

Womanhood 'under terror'

An investigation into the embodied experience of Jewish-Israeli women living in a protracted conflict zone

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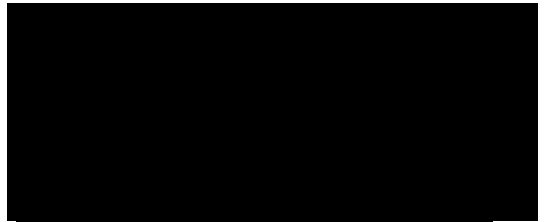
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An investigation into the embodied experience of Jewish-Israeli women living in a protracted conflict zone" is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

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Abstract

Informed by feminist theory and critical cultural theory, this thesis constructs femininity within secular Jewish-Israeli socio-culture and considers the influence of 'living under terror' on models of womanhood within this culture. It is my contention that as a Western affiliated culture, Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture tends to deploy its women to buffer the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. As in other preservations of complex power hierarchies this is done through perpetuating certain models of womanhood within mainstream discourse, endowing them with the aura of naturalness. Models of femininity within secular Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse are woven from traditional Jewish as well as Zionist values and modern hegemonic Israeli values. I argue that the global discourse on terrorism has added a significant layer of significance to these models within the last decade. Furthermore, by juxtaposing Terror Management theory and Objectification theory, I show how sexual objectification of women, perceived as a Western value, heightens the over-sexualisation of secular Jewish-Israeli women. This thesis observes power relations between various political, international and social forces through a feminist lens of embodied knowledge which seeks to understand the meaning of Jewish-Israeli femininity within the construction and performance of female bodies in mainstream socio-cultural discourse and within secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience. It is my intention to re-inscribe 'woman' in multiple ways by adding secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience to feminist knowledge.

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make concessions in their daily lives in order to accommodate the process I was going through. For all that, I am forever grateful to them.

This work is dedicated to the beloved memory of my older brother, Doctor David (Dedy) Berick (1960–2007).

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	
strands	
Bodies of knowledge	
The philosophical cultural perspective	
The political action perspective.....	
Private and public domains – woman's proper place.....	
The body as discourse – docile female bodies	
Bodies of value: Israel and Zionism as a gendered project	43
The 'colonisation' of Jews in European culture	
Zionism as a decolonisation movement.....	
Holocaust heritage in Israeli society.....	
Israeli society – a complex puzzle.....	
Western affiliations in mainstream Israeli society.....	
Judaism and gender	
Negotiating public and private spheres.....	
Familism and sexuality in Israeli society.....	
Bodies of terror	
The polemic over terrorism's definitions.....	
Terrorism as communication.....	
Exploring societal reaction to terrorism.....	
Mortality salience, everydayness and social consequences	
Living under terror	
An Israeli history of mortality salience.....	
Veiling modernity or exposing colonisation	
Liberating women – uncovering female bodies	
The over-sexualisation of Jewish-Israeli women	

The

The comb	
Bodies in social texts	
The evolution of a study – the iterative process of grounding knowledge.....	
Methods	
Data analysis	
The braid	
The influence of society's militarisation on the lived experience of secular Jewish-Israeli women.....	
The siege mentality.....	
Militarism or militarisation	
The military as a socialising mechanism	
Gender definitions within Israeli society	
Women's sense of personal safety	
Familism in Israeli society	
Jewish ethnicity as a factor in hyper-sexualisation.....	
Self-objectification and over-sexualisation as a terror management mechanism, reflecting female agency.....	
Coda.....	
Appendix A: Participants.....	
Appendix B: Code book	
Bibliography	

Introduction

The pilot focus group I conducted for this study took place in Melbourne, Australia. Its participants were four Jewish-Australian women, who had lived in Israel for long periods of time and three of them were married to Jewish-Israeli men. As soon as the women came in, they began a spontaneous conversation about the differences between living in Israel and living in Melbourne. I hadn't even had a chance to articulate my first question, concerning the unique components of life in Israel, and operate my recorder, but I managed to scribe the beginning:

MJ: [You know how in Israel it's] that atmosphere that hits you as soon as you get off the plane, passion and a bit... and you know I don't mean sexually, but there is more of that Israeli in your face; you see what you get.

MH: Oh yes, yes.

MJ: See, there you go, everyone's got this...

MR: Oh, you can't miss it!

[MJ 45Y, MH 48Y, MR 49Y, Melbourne, lived in Israel]

At that point the meaning of their words was so clear to me that I didn't need to probe deeper. However, it was only when I transcribed this conversation that I became aware of a very personal experience. This group was held a short while before my planned trip to Israel, for my field study. My time in Melbourne was the first time in my life that I felt good about and within my body. Nevertheless, as soon as I started contemplating going to Israel, I began to 'feel fat'. By this time I was already aware of the significance of one's body as well as body image in the construction of subjectivity, based on feminist knowledge I had explored. It became crucial for me to unpack and understand how the geographical and temporal situation of being a Jewish-Israeli secular woman influenced the subjectivity and construction of self, for me and for other women.

Informed by feminist theory and critical cultural theory, this thesis constructs femininity within secular Jewish-Israeli socio-culture and considers the influence of 'living under terror' on models of womanhood. It is my contention that as a Western affiliated culture, Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture tends to deploy its women to buffer the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. As in other preservations of complicated power hierarchies, this is done through perpetuating certain models of womanhood within mainstream discourse, endowing them with the aura of

naturalness. Models of femininity within secular Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse are woven from traditional Jewish as well as Zionist values and modern hegemonic Israeli values. I argue that the global discourse on terrorism has added a significant layer of significance to these models within the last decade. This thesis observes power relations between these various political, international and social forces through a feminist lens of embodied knowledge.

In this respect, it is necessary to begin with a disclaimer. It is not my intention to define in essentialist terms political terrorism, or to establish the political, international situation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This thesis will touch on complex political as well as social or international issues, many of them situated in the centre of protracted polemics and violent conflicts. One cannot examine Israeli society without stumbling upon such issues. However, it is not my intention to dwell on these issues any more than is necessary to highlight the current everyday situation of mainstream Jewish-Israeli socio-culture and its influence on the lived embodied experience of secular Jewish-Israeli women.

To undertake my analysis, in the first section of this thesis called *The strands*, I consider three distinct bodies of knowledge. First, I explore the body as a source of knowledge and a centre of cultural construction through performance. Second, I unpack the specific heritage of the Jewish people and its continuation through Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel. Finally, I investigate the discursive construction of the phenomenon of terrorism and the influence of a protracted violent conflict on Jewish-Israeli socio-culture and the evolution of its mainstream hegemonic discourse. By using an interdisciplinary approach this thesis intertwines these three distinct strands into one thick braid, examining the various ways in which this situation influences the lived embodied experience of secular Jewish-Israeli women.

In recent decades a proliferation of feminist writing on 'the body' has been published. Feminist thinkers have long been preoccupied by the ways in which female bodies are discussed, classified, violated, disciplined, decorated, altered and performed. In chapter one (Bodies of knowledge) I review some of these writers' contentions, with a specific emphasis on the significance of the body in the construction of self and subjectivity. Needless to say, feminist writers vary in their observations and their

responses of female bodies and the social contexts in which they are fashioned. Feminist theory is engaged not only in thinking through what happens to bodies that are female, but also in the ways in which these bodies construct and write female subjectivity (de Beauvoir 2008; Bordo 1993; Brook 1999; Butler 2004; Colebrook, 2000a; Conboy, Medina & Stanbury 1997; Grosz 1994; Marshall 1996; Orbach 1978; Rich 1986; Witz 2000; Young, 2005). As has been suggested by these various feminist thinkers, although subjectivity is indeterminable it is always bound up with the gendered body. For this reason, I seek to understand the meaning of specific performances of Jewish-Israeli femininity within the construction and performance of female bodies in mainstream socio-cultural discourse and within secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience. It is my intention to re-inscribe 'woman' in multiple ways by adding secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience to feminist knowledge.

In Western culture, ¹ it has been documented that female bodies are 'cut to size' in various ways. Be it through dieting, exercising, eating disorders and cosmetic surgery, the mould of female beauty is practically inescapable (Bordo 1993; hooks 1997; Orbach 1978). The demands made of women to monitor their bodies are becoming more insistent. As opposed to these views, Judith Butler contends that one's body is in actuality a way of reinterpreting received gender norms (1999). How accessible this possibility is – of personalising the nexus of culture and choice – is a central axis of investigation within this thesis.

In order to account for the construction of femininity and female subjectivity within the specific context of secular, Jewish-Israeli hegemonic discourse influenced by a reality of a protracted violent conflict, it is first important to understand Jewish-Israeli unique heritage. In chapter two (Bodies of value) I unpack the specific heritage of Jewish people, emphasising the gendered character of the Zionist project. The proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 was a culmination of several processes, yet it was not the beginning of Israel as a political or national entity. The establishment of Israel is deeply embedded within Zionism, a Jewish national movement that emerged in nineteenth century Europe along with other European national movements. Although Zionism sometimes has been referred to as a form of colonialism and

¹ It is not my contention that "the West" or "Western" are natural geographic facts, rather these terms in this thesis are geopolitical.

presented as a foreign-backed colonial project, it is my intention to show that for Jews, in general, and for Jewish-Israelis, in particular, Zionism is perceived as a cultural decolonisation movement and national liberation movement and as such, it holds a significant gendered aspect.

Due to the image of the Jew within European hegemonic culture as the 'Other', the Jewish man was effeminated within hegemonic European Christian discourse for centuries (Boyarin 1995, 1997; McNamara 1994). Frantz Fanon (1986) observes that colonisation as well as decolonisation is often channelled through the colonised body. Michael Gluzman contends that European Jews' yearning to adhere to the European-Christian model of masculinity is the aspiration of the colonised subject to adopt the white European identity of the ruler (2007). In this respect, Zionism was a carnal revolution and, as any corporeal movement, it had a specific gendered aspect. Since colonised man is often effeminated within colonial discourse, the process of cultural decolonisation, achieved through emancipation and empowerment, is often negotiated through the colonised male body (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Yuval-Davis 1997). This unification of potency and masculinity often leads to a machismo style for many decolonisation movements, legitimising gender definitions that stress women's secondary position within the national collectivity.

Biale (1992) suggests that the political ideology stressing Jewish decolonisation through negation of the Jewish man's masculinity was not a metaphor; rather it entailed a real change of the physical Jewish body. This change would encompass all carnal aspects of Jewish existence including the sexual body. Zionism guaranteed an 'erotic revolution' through the creation of a potent, New Hebrew man and the rejection of the traditional inequality of women. However, traditional perceptions of femininity are hard to dispel, especially as women are expected to represent national boundaries (Yuval-Davis 1997). As much as the New Hebrew man became the symbol of Jewish resurrection in the image of the *Sabra* (a Jew born in Palestine/Israel), the New Hebrew woman was a much more complex image.

The issue of reconstructing gender relations through liberation movements and redefinitions of masculinity and femininity is the basis for the construction of nationality. Pateman (1988) and Millet (1969-90) observe that within civil society there exists a division in public and private spheres. Women are associated with the

private sphere, while men are associated with the public sphere. Yuval-Davis concurs that since nations and nationalism have generally been discussed as part of the public political sphere, the exclusion of women from the public arena has in turn affected their exclusion from the national discourse (1997). However since women are often conceptualised within national discourse as defining national boundaries, whether as bearers of the collective or as symbolising 'motherland', the carnal aspect of their existence comes to represent the nation in multiple ways.

Since this study explores the lived experience of non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women; there are several distinctions between models of womanhood that are significant here for defining national as well as socio-cultural boundaries. The first is the national-ethnic distinction between Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Jewish women; second, between religious and non-religious, Jewish-Israeli women. Since non-orthodox Jewish-Israelis are by self-definition Western, another distinction is the one between various Jewish ethnic groups and veteran and immigrant Israeli women's sexuality. Although these are significant distinctions, it is the 'liberated Western woman' that becomes the prevalent model of womanhood within hegemonic Jewish-Israeli discourse.

Terrorism is an old phenomenon and although it had been known for decades, it became a prominent cultural term within global discourse after September 11, 2001 (9/11). I explore contemporary dominant discourse on terrorism in Western cultures that can be traced back to the 1960s; however that does not mean that terrorism as a phenomenon began then (Karber 1971; Laqueur 1978). This is only the point in history in which 'terrorism' became a 'household term' within Western American culture. Popular cultural understanding of terrorism in the West is profoundly shaped by knowledge generated by governmental institutions, law enforcing agencies, the security industry and 'the terrorism industry' (Herman & O'Sullivan 1989).

It is not my intention to redefine terrorism, as terrorism's definitions are as numerous as those who define it. However, reviewing the polemic shows that all terrorism experts as well as scholars agree that most definitions of terrorism have an element of 'terrorism as communication' and some have even defined it as 'theatre of terror'. Terrorism and acts of terrorism are perceived as audience oriented performances. I argue that the audience of terrorism is not a passive one but rather it is an active discussant in an interactive performance. Expanding on the conceptualisation of

terrorism as a form of communication that is presented in chapter three (Bodies of terror), I look for the meaning of terrorism in the dialogue between perpetrators and audience.

Terrorism's meanings are constructed in relation to social, cultural or institutional bodies of knowledge. This subordination confines these meanings to the possible labels designated to terrorism by society, especially dominant definitions within a hegemonic discourse (Third 2006; Wilkins Newman 2003). The debate on terrorism's definitions is entangled in an economy of power that limits an in-depth inquiry into its effects on a society 'living under terror'. I will reinvest these understandings of terrorism with new meanings, by examining them outside of 'terrorism industry' definitions, and to further situate terrorism as an interaction between the perpetrators and their audience. It is within this interaction that the meaning of terrorism is to be found.

When coming to explore the influences of living under terror on individuals, the most popular contemporary theory is Terror Management Theory (TMT). TMT observes the influence of 'mortality salience' (when persons are reminded of their own inevitable death) on individuals (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986). TMT assumes that existential terror is part of everyday life and stems from being aware of one's mortality. It suggests that the answer to human beings' unconscious awareness of their personal inevitable death, which haunts them, lies in conforming to cultural systems of meaning and value and thus constructing self-esteem. When an individual conceives himself/herself as a valuable partaker in a larger, more meaningful and longer lasting entity than physical existence, the existential, haunting threat of mere animal existence is lessened (Goldenberg et al. 2000; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986). A cultural worldview provides people with meaning, order and an option of continuation (for example: heaven, reincarnation, children, or historical significance). Living up to one's worldview standards contributes to the construction of positive self-esteem (Arndt et al. 2002; Fritzsche & Jonas 2005; Goldenberg et al. 2005; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986; Greenberg et al. 1990; Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg 2005).

Some consider the Arab-Israeli conflict a part of (or a precursor to) a wider clash of civilisations between the Western world and the Arab or Muslim world (Cloud 2004;

Huntington 1996). Since Israel is the only country that is perceived as Western affiliated in the Middle East, it stands at the forefront of this modern clash of civilisations. A situation of prolonged armed conflict and chronic absence of peace, accompanied by constant fear of war or terror, can be referred to as mortality salience. This is the lived experience of Israelis and it is enhanced for Jewish-Israelis due to Jewish people's specific heritage of persecution referred to in chapter two.

It is a declared aspiration of terrorism to undermine individual rights of both citizens and non-citizens within liberal democracies, as these rights constitute a cornerstone within democratic liberal values (Alouni 2001; Nacos 2003; Porta 1995). Political scientist Brigitte Nacos argues that, when targeting liberal democracies, it is terrorism's goal to trap liberal states into instituting extreme measures that undermine the fundamental values of these states. It is a declared objective to debilitate everyday freedom as well as economy and other modern liberal values that modern, Western democracies stand for (Nacos 2003, 2007). A similar argument is articulated by Bin-Laden in interview:

Bin-Laden: The events of Tuesday, September the 11th, in New York and Washington are great on all levels. Their repercussions are not over. Although the collapse of the twin towers is huge, but the events that followed, and I'm not just talking about the economic repercussions, those are continuing, the events that followed are dangerous and more enormous than the collapse of the towers. The values of this Western civilisation under the leadership of America have been destroyed. Those awesome symbolic towers that speak of liberty, human rights, and humanity have been destroyed. They have gone up in smoke. (Alouni 2001)

The societal reaction of these objectives within the terrorised society can be examined through the public civic reaction in the United States, in general, and New York citizens, in particular, to the events of 9/11. A patriotic incline within the American public was observed by many and demonstrated on various occasions by the American flag, which once again became an almost sacred, unifying object (Hawthorne & Winter 2002; Kaplan 2005; Rogers 2002). Resuming consumerism was narrated as a return to normalcy, and consumerism was presented as an American value under the deadly attack of Al Qaeda on the World Trade Centre (Spigel 2004). It seems that the Western everyday way of life becomes a value under fundamentalist terrorist attacks.

This perception of terrorism as an opposing phenomenon to modernity, in general, and Western modernity, in particular, could be easily discerned within hegemonic Western discourse, especially following the events of 9/11 and the ensuing 'war on terrorism'. It was described as a clash of civilisations and within Western discourse became synonymous with the liberation of women, especially 'oppressed Muslim women' (Al-Khouli 2006; Bender 2008; Cloud 2004; Dehghanpisheh et al. 2005; Krauthammer 2004; Shavit 2006; Sherman 2002). This image was strongly supported by writers and speakers of both the right and left of Western politics, claiming that the image of the 'veiled woman' stands for women's oppression within Islamic culture and law, and by insisting on the veiling of women, Islam defies liberal democratic values of women's equality (Brown 2001; Bumiller 2001; Chesler 2003; Fallaci 2002; Hawthorne & Winter 2002). The issue of the 'veiled woman' was at the centre of East/West polemics long before the 'war on terror' was declared in 2001 (Abu-Lughod 1998; Fanon 1986; Said 1978). In contemporary discourse this image was 'cross wired' with the image of the 'liberated Western woman'.

Within Western culture the objectified image of Western women tends to portray 'liberated Western women' as over-sexualised. This image represents Western women as 'free' to choose what to wear, since their clothing is not directly dictated to them by the men in their communities, or by religious or civil laws. They are not supposed to suppress their sexuality, on the contrary, they are encouraged to emphasise and expose it. Contemporary Western societies value women's bodies as objects. Furthermore women tend to objectify other women and themselves. Objectification and self-objectification are being used as instruments for evaluating their own worth and other women's, and is a major component in constructing self-esteem (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). The image of the 'liberated Western woman' as symbolising Western culture, heightened after the terrorists attack of 9/11, was juxtaposed time and again with the image of the 'veiled Muslim woman' within the discourse of 'clash of civilisations'.

Israeli society is a society under existential threat. Whether this is a realistic or unrealistic state is beyond this study's scope. However, this study stresses the importance that lies within the lived experience of a society in a state of siege. This feeling of constant siege, of existential threat, leads to the experience of existential

terror, which in turn leads to a need for terror management in the society as a whole. It is my contention that a society experiencing mortality salience will tend to cling more to its worldview and values. Since Israel views its dispute with its neighbours as circling around a Western, non-Arab entity within the Middle East, it is logical for Israeli society to embrace Western values as its own. And since the dispute between 'Western civilisation' and 'Muslim-Terrorism' has been presented as a clash between civilisations, represented by both sides through the image of the veiled woman, it is only natural for Israeli secular mainstream culture to adopt warmly the contrasting image of the Western woman perpetuated within Western culture. This is further heightened within non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli culture by the image of the covered, ultra orthodox Jewish woman representing religious coercion. Within Israel it was a logical construction for the secular Jewish socio-cultural resistance within Israeli society to be again translated in women's appearance.

Moreover, within the discourse between fundamental Muslim terrorism and Israeli society as the collective audience of terrorist acts, the over-sexualisation of women, derived from their sexual objectification, can be understood also as part of an audience response to religious Muslim fundamentalists. I argue that a society under terror tends to use women to pacify the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. Through the objectification of women and demands for an over-sexualised appearance, society gives women the role of alleviating existential terror, and by averting women's attention to these demands, it distances them from social liberation and associated ideas and actions.

Using a philosophy of feminist qualitative research, the epistemology of this thesis is based on standpoint theory of knowledge. Its growth is less like the growth of a tree, orderly and linear, but more like a rhizome. Its methodology is deeply rooted in grounded theory, critical theory and ethnography, while its methods derive from various social sciences techniques of in-depth, semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews, and flourishes into different and variable techniques of culture research. In the second section of the thesis called *The comb*, I describe how the focus of inquiry shifted to questions of how particular phenomena and specific themes relate to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity and gender.

Philosopher Sandra Harding (1987) suggests there is no such thing as feminist methods of research, but there are multiple feminist methodologies, and epistemologies. In this study I employed all three categories of collecting data (Harding 1987). First, by listening to participants; this was done through in-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews. Second, by observing behaviour, which took place for almost two years of conducting and writing this study in Israel, and converged in a field study carried out in a beauty parlour in a small town in Israel. Third, by examining historical traces and records; this was conducted by reading various documents, from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel to contemporary Hebrew newspapers and magazines articles, and analysing talkbacks and blogs on related issues and social texts, for example, a reality television show.

Interviewing is a complex process and yet it offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than those of the researcher. This is particularly important for the study of women because this way of learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether, or having men speak for women (Reinharz & Davidman 1992, p. 19). The choice to use focus groups was not a coincidental one. Since I was looking for a group narrative, focus groups seemed to be a good way to obtain a group narrative that would construct itself and need less active intervention by a researcher-interpretor (Madriz 2000; Morgan 2001). I found that focus group interviews proved to be the most flexible, egalitarian and interactive of all methods used in the fieldwork. This is true for interviewer–interviewee relations as well as for participants themselves. It seems that although a feminist methodology cannot eliminate power hierarchies in the research process, it can be helpful in partly reducing them.

In early 2007 I interviewed 45 Jewish women; 41 were Jewish-Israeli women and four were Jewish-Australian women who lived in Israel for variable periods of time. The youngest was 23 years old and the oldest was 74. The participants were recruited by a snowball technique.² The socio-demographic composition of the informants typified Jewish-Israeli women of upper to lower middle class. This study included seven focus groups and eight individual interview participants. Each individual or group interview

² Snowball sampling is a technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball.

lasted about one and a half to two hours. The groups met once. Every interview was taped and subsequently transcribed and analysed within the framework of feminist-grounded theory, using the code book approach and word processor analysing techniques³ (La Pelle 2004; MacQueen et al. 1998; Ryan 2004; Ryan & Bernard 2000, 2003; Willms et al. 1990).

The principal findings of these interview narratives construct the body of this thesis. As is the norm in qualitative studies, they are not easily generalised for the total target population. The purpose though was to explore women's experiences and perceptions not otherwise covered by statistics and surveys. Excerpts from transcripts of the groups' discussions and individual conversations accompany the thesis. Presenting women's words as they spoke them, thus giving voice to these women, is a major aim of this study.

This thesis examines a specific discourse within a specific culture, which is the culture in which I live. Researching culture is always a complex process; however researching one's own culture is a multilayered and dynamic process, involving broad social, ideological, political and religious frameworks as well as social structures, such as state and family, and social affiliations and loyalties (Youngs 2006). This project is a passionate one. It was sparked by my vague intuition that secular Jewish-Israeli women's options for feminine models are constructed and thus highly conformist. This was my personal lived embodied experience. When I lived in Melbourne, this notion became clearer, as for the first time I experienced living in a socio-culture that enabled women to choose from a variety of feminine models. This option, previously unknown to me, became conspicuous when I compared Israeli and Australian women's magazines and observed the difference in the models of womanhood perpetuated (Berick-Aharony 2007).

In this thesis I investigate the origins and creation of dominant discourse within Jewish-Israeli culture, especially in regard to gender construction and how femininity is created in everyday life. I examine its influence on the lived experience of women within Israeli mainstream culture through unpacking representations of models of womanhood perpetrated by variable ideological tools. In order to understand the

³ The analysing techniques will be presented in depth, in the methods section.

context of women's agency, the comprehensiveness of the constraints on it, and the processes by which these are enacted and felt, it is necessary to look across various socio-cultural areas. In chapter four (Bodies in social texts) I discuss this process using a number of research methods, including interviewing women who currently live in Israel as well as women who were part of that culture for a while, conducting a field study in a beauty parlour, and analysing a reality television show targeting women. In addition to these methods, other Jewish-Israeli 'cultural' data, like Hebrew daily newspapers and women's magazines as well as internet data like web articles, talkbacks and blogs were collected and analysed.

The third section of the thesis has no distinct chapters. It is called *The braid* because it intertwines the three distinct strands through the 'combing' methods into one whole; an integrity that depicts non-orthodox, Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience. In this section I explore and present how the situation of living in a protracted, violent conflict zone combined with Israel's security ethos influences non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women⁴ in many aspects of their everyday lives, and how it formulates their lived embodied experience.

This section is divided into themes that, when interwoven, encircle everyday lived embodied experience of non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women. These themes were not decided in advance but rather they evolved and stemmed from the research process itself. Some of the topics came up as themes in the process of analysing and coding transcripts of individual interviews and focus groups, while others sprouted as issues within Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture through reading and re-reading the literature, or by spending a year and a half of field work studying my own culture in Israel.

The third section presents themes like militarism and personal experiences within military service. The binary gender definitions that are prevalent within Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse are in part due to this phenomenon of social militarisation, evolving from the centrality of the military in everyday life and from its role as a socialising mechanism. It explores feelings of personal safety for non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women in their everyday lives. Personal safety in Israel is experienced

⁴ This is not to say that other women's or other men's lived experience in the same situation is less dramatic or significant, rather that non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women are the topic of this specific investigation.

both on collective and individual levels. The specific heritage of the Jewish people, combined with the history of the State of Israel, creates within Jewish-Israeli socio-culture a discourse of siege, which I term 'siege mentality'. This mentality influences everyday life within Israel and feelings of personal safety within the collective.

At an individual level, although men carry out the combatant roles in a society at war, and as much as Israeli men were and still are portrayed as the defenders of the country, with a dear cost to human life, the feeling of personal safety for women seems to be even less grounded. Due to women's gendered role as enablers, they are expected to compensate for the trauma and frustration of men. In a situation of living in a constantly terrorised conflict zone, this becomes a difficult, almost impossible task. Combined with the wide distribution of firearms and small arms that circulate among the Israeli civilian population through compulsory or reserve service in the armed forces, employment as security guards and through proximity to criminal activities, little wonder women's sense of personal safety is impaired (Adelman 2003; Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005; Sharoni 1994).

Due to Israel's security situation, gender equality is perceived as a luxury. Under the heading of 'national security' occurs the marginalisation of social issues in which women usually play a prominent role. This political situation leaves two types of agency available for women, one of which is motherhood. Israeli society demonstrates strong familial orientation in all its various subcultures. Whether Jewish or Arabic, religious or secular, Israeli culture embraces familism as a core value (Fogiel-Bijaoui 1999). Large families are encouraged in all ethnic groups within Israeli society; and furthermore, Jewish-Israeli culture is deeply rooted in Judaism, a tradition that views children as a blessing (DellaPergola 2007; Fogiel-Bijaoui 1992a; Herzog 1998; Mazori 2005; Yuval-Davis 1987). In Israel the ethos of 'national-security' is depicted in 'The Army', soldiering, and combatant philosophies. These dominate the public sphere and represent the bastion of male discourse. As a consequence, familism and especially motherhood are perceived as the pillars of Israeli communal and private lives and they are established and perceived as women's domain (Berkovitch 1997; Fogiel-Bijaoui 1992a; Haelyon 2006; Manski & Mayshar 2003; Meyers 2001; Morgenstern-Leissner 2006; Nagel 1998; Okun 2000; Remennick 2000).

In a cultural climate that enhances concepts of binary gender definitions, as in the Israeli social climate, women's place in the private sphere is not only strengthened, but magnified. A sense of belonging and of making a meaningful contribution to the collective, which accompanies women's traditional role as mothers, obscures the discrimination and subjugation underlying the gendered division of roles. These feelings surfaced in many individual interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study and they are also presented in the third section.

The second avenue of agency available for women within secular, Jewish-Israeli socio-culture is over-sexualisation of feminine appearance and extensive grooming. The phenomenon of over-sexualising Jewish-Israeli women was observed by most participants. In almost every individual interview and focus group the observation was made that the image of Jewish-Israeli women is objectified through over-sexualisation; while some participants found this exciting, most found it exhausting. The over-sexualised model of womanhood was observed to be manifested through women's fashion, coercion and little or 'no choice', as well as through the demands for a feminine appearance reported by the participants. This model is perpetrated by various media channels, such as women's magazines (Berick-Aharony 2007) and electronic media, as well as through social interrelations or 'natural' models of womanhood circulating within everyday Israeli culture.

Israel's security situation, and the gender inequality it entails, creates a situation of marginalisation of social issues in which women usually play a prominent role. Issues like health, education and welfare, which are perceived as women's issues, always occupying a lower rubric on the Israeli public agenda are perceived as a luxury. For example, in the Israeli parliament (*Knesset*) women are disproportionately represented on committees perceived to be 'feminine', dealing not with security or economy but rather with social subjects, which are considered less prestigious committees (Herzog 1999). This situation enables very little political agency for women. Combined with traditional gender roles, definitions and a strong need for terror management mechanisms, within a Western affiliated socio-culture, this situation leaves women with few avenues for female agency.

This thesis thus traces the discursive representations of femininity and the model of womanhood available for non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women. It sketches the

historical and political forces that created these models and the ways in which mainstream Jewish-Israeli socio-culture intertwines them into hegemonic discourse, endowing them with an aura of naturalness. As a consequence of this process, the option for women that Judith Butler (1986) terms as defining their bodies as a 'nexus of culture and choice' is severely reduced for secular Jewish-Israeli women.

The strands

Bodies of knowledge

During the past three decades a vast body of knowledge has been constructed by feminist writers from a variety of views on body theory. All agree however that one of the pillars of contemporary Western society's worldview is the 'ideal female body', which is a crucial component in the construction of self (Bordo 1993; Grabe et al. 2005; Haug 1987; Hirschmann & Munter 1995; White 2002). The various points of view within feminist theory may be represented by different approaches to this phenomenon, for example, the philosophical cultural perspective and the political action perspective.

How important is the body in one's definition? According to many scholars it is a crucial component in the perception of self and others and in the construction of wellbeing (Bordo 1993; Burns 2003; Cahill 2000; Cash 1990; Colebrook 2000a, 2000b; Fredrickson & Harrison 2005; Fredrickson et al. 1998; Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Gendlin 1992; Goldenberg et al. 2000; Gomel 1998; Grosz 1994; Halliwell & Dittmar 2004; Hirschmann & Munter 1995; Hopkins 1997; Lash 1984; Marshall 1996; Merleau-Ponty 1964, 2002; Stephens, Hill & Hanson 1994; Stoller 2000; Webster 2000; Witz 2000; Young 2005). However, extensive bodies of knowledge within feminist thought have problematised this connection of self construction and body image for contemporary Western women, by claiming that within Western societies women's normative perception of their bodies is centred on discontent. It is argued that this discontent in turn creates alienation and disrupts women's ability to reach personal and psychological wellbeing (Andersen & DiDomenico 1992; Bordo 1993; Burns 2003; Cahill 2000; Cash & Deagle 1990; Cash & Henry 1995; Champion & Furnham 1999; Engeln-Maddox 2005; Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Goldenberg et al. 2005; Groesz, Levine & Murnen 2002; Halliwell & Dittmar 2004; Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann 2005; Hirschmann & Munter 1995; Hopkins 1997; Lake, Staiger & Glowinski 2000; Leora Pinhas 1999; Littlewood 2004; Marshall 1996; Katzman 1997; Posavac, Posavac & Posavac 1998; Safir 2005; Spitzer, Henderson & Zivian 1999; Stephens, Hill & Hanson 1994; Tiggemann & McGill 2004; Webster 2000; Witz 2000; Young 2005).

The philosophical cultural perspective

The importance of subjectivity in the construction of self and 'the world', and in endowing meaning into our lives and lived experience can not be overstated. Within the research of humanities and social sciences, there was a longstanding tradition of denying the subjective realm and its 'creator', the lived embodied experience; by alienating this experience from experiential theory and practice and by legitimising mainly quantitative-measurable methods of research, a whole realm of human experience was ignored (Bugental 1989). The resurrection of the phenomenological perspective at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century (within structuralist and post-structuralist as well as postmodern schools of thought) brought the experiential component of knowledge along with subjectivity and inter-subjectivity back into the limelight (Lechte 1994).

Early in the 1960s Merleau-Ponty (1964, 2002), for instance, began to sketch out a philosophical trajectory which reconfirmed the importance of lived experience in grasping the nature of language, perception, and the body. For him, the importance of the embodied experience lies in parting ways with the Cartesian philosophy of doubt,⁵

The multiplicity of points or 'heres' can in the nature of things be constituted only by a chain of experiences in which on each occasion one and no more of them is presented as an object, and which is itself built up in the heart of this space. And finally, far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body (2002, p. 141).

Merleau-Ponty confirms the primacy of lived experience by emphasising that 'the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind' (1964, p. 3). Perception is rooted in embodied experience; it is not the result of external happening on our bodies, nor is it separate from an autonomous consciousness. There is no perception in general; there is only perception as it is lived in the world. This lived experience resulting from the

⁵ Descartes doubts the existence of the body while he affirms the existence of the mind; he discovered that he could doubt whether he had a body (it could be that he was dreaming of it or that it was an illusion created by an evil demon), but he could not doubt whether he had a mind. This gave Descartes his first inkling that the mind and body were different things. The mind, according to Descartes, was a "thinking thing" and an immaterial substance. This "thing" was the essence of himself, that which doubts, believes, hopes, and thinks (Apel 1998; Damasio 1994; Hart 1996).

incarnate nature of perception is the basis for phenomenology and its reason for being (Lechte 1994). In this Merleau-Ponty reorients the entire tradition of articulation of the primordial structures of existence, based on the Cartesian dichotomy, from the mind and consciousness to the body.

Damasio (1994) and Gendlin (1992) problematise the validity of the Cartesian dichotomy even further. They assert that the body supplies the brain with a field of reference. Perception is not just the brain's reception of phenomena; rather the whole organism is changed actively. The body is never passive, in order for the organism to be able to sustain a state of homeostasis it has to act on the environment. If the organism is to successfully obtain food, sex and shelter while at the same time it distances itself from danger, it has to sense the environment (smell, touch, feel, hear and see), so it can act in accordance with its perception. Both Damasio and Gendlin stress that perception is about acting upon the environment, as much as it is about receiving signals from it. The mind, self or subjectivity in their view are all interwoven into the body and its perception of the environment.

Simone de Beauvoir (2008) in her classic work *The Second Sex* adds another strata to and in going to the heart of embodied experience, which is what experience is: the concept of the living body termed by Husserl⁶ and developed by Merleau-Ponty (2002) and his followers (Damasio 1994; Gendlin 1992). She stresses that although for a man the perception of 'I am my body, as far as my experience reaches, and at the same time my body is a temporary sketch of my whole being', as Merleau-Ponty puts it, the woman is indeed her body, yet at the same time, her body is a separate being. Once we accept the body as an existence and not an object, the body and its physical definitions, including bodily differences between men and women, becomes the channel through which the self is constructed (de Beauvoir 2008).

⁶ In Husserl's (2001) view, intersubjectivity is one of our world's inherent properties. We perceive the world as 'real' as an objective world, and we believe that everyone else, the others within this world perceive it in the same 'objective' way we do. For him this inherent intersubjectivity was a feature that obscured our vision of the 'objective' world, the world as it is. His phenomenological research method was designed to discard with this obstruction of our vision by subjectivity, through a set of rules intended to strip away, as far as possible, our interpretations of the stimuli we experience and by so doing to minimise the influence of our subjectivity by methods like: bracketing, description and horizontalization (Husserl 2001; Spinelli 1996, 2005; Vandavelde 1996).

Following de Beauvoir's lead, other feminist writers have further stressed the different embodied experiences of men and women (Bordo 1993; Butler 1986; Cahill 2000; Davies 1992; Fredrickson & Harrison 2005; Gomel 1998; Gould 1984; hooks 1997; Irigaray 1997; Kristeva, Jardine & Blake 1981; Lorde 1997; Marshall 1996; Rich 1986; Stoller 2000; Sullivan 2000; Young 1990, 2005). Adrienne Rich (1986) challenges one of the primary perceptions in Merleau-Ponty's structure of the lived embodied experience as the main source of self construction. While Merleau-Ponty stresses the differentiation of self from other as a basic feature in the embodied experience of the self (Merleau-Ponty 2002), Rich sees this experience as foreign to the female experience of her body. The boundaries of the physical are not as clear cut for women, as for men.

As an inhabitant of a female body, this description gives me pause. The boundaries of the ego seem to me much less crudely definable than the words "inner" and "outer" suggest. I do not perceive myself as a walled city into which certain emissaries are received and from which others are excluded. The question is much more various and complicated. (...)Nor, in pregnancy, did I experience the embryo as decisively internal in Freud's terms, but rather, as something inside and of me, yet becoming hourly and daily more separate, on its way to becoming separate from me and of itself. (1986, p. 63)

Iris Marion Young bolsters de Beauvoir's and Rich's approach even further. She claims that since women's embodied experience is totally different from men's, Merleau-Ponty's views should be reassessed when examining women's embodied experience. This difference stems from the feminine body being immanent in ways that alter its transcendence and openness to the world. If Merleau-Ponty describes the transcendence of the lived body as moving out of the body in an open and unbroken directedness to act upon the world, this view is challenged by Young's view of the immanence imposed on the feminine body and its comportment.

For any lived body, the world appears as the system of possibilities that are correlative to its intentions. For any lived body, moreover, the world also appears to be populated with opacities and resistances correlative to its own limits and frustrations. For any bodily existence, that is, an 'I cannot' may appear to set limits to the 'I can'. To the extent that feminine bodily existence is an inhibited intentionality, however, the same set of possibilities that appears to be correlative to its intentions also appear to be a system of frustrations correlative to its hesitations. (2005, p. 37)

By employing Adrienne Rich's work on motherhood, Young posits the experience of pregnancy as an essential component in the construction of the lived experience of women and its diverse course. Even women who did not experience pregnancy, but possess the potential of a pregnancy experience, have a completely different embodied experience to that of men, due to this possibility. In Young's view, the culmination of the differences between men and women is expressed in the embodied experience of pregnancy. It is embedded, not in the comportment of the feminine body, but in its shift of defined boundaries. She accepts Merleau-Ponty's view of the location of subjectivity within the body; however, she problematises the unique experience of pregnancy as radically challenging the dualism of Western philosophy of the body and construction of subjectivity (Young 2005). It is the uniqueness of pregnancy on which Young focuses, particularly in terms of repositioning of the pregnant woman's body in space and time. This uniqueness of the experience problematises the clear distinction of mind and body, transcendence and immanence and especially the clearly maintained boundary between self and other.

The birthing process entails the most extreme suspension of the bodily distinction between inner and outer. As the month and weeks progress, increasingly I feel my insides, strained and pressed, and increasingly feel the movement of a body inside me. Through pain and blood and water this inside thing emerges between my legs, for a short while both inside and outside me. [...]The integrity of my body is undermined in pregnancy not only by this externality of the inside, but also by the fact that the boundaries of my body are themselves in flux. In pregnancy I literally do not have a firm sense of where my body ends and the world begins. (2005, p. 50)

Luce Irigaray (1997) characterises these differences even more empathically. Her description of fluid subjectivity stresses the distinctness of woman as it is expressed through her sexuality (also see Gomel 1998).

Whence the mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. She is neither one nor two. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition. (1997, p. 251)

In concurrence with the views expressed above, I too find that the notion of embodied, experience based, subjective knowledge is an essential notion in my personal epistemological processes. I find that in order to construct meaning out of

that 'body of knowledge' the process always involves an 'other'; it seems that de Beauvoir's statement that 'one is not born but rather one becomes a woman' (2008, p. 62), stresses the significance of the social in this construction of self. Hence, after presenting the importance of the embodied experience to the self, my next step would be to present the ways in which it is influenced by culture and society.

The political action perspective

In this section I will explore the ways in which social discourse helps 'keep good women down'.⁷ According to Michel Foucault's theories social discourse in modern societies is a tool used to insert into our everyday lives and perceptions ideas that serve existing power relations (1977, 1994). Foucault argues that the rise of parliamentary institutions and the rise of new conceptions of political liberty were accompanied by a new discipline that was directed against the body. He claims that the phenomenon of reduction in penal severity was coupled with the emergence of unprecedented disciplinary practices that invade the body in new and different ways. This discipline seeks to regulate the very forces and operations of the body, the efficiency of its movements and the economy of its time (Foucault 1977). This regulation of the body, spread into various aspects of modern life, can be found in modern schools as well as in modern armies, hospitals, prisons and factories.

What was then being formed was a policy of coercion that acts upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the technique, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). (Foucault 1977, p. 138)

This 'mechanics of power' that produces 'docile' bodies is best represented in Foucault's work by the Panopticon; this model prison enabling a constantly conscious and permanent visibility as well as supervision of all inmates assures the automatic

⁷ See Alice Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1982).

functioning of power. However, this account is lacking in a feminist view, as Bartky puts it:

Foucault's account in *Discipline and Punish* of the disciplinary practices that produce the "docile bodies" of modernity is a genuine tour de force, incorporating a rich theoretical account of the ways in which instrumental reason takes hold of the body with a mass of historical details. But Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experience of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the "docile bodies" of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? Women, like men, are subject to many of the same disciplinary practices Foucault describes. But he is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine. (1997, pp. 131-2)

Bartky (1997) stresses the importance of the gaze. The effect of the gaze is to induce in the 'viewee', whether inmate or other, a state of permanent and conscious visibility that assures the functioning of power. It is this state of permanent and conscious visibility that signifies that the tight discipline of control over the body, has taken hold over the mind as well.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) name the process of creating docile bodies 'objectification' and they term this state of constant consciousness and permanent visibility, 'self-objectification'. Their 'Objectification Theory' suggests that this attitude of objectifying women into bodies or body parts may lie at the basis of prevalently female negative experiences, such as body shame and appearance anxiety, or depression and eating disorders. This theory suggests a more encompassing explanation for the processes involved in women's desire and their actual actions in attempting to attain society's ideals of embodiment (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997, pp. 175-80). Through the process of sexual objectification, perpetuated through different, socially employed channels, girls and women gradually internalise an observer perspective on their own physical selves. This 'self-objectification' is a form of self-consciousness transferred through habitual and constant monitoring of bodily appearance. This constant body monitoring leads to some negative emotional and practical outcomes; for example, an increase in shame and anxiety, in particular about body and appearance, which can be accompanied by a decrease in awareness of

internal bodily cues and peak motivational states (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997, pp. 181-5).

Fredrickson and Roberts are not alone in their view regarding the connection between social and political forces and women's unique embodied experience. From de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* and throughout the second half of the last century to the present, feminist thinkers and writers have established the difference in embodied experience for men and women (Bartky 1997; de Beauvoir 2008; Bordo 1993; Cahill 2000; Cash 1990; Colebrook 2000a; Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Gomel 1998; Heinamaa 1999; Irigaray 1997; Lake, Staiger & Glowinski 2000; Rich 1986; Young 2005). This diverse embodied experience is negotiated through the dominant discourse as well as other ideological tools.

In the traditional view of gender roles, this was done through allocating to women the private sphere and in so doing, excluding them from participation in any decision-making activities within the public domain. Feminism has problematised this process by exposing these procedures and demanding their reform through increased participation, or equal participation of women in the public domain. However, this has not been an easy process. In many Western and non-Western societies, it was a complicated struggle, with much backlash.

Private and public domains – woman's proper place

The body is sketched not as an object but as an existential state of being (de Beauvoir 2008). For de Beauvoir, the biological parameters of the female body can not be considered as the cause for the different situations of men and women within a society. She explores the variable approaches to these distinct states from the Freudian psychodynamic approach, or Engels' historical-materialistic approach, and concludes:

As Merleau-Ponty very justly puts it, man is not a natural species: he is an historical idea. Woman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man; that is to say, her possibilities should be defined. What gives rise to much of the debate is the tendency to reduce her to what she has been, to what she is today, in raising the question of her capabilities; for the fact is that capabilities are clearly manifested only when they have been realised – but the fact is also that when we have to do with a being whose nature is transcendent action, we can never close the books. (2008, p. 62)

The importance of social processes in the creation of this existence referred to as 'woman' is also stressed; and in making this point, de Beauvoir is followed by other, more recent feminist writers.

In the early seventies, Kate Millett (1969, 1990) launched a cultural criticism, arguing that patriarchy as a political institution defines concepts of power and constructs a domination play between genders. She describes how historical transformation in the traditional relationship between genders, which took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, assured the continuation of a modified, patriarchal way of life.

Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Mediating between the individual and the social structure, the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. As the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society the family and its roles are prototypical. Serving as an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads. Even in patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state. (1969, 1990, p. 33)

The situation Millett described brought forth the feminist notion that the personal is political; that the private situation of women within their own homes and families is in effect the political agenda of women's rights movements, just as much as their public status and their civil rights; this division of private and public spheres has also been singled out by many feminist theorists to be a central issue in the construction of gender within Western societies (Bartky 1997; Davies 1992; Diprose 2000; Elshtain 1982; Gould 1984; Kristeva, Jardine & Blake 1981; MacKinnon 1982; Marshall 1996; Millett 1969, 1990; Nicholson 1984; Orbach 1978; Pateman 1988; Rich 1986; Ross 1995; Rothman 1978; Yuval-Davis 1980, 1985).

Betty Friedan's (1997), Adrienne Rich's (1986) and other feminist theorists' works demonstrated how the 'haven' created at home, is in actuality a prison, in which women are being put away, not for something they have committed, but for the benefit of patriarchal society (Gould 1984; Klein 1999; Mann 1994; Millett 1969, 1990; Nicholson 1984; Young 1980). An attempt was made by de Beauvoir (2008) to explain how this kind of division and distribution of power came to be established

within society. Other theorists problematised this dualistic viewpoint and insisted that the model of separate spheres is misleading in that, in effect, this perception is a distortion of reality (Nicholson 1984; Young 1980).

Whether viewed as separate spheres, or two folds of the same reality, it became clear that the presentation of the personal as private plays into the hands of dominant discourse as well as power struggles within Western societies. The realisation emerged that even our own, very private bodies were actually a political issue, representing power conflicts of domination and subjugation.

The body as discourse – docile female bodies

It has been documented beyond dispute that modern Western societies have adopted a thin or slender ideal for the female body, and that women and girls are constantly exposed to this ideal in the mass media (Champion & Furnham 1999; Murray 1999). Arguably, society's demand for thinness increases along with the actual weight of the average woman. As a consequence, numerous women experience dissatisfaction with their bodies, in general, and size, in particular. This dissatisfaction has become so widespread that it has been conceptualised as a feminine norm (Rodin, Silberstein & Striegel-Moore 1985). Hirschmann and Munter (1995) refer to this phenomenon as "the sisterhood of fat talk"; a sisterhood which, they suggest, it is hard to give up on.

In the late seventies, Susie Orbach suggested that the issue of fat is not a personal, private issue, but rather a social issue, and should be a prominent part of the feminist agenda (1978). She claims that fat is not about lack of self-control or willpower, as it is often viewed; it is about protection, sex, nurturance, mothering, strength and assertion, thus it is a social issue.

For the compulsive eater, fat has much symbolic meaning which makes sense within a feminist context. Fat is a response to many oppressive manifestations of a sexist culture. Fat is a way of saying "no" to powerlessness and self denial, to a limiting sexual expression which demands that females look and act in a certain way, and to an image of womanhood that defines a specific social role. Fat offends Western ideals of female beauty and, as such, every "overweight" woman creates a crack in the popular culture's ability to make us mere products. (1978, pp. 33-4)

Naomi Wolf (1992) takes an even more political stance to this question. She claims the female body represents what everyone despises in our society. It is the method

with which society controls women's freedom and potential social power. By making beauty a commodity in a culture in which commodities are most important; by stripping women of their lives, because they are not supposed to show any life marks on their faces or bodies; and by robbing them of their sexuality and their life force by bombarding them with 'perfect women' images, claiming these are expressions of the only possible sexuality, that keeps women in their 'proper place' (Rothman 1978).

It is safe to assume that as women seem to gain more public space, through work power, or political power, there are fashion trends accompanying these changes in status, and the demands made of women to monitor their bodies are becoming more insistent. Camille Paglia illustrates the struggle between the female body, representing nature, life and primal instinct, and Western culture, represented by Judaeo-Christian tradition, logic and social order, in *Sexual Persona* (1990). Looking at the changes in women's bodies in art, Paglia shows how, over time, the image of woman went from the voluptuous, big-hipped body of the pagan goddess to the slim, tall body of the supermodel. An historical survey of the last century indicates that sometimes the fashions, particularly pertaining to body shape, contradict rather than reinforce new freedom (Bordo 1993). This philosophical cultural perspective attempts to understand the social, economic, and political forces that embody womanhood and femininity (Fredrickson & Harrison 2005; Hopkins 1997; Young 1990, 2005). It is difficult to ignore the notion that as women's public space expanded, the reproductive, mature female body had to be cutback.

Kim Chernin (1982) suggests that women symbolise, with their bodies through their infinite struggle to lose weight, the old struggle between body and soul. She provokes the question as to why only women embody this struggle, while men continue to inflate their bodies, the more the better. Today, almost thirty years later and in part due to the discovery and currency of gay market power through increased advertising campaigns, men are becoming more objectified. A contemporary question concerns the extent to which this commercial objectification continues to carry differently gendered meanings (Burns 2003; Dillon, Copeland & Peters 1999; Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann 2005; White 2002).

The construction of the gendered body is becoming increasingly complex as factors such as plastic surgery, transgender, and cyborgs or virtual bodies are constantly

blurring the boundaries. Judith Butler (1999) in *Gender Trouble* rejects previous feminist positions. Butler brings forward criticisms of the tendency towards exclusivity and universality latent in some earlier feminist theories, which often assumed the female experience to be white, middle class and heterosexual; in her view these theories did not go far enough in their interrogation of the constructed character of identity and the variable factors that influence it. She introduces her theory of gender construction as situational (Butler 1986, 1998).

The body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and 'existing' one's body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms. To the extent that gender norms function under the aegis of social constraints, the reinterpretation of those norms through the proliferation and variation of corporeal styles becomes a very concrete and accessible way of politicizing personal life. (1986, p. 510)

The possibility of personalising this nexus of culture and choice is a central issue that will be examined later in this thesis, with specific regard to Jewish-Israeli culture and accessible models of womanhood and femininity within this culture.

An interesting twist in the construction of gender and the gendered body is the use of erotics, both as 'Girl Power' and as a device to keep women in their 'proper place'. The power of the feminine body is not a new concept within Western culture; however, its positive expression through the conceptualisation of feminine erotics as power is new and interesting.

Elizabeth Grosz (1994), coming from a psychoanalytic point of view, expands on Kristeva's abject concept,⁸ and explores the negative connotation of the female erotic. Since the only forms of female sexuality recognised and validated within Western

⁸ The abject concept exists between the concepts of object and subject, something alive yet not; abjection can be seen as letting go of something we would still like to keep. In the case of blood, semen, hair and excrement/urine, we recognise these as once being a part of ourselves, thus these forms of the abject are taken out of our system, while bits of them remain in our selves. When one encounters blood, excrement, etc. outside of the body, one is forced to confront what was once a part of oneself, but no longer is. Dismemberment compels the same kind of heightened reaction when one confronts the horror of detachment. A dismembered finger or limb is identified as belonging to one's own body and is 'missed', while at the same time, repulsive to the viewer for no longer being a part of the whole. According to Kristeva, since the abject is situated outside the symbolic order, being forced to face it is an inherently traumatic experience. For example, upon being faced with a corpse, a person would be most likely repulsed because he or she is forced to face an object which is violently cast out of the cultural world, having once been a subject (Douglas 1966, 2002; Kristeva 1982).

societies are those which conform to, and agree with, defined male-heterosexual desire, thus the female body is characterised not only as lacking but also as leaking.

Can it be that in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self containment ... The metaphors of uncontrollability, the ambivalence between desperate, fatal attraction and strong revulsion, the deep seated fear of absorption, the association of femininity with contagion and disorder, the undecidability of the limits of the female body (particularly, but not only, with the onset of puberty and in case of pregnancy), its powers of cynical seduction and allure are all common themes in literary and cultural representations of women. (Grosz 1994, p. 203)

Irigaray (1997) uses the same liquid metaphors to stress women's sensuality and positive values. In her work, *This Sex Which is Not One*, she refers to the liquidity of female eroticism and emphasises the encompassing quality of female eroticism. Audre Lorde (1997) suggests that the suppression of female erotics as a source of power serves as a tool in perpetuating patriarchal ideologies. However, she also acknowledges the possibilities in reconnecting to erotics as a life force. She distinguishes between the pornographic, often confused with erotics and used against women as a disempowering tool, and erotics itself, embedded in every aspect of life.

In order to challenge dominant representations, it is necessary first of all to understand how they work, and thus where to seek points of possible productive transformation. From such understanding flow various politics and practices of oppositional cultural production, among which may be counted feminist interventions ... there is another justification for a feminist analysis of mainstream images of women: may it not teach us to recognise inconsistencies and contradictions within dominant traditions of representation, to identify points of leverage for our own intervention: cracks and fissures through which may be captured glimpses of what in other circumstances might be possible, visions of "a world outside the order not normally seen or thought about?" (cited in Kuhn 1985, p. 128; cited in hooks 1997)

Within the framework of this thesis, these representations will be explored and unpacked within the general infrastructure of Western culture, and specifically in relation to Israeli society and Israeli images of womanhood as represented through Israeli women's fashion. (There occurred a change in the perception of 'full figure women's fashion' in Israel, and they are more encouraged to over-sexualise their

appearance.) This is explored through focus groups and individual interviews, Israeli electronic media, and other cultural ideological tools such as women's magazines, daily newspapers and internet data such as talkbacks and blogs.

Bodies of value: Israel and Zionism as a gendered project

The State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948. In the Declaration of Independence members of the people's council⁹ declared that 'the State of Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex' (MFA 1948). In this chapter I will explore the gendered context of this declaration, the forces that brought it forth and tried to undermine it, and how it evolved within the State of Israel.

Although the proclamation of the state of Israel was a culmination of several processes, this was not the beginning of Israel as an international political entity. Israel as a modern state is embedded within the rise of Zionism, a Jewish-national movement that emerged in Europe at the second half of the nineteenth century along with other European national movements (Merriman 2004). Zionism called for Jews to immigrate to Israel (Zion), in order to construct the modern, Western Jewish state. Many writers have considered the gendered aspect of various national or ethnic liberation movements, claiming that women define the boundaries of the national or ethnic collective in multiple ways. Women's positioning in the collective as well as their obligation to the nation or state they are citizens in, affects their reproductive rights. All reproduction takes place in a specific social, political and economical context and within discourses that are used in constructing boundaries of national or ethnic collectives. As biological 'producers' of children, women are also 'bearers of the collective' (Yuval-Davis 1980). However women's position within the national or ethnic collective is even more complicated, as women are also national symbols. Whether as 'mother-land' representing the national culture and tradition, or as 'womenandchildren' (Enloe 1976, 1983) representing the dichotomy of front/rear, women are the symbol of what needs to be protected, 'the reason we are fighting for'.¹⁰

⁹ The people's council were the representatives of the Jewish community of the State of Israel.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion on the gendered aspect of national or ethnic liberation projects, see: Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Bastian 1998; Bracewell 1996; Butler 1986; Hofstede 1983; Hollander 1996; Hyndman & de Alwis 2004; Lemish 2005; Lentin 1996; Nagel 1998; Yuval-Davis 1987, 1996, 1997.

The 'colonisation' of Jews in European culture

The specific historical experience of the Jewish people is clearly of relevance to this study. In his revised history of the Jewish people, *Judaism*, Swiss historian Hans Kung (1995) describes how all over the world Jews were by law deprived of citizenship rights since the early years of their Diaspora. They were constantly under physical threat and persecuted specifically because they were Jews. The Holocaust in Nazi occupied Europe was the climax of long periods of Jewish persecution. From 1935 to 1945 six million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators across Europe (Kung 1995).

Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) suggest that as Christianity became hegemonic across Europe and as so-called pagans faded from the scene, the function of those who stood in a position of difference came to be filled discursively, almost exclusively, by the Jews, and the coercive move toward sameness came to be directed at the Jews. The place of difference increasingly became 'the Jewish place'.¹¹ This entails a positioning of the Jew as the very sign of discord and disorder in the Christian polity. This can also be observed in the fact that others, although Christian, but in some way different to the Christian mainstream like the Lollards,¹² are figured in literature as 'Jews' (Boyarin & Boyarin 1993, p. 697). This view of the Jew as Other was intensified by the effemination of the Jew. Jo Ann McNamara has described this phenomenon:

[T]hey had also fused personhood with manhood, and to defend their manhood they had to become evermore manly. They had to persecute with ever-increasing severity anyone who threatened the uncertain inner core of that image. Women were victimized by their exclusion and male victims, heretics, homosexuals, Jews, any rebels who didn't fit the mold, were turned into women. The image of domination forced men into an endless competition to prove their manhood to one another. This was a tragedy for women and for the not-men, half-men, effeminate men who were the objects of this relentless persecution. (1994, p. 22).

Like many other national or ethnic liberation movements, Zionism had a clear, gendered perspective to its project of re-construction of the Jewish people. In this chapter, I will unpack the gendered perspective of Zionism and its influence on

Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse

In his classic work *Orientalism*, Edward Said places the Orient, which he defines as India and the Levant, in this place of Otherness. However Frantz Fanon, writing almost two decades earlier, still positions Jews and Blacks in this same place of Otherness (Fanon 1986; Said 1978).

¹² The Lollards were a religious and political movement, from the mid fourteenth century to the English Reformation that demanded a reform of Western Christianity. The movement argued that religious power came through piety and not through the church hierarchy, emphasising the authority of the scriptures over the authority of the priests (Ghosh 2002).

The effemination of the Jewish man due to his otherness was accentuated by the fact that Jewish men did not adhere to the accepted cultural construction of European masculinity. The ideal existence for the Jewish man was that of bookish scholar. This existence was non-phallic and unmanly for Euro-Christian performances of gender¹³

Emblematic, perhaps, of this relationship is the fact that in early modern Europe, the little finger was referred to by gentiles in certain places as "the Jew", while the thumb was called in Yiddish "the *Goy*"! In other words, rather than thinking of the stereotype as a one-way process of domination, we must begin to consider processes of complex mutual specular relations. (Boyarin 1997, p. 4)

Furthermore Boyarin contends that in early modern Eastern Europe for mainstream Jewish culture this process of effemination of the Jew, that has its roots in the Babylonian Talmud,¹⁴ assisted the assertion of Jewish identity over and against its gentile surroundings (1997, 1998). The traditional European Jewish culture produced a model of masculinity that was openly resistant to, and critical of, the prevailing ideology of manliness dominant in Europe. However with the Emancipation¹⁵ in the late nineteenth century, this model of Jewish maleness no longer fulfilled its purpose; and its demolition, as will be unpacked later, stands at the basis of Zionism.

What model of femininity did the effemination of Jewish men leave? The orthodox vision of womanhood in Judaism can be summed up in King Solomon's poem 'A Woman of Valor' (*Eshet Hayil*), which praises a woman for qualities such as wisdom, courage, creativity, business acumen, and the profound insight to recognise how to relate to individuals according to their specific needs (Proverbs 31). Within her sphere, the home, the Jewish woman was placed on a pedestal. The qualities of

¹³ This trend of Jewish Orthodox men can still be observed in contemporary Israel (Blumen 2007; Don-Yehiya 2005; Stadler 2007).

¹⁴ The Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) was transmitted orally for centuries prior to its compilation by Jewish scholars in Babylon in about the fifth century AD (Encyclopedia-Britannica 2008).

¹⁵ Emancipation means entailing equal status of individual male citizens in relation to the state, equality before the law, regardless of religion, property, or other individual characteristics of persons.

femininity were defined by male Jewish culture in opposition to masculine traits. The female in Judaism is regarded as inherently close to the physical, material world, while the Jewish male is immersed in the spiritual. The female's role is to supply her husband's and children's physical needs, while he supplies her spiritual wants. This (Boyarin 1995) as Boyarin explains, a tendency on the part of the physical support of the family oppressed, hid their husbands withdrawal into the study hall (*Beit Midrash*) (Costa 1997), the spiritual character for the entire family. Considered other in the Elved Antler is a secular public sphere, the most their role as oppressed, but were excluded from the religious public sphere (Ader 1998, Kohn 1976, Labovitz 2007). This image was of the hyper-male gentile (the *Goy*).

As mentioned earlier, Jews were subject to a wide range of restrictions throughout most of European history. They were required to wear special clothing to distinguish them from Christians; and were often restricted in their religious practice. They were not allowed to vote, and were excluded from some public spaces. Some countries, such as Spain, did not allow Jews to enter their borders¹⁶ (Boyarin 1997; Dinur 2001; Dubnow 1936; Elon 2002; Kung 1995; Labovitz 2007). As part of the 1848 Revolutions in Central Europe, Jews were emancipated. Jewish emancipation was the gradual abolition of the discriminatory laws against Jews in Europe in the nineteenth century, accompanied by the granting of citizenship to European Jews, and by the de Jure recognition of the Jews as equals. Emancipation enabled active participation of male Jews in civil society (Dubnow 1936; Elon 2002).

During the period when Jews were segregated in ghettos and denied participation in the civil societies of their countries, the rabbis were the most influential members of the Jewish community. Together with the community's elders, rabbis had religious as well as important administrative powers. This made the rabbinate a desirable aim for many Jewish boys. This position could be obtained through constant and rigorous studying of Jewish scriptures and Jewish law, and this fitted with the Jewish model of the desired scholarly effeminate Jewish man (Boyarin 1995, 1997). However, beginning in the late eighteenth century, along with the struggle towards emancipation, there came to be a movement of European Jews that advocated the

¹⁶ **Spanish Jews** once constituted one of the largest and most prosperous Jewish communities under both Muslim and Christian rule in Spain. However, after several centuries of persecution they were expelled in 1492 (AICE 2009).

adoption of enlightenment values, and better integration into European civil society. The Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) movement signified the beginning of a wider engagement of European Jews with the secular non-Jewish world and its values, which later developed into Zionism's adoption of the European model of masculinity.

The *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment, was an intellectual movement in Europe from the 1770s to the 1880s. The movement's most important centre was Berlin, where Moses Mendelssohn¹⁷ was active. The *Haskalah* advocated emancipation, the introduction of secular and modern ideas in Jewish life, the modernisation of their own culture, and partial acculturation was expressed in the rejection of 'identifying' Jewish features such as: traditional garb, certain customs and the Yiddish¹⁸ language. Another prominent concept of Jewish emancipation was 'productivisation' that meant taking up professions outside trade and crafts, or studying scriptures, the traditional occupations for Jews; as well as the encouragement of agriculture, and the cultivation of a sense of citizenship, understood as loyalty towards the state. The *Haskalah* began in Galicia (Germany, Poland and Central Europe) and later spread to Eastern Europe (Lithuania and other provinces of the Pale of Jewish Settlement¹⁹). The *Haskalah* was characterised by a scientific approach to religion in which secular culture and philosophy became a central value. It was influenced by an approach that valued secular studies and used reason as the measure of all things (Schoenberg 2009). The *Maskilim* (Enlightened) failed in their attempts to modernise Jewish traditions, and many *Maskilim* rejected Judaism in favour of Christianity, which enabled them to enjoy equal rights and gain positions otherwise inaccessible to Jews (Arendt 1974).

The *Haskalah* nevertheless was one of the most important phenomena of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Jewish culture. It launched the process of internal modernisation, including cultural modernisation and secularisation, which in turn led enlightened Jews to join European culture and to make their own

¹⁷ Moses Mendelssohn was a German Jewish philosopher whose ideas set the basis for the *Haskalah* movement. Some see him as 'The third Moses', the other two being the biblical lawgiver and Moses Maimonides. They herald him as a creator of a new era in the history of the Jewish people, while others think of him as the reason for Jewish assimilation, and the loss of Jewish identity and dilution of traditional Judaism (Altmann 1998; Arkush 1994).

¹⁸ **Yiddish** is a non-territorial High German Language of Jewish origin, spoken throughout the world. Unlike other such languages, Yiddish is written with the Hebrew alphabet as opposed to a Latin alphabet.

¹⁹ The Pale of Jewish Settlement was part of Poland that Russia conquered. Russia did not allow Jews to move from that area into the rest of Russia.

contributions to that culture. Their ideas became the cornerstones of Zionism, developing from the Jewish enlightenment movement (Dubnow 1936; Elon 2002).

Frantz Fanon (1986) observes that colonisation as well as decolonisation is often channelled through the colonised body. In his classic work *Black Skin - White Masks* (1952), he observes how the coloured person is encountering difficulties in integrating his/her corporeal schema. His body is known to him through negative processes of contradiction and elimination until it reaches a stage in which the assailed corporeal schema crumbles and its place is confiscated by 'a racial epidermal schema' (Fanon 1986, pp. 110-12). Michael Gluzman (2007) takes this comparison a step further. He concurs that the crumbling of the corporal schema that Fanon describes is also true for European Jews, and the yearning of the European Jew to change and become more like the European model of manhood is, in actuality, the aspiration of the colonised subject to adopt the white European identity of the ruler²⁰ (Gluzman 2007, pp. 123-35). This perception lies at the centre of the Jewish colonised male body, and it is that carnal aspect of Jewish emancipation that the Zionist movement adopted as the most significant character of the New Jewish man.

There are a lot of similarities in the way Jews were defined within Euro-American culture, and the way colonialism defines the colonised. They were usually defined as inferior and constructed as effeminate in colonial discourse; the process of cultural decolonisation through emancipation and empowerment has been by negation of the colonised men's masculinity (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Fanon 1986; Yuval-Davis 1997). This unification of potency and masculinity leads to a 'macho' style for many decolonisation movements, as well as legitimising the secondary position of women in these national collectivities.

These circumstances created a situation in which Zionism was the only option for Jews who wanted to preserve their Judaism, in a non-religious sense. The option of being 'Germans of Moses religious' was not a real one as the Europeans held their

²⁰ In the same work, Fanon himself compares the anti-Semite and the Negrophobe: At first thought it may seem strange that the anti-Semite's outlook should be related to that of the Negrophobe. It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: "Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you". And I found that he was universally right, by which I meant that I was answerable in my body and in my heart for what was done to my brother. Later I realised that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti- Negro. (1986, p. 122)

Judaism against them. So their options were, either to convert to Christianity, or to become a nation like all other nations, and that was under the bourgeois model of European Enlightenment. The model of the nation state adhering to the 'male principal' subjected the authority of the father over the son to the higher level of the state, thus they cease to be father and son and become subject to the same higher authority, and hence brothers in the same nation. 'Men pass back and forth between the private and the public spheres and the writ of the law of the male sex right runs in both realms' (Pateman 1988, p. 12). Within the Enlightenment movement, nationalist movements arose to present its legitimate demand for sovereignty, and the nation state met that demand. In this respect Zionism is a liberation movement, and a cultural decolonisation movement. The perception of Zionism as decolonisation raises the question of the movement's, and later the State of Israel's, Western affiliation.

Zionism as a decolonisation movement

Efforts to construct a viable taxonomy of the social universe were an important activity for the social scientist since ancient times. Modern social theorists, archaeologists and anthropologists used different and variable methods of taxonomy in order to organise a typology of societies (Lenski 1994). These taxonomies however were based mainly on the point of view of Western researchers and were a tempting resort to the paradigm of 'Us and Them' (McGuigan 1999). This paradigm did not emerge for the first time in the social sciences field and was prominent within Western culture.

Political scientist Samuel Huntington puts this paradigm into a more pluralistic view in referring to it as 'The West and the Rest', in recognition of several different non-Western civilisations (Huntington 1996, pp. 36-9). The tension between the West and the 'rest' (East, Orient and Indigenous of colonised continents as well as Jews) has historically been at the centre of an intense academic debate (Altorki & El-Solh 1984; Burton 1999; Morgan 1983; Rosaldo 1980; Said 1978, 1981, 1994). Lately, with Huntington's death, the debate was reignited (Ajami 2008; Gergen & Huntington 1997; Obituary 2008). This tension brought forth the perception of any culture that is not defined as Western as the 'other'; while simultaneously becoming a core issue in translating and negotiating cultures, through academic research, as well as global politics.

Some see this as the fragmentation of the hegemonic structure of the world system (Friedman 1992; Huntington 1996), while others perceive it as the end result of a long resistance process to imperialism (Altorki & El-Solh 1984; Meibar 1982; Said 1994). However, these power struggles, as well as domination and subordination that underline this debate, have made it fertile soil for reconstruction of sexuality and gender relations (Abu-Lughod 1990; Altorki & El-Solh 1984; Henry 2007; Rosaldo 1980; Sarukkai 2002; Yuval-Davis 1997).

The issue of reconstructing gender relations through liberation movements and redefinitions of masculinity and femininity forms the basis of the construction of nationality. As mentioned earlier, Pateman (1988) and Millet (1969, 1990) observe that within civil society there exists a division in public and private spheres. Women are allocated to the private sphere, while men are allocated to the public sphere. Yuval-Davis concurs that since nations and nationalism have usually been discussed as part of the public, political sphere, the exclusion of women from the public arena has affected their exclusion from the national discourse (1997). As nationalism evolved from feudalism, the social system in the modern liberal state transformed from patriarchy to paternity (Pateman 1988),²¹ men substituted their paternal rights over other men and women had 'the right to rule over their women in the private domestic sphere, but agreed on a contract of social order of equality among themselves in the public, political sphere' (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 7). This social system lies at the base of nationalist discourse and in turn leads to the process of defining nations through masculinity, as well as initiating decolonisation processes through the colonised male body.

Like the abovementioned decolonisation movements, Zionism was also a gendered movement with a unique bodily aspect. It was not just a political and cultural liberation movement, but a 'carnal' revolution (Weiss 2003, p. 151). Within Zionism, as within many other liberation movements, there were several branches. Labour Zionism became the dominant ideology in Jewish Palestine with the founding of the Zionist Labour Party in 1919 (Kelemen 1996; Weissbrod 1981). Labour Zionism

²¹ It is important to note that although Pateman presents this classic contract theory, she does not give up on the term 'patriarchy' in modern societies. Pateman claims that to renounce patriarchy, as many contract theorists have done, is too soon, and would leave feminist theory without a proper way of describing the sexual power relations within these societies (1988, pp. 19-20).

developed from the teachings of A. D. Gordon.²² Its main features were national resurrection by emigration to Palestine, social salvation through physical labour and contact with the soil (agriculture) and by service to the community, which could be achieved through asceticism and self-sacrifice as well as instituting an egalitarian society of perfect justice (Salmon 1997; Weissbrod 1981). Israelis were defined by central Zionist proponents as Jews returning to their historical homeland for restoring the Jewish people's national existence (Weiss 2003; Weissbrod 1997).

The 'productivisation' of Jews, propelled by stressing the importance of labour, especially agriculture and the disdain for bourgeois-middle class values, was prominent within Labour Zionism (Milfull 2008; Rose 2006) and, in a way, echoed Marx's point of view in his *Jewish Question*. Marx (1844) went to the very heart of the matter when he said that Jewry had survived, not in spite of history, but in history and throughout history, it owed its survival to the distinctive role that Jews had played as agents of a money economy in environments which lived in a natural economy; that Judaism was essentially a theoretical epitome of market relationships and the faith of the merchant; and that Christian Europe, as it developed from feudalism to capitalism, became Jewish in a sense²³ (Deutscher 1968; Marx 1844). This point of view is stressed in Zionism's claim that the Jews lived a disembodied existence in exile, and that only a healthy physical life could restore the national Jewish existence (Biale 1992).

Furthermore, Biale (1992) suggests that this political ideology was not a metaphor; rather, it entailed a real change of the physical Jewish body. This change would encompass all carnal aspects of Jewish existence including the sexual body. Zionism

²² A.D. Gordon believed that all of Jewish suffering could be traced to the parasitic state of Jews in the Diaspora, who were unable to participate in creative labour. Although his view was practically close to that of Marx in the *Jewish Question*; his departing point from Marx's thought was his belief that this situation could only be amended through promoting physical labour and agriculture **as a means of transcending Jews spiritually**. It was the experience of labour, he believed, that linked the individual to the hidden aspects of nature and being, which in turn, were the source of vision, poetry, and the spiritual life. Furthermore, he also believed that working the land was a sacred task, not only for the individual but for the entire Jewish people. Agriculture would unite the people with the land and justify its continued existence there. Return to the soil would transform the Jewish people and allow its rejuvenation, according to his philosophy, which he contrasted with Marxism as an ideology whose only content was materialistic freedom, which it understood as the ultimate aim of mankind and not spiritual growth (Salmon 1997).

²³ Maccoby (2006) claims that Marx' argument that the emancipation of Jews and non-Jews alike from the bourgeois way of life, or, as he puts it provocatively the 'emancipation of society from Jewry', is an example of what he considers to be Marx' early Anti-Semitism.

guaranteed an erotic revolution through the creation of a potent New Hebrew²⁴ man and the rejection of the traditional inequality of women: 'Among the socialist pioneers, a new sexual ethics opposed bourgeois marriage and affirmed a healthy sensuality' (Biale 1992, p. 284). However, as Biale stresses, this was not a straightforward relationship.

The new nationalism was accompanied by a strong sense of respectability, if not exactly the respectability of the bourgeoisie, then the equally powerful asceticism of a fanatical movement, dedicated to goals higher than the happiness of the individual. Doctrines of 'free love' and 'Puritanism' coexisted in a peculiar dialectic, similar in many ways to the status of sexuality in the Soviet Union after the revolution. In the Zionist case, the tension between sexual liberation and ascetism channelled erotic energies into the task of nation building, a form of sublimation reminiscent of traditional Jewish culture. Out of its own inner dynamics, Zionism, which had sought a radical break with Jewish past, often ended up returning unwittingly to traditional patterns. The conflict within the erotic ideology of Zionism can therefore serve as a set of signs for the tensions within Zionism as a whole between revolution and continuation (1992, p. 284)

Emblematic of this conflict is the contrast between two literary characters of Jewish-Israeli women in a work published in Israel in 1936. Within this work, the dialogue between womanhood and the values of Zionism is constructed by the description of two women. On the one hand, Rachel, the immigrant-pioneeress who is dedicated to the values of Zionism, blurs her femininity by an unkempt appearance in order to immerse herself wholly into the actual work of nation building along the lines of the male pioneers. On the other hand, Esther, the Israeli born *Sabra*,²⁵

²⁴ The Jewish pioneers in Palestine often referred to themselves as Hebrew in order to stress their connection to the land of Israel and, at the same time, to differentiate themselves from the Diaspora Jews.

²⁵ *Sabra* is an Israeli-born Jew. This concept will be explored in depth later.

Labour Zionism depicted in anti-fashion and anti feminisation of appearance (Almog 2004; Helman 2008).

As stressed before, Zionism's egalitarian ideas arose from the Jewish emancipation movement and were deeply rooted within other liberal and socialist movements in Europe at the time, including that of women's emancipation, and some Jewish women who were prominent in feminist organisation for women's suffrage and sexual rights (Baskin 1998; Boyarin 1997, pp. 313-60). A prominent component of this egalitarian society was gender equality. Zionism claimed to create a sexually equal society. Women were perceived as ambassadors to the Zionist cause. Most scholars agree that ideologically the equality of women within Zionist thought was a central principle (Berg 2001; Biale 1992; Friedman 1999; Herzog 1999; Kafkafi 1999; Rosenberg-Friedman 2006). G.M. Berg (2001) contends that within Zionism the true clash between competing ideas of gender was not between progressive women and dominant men, but between men and women of the Zionist community in Palestine, on one hand, and, on the other, Diaspora traditional Jewish communities, sympathisers and donors, both male and female, who had no connection to physical labour.

Hannah Safran (2006) sharpens these claims. She asserts that the struggle was between orthodox Jewish men and secular Jewish men, and women were the ones paying the price of this struggle. This point can be supported by the fact that Jewish women within the Zionist movement won the vote in 1925, after a long struggle against the Jerusalem Rabbinate.²⁶ The Rabbinate that represented the approach held by orthodox Jewish men and by traditional orthodox Jewish communities in the Diaspora, issued a statement against female suffrage in 1919 (Fogiel Biiaoni 1992b, 1994). During the first years of the British Mandate women's suffrage was the most controversial subject between secular and non-Zionist orthodox Jews in Palestine (Herzog 1999; Rosenberg-Friedman 2006; Safran 2006; Swirski & Safir 1991a). Although Hebrew women won suffrage, their status of equality was yet to come. The feminine Rachel represents, on the one hand, the natural connection to land and nature of the Israeli born *Sabra* and on the other hand, the egalitarian and ascetic values of Zionism. Although Zionism has also been referred to as colonialism and presented as a foreign-backed colonial project, by which settler colonisers dispossessed an indigenous

²⁶ Rabbinate is a supreme Jewish religious authority whose decisions bind all those under its jurisdiction.

people.²⁷ However, Jewish-Israelis perceive Zionism as a decolonisation movement. The *Yishuv*²⁸ struggle with the British against the Ottoman Empire, and later against the British Mandate for an independent Jewish state is narrated within Jewish-Israeli culture, as well as in some Jewish Diasporas, as a story of national liberation. Gender definitions within Jewish-Israeli culture fall under this decolonisation narrative. The New Hebrew man, the *Sabra*, was perceived as a Jewish *Goy* (gentile); a puissant, healthy, tanned and impressive young man as opposed to the pale, feeble and flaccidly timid Diaspora Jew (Almog 2004, pp. 132-3).

The figure of the new national Hebrew woman, or the *Halutza* (pioneeress) was portrayed as a full participant in nation building, while at the same time, achieving self-realisation (Safran 2006). This was indeed a threat to traditional family, domestic, and gender relations. However, since within the Zionist discourse citizenship is achieved through denial and even sacrifice of the self for the good of the collective, both men and women are supposed to engage their bodies in the service of the nation. For men, this goal is achieved in military service and becoming a soldier, while women ensure biological and social reproduction of the collective. Women gain their membership in the national collectivity by becoming mothers, nurturers, enablers to the men and children in the society. Thus the roles assigned to the New Hebrew woman in the national enterprise were the traditional Jewish feminine roles, which were now given a special, national, significance (Halevi 1999; Herzog 1999; Morgenstern-Leissner 2006; Rosenberg-Friedman 2006; Weiss 2003; Yuval-Davis 1980, 1987). This phenomenon is not unique to Zionist discourse; it is well known in nationalism discourse. As Yuval-Davis stresses, gender contributes to a definition of nationalism in several major axis such as national reproduction, national culture and citizenship, and national conflicts and wars (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995).

The narrative of the 'strong, able-bodied *Sabra*' as opposed to the 'feeble, Diaspora Jew' was intensified within the Zionist discourse after the Holocaust. In the State of

²⁷ In these cases, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is cited, not as a tragic clash of nationalisms between peoples who have comparable or even equal claims, nor as a contest between two nations, with national identities and narratives; but rather as a straightforward case of nineteenth century style colonialist dispossession, committed by a non-nation - a collection of land robbers - against a nation from time immemorial, the Palestinian people (Said & Hitchens 2001).

²⁸ Pre-state Jewish settlement in Palestine.

Israel even today, resurrected by the traumatised remains of the Jewish people after the Holocaust, many Jews still carry this feeling of persecution. Contemporary Jews all over the Western world watch the revival of anti-semitism in Europe, in South America, and especially in the Muslim world, with deep concern. The migration of Jews to Israel called *Aliya* (ascending) has increased since 2004, due to a recent increase in expressions of anti-semitism, especially in Europe, but also in Australia and Canada (Luvitz 2007; Merenda 2008; Royters 2007a, 2007b). About 8500 Jews immigrated to Israel in the first half of 2004 and about 8100 in the first half of 2005 (CBS 2005b). The *Olim*²⁹ from France usually report their concerns about rising anti-semitism in France as the main reason for their *Aliya* (Barnovsky 2007; Efraty 2004; Hason 2005a), while *Olim* from other Western countries usually report their feelings of belonging as the main reason for migrating to Israel (Barnovsky 2008; Hason 2005b). For Jews in Israel who experience a very real threat as a prominent and existing part of their everyday lives, this heritage of anti-semitism has an even deeper relevance.

Holocaust heritage in Israeli society

The Holocaust in Israel is experienced as a cultural legacy. It is embedded within Israeli culture and collective lived experience. In Israel, Holocaust memorial days are part of the yearly calendar, accompanied by stories from 'There' and surrounded by people who are Holocaust survivors. Their stories are part of the yearly, official memorial day. They are part of the customary trip to Poland's concentration camps taken by Year 11 (Junior) students in Israel, for the past two decades. They are part of the documentary television shows on memorial days as well as other days. They are part of the curriculum of high school Jewish history lessons. They are embedded within the current Israeli culture as an essential component of that culture. In a way, it is an experience the whole Jewish-Israeli society is experiencing, for the majority of them, without really being in the time and place. This may be referred to as second level experiencing or a vicarious experience (Kaplan 2005). This phenomenon is a common one within the experience of second generation Holocaust survivors. In their article 'Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study',

²⁹ *Olim* means ascending people and it is the Hebrew term for Jewish immigrants coming to Israel.

Friedman et al. (2005) give voice to the experience of a Jewish-American second generation Holocaust survivor.

Another participant was the child of a Holocaust survivor, and knowledge of her father's experience had a strong impact on her Jewish identity as well as her lack of religious practice: Growing up Jewish kind of meant to be different . . . more than having a different language, different foods, a non-American father versus anything religious. It also meant having the threat of a repeat Holocaust hanging over your head . . . my head. Especially when I was younger, I would have dreams sometimes of being . . . being threatened to be harmed because I was Jewish, in . . . in a Holocaust sort of way, not being harmed by somebody walking down the street, but somebody . . . maybe taking me . . . just . . . just like the Holocaust . . . that's what happened to my father. I guess . . . this must affect who I am today. (p. 79)

Within Israeli society, the experience described above encompasses Jewish-Israelis from all ages and walks of life. Holocaust residues exist within all Jewish ethnic groups in Israel, even for Jews from eastern origin, whose families did not experience the Holocaust first-hand. Viewing the collective Holocaust consciousness in Israel today, it is hard to imagine that it once occupied a discourse that differentiated between World War II and the Holocaust. However, when analysing the discourse in the late 1940s of the *Yishuv* it seems that the Holocaust was basically repressed. Although the Holocaust was not denied (on the contrary, a vigorous discourse emerged) but it centred on the level of 'the Holocaust as *raison d'être*' for the founding of an independent Jewish state. The Holocaust was not related to individual suffering, and did not yet achieve the status of a national trauma (Arad 2003; Ofer 2000; Ram 2000; Yablonka 2003).

In a way, the development of the commemoration of the Holocaust within Israeli culture reflects the creation of the gendered Israeli identity. In the first decade of the existence of the State of Israel, the depiction of Diaspora Jews being led by the Nazis, like 'lambs to the slaughter' was contrasted within the Holocaust discourse of the period by the heroism of the Jewish partisans. Given the situation in Palestine and later in Israel, at this time, armed Jewish resistance was valued by the *Yishuv* as the worthy and preferred form of conduct (Yablonka 2003, pp. 5-6). However, this depiction strengthened the image of the effeminate Diaspora Jew in contrast to the masculine fighter, Jewish-Israeli *Sabra* (Lentin 1996). *Sabra* refers to an Israeli born

Jew, which was supposed to hold specific characteristics such as brave, handsome, male³⁰ (Almog 2004). Through the concept of *Sabra*, Israeli gendered identity was constructed and the Holocaust heritage gave the *Sabra* a perfect justification for its manliness. Since the effeminate diasporic Jews, who were led like 'lambs to slaughter', did not protect themselves as well as their women and children we, Jewish Israelis, will never take after them. Our model will be the masculine *Sabra* (Almog 2004, pp. 137-53).

This heritage of persecution may render Jews more susceptible to emotional terror, as a lived embodied experience, and to the various ways it might influence their lives. For Jews in Israel, the very real threat on their lives is still prominent and continues, yet with a clear difference. From the day it came into existence, the State of Israel has been exposed to numerous incidents of violation of the integrity of the nation state, involving acts of terrorism and wars, yet it was able to protect itself, and its people, though clearly at a cost to human lives. For the Jewish people, it is the first time for centuries, millennia even, that they felt secure if everything falls apart again.

Judaism has survived the almost two thousand year period remarkably well without a temple and state, as a republic of scholars, despite all the catastrophes it has an intense community life. But... the State of Israel... has fundamentally changed the situation of the world Jewry. (Kung 1995, p. 305)

Although the commemoration of the Holocaust may be observed as the commercialisation of the Holocaust (Arad 2003; Gordon 2000), especially for people outside the Israeli collectivity; it genuinely tends to shape Israelis' collective experience (Cesarani 2004; Gordon 2000). The Holocaust heritage taints any other conflict in which the State of Israel is involved, with trauma and terror shades. Even the Israeli-Arab conflict is viewed within Jewish-Israeli discourse through the prism of the Holocaust, and the terror of 'we will not let **it** happen again'. We will not be led like 'lambs to slaughter'. Critics of the 'Holocaust consciousness' that come from a wide political spectrum in Israel, argue that this phenomenon leads to assimilation of values of Jewish Diaspora. They argue it emphasises Jewish-Israeli uniqueness through an ominous lens, and by so doing, the Jews are perceived as positioned in solitary against the rest of the world (Cesarani 2004, pp. 3-4). This view of the Jews

³⁰ Being male was a dominant feature within being a *Sabra*, although female born and raised Jewish-Israelis were also referred to as *Sabra*.

confronted by the rest of the world is not new. It may be a by-product of the phenomenon discussed earlier, of the Jew representing the other in Europe and the Muslim world. However, it is deeply rooted within Jewish-Israeli culture. For example, an editorial in the daily *Yedioth Aharonoth* in 1945 asked:

“Why are we so apathetic to what history will undoubtedly record as one of the greatest victories of the Jewish people over its enemies?” The answer: “We do not believe that [the world, judges, prosecutors] understand what befell us, are genuinely shocked by it, regret [what happened], or would lift a finger to prevent a recurrence of such a Holocaust tomorrow or the day after.” (Cited in Yablonka 2003, pp. 7-8)

Zuckermann (1996) claims this Holocaust anxiety becomes a solid layer in the fabrication of Israeli everyday reality, as well as a political outlook and orientation. It is constantly enhancing a socio-political praxis, which results inevitably in ever more causes for anxiety and fundamental mistrust. The trauma is ideologised by a vicious circle of anticipating the next terror act and then using it as justification for the trauma and anxiety. Thus the real anxiety and the instrumentalised trauma are so closely interwoven that it is often impossible to distinguish between the actual experienced anxiety and the ideological instrumentalisation of its fetish-like reification. In his eyes this leads to a political and social situation in which the solid matrix of the trauma-shaped political mentality will not be threatened by the need to rethink courageously the actual socio-historical chain of cause and effect of the trauma, and to actually break through the vicious circle of its ideologisation (Zuckermann 1996, pp. 95-6).

The dichotomy between the strong and able-bodied Israeli and the limp Diaspora Jew, who is unable to protect himself in the face of anti-Jewish threat (Almog 2004), came up as a theme in interviews I conducted for this research, as soon as the question of safety and place came up. Although safety is under threat in Israel, the feeling of agency, as well as comradeship, made it more bearable than the perceived threat outside of Israel, accompanied by a feeling of helplessness and aloneness. Furthermore, the development of the relationship between Israeli culture and the commemoration of the Holocaust reflects, as I stressed earlier, the creation of the gendered Israeli identity. The influence of these connections on models of womanhood in contemporary Jewish-Israeli society will be explored in depth in subsequent chapters.

Israeli society – a complex puzzle

Some refer to Israel³¹ as an 'ethnic democracy'³² while others describe it as collectivistic or nonliberal democracy (Ben-Eliezer 1993; Ben-Moshe 1997; Ghanem, Rouhana & Yiftachel 1998; Peri 1996; Smootha 1997); however, the point being made is that Israel is the state of the Jewish people, although about 18% of its population are Arabs.³³ A major feature of Israeli society is the wide and deep rifts between religious and non-religious groups, between Israeli-Arabs and Israeli-Jews, between the political left and right, the rich and the poor, and between *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim*³⁴ (Ben-Eliezer 2004; Cohen & Habersfeld 1998; Goldberg, Porat & Schwarz 2006; Habersfeld & Cohen 2007; Hirschberg 2004; Ichilov, Salomon & Inbar 2005). These divides often intersect and overlap, yet are clearly marked between those assimilating modern Western values, and those who do not (Hasan 1993; Safir 2005). As discussed earlier, modern Western values play a major role in gender definitions of Israeli society. Thus assimilation of these values or rejection of them may be central to unpacking models of womanhood within Israeli mainstream discourse.

The rifts within Israeli society bring conflict and dispute that sometimes lead to violent reactions. Soon after the 1996 elections (the first elections following the

³¹ One of the major points of dispute in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies within the definition of the physical borders of Israel. Although it is not within the scope of this study, I find it crucial to stress that in this study the 'State of Israel' or 'Israel' does not bear any reference to The West Bank and Gaza Strip.

³² Ethnic democracy is a system that combines the extension of civil and political rights to individuals and some collective rights to minorities, with institutionalisation of majority control over the state. Driven by ethnic nationalism, the state is identified with a "core ethnic nation", not with its citizens. The state practices a policy of creating a homogenous nation state, a state of and for a particular ethnic nation, and acts to promote the language, culture, numerical majority, economic wellbeing, and political interests of this group. Although enjoying citizenship and voting rights, the minorities are treated as second-class citizens, feared as a threat, excluded from the national power structure, and placed under some control. At the same time, the minorities are allowed to conduct a democratic and peaceful struggle that yields incremental improvement in their status. Northern Ireland from 1921 to 1972, Canada from independence in 1867 to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, Poland between 1918 and 1935, and Malaysia since the early 1970s are instances of ethnic democracies. Germany also borders on ethnic democracy. It is strongly identified with the German ethnic nation, and has, since 1945, absorbed about 15 million ethnic Germans (not including the 17 million ethnic Germans following unification) and immediately granted them full citizenship. (Smootha 1997, pp. 199-200)

³³ The official term used by conventional Israeli social scientists, state officials and the Jewish public in general is 'Arab-Israelis', and as such it will be used in this study. However it is important to stress that this term connotes a definition of that population as a cultural, rather than as a national minority. I am aware and would like to acknowledge that as part of a general process of strengthening of national Palestinian identity during the last years, a significant part of the Palestinian political leadership and public, as well as critical scholars use the term Palestinian citizens of Israel (Rosenhek 1998; Sa'ar 2004, 2006).

³⁴ *Ashkenazim* are Jews from European origin, and *Mizrahim* are Jews from oriental origins. These different ethnic groups will be explored in depth later in the text.

assassination of Prime Minister Rabin), an Israeli daily newspaper ran the following editorial:

[Israeli society] will never be one homogeneous society, but at least four societies: the religious-traditional world, which today is producing enough energy to be an autonomous unit, independent of the secular population; the world of 'the round eyeglasses', which draws its inspiration from a certain measure of cosmopolitan criteria... which relate to Israeli identity as a kind of extra value; the central stream, which aspires to combine Zionist values with a bourgeoisie lifestyle, based on the principles of Western civilisation; and the Arab public, which is trying to settle the conflict between its life experience in the democratic society which the Jews have established and their belonging to the Palestinian people and the Islamic faith. (Ma'ariv, 18 June 1996, cited in Ben-Moshe 1997)

Israel has two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic. Hebrew is the major and primary language of the state and is spoken by the majority of the population. Arabic is spoken by the Arab minority and by some Jews of oriental origins. English is studied in school and is spoken by the majority of the population as a second language. Due to constant migration of Jews from many countries to Israel, there are other languages spoken in Israel. Israeli media is influenced by Western models and although it produces some Israeli programs, many times based on American formats, American and some English speaking European popular television shows are commonly presented. Newspapers as well as magazines can be found in Hebrew as well as various other languages (DellaPergola 2007; DellaPergola, Rebhun & Tolts 2005).

Although both major ethnic groups in Israel (Arabs and Jews) show considerable Westernisation of body image and attitudes, as well as a high level of consumerism, their cultures are dissimilar in the sense that Jewish secular society identifies as part of the Western world and emulates modern Western values, while Arab society demonstrates persistence of non-Western Arab traditional values (Hasan 1993; Safir 2005).

The Arab citizens of Israel number roughly 1.37 million; of these, 82% are Muslims, 9% Christians, and 9% are Druze (CBS 2005a). Formally, they are considered full citizens of the state, a status that bestows undeniable citizenship rights and possibilities of access to universal social services (Ben-Rafael 1998; Sa'ar 1998,

2007b). However, due to Israel's essence as an ethnic democracy, a term with inner tension,³⁵ Israeli-Arabs experience their Israeli citizenship as incomplete (Ghanem 1998; Ghanem, Rouhana & Yiftachel 1998; Smooha 1997, 2002). The Jewish character of the state alienates its non-Jewish citizens. They are barred from ethno-national and republican citizenship, in the sense that they cannot participate in the definition of the common good of society, and are excluded from the core of collective Israeli identity (Shafir & Peled 1998, 2002). Furthermore, their affiliation to the Palestinian nations positions them in the place of the enemy, as well as the other. The status of Israeli-Arab women within the State of Israel is basically not different from that of Arab women in other countries. Despite the avowedly democratic nature of Israel, Israeli-arab women do not on the whole marry out of free choice. Marriage and divorce are entirely in the hands of the qadi, or religious judge and registrar of marriage,³⁶ (Halevi & Blumen 2005; Hasan 1993; Sa'ar 2001, 2007b) and even further, Israeli-Arab women cannot appeal to the district court, as can their Jewish counterparts (Hasan 1993, p. 70).

As opposed to recent feminist claims that highlighted Arab women's skilled utilisation of their blood rights for protection and lifelong support within the patriarchal group (Abu-Lughod 2002; Afshar 2008; Altorki & El-Solh 1988; Hegland 1998; Majid 1998; Shehabuddin 1999; Wassef 2001). Israeli sociologist, Amalia Sa'ar sketches a sad situation of Arab-Israeli women. In Arab-Israeli reality, women's entitlement to protection is more limited than is usually assumed. Her 'analysis of the code of familial commitment, particularly the interplay between gender and power, reveals that in order to obtain their family's commitment, Israeli-Arab women need to maintain a delicate balance between power and weakness. For a variety of reasons, women often fail to achieve such balance and hence suffer isolation and loneliness' (Sa'ar 2001, p. 723). Hasan suggests that this situation is not only due to Arab culture and mentality, but reinforced in Israel (as well as in Arab countries) by laws and policies motivated by governmental causes, concerned with keeping Israeli-Arabs satisfied at a low cost; that of Israeli-Arab women being sacrificed in the name of family honour, or by other traditional patriarchal clans' demands of them (Hasan

³⁵ For a detailed review of the polemic around Israel's definition as an 'ethnic democracy' see: Gavison 1999; Ghanem 1998; Ghanem, Rouhana & Yiftachel 1998; Shafir & Peled 1998; Smooha 1997, 2002.

³⁶ As for all ethnic groups in Israel, there is no choice of civil marriage, not for Jews or Arabs.

1993, 1999). While this is a constant source for consideration for Jewish and Arab feminists in Israel, it will not be a focal point of this research.³⁷

The Jews in Israel are of various Jewish ethnic origins, and of different levels of religious observance. Israelis tend not to align themselves with Jewish religious movements (such as Reform or Conservative or Reconstructionist) but instead tend to define their religious affiliation by the degree of their religious practice. According to a 1993 survey, about 12% of Israeli Jews defined themselves as *Haredim* (ultra-orthodox religious); an additional 9% were "religious"; 35% considered themselves "traditionalists" (not strictly adhering to Jewish law); and 43% were "secular", termed *Hilonim* (Elazar 1996). Since the massive migration wave from the former USSR was composed mainly of secular Jews (as well as some Christians), it is safe to assume these percentages have changed, yet the Jewish holidays are celebrated if not observed by the majority of Jewish-Israeli population.³⁸

Ethnicity and religious observance intersect and overlap. *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim* can be subdivided into three distinct levels of religious observance that are widely used to classify Jews in Israel. First, those who identify themselves as 'religious' or orthodox observe most religious rituals. Traditionally this group was predominantly *Ashkenazi*, but in the last decade a substantial group of *Mizrahim* joined this group (Album 1999; Peled 1998). Second, the 'secular' (*Hilonim*), observe some rituals, usually family-oriented holidays. This group was traditionally predominantly *Ashkenazi* and the mass Russian migration of the previous decade mostly joined this group. Third, the 'traditional' Jews who are an intermediate group consisting of mostly *Mizrahi* Jews (Tabory 1991). Among the seculars, 53% believe in God and 78% of all Israelis participate in a *Passover Seder* (Elazar 1996).

Orthodoxy is not an extreme form of religious traditionalism, but rather an innovation which often deviates from tradition in the direction of increased rigidity. In Israel this reaction is expressed in, among other things, clear separation of the sexes within the religious education systems and in daily activities: in manner of dress (women wear

³⁷ The focal point of the research is secular Jewish-Israeli women. Its main aim is to give voice to these women, who are not a fundamental religious minority, nor an ethnic minority, yet their voice is almost unheard. A detailed discussion of this issue is found in the methodology chapter (Bodies in social texts).

³⁸ These terms are unique to Israeli society and are different to terms describing relationship to religion within Diaspora Jews.

long-sleeved blouses or dresses, thick stockings, long skirts **and wigs**), in rejection of radio and television and in reading only books and newspapers approved by religious leaders. (Swirski & Safir 1991b)

The Jewish-orthodox world in Israel is a guarded sphere. The ultra-orthodox community in Israel is a secluded community. Men are encouraged to study in religious, higher education institutions (Yeshivas) as long as possible in order to keep them away from the economic sphere as well as compulsory military service,³⁹ where contact with the modern secular world of free choice may lead them away from their community. This is enforced by other means of seclusion like abstention from any form of print or electronic secular media and minimal contact with the secular world. This situation complicates access to this particular community. As a secular Jewish woman and as a researcher, it is almost beyond my reach (Blumen 2007; El-Or 1997). Furthermore, this study explores the influence of living in a constantly terrorised conflict area for women with Western affiliation. It was documented that orthodox persons use their religion as a defence mechanism (Stadler 2006), one that is not available to less religious persons.

Since in Western cultures agency for women usually involves bodily practices; it is my contention that secular Jewish-Israeli women's means of executing agency will be through monitoring the body. That is why of these three religious Jewish-Israeli sub-groups: orthodox, traditional and secular, the 'non-religious' (who usually refer to themselves as 'secular') and the 'traditional' Jews are far more open to Western influence, in particular media and fashion.

Western affiliations in mainstream Israeli society

The issue of East and West is apparent and even central to Israeli culture and society through its various layers. Whether or not the State of Israel answers to the specific definitions, as Huntington (1996) puts forward, this has been the core of an ongoing academic debate. The debate gets even more complex when the question of *Mizrahiut* as opposed to *Askenaziut*, and its influence on the hegemonic discourse of mainstream Israeli-culture in general, and on models of Israeli womanhood in particular, is added. These questions are very relevant to this research and will be explored in depth in subsequent chapters.

³⁹ Orthodox Jews in Israel are exempt from conscription as long as they study in Yeshiva.

I would like to expand at this point on the difference between *Ashkenazi* and *Mizrahi* Jews in Israel. In a cultural sense, an *Ashkenazi* Jew can be identified by the concept of *Yiddishkeit*, a word that literally means “Jewishness” in the Yiddish language. Before the *Haskalah* and the emancipation of Jews in Europe, this meant the study of Torah and Talmud for men, and a family and communal life governed by the observance of Jewish law for men and women. Across Europe, most Jews prayed in liturgical *Ashkenazi* Hebrew, and spoke Yiddish in their secular lives. Most Jewish communities with extended histories in Europe are *Ashkenazim*. The majority of the Jews who migrated from Europe to other continents in the past two centuries are *Ashkenazim*. *Mizrahi* Jews are Jews descended from the Jewish communities of the Middle East, North-Africa, Central Asia and Caucasus. The term *Mizrahi* in Hebrew literally means Easterners. Despite their heterogeneous origins, the so-called *Mizrahi* Jews generally practise rites identical or similar to traditional Sephardic Judaism; this fact has resulted in a conflation of terms, particularly in Israel and in religious usage, in which 'Sephardi' is used in a broad sense to include *Mizrahi* Jews as well as Sephardim (Spanish Jews) proper. The term *Mizrahim* was born especially in Israel in the circumstances of the meeting there of waves of immigrants from both the *Ashkenazi* and the *Sephardic* and oriental Jewish collectivities. The term came to be widely used by so-called *Mizrahi* activists in the early 1990s, and since then has become an accepted designation. Israel's Jewish population today is about half *Ashkenazi* and half *Mizrahi* (Peres & Ben-Rafael 2006, pp. 138-218).

Sociologist Sami Smootha (2005) claims the founders and leaders of Israel spoke with admiration about the West and with contempt about the East. The idea of the Jewish state, set forth by Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was reminiscent of bourgeois Austria at the turn of the twentieth century. Ben-Gurion, the leader of labour Zionism and the founder of the State of Israel as well as Jabotinsky, the leader of right-wing Zionism, expressed a strong desire to make the new Jewish state European. They, as well as other Zionist leaders of the time, warned against the cultural danger of 'eastern barbarism' posed by Jewish immigrants from Arab countries (Dahan-Kalev 1999, 2002; Smootha 2005). Ephraim Ya'ar (2005) concurs with this assessment. He claims that it is a historical fact that under the leadership of its dominant elites from both Left and Right, Israel has maintained a definite Western orientation in the three main dimensions of activity of the society and state: political, economic and cultural. He

turns our attention to the fact that there need not be an overlap between these three dimensions, yet the Western orientation is both existing and accepted by *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim*, especially in second and third generation Israelis (Ya'ar 2005).

However, Smootha (2005) objects to the implicit or explicit assumption made by many Israeli sociologists that Israel is Western (Herzog 2004; Horowitz & Lissak 1989; Kimmerling 2001; Shafir & Peled 2002). Although, he acknowledges Israel's Western affiliations, he contends that its self definition as Western is not sufficient for granting Israel a Western label. First, he claims, Israel's demography, manifested in the fact that over a quarter of its population (Arab-Israelis and ultra-orthodox Jews) are by self-definition non-Western and reject core Western values like individualism or women's equality. Second, Israel has a positive fertility rate of 2.9 in comparison with the West, which is marked by negative replacement rates. Third, Israel is marked by what Smootha defines as familism, a centrality and strength of the family within culture and society. Furthermore, unlike Western countries, the Jews from Muslim countries and the Arabs comprise the majority of the population. After the mass migration of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel during the 1990s, European Jews have increased in number, but still they constitute about 47% of the entire population (Smootha 2004, 2005). This reality and the fact that inter-ethnic marriages between Jews of European origins (*Ashkenazim*) and Jews of Middle Eastern origin (*Mizrahim*) are relatively common in contemporary Jewish-Israeli society (Benjamin & Barash 2003), contributing a somewhat Mediterranean look and flavour to Israel, not found in other Western states (Smootha 2005).

This research focus is on mainstream Jewish secular culture within Israeli society and the models of womanhood it offers, or compels upon women and girls in Israel. It is important to note that Jewish secular Israeli society defines itself as Western, and views its situation in the Middle East as a drawback to its Western affiliations (Smootha 2005). In order to unpack the tension between prevailing models of womanhood within Israeli society, as well as to explore how they are influenced by the specific situation of a Westernised society existing in a constantly terrorized conflict zone, it is first important to introduce the dominant perceptions of womanhood within the Jewish tradition, in general, and in Israel, in particular.

Judaism and gender

A quick survey shows the formative period of the older world religions – Judaism, early Brahmanism and Confucianism – which influenced the others by defining the prevailing social structure, developed within a framework of extreme male dominance. Early Buddhism, for example, refused to conceptualise transcendence in terms of gender, yet adhered to a patriarchal organisation of society, where even nuns subjugated to monks. Though Taoism's roots have been located deep in ancient agricultural religions with female symbolism, in a real sense, it was formed in interaction with male dominance. It is possible to locate a correlation of male gods and male dominance in world religions (Young 1987). Judaism is another religion born in these times, when women were perceived as material objects in most societies. Thus, the subordinate position of women is an inherent component within Judaism; however, in these times, Judaism was socially progressive,⁴⁰ although nowadays many of the regulations may be perceived as discrimination.⁴¹ Judaism had put forward many new and socially radical laws concerning women's social and legal status. For example, laws like *Yibbum and Halitza*,⁴² were designed to protect widowed, childless women. These women were often abandoned by their dead husband's family, as well as by their family of origin.

Unlike Jewish men, Jewish women are bound by only three religious duties which they are supposed to keep. Traditionally these are considered to be *Hallah* (the separation of a bit of dough to prepare the *Sabbath* loaves), kindling the *Sabbath*

⁴⁰ For example, a cardinal principle in Judaism is conserving the Shabbat, a day every week, in which, no work is allowed to be done, by any Jewish person, in any Jewish household. Landlords or slaves, men or women, and even household animals, were supposed to rest, one day a week, by commandment.

⁴¹ That said, it is important to emphasise that although Judaism's essence was socially progressive, the Jewish people had to conserve Judaism for hundreds of years, in the Diaspora, where no central Rabbinical structure had existed, and Jewish communities were removed from one another; this made communication between different Jewish communities and rabbinical authorities very difficult, and sometimes even impossible. This Diasporic situation made the orthodox conservation of the Jewish law, *Halakha*, the only way of keeping Judaism alive (Kung 1995).

⁴² In *Yibbum* the deceased's husband's family, i.e. either his father, or one of his brothers was supposed to impregnate the childless widow. This was done in order to ensure the deceased husband's family perceives the widow as a mother of one of the family's children, and so a member of the family, entitled to protection, shelter and food. The law of *Halitza* was the ritual that enabled the childless widow to decline her right to *Yibbum*. These same older laws are still hanging on today in Israel, where the Orthodox Rabbinate still enjoys a monopoly over marital laws. It is inconceivable, yet practised in everyday life.

candles, and *Niddah* (the law of family purity),⁴³ to be discussed in more detail later (Hayman 1976; Wasserfall 1992; Weissler 1992; Yanay & Rapoport 1997).

Paula Hayman suggests that the position of women in Judaism rests upon a patriarchal sex role differentiation and the concomitant disparagement of women. By exempting women from all positive, time-bound mitzvot due to their family obligations, the *Halakha* [Jewish law] changes their status from full membership participants in Jewish communities to enablers. This of course is not unique to Judaism and is consistent in other religions as well (Sharma 1987). However, since women are not *Halakhically* required to participate in communal prayer three times a day, women can not, in traditional Judaism, be counted in *Minyan* nor, as representatives of the community, lead a service. Choosing to perform mitzvot does not raise one to the *Halakhic* status of those obliged to do so (Hayman 1976).

This exclusion from religious ritual held an important part in the exemption of women from everyday public life. In a society that emphasises communal prayer and study, being excluded from these realms into the 'inferior' daily life of supplying others' needs, demonstrates the social spheres rendered to women, and their lower social status as well as their main social role as enablers and nurturers. In Judaism, women are legally excluded from the religious congregation, and their religious legal status is not equal to that of men; for example, women are not allowed to testify in a Jewish court (*Beth Din*). Within the framework of traditional Judaism, women are not independent legal entities. Like the minor, the deaf mute, and the idiot, they cannot serve as witnesses in Jewish courts, except for a few specified cases. They do not inherit equally with male heirs; they play only a passive role in Jewish marriage ceremonies; and they cannot initiate divorce proceedings (Berman 1976, p. 116).

Negotiating public and private spheres

In Israel the rabbinate has a monopoly over laws concerning marriage and divorce. Jewish couples wishing to marry or divorce are forced to do so in the State of Israel, but only in a religiously orthodox form. There is no such thing as a civil (or civilised)

⁴³ *Hallah* actually stands for women's supervision of the observation of the Jewish dietary laws (*Kashrus*). Kindling the *Sabbath* candles stands for keeping the *Sabbath*, since from the moment the candles are lit in a house, *Sabbath* observation takes hold. *Niddah* is the female practice of abstention from any bodily contact with one's husband, while the woman is menstruating. This is presented as keeping the family purity, of which the woman is also responsible.

marriage ceremony. This situation is out of step with the fact that the majority of Jewish-Israelis are not religious. Fogiel-Bijaoui (2003) contends that personal law is 'nationalised' in Israel, conscripted in the service of the national cause by both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By constricting personal law to its religious form, the two major ethnic groups, Jews and Muslim Arabs, are disabling diffusion through marriage between these groups (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2003).

Religious courts are known to prefer men's rights over women's rights, in most cases. As observed above, Judaism is a patriarchal religion; it gives women an important place, in the home, but excludes them from the public sphere (Halperin-Kaddari 2004; Raday 1994). This is manifested through various laws and costumes. For example, in traditional Judaism, Jewish women are not considered part of the congregation, even in synagogues they are segregated into the women's section. Women are supposed to sit in a separate, back part of the synagogue called "*Ezrat Nashim*" and if there are no women, the ceremony can be executed, but if there are no men, there is no ceremony. Furthermore, in traditional Jewish life, for example, orthodox and conservative Jews do not have female cantors and rabbis, and the orthodox consider it wrong for women to say Kiddush if a man is present (Koller-Fox 1976).

As a result of reducing women's mitzvot to three, and emphasising women's domain as home and family life, one mitzvah got more substantial, the *Niddah*. *Niddah* represents female bodily practices, observed in periods of menstruation and include rituals of purification. It comes from the Hebrew word to banish or ex-communicate, and its meaning is ex-communicated in the female form. However this word today stands, for a lot of people, for menstruation, or a menstruating woman. For Hebrew speaking Israelis this connotation is very obvious and for non-Hebrew speaking Jews it is made obvious through codes of behaviour.

As in so many other religions, in the Judaism of biblical times, the menstruating women literally left the camp; today the *Niddah* is referred to within orthodox circles as *Taharat Hamishpacha*, that is, family purity. Over time *Niddah* has changed and has been given the function of keeping the family purity, and besides the ritual of purification and the laws and customs observed, it is significant in giving women the role of gatekeeper for the family's health and safety (Wasserfall 1992; Weissler 1992). A *Niddah* should keep all the regulations and rituals she is supposed to follow in order

to keep her family pure and safe. In Israel, where the Orthodox Rabbinate has a monopoly over marriage and divorce, each prospective bride receives a booklet instructing her in the importance of family purity and admonishing her, according to a *Midrash* (homiletic exegesis), that death in childbirth is a punishment for the abandonment of the laws of *Niddah* (Hayman 1976).

Furthermore, Yanay and Rapoport claim that religious Zionism in Israel has conscripted the ritual of menstrual impurity and purification to the Jewish struggle over national boundaries and collective identity. By telling women that the practice of *Niddah* makes them responsible not only for purity of the family, but also for 'the people of Israel, the Land of Israel, and the preservation of the holy scriptures, the Torah. This rhetorical linkage politicises both the body of women and the practice of *Niddah* (Yanay & Rapoport 1997, p. 651). The politicisation of women's bodies is prominent in national discourse and usually involves bodily practices of sexuality and procreation (Yuval-Davis 1997). I would like to explore in depth how this process influences two prominent issues within Jewish-Israeli women's lives: the family and sex and sexual behaviour.

Familism and sexuality in Israeli society

The significance of the family within Israeli society can not be overstated. Although Israelis refer to their country as a developed Western society that happens to be located in the Middle East, Jewish as well as Arab patriarchal historical influences and modern governmental policies produce a family oriented society, in which family stability rules most sectors of society (Hasan 1999; Katz & Peres 1986; Peres & Katz 1981; Safir 1991; Shalev & Gooldin 2006; Yanay & Rapoport 1997). Fertility is a major concern of Israeli society. The reasons for this phenomenon will be explored in depth later. However a childless marriage is not considered a family, and couples without children are considered misfortunate (Benjamin & Ha'elyon 2002; Remennick 2000). Religious Jewish and Muslim law both enable a husband to take a second wife, if his wife could not produce children (Safir 1991). In Judaism, as in several other religions, procreation is a religious duty.

Procreation has always been a prominent component of Zionist discourse. High birth rates were perceived as another means of 'conquering the land'. Men were encouraged

to 'work the land' in order to really own it, and women were encouraged to have children for the revival of the Jewish nation, in its new–old country (Berkovitch 1997; Manski & Mayshar 2003; Morgenstern-Leissner 2006; Ram 1999; Yonah 2004; Yuval-Davis 1980, 1987, 1996, 1997). Of course this experience is not unique to Zionism and can be found in other societies, like the former USSR (Remennick et al. 1995). As noted above, the 'good citizen' is perceived within Zionist discourse as willing to deny and even sacrifice the self for the benefit of the collective. Both men and women are expected to employ their bodies in the service of the nation; men perform this by becoming soldiers and women by becoming mothers (Berkovitch 1997; Halevi 1999; Yuval-Davis 1980, 1985).

As 'bearers of the collective' (Yuval-Davis 1980), Israeli-Jewish women gain full membership in Israeli society primarily as mothers and wives, in their role as enablers, and only then as individual citizens (Halevi 1999). In the 1950s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion established prizes for mothers with 10 children or more; even to this day, there is a national organisation, *Zahavi*, which lobbies the rights and interests of large families, that is, families with four children or more under the age of 21 (ZAHAVI 2008). In Israel these families were referred to as 'families blessed with children'. All women who give birth in a hospital receive a special birth allowance from the National Insurance Institute in Israel (NII), as well as a monthly child allowance, that increases with the number of children in the family. Women are paid more for their third and fourth child than for their first or second child. These allowances are in the name of the mother, and continue until the child is 18 years old (NII 2008).

Due to a combination of reasons relating to Jewish tradition and religion as well as political and demographic factors of the Middle East region, Israeli society is family-centred and clearly pronatalist, at both the institutional (social services, health care) and individual/normative levels. The average Israeli-Jewish family has about three children, and a low total abortion rate among Israeli-Jewish women, of about 0.6 throughout their reproductive lifespan (Amir 1995; Amir & Benjamin 1997; Remennick et al. 1995). About 6% of the births are to single women; the average age for first birth is 26.4 years (27.3 years for Jewish women and 23.1 years for Muslim women), and 43% of the deliveries are to women 30 years old or over (Mazori 2005).

Secular Israelis are fairly tolerant towards premarital sex and cohabitation of young adults, as long as they are 'sexually responsible'. Efficient contraception is widely available and used by the majority of the population. Several alternative channels of family planning information as well as help are available. Young people have full access to information about sex. Sexual education is ideologically accepted and shared at all levels of the establishment, and the overall climate surrounding sexuality is one of acceptance (Amir 1995; Amir & Benjamin 1997; Remennick 2004; Remennick et al. 1995). Another facet of this acceptance of sexuality is also prevalent in the Levantine male culture of the 'Israeli street', which sees little point in restraining or disguising sexual interest (Remennick 2004).

Social models of womanhood usually possess a prominent sexual component, defining women who are entitled to be part of the collective (Amir & Benjamin 1997). Recent studies attempting to construe Israeli female sexuality have deciphered distinctions between various female groups constructing Israeli society. First and foremost was the ethnic component; within Jewish or Arab Israeli cultures, female sexuality is perceived and related to in very disparate ways (Amnesty 2005; Hasan 1993, 1999). The second and very particular as well, was the religious-secular distinction. Religious Jewish as well as Arab or Palestinian cultures refer to female sexuality very differently than secular or even traditional sectors of Israeli society. This is especially significant in the State of Israel, which is the only democracy that exclusively employs religious alternatives as its personal law (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2003; Halperin-Kaddari 2004).

A significant body of research has identified yet another important definition of female sexual inclusion into Israeli collectivity that lies within a Jewish ethnicity, constructing 'us' and 'others' in various layers within Israeli society (Benjamin & Barash 2003; Dahan-Kalev 1999, 2002; Gvion & Luzzatto 2004; Lemish 2000; Raijman & Semyonov 1997; Remennick 2004; Remennick et al. 1995; Remennick & Segal 2001). Different Jewish ethnic groups possess different models of womanhood because they have immigrated to Israel from a different country of origin with a Jewish culture specific to that country or region. This has created some stereotypes of femininity and womanhood (Liebman 1989; Remennick 1999b, 2004). This experience is significant in the construction of public as well as private models of

womanhood for Israeli society in general, and for the women living in this society, in particular.

Since this study explores the lived experience of non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women, there are several distinctions between models of womanhood that are significant here. The first, of course, is the national-ethnic distinction between Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Jewish women; second, between religious and non-religious, Jewish-Israeli women. Another most significant distinction is the one between various groups of Jewish ethnic groups, as well as between veteran and immigrant Israeli women's sexuality. Delila Amir (1995) constructs Jewish-Israeli female's sexuality as it stems from the professional discourse of the state's abortion approval committees. Through this discourse, Jewish-Israeli female's sexuality is defined as responsible (when using contraception), committed (when she contributes to the biological reproduction of the collective) and sensible (when avoiding the 'trouble' of an unwanted pregnancy altogether) (Amir & Benjamin 1997).

Carole Pateman observes that there is a tendency to disregard the gendered nature of performance and representation of national identity and the masculine construction of the nation state and citizenship (1988). In the process of national identity consolidation, traditional gender identities are often extolled, while egalitarian views are suspended, if not totally rejected, and women are often compelled to symbolise a national way of life (Yuval-Davis 1997). National identity is also a social construct and as such, is gendered. Within Israeli socio-culture, these definitions of gender are influenced by a society in the midst of protracted, violent conflict. The secular Jewish-Israeli woman's femininity is constructed through her lived embodied experience. When coming to explore the lived experience of Jewish-Israeli women in Israel, there are some critical issues which are unique to the experience of living in Israel that need clarifying. The first and most prominent issue is the perceived notion of 'living under terror'.

Bodies of terror

As mentioned earlier, terrorism is an old phenomenon. In Western democracies it became a conversational term in the second half of the twentieth century. Terrorism was a well-known phenomenon on the domestic as well as the international scene as early as the 1970s. Philip Karber wrote in *Urban Terrorism* that 'terrorism has come to America's cities' (1971, p. 521); and terrorism scholar Walter Laqueur argued that the misconception of terrorism is due to the 'utter carelessness with which the term is used, not only in the media, but also in government announcements and by academic students of the subject' (1978, p. 262). However, it was only in the wake of 9/11, after the 'Western world' had encountered suicide terrorism face-to-face on a large scale that terrorism has become a central preoccupation, culturally as well as politically, for the global community. Perceived as a virulent threat, the problem of terrorism has come not only to dominate international relations and domestic security agendas, but constantly preoccupy the public's mind all over the globe.

Israeli society, however, perceived terrorism as a highly pernicious threat decades earlier (Laqueur 2003). The Arab-Israeli conflict in Israel-Palestine has been entwined by acts of violence defined as terrorism by both sides, creating the 'security ethos' of Israeli society that dictates Israeli security, economic, political, and even social and educational agendas (Bar-On 1997; Beinun 1998; Ben-Eliezer 2005; Berkovitch 1997; Fargues 2000; Fogiel-Bijaoui 2003; Golan 1997; Halevi & Blumen 2005; Hochman 2005; Kimmerling 1992; Klein 2002; Pat-Horenczyk et al. 2007; Sa'ar 2007c; Seliktar 1980; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2004; Swirski 2005; Warschawski 2004).

In this chapter I will explore a less charted area within terrorism studies: the cultural reaction of a Western affiliated society living in a constantly terrorised conflict zone. States or institutionalised operational reactions, as well as individual psychological reactions to terrorism, acts of terrorism and other trauma inducing atrocities have been explored previously (Abrahms 2008; Adessky & Freedman 2005; Bar 2008; Benn 2007; Biesecker 2007; Crenshaw 1995b; Jacobs 2004; Kasher & Yadlin 2005; Nacos 2003; Possick, Sadeh & Shamai 2008; Shirom et al. 2008; Youngs 2006). However, how a society under terror modifies its culture in order to accommodate it as an

everyday constant experience had not yet been explored in detail.⁴⁴ It is my contention, as mentioned previously, that as Western affiliated culture, Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture tends to deploy its women to buffer the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. As in other complicated preservations of power hierarchies this is done through perpetuating certain models of womanhood within mainstream discourse, endowing them with the aura of naturalness.

Politicians, leaders, scholars and journalists have already identified the communicational character of terrorism, and the means by which terrorist groups convey their messages have been constantly investigated (Ben-Yehuda 2005; Benn 2007; Blair 2007; Borradori, Habermas & Derrida 2003; Michael & Wahba 2001; Weimann 2000, 2004). This body of knowledge theorises terrorism as a communications process, stressing the media and especially the news media's role in propagating terrorist messages to audiences. Critical theorist, Jean Baudrillard, articulates this concept of terrorism's connection with media, when emphasising Western cultural complicity with the publicity goals of terrorism, stating that 'in their symbolic strategy the terrorists doubtless know that they can count on this unavowable complicity' (2003, p. 6). These views centre on terrorism as a way of obtaining public attention and conveying a particular message to preferred targets or audiences (Biernatzki 2002b; Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007; Lustick 1995; Michael & Wahba 2001; Nacos 2007; Schmid & Graaf 1982; Third 2006; Weimann 1987, 2000).

Slavoj Žižek, philosopher and cultural critic, sharpens his approach in referring to this tendency as the 'passion for the real', comparing contemporary fundamentalist terrorism to the 1970s terrorism that stemmed from the New Left student protest movements in Europe, and was in actuality a message intended to awaken the masses 'deeply immersed in their political consumerist stance' (2002, p. 9). The main gap in these communication theories of terrorism lies in configuring the audience as a 'passive' recipient of the message. In this chapter, I will bridge this gap by addressing the limitations of this transmission model of communication through illuminating the processes by which audiences make meaning of terrorism as social texts.

⁴⁴ Some Western societies were exposed to periods of constant terrorism like the IRA's acts in Britain and North Ireland, or the Basque freedom organisations' acts in Spain. However, it was not explored in depth from the point of view of how a society reads social meaning into these phenomena within its everyday existence (Alonso 2007; Bell 2000; Sullivan 1988).

As mentioned earlier, the widespread media-fed panic within Western cultures was already a familiar experience for Israelis. In order to explore the influence of living under terror on the lived embodied experience of a society constantly exposed to terrorism, and the ways in which it influences everyday culture, it is first necessary to outline the characteristics of terrorism as a phenomenon.

The polemic over terrorism's definitions

It is not my intention to re-define terrorism. As those who are familiar with the term on an academic level are aware, terrorism is a contested term. Anyone who writes about terrorism is confronted with the notorious problem of defining it, as is often stated: "one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter" (Beinin 2003; Ben-Yehuda 2005; Keleny 2008; Marks 2006). However defining terrorism is even more complicated than the political point of view that is implied in the above statement, since the mechanism of using intimidation for the purpose of coercion, or in some way changing behaviours, actually stands at the basis of social order. Where to draw the line between terrorising, policing or educating, is often in the eyes of the beholder. Terrorism is not a neutral word; indeed, it is a highly loaded term. The debate over the definition of terrorism as well as the 'correct' usage of the term has been endlessly repeated within terrorism studies literature (Beinin 2003; Crenshaw 1995b; Stern 2003; Whittaker 2003). A brief review of terrorism studies can show the wide range of existing definitions for terrorism, thus defining terrorism is a complicated and quite subjective process.

The definitions of terrorism are as numerous as those who define terrorism. Within terrorism studies there are various categories of definition. For example, Brent Smith, a professor at the University of Alabama, uses the FBI's definition of terrorism: 'the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives' (1994, p. 6). While this definition stresses the unlawful use of force or violence as an indispensable component in defining terrorism, American journalist, Jessica Stern (2003), defines terrorism as 'an act or threat of violence against non-combatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidating or otherwise influencing an audience'. Social psychiatrist and terrorism expert Lawrence Zelic Freedman stresses the communicating character of terrorism when he

claims that 'Terrorism is defined as the use of violence when its most important result is not the physical and mental damage of the direct victim, but the psychological effect produced on someone else' (1983, p. 3). Although these definitions are different, they all stand within the dominant discourse of contemporary Western societies, which observe terrorism from the point of view of democratic states.

Some scholars have problematised these definitions of terrorism by implying that they stem from mainstream 'terrorism industry'. This term refers to a body of specialists-experts who are often former employees of intelligence services and governmental security agencies (Adams 2006; Agathangelou & Ling 2004; Herman & O'Sullivan 1989; Mueller 2007). Edward Herman and Gerry O'Sullivan, for example, suggest that the 'private sector' of the terrorism industry is 'heavily interlocked with government intelligence, military and foreign policy agencies' funded by and serving both governments and corporate establishments (Herman & O'Sullivan 1989, p. 8). Gilda Zwerman (1992) adds that terrorism studies literature presents a picture of terrorism that aligns with establishment priorities. However, whether mainstream or heterodox, Edward Marks organises all terrorism definitions along a central axis:

In essence, all definitions are reordering of the following considerations:

1. Terrorism always involves violence or the threat of violence.
2. Terrorism is violence, but not every form of violence is terrorism.
3. Guerrilla and insurgency warfare are not the same as terrorism, although they are often intertwined.
4. Classic terrorism is "propaganda of the deed," which is even more important in today's world given the ubiquity of modern media. (2006, pp. 47-8)

As Marks stresses, most definitions of terrorism have an element of 'terrorism as communication' (2006). Scholars and experts observing how media operates as terrorism's communicating channels, stressed the significance of modern digital and traditional media in communicating terrorists' messages (Ben-Yehuda 2005; Benn 2007; Castonguay 2004; Mueller 2007; Nacos 2007; Spigel 2004; Weimann 2008b). Some have even used the term 'theatre of terror', with its distinct connotation to the French Revolution (Weimann 2000), and sometimes alluding to the fact that terrorism

started as a mechanism of coercion by the state (Biernatzki 2002a). However, an audience is a crucial element in most definitions of terrorism.

Like many others (Crenshaw 1995b; Schmid et al. 2005) Ian Lustick (1995) problematises mainstream 'terrorism industry' definitions of terrorism, when asking who that audience is. Is it the 'other', a member of the terrorist's target group, as is often suggested, or is it the terrorist's own group of affiliation? In regard specifically to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, Lustick divides terrorism (which he defines as any act of violence that one side or the other refers to as terrorism) into two categories: 'other directed terrorism', directed at the beliefs, intentions and behaviour of adversaries, and 'solipsistic terrorism', which is 'violence delivered against targets for the purpose of manipulating the behaviour or changing the utility functions of the group with which the perpetrators identify' (1995, p. 516).

It seems this distinction can be useful when exploring the reaction of the terrorised society as well, for some reactions are 'other' oriented, like anti-terrorism actions, while others are 'solipsistic' in that they are oriented at maintaining the terrorised culture's values as opposed to the terrorist's attempt to change them. It is my claim that the character of the terrorised audience's reaction endows meaning to terrorism, in a different, lived experience way. For example, although historically more Israelis were killed or injured in traffic accidents than in acts of terrorism and wars (Shinaar & Levy 2008), acts of terror were always perceived as the 'real' threat of everyday life in Israel.

Terrorism's meanings are constructed in relation to social, cultural or institutional bodies of knowledge. This subordination confines terrorism's meanings to the possible labels designated to it by society, especially dominant definitions of terrorism within a hegemonic discourse (Third 2006; Wilkins Newman 2003). The debate on terrorism's definitions is entangled in an economy of power that limits our possibilities of inquiring in depth into the effect for a society living under terror. I would like to define terrorism anew, outside of the terrorism industry's definitions of it, by situating terrorism as a relationship between the perpetrators and their audience. It is within this relationship that the meaning of terrorism is to be found.

Terrorism as communication

Terrorism and acts of terrorism are perceived as audience oriented performances. Some scholars claim that it is precisely this quality of broadcasting a violent message in order to arouse political awareness that differentiates terrorism as a phenomenon from other forms of political violence (Biernatzki 2002b; Freedman 1983; Nacos 2007; Schmid & Graaf 1982; Weimann 1987, 2000).

The connection between terrorist organisations and the media has been a subject of many studies, and numerous opinions. It had been documented beyond dispute that both terrorists and the media are aware of this connection, and to some degree, employ it to their benefit (Ben-Yehuda 2005; Biernatzki 2002b; Crenshaw 1995b; Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007; Nacos 2007; Schmid & Graaf 1982; Weimann 1987, 2000, 2008b). Modern terrorists are media focused. The tactics they use take into consideration media criteria for newsworthiness, media timetables and deadlines, as well as media access. Sometimes it seems that media-wise terrorists plan their actions with the media as a major consideration.

Hezbollah's attacks on Israeli targets were always taped, leading some analysts to suggest that every terror unit consists of at least four members: the perpetrator, a cameraman, a soundman, and a producer. Modern terrorists feed the media, directly and indirectly, with their propaganda material, often disguised as news items. (Weimann 2008b, p. 75)

The events of 9/11 were by far the most viewed terrorist spectacle ever. The single most watched terrorist act before 9/11 was the massacre of Israel's Olympic team by a Palestinian group, 'Black September'. This attack took place during the Olympic Games of 1972 in Munich, Germany and was viewed by an estimated audience of 800 million worldwide (Nacos 2003, 2007; Weimann 2000). As one of the Black September's terrorists claimed, accessing the Olympic Games broadcast was their explicit goal (Weimann 2000, p. 498). The advances in communication technology put the events of 9/11 into the record books as the most monitored terrorist spectacle ever (Nacos 2007; Weimann 2000). Bin Laden himself referred to the events of 9/11 as a speech given by the perpetrators that cannot be unheard (Michael & Wahba 2001).

Those youth who conducted the operations ... said in deeds, in New York and Washington, speeches that overshadowed all other speeches made everywhere else in the world. The speeches are understood by both Arabs and non-Arabs, even by Chinese.

It is above all the media said. Some of them said that in Holland, at one of the centers, the number of people who accepted Islam during the days that followed the operations were more than the people who accepted Islam in the last eleven years. I heard someone on Islamic radio who owns a school in America say: "We don't have time to keep up with the demands of those who are asking about Islamic books to learn about Islam." This event made people think (about true Islam) which benefited Islam greatly. (Michael & Wahba 2001)

Some scholars as well as terrorist leaders view the connection between terrorism and media as the only way for minority or otherwise deprived populations to attract the attention of Western democracies (Biernatzki 2002b; Borradori, Habermas & Derrida 2003; Crenshaw 1995b; Michael & Wahba 2001; Schmid & Graaf 1982). Others describe the same phenomenon as manipulation of the media and through it, liberal democracies, for non legitimate political profit (Ben-Yehuda 2005; Litvak 2005; Nacos 2007; Shavit 2006; Weimann 2008a, 2008b).

While terrorist organisations and objectives were studied, as well as terrorist organisations' relationships with the media (Evans 2005; Laqueur 2003; Nacos 2007; Paletz & Schmid 1992; Schmid & Graaf 1982; Weimann 1987), the question of audience reaction to these performances was not explored in depth until after the events of 9/11, which became a precursor for some studies exploring the connection between exposure to acts of terrorism and the personal reactions of victims (DeLisi et al. 2003; Schlenger et al. 2002; Thomas 2003). These studies examined Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a reaction to exposure to acts of terrorism on an individual level. Other studies developed a more social approach, exploring theories of victimhood within a society under terror as well as societal tendencies within Western culture to shift from secularisation to sacralisation as a reaction to acts of terrorism (Adessky & Freedman 2005; Hawthorne & Winter 2002; Jacobs 2004; Ochs 2006; Ray 2005; Rogers 2002; Schlenger et al. 2002; Shamai, Kimhi & Enosh 2007; Solomon, Gelkopf & Bleich 2005; Thomas 2003).

However, the gap between the 'stage' of violence and its audience as a society was not explored in depth. I would like to enquire into the audience's answer, as a collective,

through discourse and everyday culture. I will thus view terrorism not as it is usually viewed, as a monologue, but rather as an interactive performance between terrorists and their victims/audience. This study will give voice to the ways in which the audience is reacting to the message, not as individuals but rather as a society, through discursive changes and cultural shifts within its everyday existence.

Exploring societal reaction to terrorism

In the aftermath of 9/11 the American nation was shocked and confused (Eisenstein 2002; Hawthorne & Winter 2002; Kaplan 2005; Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg 2005; Thomas 2003). After 9/11 patriotism became popular again and the flag regained an almost sacred status (Jacobs 2004; Rogers 2002; Wilkins Newman 2003). A phenomenon representing this state can be seen within the entertainment industry that was in a profound state of confusion about what it was the public wanted and what would be appropriate, given the situation (Spigel 2004).

During the first week after the attack, the 'everydayness' of television itself was suddenly disrupted by news of something very foreign to the conventional patterns of regular life as well as scheduled programming. The non-stop commercial-free coverage, which continued for seven days on major broadcast networks and cable news networks, enhanced a sense of alienation from normalcy (Kaplan 2005; Mattingly, Lawlor & Jacobs-Huey 2002; Spigel 2004). However, after a week, politician and leaders started to call on the public to return to normalcy. Mayor Giuliani, for example, was one of the prominent politicians to lead this campaign in New York. His call was directed at the public as well as the business and entertainment industries, to resume operations in the Stock Exchange and on Broadway in order to give the semblance of a return to normalcy. He called on the public to patronise restaurants and even to proceed with primaries scheduled to take place on September 11 for municipal elections (Levitt 2001; Powell & Cooper 2001).

The societal reactions to 9/11 can also be viewed through an institutional lens. It is a declared aspiration of terrorism to undermine individual rights of both citizens and non-citizens within liberal democracies, as these rights constitute a cornerstone within democratic liberal values (Alouni 2001; Nacos 2003; Porta 1995). Between September 11 and the end of 2001, twenty federal laws adopted in the United States

dealt with counter-terrorism issues and weakened the very fabric of liberal democratic everyday life (Nacos 2003). Bin Laden himself affirms these aspirations in an interview given on October 2001 to Al-Jazeera correspondent Tayseer Alouni:

The events of Tuesday, September 11 in New York and Washington are great on all levels. Their repercussions are not over. Although the collapse of the twin towers is huge, but the events that followed, and I'm not just talking about the economic repercussions, those are continuing, the events that followed are dangerous and more enormous than the collapse of the towers.

The values of this Western civilization under the leadership of America have been destroyed. Those awesome symbolic towers that speak of liberty, human rights, and humanity have been destroyed. They have gone up in smoke. (Alouni 2001)

It is a well understood fact that when targeting liberal democracies it is terrorism's goal to trap liberal states into instituting extreme measures that undermine the fundamental values of these states. It is a declared objective to debilitate everyday freedom as well as the economy and other modern liberal values for which modern, Western democracies stand (Nacos 2003, 2007). Slavoj Žižek stresses this point further in his cynical style: 'Alter and Dershowitz love human dignity so much that they are ready to legalize torture – the ultimate degradation of human dignity – to defend it' (2002, p. 85).

Although in the immediate aftermath of the attacks of 9/11 the media industry's response was to abstain from broadcasting entertainment and commercials. However, television networks reformulated commercial and entertainment as the expression of the patriotic goals of the nation one week after these events. As Mayor Giuliani had called to New York citizens to resume everyday life by resuming consumerism (Levitt 2001; Powell & Cooper 2001), so too did television news anchors tell the audience that it was 'their national duty to return to the "normal" everyday schedule of television entertainment, a return meant to coincide with Washington's call for a return to normalcy and, hopefully, normal levels of consumerism' (Spigel 2004, p. 237). The resurgence of everyday life, initiated by politicians as well as entertainment industry celebrities, and sanctioned by a call to resume 'normalcy' from Washington (Kaplan 2005; Nacos 2007; Weimann 2008b), was supposed to represent New Yorker's resilient quality, and their defiance against the coercion incorporated in that terrorist act.

The societal reaction to these objectives within the terrorised society can also be examined through the civic reaction of the American public in general, and New York citizens in particular, to the events of 9/11. A patriotic incline within the American public was observed by many. This incline was clearly evident on various occasions by flying the American flag, which once again had become a sacred, unifying object (Hawthorne & Winter 2002; Kaplan 2005; Rogers 2002). Resuming consumerism was narrated as a return to normalcy and consumerism was presented as an American value, under the deadly attack of Al Qaeda on the World Trade Centre (Spigel 2004). This quality of resilience and defiance is apparent within Israeli society and culture (Bar-Tal 2004; Ben-Ari 1989; Dar et al. 2000; Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007; Shamai, Kimhi & Enosh 2007; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter 2006). I will now explore several possible theoretical explanations for this phenomenon and the ways it is manifested within Jewish-Israeli culture.

Mortality salience,⁴⁵ everydayness and social consequences

As mentioned earlier, being exposed to acts of terrorism may result in individual physical and psychological damage, however, terrorism's damaging character reaches beyond its immediate victims. Terrorism's deviating quality as a collective evolves from its disruption of the linear and routine time of everyday life (Certeau 2002; Lefebvre 1971; Third 2006). Furthermore, terrorism not only discontinues and divides the linear and routine quality of modern temporality; it also endows on its audience an essentially distressful experience of apocalyptic time (Kaplan 2005; Lefebvre 1971; Mattingly, Lawlor & Jacobs-Huey 2002; Wilkinson 1997). Since the routine and linear experience of time is fundamental to the construction of order within modernity, terrorism, by disrupting this essential quality of modernity, is perceived as modernity's opposite, trying to bring it to an end.

Many scholars attempt to explain the phenomena of terrorism and its influence on everyday life, exploring this phenomena from a political point of view to practical, everyday actions, like driving, or extreme reactions, like substance abuse (Adessky & Freedman 2005; Agathangelou & Ling 2004; Benn 2007; Biesecker 2007; Borradori,

⁴⁵ Mortality salience is a term used within Terror Management Theory (TMT) where persons are reminded of their own inevitable death (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986). This term and its expression within everyday life in Israel will be explored in detail later in the text.

Habermas & Derrida 2003; Brison 2002; Chahuan 2005; Crenshaw 1995a; Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007; Hawthorne & Winter 2002; Herman & O'Sullivan 1989; Kuriansky 2002; Lefebvre 1971; Lieblich 2004; Michels 2007; Ochs 2006; Pat-Horenczyk et al. 2007). However, when coming to explore the influences of living under terror on individuals, the most used contemporary theory is Terror Management Theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986). TMT observes the influence of mortality salience on individuals. Unlike Judith Herman's (1992) theory in *Trauma and Recovery*, TMT deals with the experience of terror, not as personal trauma, but as existential terror as it occurs in everyday life. TMT was developed in the 1980s by psychologists, Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon (1986) and was based on the thesis constructed by social anthropologist, Ernest Becker (1973), in his book *The Denial of Death*. According to Becker, human beings need two kinds of support against the knowledge of inevitable death: self-esteem and a sustaining cultural worldview (1973). TMT tries to explain the psychological functions of self-esteem and cultural belief systems. It fuses ideas from existential and contemporary social psychology to create a new way of understanding everyday phenomena (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986; Greenberg et al. 1990; Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg 2005).

Although different theories of varying orientations have agreed that achieving positive self-esteem is a highly important component of personal wellbeing, it is usually taken as an unexplained postulate used to explain other behaviours. TMT initiated from the need to explain the importance of self-esteem in itself and why it is so important for human beings to have self-esteem. TMT assumes that existential terror is part of everyday life and, that it stems from being aware of one's mortality. It suggests that the answer to human beings' unconscious awareness of their personal inevitable death, which haunts them, lies in conforming to cultural systems of meaning and value and thus constructing self-esteem. When an individual conceives himself/herself as a valuable partaker in a larger, more meaningful and longer lasting entity than physical existence, the existential, haunting threat of mere animal existence is lessened (Goldenberg et al. 2000; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986).

Self-esteem is usually perceived as depending upon the internalisation of cultural standards and values and on satisfactorily meeting these standards. TMT suggests that

the process of internalising a cultural worldview and meeting the standards it represents is a passionate process. A cultural worldview provides people with meaning, order and an option of continuation (for example: heaven, reincarnation, children, or historical significance). Living up to one's worldview's standards contributes to the construction of positive self-esteem (Arndt et al. 2002; Fritzsche & Jonas 2005; Goldenberg et al. 2005; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986; Greenberg et al. 1990; Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg 2005).

TMT uses the term 'mortality salience' to describe a situation in which persons are reminded of their own inevitable death. According to TMT, a society exposed to mortality salience would tend to cling more passionately to its cultural worldview and values, thus the need for self-esteem would be even stronger (Cohen et al. 2004, 2005; Greenberg et al. 1990). There is a growing body of TMT studies showing that exposure to mortality salience leads to clinging to one's subgroup's worldview and traditional values, while other subgroups are observed as threatening (Fritzsche & Jonas 2005; Greenberg et al. 1990; Greenberg et al. 1992). Living in a constantly terrorised conflict area, as is the situation for women in Israel, answers to the definition of mortality salience as a lived experience.

IIMs: At the time of the last war with Lebanon [summer 2006] it was really hard for me. I experienced this war extremely...

Interviewer: Did you have anyone in active service at the time? [M has three sons]

IIMs: No, no. One was in Amsterdam another was in London and the youngest was still in high-school, we were out of missiles' range, yet I experienced that war as if I was living up north. It was terrible the experiences I had these two months ... and once I even had a full panic attack, because we were on the sea shore on a Friday afternoon, and suddenly in the middle of our nice sunset picnic there was a missile shot over our heads on [a near by kibbutz]. It was extremely frightening! It was such a contrast to the pastorally sunset and Friday afternoon on the beach, you know with the children and food and it was totally ideal ... and then this missile.

[IIMs 57y, lives in Israel]

Israeli society is a society under existential threat. This study stresses the importance that lies within the lived experience of a society in a state of siege, on which most scholars agree, whether as a realistic or a perceived state (Ben-Eliezer 1995, 1998a, 2005; Horowitz & Lissak 1989; Kimmerling 1993, 1999, 2001; Waintrater 1991). This feeling of constant siege and existential threat leads to the experience of

existential terror, which in turn creates a need for terror management on the social level. This situation gives rise to issues such as subcultural enmities and clinging to one's subgroup and worldview. It is my contention that Israeli society enacts, in its everyday life, these assumptions made by TMT.

Living under terror

The particular concept of 'living under terror' requires articulation. A significant body of feminist critique has problematised the term suggesting that 'terror' is a common phenomenon for many women in the domestic domain (Adelman 2003; Al-Khouli 2006; Cloud 2004; Hammer 2003; Herman 1992; Hollander 1996; Shavit 2006; Sherman 2002; Thomas 2003; Youngs 2006). This may be even more significant in Israeli society for several reasons. First, studies suggest that domestic violence is likely to rise, since women are expected to contain and compensate for the trauma and frustration of men. Second, it is important to mention the wide distribution of firearms and small arms that circulate among the civilian population, through compulsory or reserve service in the armed forces, through employment as security guards and, of course, through proximity to criminal activities (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005). This will be explored in depth later.

I would like to make an important distinction at this point. As stressed earlier, a central constituent within terrorism's definitions stresses that terrorism is aimed beyond its actual victims. Like many others, Freedman (1983) makes the distinction between political violence that may result in injury or death, to terrorism that has a significant goal that is beyond the accomplishment of these violent objectives. What differentiates terrorism from other forms of violence is its effect on the spectator: 'The person being terrorised is not the only victim or even the most important victim' (Freedman 1983, p. 6). This is a critical point of differentiation between terror as terrorism's affect and the terror experienced by numerous women worldwide in their own homes. Since this study centres on the issue of terrorism and lived embodied experience, terror as a lived experience for women in the domestic domain will not be its focal point.

In the contemporary social climate 'terror' is often used as a synonym for terrorism. However, in this study 'terror' stands for the overwhelming effect human beings

experience due to their uniquely human awareness of the inevitability of death (Becker 1973; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986). In the lived experience of Israelis this phenomenon, termed mortality salience by TMT, arises from the situation of living in a protracted, terrorised conflict zone, and it is enhanced for Jewish-Israelis due to Jewish people's specific heritage of persecution referred to in the previous chapter.

As much as defining terrorism is problematic, defining victims of terror is unfortunately much easier. Since the onset of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, also known as the second Intifada, Israel has been affected by numerous and deadly terror attacks, many of them carried out by suicide bombers in various public places – buses, restaurants, supermarkets, shopping malls and others – and targeting Israelis of all ages and from all walks of life (Solomon, Gelkopf & Bleich 2005). Between October 2000 and December 2004, 1030 Israelis were killed as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the majority were civilians (717). Women and girls represented 330 of the sum total killed and nearly all of them were civilians (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005). In less than two years, in the period between September 2000 and April 2002, 3846 (2708 of them civilians) were injured, most of them severely. These attacks can be defined as traumatic events which have been known to cause physical, psychological and emotional distress, including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Lavi & Solomon 2005; Schiff et al. 2006; Shalev et al. 2006).

An Israeli history of mortality salience

Israel's saga of conflict and terror began long before the Al Aqsa Intifada. The Arab-Israeli conflict spans roughly one century of political tensions and open hostilities. It involves the establishment of the Zionist movement and the creation of the modern State of Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict dates to the end of the nineteenth century. The conflict became a major international issue after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917 and in its various forms continues. In its early years, it also involved the establishment and independence of several Arab countries following World War I. Some uses of the term 'Middle East conflict' refer to this matter; however, the region has been host to other conflicts not involving Israel (Abdallah 2003; Said 1981, 1994). The Arab-Israeli conflict has resulted in at least five major wars and a number of

'minor conflicts' and numerous acts of terrorism. It has also been the source of two major Palestinian Intifadas (uprisings). Indeed, since the end of World War II, Israel has been involved in more wars than any other country in the world (Furman 1999; Laqueur 2003).

Tensions between the Jews and Arabs started to emerge after the 1880s, when the immigration of European Jews increased with the development of Zionist settlements in Palestine (Horowitz & Lissak 1989). In the period between World War I and II, Arab nationalism as well as Jewish-Zionism developed; the conflicting forces of Arab nationalism and the Zionist movement created a situation which the British could neither resolve, nor extricate themselves from. This resulted in an Arab uprising against the British Mandate and Arab attacks on the Jewish communities in Palestine. In 1947 a UN Partition Plan proposed the establishment of Arab and Jewish states in Palestine, a proposal accepted by the Jewish community, but rejected by the Palestinians. Subsequent to British withdrawal and the declaration of the State of Israel in May 1948, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi Troops invaded Palestine. The fighting ended with the signing of several armistice agreements in 1949 between Israel and its warring neighbours.

Despite involving a relatively small land area, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the focus of worldwide media and diplomatic attention for decades. Many countries, individuals and non-governmental organisations elsewhere in the world feel involved emotionally in this conflict for reasons such as cultural and religious ties with Islam, Arab culture, Christianity, Judaism, or Jewish culture. More recently, some scholars and journalists have referred to it as a cultural conflict involving ideological, human rights, strategic, or financial reasons (Al-Khouli 2006; Cloud 2004; Huntington 1993, 1996; IST 1999, 2007; Meibor 1982). Some consider the Arab-Israeli conflict a part of (or a precursor to) a wider clash of civilisations between the Western world and the Arab or Muslim world (Cloud 2004; Huntington 1996). Others claim that the religious dimension is a relatively new matter in this conflict (Al-Khouli 2006; IST 1999, 2007).

Since Israel is the only country that is perceived as Western in the Middle East, as noted earlier, it is often viewed as standing at the forefront of this modern clash of civilisations. Within mainstream Jewish-Israeli society as well as within parts of

Jewish Diaspora, the current situation is perceived as a contrast to World War II; now the Jews are not just the victims but also the 'frontline fighters against these evil forces that threaten human civilisation' (IST 1999-2007). Since acts of terrorism in Israel are at times almost a daily occurrence, this perception is enhanced by acts of brutal killings of civilians by Islamic-Arab suicide bombers, executed in the name of "Allah" with the blessing "Allahu-Akbar" (God is great); representing for them the clash of civilisations with Israel at the centre (IST 1999-2007).

Whether it is a violent dispute between cultures, a war of religions, a clash of civilisations, or a mere dispute over limited land resources, this conflict has engendered animosities igniting numerous attacks on and by supporters (or perceived supporters) of opposing sides in countries throughout the world. It is an intense, violent, persistent conflict and the everyday outcome is a constantly terrorised conflict zone, in which the daily routine is often interrupted by acts of violence, death and casualties for over a century. This is why the particular concept of 'living under terror' becomes a way of life for Israeli population in general, and for Israeli women, in particular.⁴⁶

Indeed, living in a protracted, violent conflict zone is the lived experience of Israeli women living in Israel; and it is a main component in their social construction of terror and safety in their everyday lives. As much as experiencing terrorism in everyday life is a traumatic, (apocalyptic even) experience, terrorism's lived experience has a deeper symbolic strata that endows it with meaning. In Baudrillard's words, 'One might think the physical destruction brought about their symbolic collapse. But [...] It was, in fact, their symbolic collapse that brought about their physical collapse and not the other way around' (2003, p. 44).

This study stresses the notion that there is a discourse, translated into social symbols, within a society in a constantly terrorised conflict area that engages the audience of acts of terrorism in a dialogue with terrorism. The audience is not a passive recipient of messages, but an active discussant.

⁴⁶ I stress women in particular, since women have been found to be more prone to the emotional effects of terrorism (Schlenger et al. 2002; Sever et al. 2008).

Veiling modernity or exposing colonisation

The perception of terrorism as a phenomenon opposing modernity, in general, and Western modernity, in particular, can be easily discerned within hegemonic Western discourse, especially after the events of 9/11 and the ensuing 'war on terrorism'. Terrorism is described as a clash of civilisations and, within Western discourse, it often became synonymous with the liberation of women, especially 'oppressed Muslim women' (Al-Khouli 2006; Bender 2008; Cloud 2004; Dehghanpisheh et al. 2005; Krauthammer 2004; Puar & Rai 2002; Shavit 2006; Sherman 2002). Although some observed that the turbaned Muslim man had become a symbol of the Monster-Terrorist, within this discourse, it is the 'oppressed Muslim woman', symbolised by the 'veiled woman' that is the focus of this polemic. This image was adopted by both right- and left-wing writers and speakers, who claimed that the veiling of women stands for their oppression within Islamic culture and law. By insisting on the veiling of women, Islam defies liberal democratic values of women's equality (Brown 2001; Bumiller 2001; Chesler 2003; Fallaci 2002; Hawthorne & Winter 2002).

However, the 'veiled Muslim woman' as a symbol justifying Western attitudes toward colonised Arabs did not begin with President Bush's 'war on terrorism'. Frantz Fanon (1965) observed the West's fascination with the veiled woman as part of colonisation as early as 1952, and Western colonisers' attempts to unveil Muslim women as an extension of colonisation.

Every new Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defense were in the process of dislocation, open and breached. Every veil that fell, every body that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the haik, every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer. (p. 42)

This view has been recently reinforced by feminist researchers, Muslim and non-Muslim, claiming that the West is using Muslim women's liberation as an excuse for its 'war against terror', which in their view was just an extension of colonialism (Abu-Lughod 2000, 2002; Afshar 2008; Cooke 2002; Korteweg 2008; Razack 2005). As much as the claim that the West is colonising Muslim culture through the war on terrorism and the image of the 'veiled Muslim woman' may be true, mainstream

Western discourse still adopts wholeheartedly the concept portrayed in the words of Arab psychiatrist, Wafa Sultan:

The clash we are witnessing around the world is not a clash of religions, or a clash of civilizations. It is a clash between two opposites, between two eras. It is a clash between a mentality that belongs to the Middle Ages and another mentality that belongs to the 21st century. It is a clash between civilization and backwardness, between the civilized and the primitive, between barbarity and rationality. It is a clash between freedom and oppression, between democracy and dictatorship. It is a clash between human rights, on the one hand, and the violation of these rights, on other hand. **It is a clash between those who treat women like beasts, and those who treat them like human beings.** What we see today is not a clash of civilizations. Civilizations do not clash, but compete. (Al-Khouli 2006) [Emphasis mine]

This of course would not be the first time women (as a concept) are caught in polemics about culture, civilisation, religion or nationalism. As observed earlier, issues of construction and reconstruction of gender relations through colonisation as well as liberation movements and redefinitions of masculinity and femininity stand at the basis of nationalism, colonialism and post-colonialism discourses (Abu-Lughod 2002; Altorki & El-Solh 1984; Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Henry 2007; Yuval-Davis 1997). Within these polemics, one can often observe a widespread concern with women's dress. In most cases this concern indicates a cultural focus on modest behaviour, which in Muslim culture usually revolves around veiling (Abu-Lughod 1998; MacLeod 1992; Mohanty 1991). Within Muslim discourse, veiling is perceived as a subtle and evocative symbol with multiple meanings that cultural participants articulate, read, and manipulate; it involves a struggle over women's identity and role in society, a negotiation of symbolic meaning that women initiate (Abu-Lughod 1998; Kandiyoti 1988; MacLeod 1992).

As Arlene Elowe MacLeod notes, the veil has obsessed Western writers from early travelogues to more recent television docudramas. It usually stands as the symbol par excellence of the oppression of women in the Middle East. It is an image that signifies within Western discourse the case of Middle Eastern women, in particular their depiction as victims of an especially oppressive culture, generally equated with Islamic religion. From a Western vantage point, women in the Middle East are portrayed as 'bound to the harem, downtrodden and constrained; the ultimate symbol

of their oppression and their acceptance of inferiority is the veil' (MacLeod 1992, p. 553).

In contrast to popular Western perceptions, the newly veiled women across the Middle East are products of modernity. Even before Bush's 'war on terrorism' was declared, feminist scholars studying the Muslim world, discerned that the return to the veil was a symbolic act associated with nationalism as well as post-colonial Muslim identity (Abu-Lughod 1998; MacLeod 1992; Mohanty 1991; Saliba 2000). In their view, this was a modern phenomenon as much as the upper- and middle-class Muslim women who courageously took off the veil almost a century earlier. They stress that to regard this phenomenon as a symbol of backwardness ignores indigenous cultural constructions of the veil's meanings, and reduces a complex and dynamic symbolism into historical objectification (Abu-Lughod 1998, 2002; Cloud 2004; Cooke 2002; Korteweg 2008; MacLeod 1992; Mohanty, Russo & Torres 1991; Razack 2005).

Much as some thinkers object to the equation of veiling with anti-modernisation, even they concede that it has been documented as such within Western discourse, where it stands for the very fundamental Muslim, anti Western value; representing by itself the war on everything Western democracies stand for including freedom, women's equality, liberal thought and economy as well as globalisation and consumerism (Al-Khouli 2006; Cloud 2004; Cooke 2002; Dehghanpisheh et al. 2005; Korteweg 2008; Razack 2005; Shavit 2006; Sherman 2002).

Liberating women – uncovering female bodies

Israeli society, as previously mentioned, is a society under existential threat. Whether this is a realistic or unrealistic state, is beyond this study's scope. However, this study stresses the importance that lies, within the lived experience, of a society in a state of siege. This feeling of constant siege, of existential threat, leads to the experience of existential terror, which in turn leads to a need for terror management.

I argued earlier that a society experiencing mortality salience will tend to cling more to its worldview and values. Since Israelis view their dispute with their neighbours as in part a product of them being a Western, non-Arab entity within the Middle East, it is logical for Israeli society to embrace Western values as its own. Since the dispute between 'Western civilisation' and 'Muslim terrorism' has been presented as a clash

between civilisations, symbolised by the image of the 'veiled woman', it is quite understandable for Israeli secular mainstream culture to adopt, with open arms, the contrasting image of the Western woman perpetuated within Western culture.

In Israeli culture, as in many other cultures all over the globe, Western women are perceived through the images available on variable media channels, from those portrayed in American shows such as *Desperate Housewives* and *Sex and the City* or reality shows like the *Swan* and *America's Next Top Model*, to scantily clad American and European singers featured on MTV or Trace.⁴⁷ Their Israeli counterparts too are glamorous women in commercials and local reality shows. The common denominator of these images is women that are portrayed as sexual objects and glamorous consumers. Through the process of sexual objectification, perpetrated by different socially employed channels, girls and women gradually internalise an observer perspective on their own physical selves (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997).

This objectifying image of Western women tends to portray 'liberated Western women' as over-sexualised. They are represented by this image as 'free' to choose what to wear, since their clothing is not directly dictated to them by men in their communities, or by religious or civil laws. They are not supposed to depress their sexuality; on the contrary, they are encouraged to emphasise and expose it. Contemporary Western societies value women's bodies as objects. Furthermore women tend to objectify other women and themselves. Objectification and self-objectification are being used as an instrument for evaluating their own and other women's worth, and this is a major component in constructing self-esteem (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997).

TMT contributes to our understanding of the process of female objectification in various ways. First, since the perception of the reproductively mature female body as an object appears to be widely endorsed in contemporary Western society, it can be perceived as a contemporary Western value; and since individuals are motivated to internalise cultural values in their attempt to gain the security that comes from adopting a dominant, cultural worldview, it may contribute to people's (men and women) motivation to ratify this perception (Grabe et al. 2005). Second, it seems obvious that contemporary Western society values the physical body. Physical

⁴⁷ A European music channel.

attractiveness is conceived as an important component of self-esteem together with other aspects of the body as fitness, athleticism, body control and satisfying sexual experiences. Internalising these values as a necessary process for the construction of self-esteem may well cause self-objectification suggested by the objectification theory discussed in chapter one (Goldenberg et al. 2000).

From a TMT perspective the objectification of women gains its significance from the efforts to protect one's worldview, in order to gain existential meaning, while self-objectification for women would stem from the need to meet internalised cultural standards of value, in order to maintain positive self-esteem. This may suggest that when living in a constantly terrorised area, where mortality salience is a component of everyday life, the objectification and self-objectification of female body will intensify.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in Israel, 'personal law' is a religious law. Due to a particular political constellation, Jewish orthodox and ultra-orthodox parties gained great political power and enforced religious laws in several legal fields. This led to a state of religious coercion that affected the secular public, in general, and women's inequality, both de-facto and de-jure, in particular. The polemics on levels of religiosity appropriate for the Jewish state revolved many times around women's appropriate behaviour, in general, and women's dress, in particular.

As Žižek stresses in his work, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, a central constituent in contemporary Western culture is cultural resistance: 'Today's hegemonic attitude is that of resistance – all the poetics of the dispersed marginal sexual, lifestyle 'multitudes' (gays, the mentally ill, prisoners..) resisting the mysterious central (capitalized) power.. Everyone resists – from gay and lesbian to Rightist survivalist – so why not draw the logical conclusion that this discourse of resistance is the norm today' (2002, pp. 66-7). Israel has a place of honour within this Western cultural resistance.

It seems that within secular Jewish-Israeli contemporary culture this resistance is translated as a resistance to religious coercion. Ultra-orthodox Jewish politicians in Israel have stressed, on numerous occasions, the importance of modesty in Jewish women's clothing. Ultra-orthodox Jewish women's garb is, in many ways, similar to the requirements for Muslim women to cover their bodies. Although the ultra-

orthodox women's outfit does not resemble the Muslim Hijab or Burka, it does include covering the body and hair. Since the Western sexually objectified woman is juxtaposed with the Muslim fundamentalist covered woman, in both Western as well as Muslim discourses, and since this juxtaposition is heightened for secular Jewish-Israelis by the image of the covered, ultra-orthodox Jewish woman representing religious coercion within Israel, it is understandable that secular-Jewish resistance within Israeli society was translated, yet again, into women's appearance.

The over-sexualisation of Jewish-Israeli women

Sexuality, you ask about men and women, very clear distinction, [there's a man and there's a woman] and the sexuality is very, look at how people walk in the street there [in Israel], naked! You know, beautiful, and men and women, and it's out there and it's, you know, unbelievable!

[MJ 45y, Melbourne, lived in Israel for twenty years]

Within the covert discourse between fundamental Muslim terrorism and Israeli society as the collective audience of acts of terrorism, the over-sexualisation of women, deriving from their sexual objectification, can also be understood as part of an audience response to religious Muslim fundamentalists. In this thesis I argue that a society under terror tends to use women to pacify the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. Through the objectification of women and demands for an over-sexualised appearance, society gives women the role of alleviating existential terror, and by averting women's attention to these demands, it distances them from social liberation ideas and actions. Although participants' reaction to the over-sexualised female model was diverse, as some enjoyed it, while others felt it was not good for them, still the existence of this model as the main model of womanhood within Israeli social discourse was accepted by most. I would like to unpack how living under terror and the ensuing 'Security Ethos' that evolved from it influenced the creation and preservation of the over-sexualised model of womanhood as a central model within Israeli cultural discourse.

The comb

Bodies in social texts

The philosophy of my research is deeply rooted within feminist qualitative methodology; its epistemology is based on standpoint theory. Its growth, as I have already argued, is less like the growth of a tree, orderly and linear, but more like a rhizome. Its methodology is deeply rooted in grounded theory, critical theory and ethnography. Its initial methods derive from various social sciences techniques of in-depth, semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews. However, as the focus of inquiry shifted to questions of how particular phenomena and specific themes relate to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity and gender, the methods expanded into different and variable techniques of culture research.

This thesis examines a specific discourse within a specific culture, which is the culture in which I live. In this work I investigate the origins and creation of dominant discourse within Jewish-Israeli culture; especially in regard to gender construction and how femininity is created in everyday life. I examine its influence on the lived experience of women within Israeli mainstream culture, through unpacking representations of models of womanhood perpetrated by various ideological tools. This process of unpacking was done through interviewing women who are currently living in Israel as well as women who were part of that culture for a while.⁴⁸ It also expanded into a field study in a beauty parlour, analysing an Israeli reality television show targeted women and, in addition to these methods, also collecting and analysing Hebrew newspapers and women's magazines as well as internet data including web-articles, talkbacks and blogs.

The focal point of the research lies within the feminist research approach. Its main aim is to listen to secular Jewish-Israeli women, who are not part of an orthodox minority, nor an ethnic minority, yet their voice is almost unheard. During the last three decades it has been noted by many scholars that feminist research was pre-occupied with the lived experience of white middle-class women (Abu-Lughod 1998; Gonick 2006; Henry 2007; hooks 1997; Olesen 2003). In Israel, the opposite is true; research is done mainly on minority or distinctive population groups like ultra-orthodox women, or Muslim-Palestinian women trying to conceive, or new

⁴⁸ Some of the participants were Jewish women who immigrated to Israel and lived there for periods of between two and twenty years, and then returned to live in Melbourne.

immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), yet the lived embodied experience of mainstream Jewish-Israeli women was not explored in depth⁴⁹ (Blumen 2007; Don-Yehiya 2005; El-Or 1997; Hashiloni-Dolev 2006; Katz 2005-6; Remennick 1999b, 2003, 2005; Sa'ar 1998, 2006, 2007a; Stadler 2007; Stadler, Lomsky-Feder & Ben-Ari 2008). This study aims to bridge the gap in knowledge that this situation has created.

Philosopher Sandra Harding (1987) suggests there is no such thing as feminist methods of research, but instead, multiple feminist methodologies and epistemologies. It is with this definition in mind that I try to situate myself within this study. The epistemology of this study derives from feminist standpoint theory in that it is not seeking an absolute truth; rather, it is interested in the process of constructing meaning through exploring and unpacking the lived embodied experience of mainstream Jewish-Israeli women from a female, secular, Jewish-Israeli standpoint (Grebowicz 2007; Haraway 1988; Harding 2007; Hennessy 1993; Janack 1997; Naples & Sachs 2000; Smith 1990; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002; Wylie 2003). As Wylie argues:

Standpoint theory is an explicitly political as well as social epistemology. Its central and motivating insight is an inversion thesis: those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalise and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemically privileged in some crucial respects. (2003, p. 26)

Furthermore, based on a heritage of ethnographic research, 'researching one's own culture' may be perceived as an advantage, rather than a drawback, when interpreted through standpoint epistemology (Altorki & El-Solh 1988; Messerschmidt 1981). Standpoint epistemology enables viewing of data, not merely as information about a particular social group or situation, but enables an understanding of values and norms, exploring intentions and consequences that lead to significant knowledge and construction of meaning. Being an insider to a researched society may be perceived as a special asset in that it may heighten the researcher's understanding of how participants view and experience their own culture (Abu-Lughod 1988, 2000).

The composition of meaning is achieved through various interwoven methodologies. First, this study adopts a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2000)

⁴⁹ This may be attributed to the fact that there has never been an active feminist movement in Israel, and feminist research is not embraced warmly by mainstream Israeli academia. Thus the lived embodied experience of mainstream Jewish-Israeli women is an unsatisfactory topic for research.

whereby knowledge is constructed in an iterative process involving research design, data collection, data classification, data analysis and literature comparison (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). Second, this study contemplates, through the lens of feminist critical cultural theory, power hierarchies and the ways gender, ethnicity, ideologies, religions and social institutions construct discourses that preserve these power relations (Kincheloe & McLaren 2000). Third, ethnography emerged as a significant methodology in the methods used for collecting data in the field. The method of participant observer was applied in field study in the beauty parlour as well as internet websites.

All three methodologies for collecting data were employed in this study (Harding 1987). First, listening to participants; this was done through in-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews. Second, observing behaviour, which took place for almost two years of conducting and writing this study in Israel, and converged into a field study I carried out in a beauty parlour, in a small town in Israel. Third, examining historical traces and records, by reading various documents from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel to contemporary Hebrew newspapers and magazines articles, talkbacks and blogs on related issues; it also involves analysing data such as media texts and images, which relate more to critical culture research, in order to explore the power relation within the culture and the influence of these power relations on discourse as well as the way women relate to discourse.

The evolution of a study – the iterative process of grounding knowledge

The key focus of this research is the lived embodied experience of women within a Western culture, living under terror. At first, the design of the study was comparative. Since in Israel Jewish secular culture is the most Westernised, it originally seemed appropriate, when coming to explore the lived experience of women within a Western culture, living under terror, to interview women from two population groups:

1. Israeli-Jewish secular women living in Israel under terror.
2. Australian Jewish and non-Jewish women living in Melbourne, in one of the world's most peaceful communities in contemporary Western society.

Soon it became apparent through exploring my personal lived experience and literature comparison that since group one is exclusively Jewish, an extra factor must be taken into consideration. As mentioned in the previous chapters, being Jewish is relevant to this research in multiple ways, and specific Jewish heritage may influence both gender experience as well as susceptibility to terror (Bernstein 1998; Boyarin 1997; Boyarin & Boyarin 1993; Cesarani 2004; Gluzman 2007; Gordon 2000; Lahav 2006; Weiss 2002; Yablonka 2003). It therefore seemed essential from a methodological perspective to minimise the influence of the 'Jewish factor'; this entailed constructing three different population groups:

1. Jewish–Israeli women: women in a Western culture, living in a constantly terrorised, conflicted geographic area.
2. Australian non-Jewish women: Western women living in one of the most peacefully conceived places in contemporary Western society. (Preferably from an English speaking background (ESB) in order to minimise other multi-cultural variables)
3. Australian-Jewish women: Western women living in a peaceful place, yet with the Jewish heritage of living under terror as a persecuted minority for hundreds of years. (Preferably from ESB in order to minimise other multi-cultural variables)

It is significant to stress at this point that when I decided to undertake this project, I realised I would need a new point of view on Israel and Israeli socio-culture; to achieve that I left Israel with my family and came to live in Melbourne, Australia. This was an enriching and developing personal and professional experience. Part of this experience was to get more and more intimate with feminist theory and feminist research. As I immersed myself in feminist standpoint theory and situated knowledge theories (Charmaz 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Gubrium & Holstein 2001; Hesse-Biber 2007), as well as critical culture studies and grounded theory, it became apparent to me that within my research, I did not want to take the stance of an objective researcher: one that compares different groups of women, while positioning himself/herself outside of the research (Atkinson & Delamont 2006; Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina 2006; Ellis & Bochner

1996; Ellis & Flaherty 1992b; Flick 2002; Humphreys 2005; Jarviluoma, Moisala & Vilkkio 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren 2000; Neuman 2000; Pilcher & Coffey 1996; Punch 1994; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Telles 2000; Tillmann-Healy 2003).

It became clear to me that I was situated deeply inside the research. I am investigating my own culture and this research is stemming from ethnography, auto-ethnography, discourse analysis and feminist research. My aim was to examine, unpack and explore some of the ideological uses made of women by a Western affiliated society living under terror, and the extent to which these uses affect the ways in which these women perceive and enact femininity, particularly in regard to body image, but also in regard to motherhood, and other facets of womanhood, and the ways these perceptions and enactment influences women's general and particular wellbeing.

That said, I decided to explore Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse about and towards women, focusing on the impact of Israel's 'security discourse' through a process of unpacking Israeli cultural attitudes towards women and femininity, and in regard to central issues of womanhood and the influence of living under terror. This is performed by exploring cultural ideological tools like women oriented media (electronic as well as print media), and women's fashion as represented in women's narratives through talking to Jewish-Israeli women, or Jewish women who lived in Israel for a while. This enabled the study to achieve two aims: first to look critically into Israeli culture and the toll its specific 'ongoing attritions' conflict' situation takes on women and second, to listen and maybe give voice to mainstream Jewish-Israeli women who have been silently paying the price of this toll for many decades.

In this research I use various types of data collected and analysed through different methods. The initial data collecting method was focus groups and individual interviews (Flick 2002; Madriz 2000; Neuman 2000). The focus groups involved between three and 12 participants. In these groups I investigated participants' general notion of womanhood, and then inquired more specifically into beliefs, attitudes and actions connected to the models of womanhood existing in Jewish-Israeli mainstream socio-culture; their acceptance or opposition to these models; and the influence of these models on their everyday lives and lived experience.

As part of the process, I constructed a comparison between Israeli and Australian women's magazines as representing a central mass media ideological tool, which was done in order to examine and critique the different ideological means through which societies reinforce models of womanhood and femininity on women (Berick-Aharony 2007). In this thesis I further explore in-depth models of womanhood within Jewish-Israeli culture, the various ways in which they were constructed, and how these models, especially over-sexualised femininity (also observed in my previous work), influences Jewish-Israeli women and relates to different facets of Israeli everyday life. Qualitative research methods are used in order to give an in-depth analysis of implicit meaning related to different models of femininity and womanhood in texts and images presented in the various data (Denzin & Lincoln 2003b). By using variable techniques and methods I hoped to further understand these phenomena and give voice to secular Jewish-Israeli women (Bilsky 1998; Gilligan 1995; Jackson 2003; Olesen 2003; Savage 2000).

From the data collected and analysed, a group narrative was constructed that gives voice to the lived embodied experiences of the women who participated in the focus groups or individual interviews. As is often the case in qualitative studies, the themes detected through the data analysis may not easily be generalised for the whole target population. For that reason I have also conducted field research in a local beauty salon in a small town in northern Israel. I took field notes of my visits and my conversations with the women who operated the business as well as with their clients. I have also used data collected through other cultural ideological tools such as, women oriented television reality show and web or newspapers articles about women's fashion or female beauty. I also examined personal blogs and talkbacks on these issues in order to validate these themes.

Methods

The methods I use are both rigorous and imaginative. They are based on systematic observation as well as expressive insight (Ellis & Flaherty 1992a). My research starts from the view expressed by Frost (1991, p. 351): 'We and what we do are, after all, always works in progress.' My aim is to write non-alienating social science research. In order to do so I combine my personal reflections and experience as a member of Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture with the data retrieved in this research (Richardson

1992). Through systematic observation I identify narratives through which women construct models of womanhood. Through the dynamics of the different views and presentations of participants, I detect the extent they may vary in their level of conformity to these models of womanhood. Through this analysis, I examine if and how these differences influence the quality of life for these women in variables such as general wellbeing and contentment with their lives (Blomstrand 2002; Cohen & Kanter 2004; Stewart & Cornell 2003). Through imaginative and expressive insight I employ other genres of research that take as their subject matter the lived experience of the researcher (Denzin 1989; Ellis 1991). This research is multi-layered as a strategy for increasing the richness, reflexivity, plausibility and authority of the research (Humphreys 2005).

The first method used in this research is in-depth interviewing; a prominent feature in in-depth interviewing, whether individual or focus group, is the significant role of the observer or interviewer as an active sense maker and interpreter of what is seen or heard in the research context. This inevitably depends on the researcher's own standpoint and place in the community, as well as his or her own understandings, and integrity (Johnson 2001). This is even more complicated when interviewing women. Feminist researchers have observed the power of hierarchical relations within interviews (Reinharz & Chase 2001). Ann Oakley (1981) suggests that interviewing women is a contradiction in terms; observing that interviewing is a masculine paradigm embedded in masculine culture. She contends that the emphasis of an interview should shift from traditional hierarchical relations between interviewer and interviewee to a closer, more equal relationship that minimises status differences. These relations and their influence on interviews were further explored in relation to ethnicity, race, gender and even interview locations (DeVault & Gross 2007; Elwood & Martin 2000; Esim 1997; Henry 2003). However as much as interviewing is a complex process, it offers researchers access to ideas, thoughts, and memories in participant's own words, rather than those of the researcher. This is particularly important for the study of women because this way of learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether, or having men speak for women (Reinharz & Davidman 1992, p. 19).

As mentioned in the Introduction, the choice to use focus groups was not a coincidental one. At first, it was my intention to conduct in-depth individual interviews only. However, as I read more into qualitative research methods, it became apparent that I was looking for a group narrative about the lived experience of a group of women and their relationship with hegemonic discourse within their socio-culture. A way in which to obtain a group narrative that would construct itself and need less active intervention would be to use in-depth, focus group discussions (Madriz 2000; Morgan 2001). Furthermore, as the researcher, I found that focus group interviews proved to be the most flexible, egalitarian, and interactive of all methods used in fieldwork. As Morgan (2001) states, 'the single most compelling purpose that focus groups served was to bridge social and cultural differences'. This is true for interviewer–interviewee relations and for participants. It seems that although a feminist methodology cannot eliminate power hierarchies in the research process, it can be helpful in partly reducing them, especially when using focus groups. Focus groups proved to be a method respectful to participants and gave voice to those outside mainstream society, which is the situation for women within masculinised, Israeli socio-culture.

Reflexivity

One of my methodological considerations for research rigour was to ensure that as a feminist qualitative researcher I would be immersed in the research, and would thus reflect not only on my role, but on the research process. As a situated researcher, it was clear to me that within this study I would be part and parcel of the setting, context and culture I was trying to understand and analyse. The process of reflexivity aims to look inside and outside at the same time (Ellis & Bochner 2000; Humphreys 2005; Kenway & McLeod 2004; Mauthner & Doucet 2003; Naples & Sachs 2000; Pillow 2003).

Choosing to investigate the role of hegemonic discourse on secular Jewish-Israeli women's lives was evidence of my personal interest from the outset of this research study. My values as a feminist woman in a machismo culture, my life experience as a secular Jewish-Israeli woman, and my professional lived experience as a psychotherapist informed my choice of research topic and design. These values influenced my choice to move to Melbourne for the duration of this study; my

research practice in relation to how I conducted the in-depth focus groups and individual interviews; the site I chose for my observational field study, the beauty parlour; and my approach to data analysis from a narrative perspective (Ellis & Bochner 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber 1998; Telles 2000).

During data collection and analysis I needed to be aware of two issues. First, since my theories and especially my personal values were not always the same as mainstream Israeli values they should not dissuade participants from expressing their own values, opinions and ideas. Second, to recognise the meaning given to the data by participants and in so doing, avoid interpreting their reflections through the lens of my personal and professional tacit knowledge. This was particularly challenging, coming from a professional background as an Art Psychotherapist, used to thinking in an interpretive mode. All this had to be done while at the same time being respectful and enabling and not occupying a condescending position toward participants in the study (DeVault & Gross 2007; Esim 1997; Gubrium & Holstein 2001; Klatch 1987; Oakley 1981). For this reason, I employed a method of using a reflexive journal to avoid misinterpretation and personal bias as a secular Jewish-Israeli woman living with Israeli 'security ethos' discourse for most of my life.

My main aim was to listen to participants' perspectives, rather than limit them to what were my assumptions to begin with. All discussion began with a general question that redirected the focus of discussion to the uniqueness of living in Israel, without articulating the phenomenon of 'living under terror' as a main point of interest. It was important for me to explore whether other Jewish-Israeli women experienced 'living under terror' as an inseparable part of living in Israel, as I did (Madriz 2000; Morgan 2001).

The issue of women's personal safety was added to the questionnaire after long discussions with Victoria University's Human Research Ethics Committee. It had not been obvious to me as an Israeli woman, who had lived in Israel, to connect the feelings of personal insecurity as a woman to the specific situation of 'living under terror'. However, participants' responses motivated me to explore the issue further to more fully understand how the two phenomena were interconnected (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005, 2007). Again, this was an iterative process propelled by reflexivity.

Another example of my reflexive work during the process of my research was my encounter with Jewish ethnicity. The issue of Jewish ethnicity was apparent in both interviews and focus groups, yet it was not developed within the discussions due to my personal, very cursory awareness of it, at the time. The significance of Jewish ethnicity and its influence on women's lives as well as on other social spheres including class and social status, or acceptance into mainstream Israeli culture, became apparent through a parallel process of the literature research I undertook as part of this study. It seems that as a researcher/moderator investigating my own culture, I fell victim to mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse, which silences Jewish ethnic differences by insinuating that Jewish ethnic variations are all accepted with similar fervour, as 'we are all Jewish', and as such it shouldn't matter where Jews come from (Benjamin & Barash 2003; Cohen & Habermeld 1998; Dahan-Kalev 1999; Habermeld & Cohen 2007; Mizrahi 2004; Mizrahi 2004; Motzafi-Haller 1998, 2001; Peres 1971). It may well have been my experience in Melbourne in encountering multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in a new way that made me more sensitive to this phenomenon. However, when transcribing the data from interviews and focus groups, I noticed that the issue did come up, although infrequently. This observation initiated and influenced my fieldwork at the beauty parlour because I was much more aware of data that contained indirect or direct references to this issue.

Uncovering Jewish ethnicity in the beauty parlour

Whether perceived as backlash to a wider social, economical and political advances made by women (Wolf 1992), or as the complex relations between discourses and body regulatory practices that produce femininity (Bordo 1993, 1997; Butler 1993, 1999), in order to obtain femininity, women are required to paint, moisturise, deodorise and remove hair from their bodies. These activities form part of the everyday routine of femininity. In this sense, femininity is a state to be constantly sought after. The beauty salon may be seen as the site of both compliance with, and escape from, the feminine ideal.

The beauty industry fuels this acquisition of femininity and even for those women who do not visit beauty parlours themselves, the beauty system is all pervasive. This does not necessarily mean that all women will equally achieve this ideal, or that all women will strive to attain it, but rather that as a feature of everyday lives of women, femininity and the discipline of the unruly body, form an inescapable backdrop. The beauty parlour is

the site par excellence, where this attainment of femininity, and its definition and negotiation are being fought out. (Black & Sharma 2001, p. 2)

As Thornton observes in her work on the role of the beauty parlour in Afro-American communities, the beauty parlour is a space where one can meet all strata of a community and while the beautifying process is underway, conversation, richly embroidered with cultural idioms covers an unlimited range of subjects (Thornton 1979). Beauty parlours may be seen as sites of compliance with the prevailing models, since beauty workers who are more fully embedded in and depend on beauty culture more than other women, play an essential role in the dissemination of cultural ideals. As representatives of the putatively hegemonic beauty ideology, with both a financial and personal commitment to that ideology, these beauty workers impose standards on women who seek to shape their appearances within institutions such as beauty parlours (Gimlin 1996). However these parlours may be perceived as a female space, usually consisting of an all female crowd that enables open conversations about various women's issues (Scanlon 2007).

Beauty parlours are very common in Israel. In most, women can have haircuts and hair dressing, manicures and acrylic nails, pedicures, facials, various hair removal options and more. The parlours in Israel are rather diverse. Some are very high-tech and modern, mainly in larger cities like Tel Aviv and Haifa, while others are a bit more shabby and full of kitsch. Upon entering the parlour, one is likely to be assaulted by shiny, pink plastic ornaments or very popular 'artefacts of decorated blessings' that mingle with the smell of bleach and wax. Most beauty parlours nowadays, even those located in private apartments usually have a television tuned to some music or fashion channel. The fact that beauty parlours are everywhere in Israel is obviously an indication of demand for this service. The elaborateness of bridal make-up dictates the necessity of hiring a beautician, in most cases not exclusively for the bride, but also for close female relatives. Beauty parlours are also a popular option for women intent on running their own businesses from home with some basic tools of the trade.

The parlour where I conducted my field study caters to women of all classes.⁵⁰ It is located in a small town in the centre of Israel and surrounded by various

⁵⁰ Initially I was a client and then realised the richness of data I had 'stumbled upon', and obtained permission to undertake research at the beauty parlour.

neighbourhoods of different socio-economic status. Although there is an Arab town nearby, I never met an Arab-Israeli woman in the parlour. None of the beauticians in the parlour wore white coats. The parlour is located between homes in a neighbourhood street and accessible to women from different backgrounds and various Jewish ethnicities. Beauty therapy does not include minor cosmetic surgery, which is done mostly by doctors in Israel. Time is not of the essence in this place as in many similar beauty institutions; the schedule is often very flexible. Waiting for the beautician was a research asset as it enabled me to sit, listen and talk to other customers and beauticians without interrupting.

The parlour is run as a family business, owned by three sisters, each specialising in a different field of beauty work, and two assistants. It is an open space, with a small room at the back for private treatments, such as facials and Brazilian waxing, which are very popular, according to the beautician. Conversations take place between beauticians and customers and between them and other customers who are waiting for their turn. These conversations were an essential part of my observations, as well as short interviews I conducted with four beauticians working in the parlour.

Many of the topics discussed in the parlour revolved around Jewish ethnicity; the beauticians and customers assumed that Jewish ethnic groups held different socio-economic status and demographics as well as having different tastes in female beauty and attitudes toward the nature of intimate relationships. Variations included new Russian immigrants who were defined as having 'Barbie' beauty, former immigrants from Georgia as having a 'lower taste' and preferring corny ornaments, and *Ashkenazi* women as spoiled and dominating their men, while North-African women were depicted as warm and sexy. All beauticians working in the parlour were of North-African origin, while their customers were of various Jewish ethnicities.

In one of my visits to the parlour someone mentioned a new reality show on one of the commercial Israeli channels called *The Models* (Israel's version of *America's Next Top Model*). This was the third season of the show and the remark was that 'the Russians are winning Israeli beauty contests, like they won over Israeli husbands from their Israeli wives'.

Media reality show

As I was living back in Israel at the time I did my field study and wrote the thesis, and since Israel is my homeland, I became re-immersed very quickly in Israeli culture. It was as if the time I had spent in Melbourne was a 'dream', and now I was again living reality. It meant getting reaccustomed to Israeli lack of manners, to Israeli driving, to Israeli weather, to the humidity of the climate and to the heat in personal relations, and to Israeli television. While I lived in Melbourne, reality shows began to flourish on Israeli television. One of these shows revolved around Israeli models of female beauty, as its main initiative was to discover Israel's next top model. The term 'Israeli beauty' was mentioned time and again by contestants, especially the veteran Israelis. Israeli beauty usually stands for women with a darker complexion, and rounder figures than accepted Western standards. It is often a topic of discussion in talkbacks and print media (Shoshan 2008; Todana 2007; Ynet 2003).

From eighteen initial contestants, nine were veteran Israeli and nine were of FSU origin (of whom none were born in Israel). In the first episode, six contestants dropped out of the show on the judges' decision. Of these, four were veteran Israelis and only two were of FSU origin. This was the preface for the season's battle, over Israeli beauty. Many discussions took place between the judges as well as between the participants or the show's viewers, as to who deserved to represent Israeli beauty. Was it the *Sabras*, the veteran Israelis, or the new immigrants of FSU, who conform more closely to the Euro-American standards of Western female beauty? The whole season of this reality show was videotaped and analysed as part of the process of unpacking models of womanhood in Israeli mainstream discourse.

Websites

Important sources of information on Israeli socio-culture were newspaper articles and their internet readers' comments, often referred to as talkbacks. As part of this study I have read and analysed online versions of Israeli newspapers and magazines, personal blogs and talkbacks. The information on the internet sort of 'freezes' a period of time. When surfing the net, one can find news items and reactions to these items. In a way, these are reflections of a society frozen in time, enabling exploration after the events, like historical documentation of everyday conversations.

Study participants

In order to explore the lived experiences of Jewish-Israeli women, in early 2007 I interviewed 45 Jewish women; 41 were Jewish-Israeli and four were Jewish-Australian women who lived in Israel for variable periods of time (between two and 20 years). Contact with the women was made through ads placed in neighbourhood houses, and through contact person in different neighbourhoods in different areas including Greater Tel Aviv and the southern parts of Greater Haifa. To be eligible for the study, these women had to be over 18 years old. The youngest woman was 23 and the oldest woman was 74. The participants were recruited by a snowball technique. The socio-demographic composition of the informants typified Jewish-Israeli women of high to low middle class.

Although the snowball technique was used for recruiting, I did not personally approach any of the participants. Ten women were recruited by answering the ads and the rest were approached by the neighbourhood contact person and were given my contact details; making the contact with me was left to their initiative. The interviews took place in private homes or public cafes or in neighbourhood houses allocated for the purpose of conducting focus groups with neighbourhood residents for this study. All except one interview were conducted in Hebrew (the author's native language) and taped with the permission of participants. I used open-ended questions to guide women through the interview. The interviews and/or focus groups lasted, on average, two hours.

The interviews and focus groups were participant-directed. I attempted to create an ambience of 'conversation' and not 'examination'. By permitting participants to speak about recent life events, it was possible to generate important information about their immediate experiences of everyday life in Israel. My aim in this procedure was to elicit specific behaviours, characteristics, and descriptors of participants' lived embodied experiences of being a Jewish-Israeli woman, as well as to understand the situations and events (private and public) that provided contexts for these experiences. The interview or focus group process itself entails a kind of tacking procedure from specific detail to its placement in a larger whole. This process has built into it an interpretive dimension, with the researcher evaluating and interpreting as the conversation develops. Where the meaning of a statement seemed ambiguous, or

where the interviewer/moderator found it necessary to probe further into an issue, the participant was asked to clarify a point; it was the participant's choice, whether to expound on the same event, present another story, or discuss her feelings and impressions in more detail.

Focus group description

This study included seven focus groups and eight individual participants. I would like to describe the groups, so as to enable the reader to understand better the social environment from which the participants come. A detailed description, subject to confidentiality, is available in Appendix A. Each group was named after the town or neighbourhood in which it took place, which in many cases was the town, or near enough, to where the majority of group participants reside. Each participant in the group was given a code that included the initials of the group's name and the initial of the participant's first name. If more than one participant in a certain group had the same initial to their first name, a second letter was added to the code to differentiate between them. I note whether participants were mothers or not, as this was on many occasions part of their personal presentation, although it was never asked explicitly.

Tel Aviv (2007) was the first focus group I conducted in Israel. Before the group met I talked with potential participants, usually on the phone, and retrieved some personal data. Since I was concerned that some participants would not show up, I asked every potential participant that if they had a friend who might be interested in joining the group to bring them along. I interviewed six potential participants for this group and twelve women showed up for the actual group. It was a diverse group; all women lived in Tel Aviv or surrounds, apart from one, who lived in a small settlement to the south of Tel Aviv. The age range within the group was 35-55 years. All participants in this group were mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to upper middle class.

Kefar-Sava (2007) was the second focus group I conducted in Israel. It had five participants aged 23 to 74 years old. It was a diverse group, in age as well as occupation and status in life. All participants in this group contacted me after getting my contact details from neighbourhood contact person. Two of them lived in Tel

Aviv, one lived in Ra'anana and two of them lived in Kefar-Sava,⁵¹ the oldest participant, living in Kefar-Sava, volunteered to have the group in her home. Except for the youngest participant, all of the participants were mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to upper middle class.

Herzelia (2007) was the third focus group conducted in Israel. It had three young participants in their early twenties; they were all previously known to each other. One of them contacted me through an ad I placed at Tel Aviv University and gave my contact details to her two friends. This group was supposed to include three young women in the same age group, but they never showed up, although I did speak to them in advance.⁵² Two participants in this group were students; one lived in Herzelia and two in Tel Aviv. They were all single and resided with their parents. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was middle class.

Rishon-LeZion (2007) was the fourth focus group conducted in Israel. It had four participants aged 40 to 49 years old, all of which were mothers. One participant in this group contacted me after getting my contact details from her neighbourhood contact a participant's kitchen. Three participants were married and one was a single mum. Three lived in the same building in Rishon-LeZion and one came from a suburb to the north of Tel Aviv. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to lower middle class.

Pardes-Hanna (2007) was the fifth focus group conducted in Israel. It had three participants in their mid twenties. Two were single, one was married, and none had children. Two worked, one as an au pair and one as a sales person, and one was unemployed. The single participants lived with their parents in Pardes-Hanna, a small town in the centre of Israel, with some middle-class neighbourhoods with a country character and other lower socio-economic neighbourhoods, where violence and crime were more prevalent. The married participant used to live in Pardes-Hanna but had moved. One participant in this group got my contact details from her neighbourhood contact person and the other two participants were her twin sister and a neighbour. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was lower middle class.

⁵¹ Ra'anana and Kefar-Sava are adjacent, medium-size towns in the eastern centre of Israel.

⁵² One of them contacted me a day after the group took place and scheduled an individual interview, which she attended.

Caesarea (2007) was the last focus group conducted in Israel. It had six participants aged 37 to 62 years old. Five lived in Caesarea, which is an upper middle-class neighbourhood in the centre of Israel. One participant lived in a small settlement (*Moshav*) on the outskirts of Haifa. All participants contacted me through an ad in their neighbourhood house. Five were married, one was widowed and all were mothers. Four participants lived for long periods of time outside of Israel, in the USA, South-America, Europe and India. The two participants who had never lived outside of Israel had nevertheless travelled extensively overseas. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was upper middle class.

Melbourne (2007) was the pilot group, conducted in Melbourne, prior to my field trip to Israel. This group had four participants. All had arrived in Israel two decades before, as young single women; three arrived from Melbourne and one from the USA. They all met their spouses in Israel, three married Israeli men, lived with them in Israel and are still married to them, but currently living in Melbourne. One who came from the USA met a Jewish-Australian man in Israel; after living together in Israel for almost two years, they moved to Melbourne and have lived there ever since. She is currently single again. One participant in this group contacted me after getting my contact details from my contact person in the Israeli community in Melbourne; the other three were her friends that were happy to join the group and discuss their time in Israel. All participants were in their mid-forties and mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was middle class.

Individual interviews

For practical reasons to do with time, place and personal schedules, five of eight interviewees opted to be interviewed individually and three preferred not to participate in group discussion. Each interviewee has a name code that includes II for individual interviews and the initial of the participant's first name.

Data analysis

Taped interviews and focus groups were subsequently transcribed and analysed within the framework of feminist grounded theory, using the code book approach and word processor analysing techniques (La Pelle 2004; MacQueen et al. 1998; Ryan 2004; Ryan & Bernard 2000, 2003; Willms et al. 1990). When transcribing I was rigorous in

recording everything said by participants as well as myself in the role of interviewer/group moderator. Every expression, pause, and other identifiable noises were inserted in the transcript in brackets, as well as significant intonations or gestures recorded in my notes. After transcribing each taped session, I recorded my impressions of tone, content, or feeling of the interview or focus group. Having heard the conversation on tape, I often wanted to add one or two paragraphs describing how I felt the interview had gone. This procedure provided room for 'in-house' interpretations of interviews and it was also an initial phase of analysis. Prominent themes or issues were noted and coded in this preliminary phase. The process of transcribing was an important phase of analysis.

Since I do not have a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) specific program, I based my analysis of data, obtained through focus groups, individual interviews transcripts and media programs, on word processing programs using Microsoft Word's built-in functions (La Pelle 2004; Ryan 2004). The first step was to use this program to create a code book (Willms et al. 1990) as well as cluster the data thematically (Carley & Palmquist 1992; Guest & McLellan 2003; Ryan & Bernard 2000, 2003). With the initial list of content categories based on interview/focus group questions, the transcripts were scanned for recurrent themes (or codes) and statements. On the basis of the first three focus groups, the initial analytical categories were refined and expanded. At the final step, the recurrent themes were integrated into more general conceptual categories. This was an iterative process that involved reading and re-reading of over 500 pages of transcripts, and coding and refining coding of emerging themes. The code book can be found in Appendix B.

The principal findings are presented in the following chapters. In qualitative studies findings are not easily generalised for target populations. The purpose though was to explore women's experiences and perceptions not covered by statistics and surveys. The study was staged in Israel and explores the experience of womanhood for women living in a Western oriented culture. Altogether, this gives me reasonable confidence that the findings reflect reality without major biases.

Excerpts from transcripts of focus group discussions and individual conversations accompany the third and last section of the thesis. It is an important aim of this study to convey women's narratives as they said them, which gives voice to these women.

The braid

The influence of society's militarisation on the lived experience of secular Jewish-Israeli women

We begin life as kids worrying about daddy, later we worry about our men, then we worry about our own children and later we worry about our grandchildren. Yes, here, this is what I think now, I have a granddaughter in the army, in two years I will have a grandson in the army, and really this is a cardinal element in our whole, in our quality of life. It's like, let's say, there's always some kind of anxiety, there's this anxiety thing... insecurity, now, this is a physical insecurity, an existential one, not in an economic way, it is all about losing... losing someone close.

[KSN 69y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

The military as an institution assumes a central role in a society living in the midst of a prolonged, violent conflict accompanied by constant (at times daily) fear of war or terror. When joined with the Jewish heritage, with its specific history of re-masculisation of the 'new Jewish-Israeli man', little wonder that the result is that military norms and values seep into everyday social, economic and political culture. It is not easy to describe to non-Israelis how central an institution the military is in Israeli society and in the lives of its citizens. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF, often referred to in Hebrew as 'The Army'⁵³) is both an institution and a personal experience for the majority of Israeli citizens, both men and women.⁵⁴

With the establishment of the Israeli military, Ben-Gurion insisted on a clear cut institutional separation between the military and other institutional spheres, especially political ones; at the same time, he made the IDF a major organisational force within Israeli society. Some scholars have even declared that 'Israel is not a state that has an army, but rather an army that has a state attached to it' (Kaspit 2002, p. 11). Sociologists Dan Horowitz and Baruch Kimmerling even claim that in Israel one does not expect to be rewarded for contributing to the country's security; rather, the very participation in an act of contributing to the country's security represents a reward in itself (Horowitz & Kimmerling 1974). The military and its services are perceived as making a contribution to society, and as such are considered as values within

⁵³ In interview excerpts I will use the term 'The Army', even if in correct English it should be 'the military'.

⁵⁴ Every Jewish, Druze or Circassian male citizen in Israel and all Jewish female citizens are conscripted by law, at the age of 18. All Muslim as well as ultra-orthodox Jewish men and Jewish women who declare that they preserve the *Shabbat* and Jewish dietary law (*Kashrus*) are exempt from service.

mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse to this day. However, the importance of the military goes beyond its positive value of self sacrifice for the collective's benefit.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was accompanied by the notion that for the first time since the exile, the Jews now had a homeland, a state, and a government of their own. The fact that all the neighbouring Arab countries objected to and conducted a war against the newly proclaimed state, strengthened national commitment, as this state was perceived as the longed for haven for the Jewish people, who had survived the Nazi Holocaust. The Jews had finally attained independence, and were expressing a sense that their existence and security did not depend on the will of God, or the colonial super power. Instead, the collective's existence and progress were assured by a 'New Muscular Jew', its army and soldiers (Kalekin-Fishman 2006; Kimmerling 1993, 2001).

As much as the Arab-Israeli conflict is a prominent and continuous feature in everyday life in Israel, the specific heritage of the Jewish people, discussed earlier, heightens this experience for Israel's Jewish citizens. The Arab-Israeli dispute may be perceived as a territorial one or as part of a larger cultural, political, religious or economic dispute. However, the lived experience of Israelis is that of living in a constantly terrorised conflict zone. And for Jews in Israel, the actual threat to their lives is still prominent and continuous. In this situation, and bearing the Jewish heritage in mind, it is clear why the military security aspect is a significant ascription of Israeli society.

This section of the thesis lays out the braid, woven from the various bodies of knowledge presented in *The strands* (first section), and interwoven with the data collected and analysed through various methods described in *The comb* (second section) to create an understanding of the lived embodied experience of secular Jewish-Israeli women. This section is divided into themes that, when interwoven, encircle everyday lived embodied experience of non-orthodox Jewish-Israeli women. These themes were not decided upon by the researcher in advance; rather they evolved and stemmed from the research process itself. Some of the themes evolved through a process of introspection over a long period of time in Melbourne, where I contemplated Israeli socio-culture and my approach to this research. Other topics came up as themes in the process of listening as well as analysing and coding

transcripts of individual interviews and focus groups conducted for this research. Some more sprouted as issues within Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture through the reading and re-reading of literature or by spending a year and a half in the field studying my own culture in Israel.

The siege mentality

TLP: I would like to talk about the post-traumaticness. I was born in a place that... I do not know how it is in other places, but there is constantly some kind of post trauma here, it was the Holocaust, later it was the Independence War, so they lower the flag and they raise the flag and they lower it again.. you had constantly to align with the trauma that was currently post... Yes, and trailing behind was a huge list, until the First Temple, the second, the third and it is not over! I think it is unique, I think it is unique, this living on the edge, this is not life yet, it was not decided that we are here yet, it is still a trial period like, something very turbulent, something basic

TLT: And you have to carry all that on you?

TLP: What was I overfed in school? My mother came from Auschwitz, before that was Khmel'nitsky; everything I touched was loaded with trauma. Some kind of persecution...

[TLP 53y, TLT 38Y, Tel Aviv, lives in Israel]

As soon as issues of safety were produced in interviews or focus groups, and sometimes even before I had a chance to articulate them, the issue of anti-semitism or national ethnic past traumas as well as a feeling of persecution came up. In one of the groups, even before the issue of safety was brought up, in answer to the question about the unique feature of living in Israel, RZT raised the issue of Jews being unsafe in other places in the world due to anti-semitism, and most of the group acknowledged this issue as the current global situation.

RZT: I personally was in Europe, so I also know that first of all it's the fear there.. Here you feel the safety, with all the... that you hear and the warnings and that... there is fear here, but with all that there is safety here.

Moderator – you said that you feel less safe in Europe, can you explain why?

RZT: First of all that I cannot talk Hebrew over there, because of the fear.

RZS: Really?

RZT: Yes, for example I was in Paris for a long time, [she did not specify when] I have family there, and they asked me not to speak Hebrew. And I also see... my cousin... my cousin who lives there, she hides the Jewish doorpost (*Mezuzah*) behind a picture, out of fear. She used to live in another neighbourhood and when they found out she is Jewish they slashed the tyres on her car, and she actually lived in fear, so she left there and moved to another place, it's sort of... the end of world. And even there she asked me not to speak Hebrew.

RZS: There is anti-semitism in France?

Everyone: Yes, yes, of course...

RZT: Yes, there is. Not only in France, also in Turkey... in Turkey also. I tell you, once we were on a trip there and the young men spit on us and started to curse us.

RZE: Okay, that was at the time of the war [2006, Lebanon War], no?

RZT: Not at all, not at all.

RZY: They have fundamental Muslims over there; they have fundamental Muslims all over the world.

[RZT 51y, RZS 46Y, RZE 40Y, RZY 39Y, Rishon-LeZion, lives in Israel]

As may be observed, the specific time or who specifically are 'they' does not need articulation in an all Israeli group. As I explained in chapter two, Israelis have a tendency to view the world from a perspective of 'Us and Them'. 'Us' usually stands for Jews and 'Them' for non-Jews. Later, at the same discussion, all four participants agreed that their feelings of safety are stronger in Israel, even though Israel has more war, terrorism and other forms of violence. In another group of three younger women very similar feelings were articulated.

Moderator: So, what do you think of the feeling of safety in Israel?

PHSh: It is good! I am not worried, not worried at all. Look there are acts of terrorism all over the world, not just here. Maybe I say so because this is my home, but...

PHM: I think Israel; of the whole world is the less frightening place...

PHSh: Yes, I totally agree!

Moderator: Yes? Why?

PHSh: Because there is anti-semitism. Nobody loves the Jews.

[PHM 23y, PHSh 24y, Pardes-Hanna, live in Israel]

All of these women are from lower to middle-class status and from *Mizrahi* background. For most, the experience of anti-semitism outside of Israel is a vicarious experience as they never had a personal experience of living outside of Israel for an extended period, and two of three have never been out of the State of Israel. Nevertheless, it is reported as if it were part of their lived experience. This phenomenon relates to the way the Holocaust is experienced in Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture. This sense of anti-semitism as a personal lived experience was narrated by other participants who had lived for long periods outside of Israel. In the next excerpt, it can be clearly observed how easily it is related within Israeli discourse to the personal experience of Holocaust survivors.

CS: I wanted to talk about an experience we underwent in Brazil. At the time, Matan, my soldier [her eldest son who is 19 year old] was about... I think it was right after the *Bar Mitzvah* and we were driving in the streets of São-Paulo and we were standing at the traffic lights and there came... there came a car on our right hand side, standing at the traffic lights next to us, and Matan

was wearing a yarmulke, he was studying at a religious [Jewish] school at the time. You know, I look to the right and I fel[t] I just felt my heart beat at once, and this guy looked, he looked somewhat... something was wrong. And all of a sudden, he looks at us and tells us in Portuguese: "Ah, you are Jews, they should have killed you; they should have destroyed you!" Oy, that was something, it was just terrible, just terrible and I told my husband: Keep going, no word, just keep... he turns to the right, you turn to the left. You know, I had my little ones there, everyone in the back seat... you know, I was sitting with them in the back and Matan sat up front... it was terrible, just terrible.

CM: But I think most people who are foreigners somewhere have a similar experience.

Moderator – that someone tells them they should have been killed?

CM: Wow, I had a worst experience than that, like... in the USA, and I think that... everyone does. My sister and I went to this Jewish school [in the USA] and one time we were walking home and two girls from the Catholic school, both bigger than us, blond with blue eyes, walked behind us and said things..

CE: Did they know you were from the Jewish school?

CM: Yes. And they said: "Hitler should have finished the job, these crematoriums were the best invention ever..." and all the way they just walked behind us and talked like that. I remember coming home pretty scared and telling our parents and my dad asked: "So, what did you do? What did you say?" And we said: "We did not answer, they were bigger than us" and he was very annoyed with us. [tells how her mum handled the circumstances] Now, when you live as a Jew in Israel maybe someone will bug you for being Moroccan or Russian [Two Jewish ethnicities] or of some other Jewish ethnic origin, or a new immigrant, different in some way. However, in general, I think this is an experience that most Jews in the world, not in Israel can report.

CS: I have to say in all my years in the USA, I had nothing of the sort, not even the slightest thing, maybe because I was always with a Jewish community, working in a Jewish school, so I don't know, I never encountered there anything like this incident I had in Brazil... very, very stressful.

CSh: I'd like to take the discussion to my personal place, talking about 'Hitler was the best' or the crematoriums being the best invention ever, I want to relate it to my situation of growing in a family of Holocaust survivors and how it influences one's womanhood. My mum was a Holocaust survivor and she was the weak one at our home. I think I grew up or my personality crystallised as an antithesis to what I experienced at home. It was my aim to need as little as possible, never to show weakness and always try and do things myself, never ask for help. I think, I think I don't know it has an influence... a strong influence, because the sight of needy mum... of mum who is much weaker stayed with me for a long, long time.

Moderator: Your father was a *Sabra*?

CSh: No, my father was not a *Sabra*, he was with the Russian partisans, but this already indicates some kind of power.

[CS 45y, CM 40y, CE 53Y, CSh 61y, Caesarea, live in Israel]

In this sense it may come as no surprise that a significant portion of Jewish-Israeli society in Israel experiences its involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute as the

continuation of a prolonged history of the persecution of Jews. Many even observed it as the flip side of the same coin, as when IIEEn was asked to articulate her notion of safety and place and her feelings:

IIEEn: I don't think there's a difference. I suppose I might have felt a little less stressed in another place, from the aspect of all the masses that flow in your direction, and from the aspect that in another place you are an unspoiled board. You don't come with a history... But I don't know to say whether I would feel safer to live in another place, every place and... its troubles... especially as [sarcastically] a son of the chosen people, it is not simple.

Interviewer: Why?

IIEEn: Because my first aspiration is to live in Paris and... you know, there is anti-semitism there. My second aspiration is another place, but there are mosquitoes and Anopheles there. It's like there is no safe place.

[IIEEn 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

In the course of an individual interview, another participant who lived extended periods outside of Israel, in the USA and in Europe, concluded the question of safety and place in the following manner:

Today I don't feel safe in other places too. I don't... Today my feeling of insecurity is totally global. I think that seven years ago I would say with total confidence that I feel much safer outside of Israel, however, there is always... As a Jew outside of Israel I always have a Jewish Insecurity. It's another thing, apart from the tsunami and Al-Qaeda you always know you are susceptible to some kind of anti-semitism that can always raise its head. Therefore my experience is of insecurity, I think that is how we live today.

[IIA 49y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

It seems that within mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse, as expressed in this study in participants' words, the siege mentality can be articulated in the following way. As much as Israel is not a safe place to live in, due to its involvement in a protracted violent conflict, it is the safest place on the globe for Jews because in Israel, at least they experience agency through the IDF, and Jews are not defenceless, unprotected victims. This point of view, prevalent within Israeli discourse, heightens the importance of the concept of security and leads to what some may observe as militarism.

Militarism or militarisation

Several social scientists observe that in the period after the 1949 armistice agreements,⁵⁵ the notion that the Jewish-Arab conflict could only be resolved by force developed within Israeli society (Ben-Eliezer 1995; Carmi & Rosenfeld 1989; Kimmerling 1993; Peri 1996). Uri Ben-Eliezer sees this notion as the root of what he defines as militarism in Israeli society. In his view, this process began in the *Yishuv* period (1920-1948), and remains operative today (1995, 1998b). Others are even more radical, stating that as a consequence of the establishment of the State of Israel and its incorporation into the 'Western bloc', it was in Israel's perceived interests to reject a peaceful solution to the conflict and externalise it, if only to forestall the return of the Palestinian refugees (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Carmi & Rosenfeld 1989; Klein 1999; Yuval-Davis 1985). The debate as to whether Israel can be defined as a militaristic society, and if so, identifying the roots of the phenomenon, is a debate with a clear political stance; however, the importance of military experience and security issues in Israeli politics and society can hardly be overstated, nor can the 'siege mentality' be ignored. For that reason, I would like to dwell briefly upon the issue of militarism within Israeli society. The influence of the military within Israeli society reaches far beyond the military service of individual citizens. This phenomenon seems to be the basis for the concept of militarism in Israeli society. However, Ben-Eliezer in his book *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, distinguishes between militarism in general and Israeli militarism.

Militarism, as the term has been used in this book, should not be confused with a love of war. Dilating nostrils at the smell of gunpowder, machismo indifference at the sight of bloodied bodies, illusory fears and self-invented enemies, exaggerated needs of army which demands it due – such images are off the mark. Our subject rather, is the dynamics of social processes, practices, and interactions that render a military solution legitimate, self-evident, necessary, and desirable so that it becomes integral to the formulation of national policy. (1998b, p. 223)

Ben-Eliezer (1998b) defines some significant characters differentiating 'Israeli militarism' from other, more recognised forms of militarism. He counts some

⁵⁵ The fighting of what is known in Israel as the War of Independence (1948) ended with the signing of several Armistice Agreements in 1949 between Israel and its warring neighbours. These Agreements were viewed in Israel as a 'temporary truce'. Ben-Gurion referred to them as 'armed peace' (Bamachane-IDF Bulletin, October 17, 1949, cited in Ben-Eliezer 1995).

prominent features within Israeli militarism. These are persistent seeking of military solutions to national problems, lack of class and blurred borders within Jewish-Israeli society, and resilience due to its foundation of duty and coercion. This leads to Israeli militarism being a product of both the military and politics, and in turn to a lack of military and civil boundaries, which taints Israeli culture with military colours.

I would like to dwell upon the definition of militarism briefly, before continuing my discussion. Militarism, like other complex and contested terms, is hard to define. Various definitions of militarism in the dictionary stress issues like "glorification of the ideas of a professional military class" and "predominance of the armed forces in the administration or policy of the state" (Virtual 2000). Historian Peter Wilson observes that:

[T]he term lacks any real definition and risks simply denoting anything to do with military institutions and warfare in general. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify two broad traditions since the term first entered scholarly discourse in the 1860s. Anglophone writers have tended to see militarism as some kind of "improper" influence of soldiers in politics and other spheres of life, distinguishing between a "military way" to denote "normal" preparations for war, and militarism meaning "an undue preponderance of military demands." Germans and others regard it as a state of mind, but one that is generally condemned as dangerous or immoral. Both perspectives are essentially subjective value judgements. [...] Militarisation has political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Political militarisation is not necessarily the preponderance of soldiers in government, but the extent to which state structure is geared for war. This will vary over time, due to changes in military technology and methods of fighting, as well as **the state's geopolitical circumstances**. (2008, pp. 39-40) [Emphasis mine]

As much as I agree with Ben-Eliezer's description of the complex relationships between the military and society in Israel, I would like to differ on terminology; I would not refer to this as a militaristic society, but rather as a militarised society. I believe that the significance of the overt threat to Israeli society partially validates (in the minds of many Israeli-Jews) the concept of a military solution as a legitimate option for a society under siege. That is not to say that I find this a justified route to solving conflicts, but rather the lived experience of Israeli women and men, living in a constantly terrorised conflict area, feeling threatened, and enduring mortality salience as part of their everyday existence, may lead a society to incorporating militarised concepts into its mainstream discourse. It seems to be more appropriate to use here,

especially due to the Israel geopolitical situation, the term, 'cultural militarisation of society' (Wilson 2008).

Cultural militarisation entails the wider presence of military culture in society beyond military institutions. The most important aspects are those that distinguish military culture from other institutional cultures, notably the acceptance of killing, the readiness to use war to achieve objectives, and the toleration of its preparation. Cultural militarisation can extend from passive acceptance to active endorsement and promotion of military values, and of the institutions associated with them. (Wilson 2008, p. 41)

This phenomenon was articulated in the words of participants from various points of view. In one of the focus groups, a young participant in her twenties said she would like to live outside of Israel, due to reasons of personal security and wellbeing; the other, older, participants disapproved of this approach, stressing the significance of the military service as a cornerstone in the existence of Israel.

Moderator: You think that here [Israel] you cannot have a better life?

KSS: It's not that you can't have a better life here, it's just that here, it'll always be a little harder. At least that's how it feels... here really there will always be a little more stress, a lot more stress even, a lot more anxiety; for instance, I was thinking about it, I don't want to be afraid to send a kid on the bus. [At one period many terrorists attacks executed by suicide bombers took place on buses] It's like... I think it is terrible; there are so many existential fears, so why sending your child on the bus should be added to them? It seems hysterical, it seems terribly hard. So yes, I would like to leave [Israel], I feel like a traitor in any case, either I betray what I want for myself or I betray my country, or what I want for my brothers, who serve in the army or what is important for my country.

KSL: I think this can be summed up in two words that we already have here, stress and anxiety. But if we are already talking about these fears: sending the kids to the army, or the existential security problem, it is actually kind of recent, not recent, recent, but ever since buses started to blow up and the security situation became very, very acute.. Because earlier, people did go to the army, and I think the anxiety was there, yet it was more minor. I am not sure I can testify to that because I have only daughters, no sons, my husband was never a 'fighter' and my father was never a 'fighter'⁵⁶, I served in the Air Force, and I never knew anyone who could be hurt due to security reasons. However, lately when I watch the kids go to the army, kids! Twenty year old kids...

KSD: They are kids, totally kids, they haven't finished developing, yet I see them.

KSL: I think I could not be in the place of these mums, yet I am very, very angry when I hear that kids are avoiding their military service, or do not want to serve in combatant roles. My pupils for

⁵⁶ They both served in the army in non-combatant positions.

example, I used to be a teacher, my pupils came from a volunteering population. And every time I went to memorial services at school, even after I retired, the best part was to see all these rascals, these whippersnappers who disturbed in class, come in their military uniforms and salute the flag. I don't think anything can be more exhilarating than that. And I am very, very angry when people evade their service, although I know the risk is high.

[KSS 23y, KSL 55Y, KSD 43Y, Kefar-Sava, live in Israel]

Beyond the reproach in her words to the 'shirkers', KSL also expressed a well accepted belief that the military turns you into a 'real man'. As a common Hebrew saying goes: "What does not kill you fortifies you and what kills you fortifies your mother." In a different tone RZS, who narrated her saga of resistance in joining the military against her father's objection, described his reaction of total delight on seeing his daughter in military uniform.

I decided I am joining the army and my father said to me: If you join the army, you are not my daughter. The minute he saw me in uniform he was delighted (laughs). I came to his grocery shop, as if nothing happened and that was that, he saw me in uniform and he was beside himself.

[RZS 46y, Rishon-LeZion, lives in Israel]

This little episode contains in a nutshell the clash between the traditional values represented in the *Mizrahi* patriarch's negative attitude towards his daughter's military service and his embrace of the all Israeli value of military service as a source of pride, once it is clear to him that his daughter has done it and joined 'the Army'. A different point of view of militarism within Israeli society is represented in the words of KSD, whose son had joined the military a couple of months before our discussion.

KSD: I inducted my son to the army this year and it felt very... weird, totally weird... it is like my choice to live here, to continue living here, because it is clear to me that if I reached this phase when my son is conscripted and I am still here [in Israel] then it is a choice, it's...

KSN: True

KSD: It's a choice I made not to leave on time [for him not to be conscripted] and choosing to live within this model, and it seems imaginary, totally crazy. It seems unrealistic to send a child to the army, a child that was never in his life involved in a fight, never came home wounded, because he hit someone. He always somehow avoided that. A child with a broad smile, happy, tons of friends, surrounded by friends, what does he have to do with the army, anyway? It's as if until we reached this point I managed to ignore and repress the security environment I am living in, luckily I had no one close injured, not in a terror act and not within an army service, so I walked between the drops

somehow, until I became forty and suddenly I am inducting a child to the army. And I say: How come? How come? What does he have to do with the army? And there is no choice!

[KSD 43y, KSN 69y, Kefar-Sava, live in Israel]

This feeling of *Ein Breire* (no choice) further emphasises siege mentality as the basis of the militarisation of Jewish-Israeli society. However, for Jewish-Israelis, the military is a significant social institution: a personal as well as socialising experience.

The military as a socialising mechanism

In a speech to the *Knesset* (Israeli Parliament), Ben-Gurion stated his intention to use the military as a construction tool for the Israeli nation. Ben-Gurion explains this as an efficient use of limited resources, like time, among other things.

I have been a Zionist all my life and I do not deny the existence of Israel, Heaven forbid... but... even the English nation was not always that nation... but was composed of different tribes... fighting one another. And only after a development of hundreds of years did they become one nation... **We do not have hundreds of years, and without the instrument of the army... we will not soon be a nation... We must guide the progress of history, accelerate it, direct it...** This requires a framework of duty... a framework of national discipline. (*Knesset* minutes, August 19, 1952. Cited in Ben-Eliezer 1995) [My emphasis]

The concept of 'security' is far more widespread within mainstream Israeli discourse than the term 'military'. The boundaries of 'security' are loosely defined, are constantly expanding and almost any sphere or subject can be connected to security. For instance, social issues of gender or Jewish ethnic subgroups, the economy, industry, settlements, or education are often laden with 'security' related arguments (Ben-Eliezer 1995; Horowitz & Kimmerling 1974; Kimmerling 1993; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Yuval-Davis 1985).

According to Ben-Gurion, Israel's security included a variety of issues including increasing the birthrate (of Jews); populating 'empty' areas of Israel; expanding settlements along Israel's new borders; absorbing Jewish immigration; developing economic independence as well as fostering research and scientific ability; and, above all, voluntarism of the Jewish population for difficult and even dangerous missions (Ben-Eliezer 1995, 1998b; Kimmerling 1993; Lissak 2001). Little wonder that with so many diverse issues, many were assembled under the rubric of security in Israel, and almost any social, cultural, economic or other issue has security implications as well in mainstream Israeli discourse.

Since the concept of 'security' has such a broad definition, and the military is viewed as a nation building tool, the military has been given far more social responsibility and

functions⁵⁷ than just traditional roles within Israeli society. Almost all young people in Israel are obliged to serve in the military. Men serve three years and women serve two years.

At age 18, one is inducted into the army, and it is there that one experiences what amounts to the last stage of socialisation, emerging from adolescence to adulthood. Men then continue to serve, regularly and actively, throughout most of their adult lives. (Golan 1997, p. 581)

Of course, the process of socialisation through military service, or of societal adoption of military values and norms, is not unique to the Israeli experience (Enloe 2000); however, its prevalence within everyday life in Israel is particular. Traditionally, men were fighting while women were allocated service and educational roles. These roles have changed with time according to society's needs in various periods. The comprehensive conscription for men and women, juxtaposed with a gendered division of labour and the vision of the military as a social tool, created specific female related roles within the IDF that had more to do with the traditional roles of enablers, and caretakers, than fighters. Special female roles included female soldiers as coordinators in new immigrant camps, or soldiers/teachers in development towns. Although the gendered division of labour is not the only division of labour within the military, it is still a major one (Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Sasson-Levy 2003; Yuval-Davis 1985).

Women's lived experience in 'The Army'

Status in the military is determined by one's relationship to combat. Israel is the only Western country that presently conscripts women for military service (Dar & Kimhi 2004; Sasson-Levy 2003). Until very recently, only men served in combat positions in the IDF. Although in recent decades, with the military becoming more technological, women are serving in more professional roles; their roles are still not usually defined as combatant ones. This is not to say that some 'status-bearing' positions are not open to women; indeed, the closer a women's task is to an actual combat position, the higher her status, albeit after that of her fellow male soldiers.

⁵⁷ For example, the IDF even conducts conversions to Judaism for soldiers whose parents are Jews, but for some reason, they are not accepted as Jews according to Jewish law. (Usually it is because only their father is Jewish and Judaism is a matrilineal religion).

The IDF's personnel data are highly classified and restricted by strict censorship, yet according to several sources the gendered division of labour within the IDF in the 1990s was: 39% of women soldiers were engaged in clerical work, 36% worked as instructors, 14% were in military courses, 7% were officers, and the rest were technicians or drivers (Jerby 1996; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Sered 2000). The situation did not change much in the 2000s when one third of IDF's draftees were women and of these only 5% served in combat duties, most of them as male combat soldiers' instructors in military training bases (Dar & Kimhi 2004; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Sasson-Levy 2003). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the vast majority of women conscripts are still filling clerical or service positions within the IDF (Golan 1997; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Sasson-Levy 2003; Yuval-Davis 1985).

The fact that women are drafted to the IDF reflects egalitarian values that were prominent on the social agenda of the *Yishuv*, and still circulate within Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse. (Today they are usually represented in the demand of women to be 'economically independent', or at least to contribute to their families income). The all embracing conscription and women's service in 'The Army' is still viewed by many as proof of Israeli society sustaining women's equality. In a recent research study, social psychologists Dar and Kimhi found that contrary to claims that since women's position in the IDF is regarded as inferior, which may lead to them being less inclined to invest efforts in their military service, or to view it as less significant and less rewarding; the female veterans they interviewed viewed their service as personally beneficial, although from a national point of view both men and women veterans agreed that women's military service is less valuable than men's (Dar & Kimhi 2004).

Of the 41 Jewish-Israeli women interviewed for this study, only three had not served in the IDF; one because she was married prior to her military service, another for health reasons, and the third had been repatriated in her early twenties, having left Israel as a young child and thus exempt from service. The remaining 38 women all served in various female roles. The oldest participant, a 74-year-old woman, had served as a radio operator in the 1950s. The majority of the women served in various

clerical positions, some as military or civil instructors.⁵⁸ Eight described the military service as a positive experience, enhancing self-esteem and creating feelings of agency and empowerment; although they acknowledged the hardships involved in the military service, especially basic training in boot camp.

The military service as a positive experience

RZE and RZS are sisters in their forties and they participated in a focus group with two more women. Three live in a lower middle-class town in the centre of Israel. They all come from traditional *Mizrahi* families. In RZS and RZE's family of origin, there were nine children, five boys and four girls. RZS was the seventh child and RZE was the youngest; however in their family RZS was the first girl to go through military service. In the focus group they told us about the futile struggle one of their older sisters had had with their father over her desire to do her military service against her father's objection. She did not win and was forced to go to the recruiting station and declare she was religious to get an exemption from military service. RZS told the group how she left home at the age of fourteen to a religious boarding school for girls to escape her older sister's fate and was thus able to join the military at the age of eighteen. After RZS completed her military service, the path was paved for younger RZE, who did her military service with no objection from her father. Both recalled their military service as a positive experience of freedom, equality and release.

Moderator: So how was it for you to be in the army?

RZE: It was fun

RZS: It was...

RZE: The truth is... the beginning was a little hard... but eh...

RZS: Because it was the first time E left home.

RZE: Yes, it was a bit hard, but... real fun. Even boot camp with all the hardships and that, it was totally a release! It was fun really; all in all it was fun. [...]

RZS: The confidence! It gave me tons of confidence!

[RZS 46y, RZE 40y, Rishon-LeZion, live in Israel]

Another group of three young women in their early twenties came from traditional-*Mizrahi* families in a mixed middle and lower class neighbourhood, presenting with issues of violence and integration problems associated with new Jewish immigrants

⁵⁸ The term 'civil instructors' refers to female soldiers serving as teachers or youth instructors in neighbourhoods that are troubled in various ways.

from Ethiopia and veteran Jewish-Israelis from a lower socio-economic status in the Sharon area of Israel. They described the same feelings of release and empowerment as well as personal gain due to the feelings associated with their military service. For these young women, as well as for RZE and RZS, military service in and of itself was perceived as an empowering experience, independent of their military roles.

PHM: I think... I never lacked confidence, yes? Not that I had an exaggerated confidence, but, like, I always had confidence, however, in the army I gained more confidence. It's not that I had some fighter service, in the *Kiryat* (IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv), home every day, I had a commander that released me every day at noon, I didn't have a difficult service, but the very fact of being in a military frame, it's different to any other frame, school, a job, everything...

PHS: All in all, it's a very good experience.

Moderator: In what ways was it good for you?

PHS: The independences I gained, I arrived at places alone by bus, up north, almost the northern end of the country, by bus! At the beginning [of her service] I served at *Golani* junction, I used to get up at five am, catch the first bus, go on to do watch shifts, nights, I did night shifts as well, things that.. I never dreamt I would do such things, getting up like that at five in the morning, grab the first buses... But all in all, looking back...

PHSh: It was bliss!

PHM: No, it's a real experience, after you are through.. it's a real experience.

PHSh: It was fun, really it was fun. Once you are over boot camp, this is a real horrible part..

PHS: Yes.

Moderator: What courses did you take?

PHS: I did a technical course, it's a technical clerk in munitions, I should have worked in munitions warehouse, but they sent me to be an office clerk.

PHSh: I had a shitty job, reserves coordinator. Oh my, all the reserve soldiers curse me on the phone, they don't want to do anything... still it was fun. I didn't have a military commander, just a civilian that worked in the army, came at eight left at noon, free phone, He was the funniest man ever [...] and army trips, this is real fun, educational series, a bliss, we were in Jerusalem, Sundays' culture, theatre, movies...

PHM: We didn't have that in the air force...

PHS: But air force is better.

PHSh: All in all the army here is a good thing!

[PHM 23y, PHS 24y, PHSh 24y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

For IIEi in her early forties, the empowering experience of the military service had to do with the fact that she did her training in a mixed course of men and women. She tells me (individual interview) how she toyed with the idea of organising a group of girls to be accepted to the naval boarding school to a captains' track (that did not

accept girls twenty years ago). When she was recruited to a mixed course with 'boys' for the job of a military sports instructor, she felt elevated. During the course she suffered acute health problems as a result of the harsh training, but she refused to go to a military doctor and took minimum sick days, in order not to fail the course and to become a military sports instructor.

IIEs in her early fifties supports the notion of the military as an empowering experience. For her, her service as a non-commissioned officer, involving a responsibility of overseeing 200 female soldiers at the Air Force Flight Academy and the cultural life of the base gave her confidence and skills she could not easily acquire at the age of eighteen through other life experiences.

IIEi and IIEs come from a different background than RZE and RZS or the younger women whose experiences were narrated above. Their families of origin are *Ashkenazi* and they both grew up in the suburbs of Haifa, a more socialist oriented city in northern Israel, which may account for their different attitudes. For the first six participants who expressed a positive personal gain from the military service, the military was a release from more restricting surroundings of traditional *Mizrahi* families, in which traditional patriarchal relationships were the norm; as RZE and RZS said, it was their father who objected to RZS's military service and he managed to prevent their older sister from doing her military service. For these women, the very fact that they had left home to live in a gendered mixed environment, and serve in the military (a traditional male role), was an empowering experience in itself. However for IIEi and IIEs this was not enough, and their military service had to have the added value of either 'doing a real man's job' or being an extremely responsible experience for them to appreciate it.

As much as the military service was appreciated as an empowering experience by these participants, other participants identified some negative aspects.

The military service as a negative experience

Of the 38 participants who served in the military, about half noted some negative aspects within their military experience. Although some of these experiences were gender neutral and could have happened to men as well as women in their military service, most of the negativity had to do with gender inequality within the military.

Some were degrading experiences related to participants' gender, like referring to them in belittling or otherwise derogatory terms, reserved for women, while other experiences concerned frustration due to unsatisfying or unchallenging military jobs (designated as female roles). KSN, who completed her military service some fifty years ago, recalled being frustrated by the broken promise of egalitarian values conveyed in female conscription, yet translated into inequality in real life.

At first there was the nice part in boot camp, we were given rifles and we were made to feel like we... like we were soldiers. This part was in some way a continuation of the upbringing I got, that a woman is worthwhile, and that... however, as I finished boot camp I was classified to supply corps and became a clerk and... Nobody gave anything about me... Nobody gave anything...

[KSN 69 y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

KSR, in her mid seventies, who served as a radio operator almost 56 years ago, still recalls how she and her female colleagues were called by the superior male officer "*Katchkes*" (geese in Yiddish), a demeaning title for women. The issue of women's military service, its contribution to the army as well as its contribution or diminution to the women themselves is an ongoing polemic within Israeli political and social domains (Harel 2007; Jerby 1996). The first Israeli female pilot, Yael Rom got her wings in 1951 and was the first of five to fly in various capacities in the early Israeli Air Force (IAF). However, before long, women were barred from Flight Academy as well as from most other combat or subcombat roles in the IDF (Feldinger 2008a; J. 2006). Though women were active partners during the battle for independence (1948–9), most of their female successors served in less significant 'female roles' (Feldinger 2008a; Nevo & Shor 2003).

I liked the army, but, eh... I kind of felt that I could use this time for... I served coffee some of the time, I was a clerk and really, I just served coffee. I remember my superior officer, I had three superior officers, I served in a platoon. They would arrive in the morning and do like that (signals with her thumb). They did not say anything, they just raised their thumbs and it was clear. They were such worthless... One wanted black coffee, the other: L, but you know I want tea, the third wanted... and I like had to fulfil the stupid needs of each and every one of them.

[KSL 55y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

In 1949, with the cessation of battle, the Israeli Women's Corps (IWC) was established. The IWC was responsible for the integration of female soldiers, their basic training and transfer to IDF units. It also provided female soldiers with various

services during their time in the military; the most significant one was the establishment of a separate (Women's Corps) judicial authority over female soldiers (Nevo & Shor 2003). This meant that male officers were not permitted to sit in judgement of female soldiers, in order to protect female soldiers from their male commanders' direct coercion or vindictive action. All female soldiers were part of the IWC until it was dismantled in 2001. Female soldiers now fall under the authority of individual units based on jobs, not on gender.

From the mid nineties after a landmark 1994 High Court appeal by Alice Miller, in which the Air Force was instructed to open its flight school to women (*Miller v. Minister of Defence* 1995 [sic]; IDI 2008). The first female fighter pilot, Ronnie Zuckerman, successfully received her wings in 2001 and several female navigators graduated before her (J. 2006). The Chief of Staff Advisor on Women's Issues, Brigadier General Yehudit Grisaro, said in a recent interview that:

The issue of women in combat is progressing and we have been improving integration since 2000. There have been great improvements, and most of the taboos have been lifted. We allowed women to serve as fighters in anti-aircraft, artillery, Karakal light infantry, pilots, navigators, sailors, search and rescue, etc. The fact that I can't remember all the units is a good indication of how many are now open to women. We are also working to create a vision for service of women and make sure all we are doing is appropriate for where we want to be ten years from now. (Feldinger 2008b)

Many journalists and trendsetters praise the egalitarian values depicted in stories like *'The first female deputy squadron commander'* or *'the most combatant female officer in the army'*, while other politicians, generals and journalists claim that this reform in women's roles is detrimental to the IDF and both female and male soldiers alike. Others think the IDF is not enabling women to fulfil their potential within military service, a phenomenon that causes loss, in their opinion, to both female soldiers and the IDF (A 2005; Azoulay 2007; Buchbut 2008; Fishman 2007; Harel 2007; Jerby 1996; Nevo & Shor 2003; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000; Weis & Kelner 2007). Law professor, Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, is cognisant of this situation, and suggestions made in order to improve women's status within the military, but she warns against giving women even more obligation and responsibilities without benefits (Feldinger 2008a).

The issue of women's roles within the IDF, their meaning and significance for the IDF as well as for female soldiers, whether as an empowering or a demeaning experience, is an open one, with various supporters and opponents; however, within the lived experience of the participants of this study it was not the only facet of negativity experienced in their military service. A different kind of negative experience involved various forms of sexual abuse, from sexual objectification to sexual harassment. These issues usually came up in interviews or focus groups voluntarily and they did not warrant specific questioning. Narratives about military service experience invariably raised issues of verbal or physical sexual harassment. In some cases this was a personal experience, while in many others it was a vicarious one. I would like to review some of these narratives next.

The "beauty hierarchy" – *the best men are pilots, the best women are for the pilots*⁵⁹

All military cultures are heavily biased toward essentialist perceptions of femininity and masculinity, which preserve and enhance dichotomous, hierarchical gender relations (Enloe 1983; Jerby 1996; Sasson-Levy 2003). Within the lived experience of participants, these hierarchies were maintained within the military in various ways. Allocating women specific 'insignificant' non-combatant roles within the military serves as a mechanism that preserves these power relations. Another mechanism reported widely in interviews and focus group discussions was the objectification of women as prizes, organised according to a 'beauty hierarchy', and distributed according to military rank. Various women described this phenomenon.

KSL: First I did a course and later it was decided I will stay as a clerk, however the other girls who did that course were sent to other bases according to their beauty level. Meaning, the ones that were pretty enough were left at that base, and the platoon commanders chose, who they wanted...

KSR: What, according to looks?

KSL: Yes, it certainly was. Not according to professional skills, but according to... it was obvious that it was according to... this one wanted that one and this one wanted that one...

KSN: In my time it was clearly known that the hot babes go to senior officers. Those with the high status that could choose... that could say: This one or that one...

[KSL 55y, KSR 74y, KSN 69y, Kefar-Sava, live in Israel]

⁵⁹ This is a common quip in Hebrew attributed to **Ezer Weizman**, the popular seventh president of Israel. Before the presidency, Weizman was commander of the Israeli Air Force and Minister of Defense (Nevo & Shor 2003).

As is obvious in the above citation, the beauty hierarchy of female soldiers within the IDF was a common phenomenon in its early years. Women now in their fifties and seventies who completed military service thirty to fifty years ago, repeatedly reported on that. However, this phenomenon persists today, and it was reported by participants in their early twenties, as part of their military service experience completed a few years earlier.

I have been in a situation that, eh... I realised that... we mentioned it before... that commanders indulge themselves with... according to looks, who will be in your office. The higher your rank you have a better choice for what you want. I have been in that situation and it was very clear what is going on... and it is very sad.

[HS 24y, Hertzelia, lives in Israel]

It seems the same phenomenon is currently happening in the IDF, as narrated by a current female soldier's mother, who participated in one focus group.

TLH: I have to tell you, àpropos an Israeli phenomenon, that my daughter who joined the army two months ago and was chosen for a high quality and highly classified intelligence unit, two months after she joined that unit she told me... actually the girl she is replacing told her: Have you noticed who serves here? And the answer was: Hot babes and religious Jews, and anyone who knows this unit, agreed that this was the case; hot babes and religious Jews!

[...]

TLH: It's a kind of snobbism, it is an elite unit's choice, it is sad, very sad...

TLP: You mean that because it is an elite unit, they get to choose the hot babes?

TLH: Sort of... they have the ability to do that with the right connections, it's like they used to say that pilots choose the prettiest operation clerks, okay? It's very grave, but that's the way it is.

[TLH 50y, TLP 53y, Tel Aviv, live in Israel]

Sadly, the negative experience of sexual harassment of female soldiers within the IDF does not stop at beauty hierarchy. The sexual objectification of them overflows into other actions as well.

Lived experience of sexual harassment

I did a community course and was positioned in [a small town in the centre of Israel with many difficult neighbourhoods], and I was really independent. I was in an apartment with another [female] instructor, but sometimes you had these inconvenient things with the men commanders,

yes? I was just talking about this with a friend, following the 'Ramon incident'⁶⁰ and I said, "How can a girl soldier know how far? Where are your boundaries as a woman, as a girl?" One should know... I remember when my direct commander, when I had my birthday, or didn't have it yet, I don't remember exactly... anyway, he came to give us an inspection and the other girl was not there at the time, we stood in the kitchen and he told me: "In Argentina we do like that on birthdays", and he pinched my cheeks, he was standing really near me. I was afraid it will develop beyond that so I moved a step back... From today's perspective, I think, I could say, that's it! And I did withdraw, not that it was anything explicit, but in my head there was this fear.

[IIEi 40y, lives in Israel]

KSN, who completed her military service about 50 years ago, had a similar personal experience.

KSN: I remember serving in this munitions base on [...] and my boss started pawing me, and suddenly there was a knock on the door and my boyfriend came to visit me.

KSD: (quietly) What a save...

KSR: Couldn't you say anything? Were you afraid?

KSN: You know what I was told after that? We talked about it just now in a group of women, àpropos the Ramon incident, so I told my story and a friend of mine told her story and we were actually threatened. If I'll make a fuss I'll find myself in a base in [a far away place], I will be sent away from home; it will be a punishment. A punishment!

[KSN 69y, KSD 43y, KSR 74y, Kefar-Sava, live in Israel]

PHSh told the group about an experience she underwent during her military service. A friend who was serving in the same base was sexually harassed by her officer and she used to come to PHSh for comfort. Although she completed her military service only four years earlier, PHSh talked about it as if it happened long ago. She stressed that such experiences cannot happen today in the IDF.

PHSh: He was really horrible! He was a Druze and he had a very dirty mouth, he used to paw her and in return he would let her go home early. She used to get annoyed and come to me to cry, she used to cry a lot.

Moderator: She is a friend of yours?

PHSh: Sort of [...] and she always came to me, saying: Halid does this, Halid does that...

PHM: We didn't have any of this.

Moderator: Did she ever complain?

⁶⁰ **Haim Ramon** is an Israeli politician and Member of the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*). He was appointed Minister of Justice in 2006 and announced his resignation from the post the same year, following allegations of sexual misconduct. Despite being found guilty of harassment, he was reappointed to the Cabinet in 2007, as Vice Premier and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, with responsibility for state policy. Since some of the interviews and focus groups took place at the time, the issue of whether he should be reappointed was on the public agenda and there were several references made to this 'incident'.

PHSh: (Shocked) NO! We didn't have that term, complain; I think at my time... No, I used to tell her, I used to quip him and quip him about it... Today, if it was nowadays? It would have been the end of his life; it really would have been the end of him, really.

[PHSh 24y, PHM 23Y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

As is clear from the voices of the various women narrating their personal history of sexual harassment within their military service in the IDF, PHSh conclusion, that such an experience would be resolved differently today, has unfortunately no foundation.

Attorney and military judge Abraham Fechter observes the history of sexual harassment in the IDF began with its inception and was treated more as a nuisance one had to learn to live with than as a serious problem to be resolved (Fechter 2006). Orna Sasson-Levy stresses, in her article on female Israeli soldiers in combatant positions in the IDF, how these female soldiers adopt masculine behaviour patterns and how they tend to trivialise various sexual harassments (2003, p. 447). This trivialisation did not actually occur within the focus groups and individual interviews conducted for this study; however, the realistic need of female soldiers to trivialise these experiences, or to handle them in alternative ways in order to continue coping within their military service, was narrated in many instances.

From this cultural militarisation stems gender definitions based on chauvinistic culture and these definitions constitute the core for models of womanhood within Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture.

Gender definitions within Israeli society

As demonstrated in the previous section, the reality of cultural militarisation tends to create a 'machismo culture', meaning that society is divided into a 'warrior society' of men and predominantly women's 'home front' (Bar-Yosef & Padan-Eisenstark 1977; Klein 2002). This phenomenon is further enhanced within Jewish-Israeli culture whereby military concepts are part of everyday language, especially due to the fact that almost everyone has served in the military, or is intimately familiar with someone who has served in the military. And the military's jargon or slang is known to most, as well as highly gendered definitions of masculinity and femininity. This combination of civil and military in everyday life formulates gender definitions within Jewish-Israeli culture that arise from the reality of the gendered labour division and gender hierarchies in the military.

The encompassing military service experience generates in Israeli men, due to their inevitable rite of passage in their military service, a more macho definition of masculinity. At the same time women, due to their experience in the military and their everyday existence as counterparts to the macho Israeli men, generate a more subjugated definition of femininity. These gender definitions were accentuated very clearly by a group of four Jewish-Australian women who lived in Israel for various periods of time; three were married to Israeli men and are now living back in Melbourne. They all observed the different, more 'macho' character of Israeli men as a distinct group.

MJ: It's interesting watching Israeli men get together.

MH: Come over to my place every night. (Laughter)

MJ: I was just thinking about, when we go back to visit Israel, now, what happens to G [J's husband] after about two hours.

Moderator: What happens?

MJ: He goes: [I'm going out for a minute] He does his civvies [civilities], he comes back and he is... he looks different. His face is all linear; you know, his manner, the way he talks to me. The way he behaves with me, everything is different, you know. It's not drastically different, but it's clearly different.

Moderator: In what way, could you be more... just give me...

MJ: Animal...

MH: The animal comes back.

MJ: Animal and I don't mean it in sexual terms. (H- No!) Though it's hard not to take it that line...
But, this basic animal thing that goes on. When they meet, when Israeli men meet... [...] They
discuss the world and they think they know everything!
[MJ 45y, MH 48Y, Melbourne, lived in Israel]

Feminist writer Cynthia Enloe (1983) contends that the military is more than just another patriarchal institute. It has an extraordinary status in relation to the state, even in countries that are not highly militarised. Through this special status the military defines 'national security', which in a circular process defines the 'social order' on which 'national security' is established (Enloe 1983, p. 11). This process is very noticeable in Israeli society and within mainstream Jewish-Israeli culture, and as Enloe stresses, in this circular process the preservation of 'national security' may come to mean defending the state and citizens from external as well as internal enemies. The internal defence includes preservation of the 'social order' and in turn the gender definitions which fortify military ideologies. Furthermore, as much as the military is defined as a masculine institute, the military needs women to inspire men with the masculinity reinforcing incentives to endure the hardships of soldiering. However, for that inspiration to take place, women need to behave as 'women' (Enloe 1983, p. 212).

This militarisation of gender definitions within Israeli society has deep implications, even for intimate relations and within the family. For Jewish-Israeli middle-class women this means that as wives they are expected to take up the extra burdens of child care and domestic management as well as emotional support, and the everyday role of enablers in exchange for protection by their male-spouses are provided through their military service. In order to sustain the military institute, Israeli society needs women to act in a gendered way. Maintaining the military are thus gendered processes that draw on ideological beliefs regarding the various and dichotomous roles of women and men. In her account of her marital relationship MR sharpened this aspect of gender that stems from militarised gender definitions, and how this influences the way in which Israeli men perceive the women they are with, and how they should behave in everyday life.

With me... and E [her husband]... E's position was always that he was the giver, in Israel, working... and that I had, it was my place to support him. Without it being stated... it was my place to support him, whatever it was, whatever decision he was making, I should understand that he was making that, this decision for our sake, and I was meant to support him. So if it meant him not

being home seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year! Whatever comes up I have to be ready to handle it, because he is working to support us! And it didn't matter that I might disagree with that or it might be inconvenient, or it might be something I don't like... and that... for 20 years it was like that. We lived in Israel and he always worked and he was bringing the money so I had to be happy with that. And now here... he's not working, and he's... he goes to Israel to work every so often and I have to understand that now, but... he has to go off whenever he needs to go off and I have to be ready to support that situation.

[MR 47y, lives in Melbourne]

CM who was born in Israel to Israeli parents, but was raised from a young age in the USA, has another example of a woman who has enabled others all her life and finds this is her main role. As a repatriating Israeli young woman, she told the story of her first meeting with her mother-in-law and her vision of this woman as the representer of Israeli womanhood.

CM: For me looks is really a difficult question because it is very blurred now days, however, about behaviour I can say that when I first came here from the states, I arrived at my husbands' parents home, in the *Kibbutz*. [His mum] a mother to four sons, I was shocked at what was going on around me, I didn't know how to absorb the whole situation.

Moderator: Why?

CM: Because her job is the one who launders and cooks and gives and gives and gives.

CD: In the *Kibbutz*?

CM: Yes, it wasn't a *Kibbutz* anymore. It's like... She gives and gives endlessly, never says no. We would come over to eat, she would fix everything, they would finish eating, the four sons and the husband would get up from the table, sit in the living room and light a cigarette, and I would find myself like... Where do I fit? Do I sit and smoke or do I help her? Where am I here? So, I told my husband: You know this is really annoying me, why should you sit and drink coffee and watch television and... I don't know what and I have to hel[p]... So he said: "so don't do it". He said: "my mum likes to do it!"

[CM 40y, CD 43Y, Caesarea, live in Israel]

Food anthropologist Carole M. Counihan asserts that 'food establishes and reflects male and female identity and relationships' (1999, p. 13). Mutual exchange in the preparation and consumption of food creates equality, while the situation described in the above account preserves power hierarchies and gender inequality. This state of things was also echoed in Jewish-Israeli women's words, especially regarding women as enablers, stressed earlier in the text, and the importance of food.

I have to say that even nowadays... For example, I have dated this... and today we really feel like wow... Sure, when you look at it from another point of view and you say: Well, someone her age, it must be a totally different world for a woman, women learn, women are independent, strong and that... I want to say that it looks that way much more than it really is. I was on a date with someone and we started talking, an educated guy, and we sit there and we talk about books, we talk about studies, and we talk about many things that are considered... a world in itself. And then came up the issue of food and I mentioned the fact that I don't know to cook, and he stares at me and he goes: Wow, so you'd better learn.

[KSs 23y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

In another group of Jewish-Israeli women other aspects of gender definition that involve domination and subordination, yet undermine the established understanding of who protects and who is protected were raised and discussed. RZT brought up the issue of "men's egos" describing how, in any dispute between a man and a woman, men will never admit that they are in the wrong. The other participants agreed with her and attributed this phenomenon to women's specific feminine wisdom:

RZS: No, I think women find it easier to say sorry.

[All participants around the table nod in agreement]

Moderator: Why? Why is it easier for women to say sorry?

RZS: I think it comes from... awareness. It's an awareness thing and eh... also an upbringing thing, and also a thing of... one gains from that. If you know to admit that you have made a mistake and apologise for that, you get four goals at the same time. I think it is feminine wisdom, to know to err and to say you erred; it's truly a matter of feminine wisdom. It is something built in, into being a woman. It's like the ability to give birth, to bear children, to contain; it's some kind of feminine wisdom. I can say that about my mum, who lived with a totally un-easy partner. This ability to restrain and forgive and make peace is a feminine ability. Men have some kind of... very distinct difficulty... it's an ego thing, I think, it's an ego thing to come and say pardon me, they can't do it.

[RZS 46y, Rishon-LeZion, lives in Israel]

As the dialogue around the table evolved, someone observed that women are willing to compromise in order to keep their male partner from leaving home, but the polemic was concluded in mutual agreement with RZE's words:

RZE: I think, I think, I speak for myself; since the children arrived I am ten times more compromising. It's as if, before, I used to stand up for myself, like that is how I am and that's that. Like, you know, I used to have an ego too. The minute the kids arrive, your ego is down.

Moderator: What happens? Please explain, what has changed?

RZE: It's important to me that the kids will not be exposed to states of... you know, dispute and hear all this arguments and such.

Moderator: So it is done in order to protect the kids?

RZE: Yes! To protect the family, yes. You realise this is your part, your family and you should protect it. Sort of like, you know, a real defence. You have to watch all the time that everything runs pleasantly, and... more or less peaceful.

Moderator: So, the feminine way of protecting ones family is through concession?

RZE: Yes, many times...

RZT and RZS: Yes, definitely!

[RZE 40Y, RZT 51Y, RZS 46y, Rishon-LeZion, live in Israel]

Whether women are indeed protected by their male partner and what price they pay for this protection within Jewish-Israeli society is yet to be answered. As was obvious in most focus groups and individual interviews conducted for this study, the feeling of personal safety for women is not a resolved issue within Israeli society.

Women's sense of personal safety

Although men carry the combatant roles in a society at war, and as much as Israeli men were and still are portrayed as the defenders of the country, when the issue of safety was brought up, in interviews and focus groups, only one participant thought that men were less safe than women in Israel, but even she conceded it might be the other way around.

Interviewer: Who do you think is safer in Israel, men or women?

IIEEn: I don't think there is a difference

Interviewer: None?

IIEEn: No!

Interviewer: And if I put social violence into the equation?

IIEEn: Then I would say men, because of women. Haven't you noticed that half of... more even, 90% of the assaults are because somebody offended someone else's girlfriend? People stab people in the streets because someone offended their girlfriend. One might assume that statistically women are more prone to violence; there is this 'amusing' element of rape that men usually don't experience [said in a very cynical tone and a fake smile]. Apart from that on the global level the army kind of balances that. More men are injured in the army so I don't think there is a significant difference, maybe with women the emotional injury is harder, after all death last several seconds and the consequences of rape last for years.

[IIEEn 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Most participants believed that women were more vulnerable to gendered violence, and expressed the feeling that, as women, their personal safety was not guaranteed in their everyday life.

Moderator: Do you find women in Israel are more or less safe than men are?

KSD: Less safe!

Moderator: In what ways?

KSD: Economically, for instance, physically, also. Usually, I am not sure about Israel specifically; a man is more powerful than a woman. I think if a burglar enters a house, god forbid, and there is a lonely woman, there is more chance he will assault her than if there is a lonely man. She is more... She is less safe than him.

[KSD 43y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

It seems militarised gender definitions combined with the concepts of women as objects (prizes) lead to a behaviour towards women that incorporates some kind of gender based harassment as an inevitable part of Jewish-Israeli women's embodied lived experience. As IIG phrased it:

Interviewer: What experiences you find are inseparable to being a woman?

IIG: Life experiences?

[...]

IIG: I find it hard to define it as a necessity: But, some kind of confrontation with a man... Like, I don't want to call it abuse, because it doesn't need to reach a stage of touch even, but some kind of thing that has to do with a man's abuse, I mean... It can be someone in the supermarket remarking about your arse, or like... I find it abusive, okay? Like taking for granted that if you are a woman they may talk about you in a certain way, or treat you in a certain way, which is something that I am sad to say most of us women experience one way or another through our lives.

[IIG 38y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

The majority of participants did not relate personal experiences of gender based violence. However, most participants expressed feelings of personal insecurity, resulting from their gender, and even when the hazards of combatant military service were raised, women were still perceived as more vulnerable.

Moderator: Who is safer in Israel, men or women? Who is more at risk?

PHM: Women, because of the harassments, because of rape...

PHS: Overall, they are not as powerful as men...

PHM: [It's] beside the point, a brute... man rapes man?

PHS: Yes, sometimes...

PHM: It's rare, like... when? In what situations? He has the power to fight back, a woman doesn't. If a rapist confronts me, what can I do? As much as I pretend that I am strong...

[PHS 24Y, PHM 23Y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

The question of women's safety in comparison to men's in Israel gets complicated when I raise the issue of male military service and its consequences for Jewish-Israeli men. PHSh is annoyed by my question, as she feels that her safety as a woman is the issue and she doesn't sympathise with any kind of risk men are exposed to. However PHM convinced her to see the other side of the issue and their conclusion is that there is a hierarchy of risk.

PHM: She is talking about the risk, like a man goes to the... to fight, like... he is a fighter, a soldier, like all the people killed, you know, most of the people killed not in acts of terrorism, like shooting and the such... She is talking about that risk... Like a woman goes on the street, there is someone who will rape her; a man goes to the army...

PHSh: Okay, that is a risk too...

PHM: This too... I think it is equal, the risk...

PHSh: Depends how you look at it, physically the woman is weaker, but war-wise than the enemy is stronger than us, like... I am just saying it like that, but it is so, there is always the one who is above...

[PHM 23Y, PHSh 24y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

Whether it is 'the enemy' who is stronger or Israeli men, it is clear that all participants of this focus group view Israeli women's personal safety as the lowest on this 'safety scale'. In another group, participants themselves raised the equation of women's personal safety as opposed to men's in their role of national security guardians.

Moderator: In your opinion, are women in Israel more or less safe than men?

TLAs: Oy, clearly less safe!

TLH: Confidence or personal safety?

Moderator: Personal safety.

TLAh: In no place are women safe in relation to men.

TLT: (Cynically) They do not die in the army, sweetie.

TLAh: Oh, the army...

TLH: We are talking about everything, Ah.

TLAy: (Laughing) Well, they die everywhere else.

[TLAs 47y, TLH 50Y, TLAh 39Y, TLT 38Y, TLAy 42Y, Tel Aviv, live in Israel]

Gender based violence is prevalent within Israeli society. Between 1992 and 2006, about 17 to 29 women were murdered every year. During this period 311 Israeli women, Jewish and Arab, veterans and new immigrants were murdered by their life partners or other relatives. Of these 79 were Arabs and 232 were Jews (Women's aid centres 2009). Israeli youths commit and experience relatively higher occurrence of dating violence than in many other Western societies. The high rates of various types of dating violence in Israel raise concerns. Girls report more experiences of violence within their dating experiences than do boys. Some scholars assume that this may be attributed to boys' very different perception of what constitutes violence, as well as a different perception of the context preceding a violent act (Schiff & Zeira 2005; Sherer 2009).

Moderator: Do you find women in Israel are safe?

HM: Safe? [In Hebrew the word *Betucha* (safe/secure) may be used as personally safe and as confident]

Moderator: Not self-assured but like personal safety, not confidence, safer.

HR: No.

HM: No.

HR: Definitely not! Like... President Katsav⁶¹ and you have... It's obvious! We dare less, sexually speaking of course. We will never dare pawing that area of theirs...

HM: What do you mean dare? Why would you do it to a stranger?

[HM 24Y, HR 24y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

This may be a result of male induction into adulthood through the military, its values and perceptions. However, gender based violence in Israeli society is not restricted to dating violence or to youth; as both the former Minister of Justice, Haim Ramon and the former President of Israel, Moshe Katsav's conviction of sexual offences can attest to. Domestic violence is also high and the estimations, according to Israel's women's aid centres, is that one in seven women is exposed to some form of domestic violence (Rasnic 2009).

'Living under terror' may have a specific gendered perspective. The particular concept of living under terror was articulated earlier in relation to Israelis' lived experience in general. However, a significant body of feminist critique has problematised the term suggesting that 'terror' is a common phenomenon for many women in the domestic domain (Herman 1992). This may be even more significant in Israeli society for several reasons. First, gender based violence is likely to increase because of the traditional or even machismo definitions of gender prevalent in Israeli culture. Second, as Sachs, Sa'ar and Aharoni demonstrated in their eminent study (proving what many Israeli women intuitively knew), domestic violence is likely to rise in situations of war and terrorism, since women are expected to contain and compensate for the trauma and frustration of men. Third, it is important to mention the wide distribution of firearms and other small arms that circulate among the civilian

⁶¹ **Moshe Katsav** is a former President of Israel and member of the *Knesset*. The end of his presidential term was marked by controversy. From 25 January 2007 until his resignation on 1 July 2007, he was on leave of absence amidst impending charges of crimes stemming from his alleged rape of one female subordinate, which was later dropped, as well as sexual harassment of others. In July 2006 President Katsav complained to the Attorney General of Israel that he was being blackmailed by one of his female employees. The investigation quickly turned against Katsav as the employee, referred to as A, alleged sexual offences. The eventual allegations asserted that Katsav had sexually harassed up to ten women including the first woman's charge of rape. The probe in the Katsav incident started on August 2006 only days after Justice Minister **Haim Ramon**'s indictment over alleged sexual harassment. On October 2006, police recommended pursuing rape and sexual harassment charges against President Katsav. The Attorney General was expected to adopt most of the police's recommendations and indict the president. On June 2007, Katsav's lawyers reached a plea bargain with Israel's Attorney General. According to the deal, Katsav would plead guilty to several counts of sexual harassment and indecent acts and receive a suspended jail sentence, and pay compensation to two of his victims. The more serious rape charges brought by the initial employee, A, have been dropped, as well as Katsav's original charges of her blackmailing him (Alon et al. 2006; Izenberg 2007; Kershner 2007; Naughton 2006; News services 2007; Yoaz, Lis & Barkat 2006).

population through compulsory or reserve service in the armed forces, through employment as security guards and of course through proximity to criminal activities (Adelman 2003; Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005; Sharoni 1992). Simona Sharoni even stresses that since Israelis are socialised into adulthood through their military service, they acquire a violent conflict management jargon, which they employ in their everyday intimate relationships against their female partners (1992, 1994).

It is a well documented fact that the victimisation of women and girls caught in the midst of war zones emphasises extreme forms of sexual violence and related horrors that befall them as females (Cubilie 2005; Rehn & Sirleaf 2002). However, the case of Jewish-Israeli women is more complex. Their situation on the homefront renders the gendered aspects of civilian involvement particularly invisible because armed conflict concentrates mostly on the borders (Adelman 2003; Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005, 2007; Sharoni 1994). Gender based violence in Israeli society is prevalent and heightened at times when 'national security' is threatened. It seems that women's lives and their actual or potential exposure to gender based conflicts cannot be separated from armed conflict. Based on data from women's helplines and crisis centres in Israel, it can be discerned that between October 2000 and December 2004 there were over 50,000 new calls from women who reported sexual assaults and domestic violence. These figures represent an overall increase in the number of women seeking professional help regarding sexual, physical and emotional abuse. At the same time the number of women who sought help during peak political violence was consistently lower (Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005).

As one participant observed, the low rate of women's personal safety in comparison to men's in Israeli society is a regular phenomenon in everyday life. In IIEi's view, the public debate on sexual harassment has intensified women's awareness of their situation, but does not really help in any practical way.

Ever since there is all this thing we talked about of sexual harassment and since it came into public awareness, it really disturbs me whenever they catch another... lately it was Rami Hoyberger⁶² that supposedly also sexually harassed, someone is complaining about him, and it is really hard on me, I try to see both sides, because it can always be someone just trying to... but then they

⁶² **Rami Hoyberger** is an Israeli actor who was accused in 2007, by a make-up artist, of sexually harassing her. He was never indicted and the charges were dropped (Cohen, A 2007; Rubin & Batito 2007).

investigated in *Ha'Bima*⁶³ and there are other women who worked with him, not actresses, theatre workers, who don't... who are afraid to complain. The thing is, it is easier to threaten us... and I just see it, even here, one day at the supermarket, two men who work at the meat department were harassing their female colleague, and I restrained myself not to tell them off, and later I was sorry for that... But I didn't buy meat off them, it disgusted me to buy from them, they were harassing the girl that worked with them. One of them said: "What a dream I had about you, wow, what a dream". Now, he didn't give details but for me it was like, that's that! And she is a married woman, I know, and she is really young, it was very disturbing. Like, I say: "It's a very small thing, but you know", and they are laughing and laughing and she stands there and smiles but you can see she feels awful, just awful! And later I said: "I should have told them off, but my protest was that I didn't buy meat from them, I just didn't feel like being served by them, when they act that way". So, yes, your life is much more easily threatened as a woman, even harassment wise. [...] I think the threat is more on us, I don't know, they have a threat they go out and fight it, and what can we do?

[IIEi 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Whether it is the instrumentalisation of violence that Israeli men are taught in military service, or whether it is the general militarisation of Jewish-Israeli culture and society, the fact that violence against women is a prevalent experience in Jewish-Israeli women's lives was obvious in the collective narrative portrayed by participants in this study. One participant reported, in the preliminary conversation we had before the focus group, that she was a rape survivor. Another told me off the record that she was a victim of a rape attempt as a child, but she managed to flee. Three young women in their early twenties, all students living in the centre of Israel, narrated in group discussion a personal lived experience of sexual abuse, by a stranger, as young girls. The first experience is narrated by HR, about an experience she had as a young woman with a shiatsu therapist while in therapy:

HR: I think they use our ignorance. I even remember myself, I went to a shiatsu treatment and I sort of thought that shiatsu meant touching and that part of the... and only years later I realised that I was sexually harassed, because he touched my boobs. Like, since when is feeling one's boobs called shiatsu? So, like, yes... they use our ignorance a lot. Maybe it comes even more from a thing that we don't have the courage to protect ourselves.

HM: You feel awkward telling them off...

HR: Yes, maybe that's what it is

[HM 24y, HR 24y, Herzlia, live in Israel]

This narration was followed by HS's story about her experience as a young woman, dealing with unwelcomed attempts by a young man who was making advances,

⁶³ *Ha'Bima* – Israel's national theatre.

stressing again her inconvenience at telling him off and in doing so, taking upon herself the role of a 'not nice' girl:

I remember when I lived in Eilat there was this guy who came on to me, and I was like... I really wanted to be nice, and he asked to massage my shoulders, and I said: "oy, I am this, I am that"... and he insisted: "Come on"... It's very easy to defeat a woman who tries to stay nice, and at some point his hand came down and massaged my chest, the part that was exposed, and all that came out of me was carpet sounds [sic], which means: Nothing! And today when I think of that I feel like: Bang! Like smashing my head into the table. Really, it is just awful, I want to kick and scream and curse until all the blood would drain off [sic] his face, and just leave. And it makes me very sad to remember this incident, and I am sure it happens to many other women.

[HS 24Y, Herzelia, lives in Israel]

This second experience was followed by an account from the third participant of her personal experience of sexual harassment as a young teenager:

HM: This is so familiar to me, because when I was in seventh grade and someone smiled at me, I smiled back. I didn't know you weren't supposed to... (Laughing in embarrassment) Then, after that he actually started to touch me and...

HS: (Shocked) I don't believe this, what?

HM: I don't know, he had a head problem, or something...

HS: Oh, he was an adult...

HM: Something like that, I don't know. And I remember asking myself: Just a second, this isn't right, is it? He touches my bum, this is improper... And what do I do now?

[HM 24Y, HS 24Y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

IIMs, in her fifties, used to work in management positions in high-tech companies in Israel and the USA. In an individual interview, she highlighted the issue of women's personal safety in Israel by defining it as disability.

IIMs: I for instance am very threatened. No doubt there are things I can't do because I am a women, like walking on the beach alone at night, it is true it may be risky for a man too, but a woman is much more vulnerable, period. Including me. I have [female] friends that are real cowards, I for example can walk on the beach in the mornings and many times I am totally alone, and sometimes I can see men coming towards me or so... I wouldn't say that I am totally calm, but I am pretty calm, it is my territory. But I have a friend who wouldn't do that. She lives here, here! [The town is right on the beach] I do it with 99% security, not a hundred, but 99.

Interviewer: I am not sure I would have been able to do that.

IIMs: And if you were a man, would you?

Interviewer: Yes, no problem.

IIMs: So you know what I am talking about. There is this disability.

[IIMs 57y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Interwoven into IIMs's words for the duration of the interview are her latent assumptions about feminine conduct and responsibility. In very candid expression, she finds it strictly related to the issue of women's exposure to gender based violence, and women's exposure in other ways. But IIMs is not unique in her assumptions. Many participants observed the relationships between women's conduct, dress codes and violence against women. Susan Sered (2000) anthropologist argues in *What Makes Women Sick?* that within Israeli society victims of sexual crimes are often perceived as guilty. It is either their behaviour or their code of dress that inflicted the assault on them. Sered describes a gang rape that took place in Ramat-HaSharon in 1998 and public response tainted with militarised values accompanied by phrases like: 'an operational accident in an elite [fighting] unit'. In a series of articles about the incident all of the interviewees blamed the girl, in one way or another. Sered concludes:

If boys who raped should be forgiven because they serve (or will serve) in elite units, girls can be blamed for provoking male sexual attention. (2000, pp. 96-7)

The phenomenon of blaming the victims of gender based violence is prevalent in Israeli society and was noted by the participants in this study. Some of them accepted and agreed with this view, while others commented on it as an aggravating phenomenon. In a group of four women in their forties from traditional *Mizrahi* background, although RZY tried to stress that women's behaviour should not be an excuse for sexual victimisation, she still saw eye to eye with RZT who claimed nowadays women are less modest and therefore prone to sexual assault.

RZT: They [women] project sex, they project that they want it. Nowadays, one goes to pubs and women come on to men.

RZY: Yes, you are right, but it is not fair to say that if a woman projects, it means she should be raped, or forced into things.

RZT: I did not say that.

RZY: It's like... you have to separate these two things, a serious separation.

RZT: Of course, it is clear.

RZY: The fact that she is sexy and abundant, and she feels like wearing red, red lipstick, does not mean she should be forced. One should ask, and offer and be polite. Maybe she just feels like fooling around, I don't know.

RZT: Yes, but some women are just all over men; because there are more single women than men.

RZY: Those who ask for it, you mean?

RZT: Yes.

[RZT 51Y, RZS 46y, Rishon-LeZion, live in Israel]

However, in a group of younger women in their early twenties, all participants expressed their frustration with the same attitude they had experienced as society's reaction to women:

HR: Yes, there is a lot of the: She asked for it thing, like I think the hormones too, it's sort of two things that come together, hormones and décolletage, bingo!

HM: It's like if you wear a mini skirt to work everyday, you lost your case, if you are raped. If you'd wore buttons up your... then you might have a slightly better case.

HR: I remember I wore a mini skirt to work one day, because... I really like my legs and... I'll never forget it; people just came to me and said: How can you dress like that? And I sort of didn't understand, like: What's wrong? I just wanted to... And they said: Don't you understand you are asking for it? Like... That's the way it is, either you wear a mini skirt and you know what will become you, or you wear... wear layers.

HM: I am sorry to say that they have rapes in the ultra-orthodox world as well. It has nothing to... It's a mental illness.

HS: I really don't think that... There are excuses but there is no real reason, nothing justifies it.

HM: In our eyes, but what about society?

HS: I think what happens is the fact that they get really ridiculous punishments. It's a fact that many of these cases don't reach... although they complain, I assume it is especially so in the military system. Somehow it legitimises everything, like... I don't know how to explain it... maybe... I am not sure if there are more male or female judges... When I hear about these cases and the ridiculous sentences they give, I am sure there are more male judges, because I can't find any other way to explain that. I really don't know; it's like a feeling that the world is run by men and they take care of one another, otherwise I don't know what is going on here.

[HM 24Y, HS 24Y, HR 24y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

HS is not the only one who makes the connection between the military and women's sexual victimisation. Many feminist researchers observed connections between the cultural militarisation of Israeli society and the high rates of prevalent, gender based violence (Adelman 2003; Chazan & Mar'i 1994; Rasnic 2009; Sachs, Sa'ar & Aharoni 2005, 2007; Sered 2000; Sharoni 1994). The issue of 'women's proper place', their roles in society, in general, and within intimate relationships, in particular, is a long-standing one; and this is closely interwoven into the issues of gender performance (Butler 1998, 2004; Rothman 1978). In a militarised society these performances carry

specific features that are heavily laden with physical dimensions, like a certain appearance and appearance monitoring, as well as monitoring bodily reproductive processes and female sexuality. This monitoring is perpetrated through social disciplinary practices that invade the body and supervise even the most private and intimate aspects of life.

Furthermore, in a reality of a protracted violent conflict, when the military assumes the highest status as the 'national security' guard, media coverage of what is newsworthy is usually militarised and masculinised. Cynthia Enloe argues that in the USA, 'the War on Terror discourse has served to shrink understandings of what is "news", what is "security" and who is an "expert"' (Enloe 2004). These same militarised definitions have been at work in Israeli news discourse for decades. The close connections between the military and politics within Israeli society and Israeli polity were investigated in depth (Horowitz & Lissak 1989; Lissak 2001); while some scholars declare the military and civil society in Israel are two separate entities, others posit that the management of the protracted Israeli-Arab conflict assumes cardinal importance in defining the terms of participation in the Israeli political system. This is a phenomenon expressed by a majority of ex-generals within the Israeli political sphere (Beinin 1998; Ben-Eliezer 1995, 1998b; Ben-Eliezer & Shamir 1991; Feige 1998; Helman 1999; Kimmerling 1993; Klein 1999; Levy 2003; Lissak 2001; Lomsky-Feder & Ben-Ari 1999). As professor and *Knesset* member, Naomi Chazan recognises:

In many respects, without knowing it, the Occupation was the first stage in setting Israeli women back politically. It was not just 'the Occupation'; it was the Occupation and '67, which heavily militarized Israeli society and essentially made it more apparent that women were back-seat drivers in the business of running the Israeli state. (Chazan & Mar'i 1994, p. 17)

Due to Israel's security situation, gender equality is perceived as a luxury. Under the heading of 'national security', social issues in which women usually play a prominent role are marginalised. Issues like health, education, and welfare, perceived as women's issues, always occupied a lower rubric on the Israeli public agenda. For example, in the Israeli parliament (*Knesset*) women are disproportionately represented on committees perceived to be 'feminine', dealing with social subjects which are considered less prestigious (Herzog 1999). This political situation leaves two types of

agency available for women, and both are anchored deeply in femininity; one is the over-sexualisation of feminine appearance and extensive grooming, and the other is the oldest vocation in the world—motherhood.

Familism in Israeli society

As is suggested in the famous slogan 'the personal is political', the line between public and private is socially and historically constituted; it varies from one society to another as well as between historical periods. The struggle for women's equality marked on its agenda a challenge to private/public distinction as well as re-examination of social gender definitions and roles. In Israel, this struggle is confronted not only with traditional Jewish and Arab cultures, but also by the 'security ethos' that dictates public/private dichotomy (Golan 1997). As a consequence, familism is prominent within Israeli culture.

Israeli society demonstrates strong family orientations within all its various subcultures. Whether Jewish or Arab, religiously orthodox or secular, Israeli culture embraces familism as a core value (Fogiel-Bijaoui 1999). This orientation is reinforced on several levels by Israel's security situation. First, as demonstrated previously, living in a protracted, violent conflict zone increases within Jewish-Israeli society the military as a value, and contributes to the construction of more dichotomist and traditional gender definitions. These traditional definitions combined with the war situation intensify the salience of primary relationships and stress the importance of family ties (Bar-Yosef & Padan-Eisenstark 1977). Second, the security situation also intensifies the societal perception of men in masculine, instrumental, combat roles and women in feminine, supportive, expressive roles. Some scholars have even sharpened this notion by comparing men's duties as soldiers to women's duties as mothers (Berkovitch 1997; Kristeva, Jardine & Blake 1981; Morgenstern-Leissner 2006; Yuval-Davis 1980). Third, the demographic situation of Israel, often referred to in Israel as the 'demographic problem', encourages large families of all ethnic groups within Israeli society. Furthermore, Jewish-Israeli culture is still deeply rooted in Judaism, a tradition that views children as a blessing⁶⁴ (DellaPergola 2007; Fogiel-Bijaoui 1992a; Herzog 1998; Mazori 2005; Yuval-Davis 1987).

⁶⁴ When I was 39 I was pregnant with my fourth child. It was an uplifting experience to walk within Israeli society in that condition. I made it a point, to let everyone know that this was my fourth child, and it was an easy task since most anyone, from the tellers in the bank to salespersons in shops to unknown co-shoppers or close colleagues would ask straight away, "So how many kids do you have already?" My answer, that this would be my fourth, would always grant me exclamations like *Kol Hakavod* which might be literally translated in this context as: "way to go! This is the right thing to do!" As mentioned earlier, Israel has always been a pronatalist society. Families with many children are referred to as 'families blessed with children'. However when I was growing up, having three or

The shadow of a protracted Arab-Israeli conflict and constant mortality salience in everyday life has become a powerful mechanism that reproduces a gendered binary world. Within Jewish-Israeli society this dichotomy is referred to as 'home front' and 'battle front' and is embedded in military values as well as military jargon. In feminist terms, the separation between the family and the military reinstates the public/private split (Armitage 2005; Herzog 1998; Sharoni 1994). In Israel, the ethos of 'national-security' as depicted in 'The Army', soldiering, and combatant philosophies dominates the public sphere and is the bastion of public male discourse. As a consequence, family, familism and especially motherhood are perceived as the pillars of Israeli communal and private lives and established as women's domain (Berkovitch 1997; Fogiel-Bijaoui 1992a; Haelyon 2006; Manski & Mayshar 2003; Meyers 2001; Morgenstern-Leissner 2006; Nagel 1998; Okun 2000; Remennick 2000).

The institution of the family assumed a new role with the rise of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century. With evolving nationalism, mechanisms for subordinating women, not only to men but also to the goals of the collective group, were simultaneously reinforced. Women, as reproducers, are perceived both as representatives of collectivity, often portrayed as 'Nation-Mother' and representing nation's honour and symbolic boundaries (Enloe 2008; Rapoport & El-Or 1997; Shadmi 2000; Shehabuddin 1999; Weiss 2002; Yuval-Davis 1987, 2003).

In a cultural climate that enhances these concepts, women's place in the private sphere is not only strengthened, but magnified. In Israel, a sense of belonging and of making a meaningful contribution to the collective, which accompanies women's traditional role as mothers, obscures the discrimination and subjugation underlying the gendered division of roles. As much as women are currently involved in economic and political realms (one of three leading candidates for Prime Minister in the 2009 elections in Israel was a woman) they are still held responsible for running the household and raising the children. It is therefore a dominant cultural assumption that women's first priority will be the family (Herzog 1998, 2004). Tamar Katriel observes that the

more children in a family was more the experience of families of eastern origin, *Mizrahim*. In my parents' milieu, of European origins, *Ashkenazi*, our family with three children was quite extraordinary, with the 'two parents two children family' model more common.

experience of the military service generates a bonding between the males in the family while enhancing the nurturing role of the mother (Katriel 1991, pp. 70-92). Furthermore, it is assumed that motherhood is inseparable from womanhood (Haelyon 2006; Kahn 2000; Katz 2005-6; Remennick 2000) and for most women it is also inseparable from their personal identity.

In one of the focus groups, twelve women were asked to introduce themselves; there were no further instruction as to what should be included in this introduction. Each and every one of them noted their first name, their marital status and how many children they had. This was not asked, the moderator never mentioned the need to know whether or not they were mothers, or how many children each had, yet all of them felt the need not only to mention motherhood, but how many children they had, while some even mentioned their children's names and sex.

The centrality of the family in Israeli communal and private lives constantly reproduces and reinforces this binary gendered world. Israel is a family-oriented society. In most Western cultures the centrality of family (as a social institute) has shifted and hence the structure of families has changed; at the same time the social pressure to marry and have children has lessened (Katz & Peres 1986; Peres & Katz 1981). However, in both Jewish and Arab segments of Israeli society, the family is still a central pillar of society and preserves traditional patterns of two parents and their biological or adopted children. The option of being a woman and not 'fulfilling' one's womanhood by becoming a mother was described as 'blasphemy' by a young participant in her early twenties. She described her mother's unforgiving reaction to her own contemplation not to have kids. The women in the group assumed that what lay behind the reaction was the mother's desire for grandchildren, however KSS depicted other experiences she had had within Israeli society, in general, and to stress her point that women do not have the option of choosing not to reproduce children within Israeli contemporary culture.

She [KSS's mother] will have grandchildren, she has three boys that will do the job nicely and still it is very hard for her. [...] There's this forum on the net of women who don't want to have kids, because sometime, although I am still far from that point, I'm not sure where the decision of having kids stems from, for me. So I surf this forum and there is this thing called 'trolls' which is like people who go into forums they dislike and like 'bomb' them. This specific forum is constantly under 'trolls' attacks. It [not wanting to have children] is like some kind of terrible secret they walk around with.

Like, a woman has a defined role, she should reproduce kids, and it makes no difference if now she is independent and educated!

[KSS 23y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

On average, the Israeli family, even in the Jewish secular community, is larger than the average family in Western democracies (DellaPergola 2007; Fargues 2000; Mazori 2005). The divorce rate is lower and the network of ties among blood relatives is broader. Social policies are pronatalist and many laws take the existence of an intact family for granted⁶⁵ (Fogiel-Bijaoui 1999; Herzog 1998; Izraeli et al. 1999; Katz & Peres 1986; Peres & Katz 1981). As soon as the issue of lived experiences unique to women was articulated within focus group discussion and individual interviews, the issue of motherhood, as an inseparable and unique experience of womanhood, emerged. When asked about the meaning of being a woman, IIG articulated her lived experience this way:

Being a mum. [...] Taking care of the kids; the dynamics of that. Mainly being with them, being a mum! [...] I find it in bread-making. [G prepares bread every day she told me earlier that her oven wasn't working and she got a new one] It's expressed in getting up before everyone and preparing the house for them, it's the feeling of home, the coziness, the warmth, you know. For two weeks we did not have *Hallah* on Friday and this is familism, I don't know... It's like, at three I start to 'open' the dough, and *Shabbat* enters and the light is fading, and the *Hallah* is ready and the smell fills the house, and every one is expecting: When do we sit for dinner and when the *Hallah* is out of the oven it's a whole thing... It has created a charming intimacy at home, and for the two weeks I did not have an oven, I like bought *Hallah* and no one touched it. And this week when I baked it, everyone came to the kitchen and walked around and said: "What a good smell" and the thing that was taken for granted was again anticipated and exciting. And that's the thing, that's the essence of my femininity and defining it through something else that has to do with high heels and perfume or décolletage is impossible for me. This is not where I feel my femininity. (Laughing) I sometimes enjoy playing with that, but nothing more than that.

[IIG 38y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Motherhood was frequently portrayed as an inevitable part of women's uniqueness, like menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and menopause. This way of presenting motherhood, as an inevitable part of women's physiological life cycle, is part of the aura of naturalness endowed on social values by mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse.

⁶⁵ 'In some cases, the family's centrality has enabled Israeli women to achieve gains for which western feminists are still fighting, such as maternity leave and a maternity grant, legislation forbidding employers to fire a woman who has given birth, day nurseries from an early age, and other benefits'. (Herzog 1998, p. 72)

There is no doubt that the ability to give birth is the significant ability that differentiates women from men; to conceive and deliver, to give birth. If there's one thing I feel sorry for my boys is that they will never have this experience. They will never be able to conceive and give birth. [...] As a woman due to your menstrual cycle, you learn to be very attentive to your body. You are occupied by the question: "Has my period arrived? What kind of period is it this month? Does my headache have to do with the fact that my period is due? Is my fever going up? Am I ovulating?" (At times when you are trying to conceive) The whole question of how you experience pregnancy, nausea, heaviness, the pressures, the kicks, is this labour pain, yet? "Is it time? Was this the water breaking?" I had only three pregnancies, many women in Israel have many more, but this question: Did the water break? Was so critical for a few days in my life that I can never forget it!

[IIA 49y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

As IIA contemplated the consequences of this restrictive attitude towards women, for her, especially at the stage of life when the ability to bear children is no longer there, she wondered where this loss was positioning her as a person.

This whole issue of the cult of youth and the big breasted female body is definitely based on childbearing abilities. I am sure it is based on that. The woman whose skin at the neck is already drooping... everyone knows she can't bear kids anymore. This is where it comes from. From this place that men want women that can bear them children, and childbearing ability becomes your most important asset. But is it? [...] The loss of childbearing ability is huge, and then you have to ground yourself on other things, like: "Hey I've got lots of other things to give. Although I can't bear another child, I have other abilities."

[IIA 49y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

However, IIA connected this more general trend in women's objectification to the specific situation of Israeli society in the midst of a protracted violent conflict, when she commented on specific reasons as to why Israeli culture adopted these attitudes, and how once again this acted as a buffer against anxiety.

In a society where we constantly lose our kids, whether in their military service or in acts of terrorism, this ability, to bear children is hugely significant. But it's even more than that, it's like: "If I lose all my kids, if they all die, will I have the ability to reproduce them, to reproduce new kids instead." It's sort of job like, and there are... you get to hear stories like that here... And I know, it is twisted, I tell myself: "You will never do that, even if you could", still there is something primeval about this ability that works.

[IIA 49Y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

In a group discussion, CE sharpened the feelings of inadequacy this attitude constructs for menopausal women.

CE: Look, if we stay with pregnancy, let's say pregnancy and giving birth or breastfeeding, a real stereotype. So this is great for the mother and baby, but then what? What do I do when I can't fit them in here anymore? (Points at her lap)

[...]

CE: No, I was thinking: How do I break out? How do I break out of that? Like, isn't there some existence after that? It all connects to menopause, like, hey if this system isn't working anymore we are not...? So what do I do? Return to makeup once again? Return to the grounding, to deciding where we live, the more valuable side of life, which is also breastfeeding in a way.

[CE 53y, Caesarea, lives in Israel]

As feminist scholars observe, the restructuring of women as mothers within the basic socio-cultural framework of a society serves as a major mechanism for reproducing women's subjugation and preserving the gendered division of labour. As a consequence of gender inequality through locating women in traditional roles, protest is diluted and strong feminist resistance is tempered. This process is often depicted through endowing these gendered roles on the bearings and significance attributed to masculine public roles, like depicting motherhood for women as the counterpart of soldiering for men. In this study, all participants articulated a direct connection between femininity and motherhood, and for some, this was connected to strength and empowerment:

Feminine behaviour? Feminine behaviour is first of all motherly behaviour. [...] It's all about compassion, empathy, mercy, caring... On the other hand it's all about this thing of being stronger... especially at times of hardships. I find feminine strength, at times of emotional crisis. Yes, one may say that we [women] tend to be emotional and cry at times, but on the other hand I see strength there as well.

[IIEi 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

In a group of three young women in their early twenties, a feisty spirit of 'female power' was articulated when the issue of differences between men and women was raised.

PHSh: Stamina. I take myself as a woman and I see men... When I am ill, I am like an ox, like nothing. And I am seriously ill, but men, when they are ill they are like rags! Babies! So I say: Feminine power rules. A woman's word is a real word!

PHM: And the pregnancy thing, the nine month of hardships and they go through although they suffer.

PHS: And the periods. [Women are] more dominant!

PHSh: Definitely more dominant. In the family she's also more dominant. Kids will always go to mum and not to dad. [...]

PHM: Me? Yes, I think women have all the power, from any aspect, except maybe the economic providing, that the man is always, no doubt, should be more... [...]

PHSh: In short, the woman is... (flexes her arm)

[PHS 24Y, PHM 23Y, PHSh 24y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

Family structure is undergoing a process of constant change throughout the industrialised world. Among other changes is the significant shift in breadwinner-home-maker classifications. Based on Israel's specific heritage of gendered equality, attained through equality in duties and the sanctification of work as a restructuring mechanism, it is little wonder that over 64% of all Jewish-Israeli mothers, with children younger than four, are in the labour force (Izraeli 1992). According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics in 2007, almost 70% of all mothers of children aged 17 years or less were working mothers; and, in general, over 50% of all women aged 15 years or more work outside their homes. However, the occupational distribution of women is still different from that of men. In 2007 women's jobs were still concentrated in traditional female service occupations, characterised by lower wages and status. Over 70% of the female labour force is concentrated in the following occupational categories: teachers in primary schools and kindergartens, secretarial workers, general clerks, sales persons, cleaning persons and caregivers (CBS 2008).

Although the family is valued by both men and women, the primary care for family rests with women. They are perceived as primarily responsible for caring for the family, in general, and caring for children and the older generation, in particular (Katz & Peres 1986; Peres & Katz 1981; Remennick 1999a). This study's focus groups and individual interviews about families, gender equality and gender roles often revolved around issues of dependence, independence and everyday burdens. Most participants considered women's burden in everyday life as larger than men's. All participants observed the assumption within mainstream Jewish-Israeli culture that women should work outside their homes is a dominant expectation. Some understood it as an empowering mechanism encouraging women's independence, while others conceived it as a double bind. In a group of four women, all in their forties and mothers, the depiction of the 'double shift' was very personal:

RZS: The definition of women's role in Israel is very wide. Except for going to work every morning, she needs to be the kids' mother and the upbringing of the children usually falls on the woman's shoulders...

RZT: Some men help...

RZS: The kids' upbringing is on the mother's shoulders! I talk from my personal experience. The responsibility of doing homework, the responsibility of managing the household, it's a woman's responsibility one hundred percent.

RZY: No question about it!

RZS: The father is in the background, like, he's the provider in most cases.

[RZY 39Y, RZT 51Y, RZS 46y, Rishon-LeZion, live in Israel]

In a group of three young women from traditional *Mizrahi* families, working outside the home was conceived as a key element in maintaining women's independence. It was depicted as an empowering experience, although of course within the boundaries of female traditional roles, which may at times have seemed like an internal contradiction.

PHM: It's not that I'm saying that a woman shouldn't work or that she should sit at home, not at all, but apart from this thing it's...

PHSh: If someone needs to cut hours, of course it should be the woman, yes. Like, she should be more with the kids, be at home more.

PHM: Notwithstanding the fact that she has to go out, work, no matter under what conditions.

PHSh: Not to stay home.

PHM: Of course not, no way!

PHSh: Never be dependent on any man. On anything!

PHM: It's important.

[PHM 23Y, PHSh 24y, Pardes-Hannah, live in Israel]

However, many other women expressed feelings of being forced into a 'no choice' situation, like having no choice on the issue of bearing children; many of the participants felt the pressure to work outside their homes to support the family, in addition to their traditional roles within their homes. This was a trap they tried to avoid. KSS in her twenties described the situation from a broader perspective of young women who feel the expected multiple roles they are facing are beyond their capacities.

So, I'm like very happy for women that we have come a long way, and we are now educated and this and that, but it seems to me that the burden has only grown, like crazy. And women who want to complain and say: Enough, I can't take care of the kids any longer, or I can't help in providing for

the house any longer, are criticized harshly. I surf the net a lot in anonymous forums where it's easier to put it out there, like mums that don't love their kids anymore, or can't take it any longer; there are small sisterhood of those who admit to it and support each other.

[KSS 23y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

For IIE_n, in her late twenties, the issue is even more personal. When she discussed the near future of becoming a mother, she referred to beating the system.

Truth is that beyond being frustrated I have reached some decisions. I don't tend to go with the flow, usually, although I can't always maintain it. So, I did reach some decisions. There are two ways to deal with this situation, either beat them or join them. I decided to beat them; I don't really want to be in this game. I don't have an academic degree, and even when I did study it was something totally un-related to reality, like classical studies. [...] I have reached the decision that if it will be possible, when I'll be a mum, I want to be a full-time mum, I don't think I would like to busy myself with career when there is... maybe it sounds a bit chauvinistic, but hey, I am allowed, I am a woman, there are much more important roles than that, more important than a huge career. I think women's lives could be much more whole, if they could accept the fact that they are women. You can have a career, you can have hobbies, it's nice, it develops the brain but, it's not easy to say, evolutionally our job is to raise children, and I think it is the real whole thing for a woman to do.

[IIE_n 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

When the interviewer pressed the issue about 'beating the system', IIE_n articulated mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse as the model of desired womanhood:

To be a modern woman, to raise children and have a career and have degrees and make a lot of money and wear brand names, and... This is not me!

[IIE_n 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

For IIE_i, raising four young children, the issue was more an everyday practical decision.

As much as we are modern and career driven, I feel I have left the race because I said: I want so and so kids [E- has four young children] so that means, I invest more at home. It would never occur to a man, I think, to say: "Hey, I'll stop for a minute, I'll be home more, I'll do". So, of course one can do both and maybe it's easier to take this whole thing of progress and equality and okay, you do this and I do that, still it is clearly more a... a motherly thing. This thinking of who stays home with the kids and until what age and what will they get. So, okay, I don't go out and realise myself, it does not burn in my bones. He goes out and wins the bread, and I don't suffocate from staying home, like he does. It's also this thing about success. I see succeeding at home as part of a woman's success. Raising and educating the kids, making better people out of them in this world is also an important job.

[IIE_i 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

CG was in a different life stage; after raising her children, the committed grandmother recognised the various concessions she had made and contemplated the gains in making decisions the way she did.

CG: When I was young, the thing I wanted most of all was to realise my motherhood. It was the most important thing for me. I grew up in a kibbutz, actually, later I left. But I saw it as the most important thing. Most important! And today I don't look at it this way, and I think girls nowadays don't look at it this way. Yet then...

CE: And today when you look back on your life, what do you find the most important thing?

CG: Today, in retrospect, I think that... Look, all in all the kids, raising the kids gave me lots of satisfaction and tons of love and self confidence. I think it gives me a lot of... Let's say that in my heart of hearts I feel a bit like I missed my career thing... But when I observe it from a larger perspective, I say: This is the important thing. I feel a little loss, because after all I was brought up to value work, yet I feel that as opposite extremes, raising kids is more important than having a career!

[CG 63Y, CE 53y, Caesarea, live in Israel]

Cultures differ inasmuch as they are ideologically committed to the idea of gender equality, which incorporates the need to modify gender roles within the family. The social construction of masculinity in terms of the primacy of the breadwinner role, and of men's lack of 'aptitude' for domestic work, serves to perpetuate inequalities in the family as well as in the workforce. It is a common myth that women are able to choose how to balance their 'work and home' spheres, however, most women in Israel work for economic reasons, to contribute to the family's income. The emphasis on the right to work outside their home as an efficient mechanism to preserve or create women's independence as portrayed by some participants, reflects mainstream's discourse and not reality. In Israeli reality women's employment is more often than not an economic necessity (Izraeli 1992; Lewis 1992).

The pressure on women to work outside their homes, and take responsibility for home management and their family's practical and emotional caregiving, is so strong that women who choose to be full-time home-makers are constantly aware of society's disapproval of their choice. For example, IIEi, who previously described her decision to stay home full time and raise her four young children, does not seem to be at peace. When the interviewer probed, asking whether there is a hint of defiance in her tone IIEi admitted this may be the case.

Could be... Like today there is this opposite thing that women like say: Darn it, in order to prove ourselves today we need to be out and have a career and do it all... I don't have a problem with that, it's good. I just know that for me, at this stage when they are small... I tried. It's all about coming back nervous from a job I don't like and get it all out on the kids? God forbid! It's better to stay nervous at home. And I personally am more relaxed at home, I see it as a job too, I mean, as much as people might say: You have to get out, get out of the house. I say the opposite: First succeed here and then outside.

[IIEi 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

MR, born and raised in Melbourne, arrived in Israel at the age of twenty and stayed for twenty years. She bore and raised her three children in Israel – an experience she felt was not in her favour. One of the reasons for feeling that raising her children in Israel for so long was a mistake was her experience as a 'stay-at-home mum'.

MR: As time went by I grew wiser, I grew more knowledgeable and I think Israel wasn't the right place for me to be for all of that time. Because of all of this feminism of Israeli women, [...] I stayed at home when my kids were young, stayed at home mainly all the time, but I was sort of looked down upon by other women, because I didn't go out to work, how come I thought I was good enough that I didn't have to go out to work, that I had time in the morning to do what I wanted, but they were waking up in the morning, getting their kids ready, doing everything fix, looking good and whatever and I wasn't doing all of that, why wasn't I... you know, how come I got such a good life, you know... they're doing much more than me.

MJ: You know something? It is jealousy, because it's unusual in Israel.

MR: It was jealousy, but they also thought they were better, because they could handle it. I would say to them, well, I don't want to have to get up and rush out to work and neg... I wouldn't say to them, neglect my kids, cos I knew it wasn't the right thing. But I didn't think it was the right thing to do, I wanted more time with my children. And eh, I don't think that they took it very well, most of the people.

[MR 49y, MJ 45Y, Melbourne, lived in Israel]

Portraying women's work outside the home as 'women's choice' reinforces the dominant cultural assumption that women's first preference would be a family role and, if forced to choose between the two, they would choose their family over their job. Gender definitions are shaped in the spirit of these conceptions, which to a large measure define their identities as well. At the same time, these assumptions become intervening factors in women's prospects for work or political advancement, and affect their bargaining ability in the labour as well as political markets (Herzog 1998, 1999; Izraeli 1992). The binary gendered world that shapes these assumptions is again

heightened by the Israeli 'security ethos' that subjugates so many social aspects in Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture.

Another aspect prevalent in Israeli familism is the various cultural family traditions within Israeli society. In one of the group discussions about women's 'second shift' a participant described her parents' relations and the division of labour within their household. In her account, she stressed the fact that her parents were originally from Iraq.

TLAy: I haven't thought of my husband, I was thinking of my father actually, I keep thinking of my father this whole conversation. It's funny, am I the only *Mizrahi* [Eastern] in this group?

TLI: No, I'm half [*Mizrahi*]

TLAy: So my father, my parents came from Iraq, and my father did everything, just everything at home.

TLR: My husband is Iraqi too and it's not...

TLAy: No, I mean everything at home, my dad! My mum would cook, she always did, but, it's like, the equality is not in that they both do everything, but in that he did laundry, washed the dishes, tidy up, do the shopping, brings...

[Everyone is bursting into each other's words, exclamations about the fact that the *Mizrahi* man is actually more equal than *Ashkenazi* men are, one participant remarks cynically: "Then he must have beaten your mum or something"]

[TLAy 42y, TLI 47Y, TLR 42Y Tel Aviv, live in Israel]

Differences in the perception of *Mizrahi* and *Ashkenazi* gender roles within families were very noticeable between the women who came to the beauty parlour, in which part of the field work for this study was conducted. *Ashkenazi* men were perceived by *Mizrahi* women in parlour conversations as softer, less masculine, and more caring for their female partners as well as easier to 'handle', more generous and modern and less stereotyped in their gender definitions. The *Ashkenazi* women did not necessarily agree with these perceptions. Some *Mizrahi* women had *Ashkenazi* spouses, while some *Ashkenazi* women had *Mizrahi* spouses, as inter-ethnic marriages between Jews in Israel are both common and socially valued because they represent the gathering of exiles, an important value in both Zionist and Israeli ideology (Benjamin & Barash 2003; Katz & Peres 1986; Smoocha 2004).

This phenomenon supports the view that Jewish inter-ethnic marriages in Israel reflect a long-term process of reducing tensions between Jewish ethnicities. However, since

in Jewish-Israeli society people are expected to ignore Jewish ethnic differences, ethnic boundary crossing is vague, it is not a clear process.⁶⁶ Jewish inter-ethnic couples in Israel do not necessarily define themselves as inter-ethnic, although they would probably be aware of inter-ethnicity if the issue was discussed (Benjamin & Barash 2003). However ethnicity has other far-reaching ramifications concerning women's appearance and female bodies within mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse.

⁶⁶ Of course Jewish-Arab intermarriage would be observed more along the lines of inter-racial marriage in the USA, with a clear process of boundary crossing on both sides (Crowder & Tolnay 2000; Luke & Carrington 2000).

Jewish ethnicity as a factor in hyper-sexualisation

As I mentioned in chapter two, Israeli society has many cleavages within its socio-cultural fabric including the difference between *Ashkenazi* and *Mizrahi* Jews in Israel. From an ethnic and cultural point of view, the majority of *Ashkenazi* (the medieval Hebrew term for the German speaking provinces) Jews hail from Western, Central and Eastern Europe; they spoke Yiddish in their secular lives. The majority of Jews who have migrated from Europe to other continents over the past two centuries are *Ashkenazim*. *Mizrahi* Jews (in Hebrew, the word literally means Easterners) descended from Jewish communities in the Middle East, North-Africa, Central Asia and Caucasus. The term *Mizrahi* is an Israeli imagined emergent category (Halevi 2005).

The Jewish segment of Israel's population is composed mainly of immigrants and their children. Both Europeans and non-European Jews are divided into many subgroups, which differ in language, level of education, income, lifestyle, and other characteristics. However, immigrants from Arab countries (*Mizrahim*), or their descendants, generally occupy lower socio-economic status than immigrants from Europe (*Ashkenazim*), or their descendants (Ben-Eliezer 2004; Haberfeld & Cohen 2007; Lewin-Epstein, Elmelech & Semyonov 1997; Peres 1971; Sztokman 2006; Yaish 2001). The majority of *Mizrahi* Jews in Israel originated from Muslim societies, predominantly Arabic speaking ones. As with any other minority, in their countries of origin, they were influenced by Arab and Muslim culture, and they incorporated many of these elements into their own social and individual behaviour; yet for Jews from Arab countries, it is especially important to distinguish themselves from the non-Jewish population in countries where they lived as a minority (Wasserfall 1992).

Despite their heterogeneous origins, the *Mizrahi* Jews generally practise rites identical, or similar, to traditional Sephardic Judaism; this fact has resulted in a conflation of terms, particularly in Israel and in religious usage, in which 'Sephardi' is used in a broad sense to include *Mizrahi* as well as *Sephardim* (Spanish) Jews. The term *Mizrahim*, originally a demographic statistical category, was created in Israel in the course of meeting and assimilating waves of immigrants from *Ashkenazi*, *Sephardic* and *Mizrahi* origins. The term came to be widely used by so-called *Mizrahi*

activists in the early 1990s, and since then it has become an accepted designation. After the mass migration of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel during the 1990s, European Jews have increased in number, and they constitute about 47% of the population, making Israel's Jewish population today about half *Ashkenazi* and half *Mizrahi* (Peres & Ben-Rafael 2006, pp. 138-218; Smootha 2004).

Israel may be perceived as a tricultural society without a multicultural mentality. In addition to the majority's predominantly secular Jewish culture, there is an Arab minority culture and an ultra-orthodox Jewish minority culture. Although cultural homogeneity is aspired to, the right of these non-assimilating minorities to a separate existence is reluctantly recognised by the state, and enshrined in institutional arrangements intent on preserving their genuine cultures. Israel is an officially Jewish majority in its language, institutions, goals, symbols, and policies. The Arab minority has full civil rights, yet it is excluded from the national ethos. Arab culture is well protected, but not always esteemed by the Jewish majority, and is not incorporated into the national culture. There still exists in Israel a certain kind of contempt and even hostility towards things symbolising or reminiscent of the Arab world (Smootha 2004). Original Arab music is seldom broadcast on the radio; Arab art is rarely if ever displayed in public places. Although in recent decades a specific genre of Israeli music, referred to in Israel as 'Oriental Music' that bears some characters similar to Arabic music, has originated and established a place of honour within popular Israeli music; however, it is still not considered 'quality Israeli music' (Halper, Seroussi & Squires-Kidron 1989; Padva 2003; Perelson 1998; Streiner 2001).

While a clear distinction between *Mizrahi* Jews and the 'external Arab enemy' exists, it is easily discerned that much of the cultural heritage and lifestyle of *Mizrahi* Jews was explicitly rejected, not only by *Ashkenazim*, but also by the central institutions of Israeli society (Dahan-Kalev 2002). By the mid seventies, almost all the political leadership positions in the country were occupied by European Jews and *Ashkenazi* per capita income was about twice that of *Mizrahi*. Thus, politically, economically, socially and culturally the *Ashkenazim* were, and in many ways continue to be, the hegemonic group in Israel. Zionist ideology defined this hegemonic situation of *Ashkenazi* Jews in Israeli society as 'temporary'. The 'temporary' explanation is supported both by the emergence of a *Mizrahi* middle class, which has successfully

gained educational and occupational headway for its children and by *Mizrahi* presence in all ranks of the military, politics, and the financial elite (Benjamin & Barash 2003; Dahan-Kalev 1999; Katz & Peres 1986; Peres 1971; Peres & Katz 1981).

The most significant social protest in the early years of the State of Israel took place in the Waddi Salib neighbourhood in Haifa in 1959. These disturbances erupted as a result of an incident in which a *Mizrahi* resident was injured by the police; these disturbances were spontaneous and left no significant organised protest efforts in their wake. The 1970s and 1980s were decades that witnessed the emergence of political-ethnic tensions between *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim* in Israel. In 1971 the Israeli Black Panthers (*HaPanterim HaShhorim*), a protest movement of *Mizrahi* Jews, was established by second generation *Mizrahim*. Although this was not the first time the 'Jewish ethnic genie was let out of the bottle', it was the first time the issue of Jewish ethnicity and social status became a part of the Jewish-Israeli public agenda. The emergence of the Israeli Black Panthers was not the result of one incident, but rather evolved from deep feelings of deprivation experienced by second generation *Mizrahi* Jews. The movement managed to maintain an organised political effort for three years. However, the crisis of the 1973 *Yom Kippur* War overshadowed rising ethnic tensions (Horowitz & Lissak 1989; Peled 1998; Peleg 2008).

In recent decades, due to significant political and social changes, Israeli mainstream culture and discourse were forced to more warmly embrace the *Mizrahi*-Jewish culture. Since Jewish religious symbols play a unifying role for Jewish-Israelis of different backgrounds, this shift was authorised by the formation of a religious, ultra-orthodox *Mizrahi*-Jewish political party. Since the early 1980s, Israeli society has witnessed the emergence of a new subgroup, the ultra-orthodox *Mizrahim* represented by a political party, *Shas* (Album 1999; Caplan 2008; Deshen 2005; Peled 1998). Zionist ideology sets forth an interpretation of Jewish history, in which Jews worldwide are encouraged to grant primacy to their solidarity with each other, rather than to people of countries in which they live as a minority. Consequently, Jewish inter-ethnic reality in Israel is different from other inter-ethnic or inter-racial phenomena in other countries, where researchers can clearly argue that 'race matters' (Luke & Carrington 2000). The success of *Shas* as a political party may be attributed to its ability to harness this ideology towards achieving its goals.

The key to *Shas*'s success, where other efforts to organise *Mizrahi* political parties have failed, is its integrative, rather than separatist, ideology. *Shas* seeks to replace secular Zionism with religious Judaism as the hegemonic ideology in Israeli society, and presents this as the remedy for both the socio-economic and the cultural grievances of its constituency. This integrative message, emphasizing the commonalities between *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim*, rather than their differences, is attractive to *Mizrahim* because of their semi-peripheral position in the society. (Peled 1998, p. 703)

The silencing of issues of Jewish ethnicity in Israel is pronounced, given that Jewish ethnicity did not come up voluntarily in most interviews and focus groups. This phenomenon is even further accentuated since the discussions revolved around participants' lived embodied experience, and while some of the participants were *Ashkenazi*, others were *Mizrahi* or from mixed Jewish ethnic origins. Furthermore, Jewish ethnicity salience is prominent in Jewish-Israeli society in various ways (Motzafi-Haller 1998, 2001), yet only three participants mentioned the issue and two of them connected it to accepted models of female appearance.

Same or different?

In a land where ethnic and religious identity is worn as a badge, the ability to distinguish friend from foe can mean the difference between life and death. On the afternoon of Friday, 29 March 2002 seventeen-year-old Ayat Al-Akharas blew herself up in a crowded supermarket in Jerusalem, also killing the supermarket's security guard and seventeen-year-old Rachel Levy.

At exactly 1:49 Rachel Levy entered the market, her long dark hair falling down her back. At the same moment, Ayat Al-Akharas, also with long dark hair falling down her back, walked towards the entrance. Around her waist was a belt containing ten kilograms of explosives lanced with nails and screws. The girls almost touched each other as they entered the store at the same moment. But as the guard reached out to stop Ayat, [...] a powerful explosion tore out the supermarket, destroying displays, shattering glass, and sending bodies flying. When the smoke cleared and the agonized screams subsided, the two teenage girls and the guard were dead. [...] Hours later, Avigail [Rachel's mother] learned from several eyewitnesses that Rachel had entered the supermarket at the same moment that Ayat had walked in wearing an explosive belt. "People told me that when they saw them together, because they looked so much alike, both with dark complexions, long dark hair, that they thought they were two sisters who had gone shopping". Again she pauses, "The other girl was beautiful too", Avigail says, "just like my Rachel". (Victor 2003, pp. 225-7)

Not all Israelis would react as calmly as Avigail, Rachel Levy's mother, reacted to the bystanders' perception that her daughter and an Arab girl looked so similar, even if the Arab girl was beautiful. The mere fact that she acknowledged that a Jewish-Israeli is similar in appearance to an Arab can be perceived by many as an insult. In Hebrew the term 'Arab taste' refers to something that is clearly in good taste (Almoz 2008).

During my military service, I was drafted into a unit called 'Soldiers at the Police's Service'. Our duties included patrolling crowded civilian areas like markets or train stations, to ensure that no bag or parcel which might have had explosives in them, were left unattended. We checked everyone's bags to ensure they did not carry explosives, or small arms, and we were also supposed to stop and detain people who 'looked Arab' for a brief 'document check'. Very early within my service I made a point of knowing most of the regular persons in the markets I patrolled, due to a rather unpleasant incident that had happened to me at the beginning of my service. I stopped a person who looked Arab (whom I didn't recognise) and asked him to show me his identification card. The man began shouting at me. There we stood, in the middle of the market, with him screaming about how I could possibly assume he was Arab (which he found most insulting). From that day on, I tried not to repeat that mistake although I have to admit, it did happen more than once, as it is very hard to distinguish between many Jewish-Israelis and Arabs, a fact observed by Israeli sociologist Sami Smooha:

This ethnic composition of the [Jewish-Israeli] population gives a somewhat Mediterranean look and flavour to Israel, not found in any other Western state. (2005, p. 424)

The question of whether Israel is a Western society remains an open question (Smooha 2005). Although it is Western affiliated, culturally as well as politically, and may be regarded as Westernised in many respects, the centrality of the family and the collective, as well as the high birth rates within all its subgroups, establishes the fact that it is not strictly Western in regard to many important issues and behaviours. However for Israelis, especially Israeli Jews (but not exclusively), Israel is perceived as the representative of the West in the oriental Middle East. For Israelis the Arab-Israeli conflict arises from their position as the 'Other' within the Arab Middle East. Israelis observe their 'Otherness' within the Middle East, well before and most

certainly after 9/11, as deriving from their position as representatives of the West in the Middle East, or as the 'Western thorn in the eastern flesh' (IST 1999-2007).

'The Mediterranean flavour' Smootha mentions adds another dimension to 'veiled Muslim women vs. exposed Western women'. As observed before, the Western sexually objectified woman is juxtaposed with covered Arab-Muslim fundamentalist woman in both Western and Muslim discourses; this juxtaposition is heightened for secular Jewish-Israelis by the image of the covered, ultra-orthodox Jewish woman representing religious coercion within Israel, and also by the fact that mere fashion distinguishes the appearance of Jewish-Israeli from Arab-Muslim women. Thus, in order to maintain female objectification and self-objectification as a terror management mechanism, Jewish-Israeli women need to hyper-sexualise their appearance to differentiate themselves from Arab-Muslim women in order to adhere to the 'Western model of womanhood' in accord with their society's cultural worldview. As one participant phrased it:

A size 34 blond, with big breasts, I will never be; even if I'll go through tons of plastic surgery, which is not my intention.

[IIEEn 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

In recent decades the issue of Jewish-Israeli eastern appearance and the conflict between this appearance and the Euro-American standard of the 'blond, blue-eyed' model of Western womanhood was accentuated with mass immigration from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) (Birenbaum-Carmeli et al. 2002; Dahan-Kalev 2002; Shadmi 2003). In the field study conducted in a beauty parlour located in a small town in the centre of Israel, the beauticians observed the difference in taste between veteran Israeli and new FSU immigrants. While the 'Russians' have long, pointed, red nails, the 'Israelis' nails are long, square and light in colour. This distinction brought forth a discussion about other differences in appearance between 'Israelis' and 'Russians'. Hanna, the beautician, observed that immigrants from FSU have made veteran Israeli women more aware of the 'deficiencies' in their appearance.

When the Russians first arrived, many Israeli women lost their spouses to the new immigrants. The Russians were beautiful, all of them blond with blue eyes, tall and slim and meticulously groomed. They always wear makeup, and long red nails, and they just snatched all these Israeli husbands.

That's when the veteran Israeli wives regained their composure, and started dieting and going to the gym and generally taking better care of themselves.

[Hanna 39y, beautician, lives in Israel]

This perception, that the 'Russian' new immigrants snatched the Israeli husbands from their Israeli veteran wives, may not represent reality; however, it does represent the 'body threat' the new women immigrants from FSU presented to veteran Israeli women. The issue of whether 'Israeli looks' in general correspond to the standards put forward by the Euro-American Western model of beauty is a longstanding polemic within Israeli society that existed prior to the FSU immigration wave, and was heightened by it. It is a topic of discussion in almost every online talkback that revolves around issues of feminine beauty standards, or any article that presents a beautiful woman (Haviv 2008; Shoshan 2008; Skirts 2009; Todana 2007; Ynet 2003, 2006a, 2006b). In an internet article the issue of 'Russian' new immigrants and belly dancing was investigated, as many of the new belly dancers in Israel are from the FSU. While the veteran Israeli belly dancers claimed that belly dancing requires a body type that the 'Russians' do not possess, although they are sexy, the 'Russian' belly dancers explained that belly dancing is actually a Russian dance (Zuaretz 2007).

Some researchers inquiring into this image of female FSU immigrants to Israel observed that these women were labelled 'sluts' due to the complex dynamics of social forces. The social marginalisation of these new immigrants and their perceived lack of options may have prompted some of them to capitalise on their femininity. This phenomenon, combined with confusion of old versus new sexual norms, especially interpreting the local sexy dress code as representing a climate of sexual liberty, led some women to adopt a sexy dress code and behaviours that were in turn interpreted by the locals as 'loose' and provocative (Hetsroni & Remennick 2001; Lemish 2000; Remennick 1999b, 2004).

In a reality show called *'The Models'* (the Israeli version of *America's Next Top Model*) the threat felt by the veteran Jewish-Israeli women from the 'Russian' new immigrants was very conspicuous once again. The show dealt with models of female beauty in Israeli society, as its main objective was to discover Israel's next top model. At the outset, eighteen girls were chosen to compete over that desirable title. The term 'Israeli beauty' was mentioned time and again by contestants, especially the veteran

Israelis. Of the initial eighteen, nine contestants were veteran Israeli and nine were of FSU origin (the FSU contestants were not born in Israel). In the first episode, the judges dropped six contestants; of these, four were veteran Israelis and two were of FSU origin. One of the girls who was dropped (a veteran Israeli of Yemenite origin) commented:

My intention is to become the first Yemenite model in Israel. The Russians are beautiful, the Swedish are super-hot babes and the Yemenites are ugly; there's nothing you can do about that. With me, my body is a much better feature than my face.

[Reut, 18y, participant in a reality show]

When the judges' comments were presented, the fact that Reut had facial hair was remarked upon, quite rudely.

In the same episode another veteran Israeli, Gal, answered as to why she should win the show: "First of all, because I'm an Israeli and I have an Israeli beauty. I think my body is ideal." However the judges discuss Gal's body quite harshly; it is, they observe, 'too big'. Later Gal was assigned to a team of photographers with three other girls and she recalled:

The three of them are Russian and I am a *Sabra*... more, so I was happy because it meant I was different. However, later I realise they were all like this [raises a finger to indicate skinny] and I am kind of... not. So I like went with the flow and let it be, I hid a little behind Alina and tried to show my face more.

[Gal, 18y, participant in a reality show]

All of this did not help and Gal was sent home by the judges in the first episode. The rift between the 'Israelis' and the 'Russians' expanded as the show's season continued. In episode four, after Katia and Rita (both 'Russian') had excelled in an assignment, they sat by the pool with a friend while the other girls cleaned the house. Karin and Limor commented:

Karin: We Moroccans cook and clean and they...

Limor: That is why in forty years they will still look... [good] and we'll look [Makes a puking gesture].

[Karin 20y, Limor 22y, participants in a reality show]

The preference for non-Israeli beauty is prevalent in all episodes of the show as evidenced by the compliments the judges hand out: 'She is so beautiful, she doesn't look Israeli', or 'she has an overseas flavour'. Given these compliments, it may come

as no surprise that the three first places were won by 'Russians': Ella, Sasha and Rita. This may be hyper-reality, as 'reality shows' often tend to be, yet it is a reflection of the gap between the reality of female bodies in Israeli society and the ideal represented by the 'liberated Western woman'. This gap is overcome by over exposing and sexualising female bodies in everyday Israeli culture.

Self-objectification and over-sexualisation as a terror management mechanism, reflecting female agency

It is a complex task to convey Israelis' experience of living in a Western affiliated democracy, yet constantly being exposed to terror and violence in their everyday lives. Some sociologists have applied the model of nation-in-arms to Israel, contemplating whether it resembles the French or the Prussian model (Ben-Eliezer 1995; Ben-Eliezer & Shamir 1991; Dar et al. 2000; Robbins & Ben-Eliezer 2000). However, this situation certainly answers to Terror Management Theory's (TMT) definitions of experiencing mortality salience in everyday life. TMT posits that self-esteem serves as a terror management mechanism to buffer the anxiety associated with the inevitability of death. Self-esteem is gained through a process of complying with the prevalent worldview, adopting its symbolic system of meaning and attaining its values. (Fritzsche & Jonas 2005; Goldenberg 2005; Goldenberg et al. 2005; Goldenberg, Kosloff & Greenberg 2006; Landau et al. 2006). In a situation of heightened mortality salience (as is the situation in Israel), the need for self-esteem is intensified. This need can be fulfilled by adhering to current values and significant tendencies occurring in contemporary cultural discourse.

In a militarised social climate women's bodies are conscripted to the national cause in various modes and techniques. As Objectification Theory asserts, women's sexual objectification has evolved, in part, in a socio-cultural context that reflects gendered power and status hierarchies within Western cultures (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). In Jewish-Israeli socio-culture, where gender definitions are more strict and dichotomous than other Western cultures, it may come as no surprise that sexual objectification as well as self-objectification of women is highly prevalent. To extend this understanding of why female objectification is so prominent within Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture, an integration of TMT into the landscape of Objectification Theory may illuminate the nature of female preoccupation, with body monitoring and the uses of body objectification in a situation of daily ongoing violent conflict.

According to TMT, humans are burdened with the psychological knowledge that life is finite. It is this awareness of mortality that facilitates the social construction of a cultural world that insulates people from death-related fears. Worldview, which is constructed from social values and beliefs, provide meaning, order, and permanence.

In addition, living up to the standards of one's cultural worldview provides a sense of personal significance, or self-esteem, within the meaning offered by it (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986).

The perception of the female body as an object is perceived as an extensively endorsed cultural worldview. Adopting this perception may operate as a terror defence mechanism for both men and women, enabling them to experience the security that comes from adhering to a dominant cultural worldview. Since women are more inclined to be objectified than men, they may be more prone to cling to the culturally accepted notion of their bodies as objects, and may tend to use self-objectification to manage existential terror. This process is based on gaining feelings of self-worth from appearance, as is culturally endorsed within the Western cultural worldview. Thus, women's objectification may reflect, for both men and women, efforts to defend a meaningful cultural worldview, while women's self-objectification reflects efforts to gain self-esteem by adhering to cultural standards perceived as values (Goldenberg 2005; Goldenberg et al. 2005; Goldenberg et al. 2000; Grabe et al. 2005).

This phenomenon is further expanded when it is explored through yet another TMT perspective. Since it is clear that the situation of living in a constantly terrorised conflict area answers to the state of mortality salience, it is understandable for a society under existential threat to encourage procreation. This desire was demonstrated for individuals in a number of TMT studies which found that a desire for offspring can function as a terror management defence mechanism. Unfortunately the desire to have sex is lessened in a state of mortality salience. Both men and women with a relatively strong desire for offspring expressed less interest in having sex (Goldenberg, Kosloff & Greenberg 2006; Wisman & Goldenberg 2005). In that case, it seems logical for a society to over-sexualise its women in order to get men's sexual drive active again for the purpose of procreation, which in Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture is highly valued.

Sexual objectification as a national cause

The phenomenon of over-sexualising Jewish-Israeli women was observed by all participants in this study. In every individual interview and every focus group, the

view that the image of Jewish-Israeli women is objectified through over-sexualisation was articulated. While some participants found this exciting, most found it exhausting. The over-sexualised model of womanhood was seen to be manifested in women's fashion, through coercion and 'no choice' in women's fashion, as well as in the demands for a feminine appearance as reported by participants. This model is reinforced by various media channels, such as women's magazines (Berick-Aharony 2007) and electronic media, as well as through social interrelations, like feedback from acquaintances, many times uncalled for, or 'natural' models of womanhood circulating within everyday Israeli culture.

The demands that women adhere to strict codes of appearance was described by HM, a 24-year-old Israeli psychology student.

This is so exhausting! It is not as if I have something monstrous, I don't have horns, I don't have moles... But I am so human and I so want to be a goddess. It is something that is expected of women, it is something that I feel is expected of women, it is not something that I feel is being dictated to me. [...] I believe it doesn't disturb my boyfriend... still I find myself dreading taking my clothes off, and what am I? I'm human!

[HM 24y, Herzelia, lives in Israel]

In the same group HM and the other two participants, all in their early twenties, observed the Israeli public's obsession with women's weight. It is more than a mere obsession with size; it is, as in many relationships within Israeli culture, invasive and gets down to the gory details of: 'How much did she lose or gain'? When HR observed that some women in the media are plump, the discussion got heated:

HM: You know what? I'll tell you, that's actually, you're right. There are some women who weigh more than twenty kilo in the industry, and then the whole interest around them becomes their weight. They become the exception that indicates the general, because everyone is involved with their weight, and this doesn't let the thing itself to become a norm, it is not normative.

HS: Once Rotem Abuhav⁶⁷ lost some weight, immediately she was on the cover of La'isha [An Israeli women's magazine] with the caption: Wow, lost weight!

[HM 24Y, HS 24Y, HR 24y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

An excellent example of the phenomenon of disciplining female celebrities through constantly scrutinising their bodies is the case of Ninette. **Ninette Tayeb** (also known

⁶⁷ A plump Israeli actress.

just as Ninette) is an Israeli pop rock singer who came to fame as the first winner of the Israeli version of Pop Idol (*Kochav Nolad*). She is a *Mizrahi* Jew, from a development town in southern Israel (Kiryat-Gat). Ninette has achieved recognition as one of the most popular and famous celebrities and entertainers in Israel. As Ninette became famous, she was nicknamed "Israel's Sweetheart", and was always pictured as a sweet girl. Ninette started as a full-figured woman and soon after her win she began a lengthy makeover that included weight reduction, and a dramatic change of wardrobe and hairstyle. Her fans as well as her detractors (who were surprisingly few) had long and heated debates concerning her appearance and especially her weight loss (GBSS 2009; Golden 2004; Reuveni-Gefen 2006; Sigal 2007). Ninette was mentioned many times in various group discussions and individual interviews.

HM: Ninette, You know Ninette?

HR: Oy, Ninette is a real story...

HM: The end... I'll never forget her that. Everyone talks about her being full-figured, full-figured, full-figured, full-figured, full-figured... Really, really, really... from the day she lost weight, it has... Everyone fiddle with that... And she was the prettiest thing ever! And how everyone obsessed about it, until they got used to her weight loss... And just like... Say they write about her personal coaches, or her stylist who made her who she is today, and this can't be the norm, because the minute someone [female] walks into prime-time, who weighs more than twenty kilo, she will consent that she is over twenty kilo and this is even worse than the [female] host who weighs twenty kilo to begin with, because it only shows the full-figure girls: See how much out of the norm you are? Really! It reinforces the norm, even more than the fact that you have such [female] hosts; because the minute there is one fat one, she will be attacked...

[HM 24Y, HR 24y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

As in many modern Western societies, Israeli society has adopted a thin or slender ideal for the female body, and women and girls are constantly exposed to this ideal as a cultural value through mainstream discourse and various mass media channels. Society's demand for thinness increases with the actual weight of the average woman, especially in Israeli society, where most women's bodies do not adhere to the standard of slimness. As one participant in this study, a young woman in her early twenties commented incidentally: "I would have liked to be less Libyan, especially here..." [Points at her hips]

I don't know where it's coming from! What is this thing? I find it disgusting, on young women as well. I see Israeli girls and we have our hips, the Mediterranean pelvis, only few are slender, and I

don't like it, I don't get this skinny thing, why squeeze our body? I am terribly against it; also this whole over-thinness aspiration, to become a... a model. Enough is enough, stop this nonsense. I don't like that. I don't like the things that don't complement the feminine body, that it's not natural. It's like, a man is thinner, you can put this kind of pants on him, but a woman is rounder, like that's the thing.

[IIEi 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

In a focus group discussion, one of the younger participants speculated that this social demand originates from the treatment of women who are large in the media and in everyday life. She gave the example of Odetta, a host of a women's talk show on Israeli television at the time. Odetta was very popular, but aroused a heated debate as she was a full-figured woman and she wore tight, exposing, sexy garments. Her fans adored her, and her opposers ridiculed her. On Eretz Nehederet, a very popular satiric show, her full figure was exaggerated and caricatured, as was her cheerful disposition (Gurevitz 2008a, 2008b; Shiloni 2004). Like Ninette, Odetta was also mentioned in several focus groups.

KSS: I think, with her size, if people would have said, she dresses right, she dresses sexy and it looks good, I think it would have given a lot of freedom to many women, that it really looks good. Like, Noa Tishby is considered a fat, beautiful, successful woman here. [In Israel] Noa Tishby is not fat!

KSN: Noa Tishby? She is slender.

KSS: Noa Tishby is not fat.

Moderator: She is considered a model for large sizes.

KSN: Are you serious?

KSS: Yes. She is the house model for 'Just My Size', and she is considered a fat successful woman.

KSN: This is ridiculous!

[KSS 23y, KSN 69Y, Kefar-Sava, live in Israel]

As a consequence of this and similar processes, secular Jewish-Israeli women experience dissatisfaction with their bodies, in general, and their bodies' size, in particular. This dissatisfaction is widespread in Israel as in other Western countries where it has been conceptualised as a feminine norm (Etcoff et al. 2004; Hirschmann & Munter 1995; Orbach 1978; Rodin, Silberstein & Striegel-Moore 1985).

RZE: How good it is to be... I want to be like the models on television, can I?

RZT: No models.

RZY: [In a very emotional tone] I for instance, don't think that I am accepting my body. I would have given anything to be like these models. I would have given many things in my life for that!

[RZE 40Y, RZT 51Y, RZY 39y, Rishon-LeZion, live in Israel]

As part of investigating lived embodied experience, personal satisfaction with one's body was unpacked. The answers varied from total discontent to acceptance, yet even when the declared emotion was body acceptance, dissatisfaction with body size was expressed by all participants.

I would have changed the percentage of fat in my body. Always! There is nothing else! I'm good with everything, really, always! It's just this thing of loosing the ten kilos and firming a bit. It's not, it's not in heaven, I know I can and should work on that, and I will, as soon as I have the time and energy...

[IIEi 40y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

A major mechanism for manipulating and compelling women to adhere to the models of womanhood common within a culture is dress codes that are established through fashion. Fashion in Israel was observed by most participants as a coercive mechanism. Some thought it was a positive mechanism that reflected the importance of what is referred to in Hebrew as 'aesthetics'.

I find the aesthetic side is really strong in Israel. I am not sure in comparison, because the places I've been to, it depends more, I mean, in some places everything is acceptable and in others, the look is crucial. In Israel the look is very important and fashion matters, a lot! And everybody knows what's in and what's not, in Israel; it is very, very significant. I think it's good, it sure looks good, and I think that if it doesn't take up most of one's time or if it doesn't become the essence of things, it is totally positive. You know, to look aesthetic or to be involved with the aesthetics of things, it is good. I find that for me personally it only does good things. It seems the [cultural] environment accepts it in a positive way too.

[CSh 61y, Caesarea, lives in Israel]

'Aesthetics' stands for an appearance that is situated within the norm, while something that is out of the norm is observed as 'un-aesthetic'. However, what is 'aesthetic' and what is not is open for discussion. While some women thought of low-cut jeans as 'aesthetic' others did not; low-cut jeans on women who were not skinny were viewed as most 'un-aesthetic' by many participants.

I've been to Bar-Ilan [University], which is a religious university and half the girls there wore pants down to here and tops up to here (Points on midriff exposing pants and tops). Now, not all of them

are blessed with what it takes exactly, and I used to sit behind backs with tiers not to mention, veins, body hair, everything. So, I wonder, what this need is. And someone explained that in Europe they don't wear it as low, it is something that stuck here, in Israel, it's a unique phenomenon and I don't know how to explain it.

[TLP, 53y, Tel Aviv, lives in Israel]

However, even though some women would rather not wear the low-cut jeans, high-cut pants were not to be found at all, especially when the fashion was low-cut. Many participants in various focus groups and individual interviews recalled the futile search for fashion that did not adhere to the current fad.

Fashions in Israel change in an unbelievable pace! Not in Paris, not in Luxemburg, not in New York, not anywhere, one can find women as faddish as in Israel. And I don't mean only in Tel Aviv, I'm talking Kiryat-Shemona and Tiberias, I'm talking Nazareth-Ilit, as soon as there's a new fad I see it in Nazareth-Ilit. For example, low-cut pants, how many women in New York wore low-cut pants? Ten percent, maybe twenty, and even then it took them like four years to realise that's the fad. In Israel, within six month, you could not get pants that were not low cut. I used to go into shops to ask. A year ago one could not find a top long enough to reach the pelvis. I entered one shop after another, and asked: Do you carry longer tops? And no one did. By the way, now it's fashionable, so they all carry it.

[IIA 49y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Some participants acknowledged the Israeli trend to wear the over-sexualised fashions, even when it did not suit them, or look ridiculous, or made the wearer clearly uncomfortable. IIG referred to this phenomenon as 'fashion victims' and she described her observations of the streets of Tel Aviv.

IIG: Oh, ok, I've been to Tel Aviv, you see the victims.

Interviewer: Victims?

IIG: It's horrifying, I call that fashion victims. You see in Tel Aviv all sorts of women with very tight jeans, pointed high heeled shoes to a hilarious level, extremely clinging tops, where the midriff is overflows to the sides, because it is not made for real bodies, especially not after giving birth, when one has this belt of flesh that sits on your midriff. Now, even if you are really thin and I don't define myself as a fat person, still you have this 'belt', because that's how the body is built. So, when the pants are tight, I mean if they are low and loose, it's comfortable, but if it's tight it's... god forbid! And then begins this conflict between pulling the top down and this situation when one sits and the underwear are showing...

[IIG 38y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

The most acknowledged 'fashion victims' were 'older' women, in their forties or fifties or older, who tried to dress fashionably, which in Israel always means over-sexualised and exposed. These women were referred to as 'mothers' in general.

CE: And what's more when they walk with their daughters you can't tell the mum from the daughter.

CG: The mums sometimes look better than their daughters.

CE: I was sitting in the coffee shop at the mall the other day, and I just couldn't drink my... I was shocked! I sat opposite the shoppers' traffic, sort of and towards me came mothers and daughters, and it's actually ridiculous! It's a total circus. The mother looks like the daughter's friend and the daughter looks like the mum's friend. No, no, I mean they did not look twenty years apart, but beyond that, what really disturbs me is the exaggeration and the stupidity of their clothes. This suffocation, it's not clear how they will get oxygen, and the pants, as if low cut wasn't enough why is it so tight? These skinny things.

[CE 53y, CG 63y, Caesarea, live in Israel]

N: It does happen to younger women too, not only to older women. They pack themselves into clothes that are two or three sizes too small, and wear tops, like you said about Odetta, with her tyers. I think, I don't know, there's a group of women in Israel that just wouldn't accept the fact that they have grown mature, and they can't wear their daughters' clothes anymore. Some women, dress like their daughters, really. And you see they are a huge segment in Israeli society. You walk around in malls, and see: This woman looks like the mother of the mother of her daughter still she dresses like her daughter.

[KSN 69y, Kefar-Sava, lives in Israel]

In another group one of the 'mothers' explained her side of the story:

TLRa: I see mums at my daughter's school, and they are older than me, and they... they walk around with their belly all out, you know.

TLAy: But we said before that all women are beautiful and that...

TLRa: Okay, I was very happy, really happy to see these bellies out on the streets, because I said: Good! They feel good with themselves. But generally, the pants down to here, (point at her pelvis) even if there's nothing there.

TLAy: (Giggles) Even if there's nothing there. I have to say that sounds...

TLH: I have to tell you that as soon as these low pants came out I went out and bought a few. Being a fifty year old woman, I had put on a belt, made sure my midriff wasn't exposed, with tops down to the beltline. Yes, I find it extremely important that the top goes all the way down to the beltline, that the belt that I bought is visible, and that the jeans sit really low!

[...] It's important to me to look good, to be up to date. That... that people will find me up to date. That's not all I am, I am also a deep person, but I have this bimbo side to me.

[TLRa 35y, TLAy 42Y, TLH 50y, Tel Aviv, live in Israel]

This tendency may seem a little less weird, if one takes into consideration the comments that were made by a group of three young women in their early twenties.

HR: Fashion is... it's like, everything has to be exposed, and you have these thing that come out on the sides of the waists (punches her waist) these tiers, it's like, terrible. I wear that too, because as much as I say it is terrible I got used to it and it seems pretty to me now. Still, I'd rather... Had I seen enough people wearing higher cuts, even just a little higher, I would wear that too. Really, had I seen anybody wear higher cut, I would say: Let's do it! And I'd do it.

Moderator: So, although you don't like the lower cut you wear that because that's what everyone wears.

HR: It'll look a bit weird to wear high cut. It'll look weird to me too. I'll feel different.

HM: Older.

HR: Yes, it brings an association of old.

[HM 24Y, HR 24y, Herzelia, live in Israel]

However, women's fashion in Israel does not stop at women's clothes. It also extends to women's bodies. Many participants observed the prevalence of cosmetic surgery, especially breast implants. In a group of three young women from a lower middle-class neighbourhood, all had had at least two cosmetic procedures such as breast implants, nose surgery and cosmetic dentistry. When unpacking these experiences one explained:

PHSh: When you see everyone and the way they dress, you think to yourself, wow, this one's looking good and that one looks good, why can't I look that good? You know, that's the way you think about it, especially if you hang out a lot. It influences you, very much. You see this girl wearing this and the other wearing that so, somehow it makes you tick. [...] and I did hear from people who have been around that the club scene in Israel is more like that. It's especially true for those who hang out at these places, like M and I, it's less true for S. Listen, if you walk down the street every second girl has breast implants.

PHM: But, it is that way abroad as well, not only in Israel.

PHSh: Okay, but if you hang out at a club, and you see everyone you'd say: Wow, I want these too. [Silicon boobs]

PHM: Okay, but it doesn't have to be in a club, it's all over. And it's overseas as well. This whole breast implants thing came from overseas.

[PHSh, 24y, PHM, 22y, Pardes-Hanna, live in Israel]

The phrase 'every second girl' was often repeated when participants referred to cosmetic surgery, especially breast implants. These became so popular in Israel that in 2004 a *Knesset's* committee recommended that girls who were under eighteen would

not be permitted to undergo breast implants for aesthetic reasons and the advertisement for implant size (1,300cc) would be discontinued (HaReuveni 2004).

IIEn: It's just amazing. Every second woman... [has breast implants] my niece, she is like twenty, okay, so she had tiny ones and she had them done nicely. I don't think she did anything crazy, still, this whole thing. Why did she go and do it?

Interviewer: Beats me, do you have any guess [sic]?

IIEn: I'm not sure, maybe it's because the whole world communicates to her that in order to be sexy and desirable one should have large boobs, or at least have significant boobs...

[IIEn 28y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Judith Butler (1986) argues that 'the body becomes a nexus of culture and choice', that the possibility of choosing to have certain body types through plastic surgery is a personal choice. However, in a society that sexually objectifies women's bodies to the extent that 'every second woman has breast implants', one wonders whether this nexus of culture and choice is actually a proactive choice for women who feel that the only option of agency left is over-sexualising their bodies.

IIA: A woman should know how to protect herself; from all aspects. It's like, I did this and I did this and I did this, and now I am protected. It doesn't occur to her to think that if she enlarged her breasts, reduced her top, inflated her lips and lowered her belt under her pelvic line, she actually endangers herself; she feels... she feels in control, maybe that's what it is.

Interviewer: Like, because life here makes you feel so helpless, in a way, that control is diverted towards appearance?

IIA: Towards any possible option.

[IIA 49y, individual interview, lives in Israel]

Through over-sexualisation and constant bodily monitoring, Jewish-Israeli women gain some feelings of control over their otherwise uncontrolled lived situation in the midst of a violent protracted conflict. However, this process does not stop at the personal level.

The approach of 'using' women's sexuality to further a national agenda may be bluntly observed in the following incident. In mid 2007 Israeli public relations sought to change Israel's image in the United States. The aim was to identify the country not only with an armed conflict, or its archaeological sites, but for other features as well. The Israeli consulate in New York formulated a campaign based on the presence of a large number of beautiful Israeli women in uniform or, in this case, without uniform.

The idea originated in the media relations department of the Israeli Consulate in New York. A study conducted has shown that Israel doesn't have much meaning for young American men. As David Dorfman, a media adviser at the Consulate, said: "[American] males that age have no feeling toward Israel one way or another, and we view that as a problem, so we came up with an idea that would be appealing to them" (BBC News 2007).

The campaign included photographs presented in the July 2007 issue of the *Maxim* magazine. The photo feature, entitled "Women of the Israeli Defence Forces", presents several Israeli models, all ex-soldiers, photographed wearing very little in the cause of their country. In Israel, this 'sexy style' campaign sparked an irate reaction from the *Knesset* member Colette Avital, a former consul general in New York City (1992–1996). Avital observed that as much as she is in favour of creative solutions for Israel's public relations problems: "there are enough beautiful and interesting things we can use to tap this demographic than to show a half-naked woman in a magazine of this kind, considered pornographic" (The Associated Press 2007). Apparently Avital's reaction did not strike a similar chord in the minds of the policy maker in the Israeli Consulate in New York City. The feature was published with the State of Israel's seal of approval and created the anticipated buzz, judged by the favourable reaction from various male bloggers (Editorial 2007; Extremist 2007; Michael 2007).

In closing, the security ethos of Israeli society influences and constructs secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience in various ways. As I have suggested, living in a protracted, violent conflict zone disrupts and threatens not only the physical existence of individuals, but also the incarnate as well as cultural and fundamental metaphysical existence of the whole society. I have argued throughout this thesis that the Arab-Israeli conflict adopts the cultural language of the 'war on terror' juxtaposing the 'veiled Arab-Muslim woman' and the 'liberated exposed Western woman' as symbolising two poles of the conflict.

This process posits the 'exposed Western woman' as being of significant value within secular Jewish-Israeli culture. As implied by Terror Management Theory, mortality salience tends to engender a need for terror management mechanisms, in order to buffer the existential terror it emanates. Terror management mechanisms cling to social values and a global view, as well as adhering to standards which construct self-

esteem. Female objectification and self-objectification are regarded as values in Westernised Jewish-Israeli culture. The model of the exposed, liberated Western woman juxtaposed with Jewish-Israeli women's Mediterranean appearance and the threat this poses to their self-definition as Western, leads to a hyper-sexualised model of womanhood in secular, Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse and heightens women's conformity to this model.

Coda

In 1978 Israeli author and poet, Yehonatan Gefen published a children's poetry book entitled *The Sixteenth Lamb*. Later the poems were set to music and became highly popular songs in the 1980s (Gefen 1978). One of the most popular songs on this album, which started as a children's song and became a sort of a hymn within secular Jewish-Israeli popular culture today, is called 'The prettiest girl in kindergarten'. These are the lyrics of the song:

The prettiest girl in kindergarten
She has the prettiest eyes in kindergarten
And the prettiest braids in kindergarten
And the prettiest mouth in kindergarten
And the more one looks at her and all around
One can see there is no doubt
And she is the prettiest, prettiest girl in kindergarten.
When she is smiling, I am smiling
And when she is sad, I cannot understand
How can one be sad, when one is the prettiest girl in kindergarten?

The perception of feminine beauty as an answer to life's hardships has frequently been demonstrated in this thesis. Monitoring the female body has become a value in itself within Western culture, and the promise entailed by the right monitoring is a feeling of competence and personal agency (Bordo 1993; Etcoff et al. 2004; Hirschmann & Munter 1995; Orbach 1978). As is demonstrated in section three (The braid), for secular Jewish-Israeli women, adhering to standards of feminine beauty also entails a promise for some kind of sought after personal safety when living in a protracted, violent conflict zone; especially heightened by Jewish-Israeli unique heritage.

In this work I described the situation of secular Jewish-Israeli women living in a protracted, violent conflict zone. In contrast to mainstream, white Western women, mainstream Jewish-Israeli women are an underexplored group. My initial intent was to shed light and to better understand the social, political and cultural processes which shape Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience, and to listen to and share some of the voices of secular Jewish-Israeli women.

To do this I analysed Jewish-Israeli discursive history of models of womanhood, from the beginning of Zionism, the emergence of Jewish-European nationalism and cultural decolonisation. I argued that the image of the 'New Hebrew man', symbolising Zionism and Jewish nationalism, has a complex and at times dissonant counterpart in the image of the 'New Hebrew woman'. The latter image was a combination of sometimes contradictory traditional and modern values, ideas and roles that comprised gender definitions of femininity within the new Jewish society in Palestine, and later in Israel. As I have argued, this image constitutes the basis for contemporary hegemonic Jewish-Israeli discourse on femininity.

Geographical and social positioning influences how we construct our beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and responses to the world. Variable social, political and economic factors influence the ways in which we constitute our social models and indeed, the models themselves. This study has analysed models of womanhood for secular Jewish-Israeli women living in different parts of Israel, and for Jewish-Australian women who were part of Israeli society for a while and currently live in Melbourne. The main concern was the influence and experience of terror in everyday lives, for the whole society and, in particular, for the population of women who live within this society.

I have argued that the meaning of terrorism is to be found in the interrelations between terrorists and their audiences. Terrorism's meanings are constructed in relation to social, cultural or institutional bodies of knowledge. This subordination confines terrorism's meanings to the possible labels designated to it by society, especially dominant definitions of terrorism within a hegemonic discourse (Third 2006; Wilkins Newman 2003). The debate on terrorism's definitions is entangled in an economy of power that limits our possibilities of inquiring in depth into the effects for a society of 'living under terror'. Thus I found it useful to define terrorism anew, outside the terrorism industry's definitions. In this thesis terrorism is situated between the perpetrators and their audience. Thus, I have explored the meaning of terrorism outside a dominant Western discourse that operates to constrain the meaning of terrorism within mainstream as well as popular culture.

The definitions of terrorism that circulate within Western culture, especially since 9/11 and the declared 'war on terrorism' are deeply embedded, as I demonstrated,

within structures of power that are often symbolised by a female image, be it the 'veiled Muslim woman', or the 'liberated Western woman'. Thus, once again, women are conceptualised as representing with their bodies values and ideas within contested political ideologies. This is especially true for secular Jewish-Israeli women.

As Judith Herman observes: 'Repression, dissociation and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness' (1992, p. 9). The same point may be made about the concept of 'mortality salience' and accompanying psychological constructions. This thesis uses Terror Management Theory (TMT) in its conceptual focus, not only at the level of the individual, but also at the broader, social level. I have argued that assumptions of individual psychology can be applied to the ways in which a society living under terror modifies its culture to accommodate it as an everyday experience; and these ways have yet to be explored in more detail. It is my contention that as a Western affiliated culture, Jewish-Israeli mainstream culture tends to deploy its women to buffer the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. As in other complex power hierarchies this is done through perpetuating certain models of womanhood within mainstream discourse, endowing them with the aura of naturalness.

This process was unpacked further when I juxtaposed TMT with the process of female objectification. First, since the perception of the reproductively mature female body as an object appears to be a widely endorsed cultural worldview in contemporary Western society, and since individuals are motivated to internalise cultural values in their attempt to gain the security that comes from adopting a dominant cultural worldview, it may contribute to both men's and women's motivation to ratify this perception (Grabe et al. 2005). Second, it seems obvious that contemporary Western society highly values the attractiveness of the regulated physical body. Physical attractiveness is conceived as an important component of self-esteem together with fitness, athleticism, body control and satisfying sexual experiences. Internalising these values as a necessary process for the construction of self-esteem, as implied by TMT, may well cause self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Goldenberg et al. 2000).

From a TMT perspective, it is theorised that the objectification of women gains significance from the efforts to protect one's worldview in order to obtain meaning,

while self-objectification for women would stem from the need to meet internalised cultural standards of value, in order to maintain positive self-esteem (Grabe et al. 2005). I found that a society under terror tends to use women to pacify the existential anxiety endured by the whole society. Through the objectification of women and the associated demands for an over-sexualised appearance, society gives women the role of alleviating existential terror, which distances them from ideas of social liberation by averting women's attention to these demands.

I argued earlier that Israeli society experiences mortality salience in everyday life. This in turn creates a need for terror management mechanisms to buffer existential terror. Clinging to social values and worldview is a terror management mechanism, as well as adhering to one's standards which construct self-esteem. Female objectification is regarded as a value in Westernised Jewish-Israeli culture and self-objectification, as represented in contemporary Western discourse by the 'liberated Western woman', is a major component in the construction of self-esteem for secular Jewish-Israeli women, especially since their self-definition as Western is threatened by their Mediterranean appearance.

In his work *Toward an Open Tomb*, Michel Warschawski (2004) describes the high social price Israel is paying for the continuation of its occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While some sections within Jewish-Israeli society agree with this viewpoint, others see it as a 'necessary price' one has to pay for Israel's security. As I mentioned earlier, this debate is beyond the scope of the current study, however this thesis has examined the price being paid in various ways by Jewish-Israeli women, due to the Israeli 'ethos of security' and the phenomenon of a society 'living under terror'. Thus I have examined some of the ideological uses made of women by a Western affiliated society 'living under terror', and the extent to which these uses affect the ways in which self-defined Western women perceive and enact femininity, particularly in regard to body image.

This project has been a complex but necessary process in which I have had to reflect on my own society. It was obvious from the outset that the security ethos influences and constructs all aspects of everyday life for Israeli society at large. I have suggested that living in a protracted, violent conflict zone disrupts and threatens not only the physical existence of individuals, but also the incarnate as well as cultural and

fundamental metaphysical existence of society as a whole. However, it was disturbing to realise the ways in which secular Jewish-Israeli women's lived embodied experience has been influenced. In the process of conducting the study, I began to see that the main channel of agency left open to secular Jewish-Israeli women was body monitoring, while motherhood is secondary, as motherhood does not exempt women of the burden to adhere to this model. Even mothers however feel the pressure to enact an over-sexualised feminine appearance.

Throughout this thesis I have presented the gendered aspect of terrorism's discourse. This posits the 'exposed Western woman' as having significant value within Western discourse on terrorism, especially since 9/11 and the 'war on terrorism'. Jewish-Israeli women are generally more similar to Arab than to white Euro-American models of femininity they embody. As I stress throughout this thesis, it is the model of the exposed, liberated Western woman when juxtaposed with Jewish-Israeli women Mediterranean appearance that poses a real threat to their self-definition as Western, and leads to a hyper-sexualised model of womanhood in secular Jewish-Israeli mainstream discourse while at the same time it heightens women's conformity to this model.

On a personal level, the findings of this study have been both deeply disturbing and frustrating. It was painful to learn that women have accepted and internalised norms and expectations to represent, with their bodies, their society's political affiliation and its international relations. This creates the poignant situation and realisation through talking to secular Jewish-Israeli women that they are dissatisfied with their bodies and disturbed about their body image. And further, that dieting or cosmetic procedures, no matter how difficult or painful, are perceived as minor obstacles in reaching one's aim of self-esteem and agency through body monitoring.

Representing the postmodern approach of feminist theory, Judith Butler (1986) asserts that 'the body becomes a nexus of culture and choice', yet for secular Jewish-Israeli women this choice is imbricated with patterns of coercion. As I have demonstrated, women's fashion in Israel does not leave women who want to dress less provocatively with much choice, and the demand to adhere to the slender ideal is constantly perpetuated through various cultural ideological tools reinforced by the gendered aspect of terrorism's discourse. One may argue that the possibility of choosing to have

certain body types through dieting, exercising or plastic surgery presents a choice, but in a society that sexually objectifies women's bodies to the extent that they 'would have given anything to be like these models' or that 'every second woman has breast implants', is it still a choice? How accessible is the possibility of personalizing this nexus of culture and choice for women that feel that the only agency left for them is over-sexualising their bodies/selves?

Notwithstanding the question of choice and agency of secular Jewish-Israeli women, two prominent Israeli women's magazines published articles in September 2008 depicting feminine resistance to the strict demands for slenderness. *Aht* magazine presented Eliah Berger, a full-figured woman, who participated in a reality show in which she posed in the nude for a photograph (Shemesh-Kritz 2008). *GO* magazine published what it entitled, 'a sane edition'. This edition contained an interview with a popular female singer and musician Keren Peles, who declared she would not lose weight for anyone, and a long list of celebrities declaring they would not surrender and had decided to boycott size zero (Darbinsky-Tikolsker 2008; Gibli 2008). As much as this may seem like resistance to dominant models of femininity within mainstream Jewish-Israeli hegemonic discourse, these women were still depicted in an over-sexualised fashion, whether in underwear or in the nude. If this is a breakthrough, or just another twist in the over-sexualised feminine model within secular Jewish-Israeli culture, only time will tell.

Appendix A: Participants

Tel Aviv (2007) was the first focus group I conducted in Israel. I talked with potential subjects before the group met, usually on the phone, and retrieved some personal data. Since I was worried that some might not attend, I asked every potential subject to bring along a friend who might be interested in joining the group. I interviewed six potential subjects and twelve women actually participated in the group. It was a diverse group of women; all lived in Tel Aviv or outer suburbs or towns in the vicinity, apart from one who lived in a small settlement south of Tel Aviv. The age range within the group was 35–55 years. All participants were mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to upper middle class. **(Group's code - TL)**

Participant's code ⁶⁸	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
TLAs	47Y	Married+	University lecturer
TLO	54Y	Married +	Architect
TLP	53Y	Separated +	Manager
TLRa	35Y	Married +	University lecturer
TLAh	39Y	Single +	University lecturer
TLAy	42Y	Married +	Actress
TLH	50Y	Married +	Graphologist
TLT	38Y	Married +	Home-maker
TLR	42Y	Married +	Independent business woman
TLI	47Y	Married +	Secretary
TLSm	44Y	Married +	Fundraiser
TLSy	54Y	Married +	Manager

Herzelia (2007) was the third focus group conducted in Israel. It had three young participants in their early twenties; they were all known to each other previously. One of them contacted me through an ad placed at Tel Aviv University and gave my contact details to two friends. This group was supposed to include three other young

⁶⁸ In preliminary discussion, I requested some personal details from potential subjects. Most volunteered before I asked for these details. When I did have to ask, I made a point of informing the participant that it was her choice to disclose personal information.

women in the same age group, but they didn't show up, although I had spoken to them in advance.⁶⁹ Two participants in this group were students; one lived in Herzelia and two in Tel Aviv. They were all single and resided with their parents. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was middle class. **(Group's code - H)**

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
HS	24Y	Single	Student
HM	24Y	Single	Student
HR	24Y	Single	Student

Kefar-Sava (2007) was the second focus group I conducted in Israel. It had five participants, aged 23 to 74 years. It was a diverse group in age as well as occupation and status. All participants contacted me after obtaining my contact details from neighbourhood contacts. Two lived in Tel Aviv, one lived in Ra'anana, and two lived in Kefar-Sava.⁷⁰ The oldest participant volunteered to host the group in her home in Kefar-Sava. Except for the youngest participant, all participants were mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to upper middle class. **(Group's code - KS)**

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
KSR	74Y	Widow +	Pensioner
KSN	69Y	Married +	Pensioner
KSL	55Y	Married +	Pensioner
KSD	43Y	In a relationship +	Physiotherapist
KSS	23Y	Single	Student

Rishon-LeZion (2007) was the fourth focus group conducted in Israel. It had four participants, aged 40 to 49 years, and all were mothers. One participant contacted me after obtaining my details from her neighbourhood contact. The other three were her sister and two neighbours. The group took place in the kitchen of one of the participants in the morning. Three participants were married and one was a single mum. Three lived in the same building in Rishon-LeZion and one came from a suburb north of Tel Aviv. The socio-economic status of the women in this group ranged between middle to lower middle class. **(Group's code - RZ)**

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
RZS	46Y	Married +	Kindergarten teacher

⁶⁹ One of them contacted me a day after the group took place and scheduled an individual interview, to which she did come.

⁷⁰ Ra'anana and Kefar-Sava are adjacent medium size towns in the eastern-centre of Israel.

RZT	51Y	Single +	Secretary
RZE	40Y	Married +	Home-maker
RZY	39Y	Married +	Salesperson

Pardes-Hanna (2007) was the fifth focus group conducted in Israel. It had three participants in their mid twenties. Two were single, one was married, and none had children. Two worked, one as au pair and one as a salesperson, one was unemployed. The two singles lived with their parents in Pardes-Hanna, a small town in the centre of Israel, with some middle-class neighbourhoods with a country character and other lower socio-economic neighbourhoods, where violence and crime were more prevalent. The married participant used to live in Pardes-Hanna, but moved out. One participant obtained my contact details from her neighbourhood contact person, and the other two participants were her twin sister and a neighbour. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was lower middle class. **(Group's code - PH)**

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
PHS	24Y	Married	Secretary
PHSh	24Y	Single	Au pair
PHM	23Y	Single	Unemployed

Caesarea (2007) was the last focus group conducted in Israel. It had six participants, aged 37 to 62 years. Five lived in Caesarea, an upper middle-class neighbourhood in the centre of Israel. One participant lived in a small settlement (*Moshav*) on the outskirts of Haifa. All participants contacted me through an ad placed in their neighbourhood house. Five were married and one was a widow, all were mothers. Four participants lived for long periods of time outside Israel in the USA, South-America, Europe and India. Two, who had not lived outside Israel, had travelled extensively overseas. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was upper middle class. **(Group's code - C)**

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
CG	63Y	Widow +	Pensioner
CM	40Y	Married +	Home-maker
CS	45Y	Married +	Home-maker
CE	53Y	Married +	Teacher
CD	43Y	Married +	Home-maker
CSh	61Y	Married +	Pensioner

Melbourne (2007) was the pilot group conducted in Melbourne prior to my field study in Israel. This group had four participants. All participants had arrived in Israel

two decades ago, as young single women; three arrived from Melbourne and one from the USA. They all met their spouses in Israel, three of them married Israeli men, lived with them in Israel for two or twenty years and are still married to their partners, currently living in Melbourne. The US participant met a Jewish-Australian man, in Israel; after living together in Israel for almost two years, they moved to Melbourne and have lived there ever since. This participant is currently single again. One contacted me after getting my details from my contact person in the Israeli community in Melbourne; the other three were her friends who joined the group and discussed their time in Israel. All participants were in their mid-forties and were mothers. The socio-economic status of the women in this group was middle class.

(Group's code - M)

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
MH	48Y	Married +	Independent business woman
MR	49Y	Married +	Secretary
MJ	45Y	Married +	Home-maker
MB	52Y	Single +	Nurse

Individual interviews. Eight participants were interviewed individually, five due to practical reasons to do with time, place and their personal schedules. Three preferred one-on-one interviews and chose not to participate in group discussion. Each interviewee was given a name code that included II and their first name initial.

(Group's code - II)

Participant's code	Participant's age	Personal status	Occupation
IIEn	28Y	Single	Salesperson
II Ei	40Y	Married +	At home mum
IIG	38Y	Married +	Artist
IID	27Y	Single	Artist
IIEs	53Y	Married +	Art teacher
IIMs	57Y	Married +	Manager
IIMp	68Y	Married +	Artist
IIA	49Y	Married +	Manager

Appendix B: Code book

Three-level coding system			The Qualitative Coding System: Security and womanhood
10000			Specific/special features of life in Israel
	10100		Togetherness-comradery
		10101	Trauma heritage as reason for comradery
		10102	Invasiveness
		10103	Socially or individually Helpful
	10200		Stress
		10201	Existential insecurity (threat to life)
		10202	Competitiveness
		10203	
		10204	Impoliteness
		10205	The pressure to look good
		10206	Stress induced by media
		10207	Discontinuity of Israel
	10300		Passion – sexuality
	10400		Hebrew and American culture
	10500		Jewish ethnicity
	10600		Israeli Media – women's images/icons
20000			Safety inside and outside Israel
	20100		Agency in Israel
	20200		Anti-semitism
30000			The influence of living in Israel as a woman
	30100		Serving in the army
		30101	Feelings of agency and empowerment
		30102	Sexual harassment
		30103	Feelings of inequality in the service
		30104	Wasting your time in the army
		30105	Professional women in the army
		30106	Non-gendered abuse in the army
		30107	Degrading references to women in the army
		30108	Beauty hierarchy in the army
		30109	Hardships in the army
		30110	Not fulfilling yourself due to gender
		30111	The army as a generally good experience
		30112	Good relationships with commanders
	30200		Worrying for others
		30201	Caring for others as a motherly experience
40000			What does being a woman mean to you?
	40100		Women's life cycle – women's unique

			experiences
		40101	Menstruation
		40102	Pregnancy and giving birth
		40103	Menopause
	40200		Power
	40300		Burden of everyday life
	40400		Motherhood
		40410	At home mums
		40411	Disapproval of...
		40412	Defiance in being...
		40413	Mothering as success in itself
		40420	Working mums
		40421	Social demand to work as well as to mother
		40430	Career mums
		40431	Mums think the kids pay the price
		40432	Society thinks the kids pay the price
	40500		Differences between women and men
		40501	Women care more for others – enablers
		40502	Women as more practical
		40503	Men as more practical
		40504	Women as more powerful
		40505	Women as less powerful
		40506	Women as multi-tasked
		40507	Men as more successful and ambitious
		40508	Men as breadwinners
		40509	Women as more emotional
		40510	Women as compromisers
		40511	Men as walking egos
	40600		Sexual harassment in everyday life
		40601	Blaming the victims
50000			Womanhood and femininity
	50100		Acting feminine
		50101	Genteel
		50102	Submissive
		50103	Looking good (from make-up to makeover)
		50104	Plastic surgery
		50105	Being thin
		50106	Acting modest
		50107	Self-confidence
		50108	Women's friendship and support
		50109	Womanhood as power
60000			Women's fashion in Israel
	60100		Revealing/exposing fashion
	60200		Sexual fashion – no matter what size
	60300		Coercive fashion
	60400		Age appropriate fashion

	60500		
70000			Safety for women
	70100		Sexual crimes
	70200		Battered women
80000			How you feel about your body
	80100		Good
		80101	Exercising
		80102	Loosing weight
	80200		Bad
		80201	Would like to change it or part of it
		80202	After birth
		80203	Too fat
90000			Worse case scenario

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