

**UNCOVERING NEW PARADIGMS OF ROLE MODELING:
THE CASE OF ALIYAH**

**AN EXPLORATION OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS AS AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION
ON THE IDEOLOGICAL DECISION TO MIGRATE TO ISRAEL**

Thesis submitted for the degree of
“Doctor of Philosophy”

By

Daniel J. Rose

Submitted to the Senate of the Hebrew University

July 2010

Abstract

In this research the phenomenon of role modeling is explored through the study of significant others as role models in life transformative decisions, in this instance, the case of "ideological migration" to Israel. Although ideology is not the only motivation bringing immigrants to Israel, it has traditionally been seen as central to the concept of Jewish migration to Israel, as indicated by its colloquial Hebrew term – aliyah. The term aliyah, which is employed throughout this research, has “ascension” as its core meaning, and expresses the traditional motivation for Jewish immigration to Israel. The act of aliyah and the Zionist beliefs that motivate it can therefore be seen as one of many competing value systems available to young Diaspora Jews in the marketplace of ideas.

Research Question

This study is grounded in the assumption that young people are socialized through interaction with significant others as role models, into competing value systems, each existing as a plausibility structure. The institutions in the life of an adolescent, such as family, school, or youth movement, provide plausibility structures (Berger 1967, 1969) that in certain cases may be strong enough to instill their values in the young adult. Significant others functioning as role models provide the interface between young adults and these belief systems. This research explores the roles that models play in the ideological decision of an adult to immigrate to Israel.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual home for this research is found in the processes by which individuals are socialized into systems of belief and values. This is most commonly seen in the family context (Francis & Brown 1991, Hoge *et al* 1982) where parents inculcate religious and moral beliefs through modeling (Kelley & de Graaf 1997, Okagaki 1999, Scheepers & Van Der Slik 1998). This process is not limited to the parent-child relationship, but may exist within any relationship between an individual and a significant other (Mead 1934) or a reference group (Beeghley *et al* 1990, Berger 1963, Kemper 1968). These may include peers (Carr & Weigand 2001), teachers (Cohen 1980, Hoge *et al* 1982, Kelley & De Graaf 1997), other family members, parental friends (Mead 1935), spouses and other associates (Berger 1967).

The phenomenon of socialization can be defined as a process in which specific convictions, notions, beliefs, practices, values, and norms, are transmitted to future generations to enable them to participate in the prevailing social life (Kelley & De Graaf 1997) through interacting and identifying with others (Berger & Berger 1972). The child primarily experiences this socialization, and acquires knowledge of the social world, through observation of and conversation with significant others (Berger 1967, Berger & Luckman 1966). The significant other is central to this process, modeling values and beliefs in order to transmit them to the individual (Berger 1963, 1967, Berger & Berger 1972, Cornwall 1987, Kelley & De Graaf 1997, Scheepers & Van Der Slik 1998).

Berger furthers our understanding of the processes of socialization with his concept of plausibility structures. Belief systems are socially constructed and socially maintained. The plausibility of a belief is dependent on the social support this belief receives. This is its plausibility structure. We obtain our notions about the world originally from interaction and conversation with other human beings (Berger 1967, 1969). In other words, if personal beliefs are to remain plausible, one must participate in social networks of individuals who share these beliefs. The significant others from these social networks form micro-plausibility structures for us to observe and emulate; in essence these significant others function as role models (Cornwall 1987, Petersen & Donnerwerth 1997, Smith 2003).

While there have been studies exploring the effect of the socialization into beliefs on life decisions, such as religious commitment (Cornwall 1987, Okagaki *et al* 1999, Smith 2003, Welch 1981), religious conversion (Long & Hadden 1983, Pilarzyk 1978), and sexual beliefs and life style (Petersen & Donnerwerth 1997, 1998), the focus of this research is on the role played by significant others as role models in life decisions. This research specifically examines the influence of role models in life decisions related to "ideological migration", this being, emigration from one country to another for reasons identified by the émigré as ideological. The underlying assumption of this research is that through interaction with role models from the institutions in the life of an adolescent, such as family, school, or youth movement, socialization will occur. Each institution operates as a plausibility structure that in certain cases may be strong enough to instill its values in the young adult. Ideological aliyah as an example of one competing value is considered in this study, and the role that models play in the decision of an adult to immigrate to Israel is explored.

Methodology

The empirical research for this study was conducted through the use of qualitative methodology designed to investigate the perceived influence of individual personalities as role models in the life-transforming decision to make aliyah. Data was collected through multi-subject (Bogdan and Taylor 1975) in-depth open-ended interviews (Johnson 2001), allowing the generalizability of theory to be tested on a maximum variation sample (Maykut & Morehouse 1994) through the identification of patterns and commonalities in the data.

In order to explore the influence of role models on the ideological decision to immigrate to Israel, a sample of immigrants to Israel who had taken the life decision to emigrate based on the values inherent in the general ideology of Zionism was assembled. It was assumed that migration to Israel from western countries is an act of downward economic mobility most likely driven by values and ideology, and therefore the sample was populated with 19 immigrants to Israel from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The sample was assembled through purposeful sampling, where particular subjects are included in the sample because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory (Bogdan & Biklen 2006). Purposeful sampling was achieved using techniques such as snowball sampling and maximum variation sampling (Bogdan & Biklen 2006, Maykut & Morehouse 1994). Maximum variation sampling denotes a sample populated by subjects with the greatest differences in the phenomenon being explored (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). In this study, this led to a sample containing a broad mix of gender, age at time of aliyah, economic status and profession, marital status, country of origin, and religious background.

The methods of data collection aimed to be consistent with the logic and theoretical perspective embodied in the methodology of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen's 2006). In order to understand how the subjects thought about their world, accessibility and intimacy was vital, in order to hear their perspective first hand. Therefore, the method of data collection chosen was individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, in that there was a loose interview guide containing broad topics and probing follow-up questions (Maykut & Morehouse 1994) that was followed in order to create somewhat comparable data across the multi-subject research (Bogdan & Biklen's 2006). In order to maintain the integrity of the data, capturing the subjects' own words and then allowing the analysis to emerge from the data (Bogdan & Biklen's 2006), the interview questions were all open-ended and flexible, apart from the initial demographic fact

finding questions. Each interview typically lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes. Interviews were digitally recorded using an MP3 recorder and later transcribed.

Summary of key findings

The focus of this research, the impact of significant others as role models in a life transforming decision, provides a compelling case of the process of socialization into a plausibility structure of belief, in this instance, the decision to emigrate to Israel for reasons identified by the émigré as ideological, and this has not been previously explored in any depth.

The key original findings of this research can be summarized in the following way: The research exposes two paradigm modes of role modeling, the inspirational and the practical, a distinction not previously identified in the literature. Sometimes these processes can operate with the same role model, but invariably they are presented by different personalities engaged in different kinds of relationship with the observer. “Practical role modeling” is found to be more prevalent in the context of aliyah role modeling, the presenting case for this study, but there is also sufficient evidence in the case of what is identified as “inspirational role modeling”. Similarities between observer and role model are vital for the processes of role modeling to occur, especially for practical role models to have influence, but also for inspirational role models to avoid the possible pitfalls of what has previously been termed the “mastery role model” (Vesico *et al* 2005). This explains the frequency of peer and near-peer aliyah role models in the data, who have more similarities to the observer than non-peer role models; this is a finding that corresponds with the *similarity hypothesis* (Karunanayake & Nauta 2004), based on Bandura’s theory of enhanced self-efficacy from observing role models with significant similarities (Bandura 1977, 1986). This study adds nuance, however, to our understanding of such relationships, and their limitations and hazards. Non-peer role models often function as mastery role models and peer or near-peer role models are more likely to have an influence as coping role models, but significant exceptions to this pattern were found. Mastery role models are more likely to have an inspirational impact on observers, and coping role models are more likely to be practical role models; nevertheless significant exceptions to this pattern were also found. The data in this study show that the coping role model especially could function both as a practical role model and yet also have an inspirational impact, modeling perseverance and determination.

The underlying assumption of this work was that it would be found that aliyah role models would create a plausibility structure of “aliyah values” into which others were socialized through a process of emotional inspiration, and evidence of this was found. However, practical role modeling was found to be more prevalent as a mode of aliyah role modeling in the data; this mode of modeling did not create a plausibility structure of values for the observers because practical role modeling is largely independent of values. However, it is argued that practical aliyah role models create a different type of plausibility structure, a plausibility structure of belief in aliyah self-efficacy. While not a conventional example of socialization, practical aliyah role models influence the belief in the feasibility of overcoming the practical challenges in immigrating to Israel, a core belief in an ideological Zionist community.

Discussion

Exploring the case of aliyah role modeling, a heretofore unexplored example of role modeling, brought new aspects of the process of role modeling to our attention. This particular case of role modeling involves ideological values that call for emotional inspiration and intellectual cognition, as well as practical skills that necessitate a functional modeling. This results in observers searching for both inspirational role models and practical role models. These two modes of role modeling should be considered new paradigms of role modeling not previously identified in the literature. This study can contribute to the field the original terms “inspirational role modeling” and “practical role modeling”, and a clear presentation of these two paradigm modes of role modeling.

Practical aliyah role models were found to have a more frequent and more profound impact on observers than inspirational aliyah role models. Modeling the practical skills and coping strategies of aliyah, practical aliyah role models had a more extensive enabling impact, enhancing the observer’s aliyah self efficacy. This occurred through demonstrating the achievability of aliyah, and representing the future potential of the observer, and what their aliyah may look like some years down the line. This process was found to be enhanced the more similarities there are between the observer and the model, lending support to the similarity hypothesis (Karunanayake & Nauta 2004), based on Bandura’s theory of enhanced self-efficacy from observing role models with significant similarities (Bandura 1977, 1986).

Theorists who argue for the similarity hypothesis in role modeling have until now examined this in the context of practical role models, such as career role models (Hackett & Byars 1996, Gottfredson 1981), and academic role models (Erkut & Mokros, 1984, Zirkel 2002). With the role modeling paradigms I have identified, we can conclude that similarity is also important in the case of inspirational role modeling. It became clear from the data of this research that similarity between observer and model would make it less likely that the inspirational role model, as an exemplar, would have the negative impact of the mastery role model, leading to frustration and disillusionment.

A key discussion point that emerged from the data not considered anywhere in the literature was whether observers approach their role models holistically or whether observers can approach their role models in a compartmentalized way. Those who argued for a holistic approach saw their role models as a pure holistic representation of a system of values and were therefore influenced by every aspect of the model's life. This approach leads to the dangers of the flawed role model where the role model fails to live up to this ideal. Those who argued for the more realistic compartmentalized approach to their role models allowed specific aspects of the model's life to influence the observer, while rejecting others. While there were those who believed the role model is holistic and influences the observer by modeling in every area of their life, most interviewees were able to approach their role models in a compartmentalized and selective way, allowing specific aspects of the model's life to influence the observer, while rejecting others. Many interviewees also expressed the opinion that, with maturity, observers develop the confidence and in turn the autonomy to be selective about which aspects of a role model's life they were influenced by.

Interesting patterns of role modeling with regards to age-specific role models were identified in the data. Adult role models and vicarious "heroic" inspirational aliyah role models may have a disabling impact on the observer, acting as mastery role models. By contrast, peers will often function as coping role models, whereby they can operate both as inspirational role models modeling values such as perseverance and commitment, as well as the practical skills to overcome the challenge at hand. Peer aliyah role models are more likely to function as practical coping role models, and inspirational aliyah role models are more likely to be non-peer mastery role models.

When considering the time frame when the two paradigms of role modeling operate it became apparent that inspirational aliyah role modeling often occurs during adolescence, while practical aliyah role models are sought in adulthood as observers approach the time in their lives when they plan to immigrate. There were several examples emerging from the data of observers changing their attitudes to the role models over time as they matured and developed a more complex and mature approach to the world. This tempered the fallout from negative role models and encouraged a selective compartmentalized approach to the role model.

Four different types of negative aliyah role modeling emerged from the data, but the dangers predicted in the literature by critics of role modeling did not materialize. Israelis and returning immigrants encountered in the Diaspora did not seem to make any kind of real impact on the subjects. The struggling or coping aliyah role model had the opposite effect from that predicted in the literature, inspiring through perseverance and determination. The most frequently cited failed aliyah role model was the educator who had invested time and effort trying to convince the observer of the virtue of making aliyah, yet failed to fulfill this ideal herself. While there were those that described their feelings of resentment at this failed aliyah role model, most observers dismissed the impact as negligible as they developed their own understanding of the complexities of life as they grew older. Finally, a more marginal mode of negative aliyah role modeling that emerged from the data was the anti-Zionist educator who operates as an anti-aliyah role model. This too had the opposite impact from what seemed likely, encouraging a strengthening of Zionist commitment and ideology in the Zionist students exposed to such individuals.

There is disagreement in the literature whether aliyah is a unique ideological migration phenomenon (Neuman 1999) or indistinct from the larger global picture of migration (DellaPergola 1998). Some argue that aliyah has always been more about economics than ideology, with the vast majority of immigrants to Israel during the early periods of Israel's history being considered refugees, and more recent waves of aliyah during the 1990s motivated largely by economic opportunity. It is argued that proof that ideology is not central to aliyah can be seen in the abject failure of Israel to attract western aliyah to any significant extent (Shuval 1998). While aliyah is of course far from a heterogeneous phenomenon with many different motivating factors powering it, this study proves that aliyah motivated by Zionist ideology still exists, as the sample of this research were all making downwardly mobile moves by migrating from western countries with stronger economies and higher standards of living. While many of

those interviewed were mainly concerned with practical aliyah role models and did not explore in depth during the interview the ideology often at the center of inspirational aliyah role modeling, it seems clear that the basis of each aliyah narrative was ideology, and even in those narratives that focused mainly on practical role modeling, a process of inspiration was still evident.

There has been some study of the characteristics of a would-be migrant to Israel, attempting to further our understanding of the decision process to immigrate to Israel. For example, it has been found that those who have been exposed to a Zionist environment, including membership of a Zionist organization (Bermen 1979, Goldberg 1985) and those who had been exposed to Israelis or had an Israeli reference group (Bermen 1979, Goldberg 1985) will be more likely to make aliyah (Musher 1999). The vast majority of the sample in this study had significant exposure to Zionist environments during childhood and adolescence, therefore lending support to the findings mentioned above. More significantly, this study has uniquely presented the Zionist environment as a plausibility structure, and explored the role and influence of the role model within the socialization processes of the plausibility structure of the Zionist environment.

Conclusion

It was the underlying assumption of this research that a young person is socialized through interaction with significant others acting as role models into various competing value systems, each existing as a plausibility structure. The Zionist ideology that motivates aliyah is an example of one such value system, and this research aimed to explore the impact of aliyah role modeling as a plausibility structure that has the power to socialize would-be immigrants into that value system, influencing their decision to make aliyah.

The phenomenon of role modeling was found to be a profound factor influencing young people's life transformative decision to immigrate to Israel. Almost without exception, each subject from the sample was able to describe the impact of this phenomenon on their decision to make aliyah. For some, aliyah role models created a plausibility structure of "aliyah values" into which they were socialized through a process of emotional inspiration. Values were central to the message modeled by inspirational aliyah role models.

However, the more prevalent mode of aliyah role modeling in the data was the practical aliyah role model, which is a phenomenon largely independent of values, modeling practical skills and strategies to approach the challenges aliyah entails. It cannot be argued that practical aliyah role models created a plausibility structure of values for the observers, and it cannot be claimed that a process of socialization into a value system occurred. However, I believe that practical aliyah role models create a different type of plausibility structure, albeit one that is not values based. Central to practical aliyah role modeling as an example of observational learning is the enabling impact caused by a heightened sense of self efficacy achieved by observing role models who represent a perceived homophily. This is a belief of sorts, the belief that the task ahead is achievable for “someone like me”. Practical aliyah role models create a plausibility structure of belief for the observer, belief in aliyah self-efficacy. Perhaps this is not a conventional example of socialization, but it can be argued that this is socialization nevertheless, a socialization of a different type. If socialization is a process whereby an individual learns the norms and beliefs of society, then practical aliyah role models influence the belief in the feasibility of the practical challenges in immigrating to Israel, a core belief in an ideological Zionist community.