be seen together and the wives and husbands also occasionally meet separately. Two of the three men are in business together with two other single Israeli men, who often visit the homes of the married couples. One of these families participates occasionally in another fully Israeli network of older people since discovering that they have mutual acquaintances in Israel.

Among the older migrants, more intense networks tend to reflect the length of time in South Africa, and usually, the longer the residence, the more stable the network. But that is not always the case. New arrivals are sometimes absorbed into existing networks and are sometimes the catalyst for realignments. For example, when Arik's childhood friend Baruch arrived, the two families saw a lot of each other. Later Baruch encouraged two other Israeli

families to come, close friends of his but not friends of Arik's, and Arik's South African wife, who is considerably younger than the others and not fluent in Hebrew, felt uncomfortable in the group. They still interact occasionally as a couple but the men are more likely to meet without their wives.

Arguments and disagreements do occur among the participants in the networks but are usually resolved in time and seldom create sharp splits. In one case, after a couple in a long-standing network divorced, some friends were more sympathetic to the wife, others to the husband, and the network as such disintegrated although relationships between individual families continued. Not all the participants in these networks interact with the same frequency or intensity, and all participate in networks that are not exclusively Israeli, but all interact more with Israelis like themselves, in interactions of choice, than with any other category of friends.

The gender distinction noted for the 'mixed' families is less pronounced among the 'fully Israeli' families. While many wives are full-time housewives, proportionately more work with their husbands and participate jointly in the various networks, except for the 'Parle-ment'. Moreover, while more of the women volunteered expressions of loss at the absence of family, and many claimed to be the more pro-active of the partners in maintaining relationships and contact with Israel, separate discussions with each partner revealed very similar rates of communication and depth of feeling. The women tended to communicate more with family, the men with friends and former colleagues; the women tended to read Israeli magazines and books, the men newspapers; but both men and women expressed nostalgia for *chayei shchuna* (neighbourhood life), the intimacy of interpersonal relationships, the bustle and vibrancy of urban living, and the intensity of engagement with the pressing issues of the day, to much the same degree. Although there was considerable variability among the women's attitudes towards life in South Africa and Israel respectively, all indicated that the decision to leave Israel had been their husbands', and that they had fallen in with their husbands' plans, with more or less resistance in individual cases.

Although the style of all these relationships is informal, open, and easy-going, some are closer than others and form sub-groups characterized by the participants as 'like family'. Indeed, when Aliza's husband died suddenly of a heart attack, and many Israelis gathered at her house daily during the traditional week of mourning, she commented on one occasion:

'You can always rely on the Israelis, specially in times of trouble. They come immediately, and help in any way possible, like family.' Aliza was not on equally intimate terms with everyone assembled. In fact the trigger for her comment was the presence of two young men she had never met before, who had known her husband, and who told me they had come 'out of respect'. For Aliza however, the family metaphor seemed most appropriate for the kind of emotional support being shown at this trying time.

The Cape Town population contains several non-kin networks, both 'mixed' and fully Israeli, whose members describe their relationships as 'like family'. These are understood by the respondents themselves to be compensation, rather than a substitute for, absent relatives: 'There is no substitute for family but the mutual closeness we have with the Levis is the most similar. We simply accept each other as we are.' The informal conviviality (cultural style) Israelis associate with Israel is notable at all gatherings of Israelis, reinforced by a shared language and common concern with various Israeli issues. Those who use the metaphor of 'like family' however, share something more than a general sense of good fellowship. These relationships are valued not only for the close positive personal feelings they generate, or for the sense of Israeliness or 'home' that they confer. The members also share a sense of mutual unconditional acceptance, which is perhaps the hallmark of ideas about family. However, while families may share notions of unconditional acceptance, mutual obligation, and the like, they are also often fraught by disagreement, friction, conflict and even dislike. By contrast, the 'constructed' families in Cape Town share sets of attitudes and positions about many Israel-specific issues as well as negative attitudes about and distancing behaviour from local Jews. The confluence of cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects, especially but not only pertaining to Israel and Israeliness, cuts across the demographic differentiators of age, stage in the life-cycle, and length of time in South Africa. The confluence is what makes these 'like family' networks particularly cohesive and enduring and sets them apart from the looser and usually larger friendship networks.

In describing the 'loosely knit networks' of Israelis in New York, Shokeid suggests that 'their Israeli ethnicity is mainly sustained as an affective modality' (1988:213) and characterises their behaviour at an Israeli club as 'impersonal sociability' (ibid: Chapter 4). Affective rather than political or instrumental ethnicity is also an accurate description of the Israeli migrants in this population, and as shown, these migrants too do not 'build community'

either in the sense of an umbrella organisation for all in an 'imagined community', or at the level of smaller purpose-directed institutions. However, while 'impersonal sociability' may characterize local Israeli interactions in the aggregate on the few occasions when larger numbers are present in one place (for example, communal Independence Day celebrations, or the election evening), relationships between participants in networks is certainly not impersonal. This may be a function of the smaller size of the local migrant population relative to New York<sup>7</sup>, as well as the popular negative perceptions of *yordim* in New York, largely created by the Israeli media. It may also be a function of Shokeid's emphasis on, and indeed the New York migrants' concern about, the stigma attached to the notion of *yerida*. More than ten years have passed since Shokeid did his research. Many changes have taken place in both Israel and South Africa since then, including changes in the relationship between the two states. Israeli attitudes to diaspora have also changed and today are more likely to be represented as a partnership between the Jewish state and diaspora communities mutually engaged in ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people. In addition, large numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union have entered Israeli society, changing perceptions about the vulnerability, in terms of population size, of Israeli Jewry (although concerns about vulnerability in terms of security remain). Whether or not these factors have contributed directly to the self-perceptions of Israelis abroad, the migrants in this study were not overly preoccupied with issues relating to *yerida*, nor were they, for the most part, as negatively judgemental about their compatriots as Shokeid's research suggests. Thus in Cape Town personal sociability among Israelis not only occurs, but is considered necessary and important by the majority of migrants, and is central to the lives of many.

More importantly, the continuing interaction of most migrants with relatives and friends in Israel, together with simultaneous participation in multiple networks in Cape Town, creates a sense of confidence that they are in control of their own destinies, that they have many options and can exercise them as and when they please. By suggesting this degree of existential comfort, I do not wish to imply that all the migrants are equally comfortable, or that all share a sense of 'all things are possible' to the same degree. The cases presented expose ambivalences and doubts, at different times and for different reasons, and many are

---

<sup>7</sup>Cursory evidence from Johannesburg, where there is a larger concentration of migrants, suggests that the interaction patterns and network formations follow the same trends as Cape Town.

fully aware of the objective and subjective limitations that govern their personal choices. Yet all share the unequivocal view that the Israeli state and society would accept them and take care of them should they be unable to do so themselves. Such a view, one that takes for granted the existence of a safety-net, even if not desired, and even if less comfortable than present circumstances, adds to the sense that the choices they make are their own.

### **Relatively Isolated Families**

Five Israelis with non-Jewish spouses or partners were identified earlier and described as detached from both Israelis and local Jews. However, these families or couples are integrated into local kinship and friendship networks in addition to the work relationships that all economically active people have. They retain links to family and friends in Israel, visit as often as finances allow and some continue to assert Israeliness. None intend returning to Israel. Since none do anything to express Jewishness, and their identity as Israelis becomes relevant only in passing or chance encounters (such as conversations with me), it is more than likely that they will indeed 'disappear' as Jews and Israelis along with their children. As indicated, a few young singles and couples are also detached from Jews and Israelis but they too have created sets of social relationships that satisfy them.

Fieldwork data however, revealed twelve families (eleven married couples and one twice divorced woman) whose relationships beyond work and their immediate kin were remarkably limited - in terms of the number of such relationships as well as in terms of frequency, intensity, and intimacy of interaction. All but two are 'fully Israeli' families and they share an emphasis on the value of family with the others in this category. None are completely isolated - that is, all have a few social contacts outside family and work. However, their work relationships are strikingly limited to the work environment, and their beyond-work activities are concentrated within the home and with family members to an unusual degree. Although all the children of the respondents, the very young as well as the adolescents and adults, had more extensive and intensive social relationships beyond the family than their parents, they spent more leisure time with family than most other informants.

Beyond these similarities however, and their individual insistence on a strong Israeli identity, the families that make up this category seemed to share little. They are of varying ages and stages in the life-cycle - one couple has adult children who do not live at home,

another is newly married with no children. They arrived in Cape Town in different periods, and exhibit a wide variety of occupations and income levels. Two families have attended an Israeli network gathering in the past year, all but two families have attended two out of the past three communal Israel Day of Independence festivities, and two regularly attend the annual Holocaust Day of Remembrance ceremony. All know of other Israelis but none has developed close relationships with Israelis, South African Jews or anyone else. Furthermore, although I did not attempt any kind of psychological evaluation of any of the informants, only one man appeared somewhat withdrawn or reserved, though not unduly so. The rest responded as openly and were as forthcoming as any of the other Israelis in the study.

The relative isolation of these families emerged as a curious and contrary phenomenon only towards the end of the research period when I was reviewing network relationships for all informants. Examination of individual life histories, life-styles and migration histories yielded some similarities among some of the couples, but, at first glance, no features common to all. The oldest couple were both Holocaust survivors and two women are children of survivors. This may account to some degree for their intense family relationships, particularly their protectiveness of the children. Five of the parent-generation adults in this sub-set were not born in Israel, ten had migrated at least once before the current move to South Africa, and one couple had lived in two countries in Europe, and in Namibia and Johannesburg before settling in Cape Town.

Ten parent-generation adults are self employed and four of the wives work with their husbands. Six are employed and the remaining three are full-time housewives. Two of the employees work for Jewish organizations and have perfectly affable relationships with Israeli and other colleagues, but do not pursue these beyond work. All the families treat work and family as all-consuming activities. Some do so because of the nature of their work (or personalities), the divorcee has one full-time and two part-time jobs because of need, and two have relatively new businesses. However, many families in the 'mixed' and 'fully Israeli' categories work equally hard for the same kinds of reasons and are not isolated. Some of the couples are stridently secular, others more or less 'traditional' (their label). Six of the parent generation (though no couples) are Sephardi which accounted for the style of traditional celebrations in two homes but did not seem significant in any other way. None is religiously

observant and three families are members of Orthodox congregations though only one 'mixed' family attends regularly.

Closer examination of the data however, revealed a surprising common denominator. In each of these couples, one partner actively resents being in South Africa and the divorcee claims, 'The worst thing I ever did was to come to here ... It was better for me *ba'aretz* from every point of view. Now I'm stuck here. There's no way I could go back to Israel but I think about it every single day.' Pointing to this factor is not to suggest that resentment at being in South Africa or a very strong desire to return to Israel (or simply to leave South Africa) is unique to this sub-category. However it does seem that active resentment, combined with aspects specific to some of these individuals or families, is a powerful factor in their isolation relative to all other individuals and families in the population.

In the least isolated family, both parents work in different departments of the same institution so that there is some sense of shared collegiality even if largely confined to the workplace. The elderly couple's one daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren were tragically killed in a car crash some years ago. The wife in particular has withdrawn ever since (though they were part of a network prior to the accident) and wishes 'we had never come' even while conceding that the accident could have happened anywhere. In one 'mixed' couple, it is the South African wife who would prefer to live in Israel. She went to live in Israel for Zionist ideological reasons and was happy there. Her husband's work requires much travel away from home and she feels, 'I am just treading water here, waiting to go back. I don't feel part of South Africa, not even the new South Africa. So I mind my own business and look after the children and make plans for going back.' Chaya, referred to earlier, has retired, misses 'home' more now, and both her children live elsewhere. Ilana has two sons and grandchildren in Israel, claims she never wanted to come, and invests a great deal of time and energy in her teenage daughter's dancing activities, as 'It is the only thing that saves me'. Dafna, also mentioned earlier, feels completely alienated which she ascribes mainly to language constraints and her perceptions about her ideological distance from local Jews. She even avoids an Israeli neighbour in their apartment building claiming, 'She is not my type'.

Two couples most closely resemble one image frequently referred to by the Israeli press and mentioned by both Sobel (1986) and Shokeid (1988): the *yored* who didn't make good and is now too ashamed to go home. Yechezkiel came to South Africa with his wife and

three school-age children after he was retrenched from a job he had held for fifteen years. They knew no-one and at first lived in a suburb where there are no other Israelis and few Jews, and moved house seven times in the three years I knew them. Their children attended the Jewish school and integrated well but Yona did not work and Yechezkiel changed jobs every few months always claiming to have been let down or cheated by others, including some Jews and some Israelis for whom he worked for short periods. Yechezkiel claims they left Israel 'to experience the world, to experience something different for a while. Israel is home and we will return when we've seen enough.' They do not own an apartment in Israel and at my last meeting with them they were planning to move to New Zealand even though the eldest daughter had done well in her first year at university and the son had also been accepted. The daughter insisted that she would return to Israel whether her father agreed or not and Yona confided that she would help her do so. Yona too would prefer to return to Israel but says, 'Yechezkiel must try to the end. There's no point (*ein ta'am*) returning *la'aretz* if he continues to believe that he will succeed in New Zealand. Meanwhile, there is still bread on the table.'

Gidon was injured in each of the three Israeli wars in which he participated. Despite his protestations that 'I'm not bitter. I was proud to fight for my country and I would gladly do it again', it seemed clear that at least part of his motivation for leaving was in order to avoid any future wars. He was able to identify several migrants, by name or occupation ('the tall one, the mechanic'), but none of the others mentioned him in any context and I have never seen him or his wife at any of the network or larger gatherings, nor at any of the restaurants or coffee shops that Israelis are known to frequent. He and Yaffa work very hard in their small take-away business and claim to have little time or energy for socialising beyond the family. Yaffa's resentment (expressed only when no other family member was present) has developed and intensified over time: 'It was fine at first. The children were younger and we knew we would have to work hard. But now the struggle-for-a-living (*ma'avak ha'parnasa*) seems endless and I ask myself often whether we couldn't have done the same, maybe better, *ba'aretz*.' In addition, however, she is unhappy about the fact that Galia, the oldest of three daughters, has a non-Jewish boyfriend:

He's a nice fellow, a good boy, and they are very young. But this I did not anticipate. It would not have happened *ba'aretz* and I really don't like it. Gidon won't discuss it and I don't want to cause her to do *davka* (purposefully

contrary). She's so naive. She tells me all the time she will always be Jewish no matter whom she marries or where she lives. To a certain extent there's something in it - she's the one who always remembers to light the [sabbath] candles, she always makes the right food for the festivals. And she says her children will always be Jews .... If we hadn't come, this wouldn't have happened.

An extended period in the field enabled me to record changes in the resentment factor for three other families in the sub-set in some detail. The kinds of changes observed again highlight the diversity of the population, the simultaneous connectedness to both countries, and the value placed on Israeliness.

When I first met Ohad he was a newly arrived bachelor who had spent a few years in California and was often to be found in the company of other young single Israelis. After he had been in Cape Town for about a year, he decided it was time to find a wife and settle down: 'But the local girls were too spoilt (*mefunakot*). So I went home and found my wife - a nice girl, a typical Israeli, not spoilt.' At that time Ohad was living on accumulated capital and was looking for an appropriate business. His wife did shift work in a restaurant and often worked until late, so they did not socialize much. She had never been out of Israel before and she liked Cape Town very much. Two years and a business later, her attitude had changed: 'It's a pity that I agreed to come. I would really like to go home. I'm sure Ohad could find a suitable business in Israel too, if he would only look. At least there I would have my family, and friends. Here we work all the time, weekends too. I feel stuck, and there's no-one here for me.' Ohad feels that he was badly treated by the army - 'not even a thank-you after five years in the permanent forces in an elite unit' - and that, together with various experiences he had when trying to set up a business in Israel, makes him determined not to return. A few months later, when Sigal learned she was pregnant, she insisted on going 'home' for three months to have the baby. Their business is largely seasonal so Ohad was able to join her. On their return, both were much happier, but their circumstances suggest that they will probably remain more socially isolated than most of the Israelis, particularly those in their age cohort.

In the early years in Cape Town as students, Ami and Raya, described in Chapter 3, did not have much time for socializing: both worked very hard, money was in short supply and both had to put in extra hours to improve their English. At that time their social network comprised mainly students and others they met through them. They knew no Israelis or South African Jews and 'we didn't even think about it, we were too immersed in our own affairs.'

When Ami was offered a job at the university, 'much better than anything he could get *ba'aretz* at that time', Raya resisted, but was appeased by Ami's promise that she could visit Israel and her family twice a year. She has done so every year and since the children (born 1988 and 1992) were old enough, has arranged for them to attend play-groups or school while they are there. In Cape Town, the group of friends they had as graduate students has since dispersed, they have not become friendly with the parents of their children's friends (both children attend Jewish schools), and

We got fed up with entertaining people from the university. They drink too much and hardly ever reciprocate. It was different when we were students - then people would arrive, uninvited, like *ba'aretz*, and sometimes stay for a few days, and whatever we had would be good enough. Now it must be formal invitations - no-one just pops in.

More importantly, since the birth of the children Raya has become increasingly aware of differences, for children, between Israel and South Africa, and increasingly resentful about being here. Ami, on the other hand, has visited Israel far less, has somewhat strained relationships with his family there (partly because they disapprove of his being here), has left the university and is very involved in setting up his own consultancy business with a South African partner. They know one Israeli couple - Raya met the wife 'by chance' - who are considerably older than them but who include them every year in their Israel Independence Day party.

About six months ago Ami's brother Yoram, married with two young children, arrived to live in Cape Town after spending two years in Japan. The two couples have a close relationship and see each other frequently. In the short time since their arrival, Yoram and his wife have become friendly with two young Israeli couples and met others, and have included Ami and Raya in several joint activities. During my last meeting with Raya, a few weeks before her departure for Israel for the duration of the children's six week summer vacation, she remarked,

It's good we're going now. The children have to know that Israel is home, even if now they have cousins in Cape Town ... I don't want to be rooted here but I must admit it's nice to get to know Israelis and to speak Hebrew in company ... Ami is glad that Yoram is here, [he] was even happy to meet those friends. Maybe now he will stop distancing himself so much from Israel and Israelis. We'll see.

The following account illustrates the 'serious adjustment crisis' experienced by some expatriates who 'never overcome their strangehood' (Cohen, 1977:56-59). Oren's case was the

most extreme manifestation of alienation in this research population. While the details are specific to Oren and his family's story, they nevertheless highlight many themes of the study.

The couple met when Liz, a non-Jewish South African, spent a few months in Israel as a tourist. He followed her to South Africa when she returned and they decided to marry and set up home in Israel. She converted, willingly, at his request, via Orthodox channels, and they were happily settled in Israel, 'although life was hard', until she was expecting their first child. At that time she experienced an overwhelming need to be close to her own family. After much 'soul-searching' and negotiation between them, they came to Cape Town with a five-year plan: to improve their financial situation, have two children and return to Israel.

At the time I met them, they had been in Cape Town for seven years, had three children (the oldest of whom needed special schooling), and were experiencing financial difficulties. As a couple, they were not part of any network though Liz maintained contact with her parents and the children certainly had friends. In Oren's words,

I feel completely helpless all the time. I don't at all belong here, but I'm afraid to go back. I'm afraid I won't find work, that Liz will be miserable again, the children won't adapt ... I cause a terrible atmosphere in the house. [I] don't know; Israelis should stay at home. There they need us, here we are nothing.

According to Liz, Oren's 'depression' had been apparent for some time but he had refused any intervention. She was feeling quite desperate and believed that their relationship and family life were in danger of dissolution. She reported,

Oren's father has laid a guilt trip on him about leaving Israel ever since we left. He will not visit us here and says we shouldn't visit either unless we intend staying .... We're completely unsettled and it's affecting all of us. We talk about going back all the time and argue about when it's the right time to go. The trouble is, we live with one foot in each country. We haven't bought a house here because we're going back; whatever we do buy is with there in mind; we know it's hard there but we haven't exactly made it here either .... Oren really pines for Israel, and I understand him because I was happy there too. We've really got no-one here. My family are supportive, but they're not Jewish so we spend all the Jewish holidays alone. Anyway, they don't really understand.

Less than a year later, Liz had begun working, Oren was in therapy, the couple had been to marital counselling, and they had jointly decided on a date for their return and listed all the goals they wished to achieve before then. According to Oren, 'The moment we decided, and I could tell my father when we were returning, the whole world changed. I'm an Israeli again, I can stand up straight. Another year and we'll be home. A year is OK. A year I

can tolerate.' Liz appreciates the positive effects of her work, Oren's therapy and the marital counselling. She contends, however, that two other things made the real difference - synagogue attendance and new friends.

I just decided one day that maybe we don't belong anywhere because I'm a convert. In Israel it didn't seem to matter but here I thought maybe that's why we don't fit. So we started going to shul regularly, Friday and Saturday, and somehow, it has brought us together as a family. We're not *frum* [devout] but it's as though keeping kosher and being with other Jews regularly has reminded us who we want to be.

Through her work, Liz met another 'mixed' (South African-Israeli) couple, and through them two other 'mixed' couples:

I can't explain why we didn't meet Israelis before. Maybe we were closed off, just too engrossed in ourselves and our unhappiness. But it's made all the difference to Oren. He comes alive when he speaks Hebrew and has started reading Israeli newspapers again and we plan, plan, plan all the time. And we can talk about it with these new people, because they know what we're talking about.

As I have indicated, many Israeli and 'mixed' couples go through periods of feeling dislocated, alienated and conflicted. Most, however, manage the emotional stress by focusing on the present, maintaining strong ties with relatives and friends in Israel, and establishing friendships with other Israelis which provide a Hebrew-speaking environment and culturally familiar interaction patterns. In the case of Oren and Liz, none of these strategies had been implemented. Connecting with Oren's father in Israel exacerbated rather than relieved tension, and phone calls to friends were too expensive. Their 'present' was rendered uncomfortable by the unresolved competing claims of past and future. Although Liz's family were close by and as emotionally supportive as they could be, unlike the families of Jewish local spouses, they were complete outsiders to the specific issues that were causing the tensions. Liz's strength in insisting on therapy and marital counselling, together with synagogue attendance, the improved financial situation and new and appropriate friendships, had significantly changed this family's sense of its place in the world. Making a decision about returning had relieved Oren's inner turmoil and allowed him to repair his relationship with his father. Whether Oren and Liz will indeed keep to their planned time-table is yet to be seen. In the meantime, however, their lives now bear much closer resemblance to the kind of comfortable contradiction I have described.

### **Seeking Male *Chevra*<sup>8</sup> (company, buddies)**

One of the consequences of doing fieldwork at home is that one knows about events, people and practices relevant to one's topic, that occurred well before the commencement of formal research. Several precursors to the all-male weekly gathering of Israelis, known as 'the Par-le-ment' and which I describe below, had the makings of 'associations' even though they were not formalized. I describe them briefly to show some of the dynamics within the population over time. Another consequence of doing anthropology at home is that one continues to be aware of ongoing change. Had I left 'the field' before writing up, I might have theorized about the 'incipient club' nature of the Par-le-ment. However, in the circumstances, I am honour-bound to reflect it accurately: in the past tense.

### **Precursors**

During the late sixties and seventies the Israeli population in Cape Town was smaller than today and most Israelis knew or knew of one another. Several men, then in their twenties and thirties, used to meet regularly at weekends to play soccer at a field in the suburb where most then lived. The group fluctuated in number as new arrivals joined and others left and only a few were friends who socialized with their wives or girlfriends beyond the weekly game. The practice petered out after most moved to Sea Point (and most more recent arrivals settled in Sea Point) and as the years passed and they became less physically fit for soccer.

At the same time, several of the men could be found of an evening or on a weekend afternoon at a popular Italian-owned sea-front cafe in Sea Point, with or without their wives and/or children. The cafe was also patronized by local Greeks and Italians, had a Mediterranean atmosphere reminiscent of Israel, and at that time was one of the few places in Cape Town where foreign languages could be heard. When ownership of the cafe changed and the terrace enclosed it ceased to be a meeting place for Israelis. For a while it seemed as though another sea-front cafe would become a substitute, but that was short-lived.

During the eighties, two Israeli brothers-in-law owned an Israeli restaurant in Sea Point, at that time one of the few places that served the now common-place middle-eastern

---

<sup>8</sup>The word *chevra* is pronounced two ways. In its correct formal pronunciation, it means 'company', in its social and commercial meanings, or 'society'. The second form, in colloquial or slang usage, refers to a group of friends. The word can be used for mixed groups of men and women, but is more often (and in Cape Town almost always) used to denote a group of males, similar to the English 'the boys', as in 'an evening with the boys'.

food. This too became a place for the core group of 'old-timers' to congregate - sometimes just a group of men for coffee and gossip, at other times a place to socialize, with wives, with friends. In that restaurant, and at the initiative of a relative newcomer of about the same age as the core group, the idea was born to start an Israeli club. It was launched with great excitement at a barbecue held at premises owned by the Jewish community. The occasion was billed as a 'family day' and the children splashed about happily in the swimming-pool while the adults prepared the food, chatted with old friends and acquaintances, and met new ones. The event was well attended and considered a success by all. After two or three further attempts failed to receive the expected support, the initiator and his helpers gave up in disgust. In an interview with the initiator (for the current study), he explained the 'experiment' as follows:

There were too few Israelis in Cape Town to support a club with a proper programme. And without a programme, there's no need for a club. The whole idea was to create a kind of 'little Israel' in Cape Town, like there is in America. Only to meet your friends and talk about Israel is not enough for a club - we do that all the time. Maybe now there are enough Israelis, but somebody else must do it. I already don't have the inclination.

My retrospective view of the experiment, supported by the current findings, is that numbers were not and are not the sole reason for the lack of support for a formal organized place and space, if indeed numbers were the reason at all. The diversity within the small population suggests that a formal programme could not attract more than a small number for any particular event, except perhaps an Independence Day celebration. That, however, is organized each year by the Jewish community with a programme which always incorporates performances by the Jewish school which the children of the migrants attend. Some of the above networks do hold separate, Israeli, Independence Day parties but organizing a large event for Israelis who have already celebrated the day on the date because of their children, is redundant. Occasions with similar 'community'-wide appeal, such as Jewish festivals, are seen as home-based and family-centred, and celebrated with a single day, as in Israel, and not over two days in diaspora tradition. The obvious enjoyment informants derive from the networks described above, adequately satisfies the measure of Israeliness desired, and the diversity is accommodated within smaller Israeli groups that are more compatible on grounds other than Israeliness. For example, a few men have played cards twice a week for many years, at different homes in turn. Dissatisfaction with the levels of Israeliness on offer in Cape Town is

one reason for returning to Israel although returning is always presented as if planned from the outset. That many feel ambivalent and would like the best of both worlds, is not in dispute. My contention however, is that the accommodation I have described as 'comfortable contradiction' allows for the best of both worlds according to the informants' currently perceived preferences.

Several years after the club attempt, a new, small 'Israeli' cafe-restaurant, Aladin, opened in Sea Point, owned by an Arab Israeli and his Jewish Israeli wife. From his appearance and accent, even I, not very familiar with Arabs, knew immediately that the owner was Arab. I was not, at first, sure of his wife. I later learned that she was indeed Jewish and that their children attended the local Jewish school. From conversations with the couple, and with others, I understood that life in Israel was difficult for them - socially they had no place. In Cape Town they worked hard and long hours and to the best of my knowledge were not part of any social network outside of work. The Israelis who frequented the cafe (and some, mainly men, were to be found there at all hours of the day, during the week and at weekends) conversed equally comfortably with husband and wife, and their children seemed to have made friends with local Jewish children from school. And yet, comfortable though the conversation and atmosphere of the cafe were, the Israelis never referred to the husband, among themselves, as anything but 'the Arab': never 'we'll meet at Aladin', always 'we'll meet at 'the Arab's [place]'.

Aladin quickly became popular with Israelis of all ages, including many 'old-timers', and both sexes, though women were less frequent patrons. Yet, although people would arrange to meet there, could expect to find other Israelis, and would speak and joke with each other from one table to another, Aladin never acquired the atmosphere of a regular meeting-place. Despite the closure of the other Israeli-owned restaurant, whose owners left Cape Town secretly overnight, leaving many debts. Aladin was apparently not a viable business and the owners sold and left the country.

### **The Par-le-ment**

While Aladin was still operating, some of the original soccer-players still in Cape Town began meeting at another coffee-shop in Sea Point with the addition of more recent migrants of about the same age. Within a short while the group began to be known as 'the Par-

le-ment'. No-one was sure how the name came about or who suggested it, but it was used by all who knew of it and by their wives too, mockingly.

Throughout the year for several years, every Sunday morning except for Jewish holidays, this group of mostly middle-aged Israeli men gathered at the coffee-shop. They were welcome patrons and 'their' table was reserved for them, though no-one had requested it. They remained loyal to the coffee-shop even though it was not owned or run by Israelis and even though several Israeli-owned eating places opened during the period. The group was fluid - sometimes four or five men arrived, sometimes as many as twenty or more turned up. The meetings were not pre-arranged; there was simply an unspoken agreement that the gathering would happen, and whoever came would be welcome. They paid individually for whatever they consumed and there was often good-natured bantering about who ate what and who should pay for what.

Most of the 'members' were in their fifties, a few older and a few younger, and occasionally someone's son would also attend. Many had been in South Africa for twenty years or longer. Some were married to South Africans but for the purpose of this gathering that was irrelevant as all women were excluded. I was tolerated at their table on two occasions 'for the sake of your research', but was largely ignored. On other occasions I sat elsewhere and observed, and their talk was loud enough to overhear most of it. Occasionally a few of the wives were also present, but sat separately and were always told, seriously although in a jocular tone, not to 'dare' join the men. Often someone's wife would be shopping at the next door supermarket and a child would approach his/her father and ask for money, which always led to some kind of joke at the expense of the father.

The fact that the group met on Sunday mornings was well-known to many Israelis in Sea Point, whether they attended or not, and some who did not attend made derogatory comments about 'those Israelis'. The regulars knew a lot about each other through the meetings and through their long residence in Cape Town, but few were members of the same family networks. For most, the 'knowledge' was not intimate; it was largely restricted to what they did for a living (and some did business with each other), how many children they had and whether something important had happened such as an illness or bereavement, or a family celebration, such as a barmitzva, wedding or graduation. They also knew each others'

habits and hobbies, for example, whether they gambled at cards or at the casino and who had lost or won, and much teasing occurred around these topics.

All the men were in some kind of business and most, though not all, were self-employed. None was professional. Some were Ashkenazi, some Sephardi, and 'ethnic' (group of origin) jokes abounded, sometimes referring to Ashkenazi or Sephardi-ness, sometimes by well-known though derogatory terms for those identities (*vuz-vuz*, *tchach-tchach*), and sometimes referring to country of origin ('Polani', from Poland; 'Marokai', from Morocco). While in other contexts such references would be considered impolite and improper (or vulgar and racist), in this setting the appellations were teasing, good-humoured and affectionate.

Conversation was always in Hebrew, with English, Yiddish, Arabic and even Afrikaans words scattered here and there, and ranged haphazardly: whatever came to mind or was topical seemed appropriate. They always knew who was planning to visit Israel or had just returned, and in one way or another news about Israel or about Israelis they knew who had returned, was always discussed. Current Israeli events, often political but also matters such as soccer results or a national figure or some popular entertainer, were often the subject of animated, sometimes heated, discussion and argument. A great deal of teasing, joking, and mutual joking-insulting took place, usually good-humoured, but sometimes verging on becoming serious and conflictual. It was the content that indicated the latter, not the shrillness or volume of the voices. Those were always loud, with people vying to be heard and several talking at once.

The weekly gathering was clearly enjoyed by all participants but was more important to some. Two men in particular, both married to South Africans, always attended unless they were out of town. Yitzchak was less well-off than many, a very quiet man who listened more than he spoke. His communication with his mother and sister in Israel, his only relatives besides his wife and children, was infrequent, as were his visits to Israel. The Sunday meetings were his main connection to Israel and Israelis. He read Israeli newspapers at the Jewish communal library but could not afford to subscribe, his wife did not know Hebrew and they were not a very sociable couple. For Yitzchak this forum was both a source of information about Israel and a social occasion. He considered it 'my corner of Israel in Cape Town'.

Ze'ev's situation was quite different. A wealthy businessman with substantial property holdings in Israel, he had always visited Israel annually. Since two of his children (both born and raised in Cape Town) moved there, and since the birth of grandchildren, he and his wife now visit several times a year. Another son worked with him but never attended the Par-le-ment. Ze'ev's wife spoke very little Hebrew but all their friends were Israelis or 'mixed' couples like themselves and she was very comfortable with everyone. Ze'ev was known to be a 'soft touch' if any Israeli were in financial trouble. He had helped several people in different ways: given some jobs until they found better ones, paid an airfare for someone whose father was ill in Israel, and when a (bachelor) Israeli employee had a heart-attack, took the man into his home until he had recovered sufficiently to be on his own. Ze'ev considered himself a 'founder member' of the group and greatly valued its existence:

I wait for it all week. I work hard - [I] don't go out during the week. I really enjoy seeing the *chevra*, hear all the news ... Why no wives? [We] do go out also with the women, to a movie, to eat, but this is only for the men. [We] can talk any nonsense we want, no secrets, nothing heavy - [It is] simply pleasant. [We] laugh a lot, argue a lot, tease each other, like at home. [We] speak the same language. Not important if some are young and some are old; we're all Israelis. [We] speak the same language.

The cafe was situated in a shopping centre where Arik, mentioned earlier, later opened a felafel kiosk. He was friendly with everyone and he and his wife were occasional participants in several of the Par-le-ment members' other networks. Before the group met at this cafe Arik had attended infrequently, but once in business close by he became a regular, though he would stop by rather than joining for a 'full session'. On several occasions he invited the group to move to his kiosk, where he had chairs and tables, but they refused, saying they were quite happy with the cafe and with the personal service they received. (The cafe was a large European-style coffee-shop and they were able to put several tables together if needed.) However, it seemed to me that they preferred not to be obliged to Arik in any way and indeed did not wish to formalize their meetings by acknowledging that they were a regular, expected occurrence.

Over time, some of the men would stop at Arik's kiosk after the Par-le-ment, to exchange a few words, or have yet another cup of coffee - Turkish, this time - or buy some take-aways on their way home. Slowly the whole group transferred to his kiosk, which pleased him, and they seemed satisfied. The tables were adjacent to the supermarket entrance, and as it was a busy and popular shopping centre, passer-by acquaintances often stopped to

chat and several Israelis who were not 'members' of the group would join in for a while. While the group still had core participants, it had become even more fluid.

Towards the end of 1996, Arik moved to another shopping-centre in Sea Point, which was undergoing renovation. Some of the group continued meeting at the new place but there was competition because the girlfriend of another Israeli also owned a coffee-shop in the centre. Over a period of several weeks attendance dropped and the 'tone' of the meetings became less convivial. Four months after the move, the meetings had stopped completely and at the time of writing had not been resumed.

### **'Symbolic' Ethnicity?**

Some might argue that the kinds of networks described constitute community, and I would agree that the nature of the relationships within the larger networks indeed generate feelings of community and communality. However, although individuals and even groups of individuals are visible, the networks operate largely as sets of private relationships; a public dimension, one that would suggest that the disparate groups are somehow bound together in a common Israeliness, is lacking. Not only is the population not 'institutionally complete' (Breton, 1964; Kymlicka, 1995), it is devoid of specifically Israeli institutions. Although some networks have persisted over time in terms of core members, their composition is in constant flux which reduces the potential for population-wide solidarity.

The notion that the population constitutes a sub-group of the Jewish community may be accurate in terms of categorical description, but has no substantive experiential meaning for Jews or Israelis. In the unlikely event of a threat to all Jews, however, I have no doubt Israelis would be included in whatever protection the Jewish community could muster. The migrants certainly participate in aspects of Jewish communal life, as individuals, and, by choice, on the margins. Their feelings about this position cannot, however, be described as marginalization, in the sense of alienation, as they have no desire to become any more integrated than particular individuals have chosen to be, and, as shown, the majority continue to assert 'difference' even after many years of residence and despite their close association with many locals.

As noted earlier, Cohen (1977:49-60) explains the 'lower level of cohesiveness and solidarity' among expatriates in terms of transience and privilege, relative to the levels among

middlemen minorities, described as 'sojourners'. He claims that sojourners 'have a stake in the preservation of their community since it provides ... the continuing link between them as individuals and their homeland; their long-run identity depends on the preservation of this link' (ibid:52). As we have seen, the Israelis maintain and nurture links with Israel as individuals and families, irrespective of the extent of their interaction with Israelis locally. Without doubt the advances in electronic technology since Cohen's survey have facilitated this communication. He also shows that 'the salience of the community' (ibid:53) is lower for expatriates than for lower status middlemen because 'privilege gives access'. The Israelis' levels of education and experience of bureaucracy enable them to deal directly with authorities without the need for representative organizations. Their extension of the kinship metaphor to all Israelis removes any apprehension in dealing directly with the Israeli embassy, should the need arise. Cohen further explains the lower levels of cohesiveness and solidarity among 'natural' expatriates than among 'planted' (ibid) in terms of the greater heterogeneity of the former, and goes on to describe the proliferation of cliques and friendship circles in much the same terms as I have described networks: 'There was little contact between the cliques, some social competition, but not much mutual resentment or animosity' (ibid:55).

The findings of the present study thus concur with Cohen's conclusion that 'expatriates did not usually succeed in creating a strong solidary community' (ibid:60). However, my findings do not support the characterization that 'their "environmental bubble" often turns out to resemble a hollow shell more than a warm cocoon' (ibid). Several major distinctions, shown in detail in Chapters 3-6 of the present study, account for the fact that the lives of Israeli transmigrants in Cape Town resemble neither a 'bubble' or 'cocoon', that is, a bounded entity, nor a 'hollow shell', that is, devoid of affect and meaning.

Each distinction, alone, would not account for the sense of 'comfortable contradiction' and 'simultaneous embeddedness in various worlds' that the transmigrants display. However, with different emphases for different individuals, the combination of the following elements creates a current local reality that links past and future: self-definition as 'permanent sojourners'; self-confident personal identity; middle-class status and little social distance from the host society; and the presence of a proximal host group which reduces social distance but simultaneously reinforces cultural distance and hence strong identity. Furthermore, the

multiplicity of close interpersonal relationships, local and long-distance, pierce the boundaries of conceptual 'bubbles' and fill the 'shells' with many and varied grades and shades of emotion and meaning.

If the migrants in Cape Town are both like expatriates elsewhere in their internal social organization and relative transience, and unlike expatriates in their relative existential comfort and their relations with the host society, is their expression of ethnicity an example of Gans' notion of 'symbolic ethnicity'? Gans (1979) was writing in reaction to the proposition that ethnicity in the United States was undergoing a revival<sup>9</sup>. He argued that a new kind of ethnic identification was occurring which he characterized as 'symbolic ethnicity, an ethnicity of last resort, which could, nevertheless, persist for generations' (ibid:1), and that 'does not require functioning groups or networks; ... [it] does not need a practiced culture' (1979:12). Although he was referring to the descendants of immigrants rather than to the migrant generation, the concept has been applied more generally within social science literature. Gans stressed the actors' emphasis on identity, on 'being and feeling'(ibid:14) rather than participation and practice, as well as the relative ease and low cost of 'being and feeling'. That is to say, he emphasized the expressive rather than instrumental function of ethnicity, for individuals who voluntarily select symbols from a tradition for which they feel love, pride and nostalgia, and which permit forms of expression that do not conflict or interfere with other ways of life (ibid:8-9).

In a paper written in 1994, Gans reminds those critics who understood the phrase 'ethnicity of last resort' to imply the disappearance of ethnicity, of the second part of the sentence, namely, that symbolic ethnicity could nevertheless persist (Gans, 1994:578). He concedes that his contention in the earlier paper, that ethnicity might be used as or in leisure activity, could be construed as trivial activity, and that he did not mean to suggest that ethnicity was 'unauthentic, unserious, or meaningless' (ibid). Despite these defences, Gans' de-emphasis or relegation of behaviour (practice) and cultural content, leaves one with a sense that symbolic ethnicity is more superficial and arbitrary than other kinds of ethnic

---

<sup>9</sup>Many works were published on this theme. Among the most influential were *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970), *Ethnicity in the United States* (Greeley, 1974), and *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (Novak, 1971),

expression because he does not suggest how or to what extent 'feeling' an identity influences behaviour or what impact it has on people's lives.

Many of Gans' propositions seem to fit this research population. Yet if the foregoing descriptions of the lives of Israelis in Cape Town do nothing else, they surely demonstrate that 'feeling Israeli' translates into concerted action and influences life-decisions. While 'feeling' Israeli may not 'require' networks or practised culture, 'being' Israeli certainly creates groups and relationships based on that feeling and the expression of 'being' contains sufficient culturally-specific content to support the feeling. Furthermore, Gans contends that 'much contemporary behaviour described as ethnic ... is largely a working-class style' of 'poorer ethnics ... less touched by acculturation and assimilation ... in an unequal society' (ibid:3), whereas I have argued that middle-class status enables transmigrants to retain high commitment to ethnicity while going about their everyday affairs within the wider society.

Finally, unlike other researchers of Israelis abroad (Kass & Lipset, 1982; Mittelberg & Waters, 1992; Shokeid, 1988), Gold (1994b) finds strong evidence for the creation of community by Israelis in Los Angeles. He and his co-researchers identified 27 Israeli organizations and he lists many varied activities which suggest an 'institutionally complete' Israeli community in Los Angeles (ibid:333), unlike the Israelis in Cape Town. However, while acknowledging the ambivalence of Israelis about their presence in America, Gold interprets 'such feelings of nostalgia' as 'an incentive for co-ethnic cooperation' (ibid). Put in my terms: where most researchers find uncomfortable contradiction leading to Shokeid's notion of 'impersonal sociability' (1988) and lack of community, Gold finds little or no contradiction, or perhaps, in his desire to refute conventional wisdom, he underemphasizes the contradictions the migrants themselves recognize. Gold quotes an informant as saying: 'We Israelis continue to keep a close contact with Israel as if we left for a short time only. ... The reality is that we live here and at the same time we don't live here. We are torn apart ...' (Gold, 1994:333). The 'torn apart' evaluation does not reflect the 'comfortable contradiction' found in the present study. The 'as if' and the description of reality suggest both the simultaneity of 'here' and 'there' and the same kinds of contradictions found in Cape Town. In Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's phrasing:

... as distance becomes a function of time, the instantaneity of telecommunication produces a vivid sense of here-ness and interactivity the feeling of presence. The result is an extreme case of physical distance and

social proximity under the conditions of disembodied presence and  
immateriality of place. ... location is defined not by geographical coordinates  
but by the topic of conversation. (1994:342)

And the topic of conversation among Israelis in Cape Town is simultaneously global, Israeli,  
Jewish, South African and personal.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Towards the 21st Century:

#### Reflections on 'Transnationalism' and Multiculturalism

The end of the twentieth century can be characterized in many ways. The beginning of the century saw waves of mass migrations, essentially from the old world (Europe) to the new (Australia, South Africa, the Americas), and, in due course, the break-up of empires. The current period is characterized by the collapse of the Soviet power-bloc, and the mingling, everywhere, of people from elsewhere. Unlike the earlier period, however, today's population movements are less likely to be permanent, whether by intent or circumstance. 'Mingling' may long have been a human predilection but during the period (approximately mid-19th to mid-20th centuries) in which the nation-state came to be the 'natural' way of ordering much of the world (Hobsbawm, 1990), 'entanglement', to use James Clifford's term (1994), was either not recognized, or else it was perceived as problematic [vide 'the Jewish Question'].

In the aftermath of each of this century's world wars and de-colonization processes, as well as a myriad smaller conflicts, geographic mobility escalated everywhere. Despite this, migration is still considered aberrant, more often characterized as dislocation than relocation. It is also associated with 'not belonging', implying not only that attachment to 'place' is essential to well-being but also that attachment to only one place is the only possibility for well-being. Visible socio-cultural diversity is the hallmark of post-modernity, and the fact that the empirical evidence co-exists with the illusion of internally homogeneous nation-states, only underlines the contradictions of our age and the simultaneity of the equally powerful oppositional processes of homogenization and heterogenization (Appadurai, 1990 & 1991; Featherstone, 1990; Foster, 1991; Kearney, 1995).

This study has examined how Jewish Israelis in Cape Town have transported, nurtured and transformed personal and group identity and identification. The first attribute that makes them an identifiable population is that they left Israel, the country in which they were born or raised, voluntarily and independently. The attribute is an important defining feature because, irrespective of motivations for leaving, or for choosing South Africa as destination, it marks the migrants off from others in both Israel and South Africa. Middle-

class status is their second shared characteristic, measured in terms of literacy, years of schooling, type of occupation and skills, income, and most importantly, aspirations. Middle-class attributes were shown to be important in easing the adaptive processes inherent in dislocation and relocation, relative to victimized or otherwise disadvantaged migrants. Taken together, the two properties distinguish Israelis abroad from refugees, guest-workers and transient employees of multinational corporations. Neither attribute alone, nor their combination, is unique to Israelis. Many expatriates, whether they define themselves as such or not, share these attributes. What distinguishes such populations are their particularistic (including historical) traits, whether objectively distinct from the surrounding population or subjectively perceived as different.

Both macro and micro-level studies examine the particular ways in which differences are expressed and the degree to which social boundaries, constructed on the basis of perceived socio-cultural difference, are maintained. Macro-level studies are concerned with these issues from the perspective of the state's capacity (and will) to integrate diverse populations with minimum conflict and maximum stability. Micro-level studies tend to focus either on the internal dynamics of a defined population, or on its position within the broader social hierarchy. This thesis has incorporated both perspectives but confined itself to neither. It asks how the people studied see themselves in the world, which reference groups are pertinent to their self-identity, why these reference groups resonate for them more than others, and how these choices (consciously articulated, or not) affect both their self-definition and their position in the world.

### **Particularities**

As shown throughout the thesis, the migrants' self-definitions and self-positioning relate directly to particular conceptions of the world, formulated before migration, and adapted and transformed, but not relinquished, in the new setting. Their self-confidence in their own identity on the one hand, together with recognition of change engendered by their multi-locality and multiple (simultaneous) allegiances, serve as a cultural resource that provides considerable flexibility in choosing the bases for establishing different kinds of social relationships.

Notwithstanding the diversity (of socio-demographic characteristics, personal histories, practices, intentions and adaptive strategies) reflected in these pages, all the migrants share a sense of Jewish and Israeli historical particularity. The starting point for the self-understanding of Jewish Israeli migrants is thus located in the shared myths of Jewish history as interpreted and acted upon in the formation of the Israeli (Zionist) state. As discussed in several chapters, the Jewish case encapsulates many of the concepts, processes and dilemmas examined in this study. Yet the study does not argue for Jewish (or Israeli) exceptionalism. It suggests rather that several historical processes definitive of 'the Jewish experience' (for example, mobility, 'imagining community', establishing diaspora, dealing with powerlessness), have become increasingly commonplace for large numbers of people.

However, the ideological foundations of Zionism (see Shimoni, 1995), incorporated into formal and informal socialization processes enacted by the Israeli state, gave particular meaning to the act of leaving Israel, regarding it as betrayal and giving it the value-laden term *yerida* (see Chapter 3). Although official attitudes to emigration have changed and softened over time, the wide range of opinions among Israelis in Cape Town about the legitimacy and meaning of leaving Israel is one index of the internal diversity of the migrant population. As shown in Chapter 3, however, differences on this issue do not correlate neatly with age at departure or length of stay in Cape Town, as might have been expected. Rather, as shown, legitimacy and meaning tend to be separated, with opinions around the latter showing greater similarity. As the migrants have themselves left Israel, but continue to identify with it, it is not surprising that their departure is rationalized either as 'due to circumstances', implying reluctance, or in terms of values of self-realization and/or improvement of the family's material base, with both values considered legitimate. The meaning ascribed to leaving as 'temporary', and not rejecting of Israeli society, can be seen as the consequence of successful Zionist socialization/indoctrination, or, equally, as post-Zionist implementation of the (Zionist) aims of 'normalization'. Indeed, this thesis has suggested throughout that while Zionism may not have achieved its goal of normalizing 'the Jewish People', or the Jewish state, it may have succeeded in normalizing Israeli Jewish citizens.

## **Confident Identification**

All the Israelis in Cape Town assert strong self-identification as 'Israeli', the label referring to Israeli Jews. As shown in Chapter 4, the overwhelming majority describe 'Israeliness' in primordialist (immutable) terms, as a quality one 'has' or 'is'. Yet many locate its source in particular experiences and institutions - the neighbourhood, schooling, youth movements, the army, wars, and cultural style are the aspects most commonly identified. The (sub-conscious) acknowledgement of the possibility of 'becoming' Israeli suggests implicit recognition of the power of socialization processes in transforming outsiders into insiders. Coming from a society in which the 'absorption' of (Jewish) immigrants was, and is, portrayed as a project of ongoing national importance and obligation, the Israeli migrants have internalized both essentialism and the possibility of transformation as 'natural', and not contradictory. This seeming paradox contributes to the flexibility alluded to above.

As shown, most of the migrants claim the label 'Israeli' with pride. Indeed, while Smootha's assertion that Israel has not developed a 'national culture' (1990) is no doubt true for the state's Arab citizens, the migrants in this study clearly do not share his view. While some relate to the label in a more matter-of-fact, taken-for-granted way, a few acknowledge it in a resigned, almost fatalistic, manner as if it is something they would prefer to shed but believe they cannot. If the most important thing to know about people is what they take for granted, the assertion of Israeliness is the single most striking such 'thing' about Israelis in Cape Town. Irrespective of any specific personal connotations individuals may attach to the content of the label, the general meaning derived is a sense of self-confidence and security. They have no doubt about who they are, or where and to whom they belong for particular purposes and in particular situations, even while some, recognizing changes in themselves, are ambivalent about their own capacity to actualize the sense of belonging. The taken-for-grantedness lies in essentialist presumptions about the nature of ethnic groups and 'nations' and is closely tied to the understanding of Jewish history. Even the few who reject attachment to Israel and do not value that identity, consider themselves 'inevitably' Israeli. While a few informants considered the fact of their Israeliness irrelevant to the conduct of their lives in the present, even those informants claimed, spontaneously, that being Israeli had made them what they were. In other words, these few distinguish between identity and identification.

Although consciousness of self is inherent in the self-confident and unequivocal assertions of Israeliness, it is an untroubled self-consciousness, secure, and thus able to be paraded or ignored, as the situation warrants. The difference between kinds of self-consciousness around issues of identity was underlined for me in the words of a Jewish former South African, long resident in Israel, and an ideological Zionist, describing how he felt when he first moved to Israel and how he feels now:

I felt liberated when I got to Israel. I no longer had to promote Jewishness and Zionism, or to examine all my decisions and behaviours to see whether they were compatible with my beliefs about those things. I could relax. I was a Jew among Jews in a Zionist state and the problematics of that were now my problems as a whole person, not a hyphenated Jew. In a word, I felt genuinely free. I still feel that way despite my concerns about the kind of society we're building here. At least whatever we do here, for better or worse, is done by us. It isn't just our reaction to what is done to us.

For a diaspora Jew, particularly, perhaps, one who had left apartheid South Africa, that kind of feeling was a revelation, a discovery, after a journey from minority consciousness to full national citizenship.

Some might interpret the strong assertions of Israeliness as self-protective defensiveness in the face of a threatening world. This does not seem to be the case. Preferring the company of other Israelis in associations of choice provides pleasure and relaxation through using Hebrew, through sharing familiar references with no need to explain or interpret, and through interacting in a familiar and approved style. The formation of Israeli 'like family' networks (see Chapter 6) acts as a logical alternative to the absence of relatives, provides the unconditional acceptance (rightly or wrongly) associated with family, and underlines the (implicit) kinship metaphor of intra-ethnic relationships. The fact that the choice of friends from among Israelis is selective suggests that such associations do not constitute a strategy aimed at protection-in-numbers. The fact that such associations are not formalized, that there is no institutionalization of Israeli activities nor provision of organizations to serve a larger imagined collectivity, also seems to support an interpretation of comfortable self-confidence which needs no props. The finding that social networks (networks of choice, as distinct from work relationships) are not exclusively Israeli, reinforces this interpretation.

Some Israelis in Cape Town are more keenly aware than others of the ubiquitousness of antisemitism - some from their personal histories while others cite well-known incidents of

synagogue or cemetery desecration or violent acts of anti-Zionism in various diaspora countries, including South Africa. Most however, while acknowledging potential hostility to Jews as a group, believe that the existence of a Jewish state has reduced Jewish vulnerability and has significantly improved both the status and security of individual Jews everywhere. Irrespective of their objective accuracy, such beliefs add a sense of pride to 'being Israeli'.

### **Cosmopolitanism**

As shown, most of the migrants also share curiosity about 'others' and 'other' ways, and a willingness to try them. That is, they exhibit a cosmopolitan orientation, a positive attitude to a world recognized as simultaneously culturally 'plural' and 'entangled'. They do not perceive engagement with other worlds and with the world at large as cultural assimilation, as somehow endangering their own identity. Rather, they exemplify Appiah's notion of 'cosmopolitan patriotism' (1997), the ability to 'belong' to both the world at large and to particular corners of that world.

Introducing the notion of patriotism raises the question of patriotism to what? In this case emotional attachment is clearly to the nation-state of Israel, with the state perceived as the political embodiment, the only reliable sanctuary, for the nation, conceptualized in ethnic, communalistic - ie, socio-cultural (and not political) - terms. The 'nation', labelled 'Israeli', is imagined as Jewish Israelis, and the personal conflation of Jewishness with Israeliness, as shown in Chapter 4, is extended to the entire collectivity so labelled. The distinction between citizenry and nation, born and nurtured in Israeli society and transported abroad and confirmed through residence there, is projected onto the world. It has been successfully naturalized through both history and experience. (The reference to history includes both the migrants' personal histories as well as their knowledge and understanding of Jewish history.)

In Chapter 3 I outlined the multicultural, including multilingual, conditions of existence in Israel. I suggested that that reality engendered first-hand experience of some degree of cosmopolitanism for all Israeli citizens, whether or not they were aware of it. I proposed that this experience facilitated the migrants' ability to adapt to the new, equally multicultural and multilingual environment of Cape Town. Although not all migrants encounter similar degrees of heterogeneity in their countries of origin, the requirements of adaptability and flexibility inherent in the migrant situation suggest that through their 'lived

experience' all migrants may have greater competence in dealing with a multicultural reality than more settled populations.

Holding primordialist and cosmopolitan views simultaneously, would seem to imply conflict. However, the contradiction is smoothed by the migrants' confidence in their personal and collective identity. Indeed, Kymlicka (1995, especially Chapter 5), arguing that 'national'<sup>1</sup> identity does not require shared values, suggests that strong group identity facilitates individual freedom of choice. The notion of 'choice' connotes choosing between options, and selecting one. The evidence from this research, particularly in regard to the composition of varied social networks, supports Kymlicka's view in principle, but suggests that the contradictions are managed not by choosing either/or modes of interaction and identification, but rather through exercising flexibility (freedom?) by selecting those modes deemed appropriate to particular situations and encounters.

### **Citizenry and Nation**

'Naturalizing' the distinction between citizenry and nation, as identified earlier, projecting it onto the world, and combining it with the kind of self-confidence referred to above, exposes another contradiction in the behaviour and attitudes of the Israelis in Cape Town. As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the informants readily use popular stereotypes to characterize groups - themselves, as well as groups considered 'other' - and perceive such groups as bounded units. Yet they also insist that people everywhere share a common humanity that entitles them to respect from others and to a decent life. The informants themselves seem unaware of these contradictions between essentialism and universalism. It seems to me that when they talk about the world at large, it is ordered as categories of distinctive collectivities; when talking about themselves, their own lives, and other individuals, the discourse rests on internalized liberal (in some cases, socialist) democratic values. For people socialized in a nation-state that defines itself as simultaneously ethnic (Jewish) and democratic, and that is believed to function as such, there is indeed no contradiction because the concepts are not viewed as conflicting. Essentialism is universalized and democracy valued. Indeed, projecting from their own experience,

---

<sup>1</sup>Kymlicka distinguishes cultural membership from national identity, using 'national' to mean identification with the polity.

essentialist values and attitudes are assumed to be common to all identifiable socio-cultural groups, though not all groups are assumed to be democratic.

Of course for many Israelis as well as for observers and analysts of Jewish-Arab relations within the Israeli state, there is a deep (even tragic) irony in these observations. No account of Israeli society, whether from a macro or micro perspective, could possibly characterize the relative statuses of Jews and Arabs as equal, or the relationships between them as egalitarian<sup>2</sup>. (Some would say a similar situation holds for Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews [see Peled, 1990; Lavie, 1992]). It would seem that the differentiation depends precisely on the distinction between citizenship and nationality (see Chapters 4-6). The respective Hebrew words, *ezrachut* and *le'om*, like their English equivalents, do not share semantic similarity, but in English, unlike Hebrew, they have come to be used as synonyms. In their encounter with diaspora, the migrants gradually become aware of this fusion between citizenship and nationality in popular (and even scholarly) discourse. Some, citing their observations of the transformations in South African society, have shifted their discourse about Arab-Israeli relations away from conflict between essentialized nations towards greater emphasis on democratic procedures. Many have expressed regret that Israel 'doesn't have a Mandela'. Those who enter these debates nevertheless insist on different solutions to the Arab- Israeli conflict. Drawing on Jewish and Zionist history and the conceptual categories outlined, they present partition as the solution desired by both parties and recommend better implementation of democracy in Israel for Arabs and Jews.

### **Comfortable Contradiction**

As shown, the overwhelming majority of Israelis in Cape Town live in and with what I have termed 'comfortable contradiction'. That is to say, they exhibit little physical, psychological or existential discomfort, contrary to the findings of most studies that examine dislocation and focus on discomfort. Describing their situation as comfortable does not imply that the migrants experience no pain or loss or ambivalence as a result of dislocation. Of course they do. And as shown, for some the social and emotional cost of 'comfort' is high. It is, however, also clear that the majority manage these feelings in creative ways and live

---

<sup>2</sup>For a succinct summary of the differentiation between these segments of the population, as well as an evaluation of the extent of democracy in Israel, see Smooha (1990)

successfully in the present in relation to the various 'worlds' that are relevant to them as individuals, and as members of several 'imagined' communities. Their mental maps and coping and management strategies thus illustrate possibilities of successful (middle-class) negotiation of the contradictory, complex, and multi-faceted processes of post-modernity.

As shown in Chapter 6 there is great diversity regarding identification among the children, especially those born in Cape Town or who came at a very young age. All acknowledge some degree of dual identity but how that plays out is not predictable. While some have shown strong identification with Israel and some have chosen to move there, others have no such inclination. Given the attitudes towards emigration, there is also no certainty that those who choose to stay beyond high school will necessarily remain in South Africa in the long term. As virtually all children of migrants attend the Jewish school, the chances of marriage to a Jewish South African with full integration into the local community seem high. On the other hand, out-marriage has increased among all Jews (Dubb, 1994:82-86), exacerbated in part by the emigration of younger people. In some senses therefore, the kinds of processes described here constitute a one-generation phenomenon. Yet there are two quite different but more profound ways in which these processes have longer-term effects.

The first has to do with parent-child relationships. As shown through some of the cases, for many parents the cultural gap they perceive between themselves and their children is a painful consequence of their decision to migrate. Some consciously attempt to close the gap through literature, through frequent visits to Israel, and through their own active interest in Israeli social and political issues. Nevertheless, the perceived gap remains one cost of migration that contributes to the contradictions in their lives.

On the other hand, from an etic perspective, the children's first-hand experience of multi-locality and multiple identifications and allegiances, equips them too with the skills and flexibilities required in a rapidly changing and shrinking world.

Other contradictions arise in relation to questions of home, belonging, and identification with an entity larger than the family. Most of the Israelis seem to be settled in Cape Town, and 'home', for many, is in both places, albeit with different meanings attached to each 'home' (see Chapter 5). However, the sense of ownership and belonging, as expressed by the adjectives 'my/mine', is associated with Israel and not with South Africa. Identification - in terms of interest, concern, emotional investment, loss - is with Israel, as state, and Israel, as

country and its people - the latter labelled 'Israelis' and conceptualized as Israeli Jews. With very few exceptions, such sentiments are, at the very least, equally divided between both countries. (In a few cases, such sentiments attach more or less equally to a third country.)

Identification with Israel rests on more than nostalgia for the familiar or on (sanitized) memories of the past. It also encompasses more than mere cognitive identification. Both nostalgia and knowledge are constantly 'updated' through ongoing interaction and involvement, albeit at a distance, with persons, institutions and even state structures in Israel. For example, although family members might be widely dispersed, management of family affairs such as ill-health or a celebration are negotiated across the distance. Ongoing engagement from afar is supplemented with direct interaction during regular visits in both directions. While bodies are separated, consciousness of the selves that inhabit the distant bodies gives those selves - their needs, habits, desires, preferences, opinions - a constant presence in the everyday lives of the migrants in Cape Town.

The contradictions are 'comfortable' because of the ways in which the migrants have learned to cope with loss of the familiar and to manage the social consequences of distance. It is this ability to live with contradiction, to live a life neither permeated by a sense of permanent alienation nor pressured by any compulsion to assimilate that makes transmigration a new phenomenon, enabled by the conditions of post-modernity. Ease of communication and travel, particularly for a middle-class population, reduces the sense of finality and closure on the past that accompanied earlier migrants. Connectedness serves to reinforce a sense of belonging and to retain a sense of competence in 'being Israeli'. Acquired competence in the new setting, the freedom afforded by middle-class status to pick and choose among all possibilities, reinforces a sense of being in control, and thus enhances 'comfort'.

### **Jewish Israelis in South Africa**

Thus far this chapter has discussed the informants as migrants who have successfully negotiated transnational reality and multiple identification. The focus has been on the socio-cultural characteristics and conceptual categories, internalized before migration, that have facilitated the process. Two additional aspects however, require further examination: the

Jewish half of the label 'Israeli Jews/ Jewish Israelis' and the particularities of the South African context in which they reside.

Twenty years ago Simon Herman (1977) convincingly demonstrated the overlap or conflation between Israeliness and Jewishness among Jewish Israelis in Israel from a social psychological perspective. More recently the Guttman Institute Survey (see Liebman & Katz, 1997) has shown much higher Jewish identification among so-called secular Israelis than was expected by any segment of the population (ibid). Contrasting Jewishness with secularity immediately implies that Jewishness is a religious concept. As argued, however, there is a need to distinguish analytically between Judaism, the religion, Jewry, the people, and Jewishness, a feeling or condition which has as its referent identification with (usually selective aspects of) Jewish history and traditions.

Social science surveys that purport to measure Jewish identity among diaspora Jews usually relate to all three aspects. However, as pointed out, the different conditions of existence in Israel and the diaspora respectively, particularly in regard to public symbols and expressions of Jewishness, give different significance to results on almost every item conventionally measured. One example will suffice as a reminder: in the diaspora, where Jews are a scattered minority, a high incidence of close (measured by frequency and intensity) relationships - of neighbourhood, work and leisure - among Jews carries very different meaning from the same frequency and intensity of relationships among Jews in Israel where they are the majority. The difference in meaning, or weight, in interpreting such data rests on the issue of choice. That is, since there is no external imperative for diaspora Jews to interact more frequently and intensively with Jews than with any other category of persons in their country of residence (at least, in liberal democracies), it is assumed that to do so indicates positive identification with the group. For Jews in Israel, on the other hand, their demographic preponderance reverses the situation: close relationships with more non-Jews than Jews would constitute deliberate choice.

As shown throughout, the migrants interacted with and differentiated themselves from locals in a variety of ways. In interaction with non-Jews, the Jewishness of Israelis is seldom made explicit by either party. Informants often noted that the things about them that seemed of most interest to non-Jewish South Africans were the kibbutz, places of interest in Israel, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, discussed more in relation to armies and wars than in political

terms. Non-Jewish curiosity about their 'otherness' thus emphasized the migrants' 'nationality', in the conventional sense of country of origin or passport identity (see Chapters 4 and 5) as their distinctive feature.

As indicated in Chapters 4 and 5, the Israelis differentiated themselves from local Jews, perceived as their 'proximal hosts', in ways which, in Chapter 6, were shown to be translated into behaviour. The age of participants in inter-ethnic ' (in this case, Israeli-South African Jewish) encounters was also relevant to perceptions. As shown, older migrants perceptions of differences, while experienced in interaction, were reflected on among themselves and to me outside of the encounter itself. Younger migrants seemed to have more in common with their local age cohort. Yet several of the younger informants offered remarks such as, 'Just because we like the same music/clothes/TV shows they think we're like them in other ways too. But we're not ...'. Or, more pertinently, 'They think that just because we're Jews we will think and feel the same about everything. But we don't ...'.

The point here is that it is in the encounter with diaspora, whether with Jews or non-Jews, that Israeli Jews, for the first time in most cases, become palpably aware that their identity is perceived by others as dual. Although the category for the *le'om* ('nationality') of Jews in Israel is 'Jewish', it is perceived as a bureaucratic category for identity documents and census counts, or an unarticulated taken-for-granted distinction between themselves and their Arab co-citizens. In diaspora however, 'nationality' becomes 'Israeli' rather than 'Jewish', a conscious category to be reflected upon, debated, and 'explained', among themselves and with others. It is in response to this growing awareness that the Jewishness of Capetonians is articulated by Israelis as synonymous with Judaism and that religion becomes a central trope in distinguishing themselves from local Jews.

As shown in Chapter 4, the religious aspect of the migrants' identification as expressed in Jewish religious practice showed great diversity. Whether personally observant or not, they remain judgemental about local religious practice and, despite learning a great deal about the range of Jewish religious practices in diaspora, Orthodoxy remains their referent for 'authentic' Judaism. However, although most do not alter their personal levels of religious observance, as a consequence of the encounter with diaspora they do claim to understand that religion is the primary means of Jewish identification for diaspora Jews, in the absence of a Jewish public culture. As they do not consider themselves 'diaspora Jews',

irrespective of the length of time they have lived out of Israel, the majority continue to reject religion as a primary ingredient of their own Jewish identity. In addition, as reported in Chapter 4, as most migrants send their children to the local Jewish school, there is some pressure from their children to conform to local Jewish norms, including those that relate to religion. Thus while diaspora realities clearly do influence the Jewish practice of Israelis in Cape Town, the precise ways in which this occurs can be documented only on an individual or family basis and cannot be generalized for the entire population. The most significant variables influencing the form and degree of religious observance were shown to be whether a partner is Israeli, and the age of informants in combination with their period of time in Cape Town.

### **The Question of Community**

Public and private aspects differentiate Israelis from local Jews in additional ways. Throughout history, Jewish populations in diaspora have created organized communities. New immigrants, in all times and places, have established institutions of learning, welfare and religious organizations, and 'cultural' organizations of various kinds, including, this century, Zionist organizations. The South African Jewish community and its Cape Town segment have been no exception. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, the structure of South African society as well as the relatively homogeneous origins of the Jewish community, have led to a particularly cohesive community relative to other diaspora communities. The Israelis, like all Jews in Cape Town, are entitled to join such organizations, benefit from them, utilize their services and participate in their activities. Yet, as shown in Chapter 6 they are virtually invisible in all these organizations and activities. Of course, logically, there is no need to create such organizations if they already exist, and the Israelis do utilize existing organizations when and if they need them. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, they have also not created specifically Israeli organizations. Nor are they active in Zionist structures. It is of course true that not all people are 'joiners' and certainly the life-histories of the informants suggest that most, though not all, were not prominent in communally oriented activities in Israel either. Had they been more embedded in community structures they would perhaps not have migrated. Perhaps lack of embeddedness in communal organizations 'at home' is common to all middle-class voluntary migrants.

From the migrants' own evidence however, it appears that the agendas of local communal organizations hold no appeal for the majority. They explain their lack of interest in terms of their beliefs about the content of the organizational agendas: Zionist fund-raising - 'They give money, we have already given blood'; representative and protective agencies, such as the Board of Deputies - 'The Israeli embassy represents and protects me'; welfare organizations - 'I don't need their help. I look after myself' - even when this is not always true; educational institutions - 'I don't know the local system well enough to make a useful contribution, either educationally or in terms of fund-raising'.

Close observation of, and participation in, the lives of the migrants suggests two additional and interrelated interpretations for the lack of Israeli 'community' and for the lack of participation in local Jewish communal life. The first, differences in cultural style, is more directly observable than the second, community consciousness. Both local Jews and the Israelis characterize each other as "'They" just don't do things our way' (See Chapter 5). Decoded, this characterization relates to a myriad details of everyday interactive styles: dress, punctuality, formality - in speech and behaviour, politeness/ forthrightness, table manners, aggression/reserve, intimacy/ distance, imputed motivations - personal gain or glory/ communal good, transparency in financial transactions, male-female relations, humility/ostentation, and the like. Like all stereotyping, prejudices are exaggerated, contradictory and mutual. Yet there is no doubt that differences in cultural style are discernible in many encounters between Israelis and locals, and when comparing separate Israeli and local groups. I am not suggesting that these styles are incompatible or that the differences prevent interaction and friendships. As noted, the composition of Israelis' social networks is varied, not exclusive. But differences in cultural style, together with language, account in large measure for both the intimacy and comfortable familiarity of all-Israeli social networks and for the distancing from local Jewish activities.

In addition, whatever their specific *raison d'etre*, all Jewish communal organizations are, by definition, concerned with the Jewish community. Many of the functions they serve are duplications of state services, but are exclusive to Jews. Israelis are accustomed to receiving such services from the state. The kinds of organizations they join, in Israel or Cape Town, are based on common interest, such as sports or film clubs, music societies, environmental conservation associations, and the like. Such organizations are not based on

(minority) ethnic consciousness even if their membership, as is the case in Israel, is comprised mostly of Jews.

None of the above interpretations however, even in combination, fully accounts for the lack of Israeli-centred organizations. The lack seems doubly puzzling when it is clear that relationships of choice with other Israelis are preferred, and when occasional appearances by visiting Israeli performers or speakers are well attended by the migrants. While the relatively small size of the local Israeli population may be a practical consideration inhibiting the formation of specifically Israeli organizations, the contradiction also seems to relate to their (self-defined) sojourner status as outlined in Chapter 3. Most immigrant groups form ethnic organizations which serve a wide variety of functions. Compared with most migrants, the Israelis appear to be a deviant case. However, such ethnic immigrant organizations usually provide services not available in the wider society, for populations that intend remaining in the new country. For Israelis in Cape Town, particularistic Jewish needs are met by existing local organizations, which do not, however, satisfy their Israeli cultural and solidarity needs. It would seem that ongoing connectedness to Israeli society, coloured by a sense of temporariness in Cape Town, satisfies those needs adequately through the migrants' personal social networks. All the factors mentioned, together with expressed uncertainty about future developments in South Africa, combine to make the establishment of specifically Israeli organizations seem superfluous.

## **Conclusions**

I have suggested that the Jewish case is instructive regarding a variety of issues pertinent to the positioning of migrants in the world. Earlier I indicated that the onset of modernity initiated far-reaching changes in Jewish life. Emancipation, in particular, changed the status of Jews, as individuals, and for the first time provided them with the possibility of being full participants in their countries of residence. The new situation created the quintessential challenge of modernization for Jews: how to become full citizens of their countries of residence, while remaining full Jews. In other words, how to become fully integrated and accepted in the modern world without relinquishing the particularistic behaviours and qualities held dear. This question, which in the past was particularly acute for Jews, has today become a central question everywhere for those transmigrants who identify as

or with minority collectives. The question is relatively easily answered for individuals in democracies: recognizing the multi-faceted nature of personal identity, including multi-national-cultural identity, and with a new (post World War 2) emphasis on individual human rights, individual citizens are free to choose which aspects of their personal identity to emphasize or de-emphasize in particular contexts. The freedoms associated with liberal democracies - freedom of association, conscience and expression - grant individuals those rights as citizens of the state.

The problem is both more complex and more acute in relation to group rights. Its resolution, in any specific situation, will depend on history, on the nature of the state (totalitarian, democratic, ethnic, consociational, etc) and on the criteria believed to constitute legitimate groups (racial, ethnic, religious, etc.) (Kymlicka, 1995). Tension is particularly acute in those societies where the state is believed to be neutral, but where minorities are (or believe they are) discriminated against in terms of characteristics deemed to be immutable. When such characteristics overlap with class factors to a significant degree, tension may evolve into overt conflict. It is in such situations, prevalent almost everywhere albeit in different degrees, that de-constructing 'nation' and citizenship seems most useful. I have shown the ways in which confusion around these concepts is reflected in the vocabulary used to discuss them. However, the phenomena of hybridity and/or multiple-identity will not disappear, nor the problems associated with them be resolved, merely by changing our vocabulary. As in the case of gender relations, the real problems around these issues lie in power differentials. But in the same way that feminist discourse heightened consciousness about gender through, among other things, sensitivity to language, so more accurate terminology can contribute to a better understanding of the nature of states and nations, and of citizenship and membership in a nation, and to appreciation of the differences between them.

The notion of nation-as-polity coterminous with state has spread widely, often ignoring regional histories. In many parts of the world policies and programmes aimed at 'nation-building' are really a misnomer; they are usually exercises in state-building or state-consolidation. 'Nation-building' projects, even in democracies, usually aim to eradicate or minimize socio-cultural differences for state purposes. Where policies legitimate multiculturalism, the scope of its expression is limited (by the state) to non-state-threatening activities and programmes.

Despite the escalation in globalization at the end of our century, it is unlikely, nor is it necessarily desirable, that state structures will disappear. As a means of organizing the world, they are simply too convenient, and currently too elaborate, to be dismantled. But they remain structures, invented, and thus amenable to modification. It is people who give them meaning and it is people who feel the consequences of particular policies and attitudes. Transmigrants, as well as any other groups with non-normative affiliations and multiple allegiances, feel the validity and legitimacy of the varying claims on their selves. The current trend among both students of and advocates for such groups seems to be either to celebrate these feelings, or to problematize them. Either way, marking off, with potentially negative consequences, is deepened - that is, the groups and associated individuals remain 'other'. One area in which feelings of legitimacy can perhaps be converted to legitimate status, in the eyes of socio-cultural minorities and in the eyes of those among whom they reside, is to understand and respect the differences between the rights and obligations that are appropriate to citizenship, and membership in a nation, respectively. Although this study has not compared the Israeli migrants with other transmigrant populations directly, the emphasis on the way in which the race and class characteristics of this research population facilitate 'comfortable contradiction' in the South African context, highlights the positionality of many less fortunate transmigrants elsewhere, who otherwise share the skills required for successfully negotiating a both-and identity in a globalized world.

Appreciating the distinction between citizenship of a state and membership of a nation seems to be supported by the Jewish case. The successful integration of Jews into the western democracies during the twentieth century, most strikingly the integration of the largest Jewish community into the United States, coexists relatively comfortably with the repeated assertion and demonstration by all identifying Jews of the unity of 'the Jewish People', or, at the least, their mutual responsibility for one another. The identification includes support for a state of which they are not citizens. At the same time, knowledge of Jewish history, certainly the fresh memory of the Holocaust, and continuing anti-Zionism and antisemitism, suggest that while 'the national order of things' (Malkki, 1995) remains so powerful and pervasive, resolution is not complete and that creating identity is always a process of becoming.

This study has shown the possibility of 'belonging' to more than one place by attributing different salience to the meaning of each place. The Israelis' negotiation of social boundaries demonstrates both the continued significance of conceptual boundaries as a means of ordering the world, and illustrates the situational constructedness, and thus porousness and flexibility, of such boundaries. The migrants' strong sense of belonging to both the Israeli nation, a territorially, politically and socio-culturally defined entity (in Kymlicka's terms (1995), a 'societal culture'), and to the heterogeneous Jewish nation dispersed among many polities, supports the idea that 'belonging' to a unit larger than family and conceptualized in kinship terms, is a powerful, perhaps the most powerful, ingredient in forging strong self-confident personal identity. Israeli migrants in Cape Town have also shown the power of the idea of the state as a unit with legitimate authority to confer rights upon and demand the fulfilment of obligations from its citizens. Thus multiple identity and multiple allegiance, as shown in this case, need not undermine the authority of the state when it is seen to offer both freedom and protection for its citizens wherever they are.

One caveat remains: the more open and genuinely democratic any system, and the greater the emphasis on individual rights, the greater are the possibilities for 'defection' from groups perceived as bounded units. Expanded opportunities for individual choice thus pose a threat to those who fear the disappearance or dilution of traditions they value. When such a threat is perceived, leaders and others often emphasize difference, and attempt to strengthen or even rigidify boundaries. As mentioned, Jews certainly worried about their cultural survival at the onset of the modern era, and their concern has been deepened by recent evidence of the increase in intermarriage rates, among diaspora Jews in particular (Sacks, 1994). Yet at the same time, and to the surprise of many observers of Jews, religious orthodoxy has strengthened and there is evidence of a rekindling of a wide variety of Jewish interests among Jewish secularists. Of course Zionism, particularly in its so-called 'cultural' rendition, was invented precisely to combat assimilatory tendencies. Current evidence suggests that notwithstanding the failure of Zionist ideology to attract the majority of world Jewry to live in the Jewish state, most diaspora Jews do indeed support both the state and the continuity of Jewishness and Judaism, wherever located. To do so requires individual and group consciousness (and effort) in socio-cultural terms. But this is the 'business' of 'the nation' or the ethnic group, and not the business of the state. Culturally distinctive immigrants

or minorities who seek inclusion in their society while maintaining the right to differ from the majority can be differentiated from transmigrants. The former face two issues: adequate representation vis-a-vis the state, and the internal cultural continuity of the group. Middle-class transmigrants require representation at the inter-state ('international') level together with the freedom to pursue their internal cultural predilections.

Within the majoritarian Jewish state, as I have indicated elsewhere (Frankental, 1998), despite, or perhaps because of, continuing contestation around the meaning of the adjective 'Jewish', there is little need to cultivate self-consciousness of the kind indicated here. Ethnoscape and landscape are inextricably intertwined. The present study has shown that even beyond the boundaries of the state, self-confidence is not lost through migration, that Boyarin's contention that Zionism 'de-Judaized the Jews' (1992:126) is not upheld, and that the retention of multi-faceted identity, even those facets that relate to nations and states, can coexist, peaceably, with the simultaneous contradictory processes of the post-modern world. Perhaps in the same way that diaspora Jewish responses to modernity constitute one model for ethnic minorities in the twentieth century, Israeli Jewish responses to post-modernity could serve as a model for the twenty-first.

\*\*\*\*\*

### *Postscript*

'Melting-pot', 'mosaic', and 'rainbow' are popular metaphors used to describe multicultural reality and/or the aims of multicultural policy. I would like to offer 'fruit salad' as an alternative which seems frivolous but which, in my view, is both more accurate and more optimistic.

The idea of a melting-pot (like the Zionist concept of *mizug galuyot*, melding of diasporas/exiles) claims to dissolve difference but preserve flavour, a totalizing process whose ideal outcome is 'one-ness'. It offers no guarantee that the resultant flavour will be palatable. The image of 'mosaic' evokes a collage of separate pieces, each with a hard, clearly-defined edge, in permanently set relationship to each other - an image of pluralism rather than the entanglement of reality. Its totality too may not be appealing. The rainbow metaphor blends the edges of each coloured stripe into a melding-at-the-extremes, but also preserves a particular ordering of the whole.

A fruit salad, by contrast, provides a usually attractive, though untidy and unpredictable, mix of colours, shapes, textures and flavours. Some pieces remain firmer than others but nevertheless contribute flavour; some disintegrate more easily but their flavour too is discernible. Furthermore, no fruit is excluded in principle and none is 'hostile' (unassimilable) to any other. And the juices of all combine and are distributed equally throughout. The whole is varied, pleasing, natural, harmonious and wholesome.

\*\*\*\*\*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABU-LUGHOD, L 1991 'Writing Against Culture' in Richard G Fox **Recapturing Anthropology** pp 137-162

X ANDERSON, Benedict 1983 **Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin & Spread of Nationalism** London and New York, Verso

ANDERSEN, Benedict 1992 'The New World Disorder' **New Left Review** 193

APPADURAI, Arjun 1990 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in Mike Featherstone (ed.) **Global Culture**

APPADURAI, Arjun 1991 'Global Ethnoscapes. Notes and Queries for a Transitional Anthropology' in Richard G Fox (ed.) **Recapturing Anthropology** pp 191-210

APPADURAI, Arjun 1993 'Patriotism and Its Futures' **Public Culture** 5(3):411-429

APPIAH, Kwame A 1997 'Cosmopolitan Patriots' paper presented at Africa Seminar, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town

ARKIN, A 1984 'Economic Activities' in Arkin, M (ed.) **South African Jewry** pp 57-77

ARKIN, Marcus (ed.) 1984 **South African Jewry. A Contemporary Survey** Cape Town, Oxford University Press

ARONOFF, M J 1988 **Israeli Visions and Divisions: Cultural Change and Political Conflict** New Brunswick, Transaction Books

AVI-HAI, A 1993 **Danger: Three Jewish Peoples** New York, Shengold Publishers

AVINERI, S 1981 **The Making of Modern Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State.** London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson

AVINERI, S 1992 'The State of Israel' in Katz, Steven T. (ed.) **Frontiers of Jewish Thought** Washington, D.C., B'nai B'rith Books pp 33-41

AVISHAI, Bernard 1985 **The Tragedy of Zionism. Revolutions and Democracy in the Land of Israel** New York, USA, Farrar Straus Giroux

AVRUCH, Kevin 1992 'Making culture and its costs' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 15(4):614-626

AYALON, Hanna 1994 'Monopolizing Knowledge? The Ethnic Composition and Curriculum of Israeli High Schools' **Sociology of Education** 67:264-78

- BHABHA, Homi K (ed.) 1990 **Nation and Narration** New York, Routledge
- BHABHA, Homi K 1990 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation' in Bhabha, Homi K (ed.) **Nation and Narration**
- BHABHA, Homi K 1992 'The World and the Home' **Social Text** 31/32: 141-53
- BAMMER, Angelika 1992 'Editorial' **New Formations** 17:vii-xi
- BAMMER, Angelika (ed.) 1994 **Displacements. Cultural Identities in Question** Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press
- BAMMER, Angelika 1994 'Mother Tongues and Other Strangers. Writing Family across Cultural Divides' in A Bammer (ed.) **Displacements** pp 90-109
- BARTH, Fredrik 1969 'Introduction' in Fredrik Barth (ed.) **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference** Boston, Little Brown
- BASCH, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller & Cristina Szanton Blanc 1994 **Nations Unbound. Transnational projects and the deterritorialized nation-state** New York, Gordon & Breach
- BAUMAN, Zygmunt 1990 'Modernity and Ambivalence' in Mike Featherstone (ed.) **Global Culture**
- BEN-ELIEZER, Uri 1995 'A Nation-in-Arms: State, Nation and Militarism in Israel's First Years' **Comparative Studies in Society and History** 37(2):264-85
- BEN-RAFAEL, E 1982 **The Emergence of Ethnicity: Cultural Groups and Social Conflict in Israel** London, Greenwood Press
- BEN-RAFAEL, E & S Sharot 1991 **Ethnicity, Religion and Class in Israeli Society** Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- BIALE, David 1986 **Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History**. New York, Schocken Books
- BONACICH, Edna 1973 'A Theory of Middleman Minorities' **American Sociological Review** 38(5):583-594
- BOONZAIER, E & J Sharp 1988 **South African Keywords. The Uses & Abuses of Political Concepts** Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Philip
- BOTTOMLEY, Gill 1992 **From Another Place. Migration and the Politics of Culture** Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

BOURDIEU, Pierre 1984 **Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste** Transl. Richard Nice Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press

BOYARIN, Daniel & Jonathan Boyarin 1993 'Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity' **Critical Inquiry** 19 (Summer): 693-725

BOYARIN, Jonathan 1990 'Observant Participation: The Ethnography of Jews on the Lower East Side' **YIVO Annual** 19:233-54

BOYARIN, Jonathan 1992 **Storm from Paradise. The Politics of Jewish Memory** Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press

BRETON, Raymond 1964 'Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants' **American Journal of Sociology** 84:293-318

BREYTENBACH, B 1991 'The Long March from Hearth to Heart' **Social Research** 58(1)

BRUBAKER, W R 1989 **Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America** Washington, University Press of America

**Cape Jewish Chronicle**, June 1996

CAPLAN, Pat 1994 'Distanciation or Identification: What Difference Does It Make?' **Critique of Anthropology** 14(2):99-115

CASTLES, Stephen & Mark Miller 1993 **The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern Age** Basingstoke, Macmillan

CENTRAL STATISTICAL SERVICES, Pretoria  
Report No. 19-01-10 (1982)  
Report No. 03-51-01 (1994)  
Statistical Release P0351, May 1997

CHAZAN, N 1983 'The Fallacies of Pragmatism: Israel's Foreign Policy Towards South Africa' **African Affairs** April

CHOW, Rey 1993 **Writing Diaspora. Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Studies** Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press

CHEATER, Angela 1995 'Globalisation and the new technologies of knowledge. Anthropological calculus or chaos?' in Marilyn Strathern (ed.) **Shifting Contexts**

X  
CLIFFORD, James 1988 **The Predicament of Culture** Cambridge, Harvard University Press

X  
CLIFFORD, James 1992 'Traveling Cultures' in L Grossberg, C Nelson, P A Treichler (eds) **Cultural Studies** York/London, Routledge

- CLIFFORD, James 1994 'Diasporas' **Cultural Anthropology** 9(3):302-8
- CLIFFORD, James 1997 **Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century** Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press
- CLIFFORD, James & Marcus, George (eds) 1986 **Writing Culture** Berkeley, University of California Press
- COHEN, A 1974a 'Introduction: The Lesson of Ethnicity' in A Cohen (ed.) **Urban Ethnicity** London, Tavistock Publications
- COHEN, A 1985 **The Symbolic Construction of Community** London, Tavistock
- COHEN, Anthony P 1994 **Self Consciousness. An Alternative Anthropology of Identity** London, UK & USA & Canada, Routledge
- COHEN, Anthony P & Nigel Rapport (eds) 1995 **Questions of Consciousness** ASA Monographs 33 London, UK & USA & Canada, Routledge
- COHEN, Erik 1977 'Expatriate Communities' **Current Sociology** 24 (3):5-90
- COHEN, Erik 1983 'Ethnicity and Legitimation in Contemporary Israel' **The Jerusalem Quarterly** 28 (Summer)
- COHEN, Erik 1989 'Citizenship, Nationality and Religion in Israel and Thailand' in B Kimmerling (ed.) **The Israeli State and Society. Boundaries and Frontiers** pp 66-92
- COHEN, Erik 1995 'Israel as a Post-Zionist Society' in Robert Wistrich & David Ohana (eds) **The Shaping of Israeli Identity. Myth, Memory and Trauma** Frank Cass, London, UK & Oregon, USA pp 203-214
- COHEN, Steven M 1983 **American Modernity and Jewish Identity** New York & London, Methuen
- COHEN, Steven M 1986 'Israeli Emigres and the New York Federation: A Case Study in Ambivalent Policymaking for "Jewish Communal Deviants"' **Contemporary Jewry** 7:155-65
- CONNOR, Walker 1993 'Beyond reason: the nature of the ethnonational bond' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 16(3):373-389
- CORNELL, Steven 1996 'The variable ties that bind: content and circumstance in ethnic processes' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 19(2):265-289
- DAVIS, Uri 1994 'Being Jewish in the Context of Israel' **Dialectical Anthropology** 19:211-235

- DELLAPERGOLA, S & A A Dubb 1988 'South African Jewry: A Socio-demographic Profile' in Singer, D & Seldin, R (eds) **American Jewish Yearbook 88** Philadelphia & New York, Jewish Publication Society & American Jewish Committee
- DELLAPERGOLA, S & D Tal 1978 **Religion and Religious Observance** Advance Report No. 11, South African Jewish Population Study. Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University
- DOMINGUEZ, 1989 **People as Subject, People as Object. Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel** Wisconsin, USA, University of Wisconsin Press
- DOUGLAS, Mary 1991 'The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space' **Social Research** 58(1)
- DUBB, Allie 1984 'Demographic Picture' in Arkin, M (ed.) **South African Jewry** pp23-44
- DUBB, Allie 1994 **The Jewish Population of South Africa. The 1991 Sociodemographic Survey** Cape Town, South Africa, Jewish Publications - South Africa
- EADES, J 1987 **Migrant Workers and the Social Order** ASA Monographs 26. London & New York, Tavistock Publications
- EISEN, Arnold M 1986 **Galut. Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming** Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press
- EISENSTADT, S N 1967 **Israeli Society** New York, Basic Books
- EISENSTADT, S N 1985 **The Transformation of Israeli Society** London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- ELAZAR, Daniel J 1983 **Kinship and Consent. The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses** Washington, University Press of America
- ELAZAR, D 1989 **People and Polity. The Organizational Dynamics of World Jewry** Detroit, Wayne State University Press
- ELIZUR, Dov 1980 'Israelis in the United States: Motives, Attitudes and Intentions' **American Jewish Yearbook** 81 pp 53-67
- ELLER, Jack David & Reed M Coughlan 1993 'The poverty of primordialism: the demystification of ethnic attachments' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 16(2):183-201
- Encyclopaedia Judaica**, Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem
- EPSTEIN, A L 1978 **Ethos and Identity. Three Studies in Ethnicity** London, Tavistock Publications

- FACKENHEIM, Emil L 1992 'The People Israel' in Katz, Steven T (ed.) **Frontiers of Jewish Thought** Washington, D.C., B'nai B'rith Books
- FEATHERSTONE, Mike (ed.) 1990 **Global Culture** London, Sage
- FOGELMAN, Eva 1996 'Israeli Families' in McGoldrick, M, Giordano, J & Pearce J K (eds) **Ethnicity & Family Therapy** (Second Edition) New York, The Guilford Press
- FOSTER, 1991 'Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene' **Annual Review of Anthropology** 20:235-260
- FOX, Richard G 1990 'Introduction' in Fox, Richard G (ed.) **Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Cultures** American Ethnological Society Monograph Series, No. 2 pp 1-14
- FOX, Richard G (ed.) 1991 **Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present** Santa Fe, New Mexico, School of American Research Press
- FRANKENTAL, Sally 1989 'Israelis in South Africa: Profile of A Migrant Population' in **Papers in Jewish Demography 1985** Jewish Population Studies No. 19 Jerusalem, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- FRANKENTAL, Sally 1998 "Klal Yisrael" and Jewish Continuity: the Future (forthcoming)
- FRANKENTAL, S & M Shain 1986 'The Open Ghetto: Growing Up Jewish in South Africa' in S Burman & P Reynolds (eds) **Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa** Johannesburg, Ravan Press
- FRANKENTAL, Sally & Milton Shain 1993 'Accommodation, Apathy and Activism. Jewish Political Behaviour in South Africa' **The Jewish Quarterly** 40(1)(149)
- FREEDMAN, William 1986 'Israel: The New Diaspora' in Levine, Etan (ed.) **Diaspora** pp 271-288
- FRIEDMAN, Jonathan 1990 'Being in the World: Globalization and Localization' in Mike Featherstone (ed.) **Global Culture**
- FRIEDBERG, Asher 1988 'Yerida: The Pull and the Push' **Forum** 61 Spring
- FRIEDMAN, Marcia and Josef Korazim 1986 'Israelis in the New York Area Labor Market' **Contemporary Jewry** 7:141-153
- GALCHINSKY, Michael 1994 'Glimpsing Golus in the Golden Land: Jews and Multiculturalism in America' **Judaism** 43(4)
- GANGULY, Keya 1992 'Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood' **Cultural Studies** 6(1):27-50

- GANS, Herbert J 1979 'Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 2(1):1-20
- GANS, Herbert J 1994 'Symbolic ethnicity and symbolic religiosity: towards a comparison of ethnic and religious acculturation' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 17(4):577-592
- GEERTZ, C 1983 **Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology** New York, Basic Books
- GELLNER, Ernest 1983 **Nations and Nationalism** Oxford, Blackwell
- GELLNER, Ernest 1994 **Encounter with Nationalism** Oxford, UK & Cambridge, USA, Blackwell
- GILROY, P 1991 'It Ain't Where You're From, It's Where You're At ...' **Third Text** 13:3-16
- GLAZER, Nathan 1990 'American Jewry or American Judaism' in S M Lipset (ed.) **American Pluralism and the Jewish Community** New Brunswick, Transaction Publications pp 31-41
- GLAZER, Nathan & Daniel P Moynihan 1970 **Beyond the Melting Pot** Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press
- GLICK SCHILLER, Nina, Linda Basch & Cristina Szanton Blanc 1995 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration' **Anthropological Quarterly** 68(1):48-63
- GOFFMAN, Erving 1959 **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** new York, Doubleday-Anchor
- GOLAN, Matti, 1992 **With Friends Like You** Kineret (Hebrew)
- GOLD, Steven J 1992 'Israelis in Los Angeles' Wilstein Institute Research Note. The Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, Los Angeles
- GOLD, Steven J 1994a 'Patterns of Economic Cooperation Among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles' **International Migration Review** xxviii(1):114-135
- GOLD, Steven J 1994b 'Israeli Immigrants in the United States: The Question of Community' **Qualitative Sociology** 17(4):325-363
- GOLD, Steven J 1995 'Gender and Social Capital among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles' **Diaspora** 4(3):267-301
- GOLD, Steven J 1996 **Transnationalism and Vocabularies of Motive in International Migration: The Case of Israelis in the United States** Population Research Group

Research Paper 96-05 The Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, Michigan State University

- GOLD, Steven J & Bruce A Phillips 1996 'Israelis in the United States' in Singer, D (ed.) **American Jewish Year Book 96** The American Jewish Committee, New York pp 51-101
- GORDON, R J & Spiegel, A D 1993 'Southern Africa Revisited' **Annual Review of Anthropology** 22:83-105
- GREELEY, Andrew 1974 **Ethnicity in the United States** Wiley, New York
- GUPTA, Akhil & James Ferguson 1992 'Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference' **Cultural Anthropology** 7(1):6-23
- HAGENDOORN, Louk 1993 'Ethnic categorization and outgroup exclusion: cultural values and social stereotypes in the construction of ethnic hierarchies' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 16(2):26-51
- HANDELMAN, Don 1994 'Contradictions Between Citizenship and Nationality: Their Consequences for Ethnicity and Inequality in Israel' **International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society** 7(3)
- HANNERZ, Ulf 1980 **Exploring the City. Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology** New York, Columbia University Press
- HANNERZ, Ulf 1989 'Notes on the Global Ecumene' **Public Culture** 1(2):66-75
- HANNERZ, Ulf 1990 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture' in Mike Featherstone (ed.) **Global Culture**
- HANNERZ, Ulf 1993 **Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning** New York, Columbia University Press
- HANNERZ, Ulf 1996 **Transnational Connections. Culture, People, Places** London, UK & USA & Canada, Routledge
- HASTRUP, Kirsten 1990 'The Ethnographic Present: A reinvention' **Cultural Anthropology** 5(1)
- HASTRUP, Kirsten 1995 **Passage to Anthropology: Between Theory and Experience** London & New York, Routledge
- HEILMAN, Samuel C 1980 'Jewish Sociologist: Native-As-Stranger' **The American Sociologist** 15:100-108
- HEILMAN, Samuel 1992 **Defenders of the Faith. Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry** New York, Schocken Books

- HELLIG, J 1984 'Religious Expression' in Marcus Arkin (ed.) **South African Jewry** pp 95-116
- HELLIG, J 1986 'South African Judaism: An Expression of Conservative Traditionalism' **Judaism** Spring pp 233-242
- HELMREICH, Stefan 1992 'Kinship, Nation and Paul Gilroy's Concept of Diaspora' **Diaspora** 2(2):243-249
- HERMAN, P 1983 'The Myth of the Israeli Expatriate' **Moment** 8(8):62-3
- HERMAN, Simon N 1970 **Israelis and Jews. The Continuity of an Identity** New York, Random House
- HERMAN, Simon N 1977 **Jewish Identity. A Social Psychological Perspective** Beverley Hills & London, Sage Publications
- HERTZBERG, Arthur 1973 **The Zionist Idea** New York, USA, Atheneum
- HIRSCH, M 1994 'Pictures of a Displaced Girlhood' in Angelika Bammer (ed.) **Displacements** pp 71-89
- HOBSBAWM, Eric 1990 **Nations and Nationalism since 1780** Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- HOBSBAWM, Eric & Terence Ranger (eds) 1983 **The Invention of Tradition** Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- HOLLANDER, J 1991 'It All Depends' **Social Research** 58(1)
- HOLLINGER, David A 1995 **Postethnic America. Beyond Multiculturalism** New York, Basic Books
- JACKSON, Anthony (ed.) 1987 **Anthropology At Home** London, Tavistock
- JANSEN, C 1969 'Some Sociological Aspects of Migration' in J A Jackson (ed.) **Migration** Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- JENKINS, Richard 1994 'Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization and power' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 17(2):197-223
- JENKINS, Timothy 1994 'Fieldwork and the Perception of Everyday Life' **Man (NS)** 29(2)
- Jerusalem Report**, 24/02/94

- JONES, Sean 1993 **Assaulting Childhood. Children's Experiences of Migrancy and Hostel Life in South Africa** Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press
- KAPLAN, A 1994 'On Language Memoir' in Angelika Bammer (ed.) **Displacements** pp 59-70
- KASS, Drora & Seymour M Lipset 1979 'Israelis in Exile' **Commentary** 68(5)
- KASS, D & S M Lipset 1982 'Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1967 to the Present: Israelis and Others' in Marshall Sklare (ed.) **Understanding American Jewry** New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Books
- KASTORYANO, R 1991 'Integrative and Collective Identities of Immigrants in France and Germany' **Journal of Ethnic Studies** 19(3):51-64
- KEARNEY, M 1995 'The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism' **Annual Review of Anthropology** 24:547-65
- KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara 1994 'Spaces of Dispersal' **Cultural Anthropology** 9(3):339-44
- KLEVANSKY, I H 1982 **The Kugel Book** Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball
- X KOTTAK, Conrad P 1994 (6th edition) **The Exploration of Human Diversity** McGrawHill
- KUPER, Adam 1994 'Culture, Identity and the Project of a Cosmopolitan Anthropology' **Man(NS)** 29(3):537-554
- KYMLICKA, Will 1995 **Multicultural Citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights** Oxford, Clarendon Press
- LAHIS, S 1980 **Israelis in the United States. Report.** Jerusalem, The Jewish Agency for Israel (Hebrew)
- LAMDANI, Reuven 1983 'Emigration from Israel' **Economic Quarterly** 30 (Hebrew)
- LAVIE, Smadar 1992 'Blow-Ups in the Borderlands: Third World Israeli Authors' Gropings for Home' **New Formations** 18:84-106
- LEIBOVITCH, Dina 1984 **A Sociological Study of the Social Existence of Israelis in the Republic of South Africa** unpub. MA diss. University of South Africa
- LEIBOWITZ, Yeshayahu 1992 **Judaism, Human Values & the Jewish State** Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press
- LEVI, Linda G 1986 'Israelis in New York and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies: A Study of Anomie & Reconnection' **Contemporary Jewry** 7:167-180

- LEVINE, Etan (ed.) 1986 **Diaspora. Exile and the Contemporary Jewish Condition** New York, Steimatzky Shapolsky
- LEVINE, Etan 1986 'Introduction: The Jews in Time and Space' in Levine, E (ed.) **Diaspora**
- LEVY, Shlomit, Hanna Levinsohn & Elihu Katz 1997 'Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews' in Charles S Liebman & Elihu Katz (eds) **The Jewishness of Israelis**
- LIEBMAN, Charles S 1973 **The Ambivalent American Jew. Politics, Religion, and Family in American Jewish Life** Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America
- LIEBMAN, Charles S 1988 **Deceptive Images. Toward a Redefinition of American Judaism**
- LIEBMAN, Charles S 1990 (ed.) **Religious and Secular. Conflict and Accommodation between Jews in Israel** Jerusalem, Keter Publishing House
- LIEBMAN, Charles S & Steven M Cohen 1990 **Two Worlds of Judaism. The Israeli and American Experiences** New Haven & London, Yale University Press
- LIEBMAN, Charles S & Eliezer Don Yehiya 1983 **Civil Religion in Israel. Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State** Berkeley, University of California Press
- LIEBMAN, Charles S & Eliezer Don Yehiya 1984 'The Meaning of Jewish Identity' in Charles S Liebman & Eliezer Don Yehiya **Religion and Politics in Israel** Bloomington, Indiana University Press
- LIEBMAN, Charles S & Don Yehiya, Eliezer 1984 'The Dilemma of Reconciling Traditional Culture and Political Needs: Civil Religion in Israel' in Charles S Liebman & Eliezer Don-Yehiya (eds) **Religion and Politics in Israel**
- LIEBMAN, Charles S & Katz, Elihu 1997 (eds) **The Jewishness of Israelis. Responses to the Guttman Report** Albany, New York, State University of New York Press
- LIMON, Jose E 1991 'Representation, Ethnicity and the Precursory Ethnography. Notes of a Native Anthropologist' in Richard Fox (ed.) **Recapturing Anthropology**
- MALINOWSKI, Bronislaw 1961 [1922] **Argonauts of the Western Pacific** New York, E P Dutton
- MALKKI, Lisa 1992 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees' **Cultural Anthropology** 7(1):24-44

- MALKKI, Lisa 1994 'Citizens of Humanity: Internationalism and the Imagined Community of Nations' **Diaspora** 3(1):41-68
- MALKKI, Lisa 1995 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things' **Annual Review Anthropology** 24:495-523
- MARCUS, George E 1995 'Ethnography In/Of the world System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography' **Annual Review Anthropology** 24:95-117
- MARCUS, George E 1997 'The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-en-Scene of Anthropological Fieldwork' The Monica Wilson Memorial Lecture, University of Cape Town
- X MARCUS, G E & Michael M J Fischer 1986 **Anthropology as Cultural Critique** Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press
- MARKOWITZ, Fran 1994 'Family Dynamics and the Teenage Immigrant: Creating the Self through the Parents' Image' **Adolescence** 29 (113)
- MASSEY, Doreen 1994 'Double Articulation: A Place in the World' in Angelika Bammer (ed.) **Displacements** pp 110-121
- MITTELBERG, David & Mary C Waters 1992 'The process of ethnogenesis among Haitian and Israeli immigrants in the United States' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 15(3):412-435
- MOORE, Henrietta 1996 (ed.) 'The changing nature of anthropological knowledge. An introduction' in **The Future of Anthropological Knowledge** London, Routledge
- MORGAN, David L (ed.) 1993 **Successful Focus Groups. Advancing the State of the Art** London, Sage Publications
- NADER, L 1974 'Up the Anthropologists – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up' in D Hymes (ed.) **Reinventing Anthropology** New York, Vintage Books
- NEEMAN, Rina 1994 'Invented Ethnicity as Collective and Personal Text: An Association of Rumanian Israelis' **Anthropological Quarterly** 67(3)
- NOVAK, Michael 1971 **The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics** Macmillan, New York
- OKAMURA, J Y 1981 'Situational Ethnicity' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 4:452-465
- ONG, Aihwa 1993 'On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora' **Positions** 1:745-78
- OSIA, K 1981 **Israel, South Africa and Black Africa: A Study of the Primacy of the Politics of Expediency** Washington, University Press of America

- PELED, Yoav 1990 'Ethnic Exclusionism in the Periphery: the case of Oriental Jews in Israel's development towns' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 13(3):345-367
- RITTERBAND, Paul 1986 'Israelis in New York' **Contemporary Jewry** 7 pp 113-26
- ROGERS, Mary F (ed.) 1996 **Multicultural Experiences, Multicultural Theories** McGraw-Hill
- ROSENAK, Michael 1992 'The Land of Israel: Its Contemporary Meaning' in Steven T Katz (ed.) **Frontiers of Jewish Thought**
- ROTENSTREICH, Nathan 1986 'The Negation of the Diaspora - Past and Present' **Midstream** October
- ROUSE, Roger 1991 'Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism' **Diaspora** 1(1):8-23
- X RUTHERFORD, Jonathan 1990 'The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha' in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.) **Identity. Community, Culture, Difference** London, Lawrence & Wishart
- RUTHERFORD, Jonathan 1990 'A Place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference' in Rutherford, Jonathan (ed.) **Identity. Community, Culture, Difference**
- SACKS, Jonathan 1994 **Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?: Jewish Continuity and How to Achieve It** London, Valentine Mitchell
- SAFRAN, William 1991 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return' **Diaspora** 1(1):83-99
- SAID, E 1978 **Orientalism** New York, Pantheon
- SANJEK, Roger 1990 'Urban Anthropology in the 1980s: A World View' **Annual Review of Anthropology** 19:151-186
- SAUNDERS, Christopher 1983 **Historical Dictionary of South Africa** Scarecrow Press, New Jersey & London
- SCHOFFMAN, S et al 'Americanization in Israel' **Jerusalem Report** 18 May 1995
- SCHWEID, Eliezer 1997 'Is there Really No Alienation and Polarization?' in Charles S Liebman & Elihu Katz (eds) **The Jewishness of Israelis** pp 151-8 (Appendix)
- SEGRE, V D 1980 **A Crisis of Identity. Israel and Zionism.** Oxford, Oxford University Press

- SHAIN, Milton & Sally Frankental 1991 'South African Jewry, Apartheid and Political Change' **Patterns of Prejudice** 25(1)
- SHAIN, Milton & Sally Frankental 1997 'Accommodation, Activism and Apathy: Reflections on Jewish Political Behaviour During the Apartheid Era' **Jewish Affairs** 52(1)
- SHIMONI, G 1980 **Jews and Zionism: The South African Jewish Experience 1910-1967** Cape Town, Oxford University Press
- SHIMONI, G 1988 'South African Jews and the Apartheid Crisis' in Singer, David (ed.) **American Jewish Year Book** 88 Philadelphia
- SHIMONI, Gideon 1995 **The Zionist Ideology** Hanover, USA, Brandeis University Press
- SHOKEID, Moshe 1988 **Children of Circumstances. Israeli Emigrants in New York.** Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press
- SHOKEID, Moshe 1993 'One-Night Stand Ethnicity: The Malaise of Israeli-Americans' **Israel Social Science Research** 8(2)
- SIMMEL, Georg 1950 'The Stranger' in K H Wolff (ed.) **The Sociology of Georg Simmel** Glencoe, Ill., Free Press. pp 402-8
- SIU, P 1952 'The Sojourner' **American Journal of Sociology** 58(1):34-44
- SKLARE, Marshall (ed.) 1982 **Understanding American Jewry** New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Books
- SMITH, Anthony D 1986 **The Ethnic Origins of Nations** Oxford, Blackwell
- X SMITH, Anthony D 1988 'The Myth of the "Modern Nation" and the Myths of Nations' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 11(1):1-26
- SMITH, A D 1993 'The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?' in Marjorie Ringrose & Adam J Lerner **Reimagining The Nation** Buckingham, Open University Press pp 9-28
- SMITH, Anthony D 1994 'The problem of national identity: ancient, medieval and modern?' **Ethnic and Racial Studies** 17(3-4):375-399
- SMOOHA, Samuel 1978 **Israel: Pluralism and Conflict** Berkeley, University of California
- SMOOHA, S 1984 'Three Perspectives in the Sociology of Ethnic Relations in Israel' **Megamot** XXVIII 2-3 pp 169-206 (Hebrew)
- SMOOHA, S 1990 'Minority status in an ethnic democracy: the status of the Arab minority in Israel' **Ethnic & Racial Studies** 13(3):389-413

- SOBEL, Zvi 1986 **Migrants from the Promised Land** New Brunswick & Oxford, Transaction Books
- SOBEL, Zvi & Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (eds) 1991 **Tradition, Innovation, Conflict. Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Israel** Albany, New York, State University of New York Press
- STOLCKE, Verena 1995 'Talking Culture. New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe' **Current Anthropology** 36(1):1-24
- STRATHERN, M 1995 'The nice thing about culture is that everyone has it' in Marilyn Strathern (ed.) **Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge** London, Routledge
- SUSSER, Bernard & Eliezer Don Yehiya 1994 'Israel and the Decline of the Nation-State in the West' **Modern Judaism** 14:187-202
- TAMIR, Yael 1991 'The Right to National Self-Determination' **Social Research** 58(1):565-590
- TOLOLYAN, Khachig 1991 'The Nation-State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface' **Diaspora** 1(1):3-7
- TURNER, T 1993 'Anthropology and Multiculturalism' **Cultural Anthropology** 8(4):411-29
- URIELY, Natan 1994 'Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners: The Case of Immigrants in the Chicago Area' **International Sociology** 9 (4):431-445
- URIELY, Natan 1995 'Patterns of Identification and Integration with Jewish Americans Among Israeli Immigrants in Chicago: Variations Across Status and Generation' **Contemporary Jewry** 16:27-49
- VITAL, David 1982 **Zionism: The Formative Years** Oxford, Clarendon Press
- VITAL, D 1990 **The Future of the Jews** Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press
- WALLMAN, S 1978 'The boundaries of race: processes of ethnicity in England' **Man (NS)** 13(2):200-17
- WATERS, Mary C 1990 **Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America** Berkeley, University of California Press
- WERBNER, Richard 1995 'Human rights and moral knowledge. Arguments of accountability in Zimbabwe' in Strathern, Marilyn (ed.) **Shifting Contexts**
- WERTHEIMER, Jack 1994 'Family Values and the Jews' **Commentary** 97(1):30-34

- WEST, M 1988 'Confusing Categories: Population groups, national states and citizenship' in E Boonzaier & J Sharp (eds) **South African Keywords** pp 100-110
- WILLIAMS, Brackette F 1989 'A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation across Ethnic Terrain' **Annual Review of Anthropology** 18 pp 401-44
- WINE, Sherwin T 1985 **Judaism Beyond God** Farmington Hills, Michigan, USA Society for Humanistic Judaism
- WISTRICH, R & OHANA, D 1995 'Introduction' in R Wistrich & D Ohana (eds) **The Shaping of Israeli Identity** London, Frank Cass
- WOLF, Eric 1994 'Perilous Ideas' **Current Anthropology** 35(1):1-12
- WOOCHER, Jonathan S 1986 **Sacred Survival: the civil religion of American Jews** Bloomington, Indiana University Press
- YEHOSHUA, A B 1981 **Between Right and Right** trans. Arnold Schwartz. New York, Doubleday
- YEHOSHUA, A B 1986 'Exile as a Neurotic Solution' in Etan Levine (ed.) **Diaspora** pp 15-35
- YERUSHALMI, Yosef Haim 1982 **Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory** Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- ZENNER, Walter P 1986 'The Jewish Diaspora and the Middleman Adaptation' in Levine, E (ed.) **Diaspora** pp 117-132
- ZERUBAVEL, Yael 1986 'The 'Wandering Israeli' in Contemporary Israeli Literature' **Contemporary Jewry** 7