

## **Re-Conceptualising Lifestyle Travellers: Contemporary 'drifters'**

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## **Introduction**

The question of whether there is a difference between the notions of 'traveller' and 'tourist' has been an ongoing area of debate in tourism research (Boorstin, 1964; Dann, 1999; Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Jacobsen, 2000; Welk, 2004), as well as being a vibrant discussion topic amongst travellers themselves (O'Reilly, 2005; Riley, 1988). Not only has it been reported that travellers self-define themselves as different than tourists (O'Reilly, 2005; Riley, 1988), but also within the leisure traveller population itself, commonly known as 'backpackers' (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995), niches have developed that indicate that this group is not homogenous but in fact multifaceted (Nash, 2001; Sørensen, 2003).

Sørensen (2003) has suggested that the heterogeneity of the backpacking market justifies further research into its specific sub-types. While research has been undertaken that investigates what may be termed the 'contemporary backpacker' (Noy, 2004; O'Reilly, 2006; Sørensen, 2003; Uriely *et al.*, 2002), Cohen (2004) has noted that there is a dearth of research on 'contemporary drifters', those who seek to set themselves apart from mainstream backpackers just as backpackers define themselves in opposition to tourists. Within the backpacker label, there exist a small proportion of individuals for which travel is not a cyclical break or transition to another life stage. For these individuals, leisure travel can serve as a way of life that they may pursue indefinitely. This chapter conceptualises these individuals as 'lifestyle travellers', a less pejorative term than 'drifter' (Cohen, 1972) or 'wanderer' (Vogt, 1976), which I have chosen to describe individuals that engage in long-term travel as a lifestyle.

The chapter begins with a critical review of the supposed traveller/tourist divide and a consideration of the role of anti-tourism in constructing traveller identities. It then traces the development of the concept of the traveller over time from Cohen's (1972) drifter, a term described in detail below as an idealised form of wanderer that has inspired modern backpacker idealism, through to the current state of the backpacking literature. This is done in order to provide a historical basis from which lifestyle travel has emerged that serves to situate lifestyle travel in relation to the theory on backpacker tourism. In finally delineating travel as a lifestyle, the use of lifestyle theory is employed to justify lifestyle travellers as an identifiable lifestyle group.

### **The traveller/tourist divide**

Attempts at a distinction between traveller and tourist have regularly resurfaced in the academic literature and electronic discussions among tourism professionals (Dann, 1999). One method of exploring a supposed division has been etymologically. Fussell (1980) explained that 'travel' is derived from the word 'travail', which in turn was taken from the Latin 'tripalium', referring to a three-staked instrument of torture designed to rack the body. Thus, travel has been conceived as "laborious or troublesome" and the traveller "was an active man at work" (Boorstin, 1964: 84-85). In contrast, and appearing later chronologically, the word 'tourist' was derived from the Latin 'tornus', based on a Greek word for a tool that describes a circle (Boorstin, 1964). As such, Boorstin (1964) purported that the nature of travel changed with the decline of the traveller and the rise of the tourist, with the former working at something and the latter being a pleasure-seeker.

An association between travel and work can be linked to the Grand Tours of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, undertaken primarily by affluent young males (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). These tours were depicted as a form of education, a finishing school in which travel was intended to increase one's worldliness, social awareness and sophistication (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). As such, the Grand Tour was romanticised as being of educational value, rather than as a domain for seeking pleasure. Whether these tours were in fact also hedonistic, is beside the point for the moment, as the focus here is on how a privileged class composed mainly of well-off, white, European males (Galani-Moutafi, 2000) came to view themselves, at least outwardly, as elite travellers enhancing their educations.

Further seeking to show how distance came to be perceived between a traveller and a tourist, Fussell (1980: 39) suggested that the Grand Tour pre-dated tourism, having pointed out that "before the development of tourism, travel was conceived to be like study, and its fruits were considered to be the adornment of the mind and the formation of judgment." It comes as no surprise following this statement that the eventual development of mass tourism was viewed by many in the upper classes of Western society as signifying the end of the possibility of 'real' travel (Boorstin, 1964). In his essay on the *Lost Art of Travel*, Boorstin (1964) lamented the growth of mass tourism, which was largely attributed to technological developments such as the railway. Whereas transportation had previously been quite laborious, the industrial mass production of long-distance transportation, via railways and ocean steamers, made travel purportedly more pleasurable, cheaper and accessible (Boorstin, 1964). As Boorstin (1964: 86) complained, "thus foreign travel ceased to be an activity – an experience, an undertaking – and instead became a commodity."

Boorstin's (1964) lamentation of the decline of the traveller and the rise of the tourist helped to produce a dichotomy in the tourism literature within which the disappearing traveller was awarded the nostalgic prestige of earlier explorers and the proliferating tourist experience was pejoratively described as contrived, diluted and prefabricated. Thus, for some, the traveller can be positively valued while the tourist can be perceived negatively (O'Reilly, 2005). Fussell (1980) has pointed out that the negative connotations ascribed to the word 'tourist' are even perpetuated within the tourism industry itself, as travel agencies elect to be called *travel* agencies rather than *tourism* agencies.

Moreover, Dann (1999) has recognised that many literary works have managed a traveller versus tourist distinction that parallels that of the sacred versus profane, and that this supposed distinction has allowed for broadly contrasting analogies of types of tourism as either a sacred journey (Graburn, 1977) or as a game or form of play (Lett, 1983). Within a traveller/tourist dichotomy, wherein travel is depicted as more 'real' or superior to tourism, it has become clear that the idea of the traveller is heavily based on anti-tourism and tourist angst (Dann, 1999).

### **Anti-tourism in the construction of traveller identities**

Dann (1999) suggested that the idea of travel is simply anti-tourism. Richards and Wilson (2004a: 49) pointed out that in forming selves, "it is often easier to say clearly what one is not than what one is." It has been noted that within the context of ethnicities, differentiation is often based against the community that lives closest to one's own (Welk, 2004). Welk (2004) also suggested that while a distinction can

normally be made in territorial terms, it is also possible to differentiate a group based on a perceived symbolic basis. In the case of travellers, the closest perceived group in terms of form is mainstream tourists (Welk, 2004 and Richards & Wilson, 2004a made this comparison except having used the term 'backpacker' rather than traveller). In this light, Bruner (1991: 247) alleged that a distinction between a tourist and a traveller can be reduced to "a Western myth of identity." Consequently, a traveller identity is largely constructed through its opposition to the tourist role, or in other words, in opposition to what it hopes not to be.

Accordingly, while travellers may view the tourist experience as clichéd and devoid of spontaneity, in contrast the traveller's experience is (re)produced as risky, exciting and imbued with freedom (Dann, 1999, Fussell, 1980). Welk (2004) further urged that the issue is best clarified by looking back in history to cultural origins in the hippie movement. The counterculture that Cohen (1972) based his conceptualisation of the 'drifter' on was a reaction against a 'conformist' parent generation, and as such, any divide between travellers and tourists has roots in both a class and generational conflict (Welk, 2004). However, Fussell (1980: 49) critically surmised that the anti-tourist conviction that one is a traveller instead of a tourist is "both a symptom and a cause of what the British journalist Alan Brien has designated *tourist angst*, defined as 'a gnawing suspicion that after all...you are still a tourist like every other tourist.'" For Fussell (1980), tourist angst is a class signal, extending back as described above to the Grand Tour, in which the anti-tourist, or traveller, is deluding her/himself. As Fussell (1980: 49) continued "We are all tourists now, and there is no escape."

Thus, the question emerges as to whether travellers are distinct from tourists or in fact just tourists themselves. This can be addressed by both looking at what travellers say about themselves and deeper into the differences that the literature has suggested. With both of these methods, it is useful to clarify in advance between form and type-related attributes (Uriely *et al.*, 2002). Form-related attributes refer to the arrangements and practices through which an individual constructs a journey such as style of accommodation or length of trip. On the other hand, type-related attributes are of a psychological nature, for instance, the meaning one assigns to a trip or motivations for travel (Uriely *et al.*, 2002).

In terms of what travellers say about themselves, or self-definition, Welk (2004) claimed that travellers do not necessarily perceive themselves as 'better' tourists, but reject the tourist label altogether in exchange for the term traveller. Likewise, O'Reilly (2005) reported that traveller is the term preferred by most backpackers. In White and White's (2004: 202) study of mid-life and older long-term travellers in the Australian Outback, the terms *traveller* and *travel* were used in place of *tourist* and *touring* because the authors felt that the former terms "more accurately capture the meaning of these journeys for those undertaking them." This was also evidenced in Richards and Wilson's (2003) study in which over half of a 2,300 person sample identified themselves as travellers, around one third as backpackers and only one fifth as tourists. Particularly notable within Richard and Wilson's (2003) study was that younger persons were much more willing to accept the backpacker label than older persons.

In Davidson's (2005: 35) study of travellers in India, meanwhile, the majority of respondents were unhappy to describe their travels as 'backpacking' as the term "now conjures up images of young, privileged gap-year students." In this sense, most of Davidson's (2005: 35) interviewees would have reportedly perceived the term 'backpacker' as "an insult to their status as travellers." Moreover, in Riley's (1988) study of long-term travellers, 100% of the interviewees rejected the tourist label, having justified themselves as travellers based on form differences of available time and money. Long-term travellers were conceptualised as rich in time but financially constrained. Dann (1999) distinguished between travellers and tourists by duration as well – having argued that tourists generally have less time at their disposal.

On the other hand, O'Reilly (2005) found that some travellers admitted there is not a real form difference between tourists and travellers, but did claim that there are significant variances in their respective approaches to travel. Her interviewees cited the difference in approach to the individual's openness to the experience as a 'journey of self' (type) rather than upon money or style of accommodation (form). In further highlighting that such type differences might exist between travellers and tourists, in Maoz's (2004: 114) study of Israeli travellers in India, interviewees reported they were on a "serious and profound inward journey" with a desire to 'find themselves'; a quite stark contrast to Boorstin's (1964) contrived tourist experience.

Thus, in regards to type-attributes, for travellers the distinction is made in that it is the journey rather than the destination that is important, as travel may be considered as an 'inward voyage' or 'state of mind' that embodies feelings of independence and freedom (Galani-Moutafi, 2000, O'Reilly, 2005). Galani-Moutafi (2000: 205)



described how an inward voyage may mirror the external physical journey wherein “a movement through geographical space is transformed into an analogue for the process of introspection.” In contrast, being a mass tourist purportedly may lack this transformative power (O’Reilly, 2005). With this in mind, Welk (2004: 90) re-emphasised the importance of time in journeying as a state of mind by having alleged that “the difference between the tourist and the traveller can be seen in that tourism is a temporary state of existence, while travelling is a permanent one.” However, to draw a line between travel and tourism based solely on the presence or not of a sense of inward voyage lays the distinction between traveller and tourist within subjectivism.

Even though academia has not come to agreement as to whether travellers and tourists do differ, it is clear enough that both form and type differences have been suggested in the literature. While these differences surely do not hold fast across all individuals nor represent entirely distinct categories, it is likely that they do represent some broad trends that allow for the notion of the traveller to be teased out as a sub-type of the tourist. However, even if the form and type criteria for a traveller are not taken to differ significantly from the mass tourist (see Sharpley, 2003), it is hard to overlook the emic perspective of the traveller, who has reportedly identified with the self-definition of traveller rather than tourist (O’Reilly, 2005; Riley, 1988; Welk, 2004). Hence, anti-tourism allows for the construction of a distinct identity even if the reality may be taken as a contradiction (Welk, 2004). Jamieson (1996) suggested that a perception of identity or status apart from other tourists is what in fact sets travellers apart from other tourists.

Nash (2001) has moved past the question of a traveller/tourist divide and suggested that travellers themselves are not even a homogenous group, and as such, it is important to specify which type of traveller one is talking about. In a similar vein, this chapter now does the same. In order to situate the concept of a lifestyle traveller in relation to the broader contemporary context of the 'backpacker', the focus now turns to how the tourism literature has historically framed the traveller as the antecedent to the backpacker, beginning with Cohen's (1972) conceptualisation of the 'drifter.'

### **From drifter to backpacker and beyond**

Some of the academic (Cohen, 1982, 2003; O'Reilly, 2006) and popular literature (Garland, 1997; Sutcliffe, 1998) concerning travellers has highlighted a supposed institutionalisation of the backpacking phenomenon, comparing contemporary backpackers with conventional mass tourists, with the academic side normally tracing this development from its theoretical source in Cohen's (1972) drifter ideal. To a degree, these works have lamented the loss of the drifter ideal and have helped to increasingly compartmentalise travellers as mainstream backpackers, resembling mass tourists, to the point where the term 'backpacker' has nearly replaced the word 'traveller' in certain regions (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). However, the literature has at times recognised that the backpacker market is heterogeneous (Nash, 2001; Sørensen, 2003; Uriely *et al.*, 2002), which has opened the door to the study of its sub-types.

This chapter now turns to the academic development of the drifter role in order to examine how it has inspired the mythology of contemporary backpacking ideals. Rather than laying the drifter ideal to rest and homogenising all travellers under the

broader rubric of the institutionalised backpacker, however, it is suggested that some travellers repeatedly exceed the temporal boundaries that have traditionally situated backpacking as transitory, a rite-of-passage and/or a liminoid experience (Lett, 1983; Turner 1977). Hence, it is argued that some travellers have established travel as their 'normal' way of life or lifestyle, rather than a break from it.

In outlining the historical origins of backpacker tourism, some researchers have pointed to the wider history of tourism and again located the starting point for backpacker theory within the seventeenth and eighteenth century European Grand Tour (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). Alternatively, others have begun a historical tracing of backpacking theory with Cohen's (1972) conceptualisation of the drifter as the archetypal backpacker (Richards & Wilson, 2004b). These divergent starting points offer quite different connotations, as while the Grand Tour is associated with education and supposed sophistication, drifting often carries derogatory connotations (Riley, 1988).

A careful analysis of the literature does locate a degree of historical importance to the Grand Tour, but further questions how what was once largely the reserve of affluent upper-class youth came to bear deviant associations in the form of the drifter. Part of the answer may be found by examining another important pre-cursor to the backpacker, which is oft overlooked in backpacker studies, the nineteenth century 'tramp', a working class young adult male, who through vocational membership, followed a circuit of small-town craft society inns that supplied accommodation and work (Adler, 1985). Distinguishable from the Grand Tours of affluent upper-class youth, the tramping system was borne out of economic

necessity among the working class. At the level of motivation, however, both the Grand Tour and the tramping system supplied a ritual separation from family to foment the transition into adulthood, as well as providing the opportunity for adventure and education (Adler, 1985).

But increased urbanisation and industrialisation around the beginning of World War I spelled the decline of organised craft associations (Alder, 1985). Many young working class males continued the tramping form, but as they were no longer legitimised by the craft societies, their mobility came to be viewed as a social problem, almost a type of vagrancy (Adler, 1985). Adler (1985) suggested that the literature on youth travel shifted to represent this new image of travelling youth as a form of juvenile delinquency. Hence, while tourism among the middle classes grew with the establishment of mass produced long-distance transportation in the twentieth century (Boorstin, 1964) and travel continued to play a role in lives of young people, for the latter it changed in that their travels began to be perceived by society as hedonistic and even anarchistic – a form of escapism (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). This was also largely due to an increasing association with the ‘hippie counterculture’ of the 1960s (O’Reilly, 2006).

1960s counterculture largely stemmed from a generational values conflict between dissatisfied youth and an allegedly conformist parent generation (Welk, 2004), and as such, was “both a symptom and expression of broader alienative forces” (Cohen, 1973: 94). A large section of alienated youth in developed Western countries in the 1960s were mainly articulating a political statement against the growing cultural and political homogeneity of the period, with one primary area of expression taking place

through opposition to the Vietnam War (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). Seemingly running counter to the values of mainstream society, the counterculture became associated with rebellion, drug usage and anarchic values (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004), but to the youth themselves, their movement represented a mission, a chance to revolutionise their home societies (Welk, 2004).

One distinctive means through which countercultural adherents expressed themselves was through travel, as travelling fitted “admirably the style of life and the aspirations of the members of the ‘counterculture’” (Cohen, 1973: 93). Even popular literary works of the time such as Kerouac’s (1957) *On the Road* and Hesse’s (1964) *The Journey to the East* helped to link countercultural values to mobility. In addition to travel in Europe and North America, it became increasingly common in the late 1960s and early 1970s for Western youth seeking what they perceived as a more meaningful or authentic cultural existence (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004) to follow what became known as the ‘hippie overland trail’ from Europe to India and Nepal (MacLean, 2006; Tomory, 1996).

This overland route, followed by hundreds of thousands of young Westerners, began in Istanbul and crossed through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, before often finishing in Nepal (MacLean, 2006). India and Nepal signified the end of the road for these travellers as the counterculture had idealised the Indian subcontinent as the pinnacle of ‘alternative lifestyle’ destinations (Tomory, 1996), and popular discourse about the subcontinent had promised adventure, an ‘earthly utopia’, and even enlightenment (MacLean, 2006). Indeed, with many disaffected countercultural youth seemingly in search of a utopia, More’s (1516) *Utopia*, a literary piece that described

a socialised utopian island nation and influenced the revival of hippie communes during the countercultural period (Baumeister, 1986), appears to have influenced these idealistic wanderers. Interestingly, it seems that for many young travellers, while the overland route had spiritual connotations that theoretically support tourism as a sacred journey or secular pilgrimage (Graburn, 1977), the route also, especially to its moral critics, was viewed as hedonistic.

As the overland trail from Europe to Asia grew in popularity with primarily young travellers, and alienated Western youth increasingly 'drifted' through other parts of the world, both popular literature and academia picked up on the phenomenon. Michener's (1971) *The Drifters* served as a fictional account of the travels of several alienated youth during the period and Cohen (1972) conceptualised the drifter type within tourism studies as part of a broader endeavour to establish a tourist typology. Cohen's (1972) seminal work on a sociology of tourism spawned not only several other of his own publications that expanded on the notion of the drifter, but also established the drifter as an archetypal or idealised traveller, currents of which still run through modern-day backpacker theory and ideology. As Cohen (2004: 44) suggested: "If the model for the drifter was the tramp, the drifter is the model for the backpacker."

### **The drifter ideal**

Cohen's (1972) discussion of the drifter included his conceptualisation of the 'explorer', with both of these types described as 'non-institutionalised' tourist roles that were loosely linked to the tourist establishment. A drifter was originally depicted by Cohen (1972: 168) as:

This type of tourist ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life of his home country. He shuns any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and considers the ordinary tourist experience phoney. He tries to live the way the people he visits lives, and to share their shelter, foods, and habits, keeping only the most basic and essential elements of his old customs. The drifter has no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel.

In contrast to the drifter, whom Cohen compared to the 'wanderer' of previous times (although without explanation as to who constituted the latter), Cohen (1972: 168) described the explorer as the traveller of former years, who does not, however, try to identify with the 'natives' and become one of them during her/his stay.

The explorer arranges his trip alone; he tries to get off the beaten track as much as possible, but he nevertheless looks for comfortable accommodations and reliable means of transportation. Though novelty dominates, the tourist does not immerse himself completely in his host society, but retains some of the basic routines and comforts of his native way of life.

Although Cohen (1972) equated the explorer with the traveller of former years, both his future research (Cohen, 1973, 1982, 2004) and much of the other research that traces the 'evolution' of backpacking (Maoz, 2004; O'Reilly, 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2004b; Welk, 2004) has instead centred on the notion of the drifter as the

primary precursor to the contemporary backpacker. This was largely influenced by Cohen's (1973: 90) conclusion that drifting had moved in a short space of time from a minor phenomenon into "one of the prevalent trends of contemporary tourism," as the most popular and widespread form of travel for the Western younger generation.

Cohen (1973) supported that the popularity of drifter travel was due to its strong connection with the counterculture. He suggested that the mobility of drifting aided in the loosening of ties and obligations, the abandonment of accepted norms, and the search for sensual experiences (Cohen, 1973). Not surprisingly, as with the counterculture in general, 'drifting', a derogatory term in the eyes of 'mainstream' society, not unlike tramping, came to be associated with deviancy, as a marginal and unusual activity undertaken by society's 'dropouts' (O'Reilly, 2005, 2006).

In a further effort to typologise tourists, Cohen (1979) proposed that 'serious' drifters could be compartmentalised under what he referred to as 'experimental mode', which characterised individuals that were pre-disposed to trying out alternative ways of life as part of a quest for meaning. These experimental travellers were purported to be in "search of himself" as part of a trial and error process (Cohen 1979: 189). However, Cohen (1982: 221) lamented that most young travellers do not even qualify as part-time drifters, and even at this early stage in the drifter literature, he suggested that most youth travel "in a conventional style characteristic of the institutionalized mass tourist," a statement that, as is discussed later, seeded much of the later backpacker literature that emphasised the homogenisation of the backpacker.



### **Attempts at a less pejorative term than 'drifter'**

Apparently in an effort to defuse the hedonistic connotations of the drifter, Vogt (1976) and Riley (1988) attempted to conceptualise independent travel under different terminology. Vogt (1976) claimed that the primary motivation of wandering youth, as opposed to being aimless, was personal growth and accordingly called his young travellers 'wanderers'. Akin to Cohen (1979), Vogt characterised this type of travel as exploratory, offering ways to learn about the world and self and undertaken mostly by middle-class students on a moratorium from study. Vogt's (1976) wanderer concept seems to have been an attempt to realign travel with the educational value of the Grand Tour (O'Reilly, 2006), and to distance it from the negative associations of tramping and drifting.

In contrast to both Vogt (1976) and Cohen (1972), Riley (1988) protested the wanderer concept as being limited to relatively short-term young travellers, mainly composed of students, and also suggested that the derogatory drifter label had been misleading in connoting deviant behaviour. Riley's (1988) argument was based on a judgement that the demographics and motivations of the population engaging in independent travel had shifted in a generation to include individuals that could not be characterised as youth dropouts or just students on a break. In comparison, these travelling individuals were supposedly at a juncture in life, as opposed to generally aimless, hailed from middle-class backgrounds, and were on average older than the earlier travellers (Riley, 1988). Hence, unlike Cohen (1972) and Vogt (1976), who focused on young travellers, Riley (1988) found most of her travellers to be in their late twenties and early thirties, and with one of her interviewees being sixty years old, she placed no age restrictions on long-term travel.

Riley (1988) managed a conceptual distinction between travellers and shorter-term tourists using Graburn's (1983) division of modern tourism into two modes. The first was annual vacations that "mark the progress of cyclical time" and the second was "rite-of-passage" tourism, which was described as taking place at the junction of major changes in life relating to, for instance, adulthood, career and/or relationships (Graburn 1983: 12). Riley (1988) suggested the phrase 'long-term budget traveller' as a less pejorative and more accurate way of depicting individuals who engaged in rite-of-passage tourism. 'Long-term budget traveller' was also intended to reflect that the extended length of the individual's travel required most people to operate on a budget. As such, it was assumed that the tourist had limited time at her/his disposal whereas the traveller was abundant in time but was usually constrained by finances, and thus, self-imposed a budget in order to extend the travel period "beyond that of a cyclical holiday" (Riley 1988: 317).

In summary, Cohen's (1972) drifter, Vogt's (1976) wanderer and Riley's (1988) long-term budget traveller were each attempts to conceptualise travellers as distinguishable from tourists while representing what was perceived as the changing nature of independent travel. Although Vogt (1976) and Riley (1988) called out for a term with less derogatory connotations than 'drifter', their respective suggestions of 'wanderer' and 'long-term budget traveller' were not embraced within academia, and it was not until Loker-Murphy and Pearce's (1995) introduction of the succinct label 'backpacker' into the academic literature that a less pejorative and more widely accepted term surfaced.

## **The growth of backpacking and backpacker research**

As long-term travel grew in popularity, the term 'backpacker' took hold from the late 1990s (O'Reilly, 2006) as a means of describing predominantly young, budget tourists on extended holiday (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). More structured than drifter travel but purportedly different from mass tourism, backpackers supposedly displayed a preference for budget accommodation, an independently organised and flexible schedule, longer holidays, an emphasis on meeting other travellers and locals, and a penchant for informal recreation activities (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). More recently, Maoz (2007: 123) has described backpackers as "self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary," many of which who are on a transitory leave from relative affluence.

Backpackers have historically been mainly of Western origin with the majority coming from Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America (Maoz 2007). However, with a significant population of Israeli backpackers, and a steady growth in Asian backpackers, particularly from Japan, the backpacker literature's conceptualisations have been increasingly criticised as being too Western-oriented (Maoz, 2007; Teo and Leong, 2006). On the whole, growth in the backpacker industry has been substantial "over the past 30 years, progressing from a marginal activity of a handful of 'drifters' to a major global industry" (Richards & Wilson, 2004b: 10) that is now viewed by many as an accepted rite-of- passage for young people (O'Reilly, 2006).

Along with the growing popularity of backpacking in recent years, academic interest in backpacking has also grown (Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008). It has been noted that backpacker research has been generally divided between sociological and market-based approaches (Richards & Wilson, 2004a and b; Wilson & Richards, 2008a and b). There have been a number of studies that have looked at identity-related issues in the context of backpacking, including themes of risk-taking, adventure, anti-tourism and narratives of self-change (Anderskov, 2002; Desforges 1998, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004; O'Reilly, 2005; Welk, 2004). Additional research, amongst others, has delved into backpacking as a means of escape (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000), form and type-related differences among backpackers (Uriely, *et al.*, 2002), the culture of backpacking (Muzaini, 2006; Sørensen, 2003; Westerhausen, 2002), the roles of backpacker enclaves (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Wilson & Richards, 2008a and b), the specifics of Israeli backpackers (Haviv, 2005; Maoz, 2004, 2007; Noy & Cohen, 2005; Shulman *et al.*, 2006), social interactions of backpackers (Murphy, 2001), the influence of travel writing upon backpackers (Richards & Wilson, 2004a) and a postcolonial analysis of backpacking (Teo & Leong, 2006). Additionally, there have been a number of market-based and development studies focusing on backpackers (see for instance Richards & King, 2003; Richards & Wilson, 2003; Scheyvens, 2002; Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003).

One other related theoretical point within backpacker research, as noted earlier in this section and expanded upon below, is that some of the literature has suggested an institutionalisation or 'mainstreaming' of the backpacking phenomenon (Cohen, 2004; Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008; O'Reilly 2006). This can largely be attributed to the commodification of the backpacker market, as backpackers are increasingly seen to

follow the same distinctive trails, use the same guidebooks and gather in established backpacker enclaves, within which the backpacker “scene is (re)produced” (Sørensen, 2003; Westerhausen and Macbeth, 2003; Wilson and Richards 2008a: 188).

### **The institutionalisation of backpacking**

Many of the paths that backpackers follow are well-trodden in large numbers (Cohen, 2004), and as such, a parallel travel system to mass tourism has developed that caters mainly to the backpacker market (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). Resultantly, contemporary backpackers utilising these facilities have not necessarily had to develop the skills and invest the effort in their trips that were attributed to the earlier drifters (Cohen, 2004). Cohen (2004) has recognised that the figure of the drifter was, and still is (O’Reilly, 2006), an ideal towards which many youth were attracted, but very few have attained. As O’Reilly (2006: 1005) suggested “the ideal typical backpacker of today closely resembles the model set down by the hippie travelers of the 60s and 70s.”

The difficulty of living up to the drifter ideal is explained by Cohen’s (2004: 45) admission that “drifting, as I have conceived it, appears to take much more competence, resourcefulness, endurance and fortitude, as well as an ability to plan one’s moves, even if they are subject to alteration, than I had originally surmised.” As mentioned previously, in contrast to the drifter concept, Cohen (1982: 221) surmised that most young tourists, not then yet referred to as backpackers, travel in the style of “the institutionalized mass tourist.” In view of that, Cohen (2004) and O’Reilly (2006) have more recently decried the ‘mainstreaming’ of backpacking as it

often now carries the same stigma of institutionalisation associated with mass tourism, especially along the more popular backpacker routes of Australia and Southeast Asia (O'Reilly, 2006). However, as discussed in the following section, despite efforts to homogenise backpackers with mass tourists, there has been a growing body of literature that has attempted to highlight heterogeneity within the backpacker label (see Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Nash, 2001; Sørensen, 2003; Uriely *et al.*, 2002).

Similar to the tourist angst that travellers reportedly harbour, there appears to exist within backpacking culture angst towards institutionalised backpackers (Richards & Wilson, 2004a; Welk, 2004). This comes as no surprise considering the backpacking ideal of the drifter is positioned in opposition to institutionalisation. Welk (2004) argued that the more involved travellers no longer strive to distinguish themselves from tourists, but instead from mainstream backpackers, especially the stereotype of the young party backpacker. Indeed, Wilson and Richards (2008a: 188) commented that this type of backpacker angst "is prevalent among older, more experienced independent travellers lamenting the loss of their pioneering travelstyles due to the changing nature not only of tourism but also of backpacking." In other words, as Welk (2004: 89) observed that for some travellers, "anti-tourism has given way to anti-backpacking as their main category of distinction."

As evidenced in Loker-Murphy and Pearce's (1995) re-centring of the traveller discussion around younger travellers, travellers of all ages are often herded under the backpacker label. This continues despite Riley (1988) having urged that older travellers have also engaged in long-term travel as a rite-of-passage. Moreover,

Westerhausen (2002) pointed out an increasing diversity of ages among backpackers as its appeal as a mode of tourism widened. Fittingly, Richards and Wilson (2004c: 65) observed that “the backpacker as a clearly defined species of tourist is disappearing, just at the moment of its discovery.”

Ateljevic and Doorne (2000: 131) noted that studies focusing on the backpacker market tended “to treat these travelers as a homogenous consumer group.” Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) instead suggested that there is heterogeneity under the backpacker umbrella term. Moreover, Uriely, *et al.*, (2002: 536) put forward that backpackers could be further classified into sub-types which might reveal similar groupings “in terms of their motivations and the meanings they derive from travel.” Helping to determine whether different sub-types existed within the backpacker label, Uriely, *et al.*, (2002) conducted research into the backpacking population in terms of form and type- related attributes. While they concluded that backpackers share a common identity based on form-related practices (length of time on road, budget, form of transport), it was also found that backpackers are heterogeneous in type, displaying varying motivations and attitudes (Uriely *et al.* 2002). These findings were supported by Sørensen (2003: 848) who has suggested that while backpacker facilities have become homogenised, its users seemed “more composite and multifaceted than ever.” As such, Sørensen (2003) called for further research into specific sub-types of the backpacker market.

Richards and Wilson (2004a) have suggested that rather than seeing backpackers as part of a general tourist typology, it might be more fruitful to consider backpackers along a continuum of ideologies of its own. In this vein, Cohen (2004) has noted that

systematic research has not been undertaken into those travellers most closely reflecting the drifter ideal, who may seek to distinguish themselves from contemporary backpackers. Indeed, Uriely, *et al.*, (2002) claimed that only a minority of backpackers are travelling in Cohen's (1979) experimental mode, with many instead seeking the diversionary and recreational experiences of mass tourists. However, notably, among their (2002) interviewees were 'serial' or repeat backpackers who had often started their travels as recreational tourists and later switched into the experimental type. As Cohen (1979) has linked the experimental type with the more serious of the drifter segment, it is possible that Uriely, *et al.*'s., (2002) serial or repeat backpackers may be linked to Cohen's (2004) notion of the 'contemporary drifter', at least in a temporal sense. This temporal component informs the next part of this chapter, which looks at the notion of travel as a way of life.

### **Travel as a way of life**

Generally, backpackers perceive their travels as a time out from their normal life-path (Elsrud, 2001) and/or as a self-imposed rite-of-passage (Graburn, 1983; Maoz, 2007), whether it occurs at the juncture between school and university, university and a career, or between careers (Cohen, 2004). Maoz (2007) also suggested that some backpackers have experienced what may be described as 'life crises' prior to their journeys. However, while drifters of the 1960s and 1970s were described as "alienated individuals roaming the world alone" in reaction to a perceived value conflict with Western societies (Cohen, 2004: 44), estrangement from one's home society is purportedly a less central theme to most modern backpackers (Maoz, 2004). Correspondingly, the majority of backpackers expect to rejoin the workforce in their home society (Riley, 1988) and re-engage with the lifestyle they had left at



home (Sørensen, 2003; Westerhausen, 2002), as few view travel as a feasible indefinite alternative to a 'normal' career (Cohen, 2004). Even Cohen's (1972: 176) original drifter was characterised as eventually settling down to an "orderly middle-class career" after a period of drifting.

However, in Riley's (1988) study of long-term travellers, a small number of individuals were identified that did treat travel like a career. Cohen (1979) also observed that in some extreme cases, the more serious of the drifters, extended the search for meaning through travel into a way of life, essentially becoming 'eternal seekers'. Accordingly, Noy and Cohen (2005: 3) suggested that, for some, backpacking can cease to be a part of a transitional phase in life and can instead extend to "a way of life in itself." This is further substantiated by Giddens' (1991) assertion that as identity has become less staked out in post-traditional societies in late modernity, rites of passage as lifespan markers have become less relevant.

Likewise, Westerhausen (2002: 154) noted the phenomenon of a growing number of individuals travelling into and beyond their thirties, suggesting that what was once largely the domain of youth culture, "now represents a lifestyle alternative for those at least temporarily unencumbered by family and professional responsibilities." Westerhausen (2002: 146) summarised this type of dedicated backpacker best in having stated that "for a sizable minority, being on the road becomes a preferred way of life to which they will return whenever the opportunity presents itself." Moreover, Welk (2004: 90) identified that for some backpackers "the journey is not designed to be an interruption from normality, it is normality; and it is not supposed to serve any goals beyond travelling itself." Welk (2004) used this theme to try to distinguish

between backpackers and travellers, having claimed that a backpacker becomes a traveller when travel becomes a way of life.

Hence, it is suggested that some individuals do not fit within the cyclical and/or temporal boundaries that have traditionally circumscribed the annual holiday and also situated backpacking as a rite-of-passage that is a transitory or liminoid experience (Lett, 1983; Turner, 1977). As such, some repeat or serial backpackers (Uriely *et al.*, 2002) have inverted the traditional form of the cyclical holiday as a time-out from routine, and rather than treating tourism as a break, they have instead established travelling as a 'normal' way of life that they may pursue indefinitely. In this light, Graburn's (1983) two modes of tourism – cyclical annual holidays and rite-of-passage tourism, falls short.

Noy and Cohen (2005) have suggested that 'lifelong wanderers' are difficult to locate as they often try to avoid tourist facilities, and as such, have rarely been the subject of research. An individual who repeatedly returns to long-term travel and considers travel to be her/his way of life, can aptly, and less pejoratively than 'drifter' or 'wanderer', be termed a 'lifestyle traveller'. Lifestyle travellers reflect Cohen's (2004) notion of 'contemporary drifters' and Noy and Cohen's (2005) 'lifelong wanderers'. As for the term 'traveller', as opposed to 'backpacker' or 'tourist', traveller is the self-defined label of most backpackers, especially older ones (Richards & Wilson, 2003), as unlike the term 'backpacker', it does not primarily connote transitional youth. Instead, 'traveller', as an identity perceived as set apart from a more temporally constrained 'tourist', emphasises a journey over time (Welk, 2004), with an "assertion that travelling is a lifestyle or a 'state of mind'" (O'Reilly, 2005: 158). In

order to conceptualise travel as a type of lifestyle, and in doing so, further delineate lifestyle travellers as an identifiable sub-type of backpackers, it is now useful to turn to the literature on lifestyle theory.

### **Travel in the context of lifestyle theory**

The origin of the term 'lifestyle' can be located as far back as Max Weber, but Wrong (1990: 24) has noted that within everyday usage, the word "spread like wildfire at the height of the student protest movements of the late 1960s." As sociology students played a strong role in the countercultural protests, it was partly their familiarity with Weber on 'style of life', which informed their movement for a break from the past and the adoption of 'alternative lifestyles' (Wrong, 1990). Within the academic literature, Veal (1993) recognised that a consensus had not been established on the meaning of the term lifestyle, as over thirty varying definitions had been offered. After a review of lifestyle theories within the context of its Weberian usage, as well as "sub-cultural, psychological, market research and psychographics, leisure/ tourism styles, spatial, socialist lifestyles, consumer culture, gender, and miscellaneous approaches," Veal (1993: 233) later suggested that the concept of lifestyle could be more clearly defined as "the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group" (247).

It has also been suggested that most (western) people seek 'coherence' in their lives, without necessarily finding it, and that many individuals are engaged in a 'life task' of establishing a set of activities or behaviours that 'make sense' to themselves (Veal, 1993). Furthermore, Giddens (1991) theorised that the concept of lifestyle has become progressively more important in modern social life as tradition has continued

to lose hold and the increasing affects of globalisation have forced many individuals to negotiate a larger variety of life options. The breakdown of traditional roles, which previously contributed to a more secure sense of self, has made in turn, for some, lifestyle choice critical in the (re)constitution of self-identity (Giddens, 1991). In contrast, lifestyle is suggested as having less applicability in traditional cultures where the options in constructing one's life are more limited and identity tends to be 'handed down' rather than 'adopted' (Giddens, 1991).

Thus, Giddens' (1991) definition of lifestyle differs from Veal's (1993) in that it is focused on lifestyle as a vehicle for forming a more coherent sense of self. Accordingly, Giddens (1991: 81) defined lifestyle as "a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity." Semi-routinised practices such as habits of dressing, what to eat, choice of work (or even not to work) and 'favoured milieux' can become "decisions not only about how to act but who to be" (Giddens 1991: 81).

In contrast to the privileged position of being able to choose among an array of lifestyles, some groups in various societies, of course, have less choice than others, with their way of life often imposed, rather than being a lifestyle choice (Veal, 1993). That being said, many who do have the resources to engage in other ways of life are not always aware of the range of life options available to them (Giddens, 1991). On that point, Giddens (1991) suggested that the more post-traditional the setting within which an individual operates, the more lifestyle concerns questions of self. Giddens

(1991: 80) noted that “by definition, tradition or established habit orders life with relatively set channels.”

Hence, lifestyle is often of particular significance to individuals engaged in ‘alternative’ ways of life that operate marginally to the ‘norms’, or traditional channels, of mainstream society (Metcalf, 1995). In view of that, significant research has been conducted into the lifestyles of groups such as surfers, hippies, ocean cruisers, ravers and rural communards (Macbeth, 2000; Malbon, 1998; Metcalf, 1995; Veal, 1993), and much of this research has been concerned with issues of self, values and perceived resistance. In Macbeth’s (2000: 28) study of the ocean cruising lifestyle, he observed that the adoption of a cruising lifestyle often reflects uneasiness about mainstream society, in effect a social critique, as many ocean cruisers have perceived that “modern society is restrictive and saps personal choice and self-determination.”

In addition to ocean cruisers, as he describes as representative of a certain type of tourist, Macbeth (2000) also suggested that communal living, such as in Kibbutzim, and long-term travel may offer alternative views of how society might be constructed. Notably, each of the abovementioned groups seem to express a relative uneasiness with what Macbeth (2000: 25) described as “the iterated structures of urban life and occupational imperatives of a career.” Likewise, Giddens (1991) urged that choice of work and work environment is fundamental to lifestyle orientations. So, it seems that much of the discussion on alternative lifestyles articulates a move away from traditional occupation-dominated lifestyles.

As lifestyle is largely constituted by the choices a person makes each day (Giddens, 1991), it has been strongly linked to degrees of freedom or choice (Veal, 1993). With long-term travel having been traditionally viewed as being counter to the norms of 'mainstream' society and characterised by a high degree of perceived freedom (O'Reilly, 2006), it can be justifiably considered as an 'alternative' lifestyle choice. Moreover, in most cases, the time commitment of lifestyle travel entails a move away from a career-dominated way of life. Lifestyle travel is a post-traditional context with its own ideologies and patterns of individual and group behaviour that are integrated not only at a functional level, but also foment a space where individuals may possibly seek coherence in order to try to 'make sense' of their lives.

## **Conclusion**

Through an examination of a historically constructed traveller/tourist divide, it has been shown that a traveller identity is largely borne out of tourist angst, wherein a traveller often self-defines/identifies in opposition to a tourist, her/his closest form. This self-definition through anti-tourism helps to cluster travellers into an identifiable group in its own right. Yet, there are also elements of travel itself, as a sub-type of tourism, which arguably allow for its differentiation. Travel itself tends to imply an extended journeying aspect, both outwardly and inwardly, that theoretically differs from mass tourism, which is often conceptualised as temporally constrained and perhaps, more playful. However, positioning travel as a form of secular pilgrimage as separate from mass tourism as a form of play is fraught with difficulties. For each individual's experience is just that, individualised, with elements of work and play that likely blur and change over time and place.

The burgeoning literature on backpackers, a label descended from the pejoratively positioned drifter and tramp, reflects academia's ongoing attempts to tease out the backpacker as a sub-type of the tourist. Backpackers have been characterised by the academe as journeying to multiple destinations for both longer than mass tourists and with a less organised itinerary and money per diem, all the while mostly utilising a backpacker infrastructure that has developed to capitalise on, and has reportedly homogenised, many backpacker needs. Yet, since its first use in academia, the backpacker label has been attached to the notion of youth (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995), forming a stigma for some older self-styled travellers to resist, who can now potentially add backpacker angst as a subdivision of their broader tourist angst. While it is clear that labels such as traveller, backpacker and tourist are contested notions, it seems that through the haze there is a temporal factor that repeatedly emerges if one wishes to distinguish amongst these identities and within them.

Within the backpacker label, which has been traditionally aligned with Graburn's (1983) form of tourism as a temporary rite-of-passage, there exist a small proportion of travellers, as they like to call themselves (O'Reilly, 2005; Richards & Wilson 2003; Welk, 2004), for which travel can no longer be considered a break or transition in their life span. For these lifestyle travellers, repeated and extended temporal commitment to a travel lifestyle, involving its own ideologies, praxis and identities, has become a way of life in itself that they may pursue indefinitely.

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