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# What do we talk about when we talk about ‘national identity’?

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Jewish-Israelis in Britain negotiating  
‘national identity’ between Zionist  
ideology and diasporic reality

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The Department of Psychosocial Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College,

University of London

September 2013

I certify that the work submitted herewith is my own and that I have duly acknowledged any quotation from the published or unpublished work of other persons

Yuval Moshkovitz

## Abstract

This is a psychosocial research project investigating 'national identity' amongst middle class Jewish-Israelis in Britain. Its aim is to map key contents and highlight social categories that subjects draw on in their construction of 'national identity' and to study how they negotiate these categories and contents when narrating a story of 'who they are' as Israelis in Britain.

The first part of the thesis provides historical and theoretical background to the study of national identities, with a focus on Jewish-Israeli identity in the context of Zionism. An empirical study is then presented, in which twelve Israelis living in London were interviewed in depth about their views on Israeli national identity, what it meant personally to them to be 'an Israeli', and what it meant to be 'an Israeli in London'. Interviews were transcribed and a critical narrative approach was used to analyze the resulting texts, taking account of reflexive interview processes as well as exploring links with the broader cultural and political context.

The findings reveal the elasticity and fluidity of 'Israeli identity'. Subjects drew on a shared cultural reservoir - Zionist images, preconceptions and signifiers - to describe their personalized experience of belonging to or alienation from an acceptable notion of 'Israeliness' while living abroad.

'Israeli identity' was constructed against stereotypical images of 'the others' which, at times, applied racist discourse. Subjects constructed 'Israeliness' differently depending on the context they referred to (e.g. Israeli or British society). Each context had its distinct 'others'. Within the British context Israeliness was constructed against the images of 'the local Jews', the 'English' and the 'local Arabs and Muslims'.

Constructing an Israeli identity was also influenced by the social position that subjects were implicated in, in relation to their class, ethnicity, gender, or occupation. This also shaped their experience of dislocation in Britain.

Most of the participants conformed with a mainstream perspective on Israeli nationalism and refrained from criticizing it. This was interpreted as a discourse reflecting their privileged socio-cultural position in Israel and their commitment to a Zionist ethos which condemns emigration. Such a portrayal of Israeliness

both initiated and contributed to a sense of unsettledness characteristic of this middle-class group. Subjects moved back and forth between two identificatory positions ('*Ha'aretz*' and 'Israel') as their points of identification constantly changed. The research contributes to the analysis of nationalism phenomena and associated concepts such as diaspora and belonging among a middle class group of migrants. It outlines cultural, material and political forces that sustain nationalism yet also demonstrates ways through which subjects negotiate or resist the discourses and social categories offered to them for the construction of a 'national identity'.

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# Chapter one: Introduction

## *Poem Without an End - Yehuda Amichai (1996)*

Inside the brand-new museum  
there's an old synagogue.  
Inside the synagogue  
is me.  
Inside me  
my heart.  
Inside my heart  
a museum.  
Inside the museum  
a synagogue,  
inside it  
me,  
inside me  
my heart,  
inside my heart  
a museum

The general aim of this thesis is to present an empirical investigation of what is commonly entitled 'national identity', to problematize this concept, put it in its social context, and map some of the key factors that serve individual subjects when making sense of it<sup>1</sup>. The title of the thesis, 'What do we talk about when we talk about "national identity"' (taken from Raymond's Carver famous collection of short stories *What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, 1981), points to the double meaning that 'national identity' may carry as a constructed *concept* (rather than an essentialist psychological entity) - i.e. what do we actually *mean* by 'national identity' - and as a *practice* - what do we consider relevant when we *do* (e.g. talk about) 'national identity'? The study draws on a psychosocial theoretical approach which, as the above poem demonstrates, sees the social/collective (e.g. the museum/the synagogue) and

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<sup>1</sup> Therefore, throughout the thesis I address this term within quotation marks although in order to facilitate the reading I will drop these quotation marks at an early stage.

the private/psychological (e.g. the 'I'/the heart) domains as inseparable, dependent on each other and mutually constitutive. This psychosocial study was conducted among Jewish-Israelis who live away from Israel, in Britain, and was interested in their private and collective associations of the notion of 'national identity'. Thus, the study brings together three main areas of academic interest: 1. nationalism and 'diaspora'; 2. identities and subjectivity; 3. qualitative empirical research in the aforementioned areas. The introduction will serve to locate the current research in the context of contemporary debates in each of these areas and will touch on my own personal engagement in it.

### **1.1. Nationalism today**

In a world governed by transnational forces of globalization, massive population transitions, transnational projects such as the EU, technical innovations that facilitate data transmission across the world, all of which appear to erode the classic physical and identificatory nation-state boundaries, nationalism was portrayed by some as a thing of the past, the remnant of the age of modernism. In *The Post-national Constellation* (2001), Habermas makes the case for transnational forms of identity (e.g. the EU) and argues: 'As nation-states increasingly lose their capacity for acting and the stability of their collective identities, they will find it more and more difficult to meet the need for self-legitimation' (p. 110). Other social categories: gender, class, race, ethnicity, professional status, age etc., attract the attention of social scientists in western societies as 'nationalism' is taken as an exotic, peripheral phenomenon that happens 'elsewhere' or is relegated to the domains of the margins of western societies. In his influential book *Banal Nationalism* (1995) Billig warns against such an interpretation of nationalism and argues:

This is where the accepted view becomes misleading: it overlooks the nationalism of the West's nation-states. In a world of nation-states, nationalism cannot be confined to the peripheries. That might be conceded, but still it might be objected that nationalism only strikes the established nation-states on special occasions. Crises, such as the Falklands or Gulf Wars, infect a sore spot, causing bodily fevers: the symptoms are an inflamed rhetoric and an outbreak of ensigns. But the

irruption soon dies down; the temperature passes; the flags are rolled up; and, then, it is business as usual. (p. 5)

Throughout the last decade such major global and local crises indeed demonstrated that it was too early to wish goodbye to nationalism as a structuring social order. The current rise of nationalist agendas and the tightening of western nation states can be accounted for by the 9/11 event and its aftermath and the rise of the 'war on terror' discourse (Karla, Kaur and Hutnyk, 2005) as well as by the 2008 global financial crash. In this context, immigration policies are once more tightening the physical, cultural and political boundaries around the nation.

A similar pattern has occurred in Israel. In the 1990s, despite the continuous Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, a marked decrease in the hostile actions from the Palestinian population, some diplomatic advances towards a resolution of the Israeli Arab and Palestinian conflict (e.g. the 1993 Oslo agreement with the Palestinians and the 1994 Jordanian Peace accord) and a period of relative economic prosperity in both societies seemed to promise the beginning of a new era, that of a 'New Middle East' (Peres, 1993). These processes of boundary lowering between Israel and its exterior and the economic fruits that came with it, alongside the increased socio-political and intellectual challenges within Israeli society towards the classical hegemonic Zionist national narrative<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Shlaim, 1988, Peled, 1989) have led some to announce a *post-Zionist* (Ram, 2006) or a *post-national* era. Yadgar (2002) for example claims that there appears to be a transition from 'the "Jewish"-particularistic narrative to the post-national peace narrative' (p. 69).

And yet, the second Palestinian *Intifada* (uprising) (2000) following the failure in the peace negotiations with the Palestinians in 1999 brought about the intensification of the military tensions and eventually led in 2003 to the construction of the separation barrier between Israel and the West-Bank. Other military clashes, e.g. the 2006 second Israeli-Lebanese war, the 2009 'Cast Lead operation' in Gaza and others followed. In this socio-political and cultural climax of re-intensification and distrust many scholars talked about *the Rise and Fall of Post-Zionism* (Livne, 2001) or of its irrelevance (Yuval-Davis, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> See an elaborated discussion on Zionist ideology in chapters two and three.

Consequently Naveh argues: 'many signs indicate that Israeli society is breaking away from the monolithic memory instilled by the canonical Jewish-Zionist narrative, yet no other narrative has been created to replace it nor is there likely to be' (2006, p. 248). First and Herman conclude that 'in contradiction to Bauman's (2000) statement that the romance between the state and the nation is over in the era of liquid modernity, in Israel the partnership between the two seems rather stable, at least as long as the Middle East conflict is still going on' (2009, p. 521). The historical changes outlined above describe the ongoing interchange between lowered and heightened boundaries, between opening up to and closing down from 'the others' where 'the nation'<sup>3</sup> and discourses of nationalism play a major role.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter two draws a schematic map of the theoretical debates on nationalism: the cultural, material, political-ideological and psychic forces of nationalism and the many faces it takes. Chapter three applies these theoretical concepts and debates to the Israeli reality and discusses contemporary trends in Jewish-Israeli nationalism.

My point of departure is that nationalism in general and Israeli nationalism (Zionism) specifically are still very relevant in Jewish-Israelis' contemporary public space where 'national contents and symbols can still be found everywhere' (First and Herman, 2009, p. 520). These notions of nationhood are brought by Israelis who come to live in Britain (especially those coming from middle class background) and take part in the construction of private immigration or diasporic experience.

## **1.2. Diaspora**

In the past decades the concept of 'diaspora' has become increasingly relevant within academic circles and in popular discourse mainly due to the physical, economic, professional and cultural transitions that global capitalism allows and encourages. This has resulted in an expansion of diaspora's traditional meaning (which Brubaker refers to as 'The "diaspora" diaspora', 2005) that usually referred to Jews' involuntary dispersion and now reflects the

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<sup>3</sup> Like 'identity' I am using quotation marks around 'the nation' to mark its constructability and its imaginative features and in order to differentiate it from an essentialist usage of the term. However, I will from now on drop these quotations to facilitate the reading.

dispersion of any collective social category (e.g. the '*Queer Diaspora*' – Paton, 2000) in whatever social circumstances. Its popularity among cultural theorists (e.g. Hall, 1990, Brah, 1996, Kaur *et al* 2005) stems from the political and cultural room it makes for hybridity, multiplicity and trans-nationality and the critique of stable and fixed interpretations of social categories such as nationality, race or ethnicity. It addresses the contemporary conditions of living in a rapidly changing world where physical transition brings different cultural and ethnic communities to live side by side in multicultural urban mega-centres and where notions of 'home' and 'away' can be reconsidered. However, while some authors prefer to look at 'diaspora' as a transnational phenomenon 'that begin[s] with a world without borders' (Levitt, 2010, p. 40) or that offers an alternative model of belonging, others (Anderson, 1998, Karla *et al.*, 2005, Al-Ali, 2010) have pointed out the complicated relationship between diasporic communities and the local and away states where diasporas often play reactionary roles by accentuating (e.g. funding from afar national movements' military agendas) rather than challenging nationalism. Sayad argues that

In a world governed by 'state thought'...we automatically think in national terms' [which] 'introduces that inevitable, and eminently 'statist' distinction, which is arbitrary as it is pertinent, between the national on the one hand, and the non-national on the other' (2004, p. 294).

Hence I propose to look at diaspora as a phenomenon that operates within the margins of the national order and which could *potentially* (but not necessarily) at times critique the territorial dimension or the attachment to a single national structure and imagery. 'Diaspora' could be thought about as a state of mind or as a way of consciousness (Vertovec, 1997) rather than as a settled, prolonged condition. As my research will show, the perception of 'diaspora' is greatly impacted by the social and political positioning of the migrant within 'home' and 'away' societies and its insertions into the system of cultural significations.

Despite the greater legitimacy in contemporary Jewish-Israeli society of emigration away from Israel, this nevertheless still carries pejorative emotional connotations in Israeli cultural imagery. Founded on a collective narrative of millennia of exilic existence and non-Jewish hostility and persecution,

Zionism's ideology revolves around the 'Negation of Exile' which depicts communal and private Jewish existence away from Israel as partial and lacking.

Such notions of 'diaspora' and nationality are being imported by Israelis who live abroad, especially among those whose parents or grandparents emigrated to Israel one or two generations ago for whom transition abroad could be regarded as 'the return to the diaspora'. These Jewish Israelis often make part of the middle class or the backbone of Israeli society. These demographical and biographical factors shape to a large extent the experience of migration and the potential integration into the local (i.e. British) host society.

In her trilogy of video art works, *And Europe Will be Stunned* (2007), the Israeli-Dutch artist Yael Bartana toyed with the idea of the return to Europe. She imagines the return to Poland of 3.3 million Polish Jews (who were murdered in WWII) following the invitation of local Poles. Such an alternative narrative reverses history and reconstructs Polish and Israeli national narratives. While this art-work's poignancy resides in its intentional artistic effort to upset basic elements of the Zionist narrative, there are contemporary voices within world Jewry that call for the redefinition of the Zionist notion of 'diaspora', the relationship between Israel and world Jewry and accordingly offer alternative notions of citizenship, belonging and Jewishness (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994, Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010). Chapter four discusses the theoretical literature on diaspora as it is understood in British and Israeli societies. The current research, therefore, seeks to study the way Jewish-Israelis who live in Britain imagine this diasporic reality as it intersects with prevalent notions of nationality and diaspora in Israeli and British societies and potentially with alternative, counter-hegemonic models of Israeli diaspora.

### **1.3. Subjectivity and Identity**

The main interest of the current thesis, however, focuses on the location of individual Jewish-Israeli subjects within this seemingly collective, political and social project of the nation and the diasporic condition. One of the areas that are often overlooked is the process of subjectification in relation to nationalism, i.e. the role that subjects play in national projects and their engagement in them. In chapter two I will argue that the persistence, impact and 'stickiness'

(Hook, 2008) of nationalism stems not only from economical and material conditions (as modernist theorists, e.g. Gellner, 1983 argue), from the ongoing cultural traditions and collective symbols (as ethnosymbolists, e.g. Smith, 1991, argue) or from the political power that comes with social (e.g. national) projects (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), but *also* from the psychic gratification (Zizek, 1998) it provides its individual members and the emotional attachment (Stavrakakis and Chyrisoloras, 2006) it is invested with *in return* by its subjects. This calls for a more psychosocial approach to nationalism that sees the subject and the 'nation', the social and the psychological as interdependent and mutually constitutive; two sides of the same coin.

It has now become common among critical social theorists to conceptualize 'identity' as 'something local, fluid, unstable and contingent, made up of momentary stabilities that are then instantly displaced' (Frosh and Baraitser, 2009, p. 166). In contrast to a more essentialist, consistent and 'internal' psychological/cognitive understanding of identity, a psychosocial definition of identity, accentuates the process ('identification'), the variability ('identities'), and the socio-political context within which identities are formed and played out. The problem, however, is that such notions of fragmentation and fluidity contradict people's relentless quest for consistency, stability and meaning (even if imaginary) which grant them a sense of control over their lives. Thus, while subjects are no doubt structured by the impersonal social, political and cultural circumstances they happen to be located in, their *insertion* or '*suturing*' in Hall's words into these social positions (subject positions in Foucauldian terms, e.g. Davies and Harré, 1990) 'requires, not only that the subject is 'hailed' but that the subject invests in the position' (Hall, 2000, p.19). As the analysis of the interviews will later demonstrate, subjects indeed toil to make these arbitrary subject-positionings into 'their own' and incorporate them into their personal imaginary understanding of 'who I am'. A central tool that subjects apply for this act of appropriation is narration. Yuval-Davis draws direct links between identities and narratives when she argues that: 'Identities *are* [my emphasis] narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and what they are not) but identity is fluid, always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 202). In this thesis I study the

themes, images and concepts that are being employed by Jewish-Israeli subjects when performing these acts of appropriation: how they locate themselves within the cultural-political circumstances of the nation in a context of dislocation and/or emigration.

Amichai's opening poem describes the social (the museum and the synagogue and their temporal representations) and the subject (the 'I') as a never-ending chain where one never knows when representations of the 'I' and its body ('the heart') end and where the modern and traditional collective representations start. Amichai was often preoccupied with the specific location of the Jewish-Israeli subject amidst the powerful cultural and social symbols that Israeli society is saturated with, as the following poem discloses:

### **Tourists/ Yehuda Amichai (2010)**

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.  
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,  
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall  
And they laugh behind heavy curtains  
In their hotels.  
They have their pictures taken  
Together with our famous dead  
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb  
And on Ammunition Hill.  
They weep over our sweet boys  
And lust after our tough girls  
And hang up their underwear  
To dry quickly  
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower,  
I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. "Just right of his head". "But he's moving, he's moving!"

I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,  
"You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next  
to it, left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and  
vegetables for his family."

Amichai's poem emphasizes another dimension which is crucial, alongside narration and personification of the social positioning, for the construction of social identities: the role of the 'other'. In the above poem, Amichai argues that subjectivity is determined in relation to the other and more specifically, according to Lacanian theorizing (e.g. Zizek, 1998), through the others' (the tourists') gaze – whether one is perceived as a subject in his own right (who buys fruits for his family) or as an insignificant marker of history. As I will show in the findings chapters (six – nine), subjects were 'assisted' by 'other' figures (Israelis in Israel, British Jews and non-Jews, local/British Muslims and Arabs) in the construction of their personal version of 'Israeli identity' in Britain. Both the force of narration and coherence and the role of the 'other' in the construction of 'identity'<sup>4</sup> are a central tenet of the imaginary register in Lacanian theorizing. While not subscribing to a psychoanalytic theory, Lacanian or otherwise, my research has definitely applied some Lacanian concepts to understand and relate to the inherent complexities and inconsistencies that (Israeli) 'national identity' construction involves both on private (Zizek, 1998, Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006) and collective (Bhabha, 1990, Said, 2003, Rose, 2005) levels.

#### **1.4. My personal engagement with the topic**

Amichai's concerns around the subject and its location in culture and history certainly struck a personal chord. In the summer of 2006 I was living with my family in a small Galilean township, just south of the Lebanese border. I was working as a clinical psychologist at an inpatient psychiatric ward in a nearby hospital. Then the war broke out and our daily routine was shattered. It seemed like we had all been inserted into a different uncanny reality, where the physical scenery was familiar but its context totally unfamiliar. Like many other citizens in the Northern part of the country my family sought shelter in

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<sup>4</sup> From now on I will drop the quotation marks although the constructed features of the term are intended.

Jerusalem and I anxiously raced the deserted and bombarded roads, accompanied by the sounds of sirens, and occasional sounds of missiles between their flat in Jerusalem, our house and the hospital. Thousands of missiles came from the Lebanese side some hitting our town which was by now almost deserted. Distant towns that were previously located outside the range of Lebanese missiles were now hit by long-range missiles. The Israeli army spread its artillery units, one of them located not far away from our home, to launch hundreds of thousands of missiles on Lebanon. The hospital's specially built huge underground spaces were now being occupied day and night by patients, medical staff and hundreds of civilians from the vicinity as sounds of explosions were heard outside.

I was especially taken by the collective assumptions that were voiced in the media, in public debates and in formal governmental announcements – around the army's strength, the state and its future, Hezbollah and their targets and the world's hostile and hypocritical public opinion towards Israel, all of which were repeatedly cited and recycled, taken for granted without being given personal consideration. As in past military conflicts, the collective space for thought seemed all of a sudden increasingly limited yet I had the uncomfortable, 'déjà vu' feeling that 'I already saw this movie' or rather took part in it before. The same old sense of rage, vengeance and superiority at the start which would quickly turn into catastrophic visions of personal and collective destruction and annihilation, which was gradually replaced by cautious criticism of the amount of force used by the army against military and civilians of the enemy all of which left me with a slight sense of 'hang-over' and retrospectively, with a troubling feeling of uncertainty as to what exactly went on. After a ceasefire was declared following 35 days of battle, and things gradually went back to normal, I was struck by an inexplicable feeling of angst which took some time to fade.

In retrospect, I felt a sense of disillusionment with the familiar national discourse not only in the way it was applied by official figures in public media but also as it was applied in popular discourse around me. Following the war, as if in a ritual, the familiar discussion of 'who won the war' took place, where mostly male army generals and military pundits would provide proof for the superiority or inferiority of the army's military performance vis-à-vis Hezbollah.

There was no discussion of the 'larger picture' within which this conflict took place: the effects on Israeli civil society, Jews and Arabs, living in a militarized society where targets and goals are mainly seen through a military/security angle; the effects on the neighboring societies, the continuous occupation of Palestinian territories and the prospects of future diplomatic arrangements. It seemed the government was content to provide a military solution to the situation whereas other civil aspects of daily life were completely neglected.

In short, I was troubled by the hegemonic militaristic narrative that was dominating the Jewish-Israeli public space and which I was expected to join. This understanding left me, however, with a sense of loss of the Grand Narrative, an alienation from my environment and a reluctance to participate in social practices and rituals. It provided me with a tangible demonstration of the gap between subject and society and the angst and depression that might accompany this realization.

Following the war I became more attentive to the efforts of individual patients, especially those from social minority groups, Arabs, Druze<sup>5</sup>, immigrants, to construct a meaningful and positive understanding of themselves out of the cultural resources that the Jewish-Israeli society offers its members. I learnt how crucial and sometimes impossible was the task of using these socially acceptable 'building materials' to construct an acceptable and respectable social position within Israeli society.

Therefore, the decision to come to Britain with my family for a PhD was not accidental and reflected an effort to disengage from the impact of the collective narrative and its discourses of nationality that circulate in every aspect of Jewish-Israeli society (in government policies, structure of institutions, daily social practices and even in the idiosyncratic contents of individual subjects' self-perceptions) and study them from a distance.

It is important to note that my interest did not stem only from a professional or theoretical interest in the social or political aspects of subjectivity but also from a deep concern for the future of Israeli society and the state of Israel (comprising a large minority of non-Jews – Muslim and Christian Arabs and various excluded Jewish groups) and its potential for growth and development

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<sup>5</sup> A Muslim sect that is influenced by spiritual philosophies and is scattered mainly in Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria

with the hope of exploring what lies ahead and whether any transformations in the basic thematic logic of the collective story are at all viable. In this sense I felt I approached the interviews with an open mind: having certain assumptions about what participants might be talking about but also warmly welcoming alternative, novel themes. The contents and the process indeed surprised and intrigued me on many occasions.

### **1.5. Researching identities using a psychosocial methodology**

In recent years, the psychosocial discipline was not only extensively theorized (e.g. Frosh, 2003, Frosh and Baraitser, 2008, Parker, 2010) as an intermediary space that is inseparably psychological and social at the same time but also discussed as an epistemological framework for conducting empirical qualitative research and analyzing its data (Riessman, 1993, 2008, Roseneil, 2006, Elliott *et al*, 2009, Saville-Young and Frosh, 2010).

What is at stake in a psychosocial approach to empirical data is how to present the interplay of cultural and social phenomena and their political implications and the acts of meaning-making and appropriation that subjects engage in for the construction of subjectivity. Since I was interested not only in the *contents* that subjects come up with in connection to 'an Israeli national identity' but also in *the work in progress* of such identity construction, I chose interviews as my data collection method where I could follow up *in vivo* such acts of construction. Furthermore, since narration constitutes an important tool for subjective appropriation of the social space, I have consequently chosen narrative analysis as the main tool for text analysis. Nevertheless, while I draw on classical notions of structural narrative analysis (e.g. Labov, 1972, Gee, 1991, 2005) to learn about the style and the techniques that subjects employ to create their narrative and tease out themes that lie between the lines of the manifest content, I have applied a critical narrative analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) which is better couched theoretically and practically within the notion of the psychosocial. Such a critical approach to narrative subscribes to the principles of fluid and fragmented identity and highlights: a. the changing cultural and political context within which the narration is performed; b. the inevitable disruptions and interruptions of the linear narrative; c. the role that the 'other' (e.g. the interviewer) plays in the construction of the interviewee's

narrative; and d. the discursive tasks that the interviewees want to achieve by using the specific narrative they promote. In short, my narrative outlook aims to study 'national identity' as an active, dynamic effort of the subject, negotiated and performed *in vivo* throughout the interview encounter. In this I join Hall's (1994) formulation of identity which is 'not [as] a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak' (p. 402).

Within such psychosocial research psychoanalysis has an important role to play. In spite of my psychoanalytic professional 'upbringing' I have not committed myself to a predominantly psychoanalytic approach because: a. it often assumes the predominance of the psychic over the social (as the Object-Relations school does e.g. Segal, 1997); b. it takes for granted certain theoretical assumptions (about the defended subject – Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 or the oedipal complex) that cannot always be warranted by the immediate interview texts; and c. it imposes a therapist-patient relationship on the substantially different research setting and researcher-participant relationship (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). Nevertheless, as described above, a psychosocial critical narrative analysis does converge with certain Lacanian notions (e.g. about the disrupted or split subject, about identities as an imaginary phenomenon and about the role of 'the other' in the constitution of self/identity). In contrast to a Lacanian qualitative analysis (Parker, 2010, Pavon-Cuelar, 2010) which aims to reflect on subjectivity as articulated across the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary registers' I have accepted 'identities', 'narrative' and 'nation' as products of the social imaginary and sought to study them as such. The psychoanalytic influence on my research is manifested in the particular awareness to tensions and disruptions in subjects' construction of national identities and experiences of subjectivity. I refer here to tension between I and not I (i.e. between the contents of identities and the contexts within which they are constructed); the tension between form and force/process (i.e. between 'identity' and *identification*); the tension between completeness and disruption (i.e. between a coherent and 'accountable' narrative and its confusing exceptions and disruptions) and the tensions between the generalized and the particular (i.e. between collective narratives

and private narratives). These tensions informed my reading, the analysis and finally the presentation of the material.

## **1.6. The structure of this thesis**

Following the first three theoretical chapters on nationalism, Israeli nationalism and identity in an immigration context, in chapter five I describe the theoretical reasons for choosing critical narrative analysis as an empirical methodology. I discuss the practical steps I took and the dilemmas I faced when conducting the research. The three research questions that informed my research were:

1. What hegemonic and counter hegemonic national narratives, themes, images and daily practices do Jewish-Israeli subjects draw on while making sense of their national identity?
2. What are the subject-positions and underlying power relations implicated in these social discourses of nationality? How are practices of inclusion and exclusion informed and managed by this collective imaginary?
3. How do participants negotiate or narrate these social discourses to accommodate them to their personal narratives of 'who they are'?

Chapters six to nine present the empirical findings based on the interview material. I have organized these findings chapters according to three main features that came up in the material: the application of the formal national narrative in the subjects' private narrative, the position of the speaker in relation to the object of reference (Israeli society, local British society and the Israeli community in Britain) and the references to the 'other' as a means of constructing self-identity.

In chapter six I demonstrate how subjects make use of the national narrative and other popular notions of the ideal nation to address the disadvantageous experience of living abroad and to manage the interview encounter.

Chapter seven focuses on subjects' construction of their Israeliness in reference to Israeli society and their position in it. The chapter presents some of the social categories along which Israeli society is stratified as subjects make use of these categories in order to consider their place in Israeli society. The tension between the subject and the social and cultural demands (which I have raised above) is also discussed.

Chapter eight presents Jewish-Israelis' outlook on British society. Subjects have repeatedly used several 'other' figures (British Jews, the general non-Jewish British population considered 'indigenous' and local Muslims and Arabs) as a means of differentiating themselves and articulating their singularity and particularity as Israelis.

Chapter nine focuses on the 'diasporic' experience of living outside Israel and presents an outlook on the local Israeli community and highlights dilemmas around identity-maintenance and bringing up Israeli children in Britain. This chapter looks at the way a diasporic condition is being negotiated and understood. Categories of gender and occupation intersect with the notion of nationality in the construction of Israeliness abroad.

Chapter ten discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical literature and raises empirical as well as theoretical aspects around the notion of national identity in general, Israeli national identity and more specifically Israeli national identity in Britain.

### **1.7. Why is this research needed?**

I see a potential contribution that my study can make towards a critical reading (substantiated by empirical research) of hegemonic Israeli notions of 'identity', nation and 'subject', and to the conceptualization of the dislocated or 'diasporic' condition. To start with, the notion of nationalism, as Billig's opening quote discloses (1995, p. 5), is often received with suspicion and resentment by cultural theorists in western societies. It is my intention in this research to study it from a non-judgmental perspective that looks at the individual subject rather than at the macro social structures. Second, research on national identities is often conducted through a quantitative approach which is committed to an empiricist methodology (e.g. Auron et al, 1994, Lazar et al, 2004). Measures of identification are generated through questionnaires and statistical analysis is carried out in order to determine connections between variables (e.g. the effects of Holocaust education on national identity, Auron et al, 1994). Third, although some qualitative research on Israelis' experience abroad has been conducted (e.g. Hart, 2004, Gold, 2002, Floman, 2007, Lev-Ari, 2008) they have adopted a non-critical approach to the texts generated and mainly focused on the manifest content, taking speech at its face value as

a testimony of the speaker's 'inner truth' and attempting to generalize rather than pointing to the particular. In these analyses there was no attempt to contextualize the extract within the overall interview narrative and structure (as advocated by Gee's structural approach), within the interviewee's personal biography, the interview encounter or wider historical, political and social conditions in Israeli society (although Floman's research from 2007 does make certain references to the speakers' location in Israeli society).

This research also wants to study a specific kind of migrants – those who bring with them social, financial and cultural capital and who, economically, fare well in Britain. Such groups are often overlooked in the migration literature which tends to focus on disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

Following Emerson and Frosh (2004) and Riessman (2008), I am interested in a psychosocial reading of Israelis' construction of Israeli identity that recognizes the mutual role of collective socio-political forces and their private interpretations. Also, while recognizing the hegemony and dominance of Zionist ideology in the construction of Israeli collective and private spaces, I am applying a critical approach that recognizes the existence of competing, counter-hegemonic (and in that sense 'Post-Zionist') outlooks and narratives that can offer alternative interpretations of the nation and of concepts that are associated with it such as citizenship, religion, Jewishness and subjectivity. Hence, I will point to the practical and discursive limitations (Foucault, 1974) that a Zionist discourse imposes on Israeli subjects who at the same time struggle to negotiate their subjectivity and national belonging when living abroad. I look at the notion of identity as a creative discursive-cultural-political category and at the same time highly personal and idiosyncratic where subjects work continuously to make sense of their social positioning and accommodate these into a meaningful story of who they are.

# Chapter two: Theorizing nationalism

## 2.1. Introduction

In this opening chapter I will be presenting a schematic discussion of contemporary theories of nationalism with the aim of contextualizing the psychosocial approach of nationalism that I am applying within the theoretical debates and highlight relevant key concepts such as narrative, ideology and the links between them in the national context. Applying a psychosocial approach to nationalism means looking at collective symbols, images and signifiers, all bundled together within a narrated representation of the nation, as they interact with material and historical conditions and the power struggles between various political interest groups within a given social field. The notion of 'diaspora' will be applied as a critique of the classical perceptions of the nation.

The chapter is divided into three parts: the first will present three sociological approaches to nationalism and the forces that drive and support it: modernism, primordialism and ethnosymbolism. In the second part I will be drawing on the ethnosymbolist approach which emphasizes the emotional impact of pre-modern traditions and cultural symbols and look at the imaginary aspects of nationalism. The role of imagination within the national project is central in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) and Bhabha's post-colonial reading of the nation as a disrupted imaginary notion (*Narrating the Nation* – 1990). The third part looks at nationalism as a social field where competing interest groups struggle for political and cultural dominance.

## 2.2. Defining nationalism

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary nationalism is the: 'loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups' ('nationalism', n.d.). In this thesis I will use nationalism to denote a variety of social phenomena that revolve materially, emotionally or conceptually around the idea of the nation as an organizing and pivotal social

category. In this chapter I will mainly focus on nationalism as a collective project and present sociological theories. In later chapters (particularly chapter four – the psychosocial subject and the findings chapters), I will discuss national identities i.e. individual subjects' engagement with and embeddedness within this social construction.

### **2.3. Sociological approaches to nationalism**

Theorists of nationalism were grappling as early as the end of the nineteenth century (e.g. Renan, 1882 in Bhabha, 1990) to explain the conditions of its occurrence, its emergence and the rules that govern its performance. Contemporary mainstream sociological literature on nationalism can be roughly categorized into three approaches: modernists, primordialists and ethnosymbolists (see Nairn 1997, Smith 1991, and Ram 2006). Although one point of controversy focuses on the historical onset of nationalism as a distinct political structure, and on the forces that drove it, in fact, the disagreement revolves around: 1. the substantiality or constructability of the national group as an entity; 2. its external or internal contents that motivate and conduct it, and 3. the way it interacts with alternative social categories such as religion, gender, race, and ethnicity.

#### **2.3.1. Primordialism**

Within this discipline approaches to nationalism (Van der Berghe, 1981, Shaw and Wong, 1989) draw on evolutionary theories, ethnicity and family kinship ties to argue that group members share common ethnic, psychogenetic features that distinguish them from members of other national groups. They also argue that since belonging to the ethno-national group constitutes one of the essential features of human nature, many human behaviours and choices are determined by this collective identification which gives priority to tribal, primordial features such as physiognomy, traditions and territory over 'higher' civilized aspects such as citizenship or legal rules.

#### **2.3.2. Modernism**

Modernists contest the essentiality, innateness and historical durability of nationalism as presented by primordialists and see it as a modern socio-

politically constructed phenomenon. They analyse the modern social forces and conditions (such as capitalism and industrialization) that emerged in the past three centuries, altered pre-existing forces such as religion and traditional social order and brought about the rise of national movements. Each theorist emphasizes a different historical condition as a precursor of nationalism. Gellner (1983) underscores the scientific and economic processes following industrialization; Anderson (1991) highlights the invention of print and the growing capitalist conditions and Breuilly (1993) focuses on the alienation between the absolutist rule of monarchism and civil society. They all agree, however, that nationalism fundamentally altered the pre-modern material, social and political conditions and should, therefore, be considered a distinctively modern socio-political phenomenon. Others analyse nationalism in connection to a wide variety of other social variables (globalization, pan/trans-national projects, religion, capitalism, ethnicity, language, class and gender) in an attempt to understand the regularity that drives national phenomena. Modernists (and post-modernists) also share a view regarding the invented or constructed nature of collective myths and national narratives which can be found in many, if not all, national movements. Gellner's assertion that 'nationalism is not the awakening of nation to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (Gellner, 1964 p. 168) sums up the modernist approach which claims that national narratives were invented 'beyond effective historical continuity' (Hobsbawm cited in Smith, 2001 p.13) in an attempt to link the present with a glamorous past, and add to the national movement's ancestral and ancient credentials. Billig (1995) analyses the discursive means by which 'the nation' is constructed and presented to members of a society as axiomatic and unquestionable through daily banal practices (e.g. selective media coverage, the terminology of weather forecasts, sports etc.).

### **2.3.3. Criticism of the modernist approach**

While I found the modernist approach productive in moving away from the primordial, reductionist, essentialist and biological approaches to nationalism, and for pointing out other social factors relevant for the analysis of national phenomena, my criticism relates to its overly rational, quantitative, social-constructivist model of analysis which emphasizes material, presumably

'objective' conditions at the expense of emotional or non-rational ones. Smith describes modernist approaches to nationalism as overly rational – failing to 'understand the global appeal of nationalism and its ability to inspire fierce resistance and mass self- sacrifice' (Smith 2001 p. 26). Likewise, I argue that the modernist approach offers a detailed rational analysis of the structure or form of nationalism and how different aspects may be connected to each other but qualitatively 'flattens' the elements that drive it and give it its 'soul' (Renan, 1990), 'passion' (Mouffe, 2001 or Rose, 2004) or 'force' (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006).

My second criticism towards modernist approach is that its quest for a comprehensive explanatory model of nationalism that draws out the elements that could account for the myriad of national manifestations and particularities (e.g. the multi-lingual/cultural/religious Swiss nationalism - see Helbling and Stanovic, 2011 and Kaufmann, 2011) brings about an ever-growing list of explanatory factors (e.g. language, territory, religion, ethnicity, race, geography, material conditions and political interests etc.) while ignoring the qualitative impact of such factors.

Third, subjects and societies seem to cultivate a collective narrated notion or an image of the nation as continuous and linear which persists and even thrives in spite of negative material conditions or the promise for economic improvement (e.g. the Palestinians or the Kurds). Therefore *the idea* of the nation plays an active role in the manifestation of nationalism.

Finally, the modernist approach ignores the reciprocal interactions between nationalism and material, economic and social conditions and presents it as uni-directional. It also ignores the role that individuals play in it as active members or leaders and the complicated impact that it plays on them.

#### **2.3.4. Ethnosymbolism**

The ethnosymbolist approach provides a third perspective on nationalism that offers a bridge between essentialist primordialism and modernist social constructivism and addresses some of the criticisms that have been pointed to above. According to ethnosymbolism, nationalism should also be studied as an emotional and mental state of mind rather than merely for its material historical

conditions. Smith (2001) and Hutchinson (2004) reject on the one hand the primordialists' essentialist view of nations and yet insist on the importance of pre-modern collective features – myths and symbols of pre-nation-state groups (termed 'ethnos') - as precursors of modern nationalism thus rejecting the view of the nation as an invented modern political 'tabula rasa' whereby new symbols can be invented and introduced. Armstrong (cited in Smith 2001 p. 14) suggests 'a continuous shift between pre-modern ethnic collective identities with their blurred and abstract geo-political boundaries towards the clearly defined modern national identities'. To demonstrate, inspired by ethnosymbolism, a historical analysis of the *Risorgimento*<sup>6</sup> emphasizes 'meaning, emotion and lived experience as opposed to class interests and structural change' (Korner and Riall, 2009 p.398) and is interested 'in how people lived the Risorgimento, how they took part in, felt about, described and represented these activities' (ibid). Seen from this view-point, myths and narratives and the emotional effects they generate are treated as valid and important objects of study in their own right, rather than negligible artefacts or merely 'invented' phenomena as modernists suggest.

Nevertheless, while helpful in curbing the over-rationality of the modernist approach, I find ethnosymbolism's analysis of cultural symbols, traditions and practices unsatisfactory in that it fails to account for the mechanisms and formations through which shared symbols acquire their significance, the specific peculiarities of such attachments, and the way they operate and become significant for individuals and groups.

In the following pages I wish to therefore focus on two bodies of not necessarily mutually exclusive theoretical work which highlight two aspects of nationalism. Anderson's notion of the nation as an *Imagined Community* and the psychoanalytic perspective on nationalism (which have fundamental differences) both highlight and emphasize the inbuilt imaginary, phantasmatic<sup>7</sup> aspects and therefore come closer to a psychosocial perspective. The second approach looks at nationalism and at the nation state as a field of socio-political struggles. Here nationalism is analysed as a political project or ideology that is held in place by the continuous struggle for social and political

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<sup>6</sup> Resurgence – (Italian) - a period of Italian national renaissance and national unification

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this thesis I will be using 'phantasy' rather than 'fantasy' to highlight its imagined rather than capricious or irrational aspects.

power. Ideology will be addressed here 'less [as] a set of well-articulated political ideas or doctrines<sup>8</sup> [but rather as] deeply resonant unconscious images and associations generated in everyday interactions which lead individuals to feel centred on others and the wider world' (Eliot, 2009, p. 100). I argue that interplay between power and phantasy, ideology and imaginary narrative offers a better understanding of the persistence and fascination of nationalism while at the same time allowing a break away from both essentialist primordialism and the overly-rational, cause and effect modernism.

#### **2.4. Nationalism as an imagined community**

Although often regarded as modernist due to his insistence on the role of modern print as the catalyst of the national imaginary, Anderson's *Imagined Communities* introduced into academic debate on nationalism the importance of the psychological and social imaginary as an indispensable element accounting for the force and resilience of national phenomena. Anderson breaks away from the traditional modernist perception of the nation as 'invented' and claims that 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined' (1991, p. 6) and demonstrated how and why an imagined community with a common cultural reservoir is created and shared through the mediating force of media, books or other means of social communication. According to Anderson, the erosion of the church and monarchy's hegemony, the rise of capitalism, secularism and the technological invention of print all contributed to the rise of local languages: 'print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation' (p. 44). According to Anderson, this type of novel collective imagination - 'horizontal-secular traverse-time' (p.37) - was inspired by modern enlightenment ideas where subjects could imagine themselves to be sharing common grounds with anonymous others that they have never met before and would have probably never meet. This collective time perception was qualitatively distinguishable from former forms of imagination dominated by ideas of religious fate or the monarchic hierarchy.

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<sup>8</sup> For a different, cognitive approach to ideology as a powerful set of beliefs, or a prism, that takes part in galvanizing a sense of national identity see Kaufmann (2008).

While Anderson underscores the experience of commonality at any given time among members of 'the nation', I argue that national narratives which promote a sense of connection among people across time and space fit well with his concept of the national imagined community because of their insistence on completeness, coherence and linearity that creates a sense of comradeship and links the community through a feeling of a common fate. Anderson (1991, p. 7) claims: 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'. Other authors also address this phantasmatic, idyllic perception of the nation. Smith (1999) writes about the sense of entitlement and chosenness that can be found in many national myths and Nairn (1997) claims that for the deprived communities, the small societies who could not compete with the stronger national forces, the ethos of the 'ethnos offered the only way of ensuring such cohesion and common purpose' (p. 66).

However, in order to construct this sense of idyllic linearity it was crucial that unfavourable memories were erased from public memory. In his seminal paper 'What is a Nation' Renan (1882/1990) claimed that 'forgetting... is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation' [since] 'unity' is always effected by means of brutality' (p.11).

Anderson's contribution allows us not only to think about how the nation is experienced momentarily, but also about how this specific perception of collective time encourages a coherent linear narration of the nation, selective forgetfulness and even distorted thinking.

Anderson locates the mechanisms that create and uphold this imagined community at a sub/unconscious level ('nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, [historically] out of which as well as against which it came into being' – 1991, p.12) but avoids addressing the complexities of that subconscious as addressed by psychoanalysis.

## **2.5. The troubled imagined community: Psychoanalysis and nationalism**

With the exception of Freud's cultural papers (e.g. group psychology, 2004/1922) and, later, the contribution of the Frankfurt school social-psychoanalytic thinkers during the 1940s-1960s (e.g. Adorno - 1950, Marcuse, 1955 - see Elliott, 2002) and handful of sporadic works (e.g. Segal, 1997, Volcan, 2002), psychoanalysis tended to analyse social phenomena as a reflection of intra-psychic dynamics (e.g. nationalism as a defense mechanism against anxiety) rather than as an independent field impacting, shaping even constructing subjects' experiences or 'inner worlds'. However, a Lacanian psychoanalytically informed reference to nationalism (Bhabha, 1990, 1994, Zizek, 1998, Said, 2003, or Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006) resonates better with the psychosocial perspective I am advocating because it implicitly insists that the social order (as expressed in language, symbols and culture as well as in the image of the 'other') is a crucial aspect in the construction of subjectivity and of the subject and the ingrained ambivalence central to social phenomena.

### **2.5.1. The libidinal nation – How the imagined community maintains its attraction**

Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras (2006) draw on Lacanian psychoanalysis and claim that in order to understand the longevity and persistence of nationalism one needs to apply the psychoanalytic concept of identification: the 'bond between people and nation – a bond which seems to exhibit the characteristics of psychic investment' (p. 147). As human subjects, we are driven by the constant search for an imaginary pre-symbolic experience, where we imagine ourselves to be at one with the perfect object, living in ultimate, limitless enjoyment. Once subjects enter the social world of linguistic representation and realize they are part of a cultural linguistic system to which everyone subscribes, they also enter the existential human split condition constructed on one hand by the social order of language, its demands and constraints and the demands of significant others but also constantly longing for the pre-linguistic 'lost Garden of Eden' where enjoyment had no limits. Accordingly, the idea of the nation is sustained by a mythological narrative of a golden age where

things 'were at their best', before a rupture occurred – before 'the immigrants came', 'the country was corrupted by capitalism', 'neighbouring countries are threatening to attack us', 'the youth lose their sense of identity or morality' etc. What grants nationalism its magnetic force is the unconscious phantasmatic promise to recapture and recreate this lost and perfect era and 'to put things right again'. The mere phantasy of attaining this ultimate object is enough to produce a sense of partial enjoyment (*jouissance*) and make the nation a perfect imaginary object of desire:

enjoyment is kept at a 'healthy' distance, not too far but not too close either; close enough to support the appeal of an object of identification but far enough from letting us entertain the vision of full satisfaction as an imminent possibility, something that would kill desire, induce anxiety and put identification processes in danger' (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006, p. 152).

According to this view, 'national solidarity is maintained through the ritualization of practices which offer some limited enjoyment (celebrations, festivals etc.) as well as through the reproduction of the myth of national destiny in official and non-official public discourse' (p. 153).

### **2.5.2. Bhabha and the troubled nation**

Unlike Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras who focus on the fascination of the national phantasm, Bhabha's early work underscored the troubledness of such imagination. Bhabha's application of Lacanian theory to understand nationalism, colonialism and post colonialism (1990, 1994) leads him to define the nation as 'an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force' (Bhabha, 1990, p.1). In his book *Nation and Narration*, he looks at the contradictory and disrupted efforts to imagine the nation as a coherent collective story. For him, 'the nation' is imbued with ambivalence and 'doubleness' – the constant move back and forth between the phantasy of its 'oneness', 'completeness' and 'homogeneity' and the concomitant awareness of its precariousness, temporality and inconsistencies. Bhabha argues (1994) that although people are partly aware of the futility of narrating the collective past as continuous and homogenous they none-the-less (*'quand meme'*) engage in its construction as continuous and

homogenous. But as argued by Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras (2006), it is specifically this ambivalence ingrained in the idea of the nation that renders it its force and fascination.

Bhabha accepts Anderson's insistence on the centrality of the experienced national-time for the analysis of nationalism, but profoundly criticises his analysis of this homogenous time-experience and insists on its doubleness which renders it anxious and troubled, always alert to the inconsistencies of national homogeneity.

### **2.5.3. The role of the 'other' in the construction of a troubled national imagination**

Some psychoanalytically informed theorists (e.g. Zizek, 1998, Rose, 2004) accentuate the important role of 'the imaginary other' in sustaining the phantasy of the ideal nation and repressing the acknowledgment of the split and lacking human condition. Here, and throughout this work, I will use 'other' to denote an image of neighbouring out-group members (e.g. minorities or immigrants, etc.) towards which the discharge of aggressive drives becomes possible (Zizek 1998). The intricate interdependence between me and not-me, between 'Self' and 'Other' which constitute two sides of the same coin as they take part in the construction of (national) identities can be seen in Rose's (1996, 2005) and Said's (2003) outlook on Israeli national identity constructed against the image of the 'Palestinian' or the 'Arab' (see next chapter) and in their interpretation of Freud's own negotiation of collective (Jewish) identity as presented in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Bhabha (1990, 1994) adopts the Lacanian view of the human split between self and 'other' and the construction of identity around this condition and adapts it to the historical condition of colonialism/post-colonialism and the European - non-European divide. In this political reality the identities of the colonizer (the 'Other') and the colonized (the 'other') are constructed around images of the unequal, exploitative power relations between them. Although formal colonialism may have ceased to exist, its effects persist in alternative cultural, economic or political forms and still live in a nation's collective imaginary or narrative.

## 2.6. Diaspora as a critical cross-national position

It is within this theoretical discussion that the concept of 'diaspora' becomes acutely relevant as an alternative to nationalism's narrative of one-ness and homogeneity and its relation to its 'other'. If nationalism lays claim to historical homelands, historical linearity and communality among its members, diaspora resonates with trans-nationality: it inserts notions of foreignness and continuity *across* geographical spaces, the potential for geographical transitions, trans-territorial, multiple identifications and the distinction between 'home' and 'homeland'. Diasporas fit well the contemporary post-modern and post-colonial conditions of economic and cultural globalization that facilitate and often encourage the cross-national transitions of mass populations for economic, professional or recreational reasons in a global society that some (e.g. Bauman, 2011) regard as post-national, marked with fluidity and melting social structures. Hence, the shift from 'immigration studies' to 'diaspora studies' reflects the interest in those global cultural trends (Werbner, 2002).

According to Karla et al. (2005), the notion of 'diaspora' challenges the idea of 'the nation' on several grounds. They argue that diaspora exposes the national phantasy of 'one-nation one-people' and forces majorities to consider and accept the existence of others. Diasporas also break the link that nationalism establishes between belonging and territory and consequently challenge the sacredness of territory all together: 'many diasporic groups can be called de-territorialized because their collective claims to an [national] identity do not depend upon residence on a particular plot of land' (p. 32). Finally, they argue that while 'the formation of hyphenated identities... can reinforce the sense of belonging on both sides of the divide... it can also result in the creation of new identities which have no affiliation to the nation-state form' (p. 33). However, unlike Karla et al. (2005) who look at the diaspora as a competing model of belonging, I argue that nationalism and diaspora constitute two sides of the same coin as they are each defined in terms of the negation of the other. Diasporas do not necessarily mark a decline of the nation-state world but rather describes the complexities of the national order from its margins.

## 2.7. Nationalism as a site for political struggles and social inequality

I also find it important to address the political dynamics and practices of power relations involved in the construction of these collective imaginations and forms of narration. These have been somewhat neglected in the discussion of the imaginative, troubled and phantasized features of 'the nation'. Thus, I now wish to look at 'the nation' above all as a political project in the making that excludes, competes and struggles with alternative political projects for political, cultural and material supremacy (rather than articulate the idea of 'the nation' itself as a tension-laden construct). In this sense, the national imagination should be regarded as political since it creates tension not only *around* its boundaries – the inclusion or exclusion of its foreigners, diasporic, immigrant 'others' - but also *within* its boundaries, among contesting collective imaginations.

Some critical social theorists, post-Marxists, feminists and post-colonial scholars focus on aspects of social power-dynamics and are interested in how alternative social categories - race, gender, class or ethnicity - are constructed in conjunction with national categories and discourses of nationality. They highlight the advantages gained by specific social groups due to the application of a national agenda and discourses at the expense of marginalized and discriminated groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, refugees, women, and people from lower social classes. In his book *Banal Nationalism*, Billig (1995) sees nationalism as an ideological project with a seemingly coherent system of ideas that promotes a state of mind of 'Us and Them', naturalizes and essentializes the socially constructed category of 'the nation' and consequently implements acts of inclusion (of certain national in-group members) and exclusion (of the 'others'). Billig analyses the discursive means by which 'the nation' is constructed and presented to members of a society as axiomatic and unquestionable through daily banal practices. Billig's concept of the banality of daily-life nationalism has proved popular among researchers for tracking the *mechanisms* through which national projects throughout the world are promoted (e.g. Vidacs, 2011 – Cameroonian national identity promoted through discourses of sport) and rehearsed (First and Herman 2009 – Israeli national identity promoted through consumerism in times of military tension). From this critical position nationalism

is seen as primarily a top-down manipulative ideological tool to implement the sovereignty of the nation-state where subjects are duped into relationships of manipulation and coercion.

Feminist critics (Yuval-Davis, 1997, Kamir, 2011) see nationalism for its male-centric emphasis, as promoting the interests of men over women. Within the national order subjects are assigned specific masculine and feminine roles which effectively preserve masculine hegemony over femininity. These perpetuate inequality in financial, political and social capital between men and women; construct reality from a national world-view while at the same time closing down alternative modes of thought and being that cut across categories of gender, class or race.

Butler and Spivak (2007) look at nationalism as it is promoted by national states, in connection to mechanisms and strategies of nation-state control (or violence) over its citizen and non-citizen subjects. Butler draws on works of political philosophy (e.g. Arendt, 1970) as part of her general interest in the analysis of power (e.g. 1997), ethics and citizenship (2007) and the relationship between the subject and the state. For her, a national ethos helps to maintain the state's control over its subjects by diverting their attention away from their condition as members of marginalized social groups, cases of civil injustice or transgressions of basic human rights.

Within this discussion it is important to note Laclau and Mouffe's application of Gramsci's 'hegemony' (1985) that describes the continuous struggle for political and social supremacy among various political-cultural groups within societies. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that *by its nature*, the modern social field (e.g. the state) is saturated with multiple socio-political projects that constantly struggle for seniority or 'hegemony' along certain axes of conflict (e.g. class, ethnic background, nationality, gender or religion), characteristic of that historical period in that society (Filc, 2006). The hegemony of any specific national model/project is *never* completed but is rather constantly challenged by counter-hegemonic alternative models, each one committed to a different political–social discourse that makes certain economic, political and symbolic/cultural assumptions and serves the interests of a different group. Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of the political social field describes a plurality of alternative political (national and non-national) projects or ideologies which are

the product of popular as well as elite social arrangements and it would be more appropriate to talk about various images and narratives of the nation (e.g. secular, nationalist-religious, ultra-religious, liberal etc.) and accordingly, about multiple discourses of nationalism that circulate within the social arena with one dominating and subordinating the others.

## 2.8 Discussion

The main aim of this chapter was to present a schematic mapping of theories on nationalism and to contextualize within it the psychosocial approach that I have applied. The psychosocial approach to nationalism looks at the interplay between historical-material conditions and nationalism's imaginary interpretations, narratives and cultural symbols. It contests, on the one hand, the rational, social-constructivist analysis of nationalism while on the other hand breaks away from essentialist and primordial theories of 'the nation'. In this chapter I presented various theories that address the imaginary aspects of nationalism, starting with the sociological ethnosymbolist approach which nevertheless remains insufficient in terms of the mechanisms through which cultural symbols acquire their significance within national movements.

Anderson's *imagined* community contributes to a psychosocial model by pointing to the mechanisms (e.g. the press, and the sense of anonymity) that promote an imaginary temporal sense ('the horizontal-secular traverse-time') of a national community. The contributions of psychoanalytic theorists help to further complicate and trouble the sense of collective national community by drawing attention to the nature of its oscillation between completeness/linearity and disruption/fragmentation. Bhabha argues for multiple contradictory temporalities and the image of the abject colonized subject which trouble the idea of the nation. Following Bhabha, I argued that the controversy between primordialists who try to provide proof of the 'oneness' of nations and modernists' deconstruction of these essentialist units misses the point, as the idea of the nation is sustained specifically by the tension between a primordial phantasy of oneness and the rational/modernist realization of its illusion. Along these lines, 'diaspora' proves important for troubling the idea of 'the nation' by introducing notions of temporality, trans-territoriality and duality or hybridity into the national collective imagination. Finally, critical political theorists look at the

politicised or ideological facets of 'the nation' by examining its mechanisms of coercion and control, and see it as a site of conflict with alternative modes of social understandings, collective images and narratives. Laclau and Mouffe point out the chronic struggle for political and cultural hegemony among various social interpretations and projects. Such an approach allows us to talk of multiple images of the nation and alternative national narratives that compete side by side for political primacy.

In the next chapter I will be applying this schematic theoretical mapping to contextualize Israeli nationalism and its imagination(s). This will lead me in chapter four to the discussion of the psychosocial Jewish-Israeli subjects and their insertion into the national order in the context of their life in Britain – their condition and experience of foreignness, immigration or diaspora on the one hand and notions of belonging, citizenship or nationhood, on the other hand.

# Chapter Three: the Zionist narrative and its contestants in the collective Israeli imagination

## 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I proposed to analyse nationalism through a psychosocial prism which looks beyond the causality of material, political or economic conditions and incorporates cultural and symbolic aspects of the nation as cultural theorists (e.g. Bhabha, 1990, 1994 or Said, 2003) and ethnosymbolist sociologists (Smith, 2001) advocated. As I have argued thus far, the fascinating power of nationalism consists not only in its ability to promote a sense of 'a deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson, 1991) and a 'vertical comradeship across time' (Golden, 2001) that connects past, present and future; nationalism is also constructed around the tensions and slippages (Bhabha, 1990) in this narrated structure, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of its 'other' (Said, 2003) and the on-going power struggles among various ideological projects and their differing imagination of 'the nation' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The idea of 'the nation' thrives on these internal contradictions and tensions.

In this chapter I will be applying this outlook to Israeli society and will study the Jewish-Israeli 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). My main argument is that in spite of considerable erosion in the past three decades, the mainstream Zionist narrative and ideology and their symbols and images 'appear at all moments in the 'circuit of culture' model' (First and Herman, 2009, p. 520) and still dominate the collective imagination in what I call the 'Zionification of Israeliness'. While such wide background on the effects of Zionist ideology within contemporary Israeli society might appear remote from the texts of Israelis who negotiate their dislocation in Britain, I argued that it would be indispensable in order to understand the cultural context from which the interviewees are coming. I will first outline the historical context where political Zionism was incepted and demonstrate its main themes and concepts as manifested in Israel's Declaration of Independence from 1948. Later I will

discuss the social and political, formal and informal mechanisms that promote it in the Israeli public space. I will then present critical approaches which open up the idea of the nation and reveal key concepts (e.g. religion, Judaism, Europeanism, social class and citizenship) and their multiple and tension-laden interpretations. In the context of this research of Jewish-Israelis' national identities when living away from Israel, the association of 'diaspora' with 'exile' as a basic concept in Zionist narrative and ideology is highly significant. The analysis in this chapter will later serve me in the 'Findings' chapters to ground and contextualize Jewish-Israeli subjects' personal narratives and to look at them as psychosocial.

### **3.2. The hegemonic Zionist narrative – historical background**

The Declaration of Independence summarizes the basic principles of political Zionism. In the absence of a formal Israeli constitution, this declaration is still perceived today among the majority Zionist Jewish-Israeli public as an authoritative moral, political and social directive of 'who we are' that informs local perspectives on a variety of relevant topics in the public sphere. Bar-Tal (2007), for example, describes how the Zionist narrative constructs the mainstream Jewish perception of the conflict with the Palestinians. Here I will only present the first part of the Declaration of Independence (The full version could be found in Appendix 1). On 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948, on the day the British mandate over Palestine expired, the Jewish People's council convened in Tel Aviv and made the following declaration:

*ERETZ-ISRAEL* [(Hebrew) - the Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers,

*ma'apilim* [immigrants coming to *Eretz-Israel* in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood....

The declaration was made up of two parts: the first, part of which was cited above, offers a colourful narrative that links, as narratives do, dramatic milestones in the history of the Jewish nation (the glorious biblical past through the hardship of exilic conditions culminating with the return to the Jews' homeland and the establishment of a Jewish state in the historical Biblical *Eretz-Israel/Palestine*) to create a linear story of an ancient past, a troubled reality and a promise for an amended future. The establishment of the Jewish state of Israel is presented as the natural outcome of this unquestionable Jewish history.

The second part of the declaration (see appendix 1), opens with 'accordingly'... [We] 'hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz-Israel*, to be known as the State of Israel'. It draws on this historical narrative that was described above and outlines its socio-political and ethical implications regarding internal affairs and the citizens of the state, the Jewish immigrants ('*Olim*'), the international community, the neighbouring Arab countries and the Jewish diaspora.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence provides a convincing example of how a national narrative (dotted with significant symbols and images – 'birthplace', 'homeland', 'exile', 'political freedom', 'national rebirth') has political implications as it is matched with an ideological agenda that determines state practices, policies towards in-group and out-group subjects and forms of governance. As argued in the previous chapter (e.g. Bhabha, 1994), narratives are never a-political and ideologies often have implicit narratives that support them and the boundaries between the two are blurred.

### 3.3. Historical context - Zionism's task to resolve the 'Jewish problem'

Political Zionism emerged in the political-cultural context of growing nationalism in Mid-Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century around the need to address the 'Jewish problem', namely the chronic material, political and social conditions of exclusion and often physical persecution that Jews, above all in Mid-Eastern Europe, were subjected to officially and unofficially by the non-Jewish local population and its establishments. While some Jewish groups (e.g. the 'Bund' – a Jewish workers union) were struggling to facilitate the integration of Jews within local societies, Zionism proposed to resolve this exclusionary condition by constituting a separate political Jewish entity away from Europe. In the seventh Zionist congress (1905), it was finally concluded to form this entity in *Eretz-Israel/Palestine*. Through this innovative project, Zionism promised to renew every aspect of the old communal and private Jewish life. The ideological struggle between political nationalist Zionism and other contesting anti-nationalist Jewish ideologies: the socialists (The Bund), the cultural Zionists (Buber, Arendt) or the ultra-religious (see Magid, 2006) each promoting a different sense of Jewish communal and private life, diminished dramatically following the destruction of the Jewish communities in Europe during WWII and the declaration of the State of Israel. These historical events, argues Ram (2006), were taken as a convincing validation of political Zionism, its narrative and ideology and secured its hegemony within Israeli society and the Jewish world. The end of the British mandate in Palestine and the Jewish Declaration of Independence resulted in the eruption of the 1948 war between Jews and Arabs. Waves of Jewish immigrants, mostly from post-war Europe and later (during the 50s through 60s) from Arab countries, have changed dramatically the population's ethnic make-up from a Jewish minority to a considerable Jewish majority. Such demographic change was also brought about by the fleeing, displacement and active expulsion (Pappe, 1997) during and following the 1948 war of local Palestinian inhabitants estimated at around 700,000 (Morris, 1988), which is also known today as the *Nakba*<sup>9</sup>. Following the 1967

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<sup>9</sup> The Nakba – 'the catastrophe' or 'disaster', in Arabic. Throughout the work it became clear how different concepts are socially constructed rather than factual or objective. The Jewish-Israeli milieu where I grew up determines specific ways how history is told and understood and instructs how to use concepts such as 'war', 'immigrant', 'refugee', 'homeland', 'soldier',

'six-days' war, Israel annexed the Palestinian West-Bank and the Gaza 'strip' and allowed and encouraged Jewish-Israeli civilians – *Mitanhlim* ('settlers') – to live there<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.4. The Zionist imagination and its basic ideological assumptions

According to Ram (2006), two important ideological concepts emerge from this narrative as reflected in the Declaration of Independence and form the foundations of the Zionist ideology: 'the Negation of Exile' (*Shlilat Hagalut*) and 'the ingathering of the Jewish diaspora' (*Kibbutz Galuyot*); both are required in order to convince Jews to immigrate to Israel. The 'Negation of Exile' depicts Jewish private and collective existence in the diaspora as temporary and deficient. This ideological claim was supported by the spiritual yearning to 'return to Jerusalem' articulated in religious scripts (although the signifiers 'Israel', 'Zion' or 'Jerusalem' could be interpreted symbolically and metaphorically and not necessarily concretely or politically). According to Raz-Krakovitzkin (1994), the 'Negation of Exile' is the very essence of Zionism and its main rationale. The 'ingathering of the Jewish diaspora' sees the dispersion of Jews in different locations as lacking and calls for their gathering in Israel. According to Ram (2006), with the establishment of a growing Jewish community in *Eretz-Israel/Palestine*, the Zionist narrative insisted on Jews' exclusive rights over 'their' biblical territory and the marginalization of its local non-Jewish/Arab inhabitants.

The portrayal of the Jewish diaspora as deficient and exilic was contrasted with the merits of life in the Jewish ancient homeland. The Zionist Jews re-instituting their ancient traditions in their biblical homeland were termed 'the

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'terrorist', 'Israel' or 'Palestine'. Within this context the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians is perceived as an inevitable outcome of the war of independence or 'a catastrophe from their point of view' (Azoulay, 2009). Any other reading that acknowledges the suffering of the Palestinians is perceived as endangering the Zionist project. For criticism of the hegemonic national narrative and its usage of specific concepts see next section.

<sup>10</sup> In the Jewish-Israeli jargon there is a tendency to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a part of a larger Israeli-Arab conflict which in turn is seen as a part of an even broader (Jewish) Israeli-Muslim conflict all of which often come under the vague heading of the 'the conflict' (Bar-Tal, 2007). This contributes to a lack of distinction between 'Palestinian', 'Muslim' and 'Arab', which are often used interchangeably to refer to a vague 'enemy' or a source of threat. Bundling these group members together and portraying them as part of a huge (and therefore threatening) crowd serves Jewish-Israelis to de-humanize individual subjects (e.g. Palestinians) and relieve the Israeli responsibility for *its* aggression and the territorial consequences of the long-lasting conflict between the two groups.

New Jews' and were expected to be freed from the social and psychological maladies of the old Jewish diasporic existence. According to Sasson-Levi (2006), the New Jew is encapsulated in two idyllic images – the 'Warrior'-soldier and 'the Pioneer'-settler whose merits, different from the Zionist image of their diasporic forefathers, are described in the Declaration of Independence (those who 'made deserts bloom', 'love peace but know[ing] how to defend themselves'). Although these images have been transformed over time in response to socio-political changes, they are still seen as the ideological cornerstones of Zionist ideology (First and Herman, 2009) to which the majority of Israeli Jews subscribe. According to Raz-Krakotzkin (2007), the appeal of Jewish West-Bank religious-nationalists among the Jewish Israeli public could be ascribed to this image of the romantic pioneer whereas the army and the image of the soldier enjoys unconditional support by the vast majority of Jewish-Israelis (Sasson-Levi, 2006). Researchers have demonstrated how the hegemonic national narrative and its ideology are continuously constructed and maintained through formal institutional and informal (banal) and popular daily practices (Billig, 1995) where selective memory and forgetfulness (Renan, 1882/1990) are applied. This includes portraying the settlement project, the land confiscations and human right violations in the West Bank as part of the national security interests within the ethos of the struggling state of Israel (Ram, 2006, Sand, 2008).

### **3.5. Formal and informal mechanisms for maintaining the Zionist narrative**

#### **3.5.1. State education**

The state education system provides the platform upon which the national narrative and its themes can be efficiently communicated to, but also negotiated by, pupils and staff (Lomsky-Feder, 2011). According to Ram (2006), after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, official efforts were made to secure and ground the aforementioned narrative.

Indeed, Said (2003) noted that the vast archaeological excavations conducted by Israeli governments are strategically destined to provide scientific proof of the continuity of Jewish life in ancient Palestine/Israel and justify its

sovereignty while downplaying the legitimacy of the territorial Palestinian claims by undermining their historical heritage.

Naveh (2006) follows the debates around Israeli school history curricula during the last decades and notes that in spite of a gradual liberalization in school curricula and an inclusion of a wider range of global events which do not focus specifically on Israel, the new curriculum 'retained elements of the national ethnocentric orientation' (p. 263). Alternative history curricula that addressed the conditions of Palestinian Arabs in Israel and outside it during and after the 1948 war were shelved.

### **3.5.2. Practices of mourning**

Ben Amos and Bet-El (1999) argue, that juxtaposing specific collective commemorative events in school ceremonies - the destruction of exilic Jewish communities (Holocaust Memorial Day), the fight for freedom and liberation (the fallen soldiers Commemoration day) and the victorious period of redemption (Independence Day) affirms the classical Zionist narrative. The same authors also noted that in spite of growing freedom granted to teachers as to how to conduct the ceremonies, there appears to be a tendency to stick to the classical Zionist narrative of national redemption described above.

Lomsky-Feder (2011) concluded that while the majority of high schools stick to the classical narrative of heroic nationalism, hailing the self- sacrifice and bravery of the fallen soldiers, some Israeli high schools seem to break away from the classical narrative by adopting a narrative of victimhood that focuses on the sacrifice of the individual soldier. Both narratives, however, work within the consensus of the classical Zionist narrative which insists that wars are inevitable.

### **3.5.3. The army as a socializing agent**

Many researchers (e.g. Sasson-Levi 2006, Ben-Eliezer 2007) demonstrate the numerous ways by which the army and, consequently, the soldier figure that it promotes, are kept at the axis of Israeli society through the state education system, government funding, the public media and other channels. I argue that the appeal of the army and of the soldiers lies with the central role they play in the Zionist social imaginary as a 'testament' to the success of the Zionist

revolution in transforming the 'Old, passive exilic Jew' into a 'new and strong Israeli-Jew'. A more elaborate discussion of the militarization of Israeli society will be presented later.

#### **3.5.4. Promoting Zionism through consumerism**

First and Herman (2009) study the portrayal of important figures in Israeli history and the texts that describe their achievements as they appeared on a brand of sugar sachets distributed in Israeli cafes during the second Palestinian Intifada (2000). They conclude that in order to 'heal' itself in times of heightened anxiety and ideological crisis, the product reproduced images that are associated with the nations' 'golden age' following the establishment of the state, emphasizing a sense of homogeneity, creativity, innovation and national cohesion. The figures that were chosen appeared to prioritise the image of the idealistic 'New-Israeli Jew' - 'the warrior' and the 'Pioneer' over those whose contribution was educational, economic or cultural and avoided altogether controversial figures who fall outside the Zionist mainstream consensus. Likewise, Arabs, women, religious and Mizrahi Jews<sup>11</sup> were predominately absent. The authors conclude that rather than innovating the collective representation, popular culture expressed in consumerism exposes 'the prejudices, stereotypes and rules of inclusion and exclusion that in "high" culture are often hidden in a sophisticated manner' (2009, p. 506).

#### **3.5.5. Immigration policies and attitudes towards emigration**

Over the years Israeli governments have strongly encouraged Jewish immigration (*Aliya*) to Israel and, with the Law of Return of 1951, granted the legal right to Israeli citizenship to any Jew (any person whose mother is Jewish, according to the orthodox rabbinical authorities) who wished to come (Lahav and Arian, 1999)<sup>12</sup>. They also offer generous financial assistance to immigrants and Israeli returnees.

On the other hand, emigration was heavily stigmatized. Accordingly, in Hebrew, immigration to Israel is termed 'ascent' (*Aliya*) whereas emigration

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<sup>11</sup> Jews who originated from Arab countries

<sup>12</sup> The 1970 amendment to the Law of Return states that not only the Jew his/herself but also their spouse, the child or a grandchild of a Jew and their spouses, even if not Jewish, are also entitled to come to Israel under the Law of Return and can claim citizenship.

from Israel is coined 'descent' (*Yerida*). Although there is a decline in their popular usage these words still convey the Zionist spirit that distinguishes between the moral, spiritual and collective merits of living in Israel from those of living away from it.

It is estimated that about 9% of Israel's Jewish population (around 540,000) has emigrated and settled abroad (Della Pergola, 2012). Along the same lines that portray Jewish immigrants as Jewish ideologues returning to their old homeland (Golden, 2001), Israelis who leave Israel were seen in popular culture as *Yordim* – deserters who prioritize their personal self-interests over those of the national group. During the 1970's, the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin referred to Israeli emigrants as 'the fallen among the weaklings' (Gold, 2004, Lahav and Arian, 1999). Since Zionism promised to create a new breed of physically and mentally strong Jews, those who chose to leave demonstrated their weakness and inability to endure the struggle of life and to fulfil the legacy of the New Jew.

During the 1990's in a period of relative security, economic improvement and a growth in professional opportunities abroad, emigration from Israel was countered through an intensification of school curricula promoting Zionist ethos and ideals prior to the military service (Lahav and Arian, 1999).

Since the 90's the state's attitude towards Israeli emigrants has changed somewhat. This was a result of an amelioration of the security and economic conditions in Israel and the recognition in the émigrés' strong emotional attachment to the Israeli state (Gold, 2002, Lahav and Arian, 1999). Surveys among Jewish Israelis in Israel showed that public opinion no longer associated the resilience of the state with a continuous inflow of new Jewish immigrants. Nevertheless, despite the lessening in stigmatized labelling, many scholars agree (Gold, 2002, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Cohen, 2005) that self-images of the Jewish-Israeli diaspora (and those of the non-Israeli Jewish diasporas - Magid, 2006) are still organized to a large extent around the Zionist ethos of the Jewish ingathering and the negation of the Exile.

The continuous stigmatization of the diaspora and the 'Zionification' of Israeliness can be demonstrated by reference to a campaign launched in 2011 by the Israeli Ministry of Absorption (which is charged with absorbing and

integrating immigrants to Israel)<sup>13</sup> that was launched in September 2011 and called for Israelis who live abroad to return to Israel. The campaign was entitled 'They will always remain Israelis. Their children will not'. Analysing the images and messages used in the clips provided me with further understandings of the main features that construct 'Israeliness' in the Jewish-Israeli imaginary and draw the lines around the Israeli and its other - the diasporic Jew and the non-Jew. The clips communicated the message that specific practices – the usage of Hebrew (rather than English), religious traditions (celebrating Hanukkah rather than Christmas) and cultural/historical practices (commemorating the day of the Fallen Soldiers) make up the core of Israeli identity and that those who do not practice them (the immigrants' children) will not be regarded as Israelis. The campaign also argued that since these practices are more likely to be observed in Israel, Israeliness is therefore bound to be lost in the diaspora. The campaign excludes other ways of constructing Israeliness and being part of it and undermines the ability to construct it elsewhere. It re-emphasizes the perception of the Jewish diaspora as deficient in promoting and sustaining the continuation of Jewish and Israeli identity. Another governmental campaign reported by Shneer and Aviv (2010) casts the Jewish diaspora as potentially harmful for the continuation of the Jewish people due to the high rate of intermarriages and assimilation among diaspora Jews.

### **3.6. Contesting the national narrative – critical approaches to Israeli nationalism**

#### **3.6.1. An overview**

The following critical literature review disturbs axiomatic concepts, images and assumptions prevalent in Israeli society by pointing to the tensions and inconsistencies that infiltrate the seemingly coherent and homogenous collective narrative. As will be discussed later, the approaches certainly overlap but for didactic reasons I will present them separately for their specific troubling of the hegemonic Zionist ideology and narrative.

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<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately the Ministry of Absorption's video clips are no longer accessible, but they can be watched on various blogs e.g. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/weird-wide-web/israeli-expat-ad-dont-date-americans#1>

Following the opening up of the national archive at the beginning of the 80's and gradual changes within Israeli society (growing individualism, the lessening of the military threat) and its opening up to a globalized world, the hegemonic Zionist narrative and ideology was challenged by a group of academics known as 'the New Historians' (e.g. Morris, 1988, Shlaim, 1988, Shafir, 1989). Their critical work disrupted Israel's formal narrative regarding the events before, during and after the 1948 war. According to Bronner (2003)

rather than a David-and-Goliath tale of outnumbered idealists [the Israeli 'New Historians' claimed that] the story of Israel's triumphs was both more explicable and less heroic [they] shifted the focus of historical inquiry away from the wonder of Jewish national rebirth to military and diplomatic manoeuvrings on the one hand and Palestinian suffering on the other' (Bronner, *The New York Times*, 2003).

For example, a historical analysis of the demographic conditions during the first waves of Jewish immigration to the region falsified the Zionist portrayal of Jews as 'a people without a land coming to a land without people' (Shafir, 1996).

Academics from other disciplines followed, challenging other aspects of the taken-for-granted Zionist imagination and ideology. Some of the criticisms challenged the historical validity of the Zionist narrative (Sand, 2008), the role of the army in Israeli society (Kimmerling, 2001), the ethnic social stratification (Yona and Shenhav, 2005), gender relations, (Sasson-Levi, 2006 Kamir, 2011, Amir, 1995), the overall absorption of Jewish immigrants (Golden, 2001) and that of Jews coming from Arab countries more specifically (Shohat, 1991), Judaism and religion (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994) or the relationship with the Jewish diaspora (Magid, 2006).

Other criticisms emerge from world Jewry outside Israeli society and reflect both a critical Jewish non-Zionist tradition towards political Zionism (Butler, 2011) and its interpretation of Judaism, as well as strong condemnation with the current ethnocentric and militaristic state policies regarding the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict (Rose, 1996, Butler, 2011) and Zionism's attitude towards the Jewish diaspora (Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010).

### 3.6.2. The tension between the European and the non-European

The Ashkenazi (European)/Mizrahi (Arab/non-European) divide is one of the main schisms (alongside the religious/secular, Jewish/Arab, the veteran/immigrant and gender divides) that run through Israeli society since the mass immigration of Asian/North-African Jews in the late 1940s-early 60s tilted the demographical balance that was until then predominately Ashkenazi. Yonah and Saporta (2002) argue that various sociological scales demonstrate the continuous socio-economic advantages of Ashkenazi over Mizrahi Jews in contemporary Israeli society. For example, they argue that the state educational system enhances this social divide by directing Mizrahi pupils to lower vocational programmes.

Reinhartz and Shavit (2010) explain this preference by the historical context of the emerging Zionist movement. They argue that Zionism emerged in the socio-political climate of the end of 19th century Mid-eastern Europe, addressed the problems of the Jewish communities in these regions and was therefore inevitably a European-Jewish movement committed to an imaginary *European-Jewish* habitus – i.e. to ideas of enlightenment, nationalism and the decline of religion. However, post-colonial researchers (such as Shohat, 2001, Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994 and Yona and Shenhav, 2005) draw on Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and argue that Zionism's insistence on Europeanism should be understood within the identity politics of the growing local European nationalism and colonialism where the Jew was excluded as the European's internal 'other' - the Semite or as 'the non-European'. They argue that Zionism was driven by the promise to resolve this *identity crisis* by constructing a European 'New Jew' away from its adversarial environment and thus retain both its Jewishness as well as its Europeanism. According to Raz-Krakotzkin, (2007), within such a Zionist project, the Israeli 'New Jew' was destined to be the amended 'European-Jew', synonymous with 'modern', 'secular' and 'enlightened'. All aspects associated with the previously excluded Jewish other: the 'oriental/Arab Semite', 'the religious', or 'the traditional' were marginalized and excluded.

The Post-colonial critics mentioned above claim that this distinction between the European and the non-European other was imported by the Zionist

movement and now constitutes one of the foundational principles of the Israeli politics of identities. Shohat argues that

the dominant discourse of Euro-Israeli policy makers and scholars has suggested that Asian and African Jews—not unlike the Palestinian population—originate from ‘primitive,’ ‘backward,’ ‘underdeveloped,’ ‘premodern’ societies and therefore, unlike Ashkenazim, require modernization (2003, p. 63).

In agreement with Bhabha’s arguments (1990), Shohat (2003) claims that

Zionist writings made great efforts to normalize not simply ‘the Jew’ but also the very discourses that redefined the multitude of Jewish communities and the Jewish nation’... ‘the meta-narrative of the nation constructed one official past while simultaneously destroying other perspectives on that narrative. Non-canonical memories have been suppressed while previous affiliations have been severed’ (p.59).

Finally, according to Azoulay and Ofir (2002), Israel and Zionism encapsulates Jews’ traumatic and exclusionary European history and comprises Europe’s ‘unwanted remains’ - ‘a perfect example of European Orientalism that appears suddenly in the Orient itself’... ‘the imagined encounter with the Orient that Europe always phantasized with anxiety and desire’ [p. 195, my translation].

### **3.6.3. The concept of Exile and the tension between secularism, nationalism and religion**

In *The Question of Zion* (2005), Rose analyses the emergence of modern Zionist nationalism as a product of the theological crisis *within* Judaism regarding the concepts of exile (*Galut*) and redemption (*Geula*). She sees Zionism, like previous messianic Jewish movements (e.g. the Shabbatean sect in the 17th century), as imbued with messianism in their task to resolve the material and spiritual burden of Jewish exile. According to Rose, Jewish redemption – the reconstitution of a Jewish kingdom in biblical Israel – always existed in Jewish religious practices and beliefs, but was restricted to its potential, imaginary, spiritual mode due to physical and political, but also theological constraints. Once the socio-political and psychological conditions within the Jewish group and surrounding it were ripe, Zionism transgressed

this exilic potentiality and concretely materialized these phantasies. The material and psychological consequences of transgressing this boundary proved to be disastrous in Rose's view for both Jews and Palestinians and culminated in institutionalized violence against Palestinians, confiscating lands and acting to drive non-Jews out of the old promised Jewish land. Raz-Krakotzkin (2005) also argues that although Zionism presents itself as a secular Jewish movement, religious elements have always driven its self-conceptions (e.g. the national flag as based on a *Talith* - a religious item worn during prayers), its understandings of its non-Jewish 'others' and the state policies. He therefore argues (2005) that the Israeli-Zionist concept of 'secular' differs considerably from its European, libertarian, a-national and non-religious meaning. However, Raz-Krakotzkin sees this theological crisis between the secular and the religious in Judaism as a by-product of European nationalism driven by modernist enlightenment and its value system. Zionist secularism could therefore be summarized as follows: 'There is no God *but* he promised us *Eretz-Israel*' (Raz-Krakotzkin, 2005) which is to be distinguished from the Zionist religious-nationalists who argue that 'There is God *and* he promised us *Eretz-Israel*'. Indeed, as a self-proclaimed enlightened, nationalist, modern ideology, the Zionist narrative described in the Declaration of Independence masks any reference to Jewish religious traditions which have always played a major part in the pre-national, religious Jewish communities.

Rose's views subscribe above all to a psychoanalytic reading of nationalism (as articulated earlier by Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006). She sees the messianic tendencies of Zionism in its attempts to transgress the split Jewish condition of 'homelessness' or 'Exile' and in its promise to reinstitute the glorious, homogenous, pre-split/pre-exilic state of Jewish sovereignty in its biblical homeland. However, Jews' exilic condition was displaced onto the Palestinians 'not just by oversight or brutal self-realizing intention but as if it had symptomatically to engender within its own boundaries the founding condition from which it had fled' (Rose, 1996, p. 15). Zionism's engagement with the Jewish condition of Exile and its 'otherness' has been raised by other critics of political Zionism, such as Butler (2011), who argues that Jewishness is specifically constructed around its minority status and cohabitation with a majority 'Other'. These material conditions have brought about an ethical

condition which acknowledges the subject's fragmented nature. According to Butler, Zionism constitutes a fundamental material and psychological transgression as it seeks to disengage from the understanding of the precariousness of human and Jewish conditions and therefore betrays its Jewishness.

The Zionist insistence on the Negation of Exile has implications for the perception of Israeli immigration to this diaspora and of Jewish diaspora in general. Magid (2006) argues that Zionism's perception of the diaspora that dichotomises between centre/periphery, *Geula/Galut*, or home/homelessness 'contribute[s] to a virtual identity crisis among many diaspora Jews' (p. 197); Shneer and Aviv (2010) document the growing discontent among diasporic Jewish communities concerning the portrayal of private and collective existence as lacking and 'exilic'. Like Rose and Butler, they argue that Zionism over-wrote the traditional Jewish meaning of 'Exile', which shaped Jews as 'rooted cosmopolitans' who managed a creative tension between permanence and transition, and infused it with pejorative interpretation.

#### **3.6.4. Zionism as male-centric: Militarism and gender relations in Israeli society**

According to Sasson-Levi (2006) and other feminist scholars (Kamir, 2011, Kuntsman, 2008), the militarization of Israeli society described previously means, above all, its *masculinisation*. The Zionist promise to revise the old, passive and helpless Jew by creating 'a breed' of New Jews addressed specifically the identity crisis of diasporic Jewish males who were perceived as effeminate in popular non-Jewish representation (Boyarin 1997 in Sasson-Levi 2006). This image was adopted by Jewish males through the mechanisms described in other post-colonial literature (e.g. Fanon, 1967). Sasson-Levi cites Max Nordau's 1900 article entitled 'Judaism of muscles' where he calls for a renaissance of the glorious history of the robust and sturdy biblical Jew. Zrubabel (1995) shows how the Masada myth (which praises Jewish rebels' decision to commit suicide and die free rather than be captured by their Roman foes) with its militaristic and tragic morals was selectively chosen to become the symbol of the Zionist national narrative. The alternative 'Yavneh' myth (where an important Jewish scholar was smuggled out of besieged

Jerusalem so he could found a Jewish spiritual centre in Yavneh under Roman rule) which stresses contesting values - preserving one's life and prioritising spiritual over military life - was downplayed by institutional Zionism.

Consequently, researchers (e.g. Sasson-Levi, 2006, Ben-Eliezer, 2007, Kimmerling, 2001) demonstrate the numerous ways by which the army and the soldier figure are kept at the centre of Israeli imagination and formal and informal practices through the state's education system, government funding, the public media, etc., and contribute to what Kimmerling (2001) calls militarized Israeli society. Recently, a newspaper article published the Ministry of Education's plan to distribute government funding among secondary schools according to their pupils' rate of army recruitment and participation in civil service (Nesher, 2012) while the Walla online news site reported that Israel was ranked first, globally, in a scale of militarization (Walla 2012). The continuous preoccupation with power and force could be understood as part of the historical psychosocial conditions out of which the Zionism national movement emerged, and around which the imagined national community still gathers.

In contrast to the formal image of the Israeli army presented by the hegemonic Zionist narrative as the 'people's army', Sasson-Levi (2006) unfolds the means by which the army promotes the values of the hegemonic patriarchal militarism and secures a specific stratification of Israeli society according to gender, ethnicity, and military profession. She concludes that in spite of relative erosion in the army's status in Jewish Israeli society, the military role of the combatant male soldier still constitutes the hegemonic social role which grants its bearer various socio-psychological and economic advantages in Israeli informal public domains compared to women or soldiers in non-combatant roles. Israeli citizens who do not serve in the army at all (Arabs and Orthodox Jews) find themselves disadvantageously excommunicated from the general social order when competing for social resources (e.g. state loans, preferred jobs retained for ex-army servicemen, university grants and more).

Placing the army and the soldier as central figures in the collective imaginary also effectively shapes gender relations and gender roles, defining what a 'man' is and what a 'woman' is. Amir (1995) has noted how state abortion policies, shaped by a vision of a country in war, construct accordingly the

‘committed, responsible and wise’ Israeli woman who will not be applying for abortion approval, whereas the ‘other’ woman’, e.g. the Russian immigrant deemed ‘irresponsible, non-committed and unwise’ (i.e. who is not using contraceptives, and does not want to keep the baby) represents the diversion from this hegemonic model of ‘the right woman’. Kuntsman (2008) demonstrated how post-Soviet Union gay immigrants’ sexual and national identities are shaped by the ethos of the ideal male soldier as they try to establish their membership in Israeli society through militarized patriotism, the claim of Europeanism and the exclusion of Mizrahi Jews.

Thus according to the psychosocial approach I am advocating here, the militarization of Israeli society described above is not only the result of the material condition of unresolved military conflict with the Arab countries and the Palestinians, but also the *product* of Zionist ideology and its system of values and a ‘testament’ to its success in transforming the ‘Old, passive effeminate exilic Jew’ into a ‘new and strong masculine Israeli-Jew’.

### **3.6.5. Political Zionism as a site of power struggles between competing Zionist ideologies**

Finally, Shafir and Peled (2002) adopt a socio-political approach which analyses the power struggles between various economic-cultural interest groups in Israeli society along the lines drawn by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). This approach looks at the tensions *between* various political discourses – certain ways of talking and therefore making sense of the social world organized around certain logics of social power- within the same national field. They argue that the Zionist ideology and narrative always consisted of two contradictory and competing political discourses – a (democratic) liberal-individual discourse which emphasizes civic citizenship and rights regardless of subjects’ ethnicity or civil contribution - and a (Religious/Jewish) ethnic-communitarian discourse which prioritizes citizenship based on ethnicity. Each of these entertained a very different view of what Zionism was all about, how concepts such as ‘the nation’, ‘the state’, ‘Jewishness’ and ‘citizenship’ should be interpreted and consequently, how Zionism should be politically implemented. The tension between the two was only contained through the bridging force of a third, republican-statist, socialist and colonial ideology that

dominated the Jewish public space prior to the establishment of the state and until the late 1970s and was dedicated to the construction of a peripheral colonial socialist Jewish society. Due to socio-political and cultural changes within and outside Israeli society in recent decades, its ability to recruit support and cooperation has declined, exposing the unbridgeable rifts between the two competing worldviews. This is manifested in the growing polarization and fragmentation of Israeli society.

### **3.7. Discussion**

The main aim of this chapter was to study the Jewish-Israeli collective imagination and outline and analyse the reservoir of images, symbols and ideological concepts from which Jewish-Israelis draw their interpretations of 'the nation', 'the state', 'religion' or 'citizenship'. I have argued that this space is saturated with Zionist imagery organized around a national narrative (summarized in the Declaration of Independence) of suffering, exile, return and liberation. In spite of the growing pluralisation and individuation of Israeli society and the impact of global culture, many signs still point to its continued hegemony among Israeli and non-Israeli Jews (Graham and Boyd 2010). I have demonstrated its persistence in formal and informal practices and in popular discourse. Naveh argues: 'many signs indicate that Israeli society is breaking away from the monolithic memory instilled by the canonical Jewish-Zionist narrative, yet no other narrative has been created to replace it nor is likely to be' (2006, p. 248); First and Herman (2009) note that 'side by side with globalization and a 'borderless' world, national contents and symbols can still be found everywhere' (p. 520).

In this thesis I argue, in line with ethnosymbolist and cultural theorists, that nationalism should be studied through a psychosocial approach. This view does not undermine the impact of material, social economic or political conditions (e.g. the military conflict with the Palestinians, the forces of economic and cultural globalization or the large waves of immigration to Israel), but rather insists that collective symbols and narratives – such as the images of the old and New Jew – should be seen as mediators of these material conditions contributing to their private and collective interpretation. Zionism's narrative as a movement of Jewish revival based upon the Negation

of Exile and the constitution of a new breed of Jews contributes to the glorification of the army and the soldier and there is a reciprocal relationship between this glorification and the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict. Israelis are constructed as strong New Jews not only because they have to stand the hardship of the conflict, but the conflict actually continues because the Israeli New Jews have to demonstrate their strength in line with the mythical narrative. As Rose noted in 1996, 'it seems as if Israel cannot grant statehood to the Palestinians, not just because of felt real and present danger, but also because so great is the charge of phantasy against such a possibility that, was it to be granted, the nation would lose all inner rationale and psychically collapse in on itself' (p.4).

The critical readings of Zionism cited above go back to the inception of the Zionist idea and help to understand its evolution as a way of dealing with the burden of the diasporic condition, deemed exilic. Each criticism highlighted a different dimension of conflict which Zionism sought to resolve in relation to this diasporic de-territorial condition. Thus, the Zionist narrative and its political ideology addressed the crisis of the diasporic de-nationalised Jew within a specific European cultural-political context along the axes of masculinity/femininity, religion/secularism-enlightenment, nationality/de-territoriality and modernity/traditionalism. I have argued that these historical relations are engraved in the collective narrative and national imagination and haunt Israeli society and its members even today. The chapter followed the recurrences of these preoccupations in contemporary Israeli society but also described the forces that challenge and disturb these traditional concerns and push towards a different interpretation of 'Israeliness'. These challenge axiomatic Zionist ideological preconceptions, open key symbols and signifiers for exploration, offer alternative readings of Israeli history (e.g. the perception of the Jewish diaspora and the place it played and plays within the local societies), its relationship to its internal and external others (Palestinians, non-Jews, Europeans), and offer alternative interpretations of concepts such as 'the nation', 'Jewishness', 'citizenship', 'state', 'territory' or 'modernity'. In sum, they offer alternative readings of 'Israeliness' and challenge the one promoted by the classical Zionist narrative (demonstrated for example in the governmental campaign encouraging Israelis to return to Israel). They disturb

the efforts to construct a linear homogenous sense of Israeli 'one-ness' which simplifies the complexities, denies the inconsistencies, and masks the exclusions of Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews or women and the coercive power-relations ingrained in nationalism.

Interpreting the Jewish-Israeli imagination as an on-going attempt to resolve the crisis of the diasporic Jew places the Jewish diaspora at the centre of Israeli imagination and Raz-Krakotzkin argues that 'Zionism simply couldn't exist without negation of the Diaspora and the negation of any alterity more generally' (in Magid, 2006, p. 200). This interpretation of 'diaspora' is especially relevant within the context of my research looking at Jewish-Israelis' construction of a national identity while living away from Israel.

The following chapter will conclude the theoretical section of my work and will look at the Jewish-Israeli subject and its embedment within the social world as a psychosocial subject in the context of a diasporic reality, charged with highly controversial connotations in the public imagery.

# **Chapter four - The Jewish Israeli subject: negotiating national identity in a diasporic context.**

## **4.1. Introduction**

In chapters two and three I took up a sociological stance and presented nationalism in general and Israeli nationalism specifically above all through a macro perspective. This theoretical introduction can help contextualize my first two research questions (the contents of the Israeli cultural reservoir and the subject positions that emerge from them). This chapter will address my third, perhaps more psychosocially-oriented research question that looks at how Jewish Israelis (within Israeli society or outside it - e.g. in Britain) negotiate their insertion into the Israeli system of signification described so far. My main argument is that in spite of the constructive and constrictive power of Zionist ideology and narrative, individual subjects and groups play an important role in their constitution, maintenance and modification. Thus a central part of this chapter will focus on modes of subjects' agency and subjectification involved in the construction of 'Israeli identity'.

I will open the chapter with Stewart Hall's cultural and post-colonial psychosocial understanding of identities (e.g. 1990, 2000). His analysis of Caribbean identities brings to the fore the colonial and post-colonial historical-political and inter-cultural contexts within which national and cultural identities emerge. In the second part of this chapter I have chosen to demonstrate Jewish-Israelis' construction of an 'Israeli national identity' through their participation in formal and informal practices of collective mourning. While there is no doubt that 'national identities' are practiced in various ways on a daily basis (Billig, 1995), practices of mourning are especially productive for learning about collective memory (Feige, 2007), indicating what will be included in the collective memory and what is bound to be forgotten. This will serve me to discuss various modes of subjects' engagement with the national canon and notions of subject obedience and agency in the construction of 'Israeli identity'. The third part of the chapter will deal directly with the

construction of national identity in the diasporic context. I will open it with a literature review of contemporary notions of 'diaspora' and highlight the multiple representations that this concept has in British society as part of the perception of immigrants and immigration. The description of the British cultural and social context is important if we understand identities to be constructed in cultural, historical social and discursive contexts. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the image that Israel might have in local-Jewish and non-Jewish British eyes. The discussion then will focus on Israelis' experiences while living outside Israel – in the 'diaspora' - a highly contentious concept in the Zionist system of signification around which 'Israeliness' was and still is constructed (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994). Due to the paucity of research on Israelis in Britain, the discussion will be assisted by literature dealing with Israelis' immigration and acculturation in the North American context.

#### **4.2. Theorizing identities**

According to Brubaker (2004), a proliferation in usage of identities emerged in the USA during the 1960s and marks a certain rise in an individualist ethos that was correlated with the student anti-war movements and 'the weakness of class based idioms of social and political analysis' (30). This 'identitarian' trend also coincided with the popularity of humanistic and cognitive psychological approaches which saw subjects as free agents – authors of their destiny and social reality. Within these theoretical approaches, identities were understood to reflect an inner, persistent subjective core that is carried with the subject and determines the ways he or she views the world. This notion of identities was severely criticised by social theorists from various disciplines whose main argument was that such usage of identities, as inherent, stable, and psychologically determined, overlooked the crucial role that social forces and culture play in its construction. Discursive social-psychologists (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1992, or Potter, 2009), point to the variety of confounding, often contradictory, positions that people take in their daily lives, each associated with a different social identity. They therefore argue for one's multiple social *identities* rather than psychological 'identity'. Structuralists (Foucault, 1970, Althusser, 1971) and feminist intersectionalist theorists (Yuval-Davis, 1997) highlight the constraining political forces and coercive social power that confine

the subject to certain social positions and limit his/her ability to act independently. Cultural theorists of modernity (e.g. Bauman, 2011) argue that identities are better suited to reflect a modern world rather than a post-modern, fluid, globalized world, characterized by rapid social shifts, the emergence of new social categories and the decline of classical social institutions. The debate around 'identity' is often confounded with the discussion of a broader and more abstract term, that of subjectivity or the 'subject' relating to people's condition, understanding and experience of themselves within their surroundings. Because 'identity' has come to be associated with essentialist, stable and over-psychological meanings, alternative terms such as 'positionality' (Anthias, 2002) or 'belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2006) have been proposed to address and describe the condition and the engagement of the subject within his/her social context. Since, on the one hand, the concept of 'identity' is central to my research, if only because it is emphasized (even essentialized) in Israeli nationalism and Israeli culture but, on the other hand, I choose to look at it critically as the subject's troubled insertion into the available socio-political 'slots', I found Stuart Hall's approach (1990, 1994, 2000), especially useful. He theorizes the links between identity (and identification), subjectivity and the socio-political reality and demonstrates their interdependence.

#### **4.2.1. A psychosocial approach to identities**

The psychosocial approach I am applying to the analysis of national identities tries to break away from the classical distinctions between sociology (emphasizing macro social processes and social power) and psychology (focusing on private 'internal', cognitive or psychic processes) and relates to the social and the psychological as inherently interdependent, 'two sides of the same coin' where distinctions are artificial. Sociologists have to accept that historical and social events such as the Holocaust or the 1948 War of independence transcend their material, concrete significance and are inevitably interpreted and imagined by subjects who assign them subjective and emotional qualities. Psychologists have to accept that Israelis' subjective understandings of their socio-political 'reality' – e.g. the interpretation of 'the military conflict with the Palestinians' (Bar-Tal, 2007) or 'the Palestinian *Nakba*'

(Azoulay, 2009) are shaped by the Israeli cultural ways of talking and understanding 'the nation', 'the army', the 'state', 'the Jew' or the 'Palestinian' as well as certain power arrangements that structure Israeli society<sup>14</sup>. Although the psychosocial approach acknowledges the formative and authoritative effects of social order – discourses, inter-group and intra-group power relations and their system of signification - it argues that subjects' identities cannot be reduced to 'the power by which it is occasioned' (Butler, 1997, p. 16). Social power and structure are inevitably mediated, i.e. have their subjective markers: they are represented, negotiated or even merely acknowledged or registered (Butler, 1997) consciously or unconsciously, by subjects.

#### **4.2.2. Hall's psychosocial approach to identities**

Hall considers identities as a 'suture' of social positioning, political and cultural impositions and psychological processes (e.g. representation and identification). This bridges theoretical gaps between social constructivist theory and the (Lacanian) psychoanalytical approach which has recently become influential in the critique of classical notions of psychological identity.

For Hall:

Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always 'knowing' (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a 'lack', across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them. The notion that an effective suturing of the subject to a subject-position requires, not only that the subject is 'hailed' but that the subject invests in the position, means that suturing has to be thought of as an *articulation*, rather than a one-sided process, and that in turn places *identification*, if not identities, firmly on the theoretical agenda. (2000 p. 19)

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<sup>14</sup> As explained before, I did not insert inverted commas around many of the categories. The overall research process, generally, and the analysis more specifically often revealed the multiple significations that categories such as 'Arab' 'Jew' 'Israeli' or 'English' might have in different cultures or for individual subjects .

Hall's specific understandings of 'identity' and the 'subject' will be demonstrated below through their contrast with other theoretical approaches to such concepts.

#### **4.2.2.1. Identities are representations of historical memory**

Hall joins the structuralist and psychoanalytic criticisms of humanistic and cognitive interpretations of identities as fixed, consistent and stable internal mental apparatuses. He claims that revolutionary anticolonial movements advocated, *for political reasons*, a lost (e.g. African) identity 'buried', so to speak, under the heavy weight of alien colonial exploitation and which had to be actively rediscovered. In Hall's argument against, presumably, a lost African identity, I have found a similarity to Zionist arguments (captured for example in the Israeli Declaration of Independence) that nurtures the notion of a pre-exilic, *authentic* Jewish national identity that was lost or corrupted throughout the millennia of Jewish exile, the task of the Zionist movement being to return to it and bring it to life. For Hall, however, the essence of identity resides not in 'the rediscovery [but rather in] the *production* of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past' (1994, p. 393). While he insists on the de-essentialization of identities, Hall's approach also rejects the discursive psychological approach which undermines the power of the past and its representation and where people's speech is above all purposeful. Such a sociological-discursive approach can be demonstrated in Sela-Shefi's study of Israeli identity (2006) which studied the representation of 'the Israeli Person' among Israelis and concluded that the image of the 'uncivilized' Israeli/Sabra person was constructed against an alternative idealized image of a 'civilized European'. She argued that people who saw themselves as part of the classical elite (whether of Ashkenazi or Mizrahi origin) associated themselves with 'the civilized European' in order to distinguish themselves socially and claim moral superiority over 'the Israeli masses' while at the same time creating 'solidarity among those 'concerned'' (p. 339). Hence, Sela-Shefi sees 'Europeanism' mainly as a vehicle for social mobility and respondents' aligning with this image was mainly in order to claim a preferred social positioning over others. Her approach sees Eurocentrism for the socio-political social capital it yields and overlooks the cultural-historical significations of the

European-Sabra/Israeli power-relations and the socio-political/ideological symbolic system that Israelis are embedded in (as described in chapter three).

#### **4.2.2.2. Identities are psychosocial co-productions**

Hall's understanding of identities also breaks away from structuralist approaches: according to Foucauldian structuralism, subjectivity is strictly contingent upon the immediate social context and its matrix of power relations and subjects' efforts should focus on clarifying these underlying oppressive discursive regulations and try to break away from them (only to fall into other discursive regulations). Other structuralist theories, such as Althusser's (1971), also accentuated the formative effect of the social order (organized as an overarching ideological system) for the constitution of the subject. Subjects are called into being through their response to acts of interpellation or hailing when encountering agents of the ideological order (e.g. Palestinian-Israelis who are subjected to extra security measures in Ben-Gurion airport). In what seems like a criticism of the Althusserian formative role of 'hailing' (see the quote on identities above), Hall claims that subjects have to invest in the position that they are called into rather than be hailed into it. Thus identities are rather the co-productions of social forces and their psychic articulations or representations (Hall 1994). A crucial aspect of colonialism, for example, resides in its ability to corrupt the colonized into *accepting* the colonizers' representations of 'self' and 'other' and to adopt/internalize their self-representation as the European 'Other'. Even within the colonial context characterized by disproportionate power inequality, the coercive relationship between colonizers and colonized still involves the investment of subjects in their subject positioning (Hall, 1994).

#### **4.2.2.3. Identities as an on-going process of identification**

Moreover, Hall sees identities as an on-going process of representation rather than as an 'already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent' (Hall, 1994 p. 392). Consequently identities are better thought of as 'identifications', which captures their dynamic and active aspects as has been discussed above, and, following the Lacanian view of the never-ending quest

for the phantasmatic lost object, it accounts for the continuous motivation that drives nationalism as argued by Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras (2006).

#### **4.2.2.4. Identities can be a part of a creative imaginary**

Couched in Lacanian theorizing and terminology, Hall, like Žižek (1998), associates identities, in this case, diasporic identities, with the realm of the imaginary, 'imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas' (394). This phantasmatic function restores an 'imaginary fullness or plenitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past' (Hall, 1994, p. 394). As noted by other Lacanian theorists (e.g. Bhabha 1990), this imaginary construct is dialectical by nature - founded on the tension between fullness and disruption, unity and difference, being and becoming, stability and processes. This is manifested in practices of 'selfing' and 'othering' – drawing boundaries that distinguish 'me' from 'not-me'. In colonial and post-colonial political hierarchy, the self–other relationship is replaced by 'an Other'–'other' relationship where the western colonizer (or local Britons for immigrants to Britain) are seen by the colonized or diasporic subject as the 'Other' - the source of absolute power and knowledge - whereas the exploited colonized person or the immigrant is seen through the colonizer's eyes as the 'other'. However, unlike Žižek (1998), Hall sees identities not only as misleading defensive processes but also, potentially, as genuine signs of private and communal acts of creativity and self-realization. For Hall, Black cinema, for example, serves 'not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak' (1994, p. 402). The crucial point here is not that (national) identities are or are not an imaginary construct; they certainly are. What is more important is to study how the inherent complexities of the imaginary are *creatively managed* by different societies and individual subjects at different times. Craib (1998) argues that 'the sociologically interesting questions are about the nature of the social conditions which encourage individuals to close down their psychic space around one or another social identity, and the social conditions which encourage and open up psychic space in attempt to explore oneself and one's

relationships' (p. 170). Stated differently, the issue is in which circumstances identities are acknowledged as 'merely' representations and when is their imaginary, representational dimension ignored or denied by the subject and society (e.g. when Jewish-Israelis imagine that they are God's chosen people and that Israel was promised to them by God).

### **4.3. Identity construction in Israeli society – between interpellation and creative co-production**

I will now turn to explore Hall's understandings of identities through academic Israeli literature that looks at rituals and practices of memorialization in Israeli society and their relation to identity construction. This review can highlight certain contents, themes and socio-political dynamics around the canonical national narrative and will serve to illustrate the variability of identification processes (ranging between interpellation and proactive co-construction of one's identity). A large body of academic work (Feige, 2007, Lomsky-Feder, 2004, 2011, Yablonka, 2009 Roberman, 2007) has focused on reconstruction, negotiation or challenging of the hegemonic Zionist narrative of liberation and revival through formal and informal practices of mourning and subjects' construction of a national identity in relation to this canon. Lomsky-Feder (2004) argues that in Israel, 'memorial ceremonies are still central elements in establishing social unity, perhaps more than ever in an increasingly fragmenting society' (p. 304).

#### **4.3.1. Interpellative memorial practices**

Feige (2007) sees a gradual transformation in the Israeli mourning culture in the past decades that matches the transition from a highly ideological Israeli society to a modern society in a globalized world that encourages consumption and individuation. At the same time, the vast majority of Jewish-Israelis still take part in traditional means of commemoration, for example when standing-up during Holocaust Memorial Day and the Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers to the sound of a siren. According to Feige, such practices constitute clear instances of interpellation, when subjects willingly respond to the State's demand for them to join in with the national narrative by turning themselves into living memorials for a minute or two. In these instances, subjects' private

time is suspended in favour of a collective national time which joins together anonymous subjects (Anderson, 1991) throughout the country in an imagined Israeli community. Accordingly, those who do not take part in these practices (e.g. Palestinian-Israelis and Orthodox Jews) signal their exclusion from the Israeli imagined community and are treated as outsiders.

#### **4.3.2. Negotiating the national memory**

Feige reports (2007) that other practices of mourning, for example around the assassination of PM Rabin in 1995, generate mixed feelings and fall outside the Israeli cultural consensus and are therefore given to greater interpretation by individual subjects and groups. Likewise, there have been efforts to include civil casualties of terrorist attacks in the memorial rituals of the dead soldiers. These endeavours have met with antagonism from families of dead soldiers who wanted to conserve the exclusivity of the dead soldiers as important images in the national narrative. Roberman (2007) demonstrated how elderly Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union who immigrated to Israel during the 1990s negotiated their admission into Israeli society through the portrayal of their active resistance of the Nazi regime during WWII. She showed how 'the experience of war... [could serve as]... a powerful symbolic resource for individual empowerment and social mobilization in the contexts of nation-states and flourishing militarism' (p. 1035). She described how Soviet veteran soldiers used the growing acceptance of ex-Soviet Jewish immigrants in Jewish-Israeli society to include their narrative of heroism within the national story of the Jewish (Holocaust) bravery.

Yablonka (2009) analysed Mizrahi Jewish-Israelis' representations of the Holocaust – one of the main historical events around which Israeli identity is constructed. She tracked a three generational process that Mizrahi Jews in Israel went through in their relationship to the Holocaust:

The first generation viewed the destruction of the European Jews with profound compassion, but felt that the *Shoah* [Holocaust] was a chapter in the history of the European Jews. Their children attempted to connect, facing, to a large extent, resentment and alienation. Their grand-children already have the *Shoah* burnt in their souls being an integral part of their self-definition as Israelis (p. 94).

Lomsky-Feder (2004) documents the emergence of a new mourning ethos among some middle-higher class Israeli schools' memorial ceremonies that stages the soldier and his close environment (family and friends) as a victim of the on-going condition of war. This seems like a shift from the classic memorials of *heroic* nationalism that *glorified* the sacrifice of the soldiers and their social environment for the benefit of Israeli society. Nevertheless, Lomsky-Feder argues that 'although school memorial ceremonies serve as a meeting point between the State's demands and the alternative voices of civil groups, civil society may still be unable to fully rid itself of its deep commitment to the national collective' (304). While this new ethos highlights the personal price that individual Israelis pay when living in a conflict zone, it still adheres to a formal Zionist narrative according to which wars are inevitable, ignores Israel's responsibilities for the continuation of this state and overlooks the condition of victimhood it imposes on the Palestinians by their continuous occupation.

Thus, the literature reviewed demonstrates how the construction of the national canon is produced as an on-going negotiation between the establishment, local civil society and individual subjects, between old-timers and new timers or between the majority and a minority and not as top-down unidirectional interpellative power-relations. At the same time, this analysis also reveals the power and authority of the national canon as a means for admission into Israeli society and for recruiting recognition within the mainstream Jewish-Israeli public. The veterans were able to mobilize the much-admired image of the fighting Jew to achieve greater recognition within Israeli society while the Mizrahi Jews joined in the effort to portray the Holocaust as a Jewish (rather than a European) event so as to enhance their inclusion into mainstream Israeli society. The studies cited above demonstrate how Israelis' sense of collective identities is invariably constructed in relation to and around certain hegemonic themes and historical events in the Zionist narrative. At the same time, Roberman and Yablonka also showed how marginalized subjects such as Mizrahi-Israelis or new immigrants can actively negotiate their inclusion into the national ethos and modify the boundaries of the imagined community. Lomsky-Feder's study (2011) echoes Slea-Sefi's (2006) findings (around the desirable signification of 'the European') and

demonstrates how privileged elites in Israeli society claim their prioritized positions by differentiating themselves from mainstream Israeli society in a way that both challenges and accepts the national narrative.

### **4.3.3. Challenging the canonical narrative**

Zuckermann (2007) describes the proliferation of informal Holocaust memorial ceremonies offered to various Israeli audiences alongside the formal statist memorial service that promotes the official national narrative (as demonstrated in the Declaration of Independence– see previous chapter). He describes an invitation to a Holocaust memory service advertised in Yiddish – the language of the ‘Old Jew’ – addressed at the remaining relatives of those who perished and the remainder of the destroyed ‘Old’ European Jewish culture against which Zionism is constructed. An alternative ceremony whose panel consisted of an Arab citizen, a Mizrahi speaker, a homosexual and a German tourist sought to provide a counter-hegemonic memory that invites marginal subjects to take part in the collective memory and openly challenges the official lessons of the Holocaust. On the same day, Holocaust survivors were invited to participate in a protest against the Israeli government accused of withholding benefits destined to Holocaust survivors. Zuckermann’s work demonstrates the multiple narratives of various social groups in Israeli society as they struggle for acceptance *alongside* and in dialogue with a certain dominant statist narrative. These alternative practices challenged basic tenets of formal Holocaust memory as part of the canonical Zionist narrative; they emphasized the significance of the old Jewish, pre-Zionist culture and language and the richness of multiculturalism; it pointed to the marginalization of certain groups (citizens of Arab origin, Mizrahim, homosexuals) in Israeli society and challenged the nationalistic moral of the Holocaust promoted by the official narrative (i.e. that Jews and Israelis constantly have to be alert for a future Holocaust) while advocating a universalistic moral (that exclusion and potentially persecution, can happen anywhere, even in Israel). Finally, Feige (2007) demonstrates how new, sometimes unconventional means of commemoration (e.g. virtual commemoration via the internet) allow subjects to challenge not only what will be remembered but also how.

#### 4.4. Theorizing identities - A summary

As argued thus far, the national category informed by Zionist ideology and narrative dominates the Israeli public and private spaces and subordinates other social categories (such as gender, ethnicity or region). This does not mean that the cultural representations of 'the nation' remain unchanged. The shift in Holocaust memory from collective heroism to private victimhood and the inclusion of previously marginalized groups such as Mizrahi Israelis or new immigrants into the Israeli imagined community demonstrate how the contents of the nation can be negotiated in response to structural and cultural changes in Israeli society as well as the demands from specific interest groups. The review shows that at specific points in time, for example during a period of heightened military hostility (First and Herman, 2009), or in areas and historical moments of overwhelming social consensus (Feige, 2007, Yablonka, 2009), subjects might be more susceptible to the ideological demands and will be more easily interpellated as ideological subjects, whereas other, less emotionally intense social circumstances, are given to greater personal interpretation.

These research findings challenge a structuralist perspective that sees identities as synonymous with the range of fixed social positioning provided by the social system of signification. At the same time it seriously undermines any psychological and psychoanalytic claims that see subjects as autonomous from their social environments (as conscious or unconscious authors of their identities) and ignore the specific political, cultural or ideological contexts within which identities are constructed and identifications carried out. Even in times of greater creative space as rituals of mourning shift from 'heroic nationalism' to 'nationalism of victimhood', Lomsky-Feder (2004) argues that 'school memorial ceremonies, like most other forums and movements, have not begun to challenge basic cultural assumptions, such as the inevitability of the centrality of war and army in Israeli life' (p. 304).

Hall's understanding of identities as a creative process, 'that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak' (1994, p. 402), emphasizes the duality between process and content, 'becoming' and 'being'

and 'identification' and identities . It also points to the active role which subjects play in the continuous co-construction of their 'social identities'. Yuval-Davis argues that 'identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and what they are not) but identity is fluid, always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong' (cited in Riessman, 2008, p. 7). As subjects struggle to construct these momentary 'identitarian' stabilities ('identities', 'narratives') they are bound to stumble across their illusionary aspects in moments of interruptions, hesitations, laughter, anxiety or the usage of slang words.

Paying attention to the process of speech construction alongside the implicit and explicit content suggests that subjects' speech about 'national identity' and their attendance at an interview about it, as discursive psychologists argue (e.g. Potter and Hepburn, 2005) constitute, in themselves, an identity practice, a creative act of identity construction, (Hall, 1994). These acts of production alongside the contents and the cultural contexts will all be demonstrated and discussed in the findings chapters and are the central focus of this thesis.

#### **4.5. Immigration and diaspora in British society**

Since I am advocating a psychosocial approach that sees identities as inseparable from their socio-cultural context, Israelis' representation of 'national identity' cannot be studied in isolation from the broader British cultural and social context within which it is represented – i.e. their lives away from Israel, in Britain. This content-context dialectic requires not only acknowledging the multiple affiliations and the spatial and temporal tensions between 'here' and 'there' and 'then' and 'now' captured by this condition of dislocation, but also learning how 'otherness' and dislocation are represented and valued in Israeli and British cultures. This condition of otherness or dislocation from what is considered in our contemporary jargon of nation-states as a 'homeland' can be referred to by a variety of significations: 'immigration', 'refuge', 'expatriation', 'transnationalism' or 'diaspora', to name just a few. While each of these concepts relates to a specific material, sometimes legal condition, they also represent different theoretical outlooks on the condition of foreignness which also dictate what will be studied and how.

For Levitt (2010) 'transnationalism' is a theoretical approach that 'begins with a world without borders, empirically examines the boundaries that emerge, and explores their relationship to unbounded arenas and processes' (p. 40).

Hence, addressing subjects as 'transnationals' or cosmopolitans (as opposed to 'diasporans' or 'immigrants', for example) locates them as members of this counter-hegemonic transnational project. Whereas 'expatriation' (which is hardly mentioned in the scholarly literature) habitually refers to high-skilled workers from affluent societies who have no intention of settling culturally or formally in their country of residence, 'immigration' has often been associated with new-comers' economic, social, or professional adaptation or assimilation to or alienation from the local society and its labour market (e.g. Manning and Roy, 2010, Casey and Dustmann, 2010, Leinonen, 2012).

By contrast, the study of 'diaspora' is often carried out through a cultural prism and therefore often incorporates notions of 'identity' or identification to the migrants' country of origin in the context of their lives elsewhere. 'Diaspora' assumes a complicated identification and attachments to both new and old societies and to the space that is created between them. It has come to be associated with 'a multidimensional understanding of space and movement that does not restrict it to actual physical migration [as 'immigration' does] but makes room also for imagined, discursive, material, cultural, virtual and socially networked places and travels' (Knott, 2010, p. 79). Given my interest in Israelis' understanding of 'national identity' when living in Britain and the role that (Zionist) 'home' ideology plays in its construction, 'diaspora' appears to be most suitable to address Israelis' sense of otherness and dislocation compared to 'transnationalism' (Levitt, 2010), 'immigration', 'nomadism' (Braidotti, 2011) or 'expatriation', for example. While I adopt a critical approach to the concept of 'the nation' and the imaginary and discursive restrictions it imposes on subjects I am, nevertheless, working from *within* this ideological framework of the nation state (e.g. Zionism) and study the ways in which ideology is recited, negotiated or even challenged by the subjects. Diasporas do not necessarily mark a decline of the nation state world but rather describe the complexities of the national order from its margins. Likewise, my interest in the imaginary representations, images and discursive forms applied by Israeli interviewees to the condition of living in Britain resonates better with the 'diaspora' approach

rather than with the practical, material approach evoked by ‘immigration’.

However, I will argue that although the notion of ‘diaspora’ is helpful in some ways as a theoretical framework for the analysis of Israelis’ sense of otherness in Britain, for various political, demographical and cultural reasons the profile of Israelis and the Israeli community abroad (including in Britain) does not fit the classical model of hybrid ‘diaspora’ as highlighted by cultural theorists such as Hall (1990) or Brah (1996). Nevertheless, Knott (2010) offers a broader understanding of diasporic space and allow us to include other features of the Israeli population abroad which normally fall outside the criteria that, lately, came to be associated with ‘diaspora’.

I will open this section with a general discussion of how notions of ‘diaspora’ and ‘the other’ are represented in local British culture. Then I will discuss the specific representation of Israel among British Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Finally, I will focus on the notion of diaspora in Israeli culture and present the academic research that has been conducted on Israelis abroad. Given the negative association of ‘diaspora’ in Zionist imagery, and the images and representations of ‘diaspora’ in British culture, I will discuss to what extent the diasporic framework can be helpful for the analysis of Israelis’ experience of otherness in Britain.

#### **4.5.1. Representations of immigration, ‘diaspora’ and ‘the other’ in British culture**

As the following literature review discloses, over the past decades there have been a myriad of interpretations and imaginations of ‘diaspora’ in western societies to the extent that Brubaker complained about ‘The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora’ (2005) – an over stretching of the concept. According to Alexander (2010), the notion of ‘diaspora’ and otherness has (at least) two very different significations in contemporary western societies and consequently among diasporic subjects themselves. In its more traditional interpretation it has been associated with ‘the unequal and often traumatic circumstances of migration and dispersal, along with minoritization, marginalization and exclusion of diaspora people in the ‘host’ societies and the power of the ‘myth of return’” (p. 113). The newer-cultural interpretation of ‘diaspora’ in western societies has seen a shift from this traditional perception of ‘diaspora’, a critique of the ideas

of a 'homeland' or 'ethnic community' and a tendency to emphasize greater diversity in the host country. According to Hall (1990), an advocate of the 'new' diaspora, the traditional '*literal*' reading of 'diaspora' (whose archetype he sees in national narratives of homogeneity in general and in Zionism specifically) sees it as 'those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return' (p. 235). Such an old reading of 'diaspora', according to its critics, emphasizes 'the variation of relationship to the homeland [as] ...the defining features' (Alexander, 2010, p. 114) and consequently locks the diasporic subject in alienated positions and invites the politics of hostility and exclusion towards the diasporic 'other'. By contrast, cultural theorists such as Hall (1990) or Brah (1996) have offered a *metaphorical* interpretation of 'diaspora' that 'is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity' (Hall, 1990 p. 235). For socio-political theorists (Anthias, 2002) such an interpretation of 'diaspora' provided an opportunity to explore alternative notions of attachment such as 'belonging' or 'home' in intersections of multiple social categories. This approach sees diaspora as 'a mode of engagement rather than an assertion of separateness and distinction' (Alexander, 2010, 115). Finally, such an interpretation of 'diaspora' resonates with ideas of liberalism and diversity captured by the political-cultural concept of 'multiculturalism' and emerges out of a general political and cultural interest in alternative, marginalized social formations.

Other authors (e.g. Kymlica, 2003, Tyler, 2010, Fortier, 2011), however, challenge the liberal approach that the cultural theorists above attribute to the British public and highlight British society's formal and informal means of excluding 'outsiders'. Kymlica (2003) explored the links between citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism in various societies and argues that (compared to Canada) 'in the British context... there is no strong visible public commitment to either immigration or multiculturalism. On the contrary, there is if anything a consensus against (non-European) immigration' (2003, p. 203). Consequently the 2002 White Paper that was introduced by the British government and tried to establish a liberal approach to British 'citizenship' and encourage greater openness to higher levels of immigration (following the

Canadian model), was 'muted beyond recognition' (p. 205) which 'may well reflect an accurate realpolitik assessment of what the British public will accept' (p. 205-6). Tyler (2010) describes the gap between various liberal governmental discourses of 'citizenship' (e.g. the 2002 White Paper that Kymlica discusses above) and 'the authoritarian character of much legislation, policy and practice in this area' (p. 71). She argues that 'citizenship' as it is legislated and practiced since the 1981 Nationality act<sup>15</sup> is *designed* to fail or exclude certain populations (e.g. subjects from former colonized countries) and effectively redraws the empire's boundaries within the national territory differentiating between those who belong and those who don't. According to Fortier (2011), within British society there is a strong nostalgia for a pre-multicultural Britain, of 'close-knit communities' (p.6) and 'a narrative of the loss of a rural past, one that ties families to the land from generation to generation' (*ibid*) which she terms 'white unease'. Those 'seek[s] to close down diasporic and multicultural attachment in favour of the unified nation/al.' (p. 10). Finally, various theorists (e.g. Karla et al., 2005, Modood, 2010) argue that following '9/11' the more liberal and inclusive notion of diaspora has been once more restricted to its ethnic or racial enclaves. This encourages xenophobia within the discourse of 'national security'. This change of perception brings about an intensification of the assimilationist rather than the incorporative-multicultural approach towards immigrants (Modood, 2010). Thus, within the post 9/11 political climate the (positive) meaning of 'diaspora' among the British majority has been limited to those groups whose ties to their 'homelands' and their adaptability to the British work market and culture do not pose a (psychological, cultural) threat to mainstream British white society (Karla et al., 2005).

#### **4.5.2. Diasporic identities**

As argued before, the notion of 'diaspora' is co-constructed mutually through the locals' perceptions and practices directed at the immigrants (as discussed above) and the immigrants' own perceptions of themselves. Vertovec (1997) outlines three dimensions along which 'diaspora' can be studied: as a specific

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<sup>15</sup> The Act restricted the entitlement to British citizenship to those whose parents were born in Britain and thus denied citizenship to people from former colonies or those who were born in Britain to non-British parents.

mode of consciousness, as a social forum, and as producing cultural effects within the community and outside it. These dimensions will serve me later in analysing some of the particularities of the Israeli population outside Israel and especially the one in Britain.

#### **4.5.3. Diasporic consciousness**

While the diasporic condition promotes the potential for multiple identifications and hybridity as argued by Hall (1990) or Brah (1996), Karla et al. (2005) have emphasized the potential for reactionary 'literal' interpretation of 'diaspora' among members of the diasporic group themselves, i.e. *raising* boundaries around the group rather than lowering them. Nationalism and other sorts of sectarianism offer consolation for the malaise of the diasporic condition.

Therefore, while the diasporic condition does open ways for hybrid identification and a critique of the constraining national order, 'in practice, what often occurs is both syncretic cultural formation and re-enforced ethnic and nationalist ties with the same diasporic space' (Karla et al., 2005, p. 33). For Werbner (2002), the diasporic condition reflects specifically the alternation between these two states of minds: between instances of fused, confused and hybrid identities and others where clear identity inclusionary and exclusionary definitions are made. Knott (2010) argues that:

'Every diaspora – whether recent or of long standing, whether caused by exile or movement for trade, whether multi-sited or settled in a single place – has its 'distinctive spatiality', informed by actual journeys past and present, the particular forms and distribution of its settlements, its demography, the nature and extent of its social networks ...and its distinctive imagined, historical and present geography.' (p. 81)

Thus, through his usage of the diasporic space, Knott broadens the concept of 'diaspora' to include a variety of translocated communities and individuals some of whom do not comfortably fit into the two models of 'diaspora' outlined above.

#### **4.5.4. Diaspora as a social forum**

Diaspora communities maintain their collective identities through the construction of joint communal public spheres. Werbner (2002), who studied

the Pakistani community in greater Manchester, argues that these diasporic public spheres are not merely the product of projected images of the diasporic community by the majority group (through media, public discourse, and social structure), but rather must be actively created by the members of the community. Diasporic identities 'are formed, made and remade; they exist in practice, dialogically through collective action and interaction' (Werbner, 2002, p. 267). For that end the community has to construct organizations, activities, traditions and communal forums where issues of belonging and identification can be actively practiced and negotiated (Werbner, 2002, Yuval Davis, 1997). For example, Werbner demonstrated the articulation of a Pakistani-British discourse which is curved out of a constant dialogue with the general British society and the cultural images it projects onto the Pakistani community, the images of Pakistani homeland and global and local politics.

#### **4.5.5. Diaspora as a cultural production**

Diasporas must constantly confront their invisibility within the wider (British) society 'through active acts of mobilization and hospitality and through public demonstrations of generosity which reach out beyond their locally constituted territorial communities' (Werbner, 2002, p. 10) They are requested to contribute 'real material or cultural goods across national boundaries through their political lobbying, fund raising or works of poetry art and music' (p.10). Hence, diasporic communities have to maintain a delicate balance between seclusion and self-distinction on the one hand and integration within and contribution to the local British society, on the other. This negotiability of position also occurs, albeit more phantasmatically, vis-a-vis the society of origin (in our case, Israeli society) where questions of identification and distinction are concurrently negotiated.

#### **4.5.6. Immigration and integration into British society**

Much empirical sociological work has been conducted to link various material parameters (e.g. gender, participation in the local labour market, and levels of professionalism or the immigrants' diasporic or home identity) and immigrants' inclusion into local, British society in order to predict trends and devise policies. In spite of the limitations that this quantitative empirical research suffers from

(its tendency to essentialize and fix social categories, e.g. 'minority', 'identity', or 'ethnicity', and its efforts to generalize rules across subjects), it nevertheless points to some relevant categories which merit attention.

Manning and Roy (2010) lay out certain patterns that could help in predicting greater adoption of British identity among immigrants. They argue that as a rule of thumb, ethnic minorities are less likely to define themselves as British and that newly-arrived immigrants 'almost never think of themselves as British but [that] the feeling grows on them the longer they remain' (p. 97). Their major finding, which is relevant to my research, is that the 'assimilation into a British identity is faster for those from poorer, less democratic countries' (*ibid*). The authors speculated that those coming from richer, democratic countries share similar values with the local British society and therefore 'there is little concern about the fact that Italians rarely seem to come to think of themselves as British' (*ibid*). Thus they argue that the insertion into British society is organized as a 'Culture Club' i.e. that shared values more than a declared national identity is the key for social inclusion. They also conclude that the lack of integration into British society may be due to 'the refusal of the majority population to see minorities as British' rather than these minorities' reluctance to identify themselves as British. Stated differently, the famous 'Tebitt test',<sup>16</sup> that questioned the loyalty of immigrants to British society, would only be raised in relation to certain minorities (e.g. Asians, or Africans) but would not be of concern in relation to Italians living in Britain who do not even pretend to identify themselves as British.

Several authors (e.g. Battu and Zenou, 2010 or Casey and Dustmann, 2010) look for links between immigrants' identities and their participation in the local job market, assuming there will be a positive correlation between the two. All found that these links were not straightforward and involved a myriad of alternative parameters to explain why certain subjects do adopt a local identity or participate in the local labour market while others hold onto their previous, termed by Battu and Zenou 'oppositional', identities and restrict their work to their ethnic environment. In her research on Polish immigrants' national

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<sup>16</sup> Named after the Conservative MP. He declared that immigrants' support of any other national team but the English or British one reveals the supporter's lack of inclusion into British society.

identity, Rabikowska (2010) notes a marked isolation between the Polish immigrants and the local British population in London.

Overall, the research on immigration in the British context tends to focus on the adaptation of low skilled, non-European, marginalized populations and tends to ignore the processes that high-skilled immigrants or relocated populations undergo (see later discussion on high-skilled migration in Britain). However, research of 'elite' migrants' (e.g. highly-qualified Finns and Americans) social and cultural integration into the local societies (US or Finland respectively) found that their high professional capital may have hampered their integration rather than facilitated it (Lienonen, 2012).

#### **4.6. Israelis in Britain and the notion of 'diaspora'**

It is now time to consider how the Israeli population fits into these legal, professional and 'identitarian' trends that characterize the immigration context in Britain. The Israeli high-skilled, middle-class, secular, workers in Britain who occupy well-paid jobs and cannot be identified by physical appearance or traditional clothing do not easily fall into any of the two images of 'diaspora' discussed above. On the one hand, as will be described later, Jewish-Israelis as a group do not fit into the liberal, multicultural model of diaspora, with its hybrid dual affiliation as advocated by Hall (1990) or Brah (1996); their affinity towards Israel remains strong and exclusive. On the other hand, they have not been forced into the diaspora condition due to impossible circumstances in Israel, and while some (especially the women) find it more difficult to match their prior professional experience with the British job market (see later section), as a group they are certainly not excluded in economical or professional terms in British society as the former reading of 'diaspora' demands. Yet, there is a popular tendency among Israelis, in both Israel and Britain to see the British public and its media coverage of Israel as hostile towards Israel and favourable towards the Palestinians. This has also been found consistently in the interviews that will be presented in the 'Findings' chapters. Thus, in Israeli eyes, although they do not fit into the professional, racial, ethnic or economic exclusionary system described above, they often assume that they are excluded on political grounds. This view at least partly shapes the representation of their diasporic space in Britain.

#### 4.6.1. The representation of Israel among non-Jewish and Jewish British public

So far I have discussed the general representation of 'diaspora' and 'the other' in British society. I will now channel the discussion to address the specific representation of Israel among non-Jewish and Jewish British publics.

Academic work that has addressed this topic is often accused of being one-sided. Philo and Berry's *Bad News from Israel* (2004) and *More Bad News from Israel* (2011) describe how Israelis, Palestinians and the conflict between them are presented in mainstream British media (e.g. BBC). Their general claim is that through its coverage of and focus on immediate violent events in Israel/Palestine, the British media loses track of the historical context of the conflict and under-represents the oppressive effects on Palestinians caused by the on-going Israeli occupation. Shindler (2003), on the other hand, argues that *The Guardian* is caught in the confusion of the liberal West and therefore intentionally portrays the conflict between the sides so as to promote the notion of a one-state, rather than a two-state solution.

The 2012 Country Ratings Poll conducted by GlobeScan/PIPA (2012) asked respondents from twenty countries to rate whether the influence of sixteen countries was predominantly positive or negative. The report ranks Israel fourth from bottom (only ranking above North Korea, Pakistan and Iran) with 21% ranking it positively and 50% negatively. Among the British respondents, 16% saw Israel as primarily positive while 68% ranked it negatively. On the other hand, quantitative research findings from the 2011 Jewish Policy Research (JPR) report (Graham and Boyd, 2011) carried out among Jewish and non-Jewish university students reveals that 'the notion that students in the general population tend to harbour negative views about Israel is false'; it contends that 'the majority [of non-Jewish students – 63%] is disinterested and holds no opinion at all and of those who do have an opinion, half [18%] hold a positive view and half [19%] hold a negative view' (p. 61). The JPR findings also challenge a common assumption among Israelis and Jews alike according to which attitudes towards Israel and Jews in British academic institutions are overwhelmingly hostile. The JPR findings regarding the obliviousness of British public towards Israel gains support from *More Bad News From Israel* (2011) which concluded that almost two-thirds of the British

population did not know whether Israel was occupying the Palestinian territories or vice versa. This can exemplify a misrepresentation of the conflict (as the book argued) or a general disinterest in what goes on there. One way of bridging the contradictions between the very different findings is to suggest that British citizens do harbour negative feelings towards Israel (as the country scaling poll shows) but that these views will not necessarily be articulated openly (as the JPR findings show) in a personal encounter.

In contrast to the negative image that Israel might have in the general British society, the perception of Israel among British Jews has been traditionally very favourable. The 2010 JPR report (Graham and Boyd, 2010) argues that 'the vast majority of respondents exhibit strong personal support for and affinity with Israel' (p. 36). The report summarizes the British Jewish attitude towards Israel as 'Committed, Concerned and Conciliatory'. It appears that Israel remains a major identity axis for the vast majority of British Jews, in spite of a growing dissatisfaction with the governmental policies towards the Palestinians and the peace process, or the over-representation of religious orthodoxy in Israeli society. Other works (e.g. Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010) have argued that Israel gains less attention from Jewish communities which are more concerned with internal, local issues. It looks as if more and more diasporic Jews are rejecting their position as Jews living 'in Exile' and insist on re-considering the Zionist Israeli-Jewish-Diaspora contract (Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010). For many Jews, Israel remains an important part of their Jewish Identity but not necessarily the sole axis around which this identity revolves. Thus some Jews may look at Israel as 'A Jewish homeland' rather than '*THE* Jewish Homeland' while others do not imagine it to be a homeland at all.

#### **4.6.2. The notion of diaspora in Israeli high and popular culture**

As described in greater detail in the previous chapter, the Jewish national movement, like many other national movements, selectively constructed (though not necessarily self-consciously) the collective narrative and historiography to support its political targets (Ram, 2006, Magid, 2006, Sand, 2008). Concepts such as the 'Negation of Exile' (*Shlilat Hagalut*) and the 'Ingathering of Exiles' (*Kibbutz Galuyot*) or the '*Aliya*' vs. '*Yerida*'

(ascent/immigration to Israel vs. descent emigration from Israel) vocabulary still circulate in Israeli society and support this approach to Jewish life away from Israel. Perceptions of Jews immigrating to Israel have been shaped by the Zionist ethos and they were preferred to be perceived as Jewish ideologues returning to their old homeland rather than immigrants relocating their lives out of economic and practical reasons (Golden, 2001, Anteby-Yemini, 2004). On the other hand, the official and public attitude towards those emigrating abroad has always been very negative.

The numbers of Israelis living abroad is estimated at between 500,000 and 600,000 (Cohen, 2005, Della Pergola, 2012) - roughly 10% of Israel's Jewish population and 9% of its overall population. In contrast to pessimistic impressions among the Israel public, Della Pergola argues (2012) that the Israeli rates of emigration do not exceed those in some other developed countries such as Switzerland or Italy.

Sobel (1986) argues that regardless of the contraindicative information, e.g. an amelioration of the material economic conditions of living in Israel, there is a persistent psychological state of emergency among the Jewish population which shapes how immigration to Israel and emigration from it is perceived. According to Floman (2007), emigration still casts a shadow on the success of the Zionist project which is still perceived by Jews in both Israel and outside it to be 'under construction' or under threat.

Despite the lessening in stigmatized labelling, many scholars agree (Gold, 2002, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Cohen, 2005, Floman, 2007) that self-images of the Jewish-Israeli diaspora (and those of the non-Israeli Jewish diaspora, see Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010) are still organized to a large extent around the Zionist ethos of the Jewish ingathering and the negation of Exile.

#### **4.7. The sociological profile of Jewish-Israeli emigration**

While relatively little academic research has been conducted on Israelis in Britain (see Gold, 2004, Hart, 2004 and Lev-Ari, 2008), their sociological profile seems to resemble that of many, though not all, Israeli communities in America that have been researched, i.e. mostly families (rather than singles) of highly skilled, middle class, Ashkenazi background which constitute the mainstream of Israeli society, often the descendants of the states' founding elite. In what

follows I will review some of the sociological literature that describes the profile of Israelis and Israeli communities abroad.

#### **4.7.1. Professional skills**

Cohen (2005) notes that 'Israelis abroad are a highly educated and an economically successful group' (Cohen, 2005, p. 139) and are more educated and professionally skilled than the average citizen in both Israel and the country of settlement. Like other voluntary migrations of mostly high-skilled workers (Lienonen, 2012), Israelis emigrate with the hope of enjoying the economic benefits that the western world has to offer, especially at times of economic recession in Israel. The growing demand for highly skilled labour alongside the opening up of the global market attracts highly qualified Israeli groups which have been exposed in recent decades to discourses of individualism (Roninger, 1999).

#### **4.7.2. Jewish-Israeli emigration and social/ethnic class**

According to Floman (2007) Mizrahi Jews, whose socio-economic class is traditionally lower in Israeli society, were twice as likely as Ashkenazi-Israelis to consider emigration since Ashkenazi Israelis risk losing the social capital they gained by emigrating to a new country. Yet, according to Cohen (2005), the percentage of Ashkenazi émigrés is greater than their percentage among the population in Israel and the chances that those holding an academic degree will emigrate is double that of those not holding an academic degree (*Ha'aretz*, 2012). Uriely (1994) and Floman (2007) categorized the Israeli émigrés in America into three groups: 'temporaries' (those who have come from Israel for a limited time and return at the end of this term), 'settlers' (Israelis who have immigrated and settled in their new country), and 'permanent sojourners' (who voice an intention to return to Israel but do not have practical plans to do so and effectively may live for many years in their new country). The category of 'the sojourner' has long been documented among other emigration populations (e.g. Chinese in America – Siu, 1952, Iranians in Britain – Fathi, 2011) and does not reflect a unique Israeli feature. Uriely (1994) and Floman (2007) have found that a far greater proportion among Israelis of high socio-economic status in Israel – who are mostly

Ashkenazi – have adopted a permanent sojourner position compared with lower socio-economic status Israelis – mostly of Mizrahi background – who tended to settle. These findings indicate that learning about Israelis' construction of 'national identity' abroad requires studying it in its intersection with other social factors – such as gender, class, ethnicity, professional qualifications etc. – and the power-relations they dictate, as indicated by intersectional theorists (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Like other high-skilled migrant workers (Lienonen, 2012), high-skilled Israelis often find it difficult to fit into the host society and to identify with it. Lienonen (2012) reported a sense of estrangement in the local society among American and Finish migrants to Finland and US, respectively. Like Manning and Roy (2010), she concluded that this condition was created, paradoxically, *because* American and Fins are not considered or consider themselves 'immigrants' and therefore are not assumed to make an effort and fit into the local society like other, low skilled work-migrants.

The permanent sojourners' psychology involves 'sitting on one's suitcase' - avoiding any signs of institutionalization, settling down physically or psychologically, and actively maintaining an intermediate position of temporariness in the country of settlement (Floman, 2007). According to Floman, certain trends characterize the Israeli 'temporary sojourners': a tendency to stick to Israeli culture, organizing life around the completing of a specific task (after which the emigrant proposes to return to Israel), a tendency to form social ties exclusively among Israelis and the frequent travel back and forth between the new country and Israel. According to Uriely (1994), Israeli 'permanent sojourners' experience guilt, anxiety and embarrassment due to the discrepancy between the proclaimed intention to return and the continuing life abroad; Floman adds that their apparent discomfort stems also from their ability to choose whether to stay or to return and the acknowledgement that by settling abroad they will be giving up the social capital - their high social status and the social networks - that reward them for their achievements in Israeli society.

#### 4.7.3. Jewish-Israeli emigration, gender and the job market

According to Floman (2007), the family's gender power-relations among the affluent Israeli population changes following emigration. Similar to migration patterns among other high-skilled emigrant populations (Lienonen, 2012) where 'women often sacrifice their own career for the sake of their family or may be disadvantaged in the process by gender bias' (Iredale, 2005, p. 164), among Israeli migrants to Britain it is mostly the man who is the reason for relocation (Lev-Ari, 2008) and the woman who comes as his dependent. Whereas women's participation in the Israeli job market amounts to 56%<sup>17</sup> (OECD iLibrary, 2012), Floman (2007) argues that only 30% of Israeli women, many of whom are high skilled professionals, join the American job market in the first five years of their relocation. Thus, while for many immigrant women who were barred from joining the job market in their home countries, emigration is experienced as empowering (e.g. Iranians – Fathi, 2011) since it allows and even encourages them to work, for Israeli women emigration is often perceived as *professionally* debilitating. This condition increases the gender inequalities within the Israeli immigrant family, accentuates traditional gender roles and determines how family life is conducted (what Floman calls a 'Starbucks women's society' where working women might feel unwelcomed). To compare, Fathi (2011) describes the importance of professional identity for the creation of a sense of belonging and inclusion into British society among Iranian women following their immigration to Britain.

#### 4.7.4. Jewish-Israeli communal patterns abroad

Researchers disagree regarding the extent and diversity of communal institutions formed by Jewish Israelis in their communities. Whereas Cohen (2005) reports an elaborate Jewish-Israeli institutional network (in Toronto), most researchers describe the paucity of distinctive Israeli institutions formed by the Jewish-Israeli communities in USA (Shokeid, 1993, Gold, 2004, Floman 2007) and London (Hart 2004 and Lev-Ari (2008). Floman (2007) argues that Israeli communal life in the San Francisco Bay *does exist* but that it bears

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<sup>17</sup> This is a figure that addresses the overall women's (ages 15-65) participation in the Israeli labour market that includes some sectors where participation is minimal. Among middle class Israeli women it is expected to be much higher.

distinctive informal characteristics that revolve around spontaneous social encounters in homes, women's social gatherings in cafes or organizing ad hoc activities usually around the Jewish and Israeli holidays. Accordingly, the community she described in San Francisco, like the one in London, does not own any permanent housing for its institutions, nor are there fundraising networks that could financially support the on-going communal activities. Floman explains this trend with the temporary condition termed 'permanent sojourn' that was described above. Thus, according to Floman (2007), Israelis who constantly declare their intention to return to Israel will be reluctant to establish long-lasting institutions that will signify their commitment and permanence abroad. Similarly, she found that the kinds of activities initiated and their contents intentionally resemble and echo those carried out in Israel ('like in Ha'aretz' in her interviewees' words). Hart (2004), who also demonstrated the lack of formal institutions in the Jewish-Israeli London community, showed 'the role of communal schools as a 'mag-net': a meeting point, an 'ethnic doorway' and a channel through which new members were introduced to the community and gained access to its networks' (p.190). The schooling pattern helped the community to erect boundaries around itself and 'maintain the community's structure and ensure its survival' (Hart, 2004 p. 200). It appears that the geographical proximity, the relatively low cost of travel to Israel (Lev-Ari, 2008) and the frequent turnover of Israeli families which return to Israel once the professional task has been achieved and are replaced by new incoming families; all contribute to the informal, ad-hoc and disorganized characteristics of the Israeli community in Britain<sup>18</sup>.

#### **4.7.5. Jewish-Israeli emigrants and the local societies**

Practically all scholars looking into the Jewish Israeli communities in North America (for example Gold, 2004, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Cohen, 2005) or Britain (Hart, 2004, Lev-Ari, 2008) report a marked reluctance of Israelis to identify with the host societies (by identifying themselves as British for example) although they may spend extended periods, achieve impressive

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<sup>18</sup> About a year ago, a Facebook group called 'Mummy-land' and later its contestant, 'London's Imas' (London's mums) have been set. The access to these groups is restricted to Israeli mothers. A great deal of emotional support and general information is provided by the members. These groups gradually become important public spaces, distinctively led by women, around which the Jewish-Israeli community gathers.

social and economic records and even acquire local British citizenship. This finding is not unique for Israelis. Manning and Roy (2010) report a greater reluctance among immigrants to identify themselves as British for those coming from richer and democratic countries as opposed to those from poorer countries. In a study that looked into the European context of Israeli emigration, Lev-Ari (2008) noted a marked disengagement with the local (British) society among first generation Israeli emigrants, consistent with research findings among other Israeli communities in North America. Other migrant communities (e.g. Poles, Rabikowska, 2010) also manifest signs of isolation and seclusion from the host British society. In Lev-Ari's research (2008), this was demonstrated by indifference towards, and even ignorance of, British current affairs and a lack of social interaction with the local non-Jewish population. Lev-Ari's content analysis showed that Israelis feel different among the local British population in how they talk, behave or dress and consequently feel alienated. At the same time they also described the tolerance of the local British society that allows them to keep their habits and makes their lives comfortable. Israelis abroad are often concerned about anti-Semitism disguised by anti-Zionism and faced with hostile comments have to negotiate their religious identity (McNamara, 1987), which is kept dormant under Israel's strong national-secular narrative.

#### **4.7.6. Jewish-Israelis and the local Jewish communities**

Most studies note a clear division between the Israeli and the local Jewish communities and Lahav and Arian (1999) even see a tendency for the two communities to go their separate ways. They argue that 'the ambivalence between Israelis and American Jews is transformed into separatism, rather than hostility once Israelis arrive in America for an extended stay with the prospect of changing their citizenship' (p. 18). Floman (2007) notes that the alienation from the local Jewish community is especially marked among Ashkenazi-Israelis than among Mizrahi-Israelis. Gold explains that there exists 'a disparity between the subjective secular, quasi-national Jewish identity of many Israelis, especially of the Ashkenazi elite, and the synagogue based, ethno-religious identity of diaspora US Jews' (2004 p. 337). Israelis see their ethnic identity, their 'Jewishness', as secular and national, more related to

Israeliness than to Judaism. Israelis who were brought up within a certain secular Zionist viewpoint and may even be part of the 'torch carriers' of this ideology in Israeli society, are also often hostile to religion because of the political connotations that are aroused in Israeli politics by the religious parties and also as a result of the classic western secular (Zionist) discourses towards religion (Raz-Krakotzkin, 2005). Mizrahi Israelis, who were always more closely affiliated to religion from their countries of origin (and were partly marginalized in Israeli society because of it), find it easier to integrate into the local, synagogue-based Jewish societies (Floman, 2007).

Studies (Gold, 2002, Cohen, 2005, Floman, 2007) show that in the course of time, Jewish-Israelis who choose to settle in the US, are eventually absorbed and integrated into the local Jewish communities.

Few members', writes Gold, 'of the first generation repudiated their connection to Israel to become flag-waving Canadian, English, or American Jews. A considerable number did, however, begin to describe themselves as members of the de-territorialized ethnic or religious community of the Jewish people. In this way, they were able to reconcile their connections to two or more nationalities without appearing disloyal to either (2004, p. 347).

#### **4.8. Discussion – private and communal lives of Israelis abroad**

In this section, I tried to highlight some of the main issues concerning immigration in Britain in general and Israelis' migration more specifically. Understanding the British socio-cultural context – how 'immigration' and 'diaspora' in general and 'Israel' specifically are perceived among Jewish and non-Jewish British publics (or at least how Israelis understand these perceptions) makes up an indispensable part of Israelis' construction of 'national identity'. I opened with a theoretical description of the notion of 'diaspora' (as a form of 'otherness' or dislocation) in British society since it appeared to be the theoretical framework of choice: incorporating the 'here and now' in the 'new country' with the attachments and affiliations to the 'then and there' in the 'homeland'. A review of the relevant literature on 'diaspora' (e.g. Hall, 1990, Brah, 1996 or Werbner, 2002) reveals that Israelis do not fall easily into this hybrid, liberal, multicultural interpretation of 'diaspora' as

proposed by Hall (1990). Nor do they fit the profile of marginalized, low-skilled migrants coming from poorer countries (McIlwaine et al, 2006) or those who suffered difficult political or social conditions in their home countries (e.g. Turkey, Tanyas, 2010, or Iran, Fathi, 2011), all of whom suffer the formal and informal British socio-political exclusionary practices as described by Karla et al (2005), Tyler (2010) or Fortier (2011). As high-skilled workers who have established themselves financially in British society and who have often come from mainstream middle class Israeli society, they arrive with considerable social capital and therefore often have a lot to lose by leaving Israel.

Therefore, one way of relating to the experience of diasporic dislocation has to do with the likelihood of the option to return to the 'homeland'. This aligns with Manning and Roy's findings (2010) which describe the reluctance of migrants from richer, democratic countries to adopt the local British identity. According to Floman (2007), Israelis' strong attachment to Israel for social, cultural and ideological reasons deters them from engaging with the local societies and its culture. The research I reviewed never reported or discussed an engagement of Israeli émigrés with local politics or current affairs, for example, but rather focused exclusively on the ties to Israel. Such a position makes up an important part of *their* diasporic condition. Israelis' communal and private existence abroad, as discussed by Gold, 2004, Hart, 2004 and Lev-Ari, 2008, resembles more the condition termed 'temporary-sojourner' (Siu, 1952, Uriely, 1994, Floman, 2007) characterized by strong attachment to previous social and cultural habits, the maintenance of exclusive social ties among fellow Israelis, and the marked disengagement from British (Jewish or non-Jewish) society. Taken in its deeper meaning, an 'Israeli-diaspora' requires the creation of a distinct and particularized public space with its distinctive discourses and unique practises which converses with, but is not subjugated to, the dominant home (i.e. Zionist) discourses and culture. In this sense, an Israeli diaspora might constitute a post/non-Zionist arena which can envision Israelis living rich private and communal lives in the 'diaspora' and yet maintaining their 'Israeliness'. By contrast, the Israeli profile that comes up in the sociological research maintains very strong commitments to Israeli culture and to Zionist ideology and consequently portrays a *troubled* diasporic space.

It is also within this cultural ideological context that the academic research (mine included - see reference to 'reflexivity' in the methodological chapter) is conducted. The sociological research that I have mentioned above often emerges out of mainstream Israeli society and the aims of the research and its pre-given assumptions are axiomatically drawing on Zionist premises. Many scholars are preoccupied by the numbers of Israelis that emigrate (Della Pergola, 2012) or with 'the demographical success of Zionism' (Cohen, 2007). Others are explicitly concerned by the levels of assimilation of Israelis abroad and their patterns of returning to Israel (Lev-Ari, 2008). While there is a disproportionate number of Ashkenazi, high-skilled emigrants compared to their percentage in the Israeli population, Israelis of other social groups (Mizrahi, orthodox Jews or Palestinians) also emigrate but these are hardly ever made the object of research. Thus, the objects of study are, most often, the mainstream, middle-class families whose departure troubles Israelis in Israel the most. It points to a certain social profile of the 'average Israeli' cut out of the Zionist cloth of the 'New Jew'. Research (e.g. Gold, 2002) repeatedly indicates that the permanent-sojourner Israeli communities and individual subjects mainly comprise those secular Ashkenazi Israelis, whereas the Mizrahi Jews find ways to integrate into local Jewish communities. Perhaps their integration in the local Jewish communities can be explained by the fact that *their* affiliation to Israeli society and its Zionist agenda is not as strong due to their marginalization in Zionist Ashkenazi-dominated society and their non-European imaginary of 'community', 'nation' and 'religion'. Orthodox Jewish-Israelis and Palestinian-Israelis, who also make up part of Israeli society, and whose commitment to the Zionist ideology is even weaker, have hardly ever been researched. This may be due not only to their marginal percentage among Israeli émigrés but rather because they fall out of the profile of Israeliness that Zionist discourses of nationality imagine and that Israeli social research is interested in. These groups might often have no interest in participating in research of 'Israeliness', for them a category associated with exclusion and alienation. Within these communities, perhaps those who Anteby-Yemini had in mind when discussing the 'Israeli diaspora', an alternative, counter-hegemonic Israeli 'diasporic space', may be studied (see a discussion of my own research sample in the next methodology chapter).

While the 'national imagination' performs in the construction of any migrants group's collective identity, there are various contents which inform this imagination. The Israeli case is different from many other migrant communities in that it is shaped by a clear (Zionist) narrated national ideology. This collective imagination determines who is an Israeli (and therefore who will be researched), where they should live (and that therefore living abroad 'creates a problem'), or how Israeliness is to be practiced (frequent travels to Israel, studying in 'Israeli' schools – Hart, 2004 - or avoiding synagogues). Within these constraints, however, as I have argued in the first part of the chapter, Israelis, even those who have been raised within a highly conformist Zionist environment, introduce their private interpretations and negotiate, contest or adhere to these hegemonic demands. It is on this specific intersection of subjectivity, immigration, culture, politics and ideology, all clustered under the heading of 'national identity', that my research is focused. However, a qualitative, critical and contextualized look at both subjects' personal meaning-making (narratives) and the cultural imaginary tools (discourses, images and signifiers) offered to them reveals the constant struggle and incongruence within the hegemonic collective narrative (Bhabha's 'troubled nation', 1994) and between it and subjects' personalized versions. It is this encounter between the troubled subject described in this chapter and the troubled society described in the previous ones, that I have been trying to trace in this thesis.

# Chapter five – Conducting a critical narrative analysis of ‘national Identities’ among Jewish-Israelis in Britain

## 5.1. Introduction

In the previous theoretical chapters, I have outlined my psychosocial approach to the study of nationalism (and Israeli nationalism specifically), identities, national identities, and Israeli national identities among Israelis who live outside Israel. In this chapter, I will present and discuss the various practical stages I undertook when conducting qualitative empirical research on this topic.

I have chosen a critical narrative methodology to analyse the interview texts and have argued that narratives do not reflect the subject’s inner, persistent ‘truth’ on ‘Israeliness’ but are, rather, in and of themselves acts embedded in specific historical-political contexts destined to achieve something at the very moment of their articulation. This psychosocial approach embraces ‘the critical gains of discourse analysis ... but combining it with a focus on the active constructing processes through which individuals attempt to account for their lives’ (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 7). As argued in the previous chapter, narratives play an important part in the construction of identity by binding together disparate and often contradictory experiences into imaginary stability. Yuval Davis argues that ‘identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not) (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 201). But identity is something which is always in transition ‘always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong’ (*ibid*). In light of this, my analysis sought to address the speakers’ particular and subjective interpretation of Israeliness (‘the nation’) and their sense of personal engagement (or dis-engagement) with it whilst at the same time acknowledging the contingency of these accounts:

- A. the work that the interviewee’s speech seeks to achieve within the social interview encounter (the discursive psychological focus);

- B. the co-production of texts by speaker and audience - e.g. the interviewer (the dialogical social-psychological focus);
- C. the broader Israeli and British social, cultural and discursive context within which the interviews took place (the Foucauldian focus); and,
- D. the speakers' efforts to promote a sense of personal coherence, or 'identity', in the face of disruptive experiences (the psychological/psychoanalytic focus).

The chapter will open with a discussion of critical narrative analysis – the methodological approach I chose. I will then describe the various practical stages of the research – recruiting participants and their demographical characteristics, the data collection method (semi-structured interviews) and the way I formulated and managed the interview agenda, the transcription, coding and translation of the texts (which were produced in Hebrew), criteria for choosing extracts for analysis and the method of analysis. I will also present dilemmas around reflexivity which preoccupied me throughout the research – what my role was as a co-producer of the interviewee's narrative; to what extent my own preconceptions of 'nationality' and 'national identity' shaped its course and how social roles were negotiated and administered between me and the interviewees in ways that shaped the production of texts.

## **5.2. Choosing a research methodology: Narrative or Discursive analysis?**

According to Willig (2008), the methodological approach should be the most appropriate methodology (rather than 'the right one') to address the research questions that have driven the researcher to conduct the research and have guided him/her throughout its analysis. This approach encompasses the ontological assumptions about 'what is out there' (what is 'a nation' or what are 'identities'), the epistemological assumptions about how I can study it, and the practical means of collecting that data (e.g. interviews, participant observations or observing visual images), processing it (e.g. transcribing, translating) and analysing it.

In the introduction I have described the socio-political and personal circumstances that led me to embark on the research of 'Israeli national identity' – i.e. the on-going struggle to negotiate subjectivity within Jewish-

Israeli culture dominated by a Zionist ideology and narrative. My three research questions were:

1. What hegemonic and counter-hegemonic national narratives, themes, images and daily practices do Jewish-Israeli subjects draw on while making sense of 'their' 'national identity'?
2. What are the subject-positions and underlying power-relations implicated in these social discourses on nationality? How are practices of inclusion and exclusion informed and managed by this collective imagery?
3. How do participants negotiate or narrate these social discourses to accommodate them to subjects' personal narratives of 'who they are'?

While the first two research questions focus on social discourses prevalent in Israeli society, and therefore lean towards a social constructivist approach, the third research question deals with Jewish Israelis' engagement with these social discourses, assumes a degree of subject agency and independence (as the usage of 'negotiate' and 'narrate' implies) and may appear more psychologically-oriented. As argued throughout the theoretical chapters, a *psychosocial* approach, which sees the social and psychological as intertwined and inseparable, is the most appropriate way to accommodate both perspectives within the study of 'national identities'.

Given the dual, psychosocial reading of identities as socially, politically and culturally situated and yet idiosyncratically adapted to a personal narrative of 'self' and other', both discursive analysis as well as narrative analysis could serve as appropriate research methodologies.

### **5.2.1. Locating the main focus of research**

Over the course of the preliminary stages I gradually realized that my *main* interest lies with individuals' Israeli identities rather than with the mapping of *the Israeli cultural reservoir* and the social and discursive configurations dominating Israeli culture. Since culture 'speaks' itself through individuals' stories (Riessman, 1993), analysing the narratives of Israelis who live in Britain could reveal both the reservoir of collective imagery of 'the nation' that dominates Israeli society as well as its idiosyncratic and personal interpretations by individual subjects. Furthermore, as my experiences during

the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese war (described in chapter one) taught me, I was interested in subjects' efforts towards meaning-making, *especially* in the context of what appears as collective and personal critical periods – e.g. the transitional period in Israeli society at a phase of an ideological crisis (as described in chapter three) and the personal condition of migration and life in the diaspora (chapter four). Therefore, since 'personal narratives, typically emerging around people's experiences of breaches between ideal and real, self and society, may have special importance for the narrator' (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 140), I asked myself how and to what extent do Israelis who live in Britain (away from Israel) sustain a sense of 'national identity' having grown up in a society that is driven by Zionist ideology, encourages Israelis and Jews to live in Israel and problematizes alternative forms of Jewishness. I was also interested to document alternative, counter-hegemonic, deemed 'post-Zionist' interpretations of nationhood should these be raised in the texts.

### **5.2.2. Theoretical criticism of discursive approaches**

My preference for (critical) narrative analysis over discursive analysis also stems from their differential approaches towards 'identity' or the experiences of self-hood. While a more culturally and politically informed *critical* narrative analysis (e.g. Reissman 1993, 2008, Emerson and Frosh, 2004, Elliott, et al 2009 or Andrews, Sclater, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2004) acknowledges the role of social discourses and therefore offers a means to study and incorporate the cultural symbolic system within an analysis of subjects' narratives, discursive analysis over-emphasizes the social impacts and has often been accused of 'lack of the person' (Willig, 2008, p. 106). According to Willig, 'discursive psychology does not address questions about *subjectivity*' (2008, p. 106), but is rather interested in the discursive and rhetorical means people use in order to achieve certain social goals and in the action orientation that discourse, especially *talking*, brings with it. Foucauldian discursive analysis is better suited to study the discursive reservoir (or discursive limitations, Foucault, 1970) that prevail in Jewish-Israeli society but reduces the subject to the 'discursive positioning' in which it is caught up. Both discursive approaches ignore the idiosyncrasy, particularity and creativity characterizing 'identity' as I choose to read it (following Hall, 1990, 2000) which resist, or at least negotiate

the influences of social forces. Additionally, both approaches overemphasise the role of language or words as a means of communication whereas meaning and subjectivity also appear *between the words and the lines* or in ideas that are implied and communicated through gestures, laughs, hesitations, etc. Finally, both discursive approaches defy the attempt to read or analyse the subject's narrative as an effort, even if imaginary, of continuity.

If identity is to be seen for its fluidity and contextuality made of only momentary stabilities, as Frosh and Baraitser (2009) argue, then narratives constitute an important tool in the construction of such momentary stabilities. I have adopted what Emerson and Frosh (2004) termed a 'Critical Narrative Analysis' that reads the narrative produced in text as socially and culturally situated, acknowledges the fragility of narrative coherence, and sees it as a co-production of narrator and audience (e.g. the interviewer) rather than as an independent, subjective 'truthful' account of the speaker. As I will demonstrate in the findings chapter, some of the extracts (e.g. Michael's – chapter six) present clear narrative structure, as outlined in Labov's classical model (1972) whereas in other extracts (e.g. Roni's – chapter eight) the structure is less apparent (as described in Gee's approach, 2005).

### **5.3. Critical narrative analysis**

Traditional narrative analysis emerges out of phenomenological-humanistic (Hiles and Cermack, 2008) and cognitive approaches (Bruner, 1990) and studies narratives as manifestations of the speakers' subjective experiences of the world and of themselves. Structural theorists such as Labov (1972) and Gee (2005) focus on the ways narratives are structured in order to deepen the analysis of the explicit content and learn about the speaker's style of narration and their thematic focus. According to the *critical* narrative approach, content cannot be separated from its context. It switches 'figure' and 'ground' and turns its attention to the cultural, political (Riessman, 1993, 2008), interpersonal (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) or biographical (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman, 2003, Roseneil, 2006) context within which the narrative was constructed. These aspects provide additional dimensions to the analysis and deepen its interpretation. Analysing narratives critically means addressing the following aspects:

### 5.3.1. The tension between coherence and disruption/fragmentation

'There is room for managing departures from the canonical' argues Bruner (1990, p. 50); Riessman suggests that the construction of narratives becomes especially crucial 'when biographical disruptions occur that rupture expectations for continuity' (2008, p. 10). However, following Lacanian theorists who see the subject (Zizek, 1998) and the nation (Bhabha 1990, 1994) as *inherently* troubled or split, I have argued that both 'identity' and 'narrative' are to be regarded as imaginary phenomena, serving to mask and veil the subject's recognition of its condition of fragmentation and split or as 'momentary assemblages of contradictory forces' (Frosh and Baraitser, 2009, p. 159). For that end, the narrator (here the interviewee) selects certain events or articulations that will serve the plot that they want to promote and concomitantly discards other elements or counter-narratives that will contradict and disrupt that plot. In this sense the narrative, according to Bruner (1990), is only partly committed to 'reality': 'the sequence of its sentences, rather than the truth or falsity of any of those sentences, is what determines its overall configuration of plot' (p. 44). The national narrative's coherence as presented by Renan at the end of the nineteenth century (1882) can only be achieved and sustained through a selective forgetfulness of certain unfitting traumatic and incomprehensible events. Nevertheless, the precariousness of the narrative's coherence and homogeneity will inevitably be revealed through various verbal and non-verbal articulations (e.g. hesitations, disruptions, verbal lapses, laughter etc.). Within a critical narrative approach attention will be shifted to these counter-narrative aspects as much as to the explicit storied content in an effort to highlight the on-going struggle among contesting narratives and 'voices'. Rather than looking for or unravelling the *organizing* forces of the narrative as structuralist theorists (e.g. Labov in Riessman 2008 or Gee, 2005) seek to do, my approach accepts the linearity as well as its diversions as mutually constitutive of the narrative.

### 5.3.2. Narrative as a dialogical co-production

A narrative *should not* be regarded as a reflection of the speakers' consistent personal 'inner truth', but rather as a co-production of the narrator and the audience for whom that narrative is destined. The audience can either be

physically present (the interviewer/listener) or imagined (e.g. the interviewer in the mind of the interviewee when thinking, before the interview took place, what they want to talk about) and can either participate more or less actively in the course of the interview. Roseneil (2006) argues that the 'interview was the co-production of the interviewer and the interviewee, at a particular moment in both of their lives [and would] have been inflected differently to a different interviewer' (p. 865). Various identity markers – age, profession (psychologist), gender, ethnic background (Ashkenazi – as my surname discloses), academic qualifications, as well as my style of interviewing, to state some of the obvious identification categories, played a role in the text production.

### **5.3.3. Narrative as a tool to achieve strategic goals**

According to discursive psychologists (e.g. Potter, 2005), texts should be studied first and foremost for their action orientation – the effects they aim to achieve within the research encounter and the speaker's overall self-perception in life. Riessman cites Goffman who wrote: 'What talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to recipients but to present dramas to an audience' (Goffman 1974 cited in Riessman, 2008, p. 106). Patterson (2008) argues that 'a clause that appears to be a simple narrative clause referring to an event is not necessarily present in the text just because it is what happened ...' but may have been selected for inclusion because it supports the point of narrative' (p. 30). Finally, Squire (in Andrews et al., 2004) makes a more general claim when she argues that 'in performing narratives we can create new possibilities for identities and action' (p. 104). Thus the content of the narrative should also be analysed for the social benefits it aims to achieve within the interview encounter and beyond.

### **5.3.4. Narratives reflect broader historical, cultural and social contexts**

In contrast to phenomenological, humanistic and psychological approaches that underline the subjects' construction of the world they live in, my psychosocial reading of narratives states that subjects are limited by a certain discursive reservoir prevalent in their culture (e.g. Israeli), for example when making sense of 'the nation', of citizenship, group membership, religion or 'the state'. Gee (2005) suggests that 'what is being communicated in the narrative

presents the clues about what is taken to be 'normal', 'right', 'good', 'correct', 'proper', 'appropriate', 'valuable', 'the way things are', 'the way things ought to be', 'high status or low status', 'like me or not like me' and so forth' (p.12). In *Banal Nationalism* (1995), Billig describes how a *certain* notion of 'the nation' is constructed through the banal daily details of 'flagging' which go unnoticed in people's daily discourse, media coverage and formal documents. My first research question addresses the cultural contents that Israelis draw on when defining their national identity. The interviewees in my research applied images (e.g. 'a country of sun', 'tiny Israel'), signifiers (e.g. '*Ha'aretz*', 'reside' vs. 'live', 'ghetto') and popular myths ('all Jews would like to make *Aliya*') that emerge out of the cultural reservoir of Israeli culture and society and also determine the variety of social identities from which we speak – i.e. who 'we' are and who 'we' are not. Thus, the interview between two Israelis was informed by the social roles that each participant was assigned by Israeli culture and subsequently affected the outcome of the text produced. At the same time, Emerson and Frosh (2004) argue that 'research employing critical narrative analysis, committed to privileging rather than marginalising subjective and personal narrative meaning-making, can help to interrogate personal and dominant social discourses' (p. 168) and in this sense offer a critical reading not only of the 'bounded subject' but also of the social regimes of discursive power since subjects' usage of culturally acceptable terms and signifiers is appropriated differently by each speaker (Pavon-Cuelar, 2010). In this sense, narratives describing 'Israeli identity' abroad can offer alternative images of 'the nation' and subjects' identification with it.

These four critical readings of narratives do not exclude each other. At any given time, all of the above can be demonstrated depending on the researcher's theoretical preferences: social psychologists emphasize the dialogical and co-constructive aspects of narratives, culturists and political scientists stress the cultural historical and political contexts, while Lacanian oriented researchers underscore the tension between coherence and cohesion and the multiple meanings of words. At various points in the analysis I found my attention shifting between various dimensions as their significance in the text changed. I argue that such 'inconsistency' should not be regarded as a methodological fault but rather as capturing an important aspect of narrative

construction and interpersonal communication in general. Riessman summarizes it succinctly: 'stories are social artefacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or a group...a story [is] coproduced in a complex choreography – in spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader and history and culture' (2008, p. 105).

#### **5.4. Psychoanalytic contribution to critical narrative analysis**

Psychoanalysis had an important impact on my research, if only because of my training and experience as a psychodynamic clinical psychologist. Nevertheless, it did not constitute my main methodological approach. In recent years, the use of psychoanalysis for qualitative research has been demonstrated and discussed extensively (e.g. Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Kvale, 1999, Frosh et al, 2003, Parker, 2005, Midgley, 2006 Frosh and Baraitser, 2008) and arguments for and against its use and the ways it could be used have been made. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss in length these theoretical debates, but I would like to outline what aspects of psychoanalysis I found productive for my research and in what ways it was incorporated into the analysis.

1. While my psychosocial approach advocates the constitutive role of social, political and cultural 'external' forces in the construction of subjectivity, I accept the psychoanalytic argument that the social is represented and negotiated differently and idiosyncratically by each subject and that such representations are imbued with emotionality and phantasies rather than calculated rationally in order to achieve certain social gains. This contributes to 'enriching and deepening the use of qualitative interviews in the social sciences' (Kvale, 1999, p. 93).
2. Furthermore, my analysis attends to psychoanalysis' portrayal of the subject as *inherently troubled* and torn between contrasting social and subjective forces. Consequently the texts are bound to be fraught with multiple, often contradictory meanings and a psychoanalytic analysis allows researchers to 'trouble sense making' and serves as a 'tool for "disintegrating" and "disrupting" text' (Saville-Young and Frosh, 2010, p. 511) and to highlight the *tensions* in the text rather than its coherences

as structuralists such as Gee (1991) or Labov (1972) seek to demonstrate. Such a psychoanalytic reading of the subject looks at the *efforts* to construct a linear explanatory account of themselves as coherent 'national' subjects (i.e. as 'Israelis').

3. The concept of *transference relationship* (i.e. the pattern of emotional relationship that the interviewee develops towards the interviewer as authority figure) in the interview encounter has been discussed extensively (e.g. Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). While I agree with Hollway and Jefferson that a transference relationship between interviewee and interviewer develops (even prior to the encounter) and is reflected in the interaction and consequently in the text produced, I take Frosh and Baraitser's view (2008) that unlike a therapeutic setting, this transference relationship cannot be explored and substantiated within the interview text analysis for ethical, methodological and structural reasons. Nevertheless, it was important for me to be able to contextualize the interview text (also) in terms of the interviewees' prior expectations and *personal agenda* which, I believe, played a major part in their decision to voluntarily attend the interview without clear financial or social incentives. This position draws on psychoanalytic thinking that assumes that subjects are motivated by some personal discomfort or anxiety and that they would want to address it through the interview. For instance, for Ariella, who was about to return to Israel after 11 years of living in London, the interview seemed to offer an opportunity to re-state and ground her decision. For Na'ama, who described her life as 'on hold', the interview seemed an opportunity to try and 'resolve' a decisional deadlock. For Yariv, who only recently completed a long psychoanalytic therapy, it could have been another occasion to ask if his decision to stay in Britain was motivated by his 'personal issues' - growing up as a gay man in a militaristic Israeli society - or whether it was based on 'objective' dislike and non-adaptation to the 'Israeli existence'. In these three interviews the agenda was clearly articulated either explicitly by the subject or through the recurrent engagement and negotiation of these key topics in the texts produced. Thus, I included in the analysis specific references

to the interviewee-interviewer relationship only to the extent that they clearly emerged out of the interview text and/or the encounter could be corroborated with other textual data and were relevant to the topic I am studying.

4. Additionally, in the course of a relatively long psychoanalytic relationship, the analyst gets acquainted with the patients' *idiosyncratic* or *private* usage of specific signifiers and their potential subjective meanings. Pavon-Cuelar argues that 'for each position *the* language is a language' (2010, p. 164). Due to the short interview encounter it would be impossible to accumulate such linguistic reservoir. One of the interviewees, Nira, described herself as an IDF orphan (i.e. someone whose parent was killed in the army). This orphan status was very significant in the text and shaped her criticism of Israel and of Israeli culture. Nira talked about the need to be aggressive in Israeli daily living in order to be heard. By contrast she described her experience in British society as follows: 'There's less of a need to... to push or... Because you don't have to, there is someone... There is some reaction, reaction {in English} to what you do'.

It was tempting to contrast the feeling that 'there is someone' in Britain with the lack of someone in Israel, and to explain it, psychoanalytically, in terms of the constant absence of *her father* in Israeli existence. Such psychoanalytic interpretation argues that only by leaving behind the social context where she is destined to be an 'IDF orphan' – i.e. someone whose father is absent – can this sense of constant absence be replaced with a feeling that 'there is someone'. However, I felt it would require many other corroborating references in order to ground this link.

To summarize, I find that psychoanalysis' portrayal of subjects (interviewees and interviewers) as driven by emotional engagements, rather than by rational, conscious thinking contributes immensely to qualitative research. A psychoanalytic approach offers a way to explain the 'stickiness' (Hook, 2008) of certain discursive positions or the 'attachments' (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006) of certain groups and individuals to certain social positions. Finally, it points to the inevitable gaps in the narrative and includes disruptions within its analysis of texts. Therefore I have often paid special attention to

moments of emotional intensity and confusion marked by humour, hesitations, frequent disclaimers, linguistic lapses etc. The psychoanalytic tradition and its emphasis on countertransference as an important tool for making sense of the clinical encounter has also informed my reflexive thinking - i.e. the role I played in the construction of research data.

## **5.5. Reflexivity**

According to Riessman ‘the mechanical metaphor adopted from the natural sciences – investigators providing an objective description of the world and positioning themselves outside the field of study to do so – has given way to narrative mediating and interpreting the “other” in dialogue with the “self” (2008, p. 17). Reflexivity ‘urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher’s involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research’ (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 228). If we adopt a psychosocial approach that claims the inseparability of the social from the psychic and therefore considers narratives to be the product of the encounter between subjects and their environment (be it the researcher, the linguistic system that informs their thinking or the imagined community they feel part of), then researchers should recognize their own impact on the construction of the interview text and include it in its analysis. Roseneil (2006) argued that the text produced by the interviewee ‘would, inevitably, have been inflected differently to a different interviewer’ but that ‘this is always the case in qualitative analysis. We bring ourselves to our research, and we make assumptions about what we study on the basis of our unique psychosocial biographies’ (p. 865). Therefore, the texts produced in the interviews that I conducted have inevitably been shaped by my own view point and so was their analysis. Below I have outlined some of the areas where I felt my presence particularly affected the production of texts.

### **5.5.1. A personal attitude towards Zionist ideology**

First and foremost, since an important part of my research looks at the role that Zionist ideology and narrative play in the construction of ‘the Israeli subject’ and of ‘Israeliness’ in general, I had to monitor my personal engagement with that ideology. This often proved to be a difficult task the more I became aware

how entrenched was Zionist ideology in Jewish-Israeli culture and how formative it is in the construction of certain concepts and preconceptions. Over the course of the research I came to acknowledge the complexity of this ideology and its politicised implications and recognized my growing ambivalence. On the one hand, I grew up in Israeli society and culture imbued with the Zionist world view and values; private memories, tastes, images, social relationships, hopes and fears and other minute details of daily life which all contribute to a sense of 'home', all emerged within the context of Zionist Israeli society, its ethos, values and culture. Criticism of government policies (e.g. around the occupation of the Palestinian territories) were not taken necessarily as criticism of Zionist ideology or narrative. My engagement with Zionism was also related to my familial socio-cultural background (or class) which is sometimes perceived in Israeli society as the Ashkenazi middle-class sometimes referred to as 'the salt of the earth' (see Ariella and Aaron's references to this term in chapter seven). Among this group especially, but also in the Jewish Israeli public and its collective imagination Zionism is still associated with egalitarian (if not socialist) values, social engagement and mutual collective responsibility. Only after moving to Britain and having to struggle to gain social, professional and economic recognition, did I come to acknowledge the social, cultural and economic privileges that came with being part of that social class in Israeli society. On the other hand, I feel a growing criticism towards Zionism when it is often applied as a pretext for the continuous occupation of the Palestinians, encourages the proliferation of nationalist-messianic ideologies and sentiments, provides justification for the marginalization of various groups within Israeli society, and promotes the militarization of Israeli society. This criticism emerged while still living in Israel, materialized in the decision to take a break and move to London for my PhD, and is currently present in the dilemma whether to return to Israel or to make my stay in Britain permanent. This ambivalence was captured for example in the dilemma whether to address the power-relations between Israel and the Palestinians as 'occupation' or to apply the more neutral term 'the conflict' as it is known to the Jewish-Israeli public. Thus adopting a critical position also widens the vocabulary for use. Most of the participants in my research had their own dilemmas regarding Israel and Israeli society although not always for

the same reasons as mine. Some, like Liat and Nira stated it explicitly. Others, like David, manifested greater ambivalence. In these encounters the interview constituted an area of mutual concern around our position as Israelis abroad, faced with the dilemma of whether to return or to stay, the longing for the culture, families and friends we chose to leave behind and the new opportunities awaiting in Britain alongside the hardship of being immigrants or new-comers in other people's 'homeland'. These highly emotional dilemmas manifested themselves at unexpected times during the interview and sometimes I was only able to acknowledge them in retrospect when analysing the texts. For example, Liat asserted: 'I remember, from a very early age that I felt I didn't want to be there [i.e. in Israel] {giggle}'. This surprised me greatly since she was born in Israel, lived there for most of her life and on first appearance seemed to have been part of a privileged social class. This surprise shaped the rest of the extract as I tried to make sense of her unexpected, critical position and her persistent reluctance to identify Israel as her 'home'. A critical reflection during the analysis allowed me to recognize some of my own cultural, social axioms which also revealed the preconceptions underlying Israeli social discourses on nationality (e.g. the absorption of Jewish migrants as reflected in the interviews with Michael, Liat and Udit, the power relations between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish-Israelis, articulated in Yariv's interview or the attitude towards the Israeli community in Britain demonstrated in Dorit and Roni's interviews). This reflexive work allowed me to approach the next interview with greater sophistication and awareness of what is at stake for me, but also for my subjects.

### **5.5.2. Distribution of social roles in the interview encounter**

Social roles and their respective subject positions were negotiated and assigned by both parties. Their analysis taught me about the social stereotypes prevalent in Israeli culture which confine subjects on both ends of the interview encounter to specific expected social positions and determine what is expected to be said. For Nira and Liat, who were highly critical of Israeli society and who were the only ones who didn't entertain the thought of returning, I was a representative of the official Israeli institution which they had left behind. After talking about her reluctance, from a very early age, of living in

Israel, Liat added with a laugh: 'I'm screwing up all your results now [laughs]'. This comment demonstrated to me what she believed I was expecting to hear from her as an Israeli subject abroad – that Israelis have fond memories of their childhood in Israel and therefore maintain a strong nostalgic attachment to it. In Nira's interview I was cast as a representative of formal Zionist Israel. This served her to produce a critical text of Israel but I also found myself speaking from this assigned position, adopting at times a conformist and defensive approach towards Israel. Udit's story about her immigration from North Africa to Israel and the social integration hardships she encountered have placed me as a 'Sabra' from a veteran family in Israel in a defensive position. In Dorit's interview, who was highly engaged with the Israeli and Jewish community of London, I found myself in a position of an Israeli who lives away from the 'Israeli ghetto' as it is often referred to. Finally, for some interviewees (e.g. Na'ama, Yariv or Roni) who knew I was a psychologist, the talk seemed to be motivated by a phantasy that I will help them make sense of the ambivalent feelings and confusion regarding their status in Britain. In these occasions my profession as a psychologist played an important role in the construction of texts.

### **5.5.3. A growing acquaintance with the area researched**

As a relative new-comer to London and to the field of social research, my style of interviewing was shaped gradually. My acquaintance with the Israeli community in London, its establishments and the typical formal and informal daily practices of Israelis in Britain was collected gradually, partly through certain informal meetings I held with various members of the community (an editor of the local Hebrew newspaper, a local Israeli rabbi, and other members of the community) and partly in the course of the first interviews (e.g. in Na'ama's interview). Hence, my agenda as a researcher changed gradually in the course of the first few interviews.

### **5.6. The sample group – criteria and means of recruitment**

My research sample included twelve interviewees aged 30 – 63. This sample size is desirable in qualitative research, which is more interested in the qualities of the texts rather than in their generalizability and reliability across

many respondents, the main concern of quantitative research (Willig, 2008). The recruitment criteria were set up to cut out participants who lived for less than two years in Britain and therefore did not have substantial acquaintance with life in Britain, and those who were under 30 and therefore have not spent a substantial period of their adult life in Israel. Since I was mainly interested in Jewish-Israelis' understanding of 'Israeli identity'<sup>19</sup>, the advert was formulated in Hebrew although Israelis whose mother tongue wasn't Hebrew (like Palestinian-Israelis) were welcomed to join. Another criterion was voluntary participation which was meant to eliminate situations where interviewees took part because they expected to be financially rewarded or because they were pushed into participation as a favour. Two of the participants (Dorit and Nira) responded to my ad in the local Hebrew newspaper thinking that it was a job offer but decided to take part in the research after realizing their mistake. The main criteria, however, required that subjects considered themselves as Israelis, however they chose to define it, and were interested in discussing 'Israeli national identity'. I advertised the research on 'Israeli national identity' (see appendix 3) through my internet social connections, through word-of-mouth personal and professional connections, at a nursery parent-meeting and its notice-board and through an advert in the local Hebrew-printed and electronic newspaper.. In retrospect, the recruitment process reflects the informal features and lack of structure characterizing the Jewish-Israeli community. Since there are hardly any established social spaces where Israelis gather (see chapter four), the recruitment was done through informal and personal channels. These modes of recruitment meant that I was able to access mainly those Israelis who frequented similar social and/or cultural circles as me. This may have limited the variability of the sample. At a later stage in the research, I made efforts to expand the recruitment process to alternative social groups by hanging notices in local shops frequented by Israelis or actively writing to people who might have access to such group members (e.g. local rabbis or people in the Haredi community). These efforts

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<sup>19</sup> It is clear that my research interests – mapping the language and images of Jewish-Israeli nationalism – drew on a specific interpretation of Israeliness which also inevitably narrowed its definition. Thus I have not made an intentional attempt to recruit Palestinian Israelis and after some efforts have given up the hope of recruiting Israeli- Haredi subjects. I will elaborate on discursive limitations of 'Israeliness' in the 'Findings' and 'Discussion' chapters.

were only partly successful. Table one summarizes some of the main demographical categories that are often discussed in sociological literature.

**5.6.1. Table one: Descriptive characteristics of the participants<sup>20</sup>  
(pseudonyms)**

Part.	A	YI B	G	MS	RS	EB	COB	PCOB	AQ	PCI	PCB	BN	CH
Ariella	Late 30s	12	F	M.	Sec	A.	Isr	Isr.	MA	Stu.	N.E.	Y	Y
Na'ama	38	10	F	M	Sec.	A.	Isr	E.Eur.	BA	Emp	PT	Y	Y
Noga	Earl 30s	5	F	M	Sec.	A.	Isr.	E.Eur.	MA	Emp	FT	N	Y
Michael	47	11	M	M.	Sec.	A.	USA	E.Eur.	SS c	S.E.	N.E.	?	Y
Roni	30	5	M	M	Sec	As	Isr.	E.Eur.	MA	Emp	FT	N	Y
Aaron	39	10	M	M	Sec.	A.	Isr.	?	MA	Emp	FT	Y	Y
Dorit	36	2	F	M.	Trad	M.	Isr	Asia	?	Emp	N. E.	N	N
Nira	37	12	F	Sin	Sec.	A.	Isr	?	Ba	N.E.	N.E	Y	N
Liat	34	14	F	Sin	Sec.	A.	Isr.	E.Eur.	Ph D	Stud	N.E.	Y	Y
Yariv	37	9	M	Sin	Sec.	A.	Isr.	Isr.	MA	Emp	FT	Y	N
David	43	7	M	M.	Sec.	A.	Isr.	?	Ph D	Emp	FT	N	Y
Udit	63	41	F	M	Trad	M.	N. Af	N Afr.	SS c	Emp	S.E.	Y	Y

Part = participant, A = age, YIB = Years living in Britain, G= gender, MS = Marital status (Married/single), RS = religious status (secular/traditional/religious), EB = Ethnic background (Ashkenazi/Mizrahi) COB = continent of birth (Israel/Eastern Europe/North-Africa), PCOB = parents country of birth, AQ = Academic qualifications (secondary school/B.A/etc.), PCI

<sup>20</sup> Subjects were given Hebrew pseudonyms that were chosen based on their Hebrew initials as they appear on the English keyboard.

= Professional background in Israel (Student/employed/not employed) , PCB = professional background in Britain, BN = British nationality, CH = children.

### 5.6.2. The participants

After conducting a number of interviews, I noted that the recruitment process yielded a relatively homogenous sample that mainly consisted of middle class, secular, academic *Sabras* (Israelis who were born in Israel) that come from a relatively affluent family background in Israeli society. I also noticed that with the exception of Udit (who lived in Britain for over 40 years) the other participants (who all stepped forward and volunteered to be interviewed) had been living in Britain for 2-14 years. Such a sample does not reflect the population distribution of Israeli society as I know it. The recruitment process stopped once I realized that most of the content areas – e.g. Israeli society, British society, Israeli community, work, raising children, celebrating holidays, etc. - had been repeated consistently and I had managed to expand, somewhat, the variability of my participants sample in terms of their social backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, religious orientation, and class membership). This allowed me to discuss the content and the interview dynamics also in terms of these categories and learn about their significance.

This disproportionate sample in terms of social class (replicated in previous research on Israeli emigrants, e.g. Hart, 2004, Floman, 2007), the length of stay abroad and the difficulty of recruiting members of alternative audiences constitute *the first finding* in my research (even before analysing the content of the interview texts) and can be explained in various ways. First, the group of middle class, secular Israeli academics constitute a larger portion of the overall emigrant Israeli population than their representation in general Israeli society (Della Pergola, 2012, Klingbail, and Shiloh, 2012) and therefore a researcher is more likely to sample members of this group. Second, those middle class Israelis abroad who have an academic background are more familiar with academic research and perhaps feel more comfortable with the interview setting and are therefore more likely than other, non-academic Israeli audiences, to take part in it. Third, my hypothesis is that this disproportionate sample discloses the *interest* in and the engagement with this topic among this population of Israelis, the middle-class backbone of Israeli society. As argued

in Uriely (1994), Gold (2002) and Floman (2007), because they are frequently marginalized in Israeli society and because they come from moderately religious families, Jewish-Israelis from lower social classes and other members of marginalized groups find it easier to integrate into local communities, be it the Jewish religious and orthodox communities, Arab or Muslim communities in London or general British society and might be less concerned with maintaining 'an Israeli national identity'. By contrast, the preoccupation with 'Israeli national identity' is mainly the concern of a middle-class Israeli group which has got more to lose in terms of material, social and cultural capital that they accumulated in Israel and for whom the transition to another country clashes with their Zionist upbringing and consequently involves harder choice making. This hypothesis also explains why the vast majority of respondents lived in Britain around 10 years, i.e. they were still unsure whether they would stay or return. Indeed the question whether to go back or not (and if yes, when) was raised in all but two (Nira's and Liat's) of the interviews although at times it seems to function as an acceptable discourse of nationality (where subjects are expected to signal their on-going engagement with Israel through mediating going back) rather than a practical issue.

Within this relatively homogenous and skewed sample the narrative analysis reveals great variations between participants. Subjects entertained a variety of ideas and feelings towards Israel, Israeli society, life in Britain, etc., in a way that could not be accounted for by the demographic categories such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, academic or economic status, parents' background etc. While many topics were replicated spontaneously across the different interviews (concern with children's future identity or reference to various groups in British society – Jews, Muslims, local Israelis or generally, the local British public), subjects had different ways of using these topics within their personal stories of 'who they are' as Israelis in Britain.

### **5.7. Using interviews as data collection tools**

According to Willig (2008), interviews have become the most popular way of generating data in qualitative research. As qualitative researchers, we acknowledge that the interview texts (and other means of communication) do not give us access to the 'real' experience but rather to the participants'

representation which is mediated by the specific socio-cultural context within which they produce this account (Riessman, 2008). Of all data collection methods, open and semi-structured interviews especially encourage the generation of narratives (Hiles and Cermac, 2008) since they offer the interviewee the space, time and audience (the interviewer) that encourages them to tell their personal version. Discursive psychologists (e.g. Potter and Hepburn, 2005) argue that the interview has to be studied as a unique social practice in itself, different from other forms of communications such as speeches or conversations. They argue that its unique communicative rules have to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the narrative produced.

The main aim in narrative interviewing is to generate detailed personal accounts from subjects that could teach us something about their personal engagement and interpretation of the social. In my interviews, I focused on the private and personal interpretation, embarrassing as it might be for the speakers, to capture their (if only momentary) subjective angle and private location within what they see as Israeliness. In short, how do they define their 'Israeli national identity'? Potter and Hepburn (2005) argue that participants are invited to participate in interviews 'as members of a social category of some kind' (295); in my case, as Israelis living abroad. However, they also came with a myriad of other social identities that intersected with that one.

### **5.8. The interview schedule**

As the title of my thesis discloses – *What do we talk about when we talk about 'national identity'* and in line with qualitative research tradition (see Willig, 2008) I approached the interviews without specific prior hypotheses as to how 'Israeli national identity' would be constructed, what contents would be raised, what power-relations would be revealed by taking these subject positions and how subjects would accommodate the social axioms of nationality within their personal narrative of 'who they are'. Based on the theoretical literature and the material generated from the two pilot interviews, I prepared an interview schedule that consisted of a small number of questions that all interviewees were asked and the conversation developed differently from these. Since the interviewees often come with their own agendas, as argued before, and the texts are co-produced out of the interviewee-interviewer encounter, a different

interview atmosphere was developed in each meeting. I opened with a short and telegraphic description of the research, explaining that it aimed to study the notion of 'national identity' among Israelis who live in Britain. The consent forms were given and signed. This was followed by an open question: 'tell me a bit about you'. The decision to open with this orienting question was taken following the two pilot interviews and the exposure to the BNIM (Biographical Narrative Interpretative Method) which studies how interviewees narrate their biographies (Buckner, 2005). The aim was to generate some general biographical information about the speaker and since I did not give the interviewees any guidelines as to what aspects they were expected to address, participants were left to tell whatever *they* felt was relevant in the context of an interview about 'Israeli national identity' and I was able to learn what biographical details seemed salient *for them* in connection to this topic. In retrospect, this self-introduction often constituted an 'abstract' where main areas of concern that were later elaborated were flagged. Dorit, for example, mentioned that she came to London 'probably because she didn't find love in Israel'. Later in the interview the topic of romantic and gender power relations became central when she discussed the romantic power relations between couples of Jewish-Israelis and local Jews. Liat mentioned in her introductory description the circumstances of her parents' immigration to Israel and the frequent translocations that the family has gone through. Her own sense of transnationalism and ambivalence towards living in Israel was later explored in this context.

Since my main goal was to try and arrive at what the speaker regarded as 'Israeliness' and their identification with it, the other two questions that all participants were asked were: 'what does it mean for you to be an Israeli?' and 'what does it mean for you to be an Israeli in London/Britain?', which attempted to focus on the specification of the British/London context and the 'diasporic' condition. I paid special attention to any reference of being Israeli (e.g. when participants argued that 'this is very Israeli') and followed such comments with 'in what way is it Israeli?' In this way I hoped to create a private/personal, as well as collective, reservoir of images, signifiers, myths and stories that address the popular and private notion of Israeliness.

The interview concluded with a question that all participants were asked: if there was anything else they wanted to add. This seemingly procedural question often yielded some highly interesting material that often recapitulated (rather than added) what the participants thought of as the most important aspect in their speech or what areas they were most concerned about. In the psychoanalytic section, I argued that participants often have explicit or implicit concerns that they are trying to deal with by coming to the interview and telling their story (although I also argued that the researcher has a limited ability to reveal these within the constraints of the research structure). Throughout his interview, for instance, I wondered what made Roni want to be interviewed. Just before ending I asked him this question and his response (detailed in chapter eight) about the fear of being caught in an 'Israeli ghetto' if he stayed in London, helped to clarify some of the other segments of interview. Overall 12 interviews (and two pilot interviews) were conducted. They lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. Most interviews were held in the interviewees' homes while four of them were conducted in spaces I offered.

### **5.9. Transcription, translation and coding**

Following the interviews, which were all conducted in Hebrew, I transcribed them in their entirety and translated in full the first four for my supervision. For the remaining interviews, I translated only the extracts that were destined for analysis. I found that it was easier for me to closely transcribe the texts to Hebrew, to code and complete the analysis in Hebrew, before translating them to English. Thus, the translated version constitutes the end product of a long analytic process. The translation process did require me to go back and forth between the Hebrew original and the English version in a way that often sharpened my attention and understanding of specific nuances (see later for the 'translation' section).

On first sight, the transcription of the interview texts and the coding that reflect it appeared to be merely technical. Having gone through the process of transcribing the interviews, I learnt about the huge variety of verbal and non-verbal articulations in the interviewees' speech which forced me to reconsider the above view. Theorists such as Mishler (1986), Emerson and Frosh (2004), Riessman, (2008) or Willig (2008) regard the transcription as part of the

researcher's interpretative process and an inseparable stage in its interpretation. Since there is no way of decoding *everything* that went on in the interview encounter, either verbally, visually, bodily or emotionally, in a way that would capture and re-create these moments, Taylor (2001) argues that 'a transcript therefore constructs a certain version of the talk or interaction which is to be analysed. This does not, of course, mean that it is false or misleading but simply that it is not neutral. The process of transcription selects out the features which the analyst has decided are relevant, that is what the analyst counts as data' (p. 38). Consequently, 'the 'same' stretch of talk can be transcribed very differently, depending on the investigator's theoretical perspective, methodological orientation, and substantive interest' (Riessman, 2008, p. 29). I found that the initial transcription was crude and captured mainly the essential, more evident parts of speech, whereas additional hearings revealed many more verbal and non-verbal nuances that helped to fine-tune the hypotheses. My attention to the recording was also affected by the knowledge and data I had generated in the research process thus far. For example, in the fourth interview, with Michael, the significance of the signifier '*Ha'aretz*' (THE Land – a reference to Israel) was revealed to me (although I was aware of it intuitively before) when he interrupted and corrected himself saying 'I was in a *Bar Mitzva* in Isra...in *Ha'aretz*'. This new knowledge affected the interpretation of previous (and future) interview recordings where the reference (or lack of reference) to '*Ha'aretz*' and its different discursive usage compared to 'Israel', had previously escaped my attention. Hence, each hearing could potentially reveal new aspects of previous texts. Over the course of the interviews I have accumulated a list of significant words (e.g. roots, live, reside, growing up or being born) which I then checked against the various interview texts. Some signifiers seemed significant in many texts, but each interview yielded its 'unique' key signifiers.

#### **5.10. The researcher's style of analysis**

I found that the method of analysis differs from one empirical research study to another due to the differential theoretical approaches (content vs. structural vs. dialogic narrative analysis), the structure of research (e.g. multiple interviews vs. single case study, longitudinal or short-term research) and even the

personal preferences and tastes of each researcher. Riessman argues that selection depends on the 'situated perspectives and commitments an investigator brings to narrative inquiry' (2008, p. 200). Hence, while I have drawn considerably on Emerson and Frosh's critical narrative approach (2004) for the coding and analysis of the texts (who in turn, drew on Gee's structural analysis), my analysis and transcription of twelve interviews with often highly verbal participants differs from their analysis which was based on two interviews with a single not especially verbal youngster and was designed as a methodological guidebook (of how to conduct a critical narrative analysis). Because my research was based on a relatively large number of interview texts each consisting of approximately eighteen Hebrew transcribed pages, my analysis focused on specific short extracts consisting of not more than sixty lines while knowing that much material had to be left unanalysed. This made the task of choosing extracts for analysis especially challenging (see later section). Given the nature of my research, I had to balance a fine-grained *within-interview* text analysis that sought to study the subjective interpretation of 'Israeliness' of this specific interviewee in this specific interview section, with an *across-interview* analysis that could teach me about the generalizability of certain individual engagements and common usages among Israeli participants. I have tried to address this tension by enclosing short extracts dealing with the topic under question which were taken from other interviews alongside the main extract for analysis which was more closely analysed.

#### **5.10.1. Choosing extracts for analysis and for the final writing**

Each of the 12 interview recordings yielded 12-18 transcribed pages in Hebrew (which added up to roughly 15-20 pages per interview in English since Hebrew is more concise than English). Consequently, I was required to select one or two extracts from each interview for analysis. This proved to be a challenging, often frustrating task. When choosing, I tried to capture a significant segment of speech that caught my attention either during the interview or after reading the transcription. At times my attention focused on the usage of stereotypes, myths and cultural axioms prevalent in Israeli culture (Dorit and Michael's applications of classical Zionist narrative, Yariv's racial discourse of nationality, or Noga's vision of the split world in its relation to Israel). At other times I noted

specific emotional intensity in the interview encounter (Liat and Nira's critical perspectives of Israel), a specific usage of certain words (e.g. 'Tlusha' – torn away, in Na'ama's interview) or exceptional usage of culturally familiar concepts ('an area free of Jews' – by Ariella, or 'the Israeli ghetto', by Roni). I also noted repetitive usage of specific words by certain interviewees or their application by different interviewees (choosing the usage of 'Ha'aretz' vs 'Israel' or 'reside' vs. 'live' proved to be significant in the way speakers sought to locate themselves vis-à-vis Israel). Through Ariella's story of her dramatic conflict with a member of her workshop (presented in chapter eight), I was able to demonstrate many of the aspects that have been discussed throughout this chapter. In the story she made special use of specific terms (e.g. 'an area free of Jews') and stereotypes about Israeliness (e.g. as 'warm' or 'truthful' people) and narrated them in a way which allowed her to present Israeliness as an inherent trait that stands in the way of full integration in British society. This in turn served her to justify her decision to return to Israel after living eleven years in London. Roni's usage of 'the Israeli ghetto' (chapter nine) appeared significant in describing his own experience (and concerns) of living in London as well as articulating certain Zionist preconceptions about living away from Israel and was therefore chosen for analysis although it did not demonstrate a clear narrative structure compared for example with Nira's story (chapter seven) of riding her bike during the memorial day for the dead soldiers. Thus, in choosing the extracts for analysis I was driven by multidimensionality of the narrative: the salience of specific signifiers within the narrated content, the dialogic-cultural context within which the narrative was created, and the narrators' private agenda (or private narrative) that drove them to volunteer to be interviewed. All these extracts that were chosen for analysis accumulated, eventually, to form a 'data bank', already selected out of the huge amount of raw interview material.

### **5.10.2. Presenting the findings**

When writing the final thesis I had to make a second selection out of this already 'digested' material and to categorize it in a systematic and meaningful way. The various elements of speech and the interrelation between them are presented across four 'Findings' chapters. *Chapter six* reflects my interest in

subjects' investment in the collective imaginary – i.e. the classical Zionist narrative, in my view the pillar of the imagined Israeli community. It presents the usage that subjects make of certain elements of the hegemonic Zionist narrative, and popular stereotypes about 'Israeliness' or about 'who we are'. The emphasis is placed on the tension between coherence and idealization of the nation and its disruption as part of the effort to narrate certain areas of conflict in the interviewee's life. The other three chapters follow a classical division in immigration and diaspora studies (e.g. Fathi, 2011) corroborated by my interview material where immigrants or diasporans tend to reference themselves in regards to three locales: the 'home' Israeli society from which they have migrated – *chapter seven*; the local British society (and the relationships with three significant local groups: Jews, the general British public and Arab and/or Muslims) – *chapter eight*; and the community or diaspora of Jewish-Israelis in Britain – *chapter nine*. To demonstrate certain claims I made within the fine grained analysis, I enclosed short extracts from the same interview or from other interviews which have only been presented for their manifest content. For these, I have not included a fine grained structural analysis.

### **5.10.3. Analysing the text's micro structures (stresses and lines)**

As a structural analyst, Gee (1991, 2005) distinguishes between micro and macro structures of the text, all of which are important to arrive at the narrator's specific style and make grounded claims about the narrator's personal meanings conveyed in their text. However, while Gee focuses mainly on the narrative structure in an attempt to enrich understandings of what the narrator had in mind, my psychosocial approach shifts the attention 'from what is said and/or how it is said to the dialogic environment in all its complexity: historical and cultural context, audiences for the narrative and shifts in the interpreter's positioning over time' (Riessman, 2008, p. 137). Consequently I have used Gee's method of structural analysis of micro and macro text structures as a broad guideline but also paid attention to other aspects of speech, such as the role of the interviewer in the construction of text and the broader cultural system of signification revealed by the co-constructed text. Riessman describes well the overall strategy of analysis that I have also followed. She

writes: 'I start from the inside, from the meaning encoded in the form of the talk, and expand outward' (1993, p. 61).

A micro analysis refers to the basic idea units – specific words that are emphasized by pitch glides and single sentences that communicate basic intentions. Discursive and conversational social analysts (e.g. Potter and Hepburn, 2005, Potter, 2009) look closely at the minuscule ways communication is carried out and apply systems of coding such as that of Gail Jefferson (1972) which marks pitch glides, short and long pauses, exclamations, question marks, accelerated speech, lowered or heightened volume and different means of approval. However, as a reader, I often found myself lost in this complicated, cryptic and confusing system of marking which alienates the text rather than renders it more vivid. And yet, 'the different stress patterns in a spurt of speech set up its *intentional contour*' (Gee, 2005, p. 121) and direct the hearer's attention to specific aspects of the content that the speaker wanted to convey and adds greater validity to the researcher's interpretations. My analysis therefore started with the underlining of words that interviewees' and interviewer emphasized although I did not mark them differentially according to *how* exactly they have been emphasized (as suggested by the Jefferson system of coding). Thus, Liat describes her preference for living away from Israel. She said:

1. and it was terribly easy for me to get used to being there
2. It was... it was sort of difficult like it's difficult moving from one place to another
3. Like moving schools
4. But the transition to South America was very smooth and easy
5. And was received with a lot of... happiness {I cough}
6. And returning to Ha'aretz was very very-very-very difficult [later]

The words Liat chose to emphasize and the adverbs and adjectives she picked ('*terribly easy*', '*very smooth*', '*very-very-very difficult*') serve to dramatize her main argument that, contrary to most expectations, for her life abroad as a child was easy whereas life in Israel was difficult. If other words would have been emphasized, e.g. 'for me', or 'from one place to the other', my attention and interpretation would have been directed to alternative areas, i.e. her

unique, exceptional experience, or the difficulty of frequently moving between one place and another.

- Below is the marking system I used to highlight certain aspects in the text which included:
- uncompleted words that have been interrupted in the middle (e.g. It was funn={y})
- hesitations and pauses (marked with ...)
- slang words often taken from Arabic alongside their translation in curly brackets (e.g. 'and I was sort of really Mabsuta {happy/content in Arabic})'
- repeated words
- Important signifiers in Hebrew were noted in italics and their translation or explanation was added in curly brackets (e.g. Our *Hutzpah* {audacity or straight-forwardness}). Hebrew concepts that appeared a few times were only translated in their initial appearance.
- Usage of an English word in the speech was noted in curly brackets (e.g. and they are all very friendly, {Eng.} really, but I still feel the difference').
- My own questions or interventions are brought in square brackets ([so the family basis was actually there, in your experience, and you were a... remote?])

After transcribing the text in Hebrew, I broke it down into numbered lines which marked the basic idea units. In the above example, lines four and five from Liat's extract work together to form one idea unit (and a few of these formed a stanza):

4. But the transition to South America was very smooth and easy
5. And was received with a lot of... happiness {I cough}

#### **5.10.4. Analysing the text's macro-structure (stanzas and parts)**

Gee's structural coding (1991, 2005) has been widely used by psychosocial empirical researchers (e.g. Riessman, 1993, 2008, Emerson and Frosh, 2004, Saville-Young and Frosh, 2010), perhaps because it aims to look at the particular specific styles that each speaker brings with him/her. Following other

psychosocial researchers, I also include in my analysis the parts played by the researcher and the way hegemonic social discourses and the cultural system of signification are reflected in the texts, which Gee leaves out. Gee argues that breaking the text into smaller units such as lines, stanzas, strophes and parts allows the researcher to 'reveal' an underlying structure and narrative in what appears on first sight as fragmented, disorganized and structure-less text. I opened the analysis with a short segment that preceded the extract I analysed closely so as to introduce the context for that extract. This segment of speech was mainly presented for its overt context and was not analysed in depth. In the analysed extract itself stanzas were made of a succession of lines which together promoted a common idea – in the above example, demonstrating how life in South America was far better than life in Israel. A group of stanzas formed a common part. In Liat's text, this specific stanza aimed to highlight the prioritization of family identification over national identification. In spite of its neglect of social content, I found Gee's approach to text analysis most helpful in identifying the main themes and contents around which groups of lines are organized. This also helped to clarify the role that each stanza played in the construction of a larger narrative and provided potential hypotheses about why certain arguments and examples were brought up by the speaker, what they aimed to convey and demonstrate, and why the speech often got caught up in hesitations when contradictory examples disrupted the main story and revealed areas of conflict or uncertainty. In short, Gee's structural analysis helps to identify the speaker's skeletal narrative against which diversions, contradictions and disruption can be studied.

### **5.11 Translation**

As mentioned before, all the interviews were conducted, transcribed, coded and analysed in Hebrew. Selected extracts were translated into English. This posed certain problems that researchers who demonstrate their findings in their mother language do not face. The grammatical structure of the sentences in Hebrew is different from that in English. For example, the adjective follows the noun rather than precedes it; there is an explicit difference between males and females which will not be captured in the English translation unless specifically mentioned: a 'friend' will be recognized for its gender in the Hebrew

version which might contribute additional meaning to the text. Translating the extracts also involved decisions about which words should be translated (and how) and which words would be kept in their original Hebrew version. Na'ama said:

I'm comfortable being a....foreigner. Here, I'm isolated [*'Tlusha'* - literally torn away] and it makes it easier for me to handle... I feel that I haven't exhausted life yet: {Exhausting life means} [talking in an ironic tone] Here. I live (*'Chaya'*). I bought a house. I live (*'Chaya'*) in Ha'aretz. This is my place.

In this short extract I chose to keep some of the Hebrew words because they exemplify some unique meanings significant for the construction of belonging among other respondents and are being used here in order to make a personal claim (mocking at the Israeli middle-class dream of settledness). 'Isolated' was presented with its Hebrew translation (*'Tlusha'*) to demonstrate the exceptional, unconventional usage of such a verb which normally would hold negative connotations of alienation and lack of belonging. Likewise, adding the Hebrew translation of 'live' enabled me to contextualize her talk within the broader, cultural 'Israeli lexicon of belonging' (see chapter six) and compare it with other respondents. Had I not kept the Hebrew translation the uniqueness of this term would have been lost. Slang words from Arabic, whose usage was also found to be significant, were left in their Arabic form next to their English translation. Having to think about the appropriate translation of specific words also sharpened my attention to the usage that the speaker seemed to be trying to convey. Eventually, as in other stages of analysis, I found myself going back and forth between the original recording and its final written presentation in a way that constantly opened up new perspectives on the text and demonstrated the inherent discrepancy between the original interview experience and its final representation on paper. Finally, verbatim interview material often comes across as inarticulate and disrupted. Translating these into another language makes the text look even more incoherent and messy and I needed to restrain the urge to clean it up. After all, while presenting my participants' efforts of narration I was also engaged in narrating this thesis in front of my own audience – my supervisors and future readers.

## 5.12. Ethics

Ethical considerations in qualitative research refer to any moral issues that might arise within the immediate research encounter and beyond it. These are addressed institutionally by the university and help researchers secure the rights of their research participants. Nevertheless, researchers inevitably come across unexpected ethical dilemmas that arise out of the immediate interview encounter and/or following it - for example when analysing the texts, reporting the findings or making further use of the participants' texts. I will briefly address the ethical issues that I encountered in the course of this research.

Institutional ethics - I have followed closely Birkbeck's ethical guidance when planning and conducting the research. This included keeping the confidentiality of the interviewees by using pseudonyms and altering any salient information that might disclose their identities (e.g. country of birth, place of work or town of residence in Israel). Likewise, the interviewees' participation in the research was itself kept confidential. The participants were all given a printed description of the research which informed them about its general aims – to study Israelis' understandings of their national identity (see appendix 1) - and stated its affiliation to Birkbeck College. They were also asked to sign a consent form where they were assured that their confidentiality would be respected and they were informed that they could opt out of the research whenever they wanted. Participants that showed interest in the outcome of the research were promised a concise summary of it. One participant wanted to look at the transcript of the interview and later asked that a certain part, dealing with sensitive family issues be removed from the records.

Other ethical dilemmas - Although all speakers stepped forward voluntarily, the unavoidable discrepancy between the implicit and explicit agendas of each side of the encounter (interviewee and interviewer) and the dynamics that developed throughout interviews could have potentially brought about frustrations and disappointments. Throughout the interviews and during the analysis of the material, it became clear that some of the participants (e.g. Na'ama, Roni or Yariv) came to be interviewed in order to work out an important dilemma (often around the decision whether to return to Israel or to settle for good in Britain but also, more broadly, around 'belonging' or the life

away from Israel). Such expectation and need rendered them more vulnerable and, presumably, placed me in a position of power. Although they did not, intentionally, come to seek advice, nor was such advice promised, I felt that for some of the participants who knew that I was a psychologist (if they received this invitation from any of my colleagues or if they corresponded with me via email where my signature includes my profession) there was an expectation that clarity would follow the interview. While some did articulate a sense of satisfaction with the interview process, and enjoyed the possibility to express their views and emotions, I noted a certain disappointment among at least two of the participants (Yariv and Na'ama). Na'ama, for example, who termed her life in Britain as 'life on hold', described the heavy responsibility she feels she is carrying for making a decision whether the family will return to Israel since her husband would definitely like to stay. In such cases I specifically addressed the frustration and noted, on the one hand, the limitations that an interview encounter has for addressing practical life dilemmas while, on the other hand, highlighting the opportunities it provides to lay out, think and speak about controversial issues. Participants were offered to call me again to discuss the interview.

I feel that since, overall, I was tuned to my participants' concerns and handled these concerns ethically the expectations and frustrations form an integral 'risk' when taking part as an adult in the research encounter alongside the aforementioned advantages.

While it has become customary in contemporary qualitative research to acknowledge the role (and responsibility) that the researcher bears as a co-producer of the interviewee's text, the research encounter as a practice still involves a power relation between the researcher and the participant. This is at least partly due to the inevitable unequal distribution of roles where the participant is the object of study and the researcher, the observer.

In the reflexivity section earlier, and throughout the 'Findings' chapters I include in the analysis, the effects that I might have had on the speakers. I contend that subjects were drawn into specific positions and made certain arguments because of the way they imagined me to be inserted into Israeli culture and society. Some of the participants clearly located me as one of 'their' group – an Academic, Ashkenazi, secular Jewish-Israeli. This allowed

them to express views (e.g. towards religious Israelis or local Jews, Arabs or Muslims etc.) that they might have been reluctant to share with a foreigner or a member of another social class in Israeli society. Such familiarity could have potentially contributed to a certain role confusion masking the role division or boundaries between the researcher and the participant. This was further enhanced by the fact that most of the interviews were held in the participants' homes. This turned the conversation less formal as we often sat in the kitchen or the living room, sipping coffee. Such blurred boundaries and their theoretical as well as ethical implications are characteristic of qualitative social research which are often conducted in less controlled environments and allow even encourage, informal authoritative relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Although some of the assertions were harsh and at times raised antagonism in me, I tried to read and analyse them not as a testament to the speaker's moral merits and 'personality', but rather as part of a more generalized social discourse and as the subjects' effort to locate themselves and me in an intense Israeli social space – in a society that is flooded with political, social and military tensions. This approach helped me to make sense of and engage with the more contentious assertions (e.g. regarding foreigners, Arabs or Muslims, religious Israelis or Mizrahi Jews) and read them as part of the speakers' effort to address a certain troubling condition rather than as an indication of a 'racist subject' or a 'racist discourse'.

### **5.13. Discussion**

In this chapter I have described the various theoretical and practical stages of my research. The main challenge was how to apply a psychosocial theoretical approach to nationality and identity within the framework of qualitative empirical research. I opened with a theoretical discussion of critical narrative analysis which was best suited to address my three research questions (see chapter one).

Given my psychosocial approach to 'identity' as an on-going process of identification –subjects' continuous engagement and negotiation of available social categories – I have opted to use a critical narrative analysis. This approach challenges classical assumptions of *narrative analysis* as

representing the narrator's '*truthful*' *subjectivity* or its overemphasis on the immediate *content*, the speaker's *autonomy* and *authority* and the *coherent structure* underlying the narrative. Riessman argues that in a critical dialogical analysis of narratives 'historical and cultural contexts, audiences for the narrative, and shifts in the interpreter's positioning over time are brought into interpretation. Language – the particular words and styles narrators select to recount experiences – is interrogated, not taken at face value' (2008, p. 137).

At the same time such critical narrative approach challenges basic tenets of *discourse analysis*, which focuses away from subjectivity, the emotional and idiosyncratic interpretations of the text, subjects' agency or their investments in specific discourses and subject positions, and rather is concerned with the social discourses available for usage or the social and discursive power regimes. Thus, a narrative approach helps 'to interrogate personal and dominant social discourses' (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 159) and challenges the social identities provided for the subjects and the discursive reservoir that they are restricted to. I argued that the meanings that emerge out of narratives have to be grounded within the specific usage that the speaker makes of recognizable cultural terms and signifiers. Emerson and Frosh (2004) argue that 'critical narrative analysis constantly subverts tendencies to assume that the 'meaning' of any utterance can be understood on a priori grounds, rather than embedded in, and emergent from, its very specific narrative context' (p. 145).

I have pointed to four areas where the manifest content of narratives (no doubt, important in its own right) has to be critically inspected: a. the existential tension between cohesion/ structure and fragmentation/disruption which underlies any narrative; b. the narrative as a co-constructed product of the interview encounter; c. the narrative as a means to achieve strategic discursive goals; and d. the narrative as emerging from a broader socio-cultural and political system of signification.

Consequently, rather than focusing on one aspect – e.g. how speakers make strategic use of available discourses to achieve discursive tasks (as discursive psychologists do, see Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Potter, 2009) or mapping the subject positions that subjects are restricted to by Zionist ideology (as Foucauldian analysts do e.g. Parker, 2005) - my choice of extracts for analysis

was based on various aspects. At times I was attending more to the specific usage of words and special cultural concepts; in other instances I focused on the interview politics and the distribution of social roles between interviewee and interviewer which determined what could be said about 'national identity'. In yet other instances, I focused on the social pre-conceptions or axioms taken from the Israeli imagined community's cultural reservoir for the definition of 'us' or 'them'. While this complicates, no doubt, the strategy of analysis, it nevertheless captures the messy, complex nature of identities as I choose to see them.

My research included 12 interviewees (7 women, 5 men) who have lived in Britain for 2-40 years and were mainly Ashkenazi, secular, middle class, Israeli Jews. This skewed sample of participants appears to be my first finding even before attending to the texts. In line with previous research of Israeli émigrés (e.g. Uriely, 1994, Floman, 2007), I am proposing that Israeli members of the privileged middle class – the backbone of Israeli society – have higher stakes in the dilemma of whether to stay in Britain or to return and are therefore more likely to take part in research that explores Israeli identity compared with members of marginalized lower classes in Israeli society who have not been socially and economically privileged and for whom the question whether to return or not is not so dilemmatic in this respect.

I have applied Gee's structural method of analysis (1991, 2005) to study the trajectory that the narrative seemed to take. Thus, the analysed extract was appreciated for both its internal structure as well as its position within the overall interview narrative. However, in line with a critical narrative approach, I incorporated my articulations and the social roles I played as an audience which made the text a co-production of both participants who negotiate meanings and acceptable social positions among them. My own emotional engagement with the topics discussed by the interviewees was sometimes also included in the analysis as a reflexive exploration of my own contribution as well as to study collective preconceptions prevalent among Jewish-Israelis.

## Findings – chapters six – nine

That national identities (and identities in general) are contextualized and shifting was aptly articulated by David, who, in response to my question ‘What does it mean for you to be an Israeli?’ answered:

... and there are many aspects to being an Israeli: towards Israel, I mean the interest in what’s going on in Israel, or the longing, or... the connections with the people who are there or thoughts about being an Israeli outside Israel, this is one kind and you have an Israeli in England vis-à-vis the English or.... an Israeli who seeks or doesn’t seek to preserve his Israeli identity and an Israeli with Israeli friends and again, an Israeli with non-Israelis so all these together form the ... ah...the Israeliness.

I found David’s comment very useful after I completed the primary analysis of the interview material and was wondering how to arrange my findings chapters. It struck me that the participants made very different sense of ‘Israeliness’ in different contexts: when they were thinking about Israeli society, about the local Israeli community in Britain/London, the local Jews or when talking about the image of local ‘Arabs’ or ‘Muslims’<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, even within these interfaces, subjects could make very inconsistent statements which often left me puzzled and confused, as if they were guided by some hidden agenda. One can conclude, as some indeed have, that identities are no more than constructed phantoms and therefore easily given to deconstruction. However, I prefer to look at the apparent inconsistencies, mentioned above as indications of the fragmentary qualities of identities which, as many have said before, do matter greatly to people.

However, the participants indicated a limited number of recurring contexts that seemed to be significant for the construction of ‘Israeliness’. These included

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<sup>21</sup> While in the UK the discourse around Israeli tends to contrast between ‘Israelis’ and ‘Palestinians’, in popular Jewish-Israeli culture, ‘Arab’ is a general term applied to anyone speaking Arabic – Muslim, Christian etc. The fact that not all Muslims are Arabs or that not all Arabs are Muslims is often overlooked in Israeli discourse of nationality that is organized around Us (Jews) and Them; ‘Muslims’ or ‘Arabs’. Such an ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ approach is also prevalent in the local Arab-Palestinian culture – I have sometimes been referred to by local people, not to my face, as *Yahudi* – a Jew in Arabic. I will address this variety of terminologies and its specific usage among Jewish-Israelis in chapters seven and eight.

participants' past and present positioning in Israeli society and their current positioning in Britain performed through their encounters with local British Jews, with non-Jewish local British, with the members of the local Israeli community and with local Arabs or Muslims (terms that are often used interchangeably, as mentioned in the previous footnote). Each interviewee emphasized differently the encounter with these groups to make sense of their 'Israeliness'.

The findings part of my thesis includes four chapters. In *chapter six* I will be reviewing basic assumptions, myths and symbols that underline the hegemonic Zionist narrative and ideology as they are being used by subjects for various psychosocial goals. As part of this chapter I will present a glossary of key signifiers that are constitutive of the specific politics of Israeli group belonging. If the national narrative seeks to highlight consistencies in the life of the national group through idyllic imagination, *chapter seven* will present the socio-political complexities of post-ideological Israeli society seen through the eyes of the Jewish-Israeli interviewees. *Chapter eight* presents key aspects of constructing 'Israeli identity' in Britain through the daily encounters with 3 local groups – the Jewish community, the British majority and the local Arabs and Muslims. *Chapter nine* will focus on the dilemmas of constructing an 'Israeli national identity' away from Israel as they emerge in practices of the raising of children and engagement with the local Israeli community.

## Chapter six - the Jewish Israeli subject and the hegemonic Zionist narrative

In the opening chapter of my findings, I draw on Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community' (1991) as a shared national space and on ethnosymbolist approach to nationalism (Smith, 2001) which looks at the contents and symbols of such space to learn about the role of the Zionist national narrative and popular beliefs that draw on it for the construction of the Israeli imagined community. I argue that collective narratives play an important role in the construction and maintenance of a joint imagined community *because*, by their storied nature, they facilitate the imagination of 'a national time' – i.e. forming a temporal, vertical, link between a glamorous past, present conditions, and a promise for a better future while at the same time, horizontally, connecting its subjects to each other through a shared collective space, mutual language and cultural symbols and the promotion of a sense of homogeneity and comradeship. Anderson claims (1991) that 'if nation states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical', the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and still, more important, glide into a limitless future' (p. 11-12). Other collective beliefs which draw on the national narrative cement the notion of collective unity and promote a sense of group grandiosity and exclusivity. Thus, national narratives and the images, myths and concepts that support them, allow subjects to join together and form an illusion of coherence, continuity and union which alleviates daily conditions of social and subjective ambiguity, uncertainty or loneliness.

The Zionist narrative as described in the Declaration of Independence (18/5/1948) provides a convincing example: it tells a story of a nation that was uprooted by force from its land, remained loyal to its origins and returned 2000 years later to reclaim its lawful homeland. Rose (2005) sees the risks of messianism and grandiosity that drives the Zionist movement and its aims. I argue that although it has changed considerably over the years, and is interpreted differently by various political and social groups in Israeli society (Filc, 2006), basic features of the Zionist narrative and its socio-political implications still operate in the formal Jewish-Israel public space (e.g. see the

2011 governmental campaign addressed at Israelis living abroad presented in chapter four) and form the crux of the Israeli imagined community, i.e. shape what Jewish-Israeli subjects consider as the core of their collective identity - Israeliness - for good and for bad (Bar-Tal, 2007). As such, it constitutes a dominant and hegemonic (although not exclusive) discursive and cultural reservoir for subjects to draw on when constructing personal stories and subjective meanings as Jewish-Israelis abroad.

Against Anderson's assertion, Bhabha (1990, 1994) argues that the nation is narrated along multiple, contradictory temporalities which give it its distinctive 'Janus-faced' (Bhabha, 1990, p.3) qualities. In the following chapters I will be presenting disruptions and contestations of the Zionist canon and ways in which other social categories - economics, gender, class, and religion - intersect and disturb it. However, in my opening findings chapter I wish to demonstrate the discursive value and appeal of Zionist symbols, images and themes as they are applied by three subjects to accommodate personal concerns, disturbing experiences and/or in order to manage the interview encounter. This also follows on my first research question: What hegemonic and counter-hegemonic national narratives, myths and symbols do Jewish-Israeli subjects draw on while relating to and trying to make sense of their national identities? Methodologically, I have chosen to present the discursive usage of this national canon through a close analysis of a single interview. In this way, I also hope to demonstrate the methodological approach I took for analyzing texts and to unfold some of the issues I dealt with in my work process. In a separate section, I also present some important signifiers that took part in the negotiation and construction of an 'Israeli identity' away from Israel.

### **6.1. The national narrative as a tool to manage Israeli-diaspora relations: 'The Israelis are the strong people!'**

Dorit (pseudonym) is a 34 year-old woman, currently unemployed, who came to London two and a half years ago, met an Israeli man and got married recently. She lives in a rented apartment in a Jewish North-Western London neighborhood popular among local Jews and Israelis.

When asked to describe briefly her background she chose to talk about her decision to come to London and said:

You need a good enough reason for leaving everything at the age of 34. I didn't have that good a reason, or I had a personal reason, that, simply, the need for novelty. I had, I have a charming family, I had a good career, I had many guys I kind of went out with, ones who courted me, but I didn't have, I wasn't satisfied, because I guess I didn't have love and I was looking for some...

Dorit signaled her romantic relationships as a probable motive for leaving Israel or at least as an area of preoccupation. She also demonstrated a common belief of what constitute good or not good-enough reasons for 'leaving everything at the age of 34', perhaps referring here to gender roles and expectations whereby personal or romantic issues do not constitute good enough reasons to leave for a '34 year old woman'. In the extract I'm about to analyse, Dorit focuses on the relationship between local Jews and Jewish Israelis, particularly the romantic relationships between members of the two groups. The analysis will trace the personal areas of concern that she is trying to sort out with the help of common beliefs and self-perceptions prevalent in Israelis' discourse around the national group.

In order to understand the specific usage of the extract that the speaker makes, it is important to note the interview history or narrative from which the analysed extract emerged. Dorit shared her ambivalence towards the exclusion of non-Jewish communities and individuals (e.g. foreign workers, refugees and their children), compared mono-religious suspicious and inhospitable Israel to multicultural London and tried to explain it through Jewish-Israelis' fear of assimilation, a potential loss of the Jewish state and the need to preserve Jewish identity. She related it to the condition of demographic threat that Jews in Israel and abroad are constantly dealing with and said:

'Here, too, the Jewish community is very closed, by the way, even more than... Here too, the Jewish community really preserves itself....they are much more... If I compare my Jewish friends here to my Israeli

friends here, they are much more Zionist than us, they believe {in God} more than us, they are more united, in their Judaism’.

In *this* discursive context, the British-Jewish group which *‘really preserves itself’* and its members who are *‘more united, in their Judaism’* are used to generalize a claim (of seclusion) about Jews and Judaism in general which could serve as mitigating circumstances for the exclusionary attitude to mainly African refugee and migrant illegal workers<sup>22</sup> in Israel. However, unlike Israeli society whose acts of self-preservation and anti-assimilation are seen as exclusionary and racist towards non-Jewish foreigners, the secluded (*‘closed’*) local Jewish community which *‘really preserves itself’* (see a discussion of ‘preserving the identity’ in chapter 12) is presented in a positive light (*‘amazing’*) and is admired. In contrast to her Israeli friends, her local Jewish friends seem to have managed to retain values that Israelis have lost – the national affiliation (*‘more Zionist than us’*), the religious practices (*‘believe’ {in God} more than us’*) and the sense of a united community organized around religious identity (*‘united in their Judaism’*). At this point in the interview, diasporic Jewish identity is presented as fuller, marking the lost values of contemporary Jewish-Israeli identity. The comparison between the two groups was often raised by other interviewees as a means to define what an Israeli is (i.e. someone who is different from a local Jew). The comparison and competition between the two groups and her position as an Israeli subject takes a turn when I ask her specifically about the relationship between the two groups.

Stanza 1 – the relationship between Israelis and British Jews

1. The relationships between the two groups [the Jewish-Israelis and the British Jews] How do you understand the....?

Stanzas 2 – The main argument (1) - Israelis are the strong people

2. The Israelis are the strong people [as in folk/nation]
3. [The Israelis are the strong people?]
4. {she laughs}No I'm joking, look, look

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<sup>22</sup> According to human rights organizations, since 2003 an estimated 50,000 refugees and labour migrants from Africa (mainly Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea, some but not all are Muslims) have illegally entered Israel (Sherwood - *The Guardian*, May 2012). Their presence has attracted much public debate and conflict.

The claim: 'the Israelis are the strong people' (2) became the axis around which the rest of the extract, which will be outlined below, revolved.

Structurally, the extract is clearly constructed around the main statement (that draws on Zionist ideology) – 'Israelis are the strong people' (stanzas 7, 11), the efforts to ground it by providing examples from daily practices (stanzas 8, 12, 13, 14, 15,) and frequent disclaimers that contest its validity and point to her discomfort with this hegemonic discourse (stanzas, 9, 10).

This chapter will trace popular Israeli social concepts that may discursively support Dorit's assertion around Israelis being the 'strong people' in their relation to local British Jews, look into the discursive value that such arguments may have for her while, at the same time, addressing potential reasons for the discomfort she expressed.

Two aspects stand out in Dorit's spontaneous response: the reference to *strength* as a category of difference between the two groups and her unusual usage of the concept 'people' ('*Am*') to define the Israelis as a group.

The theme of strength as a marker of self-definition often appears in the popular public Israeli discourse and could easily be interpreted as a derivative of the Zionist image of the Israeli as 'the New Jew', in contrast to the 'Old diasporic Jew'. Hence, Dorit's spontaneous response '*the Israelis are the strong people*' may resonate with common discourses of Israeli nationalism and with basic aspects of Zionist Ideology. However, although a theme of strength, force or militarism could be found in Israeli public discourse (Sasson-Levi, 2006), we have to look for the meaning that this particular speaker applies to 'strength'.

Dorit's usage of the term '*people*' ('*Am*' or Volk) is not very common. There are various ways to define the national group (group, nation, society) and 'people' comes closer to an ethnic definition which essentializes the nature of the group. It is much more difficult for foreigners to join 'A People' as it draws clear boundaries around a common historical tradition. While in the section preceding the analysed extract Dorit talked with ambivalence about the pitfalls of Jewish-Israeli essentialism leading to the exclusion of foreign workers and their children from Israeli society, the terminology she applies here ('*We are the strong People*') is taken from this contested collective approach of ethnic seclusion and demonstrates how speakers can navigate their way by using a

variety of signifiers which might support a variety of arguments which sometimes contradict each other. I argue that in this context, when she is about to glorify the Israeli group, it is useful for her to present its merits as essential rather than circumstantial and/or arbitrary.

After making a series of disclaimers which point to local Jews' cultural, economic and material advantages over Israelis, in stanza 7 she comes back to her main argument that 'the Israelis are the strong people'.

Stanza 7 – main argument repeated (3): socially Israelis are desired

25. Yes, yes. Socially, in daily life I see many, many Israeli guys, slash, sorry Jewish guys or Jewish girls

26. That yearn {or cry out} for an Israeli partner

Stanza 8 – main argument exemplified (1): Israelis are attractive for local Jews because (1) they serve as a gateway for local Jews to make *Aliya*

27. They really like to make Aliya

28. But like everyone else they are a bit afraid that they wouldn't find a job, that they ... [ahhm]

29. And the... the... Their breakthrough will be through their partner, they really...

30. [so in this respect the Israelis are the strong people]

Stanza 9 – A disclaimer (3): this rule only applies for social relations.

31. So it's ...it's funny, no, it's funny, I was merely joking ...

32. The strong people socially wise, where you see here really plenty...

33. I see here... once again, but I'm talking about the social relations

Stanza 10 – A disclaimer (4): this is my own subjective impression

34. Out of my subjective impressions

35. I don't talk at all about... I don't want to... I don't know

36. I don't know if I'll sound so smart. If I'm saying what I say

37. Because these are my personal feelings

38. It's very important for me to note these things.

Stanza 11 – main argument (4): socially Israelis are desirable for local young Jews.

39. That I see Jewish guys are really, really, really looking for Israeli girls

40. And Jewish girls are really, really, really enthusiastic about Israeli guys, ah... there's...

Stanza 12 – Main argument exemplified (2) Israelis have characteristics that local Jews don't have (confidence, *hutzpah*, knowledge of Hebrew) and would like to have.

41. [So what do we have to offer them?]  
42. Our Hutzpah {Hebrew -'audacity or straight-forwardness'}  
43. Our confidence  
44. That they want to learn Hebrew through us  
45. Our Hebrew, the... the fact that ...

Stanza 13 – Main argument exemplified (3): Israelis are attractive for local Jews because they allow them to experience Israel as a local Israeli by hosting them

46. Yes, all my girl-friends, the Jewish girl- friends, are dying for me to invite them to Israel  
47. And I invite them, some of them came along with me  
48. And they are very enthusiastic about having a friend in Israel who hosts them {in her house}

Stanza 14 – Argument exemplified (4): they help them reconnect with their forgotten Jewishness

49. They, they also kno... They also know I think that through us they get in touch with their Jewishness, more {than they usually do}  
50. Because here you have many Jews who are by definition Jewish but they don't kind of, live it in their daily life  
51. They don't 'do' {celebrate} holidays  
52. They don't observe it very much  
53. And through the Israelis, all of a sudden , someone reminds them that today it's Purim  
54. All of a sudden, someone reminds them that today it's...  
55. They do get more connected to it, they connect to these parts {aspects}

Stanza 15 Example (5) – Israelis are attractive because of their personality- confidence, Hutzpah, joy of life – all a product of the sunny climate

56. I think it's because of our personality, let's say the...

57. We are Sabras
58. We grew up in a country of sun {or a sunny country} all day long we are, sort of...
59. So it's reflected immediately
60. Our confidence,
61. our Hutzpah
62. and they love it
63. Not because they are Jews but because we have a certain joy of life which I think people...that's it.

To ground her claims around the strength of Israelis and in order to stress them, Dorit started with local Jews' advantages over the Israelis. The awareness of the inequality in social, cultural and material resources between locals (Jews) and (Israeli) immigrants/new-comers is common-place in immigrants' experience and daily life conditions; in the current extract Dorit sets out to upset this inequality of power-relations by using various *Zionist ideological arguments and concepts* to balance the odds. Jewish-Israelis find it difficult to consciously associate themselves collectively as inferior, weak and dependent having been raised as the 'New Jews' (although the haunting image of the helpless 'Old Jew' does 'lurk in the shadows', constantly threatening to emerge through the fissures of the 'New Jew' national ethos (McNamara, 1987). The idea of Israeliness that the Jews 'love', according to Dorit, emerges from local Jew's idealization of Israelis, which gives them advantage over diasporic Jews (see chapters 3, 5) and that some Zionist diasporic Jews may indeed share. Zionism's foundational ideological pillar, the 'Negation of Exile' has indeed shaped for many years collective Jewish identity both within Israel and in the Jewish world outside it and is still very influential today. Thus, in this account, the national ideology and its practices become generalized, dominant personal features that Israelis are endowed with, cutting across age, gender, class, professional occupation, appearance etc... It is especially worth noting that in this Zionist story of romantic encounters, gender differences are denied as Israelis all share the same (fortunate) condition of being objects of desire. It is to be noted that canonical collective stories require subjects to relinquish their individuality and enmesh into a definable unified crowd.

Dorit realizes that the intergroup relations she described cannot fully account for the complex relations between the two groups (as described in literature on Israeli immigrants in North America - Gold, 2004, Lahav and Arian, 1999), so while Zionist ideology places the Israeli as an object of admiration for diasporic Jews, reality often proves otherwise and relations between the two groups is often described as distant, troubled or avoidant (Lahav and Arian, 1999). Cultural, religious, linguistic and material differences between the two groups have been cited in other interviews (see chapter eleven).

This disadvantageous socio-economic status of Israelis is balanced here by the attraction of Israeli men and women as objects of love and romance. Dorit, whose preoccupation with social and romantic life was mentioned before, draws on her experience in this field where she 'sees' (in her own eyes and not only hears from others or assumes) 'many, many local young Jews' (25) (and not just 'occasional' or 'some'), that 'yearn', 'cry out' or even 'crave' (and not merely 'look for' or 'show interest in') 'an Israeli partner' (26).

In stanza 8, Dorit explains this 'yearning for an Israeli partner' which is not directly related to the Israeli partner as a person, but rather points to the function that they serve in attaining an even greater wish – 'to make *Aliya*' (28). Hence, the real object of desire for British Jews, according to Dorit, is settling in Israel. This is also Zionism's basic ideological assertion (see Israel's Declaration of Independence presented in chapter 3): that Jews all over the world have always yearned to (re)settle in Israel and have felt that their life abroad is lacking spiritually, socially and psychologically. However, this constant longing to make *Aliya* is unachievable because of practical reasons ('like everyone else they are a bit afraid that they wouldn't find a job' 28) and the 'breakthrough' (29) from this ever-going pattern of unfulfilled wish would be finally achieved 'through their {Israeli} partner' (29). Thus, here the longing or yearning for Zion is displaced and directed to the Israeli partner who could provide this 'breakthrough' to living in Israel.

After I summarized her argument (30) that the Israeli partner holds the key to the fulfillment of a personal wish (to make *Aliya*), which makes her/him 'strong', Dorit went on to provide her third and fourth disclaimers (stanzas 9-10 (So it's ...it's funny, no, it's funny, I was merely joking – 31). One can hypothesize that her uneasiness about her statement stems from disclosing a hidden

power-relations scenario where one (she) occupies a desired position in the Jewish-Israeli, female-male relationship. In an effort to contain this possibly exciting, albeit anxiety-provoking, position of desirability, she restricts it to 'the social relations', 'the strong people socially wise', '...but I'm talking about...' (32-3) and goes on to limit its absolute validity (stanza 10 – fourth disclaimer) by asserting that her claim is based on her subjective impressions (34), or her 'personal feelings' (36). Claiming subjectivity is an effective discursive strategy to justify one's assertions as it cannot be discarded as not-true.

However, Dorit reiterates her argument based on her personal experience where 'Jewish guys are really, really, really looking for Israeli girls, and Jewish girls are really, really, really enthusiastic about Israeli guys' (ls. 39-40), where the desirability of Israeli men and women for local Jewish men and women is emphasized through the adverb repetition. Although Israelis, women and men alike, are equally presented as desired romantic objects for local Jews (as a means for achieving *Aliya*), she introduces classic gender roles in the romantic encounter where men are expected to be active ('look for Israeli girls') and women are passive ('enthusiastic about Israeli guys'). When I probe about the desirable features of Israelis ([so what do we have to offer them?]) (41), colluding with her collective speech ('we'), Dorit adds five more aspects to the one that was already mentioned (making *Aliya*), which might explain this desirability (stanzas 12-15).

Her initial spontaneous response (stanza 12) relates to Israelis' personality traits (Our Hutzpah, Our confidence (42-3). In the current discursive context, *Hutzpah* (42) is strategically applied as one item on the list of desirable Israeli features, here associated with 'confidence' (43). In the collective Israeli imaginary, an 'Israeli *Hutzpah*' is taken fondly as a central feature of the Israeli-New Jew: the ability to be creative, interact in an informal way, take risks against all odds, etc. It is mostly referred to positively when exercised *outside* Israel, or in interactions with non-Israelis. When applied within daily Israeli life, it is seen negatively as a mark of audacity, impoliteness and aggression (and causes many Israelis to complain about the life in Israel – Sela-Shefi, 2006 Bloch and Lemish, 2008). The knowledge of Hebrew is then also presented as a desirable Israeli feature in the eyes of local Jews. Once again, from a Zionist point of view Israelis who provide access to living in Israel also provide access

to speaking Hebrew, 'the true Jewish language', presented here as a Jewish diasporic aspiration which is inaccessible otherwise.

In stanza 13, Dorit further describes the introductory function that Israelis, in this case herself, have for local young Jews which allows them to connect with Israel from a quasi-local position. In line with the classical Zionist narrative, visiting Israel with an Israeli friend 'who hosts them' (48) allows young British Jews to gain temporary access to the 'Israeli experience' which is only secondary to the ultimate 'real thing' – making *Aliya*. According to Dorit, her Jewish girl-friends (rather than her non-Jewish ones) are 'dying for me to invite them to Israel' (46). This points to the special place that Israel, according to Dorit drawing on classical Zionist narrative, plays in the eyes of Jews. Indeed, diasporic Jews have a special relationship to Israel (mostly idealistic but often also critical) as waves of tourism testifies. However, it is relevant in this context to note how the special relationship between Israel and diaspora Jews is understood and interpreted from an Israeli-Zionist approach, influenced by personal experiences of relocation: the need to adjust to a new place and the material, socio-economic and professional disadvantages that come with it. Whereas in the paragraph that immediately preceded this extract (see above) Dorit argued that local Jews are 'much more Zionist than us {Israelis}, they believe {in God} more than us, they are more united, in their Judaism' (as other Jewish-Israeli interviewees asserted often in a critical way, in their interviews – see chapter eleven), for the purpose of the *current* discursive task they are described as 'Jews who are {only} by definition Jewish but they don't kind of, live it in their daily life' (50), or commit to Jewish practices (51-2). Israelis, on the other hand, are cast here by Dorit as the 'identity preservers' who re-introduce local Jews to their otherwise inaccessible 'lost parts' whereby 'through us they get in touch with their Jewishness, more' (49) and 'get more connected' (55) and are reminded of these parts of their identity which have been forgotten (53) hidden or even lost.

In stanza 15, Dorit explains the Israelis' attractiveness in the eyes of local Jews with the national character or collective personality that developed out of the geographical (the sun), political (emancipation) and psychological (confidence) conditions of living in Israel. As Zionism planned and anticipated, a new breed of 'New Jews', governed by a different *psychology* and a different personality,

is to emerge out of the move from the diaspora to the Jewish homeland. For Western-European Jews who lived in political conditions of inferiority, Zionism promised a revolutionary amendment of all life aspects, including a change in weather. Growing up in these 'healthy', 'natural' conditions is assumed to be reflected in the development of a healthy personality characterized by 'confidence' and 'joy of life' (60, 63) and even '*Hutzpah*' (61). Once again (Is. 42-3), Dorit couples '*Hutzpah*' with 'confidence' which is now explained as the product of Sabras upbringing. The connectedness with nature – with 'how things really are' - allows Israelis, according to Dorit citing a Zionist narrative, to be direct and confident in their demands, which translate into *Hutzpah*. Due to the 'faulty' (lack of sun) climatic conditions in Britain, British people, and '*not because they are Jews*' (63), are assumed to lack these personality features ('a certain joy of life') and therefore '*they love it*' (62). This last argument needn't necessarily follow from a Zionist mythology, but could also be drawn from a European vs. Oriental/Mediterranean discourse. In that discursive context, Israelis are taken as an example of the 'free', 'easy-going', 'laidback' and 'optimistic' Mediterranean societies as opposed to the hard-working, ambitious, formal and serious British (Jewish and non-Jewish) Europeans.

Seen from local Jews' perception, the interest and attraction (if it indeed exists) that Dorit describes, could be explained as a way to engage romantically with an acceptable (Jewish) yet exotic other (Israeli) and may disclose social dynamics within the local Jewish community – a wish to maintain identity (to marry a Jew) while at the same time to fulfill a phantasmatic wish to break away from an established and familiar social order through a romantic relationship with an outsider (Israeli).

Throughout the extract, Dorit also made frequent disclaimers, undermining the validity of her claims about Israelis being 'the strong people'. Following the extract she added:

'I don't know, I don't know, I feel terribly uncomfortable with the responses I give, because I feel that they are stupid'.

I felt that Dorit's discomfort stemmed from both the disclosure of private ideas around power-relations between men and women, relating to her position as an (Israeli) object of desire and attraction for local Jews. On another level I

interpreted her discomfort, manifested in the above quote, with the generalizability of her claims – speaking in the plural about Israelis in general, attributing a common personality to a large group of individuals, applying common popular statements of collectivity to explain her personal experience of migration. While collective discourses offer convincing and fascinating explanations to social and private conditions and offer relief from disturbing experiences (e.g. mourning the loss of previous socio-economic status, the longing for loved ones or traumatic experiences of marginalization or exclusion in the new country), they also often clash with alternative discordant personal experiences. This discrepancy often leaves subjects anxious.

Just before ending the interview, Dorit provided a concluding remark that might offer another hypothesis for her usage of images and themes from the canonical national narrative. When asked if she wanted to add anything she said:

My identity as an Israeli in London...I think that... Firstly I'll sum it up in that it is felt much stronger, no doubt, it is manifested regardless of what it is... no doubt... [stronger than what?] Stronger than in *Ha'aretz*. It's... in *Ha'aretz* it doesn't preoccupy you. Here it's an issue that you go around with all the time; I go around with it proudly. For me it's very important to stay Israeli, to be integrated among Israelis, to... to....to know what is going on in *Ha'aretz*, in terms of politics but also in terms of the actuality, even television shows, 'The Big Brother'.

Thus part of the reason Dorit applied collective national narratives might relate to her condition as a recent arrival for whom classical national discourses, so dominant in Israeli society, are still very much available (see the discussion on promotion and usage of national discourse and mythology in a governmental campaign that encourages Israelis living abroad to return to Israel – chapter five). Israeli subjects who have been bombarded throughout their lives with the Zionist narrative and its approach to Judaism, living abroad, diaspora Jews, Arabs, etc., may find these ideas compelling while trying to make sense of their disadvantageous condition as newcomers, foreigners or immigrants (a term that was categorically absent from all interviews) when negotiating personal experiences around religion, gender and ethnicity.

Dorit was applying Zionist images and concepts drawing on the national narrative and ideology to present an idealized Israeli identity – that of the ‘New Jew’. This was done to construct more balanced power-relations between local Jews and Israelis in Britain and manage the disadvantaged condition of immigrant.

A second extract, taken from the interview with Michael, also presents the Zionist outlook on the Jewish diaspora-Israeli relationships, but this time from the reverse angle, that of the diasporic Jew, presumably lending support to Dorit's account of the mesmerizing effects that Israel has over the diasporic Jewish ‘Ole’ (immigrant to Israel). However, the second extract demonstrates how similar canonical contents can be applied by different members to achieve different goals. Michael's usage of these themes was done to reclaim membership in the Israeli group in general and manage the interview encounter in specific. The second extract, then, highlights the importance of the interview encounter and the politics of interviewee-interviewer as the platform upon which persuasive collective images and narratives can be recycled. It also raises a question regarding subjects' investment in the canonical narrative and their ability to break away from it.

## **6.2. Using the national narrative to claim group membership: ‘I arrived to Haifa, got off the boat and said: phew! I’m home’.**

Michael (pseudo-name) is 46 year-old man who emailed me willing to be interviewed following a notice I placed in the local Hebrew magazine. When asked at the beginning of the interview to give a brief autobiographical description, he said:

I was born in NY in 1965. My parents were both self-employed. After the Bar-Mitzvah I started working for them. I studied *hotel and restaurant management* {English wording}. After the studies I didn't want to study, I didn't want to work, so I sold the Harley Davidson and everything I had, took a backpack, and thought for a few months, and dad had customers in Japan, Japanese who invited me to come in and see... and for almost... eighteen, nineteen months... all the way to *Japan, Australia, South Africa, up to Kenya, to London down to Gibraltar, all around* {English wording} until I arrived to Haifa, got off the boat and said:

'phew! I'm home: everyone is crazy, I'm one of you! And in three months I made *Aliya*, and got enlisted to *Golan*<sup>23</sup>. [How old were you?] Twenty two. Nineteen eighty-seven. And I enrolled to the army in eighty seven, at the end of my military service I had an *Ulpan*<sup>24</sup> and I married the teacher and opened a small business in X [in Tel Aviv?] and I was self-employed until ahh... two thousand and one day... we have Uri, Noa and Neta (Hebrew names of his three children)....

In this short introductory paragraph, Michael gives a first-hand account of an oft-cited scene in the Jewish-Israeli collective imaginary – that of a Jewish immigrant (normally referred to as *Olim* - Jewish immigrants) coming for the first time to Israel (e.g. Haifa port). This romantic scene which has references to major historical events in the history of Jewish-Israeli society (various waves of Jewish immigrants in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century and following the establishment of the state and, most notably, the smuggling of illegal post-war European Jewish immigrants at the time of the British mandate) has been especially efficient in articulating Zionist ethos and concepts and has therefore managed to capture the public's imagination. It was represented in local culture through novels, movies, historical journals and documentaries. Obviously cognizant of this canonical story, Michael presents himself as the classical 'lost diasporic Jew': Like many others in American Jewry, he comes from a financially comfortable family background (they have their own business, his dad is well connected and has Japanese customers), but he still feels dis-satisfied (after completing his basic studies he doesn't want to go on studying or to work). He therefore sells all his material belongings and gives up the masculine life style - free, self-reliant, sexually desirable (having a Harley Davidson motorcycle) much admired by many western youngsters and sets off on a long journey in an attempt to find something else. He is not tempted by the material potential that Japan could have offered him but rather continues his journey from one place to the other without settling. Once he gets off the boat in Haifa, Israel, he experiences a 'revelation', utters a sigh of relief ('*Phew!*') and finally has a sense of belonging ('*I'm home*'). Michael's sense of homeliness in Israel is described in a somewhat unusual way: '*everyone is*

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<sup>23</sup> An IDF infantry unit known for being tough and hard working.

<sup>24</sup> A state-funded intensified programme for learning Hebrew, which all immigrants can take.

*crazy, I'm one of you*' but rather than experiencing it as stepping into a disturbing inpatient psychiatric ward, he attributes positive meaning to the signifier 'crazy' (see above for a positive appropriation of '*Hutzpah*' in Dorit's speech). Under the Zionist lexicon and within the discursive atmosphere that Michael constructs, 'crazy' may mean 'unconventional', 'informal', 'vibrant', 'refreshing' or 'creative' which here capture an aspect of the idyllic self-perception of Israeli society. Michael, who restlessly moved about not finding his place (considered 'crazy') in American society where he was born and grew up, finally manages to fit in: '*I'm one of you*'. Once experiencing this recognition everything proceeds quickly and smoothly: within three months he formalizes his decision to stay (he makes '*Aliya*' – completes the formal application to become an Israeli citizen), and takes on one of the most crucial commitments of Jewish-Israeli group members – enlisting into the Israeli army and even more so, volunteering to serve in an especially demanding and physically strenuous army regiment (*Golani*).

Michael becomes fully integrated into Israeli society: he learns Hebrew in an *Ulpan*, marries the teacher, a local Israeli woman, opens a small business and has three Sabra children with distinctively Israeli names. In terms of the Zionist narrative this is no doubt a great success story where, as promised, a rootless diasporic Jew finally finds 'home' within the Israeli group, settles down and becomes a full member. His choice to open with a personal testimony of this highly compelling collective story was made to convey to me, an Israeli-born and, by my accent, presumably a 'Sabra' that was born in Israel, that he is indeed a part of the Israeli group. In spite of the explicit ideological message 'Israel is home to Jews all over the world' and even some formal legislation and material benefits to encourage Jews to immigrate to Israel, social reality demonstrates that new immigrants suffer discrimination and find it difficult to be accepted into the local Jewish-Israeli society. Michael made exceptional efforts to demonstrate knowledge of famous figures, special locations, key events, vernacular signifiers (see 'The signifiers of belonging' section later on in this chapter) and slang words which would demonstrate to me his 'genuine' group membership. For that discursive task it is advantageous to portray himself as a diasporic Jew who immigrated to Israel. He can provide first-hand testimony of the reliability of the collective imaginary – the mesmerizing effect of Israel for

diasporic Jews ('got off the boat, Phew! I'm home') and the qualitative and spiritual advantages that living in Israel has over diasporic life, which Zionism constantly claims (as communicated in Dorit's interview discussed earlier) and Israelis like to hear. Towards the end of the chapter I will return to Michael's acculturation story.

Later in his interview, Michael 'pulled the same discursive trick' out of his sleeve when he told me of his personal encounter with a Palestinian refugee from Gaza, which most Israelis (due to security fear) probably won't have:

So he took me to 's ouse (his house – a Hebrew slang) in Jebalia {a refugee camp in the Gaza strip} and I was met {a Hebrew grammatical error} his father and his father told me of how he lost his whole life in Julis {which used to be an Arab village prior to the 48 war). You know where Julis is? Right next to Ashkelon [yes]. There is an armored military base over there. And he told me 'yes, mi {my – Hebrew slang} house is over there', and he told me of how he lost everything, because he would listen {a grammatical mistake in Hebrew} their leaders and he was sorry he ran away from home.

In this case, much like in the 'boat story', Michael is able to present himself to me as both a legitimate in-group member who is well versed in the group mythology (the Israeli version of the *Nakba*<sup>25</sup> according to which Palestinians *fled* from their homes following the advice of their leaders<sup>26</sup> - see Bar-Tal, 2007 about the Zionist-Israeli narrative of the conflict with the Palestinians) and at the same time enjoy the advantages of an out-member who can have access to these sources (he was invited to a Palestinian refugee's house) which is beyond the reach of local Israelis. Therefore, Michael can claim his superiority over me as he, a diaspora-born Jewish-Israeli who had an informal first-hand account of the *Nakba* events while I, an Israeli-born man have to rely on formal information, rumors and popular hearsay (he asks me if I know where Julis is and then quickly demonstrates his knowledge). In our encounter, Michael negotiates his specific position as an 'outside-insider' within the Israeli

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<sup>25</sup> The 'Disaster' or 'Catastrophe' (Arabic). A term referring to local Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes during and following the 1948 war between Jews and local Palestinian forces as well as Arab armies.

<sup>26</sup> It is now known that many Palestinians were driven out or were collectively transferred and were not allowed to return to their homes.

group where he gets to 'hold the stick from both ends': he enjoys the benefits of being included as an in-group member (Israel is his 'home'), while at the same time retaining a personal and critical perspective of the group. Michael was the only interviewee who mentioned the contentious events during the 1948 war during which Israel was founded. Although he brings the classical Israeli version of the *Nakba* ('they fled'), Michael offers a humanistic view of individual Palestinians' tragedy and of their suffering which other Israelis normally avoid. His exceptional reference to the Palestinian *Nakba* signals perhaps that he feels freer than most Israelis to skim between various discourses and their subject positioning. This may perhaps be due to Michael's upbringing in a liberal Jewish family in America (a diasporic perspective) or to Michael's insistence on being an outsider wherever he is, be it in America, Britain or Israel.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that canonical national narratives serve merely as self-conscious discursive tools for subjects to manage the politics of the interview encounter, a means to signify identity affiliation and gain social status or a way to make sense of or explain away a disadvantageous social condition. I argue that collective identities and the canonical narratives that play a major role in holding them together – the imagination of 'who we are' – address subjects' uncertainties, hopes and dreams, thus making them especially compelling, and explains their 'stickiness' (Hook, 2008) and resistance to change (Stavrakakis, and Chrysolaras, 2006). In the following short extract I will focus on the assertion 'We are the centre of the world', that exemplifies, according to the interviewee, the experience of being an Israeli in London. While this specific example had, no doubt, discursive and rhetorical value for managing the immediate interview encounter which I will briefly present, I would rather like to focus on the mesmerizing effect that collective preconceptions taken from the canonical national imagery have on individuals in general and especially in disadvantageous circumstances.

### 6.3. The nation as a glorified group: 'Israel is (not) the Centre of the World'.

Noga is a woman in her mid-thirties. She has lived in London with her husband and two little children for the past 3 years. She has been sent to work abroad by her company, an Israeli-affiliated High-Tec company which is often regarded in Israeli society as an example of the Israeli success story: originally founded in Israel, it was bought in the mid-eighties by a well-known world-wide American firm. Because of its history and given that, as Noga notes, higher positions in the company's professional hierarchy are occupied by Israelis, it is perceived as 'an Israeli company'.

I asked her 'what is it for you to be an Israeli in London...?' to which she responded with an anecdote from one of the professional conferences she attended:

There was a guy and we talked about sales in Europe, etc., and then he says a sentence: 'Israel is not the centre of the world', Israelis have the feeling that ...

She provided a description of the company's structure from which I've learnt that many workers in the higher levels are Israelis. She then continued her story about the guy she met in the conference:

24. And so the feeling that you get is as if ...
25. So he tells me 'Israel is not the centre of the world'
26. Firstly it is!
27. But it's funny because every Israeli he told it to him gave him the same answer
28. ['sure it is' {meaning We are the centre of the world}']
29. Yes. And then later when a {Israeli} speaker mentioned it in the larger forum,
30. He {the German guy} started to be pissed off.
31. I don't know if he thought that it was funny anymore,
32. Because you still have that feeling...
33. you come from this little Israel into the big world,
34. [and] still, we are the centre of the world.

The assertion 'Israel is (not) the centre of the world' was made in response to the question around the sense of Israeliness in London. Often interviewees related to the discomfort or complexities that arise once they are disclosing their Israeli identity in what is almost unanimously perceived as politically unfriendly London (see chapter eleven). In other instances, interviewees related to their existential sense of alienation, foreignness and lack of belonging. Noga addresses her singularity as an Israeli in a different way. She works in an Israeli-friendly professional environment (populated by quite a few Israelis and whose higher directorate is described as mainly Israeli), hence ('and so...' 24), the malevolent experiences that many Israelis describe ranging between discomfort, a need to justify, hostility and even fear is replaced here with confidence, dominance and superiority. Israelis often like to boast about the globally disproportionate number of High-Tec and start-up companies in Israel and Israeli High-Tec industry is often seen as the front window of Israeli society (Senor and Singer, 2009), a testimony to its financial strength, and a supporting proof to the merits of the Jewish-Israeli 'brain' - informal, unconventional (often described favorably as 'crazy'), creative and daring (see the discussion of *Hutzpah* in Dorit's extract earlier) - and to the Israeli way of doing things; Noga makes use of this narrative. Within the context of professional success, the non-Israeli guy's *reasonable* and *rational* claim 'Israel is not the Centre of the World' can actually be *emotionally* contested ('so the feeling that you get is as if ...' (24), 'because you still have that feeling...' (32). To justify this obviously, irrational feeling (that I too know about – I also took part in the Israeli private joke – [sure it is] 28), Noga draws on one of the nation's favorable myths 'you come from this little Israel into the big world' (34), which resonates with the idea of success against all odds (manifested through the myth of small David fighting huge Goliath). In this context the 'smallness' magnifies the sense of success and achievement. In such discursive climate of national spirit, constituting a small minority (here 'coming from this small Israel') can actually turn out to be an advantage. It makes part of the appeal of national identities which offer individuals the chance to take part in a larger-than-life collective dream or phantasy of greatness, a sense of specialness and uniqueness that other groups might aspire to. The material conditions of professional success support this dream-like mentality so while you *know* that

'Israel is *not* the Centre of the world' yet ('still' – 34) the {comforting} feeling is 'we are the centre of the world'.

And still, the proposition 'We are the centre of the world' was raised as a response to the troubling assertion of the non-Israeli man, 'Israel is not the centre of the world' (i.e. Israel as a marginal country), which Israelis who leave Israel and come to London have to confront. The geographical, political and cultural isolation from its neighboring countries that is the result of, on the one hand, external security threats, and on the other hand, an active effort to differentiate itself from its environment or even enlarge its geographical territory also contributes to a mental isolation, an 'island' or 'siege' mentality, whereby being a (local) majority supports the impression that 'We are the centre of the world'. This sweet illusion of the privileged majority was recreated in the international conference which many Israeli professional employees attended. There the German man, taken as representative of 'the big world', found himself to be in the minority. In a room filled with Israelis his joke about Israelis' illusion of centrality turned against itself – then and there, Israel indeed could be perceived to be the centre of the world. The same happened within the interview encounter itself. For a minute, both interviewee and interviewer, living away from Israel, shared the comforting experience of a hegemonic majority rather than that of newcomers in a foreign country.

Later, Noga went on to voice yet another collective phantasy recognizable within the Israeli public discourse of nationality:

43. and the world always splits,
44. and you see it everywhere,
45. into those who love you and those who don't love you,

According to this rhetorical logic 'me', 'you' and 'we' are completely enmeshed with each other (they love or don't love 'you' rather than 'us' or 'me'); I, the researcher, being an Israeli, am confined to the same rules as all the other group members and distinctions between different group members are erased. There are only two options (black-white) left: either 'they' love you or they do not. Noga also uses a highly intense verb – 'love' rather than more nuanced ambivalent ones – 'like', 'respect', 'accept' and she argues that the truthfulness of this assertion is beyond doubt (because it 'always' happens and 'you see it everywhere'). This extract demonstrates vividly how discourses of nationality:

a. have the capacity to blur nuances and complexity, to present a highly intense black-and-white interpretation of events and overlook experiences which contradict the narrative's truth; and b. are mesmerizingly compelling to individual subjects by making sense of complex situations, setting up rules and sorting out 'the mess' of inexplicable daily incoherent experience.

The two assertions: 'the world is split into those who love you and those who don't' and 'we are the centre of the world' go hand in hand and support each other. We have this feeling that 'We are the centre of the world' *because* everyone is engaged with us ('the world {only} splits into those who love and those who don't'). At the same time, because 'we are the centre of the world'; everyone either loves or doesn't love us (they either admire us or are jealous of us). It is also interesting to notice how the subjective (symbolic) status of the assertion 'we are the centre of the world', which still retains its symbolic quality and distinguishes between what *is* and what is *felt* ('the feeling that you get is as if...' 24), is lost and is taken concretely ('the world always splits and you see it everywhere').

#### **6.4. Words in the service of the nation: the Lexicon of belonging.**

As the interview material started to pile up, I became aware not only of recurrent or exceptional contents and themes that drew on shared myths and symbols, but also of specific signifiers that articulated belonging to or alienation from the national group; these signifiers often constituted signposts within the interview that signaled the subject's shifts in her/his social positioning.

As part of the current chapter dealing with the hegemonic nation narrative, I would like to demonstrate subjects' differential usage of two key signifiers that address Israel: '*Ha'aretz*' and 'Israel'. This section will look at the application of those signifiers *across* individual texts to learn about their shared cultural meaning. While Lacanian discourse analyst Pavon-Cuelar (2010) argues that 'instead of wasting time looking for imaginary similarities beyond discourse, Lacanian analysts may confine themselves to examining evident real gaps and symbolic differences in discourse' (p. 9), it is my specific intention in this section to study that very collective imaginary which 'cover[s] up the real

separation between individual subjects' (Pavon-Cuelar, 2010 p.15) and results in 'an imaginary collective identity' (p.15).

At an early stage in my research, I became aware of the high frequency with which the term '*Ha'aretz*' ('The Land' in Hebrew) appeared in the interviewees' speech alongside the term 'Israel'. The usage of '*Ha'aretz*' was of course very familiar to me, but the differential significance of these two designations became markedly visible during the fourth interview with Michael (presented earlier in this chapter), an American born Jew who came to Israel in his late 20s, stayed there for ten years, divorced and settled in London. As discussed in the previous section, throughout the interview Michael went 'out of his way' to demonstrate his acquaintance with Israeli actuality, culture and politics. In response to my question '*what did you find there (in Israel) that you liked so much (and made you want to stay)*' he responded: '*I was in a Bar-Mitzvah in Isra... in Ha'aretz*' and then went on to tell a story of friendship with some people he met there. I found his accidental slip of tongue as significant as the other manifested contents of his story. '*Ha'aretz*' – 'The Land' is the way Israelis commonly refer to Israel. But it is more than a common discursive currency. It also bears specific meaning within the daily discourse of nationality that goes unnoticed (Billig, 1995): THE Land (*Ha'aretz*) - the one and only homeland possible for Israelis in Zionist terms. 'Israel', on the other hand, could be read as a neutral designation, a country like any other, Belgium, England, Russia. By correcting himself, Michael revealed a tension between his diasporic external outlook on Israel and his Israeli identification. Seen from the outside it is 'Israel'; seen from within, it is '*Ha'aretz*'. Michael's precarious Israeli identification taught me, an Israeli born Jew, about these taken for granted, discursive social-politics and the outsider's view of the Israeli group.

Therefore, it came as no surprise to me that Aaron, who settled in Britain nine years ago, who belongs to a local Jewish synagogue, and who lives away from the traditional Israeli or Jewish neighborhoods with his non-Israeli Jewish wife and is acquainted with British actuality and politics, rarely used '*Ha'aretz*' in his interview. He also introduced an unusual interpretation of the concept 'Israeli Identity' which prioritized civic and cultural aspects, prevalent in British society, over the more ethnic one which dominates the Israeli discourse of nationality. Aaron had to disengage from the '*Ha'aretz*' position and adopt a new subject

position that of 'Israel', in order to find his place in British society because of the exclusivity that Zionism demands of its members. By contrast, Dorit (whose text was analysed in this chapter), who came to London only 3 years ago and lived in a Jewish/Israeli bubble, talked about her strong Israeli identification saying: 'For me it's very important to stay Israeli, to be integrated among Israelis, to... to....to know what is going on in *Ha'aretz*'.

My research experience taught me that within a strong Zionist discursive atmosphere, '*Ha'aretz*' operates as the *hegemonic* designation for the country and that when the less habitual form, 'Israel', prevails it testifies to a certain disengagement with the country and its ethos, at least as far as 'engagement' is understood in Israeli hegemonic and popular discourses of nationality (it would be wrong to conclude the opposite i.e. that whenever '*Ha'aretz*' is applied a '*Ha'aretz*' engagement follows). I argue that subjects who speak from an 'Israel' subject position also demonstrate some broader freedom from the discursive and ideological constraints that '*Ha'aretz*'-Israeliness imposes on them. However, while I could trace general preferences for specific signifiers among different interviewees, I also witnessed different applications of signifiers of identification in different parts of the same interview. As will be demonstrated in David's interview (chapter ten), the dialectics between '*Ha'aretz*' and 'Israel' also disclose subjects' efforts to make subjective sense for their own sake. This can demonstrate that identities, and hence identification positions, *by their very nature* are fluid, negotiated and 'changing' rather than being solid and fixed.

In comparison, an alternative signifier - 'immigrant' - which comes to clash with hegemonic Zionist ideology, was completely absent from my respondents' speech. As presented in Michael and Dorit's texts, immigration *to* Israel is welcomed and is referred to as *Aliya* (literally meaning 'ascent'), and is seen primarily as ideological (Golden, 2001). By contrast, none of my interviewees referred to themselves as 'immigrants' and they had to apply alternative signifiers to describe their departure from or absence from Israel. Roni, for example, used a variety of alternative verbs - 'reside' ('*Gar*'), 'stay' ('*Nish'ar*'), 'be here' ('*Sho'he*') - to describe his presence in Britain but avoided using the term 'living', which in Hebrew signifies settlement and permanence (see also chapter eleven and the negotiation of a diasporic Israeli space). Compared

with subjects of other diasporas for whom the signifier 'immigrant' is acceptable (see Sayad 2004, Tanyas, 2010 Fathi, 2011), for Israelis 'immigrant' bears a negative connotation. This can be due to its disadvantaged socio-economic connotation, but it can also be related to its counter-hegemonic non-Zionist connotation. Only one interviewee (Ariella - see chapter 12) referred to herself as an immigrant and compared herself to Russian *Olim* (Jewish immigrants) to Israel, and she applied this term specifically in order to explain to me her decision to go back to Israel after living for 12 years in London. She said: 'I always compare myself to new Olim from Russia. Here, I'm a new Ola (immigrant) from Russia, and I don't like this position, I don't like it.'

The couplet the 'Israeli-ghetto' (see full discussion in chapter nine) was used by some of my interviewees, usually with a pejorative connotation, to refer to the tendency of Israelis to close among themselves, presumably out of fear of opening up to new cultures, communities or people. It seems that Hebrew, heavily dominated by a Zionist ideology and its lexicon, does not 'allow' for any normative collective social existence outside the boundaries of the Jewish state. I argue that this discursive field, with the discursive limitations (Foucault, 1970) it imposes on Jewish-Israeli subjects living abroad, affects not only the ways they speak but also their ability to form and normalize institutions, practices and other structures of communal lives.

### **6.5. An epilogue: Undoing the Zionist narrative**

I now wish to return to Michael's story of acculturation in Israel. As seen before, Michael is a crafted story teller and knows well how to 'play his discursive cards'. We last read it as a success story that ticks all the right boxes on the Zionist list: the miraculous arrival to Israel, falling in love with the country, enlisting into the army, marrying an Israeli woman, establishing a business and having children with Israeli names. As the story unfolds, Michael describes what can be seen as the collapse of this mythological collective narrative, which explains how he ended up in London.

...one day, we have Noam, Gali and Smadar {Israeli pseudonyms names of his children}... 'in two thousand she asked to get a divorce on

the Friday, by Tuesday she had the *Gett*<sup>27</sup> and everything she asked for, and I ran away aboard... I moved here, bought this house and wandered like a butterfly and in the mail [sec. meaning email] I met Judith and I have two more children with her... and now I have Joseph and Maurice. And that's it.

Michael introduces a twist in the story ('one day') but then suspends it a bit longer by returning once more to his successful integration story in Israeli society (noting the distinctively Israeli names of his children). Hence, he skillfully constructs the narrative climax before he brings it to its disruption: the love-at-first-sight story and the sense of homeliness ended as abruptly as they started: when his wife asked him for a divorce he granted it within days and ran away abroad, went back to his wandering ('wandered like a butterfly'), before re-settling not in Israel but rather in London, marrying a local Jewish woman and having two kids with clearly diasporic Jewish names. This falling in love with the *country* ends when the romantic interpersonal relationship *with his wife* fails. Then, no ideology, or even material and familial relationship, can keep him from running away. This is the perfect disruption of the perfect Zionist success story he opened up with, the subordination of the grand collective and ideological narratives to the interpersonal intimate circumstances. While this could be seen as a story of ideological disillusionment and a critique of Zionism, it also conveys Michael's position as an outsider who never fits. In our encounter, Michael seemed to enjoy living in both worlds – on the one hand, claiming his membership with the Israeli group (sharing with me details of Israeli daily life, performing the knowledge of the hegemonic collective story and even claiming to know it better than me), while at the same time renouncing any group belonging and pointing to its limitations.

## 6.6. Discussion

This chapter presented various examples where interviewees drew on aspects of the Zionist canonical national narrative and popular beliefs that support it ('We are the centre of the world' and 'the world always splits into those who love you and those who don't love you') to achieve various psychosocial goals. The main aim in this chapter was to study the myths, symbols, signifiers and

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<sup>27</sup> Jewish divorce agreement

narratives that contribute to the Israeli imagined community and demonstrate its usefulness for the construction of an 'Israeli identity'.

The main part of the chapter focused on an interview with Dorit, who applied aspects of the Zionist narrative (which depicts Israel as the ultimate personal and collective phantasy of diasporic Jews) to manage troubling issues around power-relations between the two Jewish groups, the disadvantageous socio-economic condition of a new-comer, and gender relations within these disadvantageous conditions. Perhaps because she only recently arrived in the UK and has chosen to live in a Jewish-Israeli 'bubble', and thus was not exposed to alternative, local, discourses, Dorit compensates for the material, cultural and social disadvantages and inequality in power-relations vis a vis the locals (Jews) by drawing on available Zionist conceptualizations which offer her momentary consolation.

Michael's account of the 'love-at-first-sight' he experienced as a diaspora Jew when he first arrived in Israel converges with the Zionist argument that Dorit promoted here that diaspora Jews 'would really like to make *Aliya*' (to immigrate to Israel), i.e. to amend a (deficient) diasporic condition. In Dorit and Michael's interviews, the state of Israel (Michael) and its group members by proxy (Dorit) constitute ideal objects of desire for diaspora Jews. Unlike Dorit, however, Michael was disenchanted with collective narratives and insisted on his position of an 'outside-insider', or a skeptical member of the national group, and provided a critical and even ironical view of these shared collective stories. The love-at-first-sight with the country ended up in a personal divorce from his Israeli wife and a return to a diasporic condition. The Israeli narrative of the Palestinian *Nakba* (that wasn't mentioned by any other Israeli interviewee) was coloured with the recognition of the individual Palestinian's tragedy. Michael was rather using these canonical anecdotes in an effort to claim and prove his group membership and his acquaintance with the groups' collective cultural reservoir and in order to manage his relationship with me, a Sabra-Israeli and a presumably 'legitimate' member of the group.

Finally, the third short extract from Noga's interview provided insight into the mesmerizing effects that national narratives, operating within the grey area between dream and reality and promoting a sense of group grandiosity, offer individual group members, especially as they are located in disadvantageous

social, material and psychological conditions. Noga's extract highlighted, in particular, the Israeli ethos of a miraculous national phenomenon – achieving success and international recognition against all odds. The three extracts highlight ideal aspects of the group – 'its appeal for members of other groups' (diaspora Jews), 'a sense of a collective home', the centrality and superiority of the 'nation group' and, as Anderson (1991) wrote: '[regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each] the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal *comradeship* {my emphasis}' (p. 7).

Another section looked briefly at the application and negotiation of shared signifiers such as '*Ha'aretz*', 'Israel', 'ghetto' or 'living' that circulate in the discursive public space and take part in shaping ideas and experiences of belonging and alienation. I argued that alongside Zionist narrative and ideology there is an accompanying vocabulary that supports them.

While the aim of this chapter was to present some of the building blocks (themes, symbols, images and stories) of the national imagery from which subjects construct their shared sense of national identity, it should be made clear that I am not proposing to see such images or narratives as essential social axioms, a reflection of a specific 'historical reality' which are not given to deconstruction. Rather I see it as the combination of historical events as they were interpreted, negotiated and imagined (Hall, 1990) in the group's 'market place' under certain historical, socio-political conditions in the past, which are accommodated to subjects' present conditions (e.g. immigration, finding oneself in a minority situation). While Michael's usage of the Zionist narrative demonstrates subjects' ability to critically reflect and sometimes disengage from hegemonic discourses of nationality, for others, mostly those who were brought up within a Zionist world view, the persuasion of national narratives stems from the 'solution' they offer to adversarial group and individual conditions and their ability to make sense.

While the emphasis in this chapter was given to the narrative, and to the sense of 'wholeness' and meaning that it promotes, and in this sense follows Anderson's portrayal of the national linear time, other chapters will be looking at this national story through critical lenses presenting the fracturing of 'oneness' or of the national 'linearity'. The problems with the nation as a narrative are twofold: The sense of glamorous 'We-ness' that the (hegemonic

Zionist) narrative advocates shifts our attention away from the disruption, fragmentation, confusion and meaningless that people often experience. Scholars coming from a Lacanian approach (Bhabha, 1994, Rose, 1996, Stavrakakis and Chrysolouras 2006) point out that the force of national phenomena lies specifically in the tension arising between a coherent narrative and its disturbance. Such moments of disruption were evident even within these extracts, which presumably prioritized sense-making over the disrupted and fragmented, the idyllic and grandiose over the lacking and painful. Dorit was constantly making disclaimers that limited the validity of her assertions and concluded by saying: 'I feel terribly uncomfortable with the responses I give, because I feel that they are stupid'. The value of stereotypes and generalizations for nurturing a coherent linear national story and the clarity it provides often contradicts alternative private experiences and personal narratives which describe a different picture. Michael toyed with the canonical narrative, leading it (and me as the listener) skillfully to its climax before deconstructing it in the same skillful way. Unlike me and the other two Israeli-born participants who were raised on the notion of Israeli Zionism, Michael's *diasporic* position as an outside-insider allows him to move freely between in-group and out-group collective imaginaries and choose his preferred position. Noga's reference to the Israeli group grandiosity ('we are the centre of the world' and 'the world always splits...') alternated between an awareness of their phantasmatic quality ('you have a feeling that') and their concrete essentialist fixity (Israeli *is* the centre of the world).

Secondly, a national linear cohesive story comes at the expense of individual differences and social and cultural diversity. Explicitly drawing the line between 'Us' (Zionist Jewish-Israelis) and 'Them' (diasporic Jews, Palestinians, local British people) blurs differences and conflicts between various social groups *within* Jewish-Israeli society (i.e. the 'We' group) that are categorized according to gender, ethnicity, religion, class, etc., thereby repressing alternative narratives. As Shafir and Peled (2002) and Filc (2006) argue, the hegemony of the Israeli-Zionist narrative to which most Jewish-Israelis adhere was achieved, as any hegemonic project, by pushing out alternative political and ideological projects that advocated alternative narratives. Thus, Dorit's description of local Jews'/Israelis' romantic view of Israel men and women

highlights Zionist themes, images and rhetoric that sees the Jewish diaspora as a socially, politically and psychologically deficient condition ('They really like to make *Aliya*') rather than as an alternative, and equally valuable, model of Jewish life (Shneer and Aviv, 2009). Likewise, feminist scholars (e.g. Kuntzman, 2008, 2008a, Kamir, 2011) point to the male-centric bias of Zionism. Indeed, in Dorit's account there is no distinction between Israeli men and Israeli women; they are all presented as the typical 'New Jew' Sabras: '*Hutzspadic*', confident, coming from a country of sun, and as objects of desire for Jewish diasporic men and women.

My choice to look at the material through the ideological and national narrative prism stems from the appreciation of the impact that such discourse has on Israeli subjects. It allowed me to trace the myths, symbols and specific signifiers that are the building blocks of a shared imagined community and to follow their subtle negotiation by subjects in their quest for personal meaning.

# **Chapter seven - the Jewish-Israeli abroad: an inside-outsider's perspective on Israeli society and culture: ethnicity, race and class**

## **7.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I reviewed some of the interviewees' references to the national ethos and its narrative which, as I argue throughout my work, still constitute the backbone of the Israeli imagined community. I described the function that such an idyllic group image served for the speakers in order to achieve certain discursive goals: managing their pre-interview agenda or their perception of 'who they are', and negotiating it with me as an audience within the interview encounter. I also studied the limitations and disruptions of these idyllic group images.

However, since the construction of 'Israeli identity' is determined by the social and cultural context within which the subject is positioned, subjects' perception of their dislocation as Israelis abroad plays an important part in how 'national identity' will be constructed by each subject. However they choose to define their status in Britain - as immigrants, diasporic, sojourners or expats – subjects defined their Israeliness in relation to three localities (Anthias, 2002): 'home' (Israeli society – chapter seven) 'away' (British society – chapter eight) and 'between home and away' (the local Israeli community - chapter nine), although some subjects especially focused on one locality. The dialectic relations between 'home' and 'away' in these three localities will be presented in the next three chapters.

This chapter will cover the main areas that were raised by the participants when relating to their place in and engagement with 'home' (i.e. Israeli society). In chapter three, I described the changes that Israeli society has undergone in the past few decades from an ideological, collectivist, society with a certain political and cultural hegemony, to a society with greater pluralism and multiculturalism and growing challenges to the canonical narrative and its political order by contesting counter-hegemonic narratives in what has been regarded as a post-ideological or even post-Zionist phase

(Ram, 2006, Smoocha, 2010). At the same time, the on-going occupation of Palestinian territories and the unresolved conflict with neighbouring countries is kept centre-stage in Israelis' daily reality (Grinberg, 2007) and still greatly affects Israeli politics. For Israelis in Britain, in the absence of formal and informal daily mechanisms promoting 'Israeliness' (Billig, 1995), alternative, British discourses of private and public spaces may become available. I was interested to learn how Israeli society and the notion of 'Israeliness' might be described from a distance (first RQ), what power-regimes are disclosed by them (second RQ) and how these are accommodated into the participants' personal narratives of 'who they are' as Israelis.

Two areas appeared to be especially significant in the participants' portrayal of Israeli society: the internal divisions in Jewish-Israeli society along seniority (veterans vs. new immigrants) and ethnicity (Mizrahi vs. Ashkenazi) and the tension between the subject and the surrounding social and cultural demands. I also noted the absence (or marginality) of certain topics in the construction of 'Israeliness', such as the on-going military tension with neighbouring Arab countries, the continuous occupation of Palestinian territories and the tensions and uncertainty it brings with it to the civil society or the role of Palestinian citizens in Israeli society.

## **7.2. Social divides in Israeli society – 'veteran Israelis' and Jewish immigrants**

This section will draw on two extracts of interviews with Ariella and Liat, who provided two different outlooks on 'belonging' as they look at the rules of inclusion and exclusion in Israeli society and define 'who is 'really' an Israeli' and who is not.

### **7.2.1. In 'Ha'aretz' I walk 'with my head raised high'. I'm 'the salt of the earth'**

I conducted the interview with Ariella just a few weeks before she and her family returned to Israel following eleven years in Britain. This fact appeared to impact on the interview's content and its dynamics and I felt that Ariella was highly motivated to justify her decision to go back as she herself declared at an early stage of the interview:

'I sort of don't know who you interview but I wanted to tell you that... before we start, that my head is in Israel, I mean I'm very... but it's a very-very long process that I went through over many years'.

Hence, Ariella was aware of the constraints that such a position ('my head is in Israel') might impose on her portrayal of 'Israeli identity', whose complexities she believed I was expecting to hear. However, she testifies to her suitability for the research by claiming that she has not avoided the complexity and has given it much thought ('it's a very-very long process').

Therefore, while the experience of living in Britain no doubt shaped her decision to return to Israel, within the immediate interview context her decision to return shaped how events and experience could have been portrayed to me. It is within *this* discursive context that she chose and related to various professional and social difficulties in her life in Britain (her story about social alienation in British society will be presented in the next chapter). The extract below was taken from a larger segment where Ariella talked about her frustration over the loss of her professional status and her difficulty to find a job as a foreigner in the British job market.

Stanza 1 – In Britain I'm an immigrant

1. I always compare myself to new Olim (Jewish immigrants to Israel) from Russia.
2. Here, I'm a new *Ola* (immigrant) from Russia,
3. and I don't like this position, I don't like it

Stanza 2 – a disclaimer - I don't have anything personal against Olim

4. and I don't have anything against Russians,
5. my husband [*sic*] married, my sister in law.... she married,
6. I love her

Stanza 3 – immigrants in Israel are forever foreigners and will never really belong

7. but the position that she is in,
8. she's a foreigner
9. and probably throughout her whole life, she will stay a foreigner
10. she has this accent and she will stay foreign
11. no matter how much she'll belong,

Stanza 4 – I'm a foreigner who doesn't belong here, in Israel it will be different

12. and I feel that I'm in that position here and in *Ha'aretz* it's not like that.

13. Or at least this is how I feel

14. And this is something that I desire and I'm waiting for it

15. and it could be that with the years it will dissipate and I won't remember what I am talking about.

Stanza 5 – How will it be different in Israel – 'I'm the salt of the earth'

16. [Q: Waiting for that feeling that...?]

17. The feeling that I'm walking straight up with my head raised high

18. I'm 'the salt of the earth',

19. me and my dad were born in the same room

20. in the same hospital, you know,

21. I have roots in the place.

In this extract Ariella likens herself to new *Olim* from Russia. Although we don't know exactly what are the private associations she entertains about the Russian *Aliya* (immigration wave) we do know that she left Israel when the impact on Israeli society of the massive wave (almost a million) immigrants from the former Soviet Union, (commonly called by veteran Israelis, 'the Russians') was still very marked. One aspect of this migrant group was the discrepancy between their privileged educational and professional status - doctors, engineers, artists – in their home countries and the simple manual jobs (e.g. cleaners, non-skilled workers in the building industry etc.) they were forced to take following their immigration. Therefore, addressing herself as a Russian *Ola* in the context of a discussion on the limited options of foreign high-skilled working women in the British job market might be connected to the image of the Russian *Olim* in the 1990s in Israel.

Ariella's text emphasizes a tension between the popular rhetoric of Zionist ideology and the actual rules of inclusion and exclusion in Israeli society: on the one hand she uses a Zionist term – '*Ola*', i.e. a Jew who has come (back) to their homeland and is therefore expected to be accepted and embraced - rather than using 'immigrant' ('*Mehageret*'), who came to the new country ('merely') in order to improve their material conditions. On the other hand, Ariella argues that *in practice*, the rules of belonging, exclusion and inclusion in Israeli society are not organized according to the Zionist ideology of equal

opportunities (for Jews), but rather according to the seniority and the social capital that goes with it ('me and my dad were born in the same room in the same hospital [therefore] I have roots in that place'). She speaks from the position of the old Ashkenazi elite (who are often seen as the flag carriers of Zionist ideology – see Yariv's short extract later on) whose members arrived in Israel/Palestine earlier. This allowed them to occupy key major socio-economical positions in the young Israeli society and shape the local culture to match their taste. Note that even within a very young Israeli society whose citizens have mostly immigrated in the past eighty years and in which three generations are still very rare, subjects construct a hierarchy of nobility according to seniority where second generation Israelis feel socially privileged compared to first generation Israelis or those who arrived recently<sup>28</sup>. From *Ariella's* point of view, the unwritten social rules that distribute the power in Israeli society and determine who belongs and who will 'never belong' privilege having a family 'dynasty' over any other form of belonging. Therefore, her Russian *O/a* sister in law will never belong – because she and/or her father weren't born in Israel and she has 'this foreign accent'. Ariella describes Israeli society as a 'members-only' social club, where foreigners, Jews or non-Jews, can never become legitimate members and consequently will never belong. The discursive benefits of such a claim are clear: If the same rule of exclusion applies to foreigners in Israel and in Britain she can also justify and explain her own sense of exclusion and inferiority (which she discussed in other parts of the interview) in British society, because of the lack of roots, the foreign accent and in general the way that she can be pointed out as looking, acting and talking differently (see an analysis of another one of Ariella's extracts in chapter eight). She can only be accepted in Israeli society where she is amongst the excluders.

### **7.3.2. I remember, from a very early age, that I didn't want to be there**

A different angle on this veteran-immigrant social hierarchy is demonstrated in Liat's interview. Liat, a thirty five year-old academic who is raising her only child on her own, was born in Israel to Jewish parents who emigrated from

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<sup>28</sup> This has been captured in a highly popular comic video clip from the seventies whose continuous relevance is testified by its on-going popularity:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjDx2ZwLU0>

Russia in the seventies while passing en-route through South America . In Israel her parents separated, and while part of her mother's family stayed in South America, her father settled in Israel. Consequently, she and her mother moved a few times back and forth between Israel and South America. I asked her if she could recall what it was like for her to be an Israeli while living in Israel and her answer greatly surprised me:

Stanza 1 – the opening statement – I didn't want to be there (in Israel)

1. I remember, from a very early age
2. That I felt I didn't want to be there {giggle}

Stanza 2 – demonstrating her point – as a child I was happy to go away to South America

3. I remember that when they told me that we are going to live in South America, I was very-very glad
4. And it was terribly easy for me to get used to being there
5. It was... it was sort of difficult like it's difficult moving from one place to another
6. Like moving schools
7. But the transition to South America was very smooth and easy
8. And was received with a lot of... happiness {I cough}

Stanza 3 – and returning to Israel was hard

9. And returning to Ha'aretz was very very-very-very difficult [later]
10. I didn't want to return at all
11. And... still we returned and it was hard

Stanza 4 - Coda – returning to the initial claim – I didn't feel that I belonged there.

12. So I guess that actually from a very early age I didn't feel that I really, totally belonged to Ha'aretz

Liat's response surprised me because until that point she came across as a woman who was well embedded in middle-class Israeli society and culture. Nevertheless, Liat responded to my question without hesitation. She emphasized 'didn't' and claimed to have a recollection of this sentiment 'from a very early age'. This statement was followed by a giggle which was helpful in tracing moments of tension or conflict in other parts of the interview.

She insisted and grounded this sentiment by using various adverbs and adjectives which drew a clear line between her experience in Israel ('very very-very-very difficult') and those in South America ('very smooth and easy'). Liat added a disclaimer ('it was sort of difficult like it's difficult moving from one place to another, like moving schools' 5-6) to make her case more credible but then resumed her 'black and white' argument. The words she emphasizes: 'I didn't want' (4), 'very easy' (6), 'smooth and easy', 'happiness', seem almost an intentional effort to upset a recognized discourse of Israelis' relocation where people are *expected* to worry about their children's reaction to their decision to relocate, where settling down abroad is expected to be fraught with difficulties and is *never expected* to be 'smooth or easy'. Although most of my Israeli interviewees pointed to many advantages of living abroad, they would also spend some time mourning their lost friends and families, the weather, the informal relations, childhood memories or daily habits as a way to communicate their commitment to shared cultural and collective experiences. Here was an Israeli who plainly declares that she *was glad* to go away. In line 12, Liat summarizes her argument regarding the sense of belonging: 'So I guess that actually from a very early age I didn't feel that I really, totally belonged to *Ha'aretz*'. Liat talks about the totality of Israeli belonging, a key feature in Israeli Identity, which is sometimes praised by interviewees as a marker of collectivity and mutual reliance, but is also sometimes described as limiting and constraining (see David and Nira's texts later on in this chapter). Liat makes an exceptional use of 'belonging to *Ha'aretz*' – i.e. belonging to the land or the national territory - rather than the more habitual usage - belonging *in Ha'aretz*' – i.e. a sense of belonging among the Israeli group of people who live in *Ha'aretz*. The heavy requirements of 'belonging to *Ha'aretz*', which she doesn't meet, work well to explain and justify her disengagement and alienation in Israeli society. Following this extract I enquired into this sense of non-belonging and she related it to the absence of her grandparents and other family members who were living away.

Stanza 10 – I formulate my conclusion from the previous section – the family is the main source of identification

37. [so the family basis was actually there, in your experience,

38. And you were a... remote?]

Stanza 11 – Liat describes the strong ties to her grandparents

39. Yes, and I also was very-very attached to my grandfather and grandmother,  
40. They actually raised me until they left  
41. Suddenly they got up and left  
42. And that was so terrible

Stanza 12 – Liat describes how she realized that ‘there are other places in the world’

43. So [chuckles] I wanted to be there.  
44. And, then perhaps, all of a sudden, I became aware that  
45. That perhaps there are other places in the world  
46. That are perhaps more suitable for me to live in [ah-ha]

Stanza 13 – the attachment to the grandparents (11) and the realization (12) made her conclude that she will leave Israel.

47. And because it was later, it was so difficult returning to *Ha’aretz* at the age of 14  
48. So I knew that the minute I’ll get out of the army, I’ll go [giggles]  
49. I didn’t know where, but I knew I’ll go [ah-ha]  
50. I’m screwing up all your results now [laughs]

The Zionist ideology presents Israel as a home-land for diasporic Jews like Michael (chapter six – ‘got off the boat. Phew! I’m home’) who could find there an ‘*imagined national family*’ among people they didn’t know. One of the aspects that this Zionist model of belonging undermines is the impact of the *real* family that in some cases fortifies the attachment to the place (if the family is living there and is well embedded in the hegemonic culture), but could just as well disrupt the attachment to The Land - *Ha’aretz* - if the family is away or is marginalized.

Liat, on the other hand, provides an alternative model of belonging, a diasporic one whereby the *transnational* family network and the emotions invested in it are the prime site of identification. Both Liat and Ariella’s stories demonstrate that the sense of ‘(Israeli) national identity’ is related to the affective personal family experiences in Israel rather than to the fascination with the collective narrative. However, whereas Ariella’s attachment to the land where she ‘can

walk straight up with her head high' is passed on from her father to her through a shared bodily experience ('being born in the same room'), Liat's geographical attachment is linked to her family's presence in Russia, South America or Israel and the attachment and relationships she has with *them*. For me, Liat's interview highlighted my personal engagement with the collective hegemonic narrative as a member of a family which was well rooted in Israeli society. My own grandparents came from Russia in the early 1910s and Poland in the 1930s. Liat's parents and grandparents were immigrants who joined the national ethos at a later stage and did not take part in what is considered the nation's formative years. This encounter demonstrated to me that Israelis are invested to various degrees in the Zionist ethos depending on their family's social and cultural engagement.

Liat did not tell specific stories of social exclusion or rejection but related to a sense of estrangement as the daughter of immigrants who didn't fit in and whose grandparents, 'who raised her up', were away. Stanzas 12 and 13 function as a conclusion that was reached 'all of a sudden' in South America ('and then perhaps, all of a sudden, I became aware that, that perhaps there are other places in the world that are perhaps more suitable for me to live in' 44-46). Stanza 13 serves as a corroborative evidence for this awareness stimulated by her subsequent Israeli experience ('and because ... it was so difficult returning to *Ha'aretz*... I knew I'll go' – 47, 49). Note the caution with which Liat constructs her conclusion in stanza 12 (limiting its validity with three 'perhaps' and uttering frequent giggles of embarrassment). She also makes her claims personal and relative rather than absolute and categorical by saying: '[there are] ...other places in the world that are perhaps more suitable for me to live in' (45-6). Liat cautiously challenges some of the basic tenets of Zionism without upsetting it totally. For example, she takes serving in the army as an unquestionable axiom after which she knew she would leave.

Her final statement: 'I'm screwing up all your results now' (50), which was made in a cheerful although apologetic tone, demonstrates clearly the preconceptions she has about being interviewed on 'Israeli national Identity' in the context of an academic interview – i.e. that Israelis who live abroad will stay, nonetheless, attached to Israel, have fond memories of their childhood and would long to go back. My embarrassed cough and her giggles and laughs

originate from the same social and ideological axioms that both she and I are equally acquainted with but are invested in to different degrees at different times.

One can look at Liat and Ariella's stories as complementing each other. Liat's story of alienation and non-belonging in Israeli society provides a different angle on mainstream Israeli society where Ariella can walk 'straight up with my head raised high', while her sister in law, (or Liat's parents or even Liat) who emigrated from Russia, 'will stay foreign', 'no matter how much she belongs'. While Israel is portrayed in the Zionist ideology and its narrative as the homeland of world Jewry, daily reality proves that the veteran Jewish-Israeli public marginalizes the Jewish new-comers. Such marginalization, in itself, is not surprising since all societies have informal mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The significance, and consequently the problems, arise from the fact that Zionist ideology promises that it can transcend these inequalities.

### **7.3. Ethno-cultural divides and racism in Jewish-Israeli society**

The social divide in Israeli society also runs along what is often referred to as the ethnic, European- non-European ('*Ashkenazi*' - '*Mizrahi*' or Oriental) axis. The demographics of the Jewish population in Israel changed considerably following the establishment of the state from a population that was predominately of a European/Eastern European origin to one which now has a small majority of Jews from Arab and Asian origin (classified as Mizrahi). This demographic change brought about a gradual political, social and economic decline in the hegemony of the old Ashkenazi elite and its social and political establishments. This ethnic divide is still debated and discussed in Israeli public spheres and some (e.g. Yonah and Shenhav, 2005) strongly claim that such a divide still informs the distribution of social and economic capital in Israeli society.

#### **7.3.1. Today, everybody seems to me terribly Mizrahi in Israel**

Yariv's interview demonstrates the orientalism (Said, 1978) of the classical Ashkenazi elite where 'Israeliness' was constructed against the image of the non-European (*Mizrahi*) Jew. His generalizations and stereotyping often bore racist significations (which were difficult for me to hear). In its analysis, I will try

to demonstrate the socio-political context from which Yariv draws his arguments as he tries to achieve some personal discursive goals while constructing his own version of 'national identity'.

Yariv talked plainly about his preference for the 'Ashkenazi' and the 'European' over the 'non-European' (the *Mizrahi* in Israel or the Asian in Britain). He talked proudly about his European Ashkenazi-Kibbutz origin and the privileged social status associated with it in Israeli society:

It's true that I look very European, I have a much more European appearance than most Israelis, {and} ten years without the Israeli sun... but {in Israel} I've always been the Ashkenazi, the Polish guy who came from the 'Polish noblesse' that founded the state in the ... Kibbutzim and all that, the Ashkenaziness ... in its extreme'

He stated plainly his physical preferences for a partner:

I don't like foreigners and I have a... ahhm, an attitude... a problematic personal reaction to people who are different, especially to people with a different skin color. I have very personal choices; my personal preferences are for Caucasian skin colour slash European slash Eastern European slash blond [yes].

I asked him how he finds Israeli society nowadays to which he answered:

Stanza 1: Israelis are terribly-terribly *Mizrahi* (Oriental)

1. Look, the Israeli being...
2. It's terribly funny 'cause...
3. Today, everybody seems to me terribly Mizrahi in Israel
4. terribly-terribly Mizrahi in Israel

Stanza 2 – Israelis all look alike

5. Everybody seems to me terribly, first of all, they all look alike to me the...
6. I arrive to Israel and everybody ....is the same,
7. {they are} dressed alike
8. they all have the same {skin} colour {i.e. sun tan}
9. Look alike, hmm...
10. Even people on the street, ordinary, seem to me very-very alike

Stanza 3 – Israelis are ‘mixed’

11. And very-very mixed
12. It's a kind of a Chocó
13. It's not black nor white
14. But it's certainly not white
15. It's a mixture

Stanza 4 – By contrast, in London you see ‘many-many [different] colours’

16. But it's a mixture that identifies them all as similar
17. It's almost, you arrive to Israel and the sensit={ivity}... the capaci={ity}...
18. And what you are used to seeing here,
19. Seeing all the time colours, many-many colors, a lot of colorfulness, it isn't there

Stanza 5 – Israelis in Israel want to feel themselves unique (i.e. not European nor Mizrahi).

20. Israelis would very much like to feel
21. And I say Israelis as if I'm not...
22. The Israelis who live in Israel would very much like to feel that they are uniquim {using the English word ‘unique’ with a Hebrew ending for plurals}

Stanza 6 – But some Israelis, like me, define their uniqueness through their Europeanness

23. and some would like to feel that they are Europeans,
24. I'm one of them too
25. I just live here in order to make a terribly big effort to feel that I'm European,

In the first two stanzas Yariv lays out his views of the orientalization and homogeneity of the Israeli public. Yariv who has decided to settle in London and not to return to Israel, distances himself from Israeli society portraying the Israeli mass as '*Mizrahi*' against which his European appearance and preference (demonstrated in his earlier quotes) stands out. His repeated usage of ‘terribly *Mizrahi*’ which could be understood as ‘very oriental/Mizrahi’ but could also be read as a criticism against the ‘terrible’ orientalization of Israeli society. Finally, his usage of the term ‘Israel’ (rather than the common usage of

'*Ha'aretz*' (see discussion in chapter six) signifies the emotional disengagement he seeks to portray and helps him to distance himself from the 'Israeli being'.

Stanza 2 (lines 5-9) serves Yariv to distinguish himself from 'the Israeli being', this time on account of its 'homogeneity'. He draws a line between himself and the anonymous crowd which is made up of faceless individuals who all look alike, based on their physical appearance. Within this homogeneity his exceptional European looks (emphasized in the preceding extract) clearly locates him outside the group in a way that signifies him as 'unique' and not belonging.

In Stanza 3 Yariv presents the 'mixture' as another feature of the Israeli population. Referring to Israelis' skin colour, he describes it as 'a kind of a Chocó, it's neither black nor white, but it's certainly not white, it's a mixture'. While in different discursive contexts 'a mixture' and 'a kind of Choco' might serve as favorable descriptions (e.g. 'the exotic'), in the current text, and bearing in mind his previous remarks around 'foreigners' appearance, it is taken as a pejorative denomination. The emphasis in 'it's neither black nor white' (13) conveys that its fault results from not having a clear and 'unique' identity (black *or* white). The 'mixture' is taken as an indistinctive compromise, or an 'average', between the two distinctive colour identities. However the usage of 'but' and the emphasis on 'certainly not' (14) clarifies that there exists a hierarchy of preferences – where the 'white' is superior to the 'black' and that the 'mixture' or the 'Chocó' might *assume* itself to be compatible with the 'white' but it 'certainly' isn't (14).

Stanza 4 further stresses the link between indistinctive identity ('mixture'), sameness or homogeneity and non-Europeanness. While it could be argued that this 'mixture' (15, 16) constitutes a new and unique (skin-colour) identity in Yariv's eyes, this potential uniqueness is lost as this mixture 'identifies them all as similar'. The disparaging tone disclosed that this similarity is associated with the 'ordinariness' of Israelis. Yariv applies the discourse of multi-cultural 'colorful' (19) London which, presumably, sharpens your 'sensit{ivity}...{and} capac{ity}...' to identify 'many-many {different skin} colours' to accentuate the contrast with the Israeli homogeneous public. Thus, he is using the discourse

of multi-culturalism in a racist way: where he presumably celebrates the 'colorfulness' (19) of London but actually refers to a racial segregation and to distinctions between people of different skin-colours who, unlike Israelis, presumably do not mix. This assertion, together with the opening remarks preceding this extract regarding his clear personal preferences, allow him to describe the white people in London as visibly distinct and thus retain their hegemony in the hierarchy of skin-colour groups, which was lost in the 'mixed' Israeli society.

In stanza 5 Yariv insinuates that this Mizrahi, homogeneous mixture that constitute the 'Israeli being' is seen by Israelis, *mistakenly* ('Israelis would very much like to feel'), as unique. In stanza 6 Yariv finally calls the Ashkenazi/European-*Mizrahi* ethnic divide by its name (i.e. raising once more the issue around the historical and on-going unequal distribution of political and social power between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews). The logic of 'and some would like to feel that they are Europeans' (23) seems to be as follows: while Israelis in Israel 'would very much like to feel that they are unique' {*uniquim*} through their inter-racial, inter-cultural '*Mizrahi-Ashkenazi* 'mixture', some of them, like him, refute this mixture and would like to hold onto their European origins or adopt a European mentality/culture/ behavior, resisting the *Mizrahi* influences on Israeli society. Nevertheless, Yariv distinguishes himself even from these Europhile Israelis by claiming that he 'live[s] here<sup>29</sup> in order to make a terribly big effort to feel that I'm European' – 25.

Thus Yariv makes a series of claims which distance him from every contemporary social milieu in Israel and serve him in his argument that he cannot go back.

#### **7.4. The subject and the clash between collectivism and Individualism**

Social demands for conformity and self-restriction are part of subjects' experiences in all cultures and psychoanalysis understands this tension and the discontent that accompanies it as a basic tenet of the human condition (Freud, 1930). However, in this section I wish to highlight some of the

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<sup>29</sup> Here Yariv applies the contested verb 'live' [chay - see discussion in int. 5), which has a more settled resonance than other verbs: 'stay', 'reside', 'sojourn', which emphasizing a more temporary status.

particularities of Jewish-Israeli culture and its demands as it is negotiated or resisted by its subjects. Nira's text deals with the social pressure to conform to the Israeli practices of mourning, crucial today as ever, in the promotion of a coherent national story. David's extract presents the social pressure to return and live in Israel.

#### **7.4.1. 'But what? Her father is dead, her father is dead. How come she is laughing? Her father is dead'**

Nira, in her mid-thirties, is divorced and has no children. She works occasionally in the arts and cultural industries and has been living in London for the past twelve years. In a telephone conversation held prior to the interview she apologized that she might not be the right person for me to interview as she sees Israel merely as the place she grew up in and added that she lives away from any Israeli community. This conversation disclosed some of her preconceptions on what it means 'to be an Israeli', i.e. having a positive emotional engagement with Israel and having social connections with other Israelis living in London. In the interview, when asked to give a brief biographical background she said shortly: 'I was born in Haifa (significant details have been changed to ensure confidentiality), I'm an IDF orphan<sup>30</sup>. Being 'an IDF orphan' (her father died in the 1973 war<sup>31</sup>) indeed occupied a large part of the interview. Thus, Nira's agenda for an interview with an Israeli researcher on 'Israeli national identity' appeared to be dominated by her insistence (even prior to our encounter) on de-identification as an Israeli and the efforts to explain it to me and perhaps to herself.

The extract I chose describes Nira's particular position within her Israeli environment in Israel in the context of one of the nation's foundational ceremonies - that of Memorial Day for the Dead Soldiers (*Yom Hazikaron*). Various authors (e.g. Ben-Amos and Bet-El, 1999 and Lomsky-Feder, 2004, 2011) described the important task that public ceremonies have in fortifying a sense of collective identification and solidarity in the construction of an Israeli imagined community. Through the celebration of common rituals, subjects can imagine themselves as part of a larger imagined community alongside others

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<sup>30</sup> A term used for children whose parents died during their military service.

<sup>31</sup> The 1973 war between Israel and Syria and Egypt also called the Yom Kippur war.

that they will never meet or even know about (Anderson 1991) and join in with the collective narrative that links past, present and future. In a previous part of the interview, Nira talked about the special attitude that IDF orphans get from their Israeli environment:

it was always a kind of ahh... sort of a task... a task, yes a kind of a task. Because they always looked a bit differently at... I didn't want to be the miserable... as if there is something, a kind of... IDF orphans are always sort of slightly miserable, or they treat them a tiny bit differently in a kind of: 'wow, what happened to her?

*In retrospect*, when living away from this immediate Israeli environment, Nira can *reconstruct* how it feels to be 'caught up' in an emotionally and socially-charged social role where messages, demands and assumptions are not made overtly but rather insinuated to the role-occupying subject. Thus, she felt 'a sort of a task', 'a kind of a task' whose nature is not really clear, where people 'always looked a bit differently at...' [all italics mark my emphasis]. These subtle communications impose on IDF orphans the social position of 'the miserable' for the group's sake, and although these messages were communicated implicitly and not directly, Nira could pick them up.

Stanza 1 – Nira's attitude towards memorial days - being behind 'a screen'

1. ... I've always been in [behind] a sort of... a screen,
2. I don't know I wasn't interacting in any way (or: I didn't connect) with this whole business {of ceremonies for the dead soldiers}
3. Let's say, with cemeteries etc.

Stanza 2 – why she didn't connect with these practices: the discrepancy between that day and the rest of the week

4. It was funny things that weren't supposed to have happened
5. Memorial days, I didn't feel... it didn't seem to me...
6. It seemed to me awkward that only on one day I have to be sad
7. Because... my father is dead
8. it's actually...as far as I was concerned it was just another day

Stanza 3 – what Nira saw around her – how people around her behaved during Memorial Day.

9. I didn't understand why they make a national memorial day

10. and everyone has to sit and light a candle
11. And all of a sudden everyone is so sad for....
12. It seemed weird to me that throughout the year everything is all right
13. And all of a sudden one day it's...

Nira's disengagement with the public ceremonies is carried out through remoteness, blankness and emotional detachment; the emotionality that other people express does not resonate with her private experience of grief. Nira's sense of emotional incompatibility among others during these days of memorials gives rise to a sense of bodily difference, of being beside oneself. During her interview I had one such experience when I related to the title 'IDF orphan'. For a split second this linguistic term seemed to me somehow wrong and since I was aware of the heavy signification associated with it, I hesitated to use it lest I get it wrong.

Due to her specific familial and biographical situation and the importance that *society* assigns to it, Nira is located at a crucial social 'hot-spot' and can testify to subjects' sense of intrusion and awkwardness (but perhaps also of violence and rage) when they are *expected* to produce genuine feelings (of sadness) in response to, or for the sake of, artificially initiated collective practices ('It seemed to me awkward that only on one day *I have* {my emphasis} to be sad because my father died' (6-7) and 'everyone *has* {my emphasis} to sit and light a candle (10)').

I asked Nira if she could recall when she felt the discrepancy that she described above and Nira replied:

Stanza 6 – I was going on as usual during one such Memorial Day

24. I think I was still in {primary} school
25. I think I ran or rode on the bike
26. And I was sort of really Mabsuta {happy/content in Arabic} and kind of...
27. And it was memorial day

Stanza 7 - Her surroundings' reactions to her going on as usual during Memorial Day

28. And every minute they told me
29. But what? Her father is dead, her father is dead,
30. How come she is laughing? her father is dead

31. And the teacher caught up with me  
 32. And told me, it's memorial day and you have to... ahh

Stanza 8 – Nira realized that she is not allowed to carry on as usual on Memorial Day {or perhaps anytime}

33. And then I got it: Walla {Ahh So! In Arabic}? Kind of, that's great! So what?  
 34. So apparently you are not allowed to sort of...  
 35. Yes, I actually remember that day pretty clearly  
 36. I think it was at the age of 12, 11-12  
 37. It's like 'the coin dropped' that it's not... it's not appropriate for me to be Mabsuta {happy - Arabic}.

Nira describes an encounter between the emotionally free, spontaneous ('I was still in {primary} school', 'I was really *Mabsuta*'), and dynamic ('I ran or rode the bike') subject and the restraining social order (the children around her - and the teacher). She registers multiple contrastive voices during this confusing event: On the one hand she describes a clear sense of physical enjoyment riding her bike, and on the other hand, she is aware of disturbing, warning voices around her partly talking to her ('they told me') partly talking about her ('her father is dead'). This multiplicity of 'inner' and 'outer' voices that runs in parallel, converges into one once the teacher catches up with her and makes the social demands clearer but actually not clear enough ('It's memorial day and you have to...').

It is interesting to note Nira's use of Arabic in order to advocate the position of the spontaneous, authentic subject. It struck me that Nira, like some other Israeli interviewees, makes use of Arabic to address an 'authentic' emotional condition un-spoilt by linguistic formality and social conventions. In *this context*, this could be seen as an unintentional identification with members of another dispossessed group – the Arabs/ Palestinians whose language, ironically, is often absorbed into Hebrew slang as a form of non-formality and Israeli, *Sabra* authenticity. Only through the physical encounter with the literally restraining teacher, a representative of the formal social order was she able to finally get what she is not expected to do (i.e. enjoy herself). The '*Walla*' as its addition (Great, so what?) testifies and serves as an exclamation mark in the face of some unreasonable and almost ridiculous formal demand (that I'm not allowed

to be *Mabsuta*'), demonstrating to me, presumably a representative of the national group, a reconstructed moment of the subject's resistance to the imposition of the national narrative and its rituals.

In this extract Nira describes a moment when she realized that her *personal* story as she told it to herself turns out to be a part of another *collective* story wherein she and her family are given an important role, without being aware of it. Ben-Amos and Bet-El (1999) studied the means by which the Memorial Day for the Dead Soldiers promotes and consolidates the Zionist narrative within Israeli schools. The sequence of three memorial days, which are commemorated within a span of ten days (The Holocaust day, followed by the Memorial Day for the Dead Soldiers and completed with the Day of Independence) gives a concise summary of the national Zionist narrative that starts with the exilic horrors, goes on to the active battle for freedom and finally celebrates its achievement through national independence (which nonetheless is constantly felt to be endangered). Within this nationalist agenda, men and women are assigned different gender roles. The active contribution of the combatant males, who risk their lives in the battlefield, and are joined together through masculine comradeship is matched by the women's contribution: carrying the burden of mourning and grief over the dead males for the sake of the group's collective memory (Kamir, 2011). The governmental campaign (see chapter four) indeed depicts the young Israeli woman who will have to mourn on her own on Commemoration Day if she decides to stay abroad since her non-Israeli partner 'will never understand'. This message is meant to persuade Israelis abroad to return to Israel (and those in Israel not to leave) as if by giving up their mourning practices they also loosen their sense of national identity. Not taking part in the rituals, ignoring or merely being oblivious to them will be considered a major violation of the national-social codes and risk being subjected to social sanctions – explicit condemnation or indirect social alienation<sup>32</sup>.

Nira's status as an 'IDF Orphan' clearly demands her to take an active part in the collective ritual; to act as the one to whom group members gaze in order to form this sense of collective unity and justification for the collective narrative

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<sup>32</sup> During the sirens that mark the Dead Soldiers and the Holocaust memorials, Israelis are expected to stop and stand up. Those who don't take part in the rituals, often Arabs or Orthodox Jews, are seen as actively challenging the collective narrative and are pointed out.

that the group tries to maintain and promote through collective practices. Therefore, the emotional disengagement *she*, an 'IDF Orphan', takes towards this pivotal practice clearly locates her outside the national consensus. In this and in other parts of the interview, Nira presented her reluctance to play the demanding social role that was assigned to her.

#### **7.4.2. It pisses me off that someone tries to classify it as 'an experience'**

David provides another example of the informal social pressure to return to Israel placed on Israeli subjects who live abroad using signifiers around temporariness and fixity of 'life'.

David has lived in Britain with his family for the past seven years in an affluent town outside London, has completed his PhD in a British academic institution and now works as a researcher. David says that he feels very comfortable in England and considers himself 'some sort of a 'ballot error'', because his 'basic character, in a way, suits more the English character rather than the Israeli character'. He said:

76. I have an aunt, who, every time I'm in Ha'aretz
77. She says: 'yes-yes, that will be an experience for life, it's really an experience for life'
78. [ah, you being here!]
79. And I try to tell her that it's not an experience for life, it's already life itself
80. It's already seven years {since they left}
81. In a little while it will be eight, nine {years}, I don't know,
82. In any case it's more than 'an experience for life'
83. It pisses me off that someone tries to classify it as 'an experience'

A conflict erupts between David and his aunt around the interpretation of 'experience' and 'life' (see further discussion in chapter nine). According to David, his aunt reduces his life in England, which was very important for him, to *merely* 'an experience for life' (77), in the same way that Nira felt her personal experience of grief over her father was transformed by her environment to suit a particular form of 'national grief'. Seen through the eyes of the elderly Israeli aunt who will probably always live in Israel, 'experience for life' distinguishes between 'real', established life (in Israel) and the temporary,

capricious, perhaps exciting adventures of young people seen as merely 'experiences'. David is 'pissed off' because his aunt imposes on him a completely different narrative, her narrative, the hegemonic Zionist narrative, according to which he *will* return to Israel and will look at his period in Britain as *merely an adventure*. The logic of the collectivistic discourse denies the private one he entertains. Alternative understandings of 'life', 'experience' and 'reality' are less likely to be entertained in the Israeli public space saturated with Zionist concepts and signifiers.

In the course of the interview, and when I listened to its recording later, I was fascinated by the efforts that David was making to free himself of these social pressures and to construct a preferable subjective space for himself. He said:

85. I think that today it's less like this
86. When I come to *Ha'aretz*, I think that I feel, a tiny bit, yes a tiny bit, more of a foreigner
87. Still not... I wouldn't say that I feel a foreigner
88. And I think that when I come to Israel, a tiny bit, England is more, stays more...
89. I mean something which is not a distant dream

I sensed a strong intentional effort to uproot himself from a '*Ha'aretz*' discursive position - that which sees Israel as 'The Land - the one and only' (line 86), and plant himself in an alternative, more neutral discursive position (88), which sees Israel as merely 'Israel'. By its very discursive nature, '*Ha'aretz*' monopolizes the subject's engagement and would not allow for any form of alternative or competing identification. The text describes vividly the continuous, slow and gradual struggle ('when I come to *Ha'aretz*, I think that I feel, a tiny bit, yes a tiny bit, more of a foreigner' (86), to disengage from '*Ha'aretz*' (i.e. to feel a foreigner in Israel), and to engage with England (i.e. to retain its memory while being away, 88). Within the efforts to construct an alternative meaning of 'life' away from Israel, being 'a foreigner' in Israel becomes a desirable goal.

Earlier (see Noga's text regarding the tensions around the military conflict), I presented the contradictory and confusing messages circulating in Israeli society urging Israelis to return to Israel and join in with the national project

while at the same time calling on them to stay away and take care of their personal interests. I argue that these contradictory discourses reflect contrasting trends in Israeli society between a collectivistic/ideological Zionist discourse and a growing individualistic, post-ideological one. Hence they reflect the opening-up of Israeli society's discursive space in what some see as Israel's post-ideological era. However, as the material suggests, particularly in light of the threatening trends of individualism and the plurality of narratives, formal and informal channels of collectivism persist and even intensify - pushing for greater group cohesion and homogeneity.

## **7.5. Silenced disputes – absences in the Israeli discourse of nationality**

It was interesting to note that many of the controversial issues in Israeli society that I was expecting to hear – the debates around the occupation of the Palestinian territories, the status of Palestinian-Israelis in Israeli society or the militarization of Israeli society and the effects of the ongoing military conflict with the Arab neighboring countries - were either completely absent or were downplayed in the interviews and did not constitute *main topics*. In the concluding section I will discuss possible explanations for this phenomenon.

### **7.5.1. The representation of the Palestinian Israeli citizen.**

Most Jewish-Israeli participants completely discarded Palestinian citizens from their portrayal of the politics of identities in Israeli society (e.g. immigrants, veterans, *Ashkenazi*, *Mizrahi*, religious or secular) and actually referred to the *Jewish-Israeli* public when talking about 'Israeliness'. This reflects a general tendency among the Jewish-Israeli majority that overlooks the Palestinian members of society and their cultural, economic, political or social role in Israeli society<sup>33</sup>. This absence was raised by Aaron when describing the changes that Israeli society has undergone in recent decades:

.... I think that there are many, many Israelis who are not exactly what ... what used to be once the model of 'The Israeli', ah-ha...[...] ....If it's Palestinians... at the end of the day they are 20 percent of the

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<sup>33</sup> Admittedly, my own choice, to study Israeliness through Jewish-Israelis' texts, reflects such discursive tendency that synonymizes 'Israeli' with 'Jewish-Israeli'. In the 'reflexivity' section (chapter four) I have addressed my own embeddedness in Zionist culture.

population, and I don't think anyone in Israel considers them at all as Israelis

Michael (whose story of integration into Israeli society was brought in the previous chapter) was the only interviewee who referred to the Palestinians' defeat and suffering during the 1948 war – known among Jewish Israelis as the 'war of independence' and among the Palestinians as *the Nakba* or 'the disaster'. The Palestinian *Nakba* is usually avoided in the mainstream Jewish public although it is gradually becoming more present in public discourse (as the recent issue of the *Nakba* law – the legal sanctions imposed on institutions that commemorate the Palestinian defeat in connection with the day of Jewish independence – testifies). I felt that Michael took the privileged position of an insider-outsider who was knowledgeable enough of the Israeli culture but at the same time not totally constrained by its rules and obligations. Nevertheless even Michael presented the events as they are told by the formal Zionist narrative – putting the blame on the Palestinians for believing their leaders and choosing to flee:

So he took me to 's ouse {his house – a Hebrew slang} in Jebalia and I was met {A Hebrew grammatical error} his father, and his father told me of how he lost his whole life in Julis. You know where Julis. is? right next to Ashkelon [yes]. There is an armored military base over there. And he told me 'yes, mi {my – Hebrew slang} house is over there, and he told me of how he lost everything because he would listen {a grammatical mistake in Hebrew} their leaders, and he was sorry he ran away from home , and Abed told me of all the nut cases that roam Gaza, and the Muslims.

Michael was eager, to demonstrate to me his group membership by strategically drawing on shared collective knowledge (the events as they are told by the formal Zionist narrative), using Hebrew slang and voicing consensual opinions within the Jewish-Israeli public about Muslim radicalism ('the nut cases that roam Gaza'). This perception of the Palestinians as the beaten enemy who lost their right over their lands persists in the imaginary of Jewish-Israeli subjects, contributes to the fear of future conflict and obstructs any possibility for co-existence and the envisioning of joint socio-political projects. Such portrayal of the Palestinian and the 1948 war also constructs

Jewish-Israelis' perception of 'Arabs', 'Palestinians' and 'Muslims' in Britain as will be described in chapter eight.

An indirect reference to 'Arabs' or 'Palestinians' was made in subjects' speech through the usage of Arabic as slang and the application of various practices symbolizing life in the Middle East. The vast majority of Jewish-Israelis do not speak Arabic but many Arabic words have been introduced into daily slang Hebrew. It would be beyond the scope of this research to determine the role that Arabic plays in Hebrew language. However, my impression was that it was applied for the purposes of managing internal politics of Israeli society rather than as a direct reference to the Palestinian and/or Arab culture and its role within Jewish-Israeli society. In the context of this research, Jewish-Israelis who live in Britain often applied it to articulate the distinction of Israeliness from the formality of European culture and to portray it as a unique European-Mediterranean/Middle Eastern hybridity. Hence, 'The non-European', like 'The European' plays a part in the construction of 'the authentic Israeli' since it makes part of the matrix of identities around and against which subjects can construct their 'Israeliness'.

### **7.5.2. The military occupation and the 'security condition'**

The unresolved military situation has immediate material and psychological impact on subjects' daily lives in Israel and some subjects mentioned '*en passant*' the tension and the anxiety, the military service, the 'security condition' or 'the conflict' (as it is usually referred to). However, these did not perform as main themes in subjects' interviews. Only one participant (Na'ama) explicitly described it as a possible explanation for her ambivalence over going back to Israel (which was her main interview topic) and another, Ariella, described it as the cause for her decision to *leave* Israel eleven years earlier but completely omitted it when explaining why she chose now to return. Most subjects, even those who have lived in Britain for a long time have talked about the possibility of returning to live in Israel and did not mention the military situation as an argument that would deter them from doing it. I am not arguing that the participants did not have a recollection of traumatic events in Israel, but rather that in the context of the interview on 'Israeli nation identity' they chose other topics as a means to define and describe their sense of

national identity. I noted that when subjects did mention their experiences of the military conflict they tended to describe themselves as the targets of attacks by Arabs or Palestinians and that although many have served in the army as soldiers, their experience of the conflict does not include an image of themselves or of other Israelis as the perpetrators but rather as victims facing potential attacks. Israelis' experience of being the targets of attack on the part of the 'Arabs', 'Muslims' or 'Palestinians' persists when they arrive in Britain (see chapter eight) and is manifested in the images of these group members. So while the hegemonic Zionist narrative (chapter six) depicts Israel as the 'land of milk and honey', describes the horrors of the Jewish past in exile and the story of heroic collective and personal resurrection and transformation from helplessness and persecution to independence and liberation, the continuous military conflict and the public discourse creates a contradictory daily experience of anxiety and fear which subjects carry with them in Israel and abroad. Noga talked about the double messages they get from Israelis in Israel when they hear about their intention to return to Israel:

And that's why I always find it funny that bit about the 'why didn't you stay there?' ... '{Israelis in Israel ask} 'why didn't you stay for the passport, so that you'll have... a place to run away to.

While on one hand, Israelis get formal (see the government campaign encouraging Israelis to return 'home' in chapter four) and informal messages from Israel friends and family members to return to Israel and to push aside the security (and economical) difficulties, they also get a message that acknowledges the silenced stress. These confounding messages also convey two narratives that are in conflict and contradict each other: The hegemonic Zionist narrative promotes the sense of Jewish heroism and self-reliance in a Jewish state and urges subjects to fight - a personal narrative - while a diasporic one imagines collective apocalypse and urges people to flee. This clash of narratives has accompanied the Zionist movement from its inception and still lives in Israelis' daily experience as Noga summarized:

Everyone would like to live abroad but also to live in Ha'aretz too. And it's a sort of a dissonance, and if you ask me what's an Israeli this is

also a part of being an Israeli. Wanting to live in Ha'aretz but being abroad too.

## 7.6. Discussion

In this chapter I addressed some central themes concerning Israeli society that came up within and across the interviews. As highlighted in the methodological chapter, the interview extracts could be read through various, often overlapping and not mutually exclusive, critical approaches. This discloses the multilayered nature of narratives. *All of these* take part in the construction of 'national identity' in interviewees' texts although some aspects were more visible in certain interviews compared to others. I'll demonstrate this argument through Yariv's extract ('today, everybody seems to me terribly *Mizrahi* in Israel').

1. The psychoanalytic reading – Yariv's text could be read for the inevitable disruption and the impossibility of the (national) narrative (as argued by Lacanian theorists - Bhabha, 1990, Zizek, 1998 Stavrakakis, 2007). While in Jewish-Israeli society there are, no-doubt, many daily expressions of racism, there is also a strong public discourse of ethnic and cultural equality drawing on the (Eurocentric) Zionist ideological *ethos* of the 'Melting Pot' (*'Kur Hituch'*) or 'the Merging of Exiles' (*'Mizug Galuyot'*).<sup>34</sup> According to this national ethos, Jewish-Israelis are assumed to work together, regardless of cultural or ethnic origin, for the benefit of the joint collective project<sup>35</sup>, building a Jewish-democratic state regardless of the variety of cultures and traditions. Yariv's speech reveals the gap between ideology and daily practices, between the official phantasmatic ethos of collectivity, solidarity and multiculturalism her was raise on and the undercurrent forces of racism, class divisions and separatism that exist in daily social reality. This gap was also captured in Ariella and Liat's portrayal of the relationships between *Olim* and veterans and the unequal distribution of cultural and social capital.

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<sup>34</sup> Although this ethos is applied for Jews and excludes non-Jews altogether

<sup>35</sup> Israeli public opinion often boasts about 'the first Iraqi Chief-of-Staff' or 'the first Sephardic (Non-Ashkenazi) president' taking it as a testimony of the high social mobility in Israeli society where someone who came as a penniless immigrant can occupy a senior socio-political position 50 years later.

2. the socio-political reading (Peled and Shafir, 2002, Ram, 2006) – Yariv’s text could be read as a reference to the *political and social ‘reshuffling’* in contemporary Jewish-Israeli society and the continuous erosion of the old classical Ashkenazi hegemony and its flagship symbol – the Kibbutz. Yariv longs for a specific European-Israeliness, a part of the imagined glorious past where he, a Kibbutz member, was a member of the classical Ashkenazi elite and was granted preferred social recognition. In another part of the interview he said:

And this is the Israeli history that I know. The good old *Eretz-Israel...* this is what I was brought up on: the... the agricultural ethos, and the ethos... the other culture that we’ve created there, and the Israeli culture that has gone bad everywhere and has now gone and wherever I look for it in Israel, it’s not there.

Aaron addressed these changes in a more subtle way:

And I think that I’m also somehow stuck, with or without inverted commas with, perhaps out of convenience, with the model that is more of a... of the ... Zionist vision and that of Herzl’s<sup>36</sup> with Zionism, Zionism and Israeliness which is something much more secular and liberal than what is probably the average in Israel today.

Aaron’s text describes how various groups in Israeli society interpret differently ‘the nation’ and the meaning of Zionism. These distinct models also inform how ‘Israeliness’ would be portrayed: who falls within this category, who can be considered ‘the salt of the earth’ (see Ariella’s extract above and Aaron’s later on) and who falls outside. Aaron implies a distinctively European model (Herzl’s), which is informed by the cultural, political and social ideas and tastes prevalent in European societies which promoted certain groups but by doing so, marginalized others who did not fit. Ariella’s claim to be ‘the salt of the earth’ references this discourse of privileged Ashkenazi Israelis which would have marginalized others like Liat’s parents and undermined their sense of belonging.

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<sup>36</sup> An Austrian Jewish publicist, considered the visionary of the Zionist movement and of a Jewish state.

3. The psychological reading (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) - Yariv also uses this lost socio-political model to tell a *psychological story* – the search for uniqueness in the context of the immigrant condition. Yariv was often preoccupied with the notion of ‘uniqueness and distinctiveness from any group’ (the local Jews who are religious, see chapter eight; the *Mizrahi* Israelis in Israel; the European Israelis in Israel; the foreigners in London, etc.). He used it to explain that he cannot return to Israel lest he be ‘swallowed up’ by this homogenous, *Mizrahi* and non-distinctive ‘Israeli being’ and thus lose his ‘uniqueness’. Nira and David’s extracts highlighted emotionally-charged psychological moments when subjects find themselves caught up within the constraining social demands of Israeli narrative – the sanctification of the dead soldiers through ceremonies of mourning, the role that family members of the dead soldiers have to play within the national imaginary and the insistence on living in Israel as the only meaningful way of living.

4. The sociological-diasporic reading – Yariv’s text could be seen as the story of an immigrant who lost his former (*Ashkenazi*) previous socio-cultural privileges and where he can only ‘make a terribly big effort to feel that I’m European’ (30), to distinguish himself from other foreigners. The crisis around the loss of social status following immigration is well documented in immigration literature (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989, Sayad 2004 Fathi, 2011) and was demonstrated in some of my participants’ interviews (e.g. Ariella’s text). Yariv’s claim to Europeanism which in Israel was sufficient to classify him as an ‘Ashkenazi’ (a ‘European’) could not be applied in London. ‘European identity’ itself is contextual: Tell me where you live and I’ll tell you if and how much of a European you are. Hence the experiences of dislocation or sense of embeddedness in Britain (i.e. the extent to which subjects feel they found a place or ‘a home’ in Britain) and the image of Israel that they entertain are interdependent.

5. The dialogical reading – (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, Riessman, 2008) – Yariv’s text could be analysed for its discursive, inter-relational strategies and the interview politics. Such an approach undertakes that his description of Israeli society as oriental, homogenous and mixed was designed for me as his audience and in accordance with the relationship that developed within the interview encounter. Indeed, I often felt that his provocative racist remarks

were made in order to construct for me a specific image, and perhaps establish his uniqueness. Interviewees like Liat or Nira constructed images of 'Israeliness' based on their assumptions of who I am within the Israeli matrix of identities and what I might expect to hear.

The interviews were also informative in what they *did not* present – e.g. the marginalization and exclusion of non-Jews in Israeli society, the occupation of Palestinian territories and the stress of living in a society which is in ongoing military conflict. As Roninger (1999) argues, for Jewish-Israelis, the image of 'the Israeli' is closely associated with 'the Jewish' and no room is left for the non-Jewish within this imaginary. Furthermore, post-colonial theorists (e.g. Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994, 2007 or Shohat, 2003) explain that Zionism was and still is committed to the Europeanization of the Israeli and is constructed against the image of the non-European 'other' where the 'Arab' or 'the Palestinian' is its ultimate exemplar. For this reason the 'Arab' cannot be incorporated within the imagination of the 'Israeli'.

Overall, participants tried to negotiate a personal understanding of themselves in Israeli society without stepping out of the consensus. As described in the methodological chapter, the research sample consisted mainly of highly qualified, middle-class Jewish-Israelis who came from relatively affluent backgrounds. I hypothesized then that the skewed sample was partly due to this group's engagement in this topic as members of the privileged social sectors in Israeli society who were therefore more invested in the Zionist narrative and had greater social and capital stakes to lose by staying in Britain. By avoiding certain conflictual topics, they maintain a favorable national image that helps them keep the 'door open'. Indeed, most of the participants, even those who had been living in Britain for 40 years, declared the possibility of returning to Israel. This declaration seemed partly 'a membership fee' - a discourse, or a practice that signals their interest in and identification with the nation. This will be discussed further in chapter nine (the diasporic community)

To conclude, the extracts demonstrate various schisms and dialectical tensions that constitute (rather than endanger) 'identity' and the nation as emotionally engaging, albeit troubled and troubling, constructs. The material highlighted some of the specification of the socio-historical Israeli context within which the subjects constructed their texts: on the one hand the

compelling national narrative of collective resurrection linking a traumatic collective past and the promise for a better future (Golden, 2001); on the other hand, the daily accumulating effects that the military Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict bears on individual subjects, the social divides in Israeli society and the social pressures to conform to formal and informal rules of the group in an age of growing individualism and the waning of ideology. Thus, subjects refer to an increasingly troubled perception of 'Israeliness' shaped by a changing symbolic and value system and the encounter with an alternative (British) system of cultural signification seen from the disadvantaged perspective of 'the immigrant' or outsider. Narratives are situated in many ways: within the context of 'home'/'away' and what is between them, and in the intersection of the private, interpersonal and the socio-historical. Narratives reflect subjects' struggle for linearity and meaning in the face of disruptive forces. All of these were part of my participants' narratives where some aspects, at different parts of the interview took supremacy over others.

# Chapter eight - 'Us' and 'Them' – Jewish-Israelis in Britain Constructing National Identity through Difference

## 8.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to study how individual Jewish-Israelis who live in Britain make sense of their positioning within the matrix of collective identities prevalent in the local public space. The interview material highlighted two main discursive strategies for defining Israeliness: In chapter six I looked at how subjects construct a sense of 'we-ness' by drawing on aspects of the national narrative and idealized images of the national group. In the current chapter I will trace how such a sense of 'we-ness' is constructed and negotiated through the articulation of difference from 'the others'. Other empirical research among immigrants in Britain (e.g. African and non-African low paid workers - McIlwaine et al, 2006, or Polish migrants – Rabikowska, 2010) showed how collective identities are constructed in difference to other ethnic or national groups.

Stepping away from Israeli society where they constitute the majority, Jewish-Israelis find themselves occupying an unfamiliar social position – that of 'the other', as members of an immigrant minority group. This becomes especially significant for middle-class Israeli émigrés who previously enjoyed a privileged position in Israeli society. Like previous research on Israelis in the USA (Uriely, 1994, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Gold, 2002, Floman, 2007) and Britain (Gold, 2004, Hart, 2004, Lev-Ari, 2008) my research sample mainly consisted of interviewees from this socio-economic background. Therefore it is within this socio-cultural demographic context that my Israeli interviewees constructed their 'Israeli identity in Britain' or their sense of 'otherness' or foreignness. As discussed in the previous chapter, the overall reluctance to define themselves explicitly as 'immigrants' is partly connected to their privileged position in Israeli society.

Their high economic and professional status and the lack of distinctive physical markers that could signal their foreignness (physical appearance or special

ethnic or religious clothing) distinguishes this group from other unskilled, ethnic or work-migrants who might be excluded or subjected to racial remarks on grounds of their appearance, their low socio-economic or professional status (for a comparison see for example McIlwaine et al, 2006 on low-paid immigrants in London; Tanyas, 2010, on Turkish migrants; or Fathi 2011, on Iranian women doctors) which are often cited in diaspora literature.

When describing 'Israeli national identity' in Britain, many interviewees referred to the difference from two groups: the local British-Jews and the non-Jewish British public. These 'assist' Jewish-Israeli subjects in the construction of their distinct national identity. Within this matrix of intergroup affiliations, the 'Arabs', 'Palestinians' and 'Muslims' often occupy an important role as the 'cause' of this love or hate relationship towards Israelis. Therefore, while these were often kept backstage, Jewish-Israelis' perceptions of Arabs and Muslims will also be discussed to chart the matrix of identity politics and affiliations. These alternative identities mark the boundaries of the imagined Israeli community in Britain and as such can teach us about the contents of that imagined community, its conditions of existence and its assumptions in the current diasporic context. McIlwaine et al (2006), who focus on identity construction among low paid workers in London, demonstrate how identity is established through racial references to other migrant communities that compete for the same vocational resources. In the current chapter I will be looking at Israelis' representations of these three groups as the participants narrated their personal version of being an 'Israeli in Britain'. In the first section I will use an extract from Na'ama's interview to highlight some of the dimensions along which differences between Israelis and local Jews are argued. In the second section I will look at Ariella's story of a cultural conflict which she uses to demonstrate the unbridgeable differences between Israelis and non-Jewish British and Europeans in general. In the third sector I will look at some of the cross interview references to 'Muslims' and 'Arabs'.

## **8.2. The Jewish/Israeli divide: 'the Jewish community here... has nothing to do with Israelis'**

Contrary to what can be expected for two sub-groups which, according to the Zionist narrative, share a common imagined historical past, common interests

in the present and a mutual collective future, relationships between Jewish-Israeli émigrés and local Jewish communities in both North America and Europe are reported to be distant and uncooperative (Lahav and Arian 1999, Gold, 2002, 2004). This section will track various aspects of these conflictive and complex relationships as they are understood by Jewish-Israelis. It will illuminate some of the discursive and ideological preconceptions that prevail in the secular Jewish-Israeli group's self-perception concerning the neighboring 'Jewish' diasporic group. At the same time, those accounts have to be read critically since subjects make use of these distinctions as building blocks within their *personal* story and how they choose to present themselves. The analysis of Na'ama's extract is helpful in drawing out various constitutive preconceptions among Israelis about 'who they are'.

Na'ama, a thirty eight year-old woman is married with two children and has been living in London for the past ten years. She approached me following a lecture I gave where I mentioned my research and volunteered to be interviewed on 'Israeli national Identity', but claimed that she didn't really know what to say about it. In the meeting she told me that she works part-time as an administrator in an Israeli organization, having dropped her professional career following the move to Britain. Na'ama is surrounded by Israeli families:

who share with us the same state of mind that 'we'll go back in a year or two', that daily life is very comfortable and that making a big change and returning {to Israel} is a bit difficult.

Na'ama and her family live in a rented house, speak Hebrew at home, send their children to the Hebrew Sunday school and travel to Israel whenever there is a school holiday. In her initial statement and throughout her interview I was taken by the sense of temporality in her life. She said: 'it's a kind of a life... as if *'on hold'*, because it's not the real life but I think that I prefer it this way'.

Just before ending the interview I asked her if there was anything else she would have liked to add or emphasise. Like other interviewees, Na'ama took the opportunity to recapitulate the theme of 'having to make a decision' which ran throughout the interview and presumably drove her to be interviewed. She said:

Me, I'm terribly comfortable {here in Britain}, I'm afraid of the change but I know that sometime it will come, that we'll have to deal with making decisions this way or that way but right now I'm comfortable here, with being an Israeli and a foreigner.

This position of in-between resembles the profile of the 'sojourner' (Siu, 1952) prevalent among Israeli families in USA who are 'sitting on their suitcases' and whose lifestyle, choices and state of mind are dominated by the avoidance of making such decisions (Uriely, 1994 and Fluman, 2007). Since Na'ama was troubled by having to take a decision about staying in Britain or going to Israel, living a 'life on hold' allows her to avoid coming to a decision that will require giving up the other option. It is within this social/ psychological position of Israeli temporality and uncertainty, which Na'ama discussed, that she described the complicated relationships between the two groups. Hence the subject position of 'life on hold' shapes how the relations between the groups is described, but it is equally plausible to argue that the relationship between the groups as she experiences them contributes to the 'life on hold' position. Overall, she differentiated between 'the Israelis' and the Jews on four dimensions: their different approach to Zionism and Israel, religion/ Judaism, daily practices and the politics of identity within British society.

### **8.2.2. British Jews and their relation to Israel**

At one point, the interview focused on her educational preferences for her daughters. Hart (2004) followed the patterns of choosing schools among Israeli émigrés in London and concluded that although many Israelis send their children to Jewish schools, they are more likely to follow the footsteps of other Israelis around them and send their children to specific local (non-Jewish) schools around which the Israeli community gathers and organizes. I asked Na'ama about her own choices and Na'ama said that 'it was never an option' to send her daughters to a Jewish school. I then asked her:

1. [I gather that there isn't a point of contact or a touching point
2. with, say, the Jewish community, here?]

In response she answered:

3. No. But the Jewish community here is very sort of ...Jewish?!,

4. it is even not anti-Israeli
5. but it has nothing to do with Israelis
6. [what do you mean?]
7. I think, I lived for a year in US,
8. I worked in a school, filled up a place of a teacher
9. a Jewish school,
10. there was an affinity, sort of togetherness, towards Ha'aretz.

The mixture of puzzlement and decisiveness in 'Jewish?!' conveyed to me the improbability of sending her daughters to a Jewish school and at the same time demonstrated the unattractiveness of the signifier 'Jewish'. Although she was living in London for ten years already, Na'ama's associations to 'Jewish' seemed to be taken from the secular Israeli discourse on religion and nationality whereby 'Jewish' is associated with 'religious' or *Haredi* (ultra-orthodox) which is then associated with 'non-Zionist' – manifesting indifference if not hostility towards Israel as a state. Hence, in this context, 'Jewish' stands in contrast to 'Israeli'. This Zionist interpretation of Jewishness ignores the long tradition of cultural non-religious, non-Zionist Jewishness as argued by Jewish critics of Zionism (Butler, 2011, Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010). For Israelis, as argued in the theoretical chapters, the *territorial* affiliation to the land and the state of Israel ('*Ha'aretz*' – THE land) is a central component of their Jewish self-perception while, according to Na'ama, for English Jews the category 'Jewishness' does not include an 'Israel' or a Zionist aspect. Na'ama ignores the fact that a large majority of Jews in Britain who consider themselves religious do see themselves as Zionists (Graham and Boyd, 2010) and keep close connections with Israel (although there are others who base their sense of Jewishness around spiritual or cultural, but not necessarily religious, practices and would not see themselves as Zionists). These close connections to Israel if not to Israelis, have been noted by other respondents and match my own impression that a majority of the Jewish community in Britain is strongly engaged with Israel. Nevertheless, Na'ama's argument that 'the Jews have got nothing to do with Israelis' is made in order to highlight the identity boundaries around the Israelis.

### 8.2.3. Daily practices and the military conflict in the Middle East in the eyes of local Jews.

Na'ama then went on to describe the ways Israelis' daily practices, for example child-rearing and obeying rules, are perceived, negatively, by local Jews and justify the exclusion of Israelis. She described a conversation she had in the gym with a local Jewish man, part of which I record below:

24. and he said: 'you Israelis, one can't work with you.'
25. You don't know the rules,
26. I don't blame you,
27. you come from a country which is fighting for survival
28. so it's more important to be... to deal with the daily life
29. rather than to focus , say, on children's education,
30. putting children to bed at 7 pm'

This short paragraph exemplifies how differences in daily practices – broadly, 'following the rules' and specifically, 'putting kids to bed at 7pm' are used by interviewees in order to lay claims for identity difference. From Na'ama's point of view, local Jews use these differential practices to distinguish themselves from Israelis and justify ('one can't work with you') their exclusion. In Na'ama's account, the 'fight for survival' was strategically used by the man to explain away these differences and justify the exclusion. Since later on (l. 48), Na'ama expected 'more sympathy' from the local Jews, the same as she got from the American Jews when she lived there, we can assume that Na'ama understood 'fighting for survival' as a reference to the hardship related to the military condition in Israel. According to this view of Israelis, the inevitable condition they are placed in shapes every aspect of daily life and Israelis are depicted as survivalists who 'deal with the daily life' rather than attend to the long term benefits of obeying rules, focusing on children's education, and putting them to bed at 7 pm. Subjects will often try to accentuate or caricaturize the situation when trying to establish their argument. Since Israelis pride themselves on the freedom they grant their children, or the informality with which they manage their relationship with others, including their children, Na'ama's account would be sufficient in persuading an Israeli listener that British-Jews and Israelis indeed cannot get on together.

But we also have to read Na'ama's account of the man's criticism of Israelis' child-rearing practices in the context of the gender roles that the immigration process places on women. As will be elaborated in chapter nine, many Israeli women, including Na'ama, come to Britain following their husbands' well-paid jobs, live a materially 'comfortable' life in Britain but have to abandon their previous professional careers and mainly focus on caring for the family while having minimal engagement with the wider British society. Lev-Ari, 2008 and Floman, 2007, have documented this trend among Israeli women in USA while Hart, 2004, noted a similar tendency in Britain. Thus, child-rearing becomes an important part of Israeli women's identity in the context of immigration and the man's criticism of Israelis' laxness with their children could be interpreted as an attack on one of Na'ama's key aspects of self-identification.

46. I didn't like what he said
47. because you expect, 'why, you are a Jew too, we are...you...
48. normally you'd expect some sort of sympathy
49. Sympathy to Israel?]
50. Yes, I think so. In US it was very accepting, sort of, very open,

As the above paragraph discloses, of all the arguments the man raised against Israelis Na'ama was especially preoccupied with his argument about 'the fight for survival' which portrays people in Israel as living 'from one day to the other' and consequently constructs them as 'not knowing the rules'. Therefore while Na'ama presumably accepts the man's reference to the condition of survival, she expected to get sympathy (48) or support for it rather than criticism. She finds out that the limits of the Zionist narrative and discourse that cannot be 'cashed in' (as she did among American Jews) among British Jews who consider 'the fight for survival' as the Israelis' problem – it's 'your' country (rather than 'ours'). This supports Na'ama's earlier argument that the Jewish community 'has nothing to do with Israelis' (5). The tension between the two groups is captured in the immediate contact between the man and Na'ama who 'didn't like what he said'.

#### **8.2.4. British Jewishness as conservative and restrictive in its interpretation of 'religion' and 'Jewishness'**

Na'ama then went on:

51. In US it was very accepting, sort of, very open,
52. Their interpretation of religion, too, is much more...
53. The fact is that there is a Jewish network of schools
54. but it's not these orthodox, conservatives
55. where everything is very sort of open and accepting
56. whereas here, the Jewish is much more conservative
57. and I can't be affiliated with it so much.
58. [Conservative? in what sense?]
59. Kind of Jewish, in terms of religion
60. [When you say 'kind of Jewish' tell me what's on your mind, what do you mean?]
61. that they don't accept your interpretation of religion, sort of

Na'ama compares the American and the British Jewish communities along the dimension of conservatism and openness in relation to Israelis' secular Jewishness (i.e. their Zionism). In contrast to the American Jewish community, according to Na'ama, the local British community is not hospitable to Israelis' interpretation of religion which is basically not religious at all but is rather ideological. Hence, in America, she claims, Israelis could fit in within an accepting Jewish community whereas in Britain they have nothing to offer and are therefore excluded and marginalized. Note that Na'ama talks about the ability of the local Jewish communities, in America and in Britain to 'accept' Israelis' secular perception or interpretation of religion but does not talk about the ability of Israelis to reconsider, or adapt to, other versions of Jewishness which diasporic Jews, in America or in Britain, hold (Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010). Na'ama draws her images from discourses of nationality and religion in secular Israel where such variations also go un-noticed.

Yariv relates to the Kibbutz's interpretation of Judaism and asserts:

Our Jewishness is something very-very specific. It doesn't have a God. In the Haggadah of the Kibbutz there is no God. You can check it out. You don't have the word 'God'. {it reads) 'We left Egypt' and not 'we were taken out of Egypt'. And that's my Judaism.

Since the secular Zionist interpretation of Jewishness was constructed around the negation of the exilic old Jew who was seen to be caught up in the anti-Semitic rules of the non-Jewish world, great emphasis was put on Jews'

agency. Hence, one has to ask: 'what do we talk about when we talk about Jewishness' and *who* does the talking'?

### **8.2.5. The power struggles between immigrants (Israelis) and locals (British Jews)**

Na'ama concluded her discussion of the local Jewish community by drawing attention to the socio-political struggle between the veteran, well-established local Jewish community and the new-coming Israelis.

92. there is a separation between Israeli and Jewish
93. and also among the institutions that operate here.
94. I know it from my own work.
95. It's not that you can get support from all sort of Jewish institutions
96. as Israelis, we are not of interest to them.
97. it's a totally different thing.

Dorit also talked about the complicated relations between the two groups where the romantic fascination of local Jews with Israelis ('the Israelis are the strong people' - chapter six) is accompanied by rejection:

19. Some people, for example in business
20. If you ask businessmen they will tell you that
21. The Jews prefer not to do business with Israelis  
[Why?]
22. Because we are not perceived as reliable people [folk/nation]
23. And they really hate it that we give them a bad name, they really hate it

Dorit draws a picture of two groups competing with each other rather than sharing and supporting each other. According to her 'the Jews prefer not to do business with Israelis' (21), because the two groups are often associated with each other in the eyes of the British non-Jewish public and therefore Israelis give local Jews a 'bad name' - Israelis' unreliability is inflicted upon British Jews and damages their reputation in the eyes of local British people. Thus, according to Dorit, the reluctance towards Israelis does not stem merely from a disagreement between the two groups regarding how best 'to do stuff' (here, business practices, and in Na'ama's interviews, raising children and following rules), but rather originates from British Jews' position within the general British

society and the embarrassment that their immigrating, undisciplined 'family members' are causing them when associated with them. Similar inter-group politics between the socially and culturally established German Jewry and the new-coming Polish-Jewish immigrants in Germany at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was described by Elon (2003).

It is interesting to note that while acknowledging the advantageous socio-economic position of British Jews in British society, some of my interviewees still complained about the general British public's ignorance of the distinctions between Jews and Israelis. The British public gaze plays an important role in Israelis' construction of a separate collective identity. Liat said:

I don't define myself as Jewish, when they ask me {about my Jewishness} I say 'by inclusion, not by faith'. 'When they ask you 'where are you from?' and you answer 'from Israel' and they ask 'are you Jewish?' {I answer} So OK, if you must!.

And later:

And here, especially, I find that non-Israeli and non-Jews don't get it, the difference, it's like in South America. In South America, anyone who is Jewish, they call him 'Israeli'. They just don't get the difference.

And Yariv complains:

I'm constantly fighting wars here with the ....I'm not Jewish, I'm Israeli, sort of, don't confuse me with the British Jews, don't conf... it's not the same thing.

Like British-Jews who, according to Dorit and Na'ama, try to disengage from an immigrant group which is mistakenly associated with them, Jewish-Israelis in Britain assume that by disengaging with the local Jewish community, as it is perceived by *them*, they will be able to gain a preferable social position in British society. This might be due to their Zionist upbringing in a society whose *raison-d'être* is constructed around the crucial distinctions between the Old and the New Jews rather than due to a close acquaintance with the positioning of Jewishness in the British identity politics.

### 8.2.6. Discussion

Na'ama's text draws out four dimensions in which 'the Israeli' is differentiated, according to Israelis, from 'the (British) Jew'. These differences have been articulated around the attachment to Israel and Zionism; the interpretation of religion and Jewishness; the differential daily practices of how to do things and the politics of identities and power-relations within broader British society. Hence ideological as well as practical arguments are brought together by Na'ama to justify the group distinction which she is keen to emphasize.

However, my analysis also wanted to address how subjects are *emotionally invested* in these discursive milieus. I felt that central to Na'ama's extract was the *personal* experience of exclusion and devaluation: 'I didn't like what he said', 'why, you are a Jew too, we are...you...' - that she felt during the encounter with the Jewish man which she later generalized ('as Israelis, we are not of interest to them').

Israelis who have been brought up on certain Zionist values regarding Jewishness, Zionism and daily practices, and who have often enjoyed a privileged socio-political status in Israeli society, struggle to accommodate themselves to their new social condition as immigrants (this signifier was never used by my interviewees to address their status in Britain). Na'ama's account of her encounter with a local Jew demonstrates the clash between the Zionist preconceptions that Israelis bring with them ('sort of Jewish?!), the new cultural-political intergroup experiences in Britain and the experience of exclusion and rejection ('you don't know how to do things') that is associated with it. Only when they arrive in Britain, do Israelis realize that local Jews are engaged in alternative systems of social significations which override the Zionist agenda. This makes fertile soil for disappointments and frustrations.

Na'ama's description of the local Jews discloses the limitation that Zionist ideology imposes on the concept 'diasporic Jew', and ignores the rich cultural *non-religious* and *non-Zionist* Jewish tradition among Jews who do not live in Israel (Magid, 2006, Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010, or Butler, 2011). Indeed, my respondents demonstrated ignorance of the local non-religious ethos of Jewishness and its daily practices and meanings.

The examples I have cited clarify that the often pre-supposed alliance between people from the two Jewish groups, which assumes their common cultural and religious affiliation under the auspice of the Zionist narrative, in fact covers a diversity of often contrasting interpretations of those apparently shared signifiers – ‘Jewishness’, ‘Israel’, ‘religion’, etc. Those different cultural understandings set up different guidelines as to who is ‘like us’ and who isn’t.

It is nonetheless important to analyse the tensions not only through the differential system of symbolic identifications but *also* in terms of power dynamics between an increasingly ambitious immigrant group (Israelis) that troubles the hegemony of an established local community, itself a minority group that is conscious of its image, social positioning and cultural capital in the broader British society. The relationship between British Jews and Jewish-Israelis should be understood within the broad socio-political British context. This will be the focus of the next section.

Finally, Na’ama’s text also presents the Jews/Israelis’ relationships through the eyes of an immigrant Israeli *woman*, and the specific conditions of immigration that accentuate differential gender roles for men and for women among an affluent immigrant community. Drawn to the traditional feminine roles of child-rearing and having to abandon a professional career, Jewish-Israeli women, like Na’ama, might be inclined to draw a line between Israelis and local Jews along child-rearing practices (see chapter nine for an extensive discussion of Jewish-Israeli women’s construction of identity along the axis of professional status).

### **8.3. The Jewish-Israeli and ‘the European’ in British society**

In this section I will be sketching some of the significant themes in the construction of ‘Israeli identity’ in the context of broader non-Jewish British society. Like the previous section, I will open with some thematic commonalities across the interviews, such as ‘anti-Zionism/anti-Semitism’ and ‘the Israeli way of doing things’, in an attempt to sketch the collective cultural reservoir (my first research question) regarding ‘the English’ (Israelis would normally refer to the locals as English rather than British). In the second part of this section, I will demonstrate, using a critical narrative reading of an interview extract with Ariella, how subjects make specific and personalized uses of this

glossary of themes, signifiers and discourses to make sense and justify personal choices and private narratives. Not less importantly, self-perception of the Israeli group members is constructed in reference to the *image* that other group members, e.g. the British, are *assumed* to have of them. In other words, (Israeli) subjects' national identity also reflects their sense of Otherness as members of a minority group within the larger British majority.

### **8.3.1. The role of 'The conflict' in the construction of an 'Israeli national identity' in Britain: 'and the world always splits.... into those who love you and those who don't love you'**

As mentioned before, many Jewish-Israelis enjoy privileged economic and professional conditions in Britain and are normally not subjected to exclusion, marginalization or racialization on account of their physical appearance or recognizable religious or ethnic markers. In the absence of other adversarial demographical features, the on-going Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict and the occupation of Palestinian territories is perceived in the Israeli imaginary as an area of friction between the Israeli public and British society, along which their experience of foreignness is often explained. In his book *Living with the Conflict*, Bar-Tal (2007) describes what he calls 'the siege mentality' of Jewish Israeli society. Jewish-Israelis have been socialized from a very early age that Jews have always been subjected to violence from other groups throughout the millennia of communal existence, and that these attacks are founded on anti-Semitism. The Holocaust constitutes the ultimate proof of the victimhood of the Jewish people as does the continuous military conflict with the Arabs, in general, and the Palestinians, more specifically. Bar-Tal demonstrates the means (Jewish tradition, Zionist ideology, media and school curricula) through which this outlook persists and dominates contemporary Israeli society outweighing any counter-indications or narratives (e.g. Shafir and Peled, 2002, Sand, 2008 and many more).

A section from Noga's interview (see also chapter six – 'We are the centre of the world') demonstrates the way Jewish-Israelis often see the international community's (British society included) attitude towards Israel, and gives a general guideline of how their positioning as Israelis within British society might be perceived. This specific paragraph elaborates the notion of 'the split world'

(discussed in chapter six). Following on my question about 'what does it mean for her to be an Israeli in London?' Noga elaborated:

43. and the world always splits,
44. and you see it everywhere,
45. into those who love you and those who don't love you,
46. I mean, and here there are many Jews, everywhere,
47. So you go about and {they will say to you} 'ah, really?', my mom lives in Herzliya<sup>37</sup>. You constantly hear it
48. but I still remember that we walked in Montreal,
49. a sort of France within Canada and...
50. someone stopped us and said 'are you from Paris?'
51. and we said 'no, no we are from Israel'.
52. you could literally see the disappointment on his face
53. and he said: 'ahh, because the way you dress, it looks like you are from Paris [ah-ha,] ahhh...

The notion of the importance (here the 'centrality') and contestability (here, 'the split world') of Israel within international relations (usually explained through the continuous Israeli-Palestinian conflict) is well grounded in Israelis' self-perceptions. The benefit of nurturing such preconceptions is clear: it portrays Israel not as a tiny, negligible, marginal country, but rather as the object of interest and (positive or negative) importance. David says, critically:

{When I lived in Israel} I really thought that the whole world, not only the politicians, but also every citizen in the world... Israel is something that fascinates him, yes? That he and his wife are talking about Israel every night before they go to bed.

Noga makes a clear distinction between those 'who love you' and those 'who don't'. The amiable local Jews whose family members live in Herzliya are perceived here as 'shareholders' in the Israeli project and are those who 'love you'. The non-Jewish western world represents here the 'non-loving' environment and, drawing on the Jewish-Israeli memory of persecutory Europe (Bar-Tal, 2007), Montreal is likened to 'a sort of France within Canada'. Within the binary map of national affiliations distinguishing between supporters of the

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<sup>37</sup> An Israeli affluent town inhabited by many Jewish-Israelis of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Palestinians or supporters of Israel, France (Europe) is traditionally perceived by Israelis as 'Pro-Arab' and therefore hostile to Israel, while the US is taken as supportive of Israel. Hence, I am suggesting that French-speaking Montreal, by being 'a sort of France in Canada', is associated as an extension of the 'hostile' or 'not-loving' France. Noga also tells us a story about the similarity in appearance ('because the way you dress, it looks like you are from Paris) yet the painful fundamental difference between Israelis and other Europeans which captures the dialectics between 'the European' and 'the Israeli' (see chapter seven). While Israelis would like to categorize themselves as Europeans or Westerners (see Sela-Shefi, 2006 and the discussion on ethnicity and class in Israeli society in the previous chapter) and often boast about Israel being the only democracy in the Middle East, their geographical, ethnical and political conditions position them outside this 'desirable club'. It becomes clear that the binary of 'love-don't love', as it is presented here by Noga, is drawn around the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. In the previous section I reviewed the complexities in Israeli-Jewish relationships (as demonstrated in Na'ama's text), but in the current interview context Noga depicts the British-Jewish community positively so that she can describe a sense of discomfort within the politically 'hostile' British environment. These generalizations serve Noga to help maintain a coherent world view and avoid the complexities that the intercultural, inter-national encounter brings about. It allows her to gloss over the ambivalence in the relationship between Israel and the Jewish diaspora; to avoid the recognition of the disinterest and marginality of Israel in the eyes of local non-Jewish British people (as argued by Graham and Boyd, 2010), or to address the international criticism of the Israeli handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Philo and Berry, 2004, 2011).

Noga is not alone in her view of British public opinion as politically hostile. Most Israelis perceive general British public opinion as pro-Palestinian and hostile towards Israel on account of its role in the continuous conflict in the Middle East.

Nira said:

they ask me where I'm from so I say I'm from Israel, so the English way is like: 'Oh, how interesting' {we laugh} and when I hear it I understand

that something not nice is about to happen so it's on the tip of my tongue {to say}: 'yea, yea, I know what you think, get on with it.

Ariella said:

The feeling was generally not comfortable, and especially when Israel was portrayed in not such a positive light, there were many comments that I didn't like such as: 'what? {You are Israeli?} You don't look like one.

There is also a general agreement among the Israelis I interviewed that the British media coverage is hostile to Israel and is pro-Palestinian and that this position constructs a hostile public opinion towards Israel.

Dorit says:

and judging from my personal impressions, well, I don't know... well, not everyone is in on our side, let's say it this way, I mean the media here is very biased, it's pretty much pro-Palestinian.

And David said:

There is a legitimate and non-legitimate criticism of Israel which creates a demonization of Israel and an over-focus on Israel, and an idealization of the Palestinians and you have the {economic} boycott which is stupid and the academic boycott which is even more stupid.

Generally then, Israelis feel discomfort associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and apply a variety of strategies to ward off the discomfort. Yariv said:

I don't look Israeli, at least not the Israeli that most Europeans get to know here. So if they don't ask, I don't say

Ariella, who eventually returned to Israel, said:

Especially during the years I've been abroad, it was very important for me to be liked, to be an ambassadress for my country, in the most informal way, to make people who had their thoughts about Israel... after encountering me, they could say 'there are actually good people in Israel.

### 8.3.2. Jewish-Israeli subjects and ‘anti-Semitism in British society’

While the presence of anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist tendencies in British society is widely accepted by Jewish-Israelis (although they report rare occasions where they actually felt discomfort because of it), none of my interviewees reported coming across an anti-Semitic event. One can conclude that Israelis consider ‘anti-Semitism’ an issue that concerns local Jews who grew up and live within a predominately non-Jewish environment while for Israelis, who come from a country whose majority is Jewish, anti-Semitism is only hear-say, something that happens to Jews abroad (see McNamara, 1987, on Israelis’ responses when subjected to anti-Semitism in Australia). This might also explain some of the Israelis’ insistence on clearly differentiating themselves from local Jews when interacting with the general British population. The perception of anti-Semitism among Israelis in Britain seems to be more about these notions as they are imagined in Israel and imported to Britain by the new-comers, rather than based on actual acquaintance with the local identity politics and the image of Jews in the local British society.

David describes cynically the popular notion of anti-Semitism as it is held in Israeli society:

In my opinion, the Israelis in Israel are convinced that your life as an Israeli abroad constantly revolves around your Israeliness and that you constantly have to peek around your shoulder to see that they don’t throw a stone at you because of anti-Semitism, if I’ll allow myself a bit of exaggeration, {Israelis in Israel believe} that anyone you work with is either anti-Semitic or a latent anti-Semitic or else is currently a ‘Hadassah<sup>38</sup> donor.

However, educated within a Zionist Israeli society and bombarded by information in the public media<sup>39</sup> about the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the western world, as well as the international anti-Israeli approach (Bar-Tal, 2007); this option seems to be entertained at the back of the mind.

Consequently, Israelis seem confident that anti-Semitism exists, but do not really know what it looks or feels like and as a result remain unsure whether

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<sup>38</sup> A big world-wide Jewish women charity.

<sup>39</sup> See the documentary film ‘Defamation’ by Yoav Shafir for a study of the interpretation of anti-Semitism in Israeli society.

they have indeed been subjected to it or whether they just weren't aware of it occurring around them. Roni demonstrates the belief in the inevitability of anti-Semitism in British society:

I assume that if I would have been in a more anti-Semitic environment or something like this, for argument's sake, and I would have had to work in an anti-Semitic environment, naturally, it would have been inconvenient but since I'm not forced to live in such an environment...

The concept of 'anti-Semitism' was sometimes inserted in my interviewees' speeches within the context of anti-Zionism and anti-Israeliness where the boundaries between them were not always clear to Jewish-Israelis. Noga demonstrates this common mix-up:

There were these anti-Jewish demonstrations and they {the Israeli embassy} did... they organized a gathering in support of... in Trafalgar Square, it was a year ago [anti-Jewish demonstrations?] yes, the anti... Israeli.

This mix up between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism or the political criticism of Israel is very prevalent in Israeli society (or among the local Jewish community, see Shindler, 2003) where anti-Zionism is presented as the modern version of an undercover anti-Semitism which went out of fashion due to western societies' political correctness. The common fear of anti-Semitism in fact joins the Jewish and Israeli communities through a mutual enemy and helps to bridge the gap between the two groups. As a result, Jewish-Israeli subjects who come to live abroad in material and economically advantageous conditions and are not subjected to racism or marginalization for their socio-economic status, find it difficult to accommodate the Israeli discourse of anti-Semitism to their daily experiences. Ariella's story, which will be analysed later, demonstrates how the vague notion of anti-Semitism circulates in Jewish-Israelis' interpretations of their daily encounters with their non-Jewish environment.

### 8.3.3. Doing things differently – constructing distinct ‘national character’ through daily practices

Many of the interviewees defined ‘their Israeliness’ in terms of the way they do or see things which differentiate them from local British people. Subjects talked about practices of arranging play-dates for the children, work relationships, socializing etc.

I will briefly analyse a short extract from Aaron’s interview where he talks about the ‘Israeli way of thinking’ as something that defines ‘Israeliness’. Aaron, who settled down nine years ago in London with his American wife, presented an exceptionally liberal model of Israeliness:

you have to, kind of, {have} a few things to be Israeli: I think it's a way of thinking, I think it's language, I think it's a cultural context; Ah... and it can also be the place where you were born.

Within such a liberal model of Israeli belonging that also emphasizes, beside the territorial aspects (being born or growing up in Israel), a-territorial and cultural means of belonging (such as an ‘Israeli way of thinking’) he too, an Israeli who doesn’t intend to return and in whose home the family members do not speak Hebrew, could be included. Thus, it was important for Aaron to emphasize the distinctive ‘Israeli *way of thinking*’ and he therefore made the following statement:

56. ...i.e. Israelis, they don't have... you don't schedule lunch a month and a half in advance.
57. It's: ‘shall we meet {tomorrow} for lunch? Let's talk tomorrow morning!’
58. You don't have the... I mean
59. even if nothing changes between the morning and noon time,
60. You don't have that ability to plan in advance
61. Or it's less common

The Israeli thinking (perhaps a variation on ‘the Jewish genius’) that Israelis are very proud of – the spontaneity, the lack of formality and therefore the ‘lack of planning’ - has been mentioned in other interviews (for instance around issues of organizing the children’s ‘play-dates’). This ‘lack of planning’ in advance is presented here as a *virtue* (like ‘*Hutzpah*’, in Dorit’s interview -

chapter six) which signal Israelis' ability to improvise, find a solution and adapt themselves to changing circumstances. Thus the assertion that Israelis, unlike the British, 'don't schedule lunch a month and a half in advance' (l. 56) is an implied criticism of the inflexible and formal 'British way of thinking', among people who are presumably so preoccupied with pre-planning and formality that they schedule a lunch a month and a half in advance regardless of whether they are hungry, have had a rift with this friend or will have to be away from town on that date. Thus 'planning in advance' is deliberately exaggerated and caricatured to better define the unique 'Israeli way of thinking', which is especially emphasized in Aaron's model of Israeliness so that he could be included in it too.

By contrast, the Israeli way of scheduling lunch is straightforward and practical: A invites: 'shall we meet {tomorrow} for lunch?' B retains all options: 'Let's talk tomorrow morning'. Within the climate of absolute spontaneity and improvisation it is acceptable for B not to accept A's offer right away and have A wait for his answer without breaching the social norms of friendship. Moreover, Aaron argues that even if B doesn't have in sight any event that might deter him from attending the lunch ('even if nothing changes between the morning and noon time', 59), B still retains the option to delay his response until the following morning. Aaron's text tells us also about the way 'friendship' among Israelis is imagined where rules of friendship are characterized by informality, openness, flexibility, adaptation to changing circumstances, frequent interactions ('let's talk tomorrow morning'), all of which are lost in the formal 'scheduling lunch a month and a half in advance' pattern of British friendship.

Aaron's example draws on common Israeli self-perceptions which revolve around 'Israeli' informality or 'uncivilized Israeli behaviour' which is given a range of interpretations: 'spontaneity' 'aggression', 'pushiness', 'not observing rules', 'straightforwardness' and more. David for example states:

'I think that the average Israeli is in some respects a 'street cat': he is far less constrained or restrained by rules of this is how you are allowed to behave and this is how you shouldn't behave. He has a goal and he will achieve it, not in every situation and not at all costs but he will strive for

it more or less without looking right or left. And certainly without getting worked up by rules or regulations or social norms'

Within this broad category of 'undisciplined behaviour' (as demonstrated in Sela-Shefi's 'talk-back' analysis of 'the Israeli person', 2006) subjects bring up a wide range of idiosyncratic interpretations that they accommodate to suit their requirements within the immediate interview encounter and within a broader perspective of 'who they are' in the world. As part of the effort to differentiate themselves within British society, Jewish-Israeli subjects often romanticize this image of the 'uncivilized Israeli'.

The image of the Israeli as 'a street cat', 'aggressive' or 'uncivilized' is strongly based in Israeli folklore and emerged as foundational in Sela-Shefi's research (2006) on Israelis' self-perceptions. In her study, the image of the 'uncivilized Israeli' was constructed in opposition to a desirable image of the 'civilized European'. She concluded that Israeli respondents positioned themselves differently in reference to this 'uncivilized' Israeli image and the alternative counter-figure of the 'civilized European' in order to signal their preferred social positioning in Israeli society. However, Jewish-Israelis in Britain who struggle to articulate their distinctiveness within the majority British society have to position themselves differently, vis-à-vis this image of 'civilized European'.

'Aggression' is central to the image of the 'undisciplined Israeli' and is used creatively in order to produce a favourable private and group identity as Israelis. Yariv described his Israeliness among his work colleagues:

I'm vocal, I try to squeeze in. I push. I advance {professionally}. I have ambitions. When I look at the English I say {to myself} 'they don't have ambitions.

In the interview, Yariv stressed his professional achievements and success. Within this context of someone who emerged from the Kibbutz and succeeded in London, his Israeli pushiness (or 'aggression') was seen as a personal asset that helped him achieve his professional goals in Britain. Pushiness is described as merely an open and sincere manifestation of one's ambitions to succeed and since the English 'don't have {professional} ambitions', they don't push. Thus 'pushing', being 'vocal' and 'squeezing in' are being rehabilitated

and presented as legitimate or even advantageous in the context of a competitive and ambitious international professional environment.

And Aaron said:

I think that my way of doing business, which is a very Israeli way, is much more of an aggressive way than the British way, but it's aggressive not in the sense of the classical Israeli aggression. It means 'not to leave good will on the table' {English wording}, daring, is the word, try out things, in a creative way, perhaps that's the word... and not give up.

Aaron, like Yariv, claims 'the positive' or adaptive side of 'Israeli aggression' – which is more about being 'daring', 'creative', entrepreneurial, and insistent ('not giving up'). The other aggression with which Israelis are involved ('the classical Israeli aggression', for example as part of the conflict with the Palestinians, or in daily life), which bears destructive consequences for the subject and for the other, was widely denied in the interviews or just mentioned casually, like here. A rare reference to the harmful consequences of 'classical Israeli aggression' can be found in Ariella's story, later on.

David was trying to explain why he feels comfortable in Britain and why he likes to stay. To exemplify his comfort, he describes the British way of being aggressive:

Perhaps they don't have the American enthusiasm of everything that shoots and {the wish} to conquer the world, but if they {the British} feel that there is an issue that really endangers the... ahh...Western interests, significantly, they will go to war... I think that in my first visit to England, I noticed... in the tube, you know, in the tube, yes? So there is a very clear rule: you don't go in before everyone gets out. And there were some people who were about to go in before the others went out so the ones who went out, a few of them... there were two guys and they gave them *Wahad* {one hell of a... – in Arabic} elbow... and these were guys with ties and jackets

Within the immediate discursive task he wanted to achieve, namely explaining why he feels comfortable in Britain, and how he can express his Israeliness, it was important for David to stress that British people *too*, like Israeli 'street

cats', can be aggressive at times, pursue their agenda and exercise power regardless of what is expected of them. This description warrants exercising aggression within specific rules and makes the British social environment more liveable and familiar for the Israeli subject who is accustomed to thinking about himself as 'aggressive'. Also, within the scale of aggression, the Israeli and British versions are presented as reasonable compared to the 'American enthusiasm of everything that shoots and {the wish} to conquer the world'.

Being active, creative, not obeying formal rules and striving to achieve one's goals supports the imagined figure of the revolutionary New Jew that Israelis feel committed to. The 'New Jew', which according to feminist theory (Kamir, 2011) was constructed against the compliant, obedient, passive, 'feminine' Old Jew, was also constructed in reference to the 'formal and civilized (albeit excluding) European non-Jew' as some theorists (e.g. Reinhartz and Shavit, 2010, Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994, Shohat, 2003) argue is constrained by social norms, formality and bureaucratic regulations. Thus, the 'uncivilized Israeli', who is perceived negatively in Israeli society (Sela-Shefi, 2006), is strategically portrayed, within the British context, more positively as a way of arguing an identity distinctiveness. Moreover, subjects assign different, even constructive values to similar behaviours when they are performed within the context of Israeli society and when they are performed in Britain. 'Pushiness' for example can be seen as a negative feature of Israeli society but is portrayed by Israelis as a positive and beneficial trait when applied in specific circumstances in Britain and interpreted as 'resourcefulness' or 'resilience'.

In the following section, I will analyse an extract from Ariella's interview to demonstrate how subjects make specific use of shared themes, signifiers, and discursive arguments some of which have been discussed above, to construct private narratives and justify personal decisions and preferences. I argue that it is important to locate the story she told within the overall interview narrative and to contextualize it within the matrix of British collective identifications as it is understood in the Israeli public space. These can teach us not only about the available assumptions of Israelis regarding nationality and the subject positions that come with them but also about the limitations they impose on the construction of alternative private and collective identifications.

#### **8.3.4. Being ‘the other’ - an Israeli foreigner in an ‘area free of Jews’.**

Ariella in her late 30’s approached me following a professional lecture I gave where I mentioned my study, and offered to be interviewed. She said that she will be in London for three more months before she and her family will move back to Israel after living in Britain for 11 years. By the time the interview took place the preparations for the family’s return to Israel were under way.

It would be reasonable to assume that the immediate context within which this interview was conducted greatly impacted on the contents that she raised and how she presented them. Indeed, at an early stage in the interview, she ‘warned’ me saying:

I sort of don’t know who you interview but I wanted to tell you that... before we start, that my head is in Israel, I mean I’m very... but it’s a very-very long process that I went through over many years.

As the above quote demonstrates, she was aware of the constraints that such a position (‘My head is in Israel’) might impose on her ability to present multiple, contradictory or ambivalent views concerning her sense of Israeliness in Britain, which she believed I was expecting to hear.

While subjects often (but not always) come to the interview with some pre-planned agenda (in the same way that interviewers come with their own agenda), throughout the interview they find themselves occupying a variety of often contradictory discursive positions which are only partly serving the pre-planned agenda. Ariella’s interview, on the other hand, seemed to be committed to a pre-planned agenda and as the interview developed I came to appreciate what she meant by ‘my head is in Israel’.

A story that describes a dramatic intercultural encounter with a German woman was produced towards the end of the interview. By then, Ariella had already laid out a personal story of social isolation in London, of loneliness, and of fear that this isolation would eventually creep into her relationship with her children thus isolating her altogether. Like Na’ama, whom I presented earlier, Ariella felt frustrated because she had to give up her professional career. At this stage of the interview, Ariella talked about her sense of being a

foreign woman among the British, a topic she returned to a few times throughout the interview<sup>40</sup>. She said:

but here's for instance, I'm in, I work once a week in a studio, in South London, which is an area 'free of Jews', let's call it this way... and {'free'} of Israelis. I'm the first Israeli that has arrived there and I love very much the... my studio's landlady, which is coordinating some short courses etc... and I always take part in these courses and my fellow students. [English wording] I feel at ease with her, and they are all very friendly. {English} really, but I still feel the difference, I feel that they like me because I'm different, because I'm warmer, I'm more open, I say what's on my mind. [and doesn't it give you some points of credit?] Maybe, yes, yes, it does... [Are you the only foreign woman there?] No, there are other foreign women but they are European, one is from Poland and one is from Germany, so my foreignness is much more...

Ariella casts herself as an outsider: she is the only Israeli woman, the first one to arrive in this area which is 'free of Jews'. The fact that there are no Jews living in that part of London does not necessarily mean that they are banned, or excluded from there as her choice of anti-Semitic terminology seems to suggest. The unclear distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli/anti-Zionist (which are all taken for granted) is manifested here. As discussed above, Israelis can identify much more easily an anti-Israeli criticism, but anti-Semitism seems to be an abstract option that can never be ruled-out. Ariella's comment demonstrates the availability of the discourse of anti-Semitism from which 'an area free of Jews' is taken. This description also casts her as an adventurous woman who dares to travel to unfamiliar areas which most Israelis or Jews would consider 'inhospitable'.

On the face of it, she describes a reasonable integration into the group where she 'loves very much' the studio landlady, and makes an effort to come to the courses. Her efforts are noted by the local fellow students who accept her and are 'all very friendly'. However, Ariella's usage of English in 'very friendly' and its articulation hint that the relationship formed is precarious: it is based on

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<sup>40</sup> She was the only interviewee to describe herself as an immigrant *specifically in order* to explain and justify her decision to go back. No other interviewee, no matter how long they lived in Britain, used this signifier to describe their status!

polite formality (see scheduling ‘lunch a month and a half in advance’ in the previous section) rather than on mutual emotional friendship (while she ‘loves her {landlady} very much’, her fellow students are ‘very *friendly*’). But in spite of being liked for her difference, the difference is felt by her and stands in the way of her becoming like the others. To make her case stronger she draws on the geographical and political definitions of Europeanisms that group together the other non-British participants (a German and a Pole) and the local British people, leaving her, a Middle Eastern Israeli, outside this category. Although I know that Ariella’s grandparents came to Israel from Europe and that in Israeli society she would enjoy the informal social privileges of being an Ashkenazi (a European Jew) – earlier in the interview she described herself as ‘the salt of the earth’ - here her ‘Israeliness’ as non-European overshadows her Israeli-Ashkenazi ‘Europeanness’ (see chapter seven on the ethnic divide in Israeli society) and casts her as the Other; different in every way: an exceptionally warm, open and straightforward Israeli (non-European) Jew among presumably formal, introverted, non-Jewish Europeans in an area which is ‘free of Jews’. This description of otherness sets the stage for the drama that is about to erupt where these classifications and distinctions are performed in the open: she said ‘I’ll give you an example of when I felt very-very uncomfortable.

Stanza 1 – Ariella describes a German group member who is like her in some aspects

1. One of the girls who is from a German origin,
2. I don’t know how many years she lives here,
3. if she is married to an Englishman,
4. a girl about the same age as me,
5. she also has two kids,

In this opening stanza, Ariella compares herself as a woman and a mother to this other non-English yet European ‘girl’ through features that she discussed in previous parts of the interview: the length of time spent in England and the marital status, as measures of settled-ness in England (being married to a local Englishman provides, according to her, a greater sense of belonging; Ariella is married to an Israeli and therefore ‘the only roots I have in this place are my children’), and the age and the number of children. By highlighting the similarities and common aspects between the two she points to the national

origin (European/non-European) as the main differentiating category. Although she doesn't explicitly relate to it, within the context of Jewish-Israeli historiography 'the European- German', coupled to her earlier reference to an 'area free of Jews', accentuate her sense of discomfort and foreignness.

Stanza 2 – describing the nature of the relationship with the German girl

6. and we worked on a project,
7. and I love her work very much
8. and I tend to compliment,
9. when I compliment I do it with all my heart,
10. I don't say: 'oh it's very nice' [English wording] although at heart I feel differently.
11. If I don't like it, I won't say anything

Ariella feels a need to clear away any impression that the drama which will be described shortly could be attributed to personal resentment rather than to the national or cultural aspect that she wants to articulate. Therefore she stresses that she is on good terms with this girl, 'loves 'her work very much', and lets the other girl know it. Ariella refers here to other Israeli self-attributed characteristics of being straightforward and candid rather than formal or hypocritical, like 'the English', or 'the Europeans', who talk in a polite way ('oh, it's very nice') but actually feel differently. The role of this stanza is to demonstrate that in spite of the similar circumstances (mentioned in the previous stanza) and the good will, the drama is inevitable.

Stanza 3 – Ariella wants to share an idea with the German girl that will help her in her work

12. and ... ah, one project she did, one piece of jewelry,
13. I told her all of a sudden, I had an idea
14. and I really wanted to share it with her,
15. for her sake,
16. 'look, I found a stone, which, I think , look, you can do something like this

Stanza 4 – this process of brainstorming is acceptable in the group

17. because it's a brainstorming [English wording].
18. It's true that it's her work

19. but I too like to have other people's input.

20. It helps a lot,

Ariella describes the immediate, associative and even impulsive emergence of an idea that she urgently (as the repeated 'look' might disclose: 'look, I found a stone, which, I think, look, you can do something like this') wanted to share with her fellow student and presents this act as initiated for the other girl's sake rather than out of her own need (for recognition or friendship perhaps) and as an acceptable act within the group's norms. What in other circumstances could be described as Israeli impulsivity, is described here as a legitimate and acceptable procedure within this non-Israeli group culture.

Stanza 5 – this idea is rejected by the German girl but Ariella insists on it

21. and she said: 'oh yes, it's an interesting idea'

22. and I came with the stone and wanted to show her how it would look

23. and without paying attention,

24. because I'm an Israeli and it's imprinted in me,

25. I took the stone and I fel{t}...

Stanza 6 –a physical struggle evolves

26. and she caught my hand

27. and I felt that for one split second I was trying to resist and to put it on her piece [English wording]

Stanzas 5 and 6 describe the height of the drama that developed into a physical conflict. By now, we can appreciate the necessity and urgency of Ariella to communicate with her 'friendly' fellow students, to 'share', 'show' and be recognized and be seen in these 'friendly' but alienated social circumstances where she feels out of place. In these circumstances, the drama erupts. While the German girl politely rejects her suggestion ('oh yes, it is an interesting idea'), Ariella still acts out her intention ('I took the stone and fel=t'). In her story she attributes her failure to 'pay attention' to her national origin ('I'm an Israeli'), which 'is imprinted' in her. For that 'one split second', she resisted the unbearable recognition of her (cultural, religious and national) differences and persisted in her attempt to 'share' her idea. It is also at that very same minute that the painful, perhaps humiliating experience of difference and

foreignness, as interpreted by her, all of a sudden become apparent in the most concrete and physical way.

Stanza 7 – Ariella realizes how she has crossed the line and retreats

28. and all of a sudden I realized what I'm doing
29. and how I crossed the line
30. and you know, immediately I held myself back
31. and I said 'I'm very sorry'
32. and she said 'no, it's just that it's still wet and I didn't want to...'
33. but I said 'no I'm really sorry',
34. and I felt very bad

Stanza 8 – Ariella draws out the conclusion – this crossing the line happened because she is an Israeli and this act would have been acceptable in an Israeli milieu.

35. and I knew that if I was an Englishwoman I wouldn't have done it at all,
36. I wouldn't even think of imposing the idea upon her, so to speak
37. in a sort of aggressive way
38. which is not exceptional in Israeli terms
39. but that here it can be felt very harsh

In the last two stanzas, Ariella tries to amend the transgression through the communication with the other girl and declares her renewed commitment to the group's social codes ('I said I'm very sorry', 'no, I'm really sorry') while also conveying, perhaps to me, that she also stands behind them morally and psychologically ('and I felt very bad'). By doing this she declares that she renounces the (alternative, 'Israeli', according to her) codes that she acted on, but which would have been normative in Israel. In this sense, sticking to the cultural hypothesis (it's 'because I'm Israeli' and 'it's imprinted in me') serves to relieve the pain of personal rejection. Knowing that 'this is not exceptional in Israeli terms' is soothing since, according to her, the rejection would not have occurred in an Israeli context where she very much hopes to re-gain a sense of belonging. Through this story, some of Ariella's perceptions of 'Israeliness' (as 'aggressive', 'harsh' and 'imposing') emerge. These self-perceptions, as I have shown in the section dealing with differences in daily practices, circulate in the Israeli public imaginary sphere and do not distinguish between men and women. Ariella describes a striking contrast between her efforts to blend in and

integrate into the (European) environment of her fellow students and the involuntary eruption of a harsh and dominant Israeli aggressiveness that testifies her inevitable foreignness, despite all her efforts. Since Israelis often regard themselves judged pejoratively in Britain due to the Israeli government's handling of the national conflict with the neighbouring Arab countries and with the Palestinians, these very volatile images are already 'in the air'. There are a few conclusions that Ariella wants to draw by telling this story: a. the collective national self is constantly at work; b. it dominates alternative selves with different agendas (e.g. achieving integration); c. the national self is 'imprinted in you' and cannot be negotiated with; and d. within this politics of selves, one intention (friendship, sharing an idea, the search for recognition) that originates in the 'personal self' can be hijacked by the collective self and end up being interpreted differently ('aggressive', 'harsh', 'imposing').

I argue that it is discursively beneficial for Ariella to describe Israeliness as 'imprinted in you' and hence construct herself as the absolute foreigner; it justifies her decision to return to Israel since *from that social perspective of nationality*, foreigners in general, and Jewish-Israelis specifically, are forever doomed to be excluded, marginalized and disintegrated. At the same time, by attributing the aggressiveness, harshness and imposition of ideas to her national inheritance, she is able to ward off the troubling possibility that she is excluded on a personal basis. Ariella's story also tells us something about the condition of many Israeli immigrant women living in a material 'golden cage', excluded from the professional job market and caught up in an in-between position – not fully accepting her status of an immigrant in Britain, yet separated from her prior socio-professional position in Israeli society; never fully integrated and always conscious of the discomfort originating from the minute details of their difference and otherness, which is usually not spoken about but articulated in many other ways. Since the story is inevitably constructed and designed to support her decision to return to Israel, a drama, or even a tragedy, serves well to stress her point.

#### **8.4. Constructing national identity around ‘the enemy’ – Israelis and their representations of ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims’ in London in the context of ‘the (Arab/Palestinian-Israeli) conflict’**

As I’ve shown above, the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East (which are often used interchangeably) constitute a major component around which Jewish-Israelis’ organize their national identity in Britain. It also shapes their understandings of the interaction with non-Israeli locals. So while direct encounters with Muslims, Arabs or Palestinians were hardly ever described spontaneously, and although none of the interviewees reported being actually involved in any hostile incident, overall, ‘Muslims’, ‘Arabs’ or ‘Palestinians’ were taken collectively and individually as a source of danger and hostility which was best avoided when living in Britain. Subjects often used ‘Palestinians’, ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims’ interchangeably and failed to distinguish between these different identity categories.

Na’ama said:

I would feel uncomfortable if I’ll go into an area which is... Arab. I guess I will feel... I won’t put myself in this situation. I won’t go into an area which is only Arab

Noga said:

Here there are many-many-many-many Arabs and they are not, how shall we put it ... they are not friendly...

Michael said:

Many of the Muslims here, they just hate us, I met a few Indians that love us but most of the Muslims I met hate us, they can wipe us out without thinking twice.

Dorit talked about the negative attitude towards Israelis in London and I asked her to tell me where she comes across it. She said:

In my daily life {I come across this hostility} only when I go into falafel, Shwarma {kebab} or Halal places. Then you see many times people who give you the look, {like} they want to murder you or they will have a big ‘Palestine’ necklace or... like, they would be really not nice to you...

and once again... [Not nice to you? It's not written all over you that you are Israeli...]. They can identify you. I will not go alone to these places.

When imagining an encounter with 'Arabs' (or even imagining that the falafel or kebab salesman *is* Arab – in some parts of London, many kebab shops are run by people who come from Turkey), subjects describe an inevitably dangerous situation where they see themselves outnumbered ('an area which is only Arab'; 'there are many-many-many-many Arabs') and where their identity as Israelis is exposed ('they identify you') which might lead to physical attack, even murder. Wearing a 'Palestine' necklace is taken as a sign of the bearer's murderous intentions towards Israelis.

Dorit says:

If I see someone who is really... that you can see 'murder in his eyes', I won't mess {talk} with him at all, but if I see a human being who is Muslim and speaks in Arabic I... on the contrary, I tend to show him my good sides.

Note that within the encounter between Israelis and Arabs, Muslims or Palestinians, it is the 'Arabs' who are attributed the violence and aggression (in contrast to the 'uncivilized' 'aggressive' Israeli that was discussed earlier), whereas the Israelis are described as civilized and reasonable who try to show their 'good sides'. Such negative, homogenous portrayal of the 'Arab' is characteristic of a racist discourse that Israelis often adopt.

The data shows that living away from the immediate Israeli conflict does not change the perceptions of Arabs and Muslims constructed within the Israeli context (as described by Bar-Tal, 2007) but rather fixes it. Although a racist, anti-Muslim discourse circulates in general British society, especially after 9/11 and the 2005 bombings (Cameron, Maslen, and Todd, 2013), and even has currency in the British press (Richardson, 2004), the Israeli subjects in my study import with them the image of the murderous Muslim that was constructed in the Israeli socio-political context. Many Israelis continue to receive information from the Israeli media which continuously highlights any criticism of Israel in the UK and interprets it as anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic, or describes the 'Muslim demographic dangers' in Europe as a means to warn Israelis against the dangers of living outside Israel. Israelis have been brought

up (Na'ama - 'when I was in *Ha'aretz* and I was younger, so yes, I would hear that Israelis are not liked {abroad} and that you shouldn't speak Hebrew') on the notion that, generally, the world is an unwelcoming place for Israelis and Jews (see above, the Jewish-Israeli siege mentality - Bar-Tal, 2007). 'Arabs', 'Muslims' or 'Palestinians', occupy a central role in the portrayal of such dangers, and are portrayed usually in racist and pejorative terms, which appear to be crucial for Jewish-Israeli identity construction and a means to encourage Israelis to stick together in Israel (see the government campaign in chapter four).

As members of Israeli society's middle class, who traditionally consists of 'left-wing' voters, some of the interviewees did find it relevant to voice their criticism of Israel's policies regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but I felt that their comments often served to negotiate their place in the interview encounter with me and indicate to me their position in Israeli society.

Although many subjects voiced their reservation about the Israeli government's policies, the conflict in the Middle East was generally taken as an unquestionable *fact of life*, thus ignoring the part that Israel plays in its continuation. This finding was also made by Lomsky-Feder (2004), who argued that 'school memorial ceremonies, like most other forums and movements, have not begun to challenge basic cultural assumptions, such as the inevitable centrality of war and the army in Israeli life' (p. 304). Therefore, subjects seem to conclude that the continuous conflict in the Middle East has political ramifications that impact on life in Britain and that being an Israeli in London inevitably puts one in conflict with 'Arabs', 'Muslims' and 'Palestinians' who are assumed to be homogenously and non-differentially implicated in the Israeli-Arab and Palestinian conflict. It is beyond the scope of this work to analyse the military conflict as it is seen through Jewish-Israelis' eyes. Rather, I seek to describe how such categorical perception of the conflict as 'a given' allows for a racist discourse towards 'Arabs' and 'Muslim' and crystalizes them as the 'enemy'.

While drawing on different theoretical frameworks, both Rose (1996) and Grinberg (2007) have argued that 'the conflict' constitutes a vital aspect of the Israeli-Zionist identification and that its resolution might bring about an identification crisis. Therefore subjects might 'need' the conflict to go on, for the

'Arab' population to be presented as homogenously dangerous, and for the local population to be portrayed as politically hostile in order to consolidate a distinct and well-defined identity and to construct Israel as the only safe place for Jews.

### **8.5. Conclusion: Constructing an Israeli national identity in Britain**

Since identity is constructed within a context, against neighbouring identities that operate in the same public space, constructing Israeli identity in Britain, especially in London, has its specific features that make it different from identity construction in Israel or the USA (where local public opinion towards Israel is perceived to be more positive – GlobeScan, 2012), for example. The interviews show that within the British matrix of collective identities, the boundaries around the 'Jewish-Israeli identity' are constructed, above all, in reference to three neighbouring local identity groups: the local Jewish community, the non-Jewish British majority (taken as the white 'English' majority) and the Muslim, Arab and Palestinian communities (who mainly function as a 'potential enemy' to be avoided and feared). Naturally, the close links and commitments to Israeli society (whose role in identity-construction has been discussed in chapters three and four) inform the images that Jewish-Israelis have of these three groups. McIlwaine, et al (2006) demonstrated how racist remarks were used by low-paid migrant workers to distinguish themselves from other workers - members of other nationalities and ethnicities who competed for the same labour resources. Like their low-paid migrant counterparts, the participants in my study applied racist discourse when drawing on pejorative images from Israeli culture of Arabs, Palestinians or Muslims. This served them to avoid ambivalence, the need to reconsider Israel's responsibility in the Middle East or the recognition of similar conditions which might destabilize and complicate their relations to Israel. Moreover, their previous privileged social positioning in Israeli society, their aims in agreeing to be interviewed and the interview politics will also shape how the boundaries around 'Israeli identity' will be drawn.

### **8.5.1. Material conditions of immigration and the construction of 'national identity'.**

Many Jewish-Israelis who live in Britain, and certainly most of my interviewees, come from affluent socio-economic, educational and professional positions in Israeli society. Their overall privileged socio-economic background influences the way 'national identity' will be constructed and differentiates them from immigrant groups who come from less advantageous socio-political and economic background (e.g. Turks in Britain, Tanyas, 2010) or those who are marginalized or persecuted in their home countries (e.g. Iranian women, Fathi, 2011). Despite their affluent economic conditions in Britain, most of my interviewees contemplated the possibility of returning to Israel (one interviewee and one pilot interviewee indeed returned to Israel). As other research shows (Floman, 2007), the immigrants' privileged socio-economic conditions in Israeli society *complicate* their ability to give up the 'Israeli option' and settle down in Britain, come to terms with the status of 'immigrants' and eventually become part of British society, i.e. identify as British-Jewish-Israelis (as some other immigrant subjects might do). This hypothesis is consistent with research of other high-skilled migrants from richer countries (Manning and Roy, 2010) and is not unique to the Israeli case. Within this condition of relative affluence, women's positions are often complicated by their disadvantageous job opportunities (Lev-Ari, 2008, Iredale, 2005, Boyle, Cooke, Halfacree, and Smith, 2001). Thus, both Ariella and Na'ama were trying to make sense of Israeliness, from that professional, economic and gendered disadvantageous stand.

### **8.5.2. Israeliness and the Jewish diaspora**

Upon arrival abroad, Israeli subjects might become aware of alternative versions of Jewish communal and private life, which give different interpretations to categories such as 'religion', 'citizenship', 'Zionism' and 'Jewishness' and trouble their taken-for-granted understandings of such concepts. Secular Zionism's historical view of religion and the political tensions in Israeli society around its interpretation further complicate the relationship between secular Jewish-Israelis and the traditionalist, religiously-oriented local Jewish communities. Moreover, the Zionist contract between diaspora Jews

and Jewish-Israelis, which assumes partnership among all Jews but grants priority to Israeli Jews, is questioned. Local Jews enjoy privileged social, political and economic positions whereas Israelis, many of whom were used to privileged social positions in Israeli society, are assigned the unfamiliar status of 'the immigrant'. Thus, on the local Jewish 'frontier', Israelis' former self-conceptualization is troubled, requiring subjects to redefine their position or stick to it and draw a separating line between themselves and the local Jews. Nevertheless, against such political power-relations, and given the privileged and affluent socio-economic position of British Jews in British society, it would have been reasonable to predict that Jewish-Israelis would like to associate themselves with local Jewry and benefit from their social capital. However, the efforts of Jewish-Israelis to distinguish themselves from local British Jewry, as they imagine them to be perceived *in the eyes of the local non-Jewish public*, might be the result of the unfavourable image of the diasporic old Jew, applied here to the British context, rather than because of an acquaintance with the local identity politics and the position of Jews in it.

Gold (2004) discussed the sense of identity alienation of Jewish-Israeli émigrés in American society, which resembles Na'ama's 'life on hold' in London. He concluded, however, that 'a considerable number {of Israeli émigrés} did ... begin to describe themselves as members of the de-territorialized ethnic or religious community of the Jewish people. In this way they were able to reconcile their connections to two or more nationalities without appearing disloyal to either' (p. 347).

### **8.5.3. Israeliness and the non-Jewish British public**

'Jewish Israeliness in Britain' is also constructed in relation to what is perceived as the non-Jewish British majority where 'the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict' plays an important role. It constructs the British environment as potentially politically and personally hostile. When a British anti-Israeli/anti-Zionist perspective is assumed, manifested through 'biased media coverage' and an assumed sympathy for the Palestinians, Jewish-Israelis often manage the uncomfortable political criticism of Israeli policies by entertaining the abstract notion of anti-Semitism. Perceptions of world-wide anti-Semitism circulate in Israeli society (where Jews constitute the majority) and in its media

(Bar-Tal, 2007), as images of the diasporic Jewish minority amidst a predominantly inhospitable non-Jewish majority. Thus, the pre-supposed anti-Israeli position of the British public on 'The (Israeli-Palestinian) Conflict', (e.g. 'the world always splits between those who love us and those who don't' - Noga, chapter six) is often imagined as an overt manifestation of the British majority's underlying anti-Semitism. Jewish-Israelis' attempts to single themselves out draw on available discourses in Israeli society and its mythological national narrative. At the same time, they constitute discursive practices of Israeli identity construction abroad which help draw clearer lines around the group members and manage the discomforts of the migrant condition.

Different daily practices are also used to draw a clearer line between a civilized and formal European British person and an uncivilized, creative, informal Israeli 'street cat' (Sela-Shefi, 2006). Within this category, aggression is negotiated and often rehabilitated and romanticized as a constructive, productive and sincere Israeli feature, drawing on an idyllic image of the revolutionary Sabra, the Israeli-born Jew (see chapter six), who is free from social formalities. However, within the practice of national identity construction, and the attempt to highlight distinctive, albeit positive, aspects of the group, alternative, troubling, versions of aggression (as well as direct references to the Israeli occupation and the *Nakba*) are mainly pushed aside. Ariella's story, which was constructed to explain her decision to return to Israel, demonstrates an exception where the interviewee was drawing on troubling notions of Israeli aggression in order to justify the inevitability of her decision. To assist them in portraying the British public space as unwelcoming or even hostile and manage the hardships of migration, Israelis may apply racist discourse, homogeneously portraying Arabs and Muslims as potentially murderous. Such racist portrayal of the 'Arab' as dangerous serves to rehabilitate Israeli aggression and locate the Israelis among the civilized Europeans.

Finally, due to the historical, ideological and political circumstances that still monopolize the Israeli public space and which insist on the centrality of living in Israel as a key identification feature, Jewish-Israeli subjects are placed in a complicated situation when trying to construct a separate 'British-Jewish-Israeli identity' away from Israel. It appears that Israelis in Britain, who mostly came

from affluent socio-economic conditions in Israeli society and for whom the return to Israel is always a viable option, find it exceptionally difficult to create an intermediary diasporic identity; to come to terms with their immigration status; to blur the lines that they draw around themselves and the other groups in the British public space; and to be able to see themselves as part of the social structure in Britain. The next chapter will focus on such dilemmas.

The practice of constructing a national identity abroad is performed in the 'push-pull' relationship towards alternative collective identities in the British public space and towards Israeli society. While the British public might be presented in a favourable way to achieve one discursive goal, the same British public may be portrayed negatively within a different discursive context. At the same time, subjects are not engaged in making calculated strategic arguments as discursive psychologists suggest (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Potter, 2009). As the analysed extracts in this chapter demonstrate, subjects appear to be deeply engaged in the positions they occupy, seeing them as part of 'who they are'. Within the highly saturated discursive-ideological-political public space, Jewish-Israeli subjects like Ariella, Na'ama, David and others struggle to narrate their very private stories, making sense of foreignness and belonging, of gender roles and other collective and personal trajectories in a changing world of material and imagined circumstances in an effort to construct 'a national identity'.

# **Chapter nine: Gender, employability and the construction of an ‘Israeli identity’, ‘Israeli family’ and ‘Israeli community’ in Britain**

## **9.1. Introduction**

According to Anthias (2002), diasporans’ social positioning should be considered in relation to three main localities: the home society from which they emigrated, the local society into which they immigrated and the local migrant group. In chapters seven and eight I have looked at Israelis’ construction of Israeliness in references to Israeli and British societies respectively. In this concluding ‘findings’ chapter I would like to focus on Israelis’ perception of their local diasporic space. However, in response to my research data, I suggest an addition to Anthias’s third locality (that of the diasporic community): the diasporic family. In this chapter I aim to focus on some of the interrelations between these community and familial spaces. The uncertainty about their future in Britain was raised to various degrees by the majority of the interviewees (with the exception of Nira and Liat, who were decisive about not returning to Israel) and is perhaps one of the central features around which ‘an Israeli identity’ in Britain is constructed. For some (e.g. Ariella, Na’ama, Roni, or Noga), this uncertainty seemed to be the driving force behind the decision to be interviewed and was also the main theme around which the interviews were narrated. For others, (e.g. Aaron and even Udit, who has been living in Britain for 40 years), it was presented as a hypothetical option, mediated from time to time, and an identity-constructing practice in its own right which connects the two participants in the interview encounter around a discourse of belonging and longing. From this vantage point of experienced or declared temporariness, arguments about the children’s upbringing, schooling and practices at home were made, subject positions were taken and a specific vocabulary was chosen. The uncertainty about the future in Britain intersected, naturally, with other conditions including the identity of the spouse (whether Israeli or not) and the work status of the interviewee. For subjects whose partner was local or non-Israeli, the option of returning to Israel was more remote. While previous chapters underscored the

role of the national ideology and collective imagination in the construction of an 'Israeli identity' and looked closely at subjects' narratives, the first part of this chapter is somewhat exceptional. In the first section, I will look into the association between specific material conditions (notably motherhood and the condition of women's unemployment) and the construction of 'Israeli identity' in Britain across subjects' texts, rather than through an analysis of single interview narrative. These will be discussed in light of other research in the area. The second part resumes the discussion on the role of national ideology in the construction of a diasporic space through fine-grained text analysis of Roni's interview.

## **9.2. Work, gender, parenthood and the experience of migration**

Sociological research examining the connection between the immigrant's engagement in the local job market and their integration into the local society (Battu and Zenou, 2010) or the adoption of the local identity (Manning and Roy, 2010). Fathi (2011) has underscored the important role that immigrants' high-status profession played in establishing a sense of belonging and 'home' in their new country, Britain. She argued that the professional status of Iranian women doctors allowed them to see themselves as part of middle-class British society and thus gain social recognition within the Iranian community and the general British public, a sense of personal belonging and empowerment as women in a home society which is traditionally male-centric. This is not the case for Jewish-Israeli emigrant women in Britain.

Five out of seven women participants (but only one out of five men) were not in paid employment or were working part-time. Aside other factors that were mentioned (e.g. the lack of social support or the change in the climate) this condition of employment/unemployment seemed influence their satisfaction with their life in Britain as individuals, informed daily family practices and determined the nature of the local Israeli community, given that these women are often its main 'weavers' (Hart, 2004). The relatively low rate of employment among the Jewish-Israeli women in my cohort is consistent with other research on high-skilled women migrants' employment (e.g. Boyle et al., 2001, Iredale, 2005 or Lienonen, 2012). Most of the interviewees (10/12) were living as a family in Britain. It was found that employment rates among women who

migrate with their partners are markedly lower than their employment rate in their home countries or if they migrated alone (Iredale, 2005). Within the predominately affluent group of Jewish-Israeli immigrant women in Britain, there is a marked decrease in working rates compared with their position prior to their relocation. Boyle et al concluded that *in terms of their vocational career*, the migration had a negative effect on skilled women, who migrated following their partners. Iredale (2005) argues that high-skilled women migrants 'often sacrifice their own career for the sake of their family or may be disadvantaged in the process by gender bias' (p. 164). Hence, unlike some other migrant communities, among certain migrant women groups, the relocation to Britain *accentuates* traditional gender relations and role divisions which they were less accustomed to in their countries of origin. Hart (2004), Floman (2007) and Lev-Ari (2008) describe how Israeli women become the central figures of children's education and men, being the main bread-winners, become less involved in their children's upbringing. Among the women participants, I have noticed three discourses of motherhood in reference to occupational status: 'good motherhood' defined as the unemployed mother (Na'ama); motherhood as a hindrance to employment (Ariella); and managing motherhood with a professional career (Noga).

When asked to give a brief description of herself at the start of the interview (see rationale in the methodological chapter), Na'ama chose to elaborate on her condition as a non-working mother:

and we've arrived here 9 years ago, I looked for a job, ahh, it was a bit difficult to find, I didn't have enough experience in what I wanted to do. I was always thrown to finances, I worked for a year in Bank XXX (an Israeli bank), in the private banking department, when they developed it here, then my older daughter was born and then it was closed down. The department closed down and moved back to Israel. And that's it; I never went back to the working market [laughs]... It's sort of a life on 'hold' because it's not the real life but I think that I prefer it this way...so I prefer it like this, more flexibility, doing something but not... not a career... because if I did have some {career} dreams once, let's call it this way, I've given them up [laughs] not because... willingly, I don't feel that I've given up... If I compare myself to people who started with me

and studied with me and the sort, who today are in senior positions and no... I don't feel that I've missed something, no, I don't regret, no...

Na'ama's choice to open the interview on 'Israeli identity' with a description of her current vocational status indicates its importance for her. I felt that the laughs indicated moments of embarrassment around giving up the professional route and that the frequent hesitations or the recurrent negations ('I don't feel I missed something') signaled an effort to construct the condition of unemployment as willingly chosen rather than imposed by external conditions. Raising the children served as an explanation she felt obliged to give for abandoning or postponing the route of a professional career. Na'ama implies that, had she chosen to, she could have embarked on a professional career. This narrative of choice seems to mask another narrative, that of professional frustration – the difficulty for highly-skilled foreign mothers to find a job, as has been noted in previous research (e.g. Boyle et al., 2001, Iredale, 2005).

But while Na'ama's text captures the condition of the unemployed highly-skilled Israeli mother in Britain, it should also be seen in its broader context where western societies subject women to conflicting trends: on the one hand, the unequal, gendered distribution of jobs and child benefits and on the other hand the government's constant encouragement for women to take part in the job market (Ingold, and Etherington, 2013). The conflict between, on the one hand, the social expectation from women to be the 'child-bearers'<sup>41</sup> and, on the other hand, demanding women to take equal part in the job market is especially accentuated among migrant women whose access to the job market is made even more difficult. Schober and Scott (2012) argue that women's willingness to adopt a traditional gender role (i.e. for women to care for the children, and for men to work) depended on their vocational experience and economic resources prior to the birth of their children. Women who worked more prior to becoming a mother, or those who had greater economic resources, endorsed less traditional gender roles, tended to return to work after shorter periods of time and engaged in longer hours of work. Thus, besides the material, cultural and social hardships of migration itself, Israeli

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<sup>41</sup> And more generally, as biological reproducers, culture carriers and identity preservers of the 'nation' – Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, Yuval-Davis, 1997.

women who were used to relative economic autonomy and long hours of work prior to migration, now have to face the constraints of the local job market which further limits their recruitment, effectively imposes traditional gender roles and a life of leisure on them, which they would not necessarily choose themselves had they stayed in Israel.

This view - of migrant motherhood as an impediment for professional fulfillment - was raised by Ariella who completed academic degrees in Israel and in Britain and described the occupational deadlock she found herself within the general British job market as an immigrant woman.

here I always thought that {if} I'll come to a job interview and I'll always be second or third best [English wording]: I'm an immigrant, my English is not an English-English, I don't have an experience and I'm a mother

According to Ariella, being an immigrant and foreign mother from a non-English speaking country further aggravates the already difficult condition of women in a job market that prioritizes men. However, unlike Na'ama, who hasn't decided whether to stay, Ariella is willing to discuss this vocational impediment *because* she is about to return to Israel. Elsewhere I have argued that within the interview context the narrative of the excluded Israeli mother has been raised specifically in order to justify the return to Israel.

This condition of unemployment among many immigrant Israeli women with academic and professional backgrounds, together with a relatively prosperous familial economic situation, occupies a central part of the diasporic experience of these mothers and shapes the family relationships with the partner and the children. In some cases, it can perpetuate the language and cultural barrier, limit Jewish-Israeli women's encounters and understanding of British society, and confine them to Israeli enclaves (Na'ama: 'I don't have here, friends, friends who are not Israelis. I don't have'), which have been termed by some of the participants as 'ghettos' (see later section in this chapter).

The mothers often form their social network based on their mutual condition of unemployment and the sense of temporariness that accompanies it. Their employment status becomes a main signification of identity for Israelis in general and for women specifically, from which a specific understanding and practice of Israeli identity and child-rearing can be understood.

Na'ama said:

We speak Hebrew at home and our friends are mostly Israeli and the girls' friends... [are] also [Israeli]. We are a very united group of people who are [laughs] all sharing the same state of mind: 'in two years we'll go back'

Therefore, it is not surprising that both Ariella and Na'ama felt that it was up to them to decide if they wanted to return to Israel or stay in Britain, since their working partners had settled better into the local daily life and would have preferred to stay.

Na'ama said about her husband's intentions:

My husband, I guess, doesn't want to go back [you guess, because it's not something that has... {been discussed openly}??] No, as far as he's concerned, he doesn't want to go back so I guess that as soon as I decide to... that I'm not willing to stay here anymore and I will put a pressure...

I felt that the heavy responsibility of coming to a decision whether to return to Israel or stay in Britain burdened Na'ama and perhaps drove her to be interviewed. We learn of a potential tension between the couple which is not discussed ('I *guess* {he} doesn't want to go back'). This responsibility is also manifest in Ariella's text: {my husband} would have stayed here. It's not that he doesn't want to go back, he wants us all to be happy and he understands that... {laughs} that for us to be happy somehow starts with me

### **9.2.1. Women's employment and patterns of choosing schools in the Israeli community**

Hart (2004) documents patterns of school-choosing among Jewish-Israeli parents in London. She describes the mechanisms through which the Israeli community's 'intra-net operated a powerful control mechanism that perpetuated the educational clustering scheme' (p. 194), 'tighten[ed] the speakers' [interviewees'] educational horizons and urge[d] them to commit to the 'beaten educational path' previously validated by others' (p.200). She found that the schools operated as important informal social gatherings around which the Israeli community was organized. Moreover, Hart found that 'women

were at the centre of the intra-net, assuming the responsibility not only for the circulation of information among members, but also for the reproduction of the communal network and its maintenance' (p. 175). Hence the mothers, most of whom were not in paid employment, structured a communal milieu addressed to meet their own needs where working women and men who could not take part in the social practices might find themselves excluded.

The condition of unemployment that many of the Jewish-Israeli mothers in Britain share impacts mothers such as Noga who do work. This brings about a third discourse of the migrating mother. From her position as a working mother Noga referred to this feature of the Israeli milieu in London:

Many of the Israeli women here... 97 percent of the Israeli women here don't work. They either don't work at all or they do part time job. I work. I'm the main provider {in the family}. I do a full time job, even more.

It is within these cultural and material conditions of female unemployment that Israeli nurseries operate as Noga describes:

The Israeli nurseries are based on the concept of the non-working mother so it means that the day terminates at two or three {pm}.

Noga's motherhood as an exceptional Israeli working woman is constructed and negotiated within these specific material and cultural conditions of immigration where motherhood and professional career often clash:

1. and here {at the Israeli nurseries} it's 'ah, you work?
2. Ah, you have the child-minder picking up {your child}?
3. it's a pity because children need their mothers to come and pick them up from nursery'
4. or all these feelings, you know,
5. All the guilt feelings that they gradually instill into you.

From Noga's point of view, the role of the non-working mother is presented as chosen and valued and employment or getting paid assistance from child-minders are presented as signs of maternal deficiency within this specific immigration culture. Hence, within these immigration constraints there are specific ways how 'good' motherhood is constructed, e.g. as an intentional choice not to be employed ('because children need their mother to come and

pick them up from nursery’) and where women’s employment is portrayed as the exception (‘ah, you work?’).

Since Noga felt uncomfortable working, she placed her daughter in a non-Israeli nursery because ‘it didn’t work’. Since the schools and nurseries which are occasioned by many Israelis offer ‘a meeting point’, an ‘ethnic doorway’ and ‘a channel through which new members were introduced to the community and gained access to its networks’ (Hart, 2004, p. 190), the choice *not* to be part of this socio-educational milieu impacts the engagement with the local Israeli community and defines the perception of ‘Israeliness’ abroad.

### **9.2.2. The interpretation of Jewishness and the role of Hebrew in the construction of children’s’ Israeli identity**

Israeli parents like Noga who choose to place their children in non-Israeli or non-Jewish educational settings, either due to the working constraints or because they live away from areas populated by Jews and/or Israelis find that they have to cater themselves for the Israeli identity rituals and practices which are normally supplied by the nurseries/schools. This requires them to decide for themselves ‘what is Israeliness?’ Liat lives with her daughter away from Jewish or Israeli areas. I asked her ‘so what is it, really, for you to be an Israeli woman?’ and she answered:

Ok, I think it’s more related to my daughter now. Because before she was born I might have talked about it in a totally different way, but suddenly, when she was born, I felt that it’s important that she will learn Hebrew and that she will know about the {Jewish} holidays and not about Jewishness but about how I grew up, about the things that define us as Israelis. So I started taking her to synagogue, I did it! And it was very important for me that anyone who knows Hebrew will speak Hebrew with her.

Liat (whose unfavourable memories of the life in Israel - ‘I remember, from a very early age that I felt I didn’t want to be there’ - chapter seven) describes the centrality of children in parents’ sense of national identity abroad and lays out some of the criteria that, according to her ‘define us as Israelis’ – i.e. speaking Hebrew and celebrating the national holidays in the manner they

were celebrated when she 'grew up', which is 'not about Jewishness' (i.e., in a secular way). She recapitulates some of the themes that have been covered in the previous chapters, namely, the specific secular and historical interpretation of Jewishness clearly distinguished from its 'Jewish-religious' or 'diasporic' interpretations (chapter eight). The confusion of secular Zionist Israelis regarding Jewishness is well summarized in Raz-Krakotzkin's essay (2005) 'There is no God but he promised *Ha'aretz* to us': while there is a generalized attachment to Israel as 'the land of the fathers', there is a reluctance to accept it as 'God's promised land'. This confusion is captured in Liat's exclamation 'I did it!', a revolutionary act of a secular Israeli woman who took her daughter to the synagogue in order to educate and try to pass on to her some Israeli values. On these occasions, Jewish-Israeli parents who have been raised within Israeli secularism face the confusion of passing on to their children some of the Jewish traditions while at the same time being wary and suspicious of any sign of religious practices, whilst also often being ignorant of their details. Noga demonstrates this dilemma: 'I can't tell you that we've decided to light the candles every Friday<sup>42</sup>, although it did cross my mind {we laugh} ah, but we are not there...'

Our joint laughter discloses the embarrassment we both feel as secular Jewish-Israelis for whom lighting candles is usually associated with religious practices (which also assigns clear gender roles) from which we both felt alienated in Israel. The laughter also signified a moment of bond ascertaining that we are 'in the same boat'. Secular (often Ashkenazi), Jewish Israelis (like most of the participants in my study) have to negotiate previous preconceptions about religion and Jewishness in the process of maintaining their children's 'Israeli identity'. It also demonstrates how in the mainstream secular Israeli culture Jewish is tainted with religious connotations. Therefore Israelis often demonstrate ignorance of any forms of non-religious British Jewishness and its practices and, as discussed in the previous chapter, tend to see British Jews as religious.

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<sup>42</sup> A ritual conducted by women that marks the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath on Friday night. The father then makes a blessing.

### 9.2.3. The role of Hebrew in managing the generational gap in the diasporic family

Within the cultural/social milieu that most of my participants and I come from, which is suspicious towards religion and religious practices, and given the impossibility of performing daily Israeli practices (e.g. socializing, eating particular foods, touring the country, going to the beach etc.), speaking Hebrew (and, to a lesser extent, writing and reading it) becomes a main tool for national and ethnic (Jewish) identification. Through this, parents can share with their children some of the cultural capital and values they acquired in Israel. According to the national narrative laid out in Israel's Declaration of Independence, the revival of the dead Hebrew language (that remained dormant throughout the Jews' dispersion in exile) is seen as one of the great achievements of Zionism and, consequently, a cornerstone of Israeli identity. Na'ama said: 'now the house is very Israeli: we speak Hebrew at home and the girls' friends do too'. Noga said about her three year-old daughter who goes to a local English school: 'all the songs she hears {at home} are in Hebrew. Ahh... I mean her experience, the cultural experience at home, is certainly, certainly, Israeli-Hebraic, not anything else'.

Roni, Noga's husband (in a separate interview) said: 'at home we only speak Hebrew and the English she learns, she picks it at nursery. I don't teach {impart} her English.'

Taking a closer look at the interviewees' texts reveals that parents' insistence on speaking Hebrew with their children is explained on two grounds. The first reason is practical and relates to their children's ability to maintain their ties and membership within the Israeli society in case the family (or they) decide to return.

Roni said: 'because I didn't decide, to reside... because I've decided not to reside here, for ever, so.... at home we speak only Hebrew'<sup>43</sup>.

David talked of his wife:

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<sup>43</sup> Note the specific usage of key signifiers such as 'reside' (rather than 'live'), 'foreign place', and 'decide/didn't decide' to convey the dilemma around returning to Israel or settling in Britain that Roni was engaged with. See the discussion of key concepts and signifiers in chapter six, *The Lexicon of Belonging*.

My wife, if you ask her, she's still...one of the reasons that she does consider seriously to return {to Israel} is because she would have liked our daughter to have the...the Hebrew, so that when she gets to the age of 17-18 she could decide for herself between {living in} Israel and England.

However, interviewees also talked about the inevitable gap that will be created between them and their children if they switch to English. Liat describes this gap:

I sat at a café in Temple Fortune and there was a mother with a daughter and the mother talked to her in Hebrew and the girl answered in English; consistently. The whole conversation went like this. I hope it's not going to be like this {for me and for my daughter}.

Roni said:

Eventually, {if we stay in England} '*Rega Im Dodly*<sup>44</sup> wouldn't interest her {his daughter} because it's not part of her culture and I think that for me... it would be missed, a bit, that I don't have a language, I don't have a language, I think that I won't have a common language {that bridges} between my childhood and her childhood.

Roni was talking of Hebrew as one aspect of a broader cultural context, like children's TV shows, that he associates with 'Israeli' and which he would have liked to share with his daughter. Liat, on the other hand points to the specific signification that language has in itself:

I guess that if X {her daughter} starts talking to me in English, our relationship will change because the... the context is different or the... the emotional 'anchor' in a language is so and so and in English it will be different, I mean how I express myself or how she expresses herself. It will change the nature of our communication.

As discussed above, the revival of biblical Hebrew serves as one of the main national achievements of the Zionist movement and therefore a major channel for national identification. However, the above text also demonstrates one of discursive psychology's main arguments (e.g. Wiggins and Potter, 2008): namely that both the 'subject' and 'reality' are constantly constructed by the

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<sup>44</sup> A children's TV programme that Roni related to as an example of 'being an Israeli'.

particular usage of language that the individual employs. Therefore, according to Liat, speaking in Hebrew or in English and following Israeli or English cultural practices places the speaker/practitioner in two different psychosocial positions and has strong implications for the relationship between parents and children. One of the clips in the government campaign encouraging Jewish-Israelis abroad to return to Israel (see chapter four) aptly targets this very point by comparing the quality of a Hebrew vs. English-based encounter between a father and his son.

Ironically, Arabic words, pervasively used in everyday Hebrew as slang, were also taken as a testimony for *Israeli* national identification as Noga said:

If X {her daughter} comes and says to me *Sababa* or *Ahla* {Arabic words used in Hebrew as slang meaning 'great', 'all well'} [you are *Mabsuta*?... {the Arabic word for happy, content}] yes, she is *Mabsuta* and I am *Mabsuta* because it's part of something that I want to keep

As demonstrated in other 'Findings' chapters, Arabic is used strategically by Israelis, pointing to their regional belonging, authenticity and informality while at the same time ignoring the reference to the Arab/Palestinian population in Israel, the effects of occupation (chapter seven) and the tendency to apply racist terminology when addressing local Arabs or Muslims (chapter eight). Here Arabic words are taken by Noga as an indication of her daughter's acquaintance with Hebrew's pragmatic linguistic nuances and a testimony to the common cultural background she is sharing with her daughter.

The desire for cultural synchronicity between the parent and the child is demonstrated by Ariella, although for her, the inevitable gap between herself and her children wouldn't be merely linguistic but also cultural:

I felt that if I wouldn't place them in {Jewish} educational systems, I'll feel that I'll create a detachment, they are the children of immigrants, I'm an immigrant and I'll perpetuate my status as an immigrant

In spite of the discomfort that secular Jewish-Israelis feel within the local Jewish communities and their institutions (see chapter eleven), by placing her children in a Jewish school, Ariella, like many other secular Jewish-Israelis (Hart, 2004), provides an intermediate solution to the dilemmas of the national identifications of her children, who were born in England. Ariella argues here

that had she placed them in a local non-Jewish school her children's different cultural socialization would draw them apart from her and would emphasize even more her personal status as 'the immigrant'. Thus, the decision to place them in Jewish schools is explained here as a means to avoid isolation within *her own* family as the unemployed, 'Israeli' mother among her husband and her children who are better integrated, culturally or professionally, in British society. The status of 'the immigrant', then, is not solely dependent on her own acculturation in British society, but also relatively determined by the acculturation of others around her. Liat reflected on the motivation of parents to encourage Israeli identity among their children and said: 'it's important for me to expose her to these {Israeli} things; perhaps it's a bit egoistic...'

As demonstrated here, collective practices (celebrating Jewish holidays, speaking Hebrew and sharing cultural knowledge with the children) become platforms upon which intimate familial patterns of communication with the children are played out. Some subjects indeed related to the usage of Hebrew language and the Israeli culture that is constructed around it as an important aspect of their relationships with their own parents.

Roni, whose father was born in Eastern Europe and his mother in Israel, talked about the matching between his parents and the Israeli culture he grew up in:

My mum was born in *Ha'aretz*. Let's say that I went to the same primary school as my mother. No, both my brothers and I {went to the same school as her}. It has a nice continuity feel to it, not very important, but nice.

In chapter seven I described how Ariella sees herself in Israel as 'the salt of the earth' and 'walks with her head up high' because 'me and my father were born in the same room in the same hospital'.

By contrast, Noga recalled the mismatch between the Israeli environment she grew up in and her father's Eastern European cultural preferences as a new immigrant in Israel:

But this is something that is missing for me, the fact that my parents' culture and my culture were not... it wasn't the same culture. I had many clashes with my dad around the scouts... {those were} experiences I had that as far as he was concerned were meaningless

Thus, subjects' insistence on passing on their Israeli cultural upbringing to their children is embedded in personal memories of their own childhood and the awareness of issues relating to potentially conflictive gaps between parents and children. Through the dilemmas of educating children abroad, both Roni and Noga, whose parents immigrated to Israel, can relate to their parents' experience of migration and to the dilemmas of intercultural family environments where they grew up.

#### **9.2.4. Discussion**

This section looked at some features of the immigrant Jewish-Israeli family in Britain. I have underlined mothers' frequent unemployment status as a condition that impacts their self-perception, their acquaintance with the local culture and society, the intra-familial dynamics, the construction of extra-familial support groups and the educational choices. Ultimately, all these help to shape the notion of 'Israeli identity' and the practices (such as parenthood and modes of identity transmission) that are associated with it.

Feminist authors such as Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) and Yuval-Davis (1997) have emphasized women's pivotal role as 'biological reproducers' and 'culture carriers' in constructing and marking the boundaries of 'the nation', which is organized according to a patriarchal structure. Kamir (2011) has argued that Zionism as an ideology is constructed to promote a masculine agenda where the men are destined to fight and the women to mourn<sup>45</sup>. Amir (1995) demonstrated how the expectation on women to take part in the Zionist national project (e.g. by contributing to reproduction) defines 'good' and 'bad' femininity in abortion committee panels.

My findings show how the condition of low employment among high-skilled Jewish-Israeli women who worked prior to their immigration shapes their self-perception and impacts the way they conduct family life in a way that preserves the former life in Israel, its values and themes and further accentuates their detachment from local British society. This locks the Jewish-Israeli mother into a specific intra-familial position compared to her partner or children and leaves the heavy burden of deciding whether to stay or return to Israel in her hands. Intra-familial dynamics between partners and parents and

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<sup>45</sup> This was discussed in depth in Nira's interview (chapter seven).

their children were reflected in the interviews. Belonging and estrangement *among* the different family members are negotiated and childhood memories of generational differences in the parents' own families emerge.

Within these conditions Jewish-Israeli women are pushed even further towards the role of 'culture bearers' or promoters of the national project as discussed above. Indeed, Casey and Dustmann (2010), who examined the links between immigrants' identity and their economic integration into German society, found that 'mothers appear to be more important in the transmission of the home identity and fathers in the transmission of the host country identity' (p. 48). This is perhaps to do with the finding that in addition to the general tendency of gendered job inequality in any western society, immigration accentuates this trend and contributes to the alienation of women in the host society compared to working men. These conditions also determine the characteristics of the local Israeli community organized and orchestrated by the women (Hart, 2004, Floman, 2007) who tend to recycle daily practices and habits prevalent in Israeli society. It is also within this context that the perceptions of 'Israeli children' or 'Israeli family' are understood and constructed.

Practices of collective identifications have great significance for people, allowing them to feel part of an imagined Israeli community by sharing common public daily practices such as speaking Hebrew and celebrating collective rituals (see chapter seven for a discussion of collective practices of mourning) and by sharing and passing on public cultural knowledge (TV shows, folkloristic stories etc.). This section therefore presented how social/cultural practices are conducted in order to maintain the Jewish-Israeli immigrant community (Hart, 2004) and provide mothers with a sense of belonging. Jewish-Israelis' personal experience of immigration to Britain, their sense of solitude or socialization, professional career, experiences of early childhood and family of origin, all contribute to the dilemmas about how best to promote and maintain a sense of 'Israeliness' within the family and community. Other research (e.g. Lienonen, 2012) shows similar trends of alienation from the local society among highly qualified employed or unemployed 'elite' migrants. In the last chapter I will discuss the question whether the Israeli migrant group is exceptional.

### **9.3. The Israeli Community in Britain: a diasporic space or a constraining 'ghetto'?**

Apart from the representations of British society, the local Jewish community, and the Arab/Muslim community (which have been presented in the previous chapter), Jewish-Israelis' understanding of 'Israeli identity' abroad was also constructed against the backdrop of the local Jewish-Israeli population in London/Britain. Research in the US (e.g. Shokeid, 1988, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Gold, 2002) and Britain (Hart, 2004, Lev-Ari, 2008) showed that Jewish-Israelis tended to cluster in closed communities alienated from both the local non-Jewish society and the local Jewish communities. All interviewees in the current study referred to this closed Israeli community that has been partly presented in the previous section. Hart (2004) classified her research participants into 'embedded' and 'detached' subjects, referring to the extent to which they were engaged with an Israeli network in their daily life. Along these crude categories, at least half of my research participants maintained close relationships with an Israeli network, while the rest kept lesser degrees of contact, with Nira and Michael choosing to detach themselves from it altogether.

In the broader immigration literature, some variables have been outlined to account for an engagement with the expatriate local communities. These variables include the time spent in the new country, the psychological developmental process of immigration (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989), the intention to stay or to return (Gold, 2000, Floman, 2006), the ideological context within which emigration from Israel is perceived (Shokeid, 1998) and the professional, economic and cultural accessibility to the general local society (Fathi, 2011).

Undoubtedly, the Israeli communal network provides psychological and material support for newcomers in their struggles with the first stages of immigration/relocation (Hart, 2004) and a familiar environment for those who only come temporarily and do not intend to settle (a condition termed 'sojourners' in immigration literature - Hart, 2004, Floman, 2007). It can prove especially supportive for Israeli women who struggle with acculturation into the British society and its customs (Hart, 2004) and the constraints of the local job

market, as discussed above. However, aside from the practical advantages that this network may offer its members, I was interested in studying the significations or representations (Hall, 1994) of 'Israeliness' abroad which this community elicits among Jewish-Israelis who are either engaged or disengaged in it. Surprisingly, most of the interviewees, even those who described themselves as engaged in it on a daily basis, expressed ambivalence towards this Israeli milieu referring to it pejoratively as the Israeli 'ghetto' (Roni), 'the swamp' (David) or a 'commune' (Noga).

This discrepancy between the actual engagement with the Israeli community and the articulated ambivalence towards it raises the possibility that it reflects an accepted discourse that people articulate in order to gain discursive benefits. David described this phenomenon:

There are those Israelis who really like {to say} 'I don't go into the Israeli ghetto' ahhh, and everyone has 'non-Israeli friends' but if you check it out, two, three or four years later {following their arrival to Britain}, I don't know how it's with you, but I think that it's rare that... {you'll find Israelis with non-Israeli friends}

A very similar phenomenon was described by Sela-Shefi (2006) in her research of Israelis' condemnation of the image of 'the Israeli' where she concluded that such condemnation served to 'maintain a distinguished social position and moral superiority over 'the masses'' (p. 339). This discourse of condemnation served mainly to signal the speaker's socio-cultural taste and communicate their desired social affiliation as independent from the 'Israeli herd'.

Another way of interpreting this discourse of condemnation towards the local Israeli community is by attributing it to the Zionist ideology that condemns Israeli emigrations (as has extensively discussed before, e.g. Shokeid, 1988). Within such an ideological climate, Jewish-Israelis abroad would be reluctant to identify themselves as members of a community of Israeli émigrés.

In chapter seven I cited Noga, who described Jewish-Israelis in the following way:

Everyone would like to live abroad but also to live in Ha'aretz too. And it's a sort of a dissonance, and if you ask me what's an Israeli this is

also a part of being an Israeli. Wanting to live in Ha'aretz but being abroad too.

Within the interview context dealing with the military threats in Israel, the ambivalence is described as rooted in Israelis' identities: they feel, on the one hand, an ideological-territorial commitment but, on the other hand, long to disengage from the military threats that come with it. Taken in a broader sense, Israeli identification comprises both the 'New Jew', with his/her fixed ideological commitment to his/her territory, and the transnational wandering 'Old Jew'. According to the same logic, Israelis who live in Britain within the confinement of a closed Israeli milieu would also like to live away from it.

While all these hypotheses sound plausible, it is important to trace the particular and idiosyncratic usage and meaning that subjects make of available and recognizable social discourses. In what follows I will trace the way such common features perform in Roni's extract and look at the particular function that this discourse of condemnation serves *for him* when negotiating his private agenda. Like many other interviewees, Roni seemed to have been preoccupied with the decision whether and when to return to Israel. He explained his decision to be interviewed with a book he read (Floman 2007), which described San Francisco based Israelis' dilemmas around staying or returning to Israel. The book classified the speakers into permanent settlers (those who decided to stay in the USA), returnees (those who had concrete plans to return to Israel) and sojourners or permanent-temporaries (who constantly delay their decision-making and live in a condition of temporariness). In the interview analysis, it appeared that Roni's dilemma was organized along three key binary dimensions:

- a. Livings, i.e. having high emotional commitment to the place you are in vs. residing/ staying, i.e. having minimal emotional engagement with the place you are in.
- b. Deciding - making free, active choices vs. being passively carried along by life.
- c. Preserving identity – sticking to past collective and individual attachments vs. opening to new experiences

I will follow these themes as they are raised in the analysed extract in order to understand the emotional significations and implications they seem to have for Roni.

In various parts of the interview, Roni describes himself as living a similar way of life to the one he lived in Israel ('I kind of.. .preserve more or less... as much as I can, the daily schedule I had in *Ha'aretz*...because this is what I feel and this is what's convenient and what I like, for instance reading YNET {an Israeli e-news site} in the mornings'). Like some of the other interviewees, his social environment consists mostly of Israelis. He declares that 'I don't think my musical taste has changed'), he rarely switches on the TV in his home and 'when I do switch it on once a week, I watch 'Friends', not anything else which relates to {actuality}...'. He is not acquainted with local British politics or information concerning daily life ('so from that aspect, watching the BBC now seems to me too heavy and the ITV, as far as I know, don't have news broadcast and that's just about it') and declares that he intends to go back to Israel once his wife's role is terminated ('I see ourselves returning {to Israel}.... no one believes us but deep inside I know that we are returning').

At the same time, right at the end of his interview, Roni introduced the signifier 'ghetto' to address and criticize the Israeli community in London with which he was himself engaged. He said:

39. Ahh... if you've already decided, to live here forever, *Al-Hakeifak* {Arabic – 'that's fine'}
40. So that comes once again to what we talked about a minute ago,
41. I don't see the point of living here as if in a ghetto
42. Once again, don't wipe out your past, *Al-Hakeifak* {fine}
43. But living in a ghetto, out of choice, of course,
44. For me at least... it seems to me not clever.
45. If you want to live in a ghetto, you might as well live in Israel
46. Why would you cross half the world in order to live in a ghetto, the same as the one you had before?

The reference to an ethnic diasporic community as a ghetto has by now exceeded its traditional Jewish connotation and addresses issues that preoccupy immigrant communities and individuals around closure, inclusion

and exclusion *vis a vis* the local society (Werbner 2002). Thus some of Roni's concerns around the 'ghetto' should be read as a concern common to migrants. At the same time, we cannot ignore the 'ghetto's' specific signification in Jewish and Israeli historiography and the meaning it has for Jewish-Israelis who were brought up within a Zionist outlook on diasporic Jews, perceived to be willingly or unwillingly confined to denigrating Jewish enclaves (ghettos) associated with persecution, closedness and backwardness.

Four distinct features characterize Roni's concept of 'the ghetto':

- a. You live in a ghetto.
- b. You create and make it for yourself
- c. You do it willingly and intentionally
- d. It is a duplicate of what you had before

Roni was especially careful when choosing the words to describe his status in Britain. He refrained from using the verb 'live' (*'Chay'*) which in Hebrew describes a fuller, more comprehensive form of existence and signifies stability and permanence, rather preferring other verbs such as 'reside' (*'Gar'*), 'stay' (*'Nish'ar'*) and 'be here' (*'Shohe'*), which accentuate temporality and provisionality<sup>46</sup>. This could be seen as a reflection of a more generalized difficulty for immigrants in acknowledging their immigration condition, but it is further complicated among Israeli immigrants who have to re-think a Zionist ideology (with which they have been brought up) which insists that Jews live fuller Jewish lives in Israel and therefore should settle there (see chapter seven for a discussion of David's text on the meaning of 'life' vs. 'experience for life'). Thus Israeliness is constructed by the underlying *commitment* to this geographic space – which Israelis call *'Ha'aretz'*. It appears that the 'ghetto' makes an exception to this rule since Roni talks about '*living in a ghetto*' (43).

Logically then, what comes up from an analysis of Roni's text, is that a 'life' – with the full meaning it brings with it - only happens in Israel or in Israeli enclaves called ghettos which duplicate 'what you had there'. All other forms of existence outside Israel could only be partial and would always lack a specific quality. Hence the Israeli subject in the diaspora is confronted with an

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<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of specific vocabulary usage see chapter six – 'Words in the service of the nation'

impossible choice – between *living* in an Israeli (p)reservation – a ghetto - or forever facing a partial existence abroad – trying to experience, residing or staying. This perspective resonates with traditional Jewish religious notions of diasporic lacking and the yearning for the land of Israel ('*Eretz Israel*'), which have been interpreted by Zionism as a political social and cultural deficiency and have driven the establishment of a Jewish homeland. At the same time, Roni's view of the partiality of life abroad resonates with contemporary diaspora theories (e.g. Brah, 1996, Karla et al., 2005), which see it as a reflection of the existential condition of lack, temporality and fluidity, and disrupt notions of fixity, homogeneity and stability in private and collective identities.

Throughout the extract and in other parts of the interview, we see Roni's clear preference for an *active* subject (who takes control over his/her life) over a *passive* subject (driven by circumstances or by social pressure and commitment). In the above text, this preference is demonstrated through the subject who has '*decided, to live here forever*' (39) '*out of choice*' (43) to live in a ghetto (my emphasis). Roni's approach to the dilemma of going back to Israel or staying abroad distinctively favours an active choice and rational decision making. He clearly avoids the possibility that subjects might be driven to stay abroad by circumstances, cannot make up their minds or has conflicting wishes or interests. Thus the ghetto phenomenon taunts and perplexes him because it highlights the contradiction between the choice-making agent subject and the confinement of the 'ghetto', which signifies the limits of one's agency and ability to choose ('Why would you cross half the world in order to live in a ghetto, the same as the one you had before?',46)

The last dialectic dimension in Roni's speech addresses the contrast between sticking to past collective and individual attachments (preserving identity) and opening up to new experiences. The 'ghetto' is presented by Roni as a space where no new experiences are created. It is a conservative milieu which mechanically recycles life in Israel and blocks the introduction of new experiences which Roni is especially keen on (in other parts of the interview he was urging Israelis abroad to: 'try and accept the culture and the customs and language of this new place', to 'try to experience this other place', to 'definitely try to experience this other place' and to 'Get to know a little bit, other view

points, new places, new people'). Constructed in this way, the 'ghetto' articulates the idea of 'preserving the identity' which obstructs the subject from 'experiencing' these 'new' and 'other' people, places and viewpoints.

In this extract, Roni uses twice the Arabic term '*Al Hakeifak*'. Literally translated, this means 'fine' or even 'great', but in the current context would better be translated as 'fair enough', actually instilling some reservation to subjects' decision to 'live here forever' (a move which could bring about the wiping out of their collective past – a classical Zionist criticism towards those who leave Israel). Through its quality of familiarity and informality, the Arab slang minimizes the underlying criticism towards these decisions and presents them as legitimate and acceptable, albeit questionable. The overt criticism is being made towards those who decide to leave Israel but maintain it within the confinement of the Israeli ghetto.

Either intentionally or unintentionally, Israel itself is brought into the discussion around living in a ghetto. It starts off with an ambiguous assertion: 'If you want to live in a ghetto, you might as well live in Israel' which could be understood as: 'if you live in an Israeli world outside Israel you might as well live the real thing – in Israel.' But Roni goes on to portray Israel itself as a ghetto – 'why would you cross half the world in order to live in a ghetto, the same as the one you had before?' (46) – closed down by rigid ways of life and not opening up to new experiences and 'other view points, new places, new people'. This criticism could reflect a political criticism relating to the deepening geographical and cultural siege mentality within Israeli society, but there are no further indications to corroborate this claim.

Thus, Roni's text could be read as a reflection of the subject's existential ambivalence - torn between, on the one hand, a commitment to social identities, (here national), their fixed ('ghettoed') ways of articulating, and the limitations they bring with them; and on the other hand, the subject's urge to destabilize old conceptions ('wipe out your past') and introduce new 'experiences' of temporality and otherness. This ambivalence is also part of a generalized diasporic condition. In this context, the text articulates the dilemma of the potentially (Jewish-Israeli) *diasporic subject* torn between the tempting, stable, secure and recognizable (Israeli) ghetto (in Israel and outside it) (Werbner, 2002), and the political, cultural and personal temporality and

otherness that the diasporic (Israeli-Jew) subject is condemned to (Said in Magid, 2006). Paradoxically, Israel, which was established as a new, revolutionary Jewish society differentiated from the old and stable diasporic Jewish ghetto, becomes itself the site of conservatism and self-closure.

### **9.3.1. Discussion**

Seen through Roni's eyes, the Israeli community in London is presented as a closed enclave of Israelis who rigidly maintain daily cultural habits and practices imported from Israel. A similar picture of Israeli communities abroad has been portrayed by other scholars (Shokeid, 1998, Gold, 2002, Hart, 2004). As I discussed in other parts of this chapter, the conditions of closure and lack of social integration on the part of Jewish-Israelis are supported by other factors: the generalized alienation from local society (the general non-Jewish British society, the local Jewish community and the representations of local hostile Muslims and Arabs) or the lack of professional engagement of Israeli mothers. The emphasis of difference between 'Us and Them' helps construct the boundaries around the group which maintain its distinctiveness but causes subjects like Roni (and others) to see it as a constrictive ghetto. Through an analysis of parents' educational choices for their children, Hart (2004) demonstrates the mechanisms that maintain these boundaries around the group, 'tighten[s] the speakers' educational horizons and urge[s] them to commit to the 'beaten educational path' (p. 200).

My research, however, does not focus on sociological analysis of social entities such as the Israeli community in Britain, but rather analyses the way these entities are represented, evaluated and understood by individual Israeli subjects, such as Roni, as part of their construction of their 'Israeli identity'.

As I argued above, Roni's choice to present the Israeli community in this light stems from his own engagement with the dilemma around staying in Britain or returning to Israel and other more general life issues such as 'living' vs. 'experiencing' and 'making decisions'. The Israeli community is specifically constructed by Roni in an unappealing way so as to help him come to a decision not to stay, in the same way that Ariella underscored her status as an immigrant so as to argue her case for returning to Israel.

At the same time, it would be misleading to assume that subjects' construction of the social world is a byproduct of a personal agenda and the private narratives that subjects entertain of themselves. Roni's construction of an Israeli community draws on available discourses in Israeli society that are molded by Zionist ideology. Therefore, concepts of 'life' and of 'experience' of living abroad and of being an immigrant cannot be separated from the ideological signification they have within the speaker's culture. For Roni's private agenda, as well as for the hegemonic Zionist discourse, it would be risky to think of Jewish-Israeli communities abroad as potentially thriving diasporic communities. Werbner (2002), in relation to the Pakistani community in Britain, describes a diasporic community which understood 'its minority status and identified with its newly adopted nation' (p. 2) while at the same time recognizing, not simply their loyalty {to their new country}, but their existential connection with a co-diasporic elsewhere, or in the home country' (p. 251). Such diasporic space is 'the site of constant processes of struggle and negotiation, of constructing the collectivity and its interest' (Yuval Davis 1997, in Werbner 2002 p. 193-4). Such a description of a communal diasporic space does not emerge from Roni's text and its analysis. The Jewish-Israeli subject abroad, according to Roni, can only choose between a personal diasporic condition of 'experiencing but not living', which 'wipe[s] out our past' or living in 'the Israeli ghetto, the same as the one you had before' (46).

It comes as no surprise that communities of Jewish-Israelis living abroad are only rarely referred to as 'Israeli diaspora'. A thorough English and Hebrew internet search of the term 'Israeli diaspora' in both professional and popular search engines yields very limited results (Gold, 2002, Lahav and Arian, 1999, Cohen, 2005, are the exceptions). Under Zionist terminology, the concept of 'Israeli-diaspora' may well be a contradiction in terms, hyphenating an extremely nationalized notion ('Israel') with a de-territorialized one. Hence, 'diaspora' is still associated with the local Jewish communities living away from Israel and Israelis living abroad are generally related to as Israelis living abroad (and previously as *Yordim* or 'leavers'). Anteby-Yemini (2004) writes: 'Israeli emigrants ('*Yordim*') are beginning to form in Europe and the United states as new "Israeli diaspora" separate from the Jewish diaspora of these host countries' (p.68). It is not a discursive coincidence that the term 'diaspora'

was marked with inverted commas, or that the word *Yored* has been applied even in Anteby-Yemini's paper (which is critical of the mainstream Zionist outlook on 'immigration'). It exemplifies, once more, the grip of Zionist terminology, or the 'Zionification' of Israeli society, that informs available discursive concepts of 'Israeliness', 'diaspora', 'Judaism', or 'citizenship' and the practices that emerge out of them.

While factors such as the economic integration of the migrant (Casey and Dustmann, 2010), his/her gender or family status (Iredale, 2005) or the socio-economic condition in the 'home' country of migration (Manning and Roy, 2010) may help to explain subjects' engagement and identification with the western host societies or the local expatriate community, 'the Israeli case', presented here emphasizes the role of ideology and of the national imagination as it intersects with the other factors cited above in constructing a limiting diasporic space and restrictive engagement with the host society.

While research shows a similar malaise among other privileged migrants and a difficulty of integration into the local society despite or even because of the high social/professional capital migrants bring with them (Lienonen, 2012), Israelis try to make sense of this estrangement by drawing on the ideological arguments they grew up with. In the absence of an accepted notion of 'Israeli diaspora', individual Jewish-Israeli subjects have to negotiate and *create for themselves* such intermediately 'Israeli diasporic space'. Indeed Yael Bartana's revolutionary art work (2007) depicting the return of Polish Jews to Poland to reclaim their lost diasporic space within Polish society, has provoked condemnation among the Jewish-Israeli public as it undermines the foundations of the Israeli national project.

# **Chapter ten: Discussion – Jewish Israelis in Britain – narrating a national identity between Zionist ideology and diasporic reality**

## **10.1. Introduction**

As the title of my thesis and of this concluding chapter states, this research applied empirical tools (interviews and their analysis) to study the intersections of three major areas of academic research: nationalism, diaspora and immigration, and identities as they are captured in Jewish-Israelis' representation of 'Israeli identity' in Britain. The thesis was mainly interested in the processes of the 'suturing', in Hall's terms, of the participants into available subject positions within these three cultural arenas, i.e. the process through which subjects locate themselves in these social categories and accommodate them into their understandings of 'who they are', in this case their 'Israeliness'. The analysis demonstrates major dimensions, contents, processes and discursive strategies that take part in the construction of 'an Israeli identity' in this context of migration. My main arguments in this thesis were:

1. The representation of 'Israeli identity' reflected to a large extent the speaker's condition of dislocation in the British context.
2. 'Israeli Identity' is constructed in response to a combination of interdependent material, cultural and personal conditions in the speakers' lives and in response to the interview politics.
3. The participants match the profile of other privileged high-skilled migrant groups in some western societies and share some of their concerns.
4. Zionist ideology and ethos inform the Israel collective imagination and are foundational for making sense of 'Israeliness' abroad and the portrayal of neighbouring identities. This constitutes an exceptional feature of the Jewish-Israeli group.
5. This collective imaginary reservoir serves as a common platform upon which participants can communicate, locate themselves socially and set up rules of inclusion or exclusion.

6. Zionist preconceptions and the participants' attachment to it restrict the imagination of an 'Israeli diaspora' and inform the practices and structure of the Israeli community. It fixes the image of 'the Jew' and of 'the Arab' or 'the Muslim' and limits the ability of subjects to envision these identities differently and thus restricts social encounters.
7. 'Israeli identity' is constructed differently against the backdrop of various social spaces (Israeli society, British society, diasporic Israeli society).
8. Subjects negotiate their idiosyncratic position ('who am I') in each one of these spaces ('who are They' and 'who are We') in relation to private memories and a notion of 'who I am'.
9. Constructing a personalized representation of 'Israeli identity' involves the continuous effort to accommodate contradictory and troubled social and personal experiences and preconceptions into a personal narrative that makes sense.

The three research questions that guided my analysis will also guide me through this discussion. They were:

1. What hegemonic and counter-hegemonic national narratives, themes, images and daily practices do Jewish-Israeli subjects draw on when making sense of 'their' 'national identity'?
2. What are the subject-positions and underlying power relations implicated in these social discourses of nationality? How are practices of inclusion and exclusion informed and managed by this collective imaginary?
3. How do participants negotiate or *narrate* these social discourses to accommodate them to their personal narratives of 'who they are'?

The questions address three crucial interdependent dimensions of identity construction:

The first research question is interested in mapping the *contents* and *themes* of Israeli culture and Zionist ethos (e.g. Ram, 2006, Sand, 2008). In this respect I found the ethnosymbolist approach (Smith, 2001), Anderson's notion of the imagined community (1991) and psychoanalysis' notions of the troubled nation (Bhabha, 1990 or Rose, 1996) highly productive in locating collective imaginations and narratives as key factors that drive and sustain nationalism.

Acknowledging that such collective imaginations were highly politicized, i.e. inform daily practices of inclusion and exclusion (as highlighted by social theorists e.g. Foucault, 1974, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994, Azoulay and Ofir, 2002) underlined the second research question.

The third research question assumed the constant negotiations that subjects engage in while appropriating given socio-political positions (Hall, 1994). This view also determined the methodological approach I chose (critical narrative analysis – Emerson and Frosh, 2004) and the method of collecting data (interviews). I have focused on the intricate ways through which individual subjects *toiled* (I have used various verbs such as ‘negotiate’ or ‘narrate’ to describe this effort) to construct a meaningful story of who they were as Israelis in Britain.

In line with my interest of the suturing between the ‘psycho’ and the ‘social’, the discussion in this chapter is therefore divided into two main sections: in the first part I will be looking *across* participants at the key contents and themes that characterize this sample and relate to their demographical and sociological profile when making general claims about ‘Israeli identity’ construction. Since, overall, subjects drew uncritically on Zionist ideology and its imagination, I discuss potential reasons for this tendency linking it to their socio-economic and class background in Israeli society, their affinity to the Zionist ethos as a middle-class ethos, and their material conditions of dislocation in Britain.

In the second part of this chapter I will be discussing the intricate ways through which individual subjects struggle to appropriate a personal position cutting across the social categories mentioned above in order to construct a *personalized* ‘Israeli identity’. In this context I will be discussing my own role in the construction of the interviewee’s narrative as the speaker’s audience whose concerns and views might be similar to those of the speakers. I argue that the notion of ‘identity’ inevitably involves the constant move back and forth between the private and the collective, between the specific and the general, between ‘self’ and ‘other’ constantly redefining what the ‘figure’ is and what is the ‘ground’.

## 10.2. Zionist Ideology and narrative as a discursive axis for 'Israeli identity'

I would like to open this concluding chapter with a discussion of the Jewish-Israeli 'cultural reservoir'. This is the cultural context that subjects turned to when performing that painstaking, continuous, *very personal* 'identity' construction.

To begin with a disclaimer: I am approaching this section with marked uneasiness: pointing to similarities (Pavon-Cuelar, 2010) or consistencies *across* participants' texts so as to highlight a common cultural reservoir or condition of 'Israeliness' inevitably undermines the particularity and peculiarity of each participant and ignores the inconsistencies within the national canon and the individual narratives of nationality, all of which are an inevitable and inherent part of 'national identities'. Highlighting the 'cultural rules' of Israeli nationality also does injustice to those participants who advocate counter-hegemonic discourses of nationalism. After presenting the commonalities, in the second part of this chapter I will therefore discuss their limitations, disruptions and inadequacies.

As discussed in chapters three and four, Israeli society appears to be undergoing dramatic changes over the past decades in what has been considered a post-Zionist phase (Ram, 2006), an era of 'privatization' (Gutwein, 2009), or a mark of multiculturalism in Israeli society (Yona and Shenhav, 2005). The national narrative and its ethos (succinctly summarized in the Declaration of Independence - chapter three), which has served as 'social glue' for the Jewish-Israeli public, is consistently challenged by various groups within and outside the Jewish public (Said, 2004, Magid, 2006, Rose, 2005, Butler, 2011). An argument could be made that, at least for Israeli society, Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined 'homogenous' community (1991) may have been more appropriate in the country's formative years (as for other newly established nations), but has now given way to a myriad of imagined *communities* which although all referencing this prototypical hegemonic story, entertain quite different notions of 'the nation'.

At the same time, authors (e.g. Naveh, 2006, Lomsky-Feder, 2004) point to the resilience of Zionist discourse and narrative and First and Herman (2009)

argue that this collective ethos 'appear[s] at all moments in the 'circuit of culture' model' (p. 520), in the absence of an alternative common ideological agenda. In chapters two and three I discussed some of the theories (modernism, ethnosymbolism, psychoanalysis) that try to explain the persistence of national projects in general and that of the Israeli project specifically. This thesis has sought to include in its analysis the imaginary aspects of Israeli nationalism as they intersect with economic, material or social conditions.

Drawing on my own personal critical experiences in Israel (as described in the introduction), I studied the ways these hegemonic and counter-hegemonic trends were imported by the participants and how the experience of living abroad shapes their representations of 'Israeliness'. *On the whole*, the Zionist discourse of nationality appears to maintain its hegemony; participants' texts were cautious (or conservative), sticking to many of the common assumptions in Israeli culture and making only occasional, hesitant critical remarks regarding hegemonic Israeli preconceptions or Israeli society (e.g. group divisions, intolerance to non-Jews). Overall, the participants tended to gloss over many of the troubling issues that preoccupy the Jewish-Israeli society *in Israel*. The economic hardship, the continuous occupation and military conflict with the neighbouring countries and the anxieties that come with them, the uncertainty about the future or the troubled history of the Zionist movement (e.g. the expulsion of Arabs from Palestine during the 1948 war or the horrors of the Holocaust) did not play a major role in these Jewish-Israelis' portrayal of 'Israeliness'. Bruner (1990) argues that the effect of narratives resides specifically in their ability to form an internal cohesion which strategically includes certain aspects of the social reality and neglects others. As early as 1882, Renan (1990) argued similarly, claiming that 'the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common and also, that they have forgotten many things' (p.11). The participants were preoccupied with their experiences as dislocated Israelis in Britain: raising 'Israeli children abroad', forming social interactions with Israelis and with locals in Britain, managing their relationships with their families and friends in Israel or defining the uniqueness of the Israeli group compared with that of the locals. Therefore the analysis considered the narratives of 'Israeli identity' to be situated (Emerson

and Frosh, 2004) rather than as indications of generalized, consistent identities that subjects carry with them *across* social circumstances.

The exceptions, like Nira or Liat who articulated criticisms and openly declared that they did not want to return to Israel teach us most about the rules themselves. Both Nira and Liat (Nira: So for me, personally {she giggles} it's more suitable, this style {of living abroad}; and Liat: 'then perhaps, all of a sudden, I became aware that... that perhaps there are other places in the world...that are perhaps more suitable for me to live in') made an effort not to generalize their claims about Israeli society (using conditional words 'for me', 'perhaps' or '*more* suitable') and demonstrated marked embarrassment and discomfort (through giggles, chuckles and laughter) when voicing their criticism.

The experiences of belonging to or estrangement from the local British or Israeli spaces were demonstrated through two competing discourses of nationality that I referred to as '*Ha'aretz*' and 'Israel'. In chapter six, I argued that these seemingly innocent terms in fact signify two opposing subject positions that defined subjects' emotional engagement with Israel as a 'homeland' and are accompanied by a range of psychological, social and cultural viewpoints. I argued that although some subjects could identify themselves with one of these psychosocial positioning, more often subjects moved between the two in the course of a single interview (see chapter seven for David's painstaking efforts to disengage himself from the '*Ha'aretz*' position and plant himself in an 'Israel' position). These two states of mind regarding Israel informed notions of 'home', 'life', 'settledness', 'temporality' and 'belonging' and constructed accordingly ideas of who are 'We' and who am 'I'. Later, I will discuss the extent to which subjects are indeed 'caught up' (or interpellated, in Althusserian terms, 1971) in these positions and their ability to negotiate their subjectivity within.

### **10.3. Accounting for the conformist portrayal of 'Israeliness'**

Throughout the findings chapter I have outlined a few probable, and not mutually exclusive, explanations for this caution or conservatism. In the methodological chapter, I described the research participant sample – middle-class, secular, often Ashkenazi, high-qualified, Israeli-born – who stepped

forward voluntarily and wanted to be interviewed as my first research finding. This sample was consistent with the profile of Israeli émigrés in previous research in Britain (Hart, 2004, Lev-Ari, 2008) or the US (Floman, 2007). This profile of highly qualified professional migrants is disproportionate compared to the general population in Israel, but is similar to that found among émigrés from other economically developed countries with small job markets (e.g. Switzerland, Della Pergola, 2012). In terms of its educational, socio-economic and professional background, my sample also resembles other high-skilled migrant populations. These were characterized by high unemployment among the women (Iredale, 2005), who mostly came as their partner's dependent, and the sense of estrangement and lack of integration into the local society (Manning and Roy, 2010, Lienonen, 2012). Thus at first I would like to look at the speakers' construction of 'Israeli identity' within the context of their socio-economic or middle-class features.

### **10.3.1. The material dilemmas of middle-class Israelis abroad**

Unlike other immigrant groups that have been discussed in the context of diaspora studies – Pakistanis (Webner, 2002), Algerians (Sayad, 2004), Turks (Tanyas, 2010) or Iranians (Fathi, 2011), Jewish-Israelis, as highly-qualified immigrants (though not necessarily working), are not excluded or marginalized on ethnic, professional or economic grounds in British society; in fact, *economically*, they could be described as a middle-class group. Also, in contrast to some of the above communities, Israelis' return to Israel is warmly welcomed in Israeli society given the ideological ethos of Israel as a welcoming society for Jews (that offers generous benefits to returnees) and the presence of their familial/professional social networks. Thus, *on the face of it*, Israelis have a greater social mobility and accessibility to British or Israeli society; specifically, however, this privileged condition makes it difficult for them to choose since they have something to lose whichever decision they take (Floman 2007).

Such experience of psychological turmoil or stagnation is especially characteristic of women who were not on the job market and was described in Na'ama's text as 'life is "on hold"'. Part of their identity as Jewish Israeli women in Britain *intersected* for Ariella, Na'ama or Dorit with the condition of

*unemployed women* which marked their detachment from the local British social and professional networks but also signified their detachment from their old self-image as working women in Israeli society. Hart (2004) describes the ability of the informal social support network of the Israeli community in London, structured especially around children's nurseries and primary schools, to meet the social and material needs of these mothers who were not on the job market and encourage 'intra-group associations while erecting barriers between group members and others' (Hart, 2004, p. 187).

Similarly, Lienonen (2012) describes the experiences of high-skilled Americans in Finland, mostly women, who are unemployed or employed in under-qualified professions that are forced to live a life of leisure at the price of a sense of non-belonging and professional dissatisfaction. She also reports a sense of alienation from the local culture and society among those who do manage to integrate professionally. I have noted that contrary to some other immigrant groups (e.g. Algerians in France - Sayad, 2004) none of the respondents applied the signifier 'immigrant' to address their status in Britain (except for Ariella who used it especially to explain why she *has* to return to Israel); they were not willing to consider themselves as British (let alone English) and were reluctant towards any other form of institutionalization in Britain (e.g. buying houses). Their knowledge of and acquaintance with British society and its culture (reading newspapers, voting in the elections, taking part in local communal activity) appeared to be minimal, taking into consideration that they were asked to talk about 'Israeli identity'. So in contrast to Sayad's portrayal of the *Suffering of the Immigrant* (2004) among mostly unqualified Algerian manual workers in France, my Israeli cohort's experience of dislocation in Britain, and concomitantly, their portrayal of Israeli society, could be summarized as 'the distress of the privileged middle-class Jewish-Israeli' that is forced to negotiate immigration/emigration.

### **10.3.2. Zionist discourse as a common language between participants**

In order for Israelis abroad to maintain common ground with other Israelis (me included), disagreements and troubling instances have to be put aside or handled very carefully. This also involved putting the differences and

disagreements outside the encounter in a move of 'Us' and 'Them' rather than dealing with the disquieting differences within such 'Us'.

The participants (me included) could 'touch base' with each other by drawing on the Zionist ethos, narrative and ideology through shared familiar signifiers (*Ha'aretz*, live vs. reside etc.), images (the Sabra, 'a street cat', 'warm people', 'Israeli *Hutzpah*'), the usage of informal slang language (often taken from Arabic) and preconceptions (anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in Britain, the imagined hostility of Arabs and Muslims) which link members together, presumably, as equal shareholders in the national project and offer respite from the on-going condition of otherness. In chapter six, I presented various usages of such 'common knowledge' (e.g. Michael's extract - 'got off the boat and said: 'Phew! I'm home'" or Noga's 'We are the centre of the world') as they were played out between the speakers and me.

Similarly, the option to return to Israel was mentioned in the vast majority of cases, even among those like Udit (who has been living in the UK for forty years) or Aaron (whose wife is not Israeli and does not speak Hebrew and whose children do not speak Hebrew either) who both own houses and have settled down in Britain. For them, it was more about taking part in the acceptable discourse of an Israeli abroad rather than a real option, but even these momentary unrealistic phantasies help subjects imagine themselves as part of the Israeli group 'out there' and reach out to an Israeli researcher.

### **10.3.3. The Zionist national ethos as an Israeli middle-class discursive practice**

Another explanation for the conservative portrayal of 'Israeliness' and the higher proportion of middle-class Israelis in my research cohort compared to members of other social classes was also because of their special *engagement* with the topic. As members of a privileged group, they were more concerned and involved with the national canon that was actually more '*theirs*'. Noga described it well: 'Here the conversations around 'identity' replace the conversations on... [politics?] that we frequently have in *Ha'aretz*'. Both Ariella and Yariv, whose grandparents immigrated to Israel from Europe and who consequently enjoyed the social privileges of the (Ashkenazi) founders group in Israel (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994, 2007, Yona and Saporta, 2002, Shohat,

2003), mourn in their texts the loss of this prioritized position. Both find themselves out of place in British-European society where their European ancestry is of 'no use' and where their Middle Eastern Israeliness stigmatizes them as 'non-Europeans'. In other words, taking part in the interview on 'Israeli national identity' was, in itself, a practice of identity construction. According to such a Bourdieusian reading of the texts, participants demonstrated their commitment to a certain social milieu and its socio-cultural 'tastes' (Bourdieu, 1984) among which is the hegemonic national narrative – a middle-class Eurocentric version of 'the nation' with which they are culturally and socially associated. The fact that participants could locate me as part of the same Israeli social milieu or class turned the interviews into a social practice of *middle-class* 'Israeli identity' construction. This brought about an intensification of the boundaries around 'Us' as demonstrated for example through racist images of 'Arabs', 'Muslims' and 'Palestinians', that mainly served to separate between a 'good' 'civilized (i.e. European) Us and a hostile, 'bad' (non-European) other and avoid recognition of and responsibility for 'Israeli badness'.

#### **10.3.4. Emigration in Zionist culture and imagination**

Another explanation, closely related to the previous one, that can account for the subjects' conservative portrayal of Israeliness is the *content* of the ethos within which those Jewish-Israeli middle-class participants grow – namely the Zionist narrative that specifically asserts living in Israel as the correct form of the 'new Jewish' private and communal life. Israeli subjects' *experience* of dislocation in Britain (and consequently their identity construction) could not be grasped without acknowledging what it means in Israeli culture to live abroad, especially for those Israelis whose parents or grandparents (like Na'ama, Noga, Liat or Roni) immigrated to Israel *en masse*, some in order to flee conditions of persecution and marginalization. In Israeli culture, *material immigration* (as opposed to *ideological Aliya* to Israel) receives criticism from local Jewish Israelis (Golden, 2001). Despite the lessening of the Zionist agenda, the 'return to diaspora' still carries its bleak associations in the Jewish-Israeli imagination. Hence, even when they have not personally experienced hostility, Jewish-Israelis in Britain assume they will encounter anti-Semitism or

anti-Zionism in some form or another. Nevertheless, I argued that the national narrative which tells a certain historical story and draws certain social conclusions and values, indispensable as it is for understanding nationalism, cannot be studied in isolation without appreciating its *ideological* (political) implications which prioritize some at the expense of others (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), inform certain views of the world and simultaneously close down alternative views (Davis and Harré, 1990). My subjects were perhaps more cautious in disturbing the canonical narrative because the hegemonic national narrative was above all *their* story as mainly members of a privileged group. Like their skewed perception of 'Arabs', the interview texts show marked ignorance concerning local Jewish life – religious or secular and, generally, a limitation in the interpretation of Jewishness.

In summary, I argue that this specific, privileged indecisiveness (it is not infrequent for Israeli families who have lived for 10 or even 20 years in London to return to Israel), which I branded earlier as 'the distress of the unsettled middle-class Jewish-Israeli', is one of the trademarks of the Israeli group of émigrés that I have studied. It can account, at least partly, for the reluctance to openly challenge or disturb certain prevalent preconceptions in Israeli society about Israeli society, and about the world, and can explain the limited engagement with British society and reality. This reluctance to settle down in 'the diaspora' – to accept the socio-cultural implications of the departure from 'Ha'aretz' - was captured in my participants' reference to the Israeli community as 'a ghetto' or 'a swamp'. This position also shapes the collective space of the Israeli community as inherently temporary and secluded: based on informal ad-hoc interactions solely among Israelis, the lack of formal social institutions (Hart, 2004) or distinct local rituals and charity activities which focuses on 'there' rather than on 'here' (Floman, 2007). Such communal space differs considerably from the models of cultural hybridity proposed by Hall (1990), which are founded on 'the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity' (Hall, 1990 p. 235).

#### **10.4. Subjects negotiating 'Israeli national identity'**

After discussing some of the contents that were raised (and those that were ignored) that make up the 'Israeli we-ness' among my participants, I now turn to the dynamics of identity construction (second and third research questions). Although participants were speaking from certain social locations (as members of the Israeli middle-class or highly qualified, employed or not employed subjects), they were also constructing a very personal narrative of themselves within these social configurations. In the analysis of the different interviews, I argued that subjects often (though not always) volunteered to be interviewed in order to try and 'sort out' disruptions to their personal narratives as Israelis who live in certain social-political conditions and therefore have a preconceived agenda (not necessarily intentional or conscious) which informs their speech. Hence, Ariella chose the polite ('friendly') but unwelcoming 'European' art workshop environment to convey her experience of alienation and justify the decision to return to Israel where she can walk 'straight up with my head raised high' because she is 'the salt of the earth'. This was also true for Na'ama, who felt that her life was 'on hold', perhaps overly 'comfortable' and volunteered to be interviewed on 'Israeli national identity' although 'she didn't know what to say about it'. Michael constantly tried to prove to me his Israeli membership through the acquaintance with vernacular slang and general knowledge while also underlining his disengagement from it. Interviewees' personal narratives were also constructed in conjunction with the distribution of roles and the interview politics. In Nira and Liat's interviews, each one of them may have been drawn to act the role of the rebellious group members whose negative memories of their Israeli childhood and consequently their decision not to return to Israel 'are screwing up your data' (Liat), while I was cast as a representative of the Israeli establishment (a relatively newly-arrived, male, Israeli researcher) who expects them to long for Israel and mourn its absence. I am arguing here that the text analysis cannot be based solely upon the social and cultural positioning (e.g. their professional, gender or class status), but must also include the private interpretation or 'suturing' of the subject through, against and around these highly politicised social positionings as they continuously construct their personal narrative of 'who I am'.

#### 10.4.1. 'Selfing' and 'othering' and the processes of identity construction

The material demonstrated that differentiation from 'the other', and through it the setting up of the rules of inclusion and exclusion, constitutes a major strategy for defining one's identity whatever theme was raised (e.g. patterns of work or social interactions, raising children, social and moral values, etc.). In this work I have used the 'other' to designate members of a different national/ethnic group rather than the more abstract notion of 'the Other' as representative of culture and language as applied in Lacanian theorizing. Hall (1996) describes the indispensable role that the 'other' plays in the construction of one's identity:

Above all....identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks... [that] its identity can be constructed (p. 17).

Thus, the construction of these 'others' helps to maintain an illusionary sense of one's personal and collective cohesion, continuity and persistence. For that end, reality experience is unnecessary, even disruptive. Subjects could keep their personal, Israeli space 'clean' – coherent and rational - while attributing unwanted, 'messy' aspects to the 'others': in a racist manner, Arabs/ Muslims are assigned murderous (negative) aggression while Israelis' aggression is described as productive/creative (having an Israeli *Hutzpah*, being 'street cats'), with Israeli military aggression or occupation of Palestinian lands being ignored; Britons are described as overly formal ('schedule lunch a month and a half in advance' or 'putting children to bed at 7 pm'), passive and lacking ambition, while Israelis are informal in their social and family relationships, confident and professionally ambitious. Local Jews are depicted as backwardly religious and passive ('Our Jewishness is something very-very specific: It doesn't have a God...'we left Egypt' and not 'we were taken out of Egypt'), whereas Israelis, as the New Jews, who 'grew up in a country of sun' are liberal, creative and 'have a certain joy of life'. These claims were made above all to clarify the boundaries of the group and claim private and collective superiority; as Hall argues: 'identities can function as points of identification

and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected' (p. 17-8).

The interplay of inclusion and exclusion was also raised, albeit much more delicately, in the interview encounter. Inevitably, I played an important part in the subjects' narration of 'Israeliness' - as their audience - and it was also against and for this imaginary other that they constructed their narrative of Israeliness. Each participant placed me in a specific authoritative position ('the researcher', 'the psychologist', 'the Israeli male', 'the Sabra') that supported the narrative they wanted to unfold: Michael sought to convince me of his genuine Israeliness; Na'ama, who knew that I was a psychologist, came to talk about living a 'life on hold' and Liat expected me to be disappointed, as an Israeli researcher, by her critical remarks on Israel.

However, as part of imagining Israeliness abroad, Jewish-Israelis who have grown up as the majority in Israel (and who had their own 'others') have to address their own condition of foreignness, exclusion or 'otherness' in the locals' own 'homeland' since 'in a world governed by 'state thought', 'we automatically think in national terms' which 'introduces that inevitable, and eminently 'statist' distinction, which is arbitrary as it is pertinent, between the national on the one hand, and the non-national on the other' (Sayad, 2004, p. 294). Thus, the participants had to reconcile into their stories the painful experiences of foreignness, of exclusion, of loneliness away from their families in a situation in which their previous social and cultural capital no longer counted. Here were not only stories of fractured nationality and coming to terms with conditions of collective minority, but also private memories of early family relationships where immigration and cultural difference played a significant emotional role. Ariella's strong sense of 'otherness' in a local British environment was constructed against a notion of belonging in Israel where me and my dad were born in the same room in the same hospital'. For her, this sense of Israeli otherness was almost physically 'imprinted' in her determining every aspect of her conduct (e.g. her speech, behaviour, social interaction) and consequently confined her to the unbearable exclusionary position of the non-European other. This sense of 'otherness' can potentially seep into the family, as the frequent discussions on children's future Israeli identity disclose. This is a major concern for Jewish-Israeli women whose engagement with

British society is limited compared with that of other family members (children or the working spouse) due to their employment conditions and the strong pull towards the Israeli community. For Nira or Liat, however, their exceptional social positioning in a highly ideological Israeli society (as an IDF orphan, as a daughter of transnational immigrants) located *them* as the 'others' and structured their experiences of alienation and exclusion there. 'Selfing' and 'othering' constitute two sides of the same coin whereby setting the rules of inclusion inevitably excludes.

#### **10.4.2. The contingency of (national) identities**

Throughout the thesis, I have outlined the conditionality and contingency of these identities dependant on the changing discursive circumstances within the interview encounter and the social spaces that subjects relate to.

Therefore, 'Israeliness' was imagined differently against different social backgrounds (e.g. Israeli society, British society or the Israeli community in Britain). David described it succinctly in response to my question what it meant for him to be an Israeli:

... and there are many aspects to being an Israeli: towards Israel, I mean the interest in what's going on in Israel, or the longing, or... the connections with the people who are there or thoughts about being an Israeli outside Israel... or an Israeli who seeks or doesn't seek to preserve his Israeli identity and an Israeli with Israeli friends and again, an Israeli with non-Israelis so all these together form the ... ah... the Israeliness

Subjects will make very different, even contradictory claims depending on the immediate context and their discursive goals, provided these make sense within the narrative that they want to promote (Bruner, 1990). Dorit produced two contradictory images of Israeliness in its relation to local British Jews: the first one was made in the context of criticising Israeli society for its promotion of individualism, materialism and the lack of Jewish roots:

If I compare my Jewish friends here to my Israeli friends here, they [the local Jews] are much more Zionist than us, they believe [in God] more than us, they are more united, in their Judaism.

The second claim tried to account for the desirability of Israelis in the eyes of the local Jews:

here you have many Jews who are by definition Jewish but they don't kind of, live it in their daily life. They don't 'do' {celebrate} holidays. They don't observe it very much... And through the Israelis, all of a sudden, someone reminds them that today it's Purim<sup>47</sup>

These two quotes portray two different images of Israelis because they are constructed against different backdrops, i.e., designate different 'others' (the Israelis in Israel and the Jewish-Israelis in Britain) and aim to achieve different goals for the speaker. Both are nevertheless equally valid and take part in the subject's construction of an overall notion of 'Israeliness'. Moreover, these discrepancies are an *inherent* part of the constitution of identities, as will be elaborated below.

#### **10.4.3. The multiple, on-going efforts for identity construction – moving from identities to identifications**

Despite the dominance of the Zionist ideology and narrative operating as cultural and social 'compasses', the interviews revealed the constant shift of subject positioning, the contradictions, disruptions and moments of embarrassment as speakers tried to construct regularities out of their confounding experiences as Israelis abroad. These have demonstrated to me the vibrant, fluid features, the changing emotional experiences and engagements of what we commonly call 'national identity', but should rather refer to as 'national *identifications*'. This nuance emphasizes: a. the *process* of construction rather than the constructed object itself ('identity'); b. the *effort* to achieve a coherent narrative rather than the 'already-achieved' coherent story itself; and c. the multiplicity of ever-changing idiosyncratic meanings rather than one fixed consensual meaning. Hall (1994) accentuates the creative (rather than merely defensive) dimension of identities which serves 'not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak' (p. 402).

Participants tried to compose coherent stories of who they are based on their

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<sup>47</sup> A Jewish festival.

varied, often contradictory, private daily experiences of living abroad. This was also my concern as the author of this thesis, the transcriber of the interview texts and their editor. I often found myself concerned about the incoherence of my translation or the content of the participants' texts and wondered how these would be seen and judged by non-Israeli readers. Thus, the tension between coherence and disruption, between a narrative and fragmented discordant texts, an essential part of the human experience according to Lacanian theory (Bhabha, 1990, Pavon-Cuelar, 2010), was demonstrated on various occasions of text production by my participants or by me. So while identities should rather be seen as identifications ('something local, fluid, unstable and contingent, made up of momentary stabilities that are then instantly displaced' - Frosh and Baraitser, 2009, p. 167), but also as something in the making), the Zionist ethos with its themes and values, so dominant in Jewish-Israeli culture, provided a helpful structure around which the participants could organize these momentary stabilities.

#### **10.4.4. Negotiating subject positioning**

When defining a subject position Harré and Davis (1990, p. 46) argue that:

Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice.

In contrast, I have tried to demonstrate the precariousness of such subject positioning not only because of the frequent change in social setting (as described above) or the different discursive goals subjects attempt to achieve in the course of any encounter, but also because social positioning can never be fully fixed or closed. In line with Lacanian theorizing (Bhabha, 1990, Hall, 1996, Žižek, 1998), I have focused on certain moments in the narrative construction when meaning and coherence fail. These were articulated in hesitations, slips of tongues, or marked discomfort (Dorit: 'I don't know, I feel terribly uncomfortable with the responses I give'). They point to the dualism and contradictions ingrained in identities due to two binaries: meaning and fragmentation and self and 'the other'. On one level, this tension relates to the discrepancy between the apparent coherence that the imaginary provides ('the

nation', 'Us', 'Them', 'good' or 'bad') and the often fragmented experiences of daily life when signifiers lose their meanings. In response to my question 'what does it mean for you to be an Israeli?' Aaron hesitated and then replied:

To be an Israeli for me, personally, it's a given thing. I mean I was born Israeli so I'm Israeli. So it's a thing that you... it's a goo...{d question} which I thought about, what does it mean to be an Israeli? I know I'm Israeli but I don't know what it means...

But identities are contradictory in another way: they draw on a collective reservoir of images, signifiers, concepts and myths that inform certain subject positions (as described above), but also have to answer specific narratives that individuals entertain privately about themselves. Nira's experience of discrepancy between her bodily experience while cycling during Memorial Day for the dead soldiers and the meaning it was given by her classmates and school staff provides one such example. Pavon-Cuelar (2010) claims that 'for each position *the language* is [also] a language' (p. 164). The extent to which subjects are indeed obligated (even constituted – Foucault, 1970) by these subject positions have been extensively discussed in social theory (e.g. Fanon, 1967, Althusser, 1971). I have been interested in Israeli subjects' struggles to accommodate, negotiate or narrate the national canon (in the form of a social discourse, a narrative or a daily practice) which signalled the tension that is an integral part of national identities as troubled and unsettled (Bhabha, 1994). Noga described Israeli identity as contradictory by nature:

Everyone would like to live abroad but also to live in Ha'aretz too. And it's a sort of a dissonance, and if you ask me what's an Israeli this is also a part of being an Israeli. Wanting to live in Ha'aretz but being abroad too.

While Noga related this dualism to the military tensions in Israel, I have analysed it also, more generally, in terms of the on-going tension, especially accentuated in Israeli society, between the collective and private trajectories, between the New Jew's territorial commitment to the Zionist ethos of living (and fighting) in Israel and the Old Jew's urge to disperse and to wander or flee. Liat's exceptional narrative of displacement in Israel ('I remember, from a very early age that I felt I didn't want to be there' {giggle}) revealed a diasporic

model based on a familial network stretched across Russia, South America, Israel (and now London) whose familial-transnational ethos challenges the hegemonic national Zionist narrative which places Israel at the centre of the Jewish world (Magid, 2006, Shneer and Aviv, 2010). I have also argued that despite its efforts to construct a coherent story of Jewish heroism and historical linearity, the Zionist narrative was never able to eliminate the shadows of its others – the diasporic Old Jew against which it was imagined, or the Palestinian in whose land the Zionist project was materialized.

The participants in my study were each trying to reference themselves in relation to acceptable pre-given categories that prevail in Jewish-Israeli culture - nationality, Hebrew language, Jewish religious practices and beliefs, Israeli social stratification and more. The reference to each of these categories inevitably required the subject to engage in an *effort* of appropriation (third research question). Therefore, the *process* of engagement, as much as *the contents* themselves (first research question), make up the sense of 'Israeliness' among the subjects in my study.

### **10.5. The Israeli diaspora and the exceptionality of the Israeli case**

In this last section, and following my research findings, I would like to discuss the notion of 'the Israeli diaspora' in light of the theoretical debates on the diasporic space and the research findings. In its radical cultural-political meaning (e.g. Brah, 1996, Hall, 2000, Werbner, 2002 or Magid, 2006) an Israeli diaspora could be envisioned as a critique of the hegemonic Zionist perception of nationality, territoriality, citizenship or belonging. Elsewhere, however (Moshkovitz, 2013), I ask whether within a climate of dominant Zionist discourse such a Jewish-Israeli diasporic identity is at all viable or whether there are some migrant groups that will never become a diaspora in its cross-national, cultural meanings.

The gradual changes in Israeli discourses on nationality, the growing acceptance of a transnational ethos and the global economic and cultural changes that enable Israelis to relocate abroad more easily, as well as the economic, social and military hardships in Israel, have made emigration more practical and partly more legitimate. New communities of *young* Israelis (e.g. in Berlin) who are more temporally distanced from the establishment of the state

and its ethos and have not yet established themselves as part of its social structure may provide alternative models of Israeliness abroad in what can be seen as an 'Israeli diaspora' and redefine concepts of nationality. However, the findings in *my* study do not present the emergence of such diasporic Israeli communal space in Britain. This is perhaps to do with the fact that my participant cohort comprises mostly middle-class family members who did not experience social or political exclusion in Israeli society. The experience of temporariness and reluctance to settle down, much like the geographical proximity to Israel and the frequent travels back and forth, also precluded the construction of an independent Israeli community that could formulate new concepts of Israeliness and its engagement with the local society – the Jews, Arabs/Muslims and non-Jewish Britons - or engage critically with Israeli society and its preconceptions.

The participants' professional and socio-economic profile and their experience of dislocation resembled that of other high-skilled migrant groups (e.g. Iredale, 2005, Manning and Roy, 2010 or Lienonen, 2012) and was, therefore, not exceptional to Israelis. Nevertheless, although ideology is not a sole factor in the construction of 'Israeli national identity', and despite the constant erosion in the power that classical Zionist ideology has in Israeli society and culture, the socio-economic and political power-relations still implicated in it complicate the construction of Israeliness abroad and contribute to an on-going condition of temporariness and de-institutionalization of the Israeli community in Britain. Thus, while the concerns of the privileged, high-skilled Jewish-Israeli working migrant and family may resemble those of other privileged migrants (the lack of integration into and social mobility within the local societies, Lienonen, 2012), the arguments and the narrative to address such discomfort or temporariness is exceptional and stems from the special political and military conditions, but also from the way collective history is perceived and is being told.

And yet, the findings show that there are potentially many ways to envision Israeliness, each contributing to a different 'diasporic' experience. Michael who made *Aliya* (immigrated) to Israel in his twenties, got married and had children, only to leave Israel on his own twelve years later insisted on his Israeliness much like Udit, who immigrated to Israel from Morocco with her family when she was a child, lived there for ten years before leaving for Britain forty years

ago. Conversely, Nira, who was born in Israel and grew up there and whose father died as a soldier, had bitter memories of growing up as an 'IDF orphan' and saw her Israeliness as only technical. Aaron, on the other hand, introduced an exceptionally cultural rather than ethnic definition of Israeliness.

Vertovec (1997) proposes to see diaspora also as specific *mode of consciousness*. Participants constructed momentary diasporic areas where they could think about their Israeliness abroad outside the confinement of an Israeli discourse of nationality, not merely as an adventure ('an experience for life' – David's aunt) but as genuine and valid way of life.

Aaron said:

But I think you have to have, kind of, a few things to be Israeli: I think it's a way of thinking, I think it's language, I think it's a cultural context, ahh ... and it can also be the place where you were born. And in my view, you don't have to do all of them in order to be Israeli. It's enough that {you do} part of them. [Ahh]

Similarly, Na'ama said regarding her daughters and in reference to the sense of foreignness: 'So o.k., they will not be totally Israeli, they will not turn out to be totally English either. They will be a sort of a hybrid, something in the middle.'

I found these two articulations innovative in that they specifically break away from the familiar patterns of group belonging and the sense of Jewish-ethnic fixedness and permanence. They offer a different perception on the relationship between Israelis abroad and Israel – describing the condition of dislocation not necessarily as deficient, as Zionist ideology and Israeli culture often portray it ('living in a ghetto'), but in a way that accepts the displacement even if not embracing it (as Said in Magid, 2006, proposes to do); it even considers a hybrid Israeli-British identity, usually unheard of in Israeli emigrants' discourse.

## **10.6. Conclusion**

### **10.6.1. Contributions of this study and practical implications for further research**

This research has added to current knowledge in numerous fields – immigration and diaspora studies, nationalism and Israeli nationalism, and national identity and looked at their intersections with each other as well as with other central categories: class, professional status, gender, religion and ethnicity. Its contribution can be seen in the following areas:

### **10.6.2. Immigration among high-skilled migrants**

Much of the research on migrants is dedicated to the hardships low-skilled migrants face to integrate into British society. By contrast, this research presented a complex picture of a middle-class, high-skilled group in Britain which is usually under-researched. Within the general discussion on immigration and immigration policies in Britain, providing there is an intention to facilitate the incorporation of newcomers into British society, this research provides information (e.g. women's employment, patterns of schooling, familial structures, identificatory needs) regarding the immigration experience of a group whose members have to a large extent managed to secure a degree of economic comfort in British society and presumably contribute to local economic productivity. The research shows these group members' particular concerns and dynamics within the family, within the communities they form and within broader British society.

### **10.6.3. The role of ideology and the national imagination in the experience of dislocation**

More specifically, I have outlined the centrality of ideology within the construction of the collective imagination. This cultural 'map' helps the interviewees to make sense of their condition of dislocation in Britain. Hence, given the way that Jewish-Israelis in this case, engage and negotiate their nationality and the way material conditions and historical events are interpreted and imagined, the current military, social and political conditions in Israel and the resolution or continuation of the conflict with the Palestinians

and the neighbouring countries profoundly shapes their experience of dislocation and their interpretation of local British society. This no doubt applies to refugees from other areas of conflict and should be considered when trying to assist them in settling in their host country.

#### **10.6.4. The conditions of dislocation – between ‘diaspora’ and ‘immigration’**

The research also examines critically various definitions of dislocation such as ‘diaspora’ and ‘immigration’ that circulate in the academic and popular spaces. Since how ‘diaspora’ is imagined in the host and home environments shapes the experience of dislocation, the notion of ‘diaspora’ should be expanded to include a variety of experiences of dislocation as manifested by a wide range of migrant groups with their varying cultural, professional, material or political circumstances.

#### **10.6.5. Discourses of nationality in Israeli society**

This research constitutes an analysis of the discourses of nationality in Israeli society. It concludes that in spite of the distancing from Israeli society, but most probably *because of it*, the hegemonic Zionist discourse and narrative can be found in many aspects of the speakers’ speech, attesting to its continuous hegemony in Jewish-Israelis’ daily lives and private and collective imagination, as has been argued in Israeli theoretical literature. Since I have concluded that this hegemonic discourse prevails among the participant sample partly due to their socio-economic class, further research among other Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis from other social, ethnic and religious classes might reveal a different approach to this national ethos in a way that could open up ‘Israeliness’ to alternative outlooks. This research provides a critical mirror of such ideology and its fixed and constraining interpretation of ‘the Israeli’, demonstrating the discursive and imaginative limitations it imposes on subjects’ understandings of their multi-cultural British environment, their interpretation of Jewishness and their implication in it, the notions of belonging as a minority in British society and their abilities to form ties that transcend the customary division between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ in the British context.

#### **10.6.6. The importance of qualitative research and specifically of critical narrative analysis**

The findings also reiterate the importance of qualitative research for learning about migrant experiences of dislocation which eventually determine their engagement with and integration into the local and home societies. The research demonstrated the intricate ways in which subjectivity is constructed and negotiated in the context of immigration and dislocation which cannot be captured in quantitative research. As Israeli culture transforms and legitimacy for emigration and for Israeli transnational networks grows, the experiences of dislocation or diaspora among Israelis in Britain as well as the structural features of the local Israeli community and its perception of and relationship with neighbouring communities are bound to change too. Those changes beg further research.

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## Appendix one: Israel's Declaration of

### Independence (Retrieved from

<http://www.brijnet.org/israel50/decl-eng.htm> )

ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew) - the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, *ma'pilim* [(Hebrew) - immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the [Balfour Declaration](#) of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the [Mandate of the League of Nations](#) which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.

In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY WE, MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ERETZ-ISRAEL AND OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, ARE HERE ASSEMBLED ON THE DAY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE OVER ERETZ-ISRAEL AND, BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

WE DECLARE that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called "Israel".

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its

inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th November, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

WE APPEAL to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the comity of nations.

WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.

PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE "ROCK OF ISRAEL", WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, ON THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL-AVIV, ON THIS SABBATH EVE, THE 5TH DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14TH MAY, 1948).

*David Ben-Gurion*

*Daniel Auster*

*Rachel Cohen*

*David Zvi Pinkas*

*Mordekhai Bentov*

*Rabbi Kalman Kahana*

*Aharon Zisling*

*Yitzchak Ben Zvi*

*Saadia Kobashi*

*Moshe Kolodny*

*Eliyahu Berligne*

*Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levin*

*Eliezer Kaplan*

*Fritz Bernstein*

*Rabbi Wolf Gold*

*Meir Grabovsky*

*Yitzchak Gruenbaum*

*Dr. Abraham Granovsky*

*Eliyahu Dobkin*

*Meir Wilner-Kovner*

*Zerach Wahrhaftig*

*Herzl Vardi*

*Meir David Loewenstein*

*Zvi Luria*

*Golda Myerson*

*Nachum Nir*

*Zvi Segal*

*Rabbi Yehuda Leib*

*Hacohen Fishman*

*Abraham Katznelson*

*Felix Rosenblueth*

*David Remez*

*Berl Repetur*

*Mordekhai Shattner*

*Ben Zion Sternberg*

*Bekhor Shitreet*

*Moshe Shapira*

*Moshe Shertok*

## Appendix two: Information and Birkbeck consent forms

Title of Study: Israeli subjects living away from Israel and defining national identity.



This study is being conducted as part of my PhD in the Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.

Department of Psychosocial Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London

This study wants to explore the ways Jewish-Israeli subjects currently living away from Israel relate, define and understand their national identity.

If you agree to participate, we will set up a convenient time and place for me to interview you. The interview will last about an hour. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time. In case I find that a second session will be important for the enrichment of the material generated in our first session, a follow up meeting will be offered to you. Note, however, that although a second meeting might prove to be important for research purposes, you have no obligation to take part in it. A code will be attached to your data so it remains totally anonymous and I am obliged by ethical and legal rules to maintain the confidentiality of our talk. The analysis of our interview will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. You will not be identifiable in the write-up or any publication which might ensue.

This study is supervised by Prof. Frosh and Dr. Baraitser who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number.

Title of study: Defining national identity away from Israel.



Name of researcher: Yuval Moshkovitz

Department of Psychosocial Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it.

I understand that the content of the interview will be kept confidential and that I might be contacted at a later time to be invited to a follow-up interview.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that I'm under no obligation to take part in a second meeting if such a meeting is offered to me. I am over 30.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Tel. Number:

\*E-mail address:

## Appendix 3 - Recruiting participants – the research advert

### Hebrew Version

על מה אנחנו בעצם מדברים כשאנחנו מדברים על

זהות לאומית ישראלית?

רבים מאיתנו המתגוררים מחוץ לישראל, לתקופה ארוכה או באופן קבוע עסוקים בשאלות של זהות.

למחקר אקדמי פסיכו-חברתי בנושא הזהות הלאומית דרושים מרואיינים ישראלים, מעל גיל 30 המתגוררים בבריטניה באופן קבוע או זמני. הראיון יתקיים בעברית ויארך כשעה.

אם גם אתם מוצאים עצמכם עסוקים בסוגיה זו ויש לכם מה לאמר בנושא, אנא צרו קשר עם יובל מושקוביץ

[yuval.mosh@gmail.com](mailto:yuval.mosh@gmail.com) או 075-88302810

### English translation

What do we actually talk about when we talk about

Israeli National Identity?

Many of us who live outside Israel for a long period of time or permanently are preoccupied with questions of identity.

Israeli interviewees, above the age of 30, who live in Britain permanently or temporarily for over two years, are invited to take part in an academic psycho-social research dealing with the topic of national identity. The interview will be held in Hebrew and will last for approximately one hour.

If you too find yourselves preoccupied with this topic and you have something to say about it, please contact Yuval Moshkovitz

075-88302810 or [yuval.mosh@gmail.com](mailto:yuval.mosh@gmail.com)

## Appendix four: The interview schedule

A general introduction: Hello, we are meeting today to talk about Israeli national identity. It is part of my doctorate studies at Birkbeck University.

A personal background: To start with I will ask you to tell me a bit about yourself.

The general question: what does it mean for you to be an Israeli?

Identity in context: what does it mean for you to be an Israeli in London?

Elaboration throughout the interview: [when an interviewee refers to something as 'Israeli'/'very Israeli'] 'what makes it Israeli? In what way is it 'Israeli'?

Motivation to be interviewed: what do you think made you want to be interviewed?

After thoughts/'foot notes': Is there anything you wanted to add before we end?

## **Appendix 5 – An example of an interview transcript – Noga – interview number three**

[Ah, Good morning, I'd like to open up with a rather general question; could you please give me a little background of yourself, your life?]

Background?

[Some personal description of your ....

O.k. what kind of description shall I give? I'm 36 years old; I was born in Israel ah... I grew up in X, did the scouts, I started the whole process of going 'outwards' when I was 17 when I went with a scout's convoy to the States. Ah, the army service, the usual, I was an officer, I spent 3 years in the army, I started my studies, did a BA, which was a period... I studied economics and sociology I worked for a year as an economist and then realized this isn't....the right direction for me. I went back to instruction and then I actually started to work in A {A big high Tec company}. It's already 10 years I work at A... and eh... whenever I thought of leaving and upgrading they offered me something new. Actually, I'm doing the last 6 years as relocations, last three years in Vancouver, and three years, no, not three years, two years; it will be three years at the end of the year. During this period I got married to my husband after moving to North America. I had my daughters born each one in a different continent ahm, that's it basically.... ah... I completed a Masters in Tel-Aviv in the course of my work. Shall I talk about my life abroad? Or is it?

[You may]

These years were very interesting. The idea was to see a little bit of the world, to live outside for a bit, away from home, I'm coming from a small family so the whole family thing is very.... intense, and it looked very interesting and we.... I can speak for myself, both me and my husband really like big cities, Tel Aviv included, 3 years before we moved out {we were living in Tel Aviv} and then we moved to Vancouver and a large part, apart from the job, was about travelling. We travel here a lot, we travelled in North America, throughout our period there, even after the birth, and when we moved here it was a feeling of let's try, let's try something new, in a new place. Ah.... at any stage ah... we don't have any intention of staying. I mean, flatly, our goal is to return to Ha'aretz. We are not.... although we went for 2 years and we are almost ending our fifth year... five and a half, but we are, again, we haven't settled down. We didn't issue passports anywhere, we never stayed in a place longer because 'in a year or two we'll

get the passport', and it's really not something that is of interest to us, we left before we felt that we cannot stand it anymore there. We left Vancouver in a very good feeling. In Vancouver we were also bachelors, for two years, not bachelors, we didn't have children, for two years and it was a very-very different experience, culturally too, because we didn't live in a Jewish area so our integration was much stronger comparing to what it looks like here. Also, getting acquainted with what goes on in the larger society, around us, being updated with the news etc. it was something we took a bigger part in. Our friends there were ... Canada is full of Chinese; we had good Indian friends, I mean, definitely not Israelis whereas moving here was more ahh... I don't want to use harsh words, but the Israeli Commune here is very strong. So the reason for our current location is one, the proximity to work, I mean half an hour door to door {using the English expression} to work. Very crucial for me, because of the young ones, but we also grasped it very quickly when we walked around: I see this guy talking over the phone in Hebrew in the supermarket. We felt that our privacy is severed because we used to speak Hebrew everywhere and no one understood us. Here it doesn't exist. So here it's more a feeling, of living in Israeli communes. It has many advantages especially since the girls are still young, ah. And that's it, for the time being. Here too, we continue... our aim is still to travel and get to know and walk about and that's what we do. This is how we spend most of our free time. And because... what happened is that we got to know many people of different ages, different statuses and what happened is that one of the reasons I said I wanted I'm willing... to talk about this topic is because ever since we left Ha'aretz, you constantly think about it consciously or unconsciously, It's something that happens all the time including the repetitive question: 'when do you come back?'. Now with the families it's a different circle, but I don't think I finish any telephone conversation with anyone, with friends without this question being asked. It doesn't happen. Because we were supposed to return this year, but because I was on maternity leave, so I extended it {our stay in London} for a bit because I took a relatively long maternity leave so they are under the impression: 'you are not returning. You are staying there' whereas our feelings are very different. Ah, so, part of the thing is that I met Israelis and you talk a lot about it, people feel a need, in Vancouver or here, there is an apology etc. and why? We messed about with it quite a lot, especially in Vancouver. In Vancouver we more or less formalized our position, I did at least, we said what we want and then there was less this daily preoccupation with it, but it is something people talk about a lot. [ahha] ah, yes, in parentheses, I'm sitting here with a few other moms and we meet once a week, we talk about child development with a developmental psychologist who coordinates, and we just talked about the issue of identity, that was the topic, how do we want to bestow it to our kids.

[An Israeli group?]

Of course {she laughs} an Israeli group. You must also be reminded that we don't have the supportive network of the family, so the friends are turning into the family support network. If a child is sick and you need help to get them from nursery or you need to someone to pick your child up from nursery, so it's the friends, there isn't another circle. It also has an additional meaning, I think, in terms of what is the meaning of friends and what type of friends do you make, who you connect with. So we were just talking about this topic and then I came home and I saw the mail that G passed on from you, and it was funny. Because as you've said {in the ad} we deal with it quite a lot. My elder daughter is two years and 9 months and she talks both languages, but from day to day, ah... or here, at home we speak only Hebrew. Ah...we... since we intend to go back we don't spend too much time learning English. It happens on its own in the nursery. We also know that it won't stay and it doesn't bother us. Some split the languages among them and speak both

[Because the nursery is...]

The nursery is an English nursery. I tried an Israeli nursery. It didn't work. It's an English nursery where half of the kids are Israelis but.... She speaks a lot in English, she knows...she says everything in both languages and she also knows to approach people in their own language. But there are some things that she can't do in Hebrew. If she speaks to her dolls, she will imitate what she says in the nursery, she will not do it in... in Hebrew. She will speak the language that she hears. So there is a feeling that crops... all of a sudden you hear that she has an accent, things that you say, o.k. how do you deal with them? She can also better understand now and Hanukah approaches and in her nursery they told us specifically, we don't really know, and they even asked who is willing to come and talk about it. So we are going to take some part in it. Not intentionally. So the fact that she didn't dress up in Purim for three years, that's not the end of the world there are still some years ahead of her but there are things that are missing.

[What do you feel missing?]

So I'm saying, Hanukah, I'm going to look for a book on Hanukah because they won't talk about it in nursery and if last year we lit up the candles and she really liked the candles and I want her to... to understand a little bit more and that. She does come back from nursery and says jingle bell, jingle bell and they celebrated Diwali and it's very nice, nice, I think that versatility is a very-very nice thing, she has friends of all colors and all languages, She calls her doll Shwaye, {'slowly' in Arabic} which is kind

of funny {we laugh} that of all the languages, she has an Arab minder, and she got attached to this so from that respect it's very nice to see it, there isn't any, no kind of judgment in any way but ah... we come from a secular house, we don't keep the Shabbat, ah... so we don't have that ceremony... we celebrate all the holidays ourselves, usually with friends etc. but there isn't this feeling of ah... that atmosphere that is created on its own, and the responsibility... if we want her to understand the... it's on our shoulders, so that's something that I feel that at least in the past year there is some change, it's something that I'm more, I'm taking a bigger part in it.

[Why over the past year?]

No, because she is older. Before she didn't really understand. She started speaking a little bit later but I'm more, she also keeps on asking 'Why' all the time. I already anticipate her asking where is our Xmas tree. It's legitimate, it's o.k. but she only now started talking. Ah...

[So maybe now I will ask you the question... ahh. I'll ask you the big question ah, what does it mean for you to be an Israeli?]

First of all, I think of the cultural 'baggage' we come with... being an Israeli could be... starting from words to sentences to different situations you see and you can see people's reaction. I'll give you an example, I attended recently a 2-3 days' business conference in Rome, where they brought all the sales men and they brought security guards from Ha'aretz. Now, you immediately spot them and others around me, sort of didn't know, who are they what are they, and not only this, there was a nice girl, she stepped aside to speak over the phone and the guy rebuked her 'cause she didn't know what he wanted from her. It's also an effect ... a sort of an Israeli effect, I can't really tell you that I go into, I, we travel here a lot, we get into festivals, they don't check our bags, and not that, sometimes it can be nice and sometimes a little scary. Because you know, in the tube here, you have a feeling of safety that is perhaps unreal in Ha'aretz but it doesn't exist here. The way we look at things, I remember that in Vancouver we used to sit in front of the television for entire evenings, watch the news and be thrilled about how they talk of a squirrel which got stuck on a tree. And this is what they talked about throughout the news programme, and we just sat and enjoyed ourselves. There was something relaxing about it. I still don't know, not in Vancouver, and not here, what time do they broadcast the news. Let's say in Ha'aretz, if I drive...here I don't know what time it's on, whereas in Ha'aretz it constantly gets into you, it's there all the time. ... ahm, I think that Israeli is mainly, ahh my childhood, it can be about my daughter, for instance about X or Y (classic TV children programmes) as far as I'm concerned because now that she has finished using with

her nappies and I wanted to tell her 'hey you are a big girl now' so I could show it to her because this is my childhood, and it's my culture and I could connect with her. And a family, it's very-very close because the main reason for us to go back is the family and the friends, all the marriages, all the *Briths*, births, we've missed a lot out and it's missing.

[What's missing?] It's missing, in what sense? [Yes] First of all family-wise, ahh, in Ha'aretz there's too much of it but here the nothing is a too nothing. Ah, yes, I would like to celebrate the holidays with the family, and I would like to be able to pop once a week to say hello and not to be able to speak only through Skype ahh. And if the two girls are sick on Saturday morning I would be glad if there was a grandmother that can help out, but the kind of help that happens on its own... if we are sick, have someone prepare a soup, all kinds of thing... small things. [ahha]. We have very strong ties with the families. Even before I left I used to talk to my parents at least once a day. It didn't change. Actually with R's {her husband} parents we used to speak less. In this sense the ties now are much closer. And the visits etc. I mean we are not here and not there when things are happening. My father was a little bit sick and my mother was sick and you are far away [ahha] so there's a feeling... a little bit not good in that sense. As far as the friends are concerned... the real friends, the friends you've picked up over the years, I mean childhood friends etc. and friends that I know that... they'll always be there for me. Ah here we find ourselves a little bit, sort of not having the same experience. We pick the friends we want to be with, we know many people who connect to others merely out of lack of choice, people who connect to others in re-locations in other places which happens a lot. And it wasn't really on our mind, having new things, we were kind of snobbish, we weren't kind of interested in new friends, Israelis, I mean we have our friends, we kept in touch with them, that's good I mean, I don't need new friends. [Friends from Ha'aretz?] from Ha'aretz, yes because since we moved here it's a bit different, once again, because of the girls, and there are some connections formed through the nursery etc. So some connections were made and it has something very nice about it. We still, in my opinion, comparing to others, we are less, ahh, less... since we travel a great deal, it's not like every weekend I find myself making plans {to meet} which many people do: There's winter outside {so we can't go out so let's meet indoors with others} It doesn't bother me so much, we put on warm clothes and go out. We have quite a big social circle but it's a circle we enjoy, I mean, clearly, these are people I'll keep on being in touch with because I... I feel that I'm...

[You say two things: first of all that perhaps there is a difference between being an Israeli in Canada, Vancouver, and being an Israeli in London and... there's also the issue of whether you are an Israeli abroad with or without children]

Regarding the second question you are absolutely right, the first question, I think in Vancouver we were with no kids and here with kids and without kids... we came to experience the city and live, and really know a certain area as I've said before, if we would have come here younger, I wouldn't have lived here because this area, not that it's not charming but I would have wanted to live more centrally, more in the downtown and experience it differently. Ah so that's in terms of the change. As far as having or not having children, there is I think a difference, sure, although, as I've said before, we have friends who even when they didn't have children' looked out for this Israeliness. Not us. We, but it also depends on our couple relationship. We feel very good with each other. Frequently, a re-location can either bring together or separate. It brings us together and unifies us, ahh. We very much like to be in each other's company and to spend time together so from the start we didn't really look too much for it' ah' but [ahha] our experience is very different because you think of different points of consideration which are slightly different. Yes, when we moved here I first went to an Israeli nursery because I thought that perhaps it might be easier and more adequate. Ah... it didn't work. Because it didn't really match my life style. Many of the Israeli women here... 97 of the Israeli women here don't work. They either don't work at all or they work a part time job. I work. I'm the main provider. No doubt I do a full time job; even more. The Israeli nurseries are based on the concept of the mother not working so it means that the day ends at two or three. They take all the vacations that they have here and all the vacations there are in Ha'aretz, including the Day of independence. In short, most of the time you find yourself looking for solutions of what to do with the child. Another thing that happens is that they do activities with the parents, with the mothers, let's call it this way, with the mothers, and they tell you in advance: 'look, on this and this Friday there's an activity'. Great but if you forget and you don't get organized in advance so there's a problem. And it happened. ahh. It happened because there was no awareness... bottom line, it wasn't important enough for them. But ahh, there was a situation when I left her at home because... I needed a child-minder to take her from the nursery and bring her home and it's a sort of a solution, so O.K. sometimes I used to leave her at home with the child-minder because they didn't tell me, because I'm the only mother that doesn't come to collect, because the nursery teacher didn't bother to inform her {the child-minder who came to pick her child from nursery}. I think that this entire concept is very-very different, whereas in the English nurseries it's another extreme. The nurseries are open until 6

pm. So as of 6 pm they go straight to bed, sort of ...they don't have any ... I used to have a friend, she's still a friend from Z's former nursery, an English nursery too and she tells me: 'half past six she goes to bed' so... this in itself is delirious... and there I have the flexibility, because I always had... you also don't have that thing of 'come on parents, volunteer!', the English, you won't have this, the unexpected and surprises. You'll always know what's going on and when it happens and it's more convenient to get organized this way. I think that also in this respect I'm different, from all my friends because if you look at my friends, most of them don't work. And it's different too. Ahham.

[How is it manifested in the English nursery?] It is manifested in... Look the English... the English nursery they are: 'what can you do? The child is in nursery until 6pm because we have to work' and this is how it works. So ok, the kids grow up into this and here {with the Israeli nurseries} it's 'ah, you work? Ah, you have the child minder pick up {your child}? it's a pity because kids need their mother to come and pick them up from nursery' or all these feelings, you know, all the guilt feelings that they instill to you, which, again if we talk about friends in Ha'aretz, it happens less because in Ha'aretz, it's like everyone is in the same 'pot' even a more difficult 'pot' because in Ha'aretz nursery ends at 4 and here at least you have extra 2 hours which makes it a little bit more spacious. Ahh. So there is a lot of engagement around, there's really a lot, I nursery ends at 3, they always meet with the children, I mean all the activity around this which I didn't take a part in, also out of choice. Even if I finish early, I want to spend time with her {with her daughter}... here, at home, quietly, I don't need... ah, I don't feel I have to 'wow, what am I going to do with her. It's 3 pm now, she goes to sleep at 8pm, I have many hours to 'kill', I'll meet someone else'. It doesn't happen to me. But yes, it does happen a lot, {to others around her} ah, It took me a little more time until I got into, into the staff that goes on {finding myself among the non-working mothers} but it can still happen 'let's meet for coffee, - no it's not relevant as far as I'm concerned'. In this respect it's different.

[When you say that it's not relevant what do you mean?] That either I'm working, or, last week I met a... I dropped Z. in the nursery so I met a friend, so she tells me, 'ah, you're here, so come for a coffee' I told her I'm working, it's just that I'm working from home so she tells me 'you don't really work from home' I told her 'yes, you do, it's not really different from a normal day of work' [ahha] ... I remember, though, at some other point, that we started discussing this topic, when you meet the people and you talk to them, and also with our friends here, I don't think that there is a single encounter where this topic of identity doesn't come up. Including when they think that we'll return next year, 'it can't be, you'll stay' people are really disturbed by someone

wanting to go back, it disorients them in a way [ahh] it comes up in many conversations, non-intentionally around this topic. In Vancouver there were many families who came for a year and they explain to you how, a year by year, and the kid is now 13 and he doesn't want to go back home now. Now I don't criticize anyone but if you've reached a decision, stand by it. Many people we talk with are not whole hearted about it so 'we'll wait another year or the passport, and then another year goes by and then they try, sometimes through you... ah...to slightly destabilize you in that sense that... I'm regularly being asked to explain why we want to go back to Ha'aretz because 'it's terrible in Ha'aretz, really terrible, you work terribly hard, life is terribly hard' because here it's really 'a piece of cake'. There are advantages and disadvantages here and advantages and disadvantages there. It's all true, I'm not one of these people saying 'they went back {to Israel} and now they want to return {to England}'. And those that say all the time how difficult and difficult and difficult

[How do you explain it?]

Because people are...I, I, I, I think here there is... at least the life in England, at least where I live, the Israeli community, we are in a sort of a dissonance, you chose to live in another place of your own choice, fine but the ah. The sort of Israeli ghetto that we have here? It's not only that you... you don't really live in England, you live in ... Israel within London, and reading newspapers, it's Ynet {Israeli news web site}, it's only Israeli TV, ah... I don't know how many of them know what's going on in England, I don't either but, once again, out of choice because I don't choose to live here, there's no integration, I mean, everyone can tell me, I don't have a clue but I always call someone {and they tell me} where is the Israeli hairdresser, the Israeli car mechanic the... ahh everything is Israeli. So for me it's a sort of a lie. If you chose to live here, live, right, be a part of... who ever lives here at the moment. But everyone choose to live in the same place, be in the same place, kind of really want to belong etc. but it's sort of obstructing. How many English friends do we have here? The few I've made in the nursery? And because the English are so 'heavy', we didn't yet get to the situation where they came home for a visit. I can't fix a date two weeks in advance, its' a bit difficult for me this contrast I don't know if you know but you can't meet someone in the nursery and invite them over to your house. You have to preplan not two days but two weeks in advance so it's very different from the Israeli thing. Think that merely from being here you... you put efforts into feeling... feeling Israeli, ah or Jewish in some of the situations, but mainly to feel Israeli because it's not...you have to be one, just one out of...

[What do you mean? One of what?]

There are many, many all sort of, in Vancouver too and here there are many immigrants. You have people of all sorts and each one lives in a fixed area, but it's not different in Vancouver, in Canada. There are no Canadians, there's no such thing as a Canadian, it can be that he's an Indian but there isn't, there isn't an individual who's Canadian, it doesn't exist. It's an immigrants' state. Here too they speak about it, that Europe and London, they do not belong to the English anymore, when you walk in London how many English do you see. I work in a company with English, how many English do I see? Not too many. So everyone comes from somewhere and the first question they ask you everywhere... is where are you from, they will always ask me where I'm from.

[Who will ask you?]

Even people that know you, here for example I just got back from the gym and they talked about it that in Xmas they are closing so they asked 'you are going home?' yes. 'Where is home?', 'where is home?', 'where is home?' One from Denmark, one from Italy and I said Israel, so they said, what? You are from Israel? Not from France? No I'm from Israel. But the fact was that it was a question that was asked and I think that even here, in this country this topic of immigration... the child-minder where is she from. Romania, you immediately ask where from [ahha] it's a very important thing. People are looking to belong, I think that's the thing, I think that... here, it's also because of the kids because they constitute some sort of a mirror and you ask yourself where do you want them to be? In what culture do you want them to grow? My parents made Aliya {immigrated to Israel} from Romania. They will always be immigrants [when did they make Aliya?] in the 70's. my mother was a teacher so her integration was a little bit better, the language in school, but my father... until now he watches Romanian television, so for him Romania is the centre of the world it's amusing ahh but for me there is something missing, the fact that my parents' culture and my culture weren't the same. I had many clashes with my father about the scouts or else... things that I went through with them that as far as he was concerned were meaningless because he didn't go through it and it's... now I am certain that if my kids will grow up in Ha'aretz they will not have the same experience that I went through because the world has changed, everything has changed but the basic things of the culture are there.... Ah if Z {her daughter} comes and say to me *Sababa* or *Ahla* {slang words in Hebrew meaning that everything is fine, ok, the second word is in Arabic} [you are Mabsuta.... {the Arabic word for happy, content}] yes, she is *Mabsuta* and I am *Mabsuta* because it's part of something that I want to keep and there's no doubt that if I will stay here, there are some advantages to staying here, I don't say there aren't, but she will gradually... I mean people who stay here send their kids to

Sunday school because the Hebrew gets a little worn out and you need an extra factor to help you maintain this identity. And I don't want to get there, I mean right now I don't [you don't want to get there...?] to the stage where I have to send her to Sunday school. I think that one of the things I talked about with some friends regarding the identity, one of the conclusions is that if you want to maintain the identity you have to take a very active process, very, constructing the identity whereas in Ha'aretz it doesn't happen.

[So what kind of active processes, do you, sort of, take?]

So, once more,

You have to keep in mind that Z. is not 3 yet. Ah, At home it's only Hebrew. All her books...no...She also has some books in English. But since she doesn't see {understand} the letters so it doesn't really matter. All the songs she hears are in Hebrew ah... so her cultural experience at home is clearly, clearly Hebraic – Israeli. Not something else. Yes we work very strongly, it's about birthdays {using the English word} so we explain what's this birthday thing is all about, so it won't be only in English. I think we try to balance it and for instance I have to do something on Hanukah. I don't have a clue how to explain to her about the Greeks and the Makabim or whatever so that we'll create some sort of atmosphere around her, ahha, Here everybody goes to Ha'aretz for Xmas because there's a vacation of a month, so we plan to meet there and I'm curious to see how she will react. It's a bit weird; she knows all the children and all the family very-very closely. She loves looking at the photos and she points to different people {of the family} We speak a lot on Skype, everyone has been here, we were there not long time ago, so she really understands and she knows that Yonathan and Shira (Hebrew names) are here {in England} and seeing them in Ha'aretz, I'm interested to see how she will respond to it. Perhaps it's only me, but it could still be slightly different. That's it, other staff? I can't tell you that we made the decision to light candles every Friday, although it did cross my mind {we laugh} but ah, we are not there yet, but once more, I think that the way we conduct ourselves... we taught her to count in Hebrew without knowing that in the nursery they taught them to count in English. She just told us the numbers in English, one, two, three, so every day we count. She chooses what language we start with and we count using the other language. She learnt ABC, it's a little tricky in Hebrew because there isn't a clipy song about the letters but, bottom line, we don't put an effort on the English it happens on its own in the nursery but I can tell you that we've learnt all the English nursery songs. Every day she comes with a song and we'll look for it on UTube, ahh... that's it....

[so tell me, what is it for you, ahh' in some ways you've already talked about it, you said... somehow, but I'll ask it more directly, what is it for you to be an Israeli in London. Yes.]

Ahh, I'm working in a company which is English but related to another Israeli company. It also relates to the conference I've already told you about. A guy, we were talking of companies in Europe, and there was a sentence he'd say, 'Israel is not the centre of the world', Israelis have the feeling [is he Israeli?] German, [A {her company} is an American company, no?] yes but still fifty percent is Israeli, all the most senior directorate is, all the middle rank directorate, and if you travel to Europe, there are about 15 countries {where the company has branches in} and very few of the local directorate are locals, the directors are Israeli, the more lower ranked workers are locals and there are some in the middle rank positions but still most of the directors are Israeli. And then you have the feeling of 'what do you mean by saying that Israel is not the centre of the World?' to start with it is! But it's also funny because every Israeli he told it to, gave him the same answer ['for sure, we are the centre of the world'] yes, and then later when he said it in the larger forum, when the main speaker said it {an Israeli} he already got pissed off. And it was funny because you still have that feeling that although you come from this little Israel into the big world, still, you are the centre of the world. We were in Vancouver, it was during the second Lebanon war, and here we had the flotilla. And it means that so many things happen which you have to ... I don't have an explanation, not only do I not have a good explanation, I also don't justify what goes on but also seeing how it's being broadcasted, like in Vancouver we saw, here too, but you are always have to defend and the world is always split, and you see it everywhere into those who love you and those who don't love you. And here there are many Jews, everywhere, so you go about 'ah, really, my mom lives in Herzliya, and I still remember that we walked in Montreal, a sort of France in Canada and... Someone came up to us and asked us if we are from Paris and we said 'no, we are from Israel' you could really see the disappointment on his face and he said: 'ahh, because the way you dress, it looks like you are from Paris [ahha,] ahhh... {The child-minder comes in with her other child so there's an intermission in the interview}

Remind me what was the last sentence I said? [you were talking about the man from Montreal's face] yes, you could see that he was really disappointed [but how do you understand this disappointment?] because we are Israelis and it was in the midst of the war... there wasn't anything special [did he say something special?] no. you could see it on his face 'it's just that by the look of your clothes I thought you were from Paris and he just turned and walked away when initially he turned to us for a conversation. Ahh so I repeat, If I would have worked in an English company it could

have been less comfortable. You have to remember that we are in an Israeli company so everyone is very cautious. And there are many Israelis around so it's not that someone will approach me and say 'what's that thing?' {The war, the flotilla etc.}. Especially in London, even if they do think so, they wouldn't say anything. You also know the people on a slightly more personal level, they know you as a human being, and you don't represent something much bigger. I think that this is the thing: you go abroad and you become an ambassador voluntarily or involuntarily. Many times I don't have, not the will and I don't support many of the things that happen. But it's totally irrelevant and I find myself having to talk and explain because... [Can you give me an example?] ah' during the war... {The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lebanon war} it was very difficult, very-very difficult to be so far away. There's a war and now I remember that our feeling was that... I used to work very-very hard. I don't have even five spare minutes for a break, ahh I didn't have five minutes. Frequently you tell yourself, o.k. I have five minutes what do I do with it, R. {her husband} for example logs onto Ynet {an Israeli news' website} and gets the updates, and it was a very intense period, and I log onto Ynet to see what happened and I'd know that something happened. A guy worked next to me {an Israeli worker in Vancouver} ... they already went back to Ha'aretz a year ago, and he was... every time he walked into the room I'd be afraid he's going to say something bad happened. And then the war broke and it was very scary because all the friends were recruited to the army ahh. R. because he was already 3 years away from Ha'aretz he was discharged {from his regiment} [but he's abroad? Yes but there were others who went back, there were also those who went back [what do you mean? Some people who went back to the army on their own initiative?] Yes. Now there is... once more, you are not in Ha'aretz so everything looks different, so it was just terrible [so was there a sort of a dilemma, a thought that he might go back to join the army?] it didn't come up because his regiment, he's not there regularly and he was in the air force so if you don't get regularly updated in new aircraft and new material, so It's not relevant so when we decided {to stay} it was clearly irrelevant {for him to go back to the army} it didn't come up but you call and this friend's husband, and her boyfriend, and everyone is in the army [ahh] and it's so stressful. Very-very stressful. [And do you get... they give you a feeling that you are out of it?] Yes! [That you don't belong] Yes! Yes! Yes! As if you ran away, and I always find it funny this thing with the 'why didn't you stay there?' because, bottom line, it's already five years {since we've left}. We could have had a Canadian passport, 'why didn't you stay for the passport, just in case', a sort of feeling 'that you might have a place to ran away to' [who asks?] many people in Ha'aretz and many of the friends here. Many people here, now for example there is 'a wave' of passport receivers, ahh, 'so that you'll have somewhere to ran away to', 'that you'll have another passport, another possibility' all the time, all the

time. [actually it looks to me as if you always have very confusing messages, on the one hand 'you probably won't come back' or that they don't think you'll come back and on the other hand, stay, have a passport] yes, ask anyone, at least my friends, everyone would like to stay in Ha'aretz, to try out what we are doing [everyone will want to...] sorry, everyone would like to go away and it's a kind of a dissonance, and if you ask me what is it to be an Israeli this is also a part of being an Israeli.

Wanting to live in Ha'aretz but being abroad too. That is you have to live in Israel and want to be abroad and never admit it, I mean even the friends that went back {to Israel}, we have 3 couples, good friends of ours who say that to go back is Sababa {a slang word for 'fine'} their answer is 'the kids flourish, the kids flourish' for you {the adults} it'll be o.k.' [I laugh]. That's how they look at it, they will never admit that this is THE place, everyone looks back, outwards {abroad} [they will not admit that ISRAEL is the place?] yes, they will still be, many people go back because one among the couple, usually the woman, the husband would like to stay, there is a feeling that .....you know we frequently laugh about it now: here we travel a lot we don't have a problem where to choose to go. Our joke is: we'll go back home, where can we travel to? How many times can you go to the Sataf? {A spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem}. but it's true, in many ways Ha'aretz is very small ah... and our life here and our friends' lives in Ha'aretz, are very different. I sometimes see my friends {in Israel}, they meet with the kids and they travel sometimes to the sea side, sometimes having a camping trip and we go to X or Y, to Paris. Very different. A totally different experience. Now when I think about it I ask myself, it's fun {having these trips in Israel}, where *did* we leave our tent, I mean, and my friends think that we live in a movie and every time we send pictures {they say} 'you live in a movie' [what are the reactions?] 'Your life is {sweet} like homey', 'your life is tranquil and fun' everything... everything is glamorous. They think that everything is glamorous abroad. My daily life is not less difficult than the daily in Ha'aretz. Ah I have a sister in law that says that... she doesn't ... she can't have it without the family around her, not being helped. I have help here; I just have to pay for it. In Israel the feeling is that 'you have a grandma so she'll babysit the kids and she'll come and watch them and if it doesn't work out you get terribly disappointed. I don't have it here; I pay for it and step out of this dilemma, but ahh. But 'the daily hardship doesn't exist here {in England}' this is the message we get. So friends we talk to, that talk to you, they want you to be in that pot, a bit like: 'how long are you going to stay there in your great-fun-life and send us your pictures, and make us a little bit jealous?', 'what's happening?' {'Wake up'}. It's funny because every year, when we considered moving here, there was always a need to explain. I don't have to excuse myself for decisions {I make}! Even if we would decide to stay it's my decision. I mean, you always have to go around and explain

{give an account} [to whom do you have to explain?] usually it's the friends, not the family [what do they say?] the parents: what is it about going away but they are also those who encourage us 'stay, stay' {abroad}. [Your parents or R's?] Both, I mean I think that they are far away and they don't see much of the girls but in terms of... seeing the world. Both I and R have grown a lot in terms of... I mean that is the reason we moved here. We moved here because I was offered a job that will enable me to return to Ha'aretz in a better condition {professionally and economically} or R. right now, is working so they see things in a slightly different way ahh although friends, aside from a very-very good friend of mine, who also got back from a relocation in Orlando and tells me, you'll really enjoy getting back. It's so fun here, I don't know, I think that everyone would have liked, because of the hardship... in Ha'aretz [what hardship?] look, everyone says that you work really-really hard. Now, I always believed that it's a little bit up to you because if you are willing to work every day until 8 pm so they will keep you at work until 8 pm. No problem. I am also working in a company where they work very-very hard and there will always be an event {to attend to}. When R. was working in A. he used to see around him workers calling their wives {telling them} 'we have to stay back, there's something very urgent in work' and then play solitaire. [We laugh] so, you can't admit that you it's more difficult at home, that's one thing but saying that you must stay at work every evening? Ok. So there are certain periods {that you have to stay later at work} but... look, both in Vancouver and here, you can still have one person working and live well out of his/her salary. In Ha'aretz it doesn't exist. You must have both people working all the time... which does have implications. The weekends here, are much longer because we don't have a family here so you don't have this meal here and that meal there, and also because on Fridays, at 4 -5 pm. That's it. It's silent, whereas in Ha'aretz, just imagine Thursday evening. You get back home with 'your tongue out' {exhausted}... the days off here, it's a sort of an illusion that here in Ha'aretz or here there are more days off [??] we've counted, for sure, we've counted how many, basically, when the {Jewish} holidays are not greatly scheduled, you have the same number of days off and when the holidays are spread superbly [in the middle of the week...] in the middle of the week, so we are very well off {in Israel}. Here it's that you just have more respect to the distinction between work and family, whereas in Israel people {from work} don't have any problem calling me to request something whereas if I have to call Ha'aretz on a Friday, {I won't call} 'even if the world collapses', I mean I don't want to intrude on people's weekend, because I got used to this concept here. In Ha'aretz it doesn't exist. Ahh, you also have, I think that the weather too, that heat. When I arrived from Vancouver and they {a car} almost ran me over on a pedestrian crossing because I assumed that I'm on a pedestrian crossing so the vehicle will stop. In Ha'aretz it's not

like that, it's a road war, so it immediately becomes... whereas I remember the first time in Vancouver and there were four 'stop' signs and no body moved {their cars} because they waited for me because it was my turn {as a pedestrian}. It's different much more quiet [ahha]. Here on the other hand, for me, English people are Israelis in suits, I don't see any difference [hhm] yes [yes? You don't see a difference between Israelis and English?] Yes, they are not polite, not nice, they don't say anything. In my first day here, once again, I find it funny, because I got used to it in Vancouver, that they'll hold the door for me, Here I got the door slammed in my face, I bumped into the door because the manager who went past me simply closed the door, he finished passing and closed it. So it's about politeness too. When I was pregnant, I used to, regularly, people used to sit on seats designated for pregnant women. I always had to make someone stand and the looks they'd give me, they never see you, you're transparent. In Ha'aretz, I think people are a bit more aware, but... they are not that nice {the English} the bureaucracy here is impossible. We came from Canada, it's like the USA, it's a service mentality, and you are the customer so you are the king. Here when they tell you that it will take 6 weeks to connect you to the internet, what is it? A third world country? They close your bank account because there is no verification, {so} let me know, 'no we can't let you know because we closed your account, we can't send you mail'. 'So call me over the phone', no you can't. So how am I supposed to know about it?' 'Now you know'. It's the kind of answers you get, very similar to Ha'aretz in this respect, ahh we were sure that going on a re-location is 'easy-peasy' and it was very difficult for us at the beginning. The first 6 months were very difficult. As soon as we realized that we are really in a larger country and there are a lot of places to hang around, and the public transportation is advanced and many things that happen, in Ha'aretz... ahhh, **don't** happen in Ha'aretz, do happen here. But basically, I don't feel a difference in the level of privacy, by the way once again, we are an international company and the main staff is based in Ha'aretz and works with different people and there's one English woman, that if we forget for a minute her English {the language} let her speak in Hebrew... they {the staff in Israel} they are shocked by her because they are used to speaking English and being super polite and she, just like an Israeli, and all her energy and nerves and all that staff. So I see some similarities, at least in these matters... So what was the question? [We started off with being an Israeli in London and I think that you are talking about the specificity of London regarding Israelis and how you are defining it] but there is something in it, R. started now going with suits and ties and he really enjoys it. It has something dignified, it's more than merely a decoration, and everything looks slightly more beautiful even though deep inside it's all the same... and an Israeli in London... it's about hiding a bit because in Vancouver for example I would go to an area of Arabs

and there were Shawarmas {meat wrap} everywhere and here I don't dare. I'm afraid [why?] it's scary, there are many-many-many Arabs, they don't... how shall I say it... they are not friendly... once more, I don't like to say Arabs, it's a little inclusive and a little bit... it doesn't bother me that Z. connects with an Arab friend in nursery and I have another friend whose best friend is Iranian, go figure it out, you have to face these challenges at the very early stages of life and of course it's excellent and I don't have any problem with it, but I'll tell you that if I'll go to a mall and everyone will wear a cover it doesn't give me... it makes you a twitch in your tummy. They could be charming women... I remember traveling in Turkey, close to the borders of Iran and we took a transit with women with covers. 10 minutes go by, Tack, they take off their covers, take out the food and start chattering and everything is nice. I mean, {here in London} they are people like us, who arrived... the politics is there and we are here on a different level. If they would let us run things, but it's still scary. It's scary because you are afraid here [and what's the difference between being an Israeli in terms of the Arab groups in Vancouver and here, in what is it different?] in Vancouver there are less. You don't see them in such quantity all the time, all the time, all the time. Ahh and again it could be that in Vancouver I didn't have children so that's a part of the thing too [how come?] because you don't only have to take care of yourself, but you have small ones too. When you are alone, and I'll go into a restaurant and I'll eat so Sababa {no problem} but sitting with the girls is not something I'd like. So once again I find it funny, you buy something and you step into a shop and say Humus and immediately they know who you are, you can't hide it too much [the way you pronounce it?] sure because here they say Humus or something else, they all Tabule, Tabuli, they say it differently, I mean if you speak... that's it. You're lost! [O.k. did you ever have such incident regarding the ... let's call it the...] there wasn't an incident but I remember in Vancouver, near our office there was a Lebanese restaurant, very nice, and during the war {with Lebanon} I went with another guy and I said, they'll put something in our humus, as soon as they know that... It's not something that I, met in a trip, I didn't come across anything like that except that incident I told you about with the French {the man who walked away in Montreal once they said they are from Israel} who, actually didn't do anything, he just turned and went away. Yes, ahh. There wasn't ... I didn't stumble across some sort of... but there were these anti-Jewish demonstrations and they did a... a counter supportive demonstration in Trafalgar, it was a year ago, [anti-Jewish demonstrations?] yes, yes anti... Israeli [Israeli?] anti-Israeli, yes and then... [You mean during the war in Gaza?] Yes right so once more, it's what goes on around us, we said 'let's go' [you didn't go...] no, whereas in Ha'aretz there is no way I wouldn't go {to a demonstration}. So it means that... [No way you wouldn't go to what?] if I'd like to go to a demonstration or

something else, if I want to voice my views, I wouldn't be afraid, [here] I'll be cautious from places that are... because they are a little bit un... but no, we didn't have an incident here. On the contrary, there is something else [what do you mean on the contrary?] no because for instance, some friends of mine, other people I met in Vancouver or here, they are really interested to hear about Israeliness and Jewish identity and what it's about.... And what do you do. We talk about it, because they are a little bit more open, because they moved away too, they are immigrants too, they also moved to other countries, and they know us as humans so it's different [???]. {A telephone rings} I'm trying to remember what it was, but yes, it's something that I miss, a sense of more security. Although they say that in Ha'aretz you are not secure, here you don't have a sense of security. You have something because you know that you are surrounded by Israelis, by Jews and all that and some people repress it, but the fact that you are in an international society, we had a conference and a client from Indonesia spoke, and told about the Ramadan and she explains that in Ramadan it's a holiday for the family, people get closer to each other and travel to meet each other and then people around are whispering 'and there are bombings', so each side sees the holidays in a different way, and honestly, because we live here we can see it in another light [see what?] another culture, to what it's actually about, Ramadan, because it's true 'the Ramadan, they don't eat and they commit attacks' this is what in Ha'aretz, this is what people think. You don't really stop to ask yourself what do they actually do? What does this holiday mean to them [ahha] and there are other things. So I kind of have an advantage [over the ones in Israel] because of the distance, abroad, excuse me {telephone rings again, she answers and talks to a friend of her and tells her that she will call her before Shabbat breaks}. You too {meaning herself} by being here, many of your prejudices are wiped out, so to speak, because they don't have justification. There is a difference between what you see on TV and when you have a person standing in front of you, and I hope I can pass this on {to my kids}, pass it on. [Do you feel that something in your perception of the Israeli-Arab conflict has changed as a result of this move?] No. I am talking about all that ahh... I don't find myself in all that mess any way, the war and all that. It looks to me like a terrible error. And to repeat, if they expect me to ... I can't explain it to myself, I mean there was the flotilla affair and I say... it's lucky that I don't have anything positive to say about it [did anyone ask you about it?] no, no one asked and if in other occasion I might raise the issue myself, here I didn't raise it, because what can I say? It's not good? There wasn't any good explanation for all this. I must say that here the conversation around the identity replaces the conversations on... [politics] that are frequently run in Ha'aretz, because you talk about it a lot. In my house too {my family's house} if... in our house we are half-half {the political orientation of the family

members} there have always been 'wars' {around political issues} so now we talk about other things, when we visit you don't talk about it [about politics?] no. it's not something I am used to {avoiding talking about politics}. For the first time in my life I missed the elections, I always came to vote, so we missed the elections. Although we did consider whether to come or not, so that's a part of the issue too: how much you see yourself engaged. I remember that there was a debate whether to allow people to vote abroad. To whom do you give the right to vote? It's a complicated question, it's difficult to answer it from here because it would be preferable to be able to vote {when living abroad} but may people like me, who don't really live in Ha'aretz...and then you ask that question. But the decision... It's an essential question how much power would you give to people who don't really live in Ha'aretz [ahha] they ask me what's an Israeli? An Israeli is someone who lives in Israel... we traveled a lot and we were in all these places, Los Angeles and all these places where groups of Israelis live. It's not for real. It's living in Israel only in a different place. It's something, slightly, not ... real. Let's say that you are in another place and you live in a very-very closed way. Here too, the Bnei-Brak {an ultra-religious town in Israel} next to us [what do you mean? Golders Green? Hendon?] it's really Bnei-Brak [in what way?] all the familiar things, and all the things from Ha'aretz, you have a supermarket like in Ha'aretz, only it's here. In Vancouver we didn't live where the Jews were. The truth is that you also had a supermarket where you could find the soup almonds; you could always find the basic things. In my daughter's nursery... so you know how addictive it is to buy the Rogalach (pastries) and the Shabbat's Challah, and the Krembos {a sweet} or other stuff you don't really need but also the... [A {her company} where is it in Israel?].... In Raanana and Hod Hasharon (Israeli towns) [I thought that it might be close to Bnei-Brak, do you know Bnei-Brak?] sure, R. is originally from P. {a nearby town} he thinks this town {Bnei Brak} should be demolished. Ahh in Tel-Aviv, if there are traffic jams, you go through there so [are they different the... {meant to ask about the difference between the local and the Bnei-Brak religious communities}] Sure, because I know... A few years ago, I used to work with a guy, who made Aliya? {immigrated to Israel} a religious guy, he didn't wear all black but had a kippa {a Jewish religious head cover} and kept all the ... {rules} and I remember him saying that what's so difficult for him is that he doesn't have a weekend, anymore. Because here, they had the Friday, Saturday and the Sunday and {there} it doesn't exist anymore and he says 'it kills me'. And it's amazing that what bothers you, finally are these things, and it's true because if you ask me why people stay here, they stay because of the economic convenience or because they want to get away from the family, which is legitimate. No problem or, I don't know... but it's about something specific in your life which attracts you. He's still in Ha'aretz, that guy but he says 'I'll never get used to it', and it's like me, here, still,

the fact that on Friday I don't have that silence, it drives me crazy. When I come to Ha'aretz, I go outside on Friday to hear the silence [whereas here there's no silence] no silence, you don't have it any time, except form Xmas and then people are stuck in their houses [is there anyone religious in your family?] no [I'm asking because of the phone call when you said that you'll call before Shabbat breaks in] no, that girl is religious, that's it. So once again, because we've decided that we are going back, so when you ask me why do people constantly ask us about it, I think that it's happening because we are so confident and people are hesitant and they want to know what you are so confident about... I think that this is also a part of the thing but I must admit that I really don't want... I don't want... I want my kids to have my identity, that our basic identity is similar. There is a delay {due to the generations gap} but that's o.k. and that each one will have a passport {another passport} [so that...] in case they have to ran away {she laughs} if they'll have to ran away, so yes, they have passports. [it sounds like this condition between two forces, between those {in Israel} who ask you 'when do you come back' and those {abroad} who ask you 'why do you go back' or 'what are you going back for', so your decision if you go back really influences how your view the place here and the way you look at what goes on in Ha'aretz...] that's right, that's right, they talked to me about re-locations: she described to me the diagram of the relocation process: at first the place you moved to is the best in the world. Ha'aretz sucks. Then there is a period when it's 'Ha'aretz is the only place {to live}' 'only in Ha'aretz', 'only in Ha'aretz', and then it evens up. So to what direction does it turn that depends on where you see your life continuing, but you arrive at a point where you know the advantages here and there and you reach a decision. And it's true. But, still, I say that we still have to explain it {our position regarding going back or staying} on a weekly basis here and there {in Israel}. All the time, all the time. It's on this level that here, now we've had to extend our daughter's nursery and I told him {her husband} you know it allows us and he says yes I know {I think that she talks about being able to apply for a residency after living here more than 3 years} [are there nuances between the two of you?] R. is more... in Canada, I said, let's start going through the process {of getting a passport} we'll have a passport. There is a preliminary process, like here and then you get residency status and I told him let's start with this. It's not a big financial investment and he said 'absolutely no, not for any money in the world', he wouldn't hear of it, he was even more than... on the other hand, now I told him 'you know, they opened now an office in New Jersey' and he said, why don't you check if we can move there? I asked him 'what do you mean moving to New Jersey?' so I think that there are nuances, still he would... truth is me too. He would be willing to live some other place yes, but not getting too rooted. If there will be an opportunity some other place, he will be willing to... me, no... I don't think, I talked to my brother this

week and he says to me, perhaps you could go to Paris. It's very convenient for him that I'm here. I told him, 'what do you mean Paris? Forget about Paris, will you?' For him it's convenient those people who move from one place to the other. But I think that R. is more open, I'm more... [The official contract with A. is?] the contract is for 3 more years and then I can become a permanent worker {in London} [and then...] and then, my father who ran away from Romania, insisted on issuing us Romanian passports, so I have a Romanian passport that allows me in any case to stay here. But ahh, yes I can stay [how does the fact that your dad came from abroad, from Romania, to Israel, made Aliya to Israel, how does it come about family wise {you being here}?] They see it more as a career opportunity, this is how they present it and I don't correct them [present it?] outwards. Yes, they know that we don't want to stay, they ask us, I mean, ahh I don't know, it's also amusing because we had some good friends of ours for a visit and I told,, I said that we'll extend {our stay} most likely and that I'll also take maternity leave and it's something that I also told my mom but he met my parents later in the Tel-Aviv promenade and he told her something like 'so they don't come back, ah?' and then my mom immediately called on her way back home and said to me 'what did you tell him that I don't know?' [Who did she speak to?] A good friend of mine who was visiting us here, they are also on a re-location and they visited us here, and he met my mother. Now he was stressed out lest he told her something new she didn't know about and my mom was stressed out about what he knows – if we intend to stay or something like that. I told her 'no, it's just as you usually say, as you already know, I am most likely prolonging {my stay in London} because of the maternity leave' and she says 'ah'. But this is probably stemming from my mother always wanting to know first. My father can try to persuade me why it's better to stay, but his approach was always different than mine. I mean if I would have said 'I'm coming back because of you' he wouldn't accept it, they always saw it as a leap in my career. The truth was that it did combine, so it's not disconnected from the reality, but that wasn't the real cause, and that's how it's being presented. I meant, if I wanted to go back because of him, he doesn't get younger every day. That's a part of it too, so he wouldn't like this answer. [You mean formally?] not formally [or would he really not like that reason?] you know what, only formally {he wouldn't like this reason} he enjoys a lot me being there, and indeed it did affect the family, my brother told me 'promise me that you'll have 3 children so that if one of them decides to go away so the second one wouldn't be left alone with it [how many brothers and sisters are you?] we are two and we were... we are very-very close to each other, once again we don't have a very-very close family {in Israel} [where does he live?] in Ha'aretz but all the burden... I mean, what's burden... visiting the parents and the daily happening etc. he has to carry it, basically, [so he makes you vow to have 3 children so that if one of

them moves away the burden can be split] because as far as he's concerned, that's a part of the whole thing. [If he could, would he move away too?] No. if he would have wanted? I don't... it's more difficult for him because his wife immigrated from Argentina when she was 10 but before coming to Ha'aretz, they moved to the States and then they came. All this was very traumatic for her, it was traumatic when she was young so for her moving an apartment is a nuisance, so when I asked her and if you'll move away and stuff she tells me 'the transition itself makes me...' so it's something that is not even discussed when you know where it comes from. So no, they don't they enjoy it' they enjoy it very much that I'm here in London, they come to visit, much more than they came in Vancouver. No doubt. [I think that we'll stop here, but before we stop is there anything you'd like to add or ask?] ahha... I'd like to read your research when it's done [you know it can be that thick!] and ah when we were in Vancouver, there was another girl who did a research I think it's different from the one you are conducting the way you have defined it, did you hear of it? Someone in the USA who did her work on Israelis [you mean 'Temporaries and Permanents'?] exactly, yes. [Did you read it?] sure, sure, very interesting, it's basically about the reasons and excuses, I don't say excuses, but the reasons people give {for their stay abroad} and sees the difficulty... how difficult it is sometimes to accept the move they've made, sometimes. It was very interesting... [Thank you very much]

## Appendix six – Pen portraits

Here are short descriptions of the participants in the study that present some biographical details (also presented in table one on page 117), the main themes that were raised in the interview and a reference to the interview dynamics. All participants have been given pseudonyms based upon their Hebrew initials as they appear on the English keyboard. A Hebrew-sounding name was then chosen based on these English initials.

**Ariella** is an Israeli born woman in her late thirties who, at the time of the interview, had been living in London for eleven years with her two children and Israeli husband whom she met in London. Her family lives in Israel. She has British and Israeli nationality. The interview was held in my clinic. It was conducted a few weeks prior to their return to Israel. This fact impacted the course, content and dynamics of the interview as Ariella claimed at the start of her interview that her 'head is already there'. Ariella talked a lot about the sense of social alienation that she felt in Britain, which she attributed to the style of life imposed on her being an unemployed foreign mother. Ariella has two academic degrees, one of which she acquired in Britain. She described loneliness and lack of support and disclosed her fear that if they stayed in Britain, a cultural gap would emerge between her and the children. Ariella was the only participant that addressed herself as an 'immigrant'; she used this term to justify and explain her decision to return to Israel. In an especially moving part of the interview, she described the causes that led her to come to Britain in the first place – the fear for her life during the suicide bombings at the end of the nineties and especially one incident when she thought her brother was killed. She didn't disclose any such fears thinking ahead about returning to Israel. She argued that a sense of belonging cannot be acquired but rather almost inherited from the parents. She sees this as explaining the inability and futility of her efforts to integrate into British society, explaining why she can only belong in Israel and justifying her decision to return. Her interview also describes a hierarchical Israeli society from the view point of a member of the old Ashkenazi elite (she describes herself as 'the salt of the earth'), which excludes new-comers or immigrants like her sister-in-law. Describing the time

she spent in Britain as 'a journey' served her as a discursive strategy to justify the decision to return to Israel where she 'belonged'.

**Na'ama** is an Israeli-born 38 year-old woman who has been living in London with her Israeli husband and two daughters for the past 10 years. Her parents and siblings live in Israel. She has British nationality. She works part-time in a society organized by the local Israeli community. She has an academic degree that she acquired in Israel. Na'ama stepped forward and volunteered to be interviewed on 'Israeli identity', but claimed that she didn't really know what to say about it. The interview was conducted in my clinic. Throughout the interview Na'ama focused on the condition of temporariness in Britain and the need to come to a decision about whether to settle indefinitely in Britain or return to Israel, a decision that she delays. She therefore described her condition as 'life on hold' or 'not the real life' and tried to negotiate this condition of temporariness with the overall sense of 'comfort' of living in Britain as opposed to the life in Israel which was too stressful for her. Na'ama opened her self-description with an elaboration of her vocational status as a mother who didn't pursue her career. She declared that she *thought* her husband didn't want to return to Israel and that her daughters felt comfortable in Britain having been born here and therefore the decision whether to return or not lies with her. Na'ama, whose friends are mostly Israeli, described in depth the disconnection with the local Jewish community.

**Noga** is an Israeli born woman in her early thirties; she is married to an Israeli man and has two young daughters. They have been living in London for the last 3 years; they previously lived in Canada. Her parents and brother live in Israel. Noga appears to be a confident woman who asserted her arguments in a persuasive way. The interview was conducted in her home. She was exceptional among the participants of this study in that she is fully employed in a high-tech firm and is the main breadwinner in her household; most other women participants were either not working or were only partly working. This condition of working mother and successful career woman was central to her discussion of her relationships with her Israeli milieu in London – e.g. the nurseries or the social circle - and was pivotal in the dilemmas around how to promote an Israeli identity for her children. Noga described the dilemma of

whether to return to Israel or to remain longer in Britain through the relationships with friends and family in Israel and the ambivalent and confusing direct and indirect messages trying to persuade them to return while at the same time urging them to get a passport 'so that you'll have a place to run away to'. Her text disclosed some of the popular preconceptions about what is 'Israeliness' – being 'the centre of the world', is coupled with a sense that 'the world always splits into those who love us and those who don't'. At the same time, it also described the confusing effects of such strong mythical convictions as they often clash with daily reality and material considerations. Noga described this duplicity as a main feature of Israeliness: 'everyone would like to live abroad but also to live in Ha'aretz'.

**Michael** is an American-born man in his late forties who is not working. He has been living in Britain for the last 10 years. The interview was carried out in his home. He is married to a local British-Jewish woman and has two children. Prior to coming to Britain he has lived in Israel for 13 years since emigrating there in 1987. In Israel, Michael had a seemingly successful immigration process: he married a local Israeli woman, had three children and established a business. However, after his wife filed for divorce, he left Israel and settled in Britain where he met his current wife. He frequently travels between Israel and Britain to see his three children there. Michael mainly talked about his memories from Israel and seemed to try and convince me of his acquaintance with the Israeli culture and daily routine so as to argue for his membership as an Israeli. Michael came across as a man who is not settled wherever he is and constantly struggles to be part of a group while also retaining his individuality and separateness. Michael doesn't have any contacts with the Israeli community here in London but reads its local Hebrew monthly magazine (where he found my advert for the research). He is not involved with the local Jewish community or with current British affairs and feels alienated from the local British environment. He described in detail how his insertion into Israeli society was made through the encounter and friendship with a Palestinian man and expressed sympathy for the individual Palestinian who suffers the Israeli occupation; at the same time he entertains an image of Muslims as hostile.

**Roni** is a 30 year-old Israeli-born man, married to Noga (interviewee number three), and has two young daughters. He works in a local bank. His family lives in Israel. He and his wife, Noga, only have Israeli citizenship. The interview was conducted in his home. Roni argued that he maintains the same lifestyle that he had in Israel, keeps the same taste in music and food he had in Israel and closely follows Israeli politics. He asserted that he intends to return to Israel at some point. He also declared that he did not integrate socially or culturally in the local British environment, doesn't follow the local news or television and refrains from speaking English with his older daughter who is placed in a local nursery. He argued that since he doesn't intend to settle in Britain, he doesn't make any effort to accommodate his lifestyle to the local British culture. Accordingly, many of the views he expressed and the way certain groups were presented – local Jews, Britons or 'Arabs' - were characteristic of mainstream Israeli discourse of nationality and appeared not to have been effected by the years he has spent abroad. At the same time, Roni seemed troubled by the local Israeli community, which he regards as a 'ghetto' that preserves and recycles the same lifestyle and viewpoint that prevail in Israel. Throughout our encounter, I wondered what made him want to be interviewed given his unequivocal certainty about returning to Israel and his 'Israeli' lifestyle. Only towards the end of the interview did he articulate the problem that troubled him: 'Why would you cross half the world in order to live in a ghetto, the same as the one you had before?' I understood it as a concern that he too might find himself, despite his intentions, living abroad in such a 'ghetto' – the same as the one he had in Israel - and would thus lose both agency as well as the ability to experience new viewpoints.

**Aaron** is a thirty nine-year old, Israeli-born man, married to an American Jewish woman. Together they have two boys. He has been living in London for ten years and works as a local director of an Israeli high-tech and consultancy firm. His parents and brother live in Israel. He has British nationality. The interview was held in his home. Aaron appears to be settled in London and although he raises the question of whether to go and live in Israel for a while, his financial and family circumstances make it a hypothetical rather than concrete option. Both his children go to a local Jewish primary school but none speak Hebrew and neither does his wife. From his settled position, Aaron

provided an alternative and exceptional interpretation of Israeli nationality, emphasizing its civil rather than ethnic dimensions. He argued for example that Israeliness is made of various aspects – culture, mode of thinking, using Hebrew and also being born there or living there but that all these are not necessary conditions. In his speech he refrained from using ‘Ha’aretz’ when referring to Israel and did not apply many of the signifiers that were often used by other participants that distinguished between ‘real life’ in Israel and the anecdotal experiential and temporary life abroad. Being more comfortable in his intermediate position abroad, Aaron presented a less engaged and therefore more distanced view point around the question of belonging in Israeli and British society.

**Dorit** is a 34 year-old woman who, at the time of the interview, had lived in Britain for over two years. She had married a year before and has no children. Her family lives in Israel. She only has Israeli citizenship. The interview was conducted in her rented home in one of the popular areas for Jews and Israelis in London. Dorit said she arrived in London with a friend, looking for an adventure and ‘love’ since she wasn’t satisfied with her romantic relationships in Israel. Romantic gender relations were indeed an important part of the interview. In Israel she worked as a sales executive and when she arrived to London she worked for a bit in temporary stalls at various shopping malls before being employed for a while in a formal Israeli institution. Currently she is unemployed. Dorit described a lively social life among local Israelis and Jews and provided her view on the relationships between the two groups and their differences. She applied some traditional Zionist concepts around the wish of Jews to make *Aliya* (immigrate to Israel) and the desirability of Israeli men and women in the eyes of local Jews. In contrast to most other participants, Dorit comes from a Mizrahi background. Like many other Mizrahi Jews she is more closely affiliated with religion, tradition and the synagogue, eats only *Kosher* food and organizes events at her house that follow religious practices. She declares that she wants to return to Israel to raise her children there, but would like to use the financial opportunities that London offers for young couples to gain a head start. Dorit described herself as living in a Jewish/Israeli hub, living in ‘little Israel’, following closely the politics and daily life in Israel and being

mostly unaware of current events in British society. She says that this is partly due to her insufficient knowledge of English.

**Nira** is a 37 year-old single woman who was born in Israel where her mother and brother live. She has been living in London for the last twelve years and has British nationality. She saw the research advert in the local Hebrew newspaper and wrote with the thought that it was a paid job. When I corrected her mistake she was willing to go ahead with the interview although she claimed that she might not be the person I was looking for because she doesn't have many connections with the Israeli community or live in those areas where Israelis normally live. The interview was held in her apartment. She said that during her pregnancy her mother lost her husband, during the 1973 war, and so Nira grew up without a father. She grew up in Israel but felt disconnected from her Israeli surrounding. When she was 23 and following her art studies in Israel she came to London, fell in love with a local man and married. She later divorced and went back to Israel with the intention of settling there but didn't fit in and returned once more to London. She is currently out of work. At the beginning of her interview she described herself as only technically Israeli and claimed she didn't have any longing or nostalgia for the life there. She described herself as someone who doesn't fit in and rejects any attempts to be classified within any social category. A major part of her interview focused on the sense of estrangement in Israeli society that she mostly associated with the way Israeli society and individuals relate to 'IDF orphans'. By contrast she praised the British lifestyle and claimed that it suits her better.

**Liat** is a 34 year-old single woman who was born in Israel but currently has also British nationality. When she was twenty, after completing the military service in Israel, she came to study in Britain and eventually stayed. She completed her PhD and is now looking for a post-doctorate position. The interview was conducted at her home. She has a daughter with a local Jewish man from whom she is now separated. In her self-presentation she said that her parents were born in Russia and wanted to immigrate to Israel. However, after leaving Russia they first lived in South America where her grandparents stayed and later joined them in Israel. When she was ten years old her much

loved grandparents returned to South America, which was a major blow for her. A few years later her mother, who was now separated from her father, went with Liat and her sister to join the grandparents in South America, leaving the father behind. Finally, a few years later the whole family returned to Israel and settled there permanently. Liat is now the only member within the close family cell to be living away from Israel. Liat, who appeared at first to be well-established in Israeli society and culture surprised me when she declared that she remembers that from a very young age she didn't want to live in Israel. The interview then focused on her sense of alienation in Israeli society, her connections mainly with children who also travelled and lived elsewhere. It also highlighted the salience of the familiar network as a primary source of identity, which might contrast with the national Zionist ethos. At times, Liat seemed to almost intentionally present a personal narrative that would disturb the popular national preconceptions. She does not live in an area which is typically populated by Israelis and is not highly connected with the Israeli community. Despite her conflictive memories, Liat's understanding of Israeliness follows that of many other participants in the study and focuses around the negation of Jewishness, and religion. She is concerned about her daughter's Israeli identity, talks to her daughter in Hebrew and looks for a Hebrew school for her. She travels frequently to Israel.

**Yariv** is a 37 year-old single man who was born in a Kibbutz in Israel. At the time of the interview he had been living in London for nine years; he has British nationality. The interview was conducted at my office. In his self-introduction at the beginning of the interview, Yariv described his life as a gay man in the Israeli Kibbutz, which he left after his military service. He worked for a while in central Israel and completed his academic studies before being relocated by his firm to London. He describes himself as a work addict who travels around the world as part of his post. He frequently visits Israel, but doesn't intend to return and currently would like to buy a property in London. In his interview, Yariv voices some exceptionally exclusionary remarks concerning Arabs, Orientals, Mizrahi Jews, Israelis in general or local Jews, which at times were highly racist ('Israelis are very-very mixed...it's not black nor white but it's certainly not white'). He struck me as highly provocative, trying to single himself out from the usual social categories and cast himself as 'unique'. In its

crude way, Yariv's text accentuates some of the prevalent schisms in Israeli society between the European/Ashkenazi and the Mizrahi Jews, the religious and secular Jews and the othering of the Arab/Palestinian Israelis. It sums up the arguments of the classical Ashkenazi elite (and its Zionist ethos – around Europeanism in the Middle East) whose political, cultural and social hegemony in Israeli society has been eroded over the past three decades. It also described Israeli society through the prism of a gay man and the hardship of growing up in a militarized masculine Israeli society and especially that of the Kibbutz.

**David** is a 43 year-old man who at the time of the interview had been living in Britain for seven years with his wife and daughter. They only have Israeli nationality. The interview was conducted in my clinic. David completed his PhD degree in a British university and is currently employed as a post-doc researcher. Before coming to the UK, David worked in Israel, then moved to US for his MA degree and then came to Britain. David declared that he fits in better with the British lifestyle and would like to settle in Britain, but that visa and work issues might eventually cause him to return to Israel. Despite his declared comfort in Britain, David described his close acquaintance with, attachment to and interest in Israeli cultural and political actualities and the daily means through which he follows events there. He also described a strong emotion attachment to Israel and an effort to uproot himself from such engagement (to make himself feel more foreign in Israel). In his speech, I demonstrated this strong ambivalence and the constant pull towards and push away from Israel through the interchanging usage of signifiers such as '*Ha'aretz*' and 'Israel'. He also described the strong social pressures to return to Israel that he is subjected to by Israelis and critically outlined some the basic preconceptions about Israeli nationality: the hostility of the world towards Israel (e.g. through anti-Semitism), the centrality of Israel in international politics and the temporariness (or 'experience') of life away from Israel as opposed to the 'real life' in Israel. To an extent I felt that David describes well many of the issues I am engaged in as part of my own dislocation.

**Udit** is a 63 year-old woman who has been living in Britain since 1971. She is married to a British Jew and they have two sons. At home they all speak

English. She works with her husband and they own their own shop. The interview was held at her house in one of the neighbourhoods inhabited by many Jews. She still socializes with Israelis and mostly speaks with them in Hebrew. At the same time she is also engaged with the local Jewish community. Udit came with her family to Israel at the beginning of the sixties from North Africa alongside many other Jews. They lived in an area in central Israel where many North African Jews lived. At home they spoke French. She lived in Israel throughout her adolescence and left for London to study English when she was twenty. She describes her years in Israel as exceptionally liberating and enjoyable and as a period where she found her freedom as a woman and was able to stand up to traditionalist pressures that prevailed in the Jewish society in North Africa and was prioritizing men over women. Between the lines she also hinted to some difficulties in her adaptation to Israeli society, its educational system, social exclusion and language barriers but overall appeared to cultivate a positive image of Israelis and of Israel as 'the best period of my life'. The interview also portrayed the outlook of Israeli society and its values seen through the eyes of a North-African *Ola* (Jewish immigrant) in an encounter with a 'local' Israeli-born Ashkenazi researcher. At the same time, the interview, which took place away from Israel, portrayed the politics between the 'local' already established Jew and the Israeli new-comer in what appears like a historical reversal.