Spatial and Class Differences in Lifestyles: A Case Study in Haifa

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This paper is a summary of a study, one of a series of lifestyle studies using the value stretch model. It reveals the lifestyle attributes of Jewish residents of three Haifa neighborhoods located along the northern slope of Mount Carmel. The basic assumption was that the three neighborhoods differ in their socio-economic characteristics according to their location along the Mount Carmel northern slop, with the upper class located at the Carmel's highest elevation along the Carmel's watershed. The analysis revealed that the socio-economic characteristics had a significant effect on the values assigned to the lifestyle attributes, and also determined the effect of the gaps between the values on the interviewee's propensity to postpone the attainment of his/her preference or expectation.

Keywords: *Value-stretch model, lifestyle attributes, socio-economic characteristics, lifestyle differences, Haifa neighborhoods.*

This research concentrates on the lifestyle attributes of Jews residing in three neighborhoods of the city of Haifa, located down the northern slope of Mount Carmel, and their populations, which are assumed to display different social, economic, and demographic characteristics. They are: upper Carmel (Ahuza and Shambur), upper Hadar Hacarmel (an area heavily populated by Russian immigrants and known as 'Little Moscow') and a lower Haifa neighborhood of Qiryat Eliezer, whose residents are those remaining there from the early statehood years and their descendants. The main objective was to examine whether people who subjectively evaluate their lifestyle attributes are influenced by their social, economic, and cultural status, and by their demography, and whether all these attributes reflect their location in the urban space. More specifically, the research was designed to examine whether subjective lifestyle attributes are 'place and class differentiated'. The study was one of three studies carried out with the same questionnaire and the same methodology, namely the 'value stretch model'.[1] Another aim of the study was to reexamine Yaniv's (2000) conclusion that a value stretch model is an improved tool for creating planning inputs for a given target population stratified according to its

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main, in many cases place-specific, sub-groups like women, children, and the elderly (Churchman, 1981; 1992; 1994).

Our hypotheses were divided into two parts: the first concerned the differences in social, economic, and demographic characteristics between the neighborhoods, and the second sought to reveal the impact of the above on the way the interviewees subjectively evaluate their lifestyle attributes along the stretched time horizons integrated into the value stretch model. The hypotheses were as follows:

1. Significant social, economic, and demographic differences exist among the populations of the three neighborhoods. The ways in which the respondents evaluate their lifestyle attributes differ: the higher the neighborhood's status, the higher is the value its residents assign to each of the attributes.
2. People belonging to the upper status group are more willing to compromise over their lifestyle attributes (as manifested by the reconciliation and the satisfaction gaps).

The dependent variables were age, gender, education, work, country of birth, economic status (good, intermediate, poor), attitude to religious life, and other social values. The dependent variables were sevety-two lifestyle attributes clustered into six sub-groups: socio-economic, cultural, domestic, work, leisure, and residential.

A face-to-face field survey was conducted in late 1999 and early 2000 as a random systematic sample. This yielded 404 workable questionnaires. Interviewees' responses were in line with the structure of the value stretch model and the results were analyzed by means of appropriate statistical tests.

RESULTS

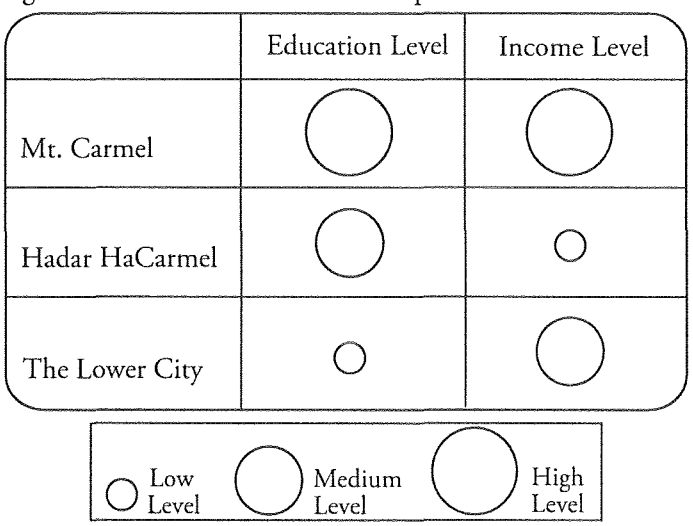
In each neighborhood the sub-group revealed almost similar demographic and socio-economic characteristics to those of the sub-groups of the other neighborhoods, as well as identical attitudes to their value stretched lifestyle attributes. Nevertheless, the first hypothesis, on inherent difference between the three neighborhoods in their residents' social, economic and demographic profiles, was confirmed. The other two hypotheses, however on the difference between the neighborhoods in the way their residents evaluated their lifestyle attributes, and how influential this evaluation was according to their socio-economic and demographic profiles, were only partially substantiated. Considerable differences between the neighborhoods were indeed evident, both in the values assigned to the lifestyle attributes and in the stretched size of the gaps, but these were not a product of the neighborhoods' population profiles. Following are some of the highlights:

- Qiryat Eliezer showed the highest value scores in all of the model's levels, and the gaps were minimal. This testifies that the people of Qiryat Eliezer seemed satisfied with what they had, and were willing to reconcile with reality.
- In upper Hadar Hacarmel the value scores were the lowest, and the interviewees

- showed the largest gaps, especially their satisfaction gap. This discloses lack of satisfaction, and a level of expectations high above the low tolerance that no doubt mirrored their actual situation. This result is explained by the fact that most of the interviewees in Hadar Hacarmel were new immigrants (probably the remains of the large immigration wave of the 1990s) who had remained in the area due to their unsatisfactory absorption. The relatively high level of expectations signified that respondents still believed and also expected that they could better their situation in the short term.
- On the crest of Mount Carmel the values assigned to the attributes were slightly lower than in Qiryat Eliezer, but the satisfaction and the reconciliation gaps were wider, indicating reasonable optimism in the part of the respondents as to their ability to realize their expectations and preferences.

The findings of our study suggest that there is a correlation between the population's level of education and their neighborhood's topographic location, but such a correlation does not exist when income is taken into account (Figure 1). The Carmel crest neighborhood is notable in both income and education. Hadar Hacarmel, occupied by new immigrants, many with a high level of schooling, is low in income. There is an obvious discrepancy between the earning potential of the population, a reflection of their education, and the actual economic level. An interesting point is that notwithstanding their tolerance level in income and in their perceived economic level, they have not lost their hopes, and the present situation does not lower their expectations. In Qiryat Eliezer, with narrow reconciliation and satisfaction gaps, there is little hope for change. People are happy where they are.

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of the level of income and of education in Haifa neighborhoods down the northern slope of Mt. Carmel.



Source: Field survey, 1999/2000

In sum, an important conclusion derives from the differences between the researched population in the different neighborhoods, and from the similarity in the relative importance of the lifestyle characteristics: the secular Israeli Jews, despite their ethnic, status, and political distinctions and their polarization, and notwithstanding their different economic, social, and demographic characteristics and their views about their life preferences, tend to reveal a rather wide common Israeli denominator. Beside the attitude of 'my home is my castle' and their closed social affiliations, their lifestyle attributes seem to be almost the same.

NOTE

1. For the many meanings of the term 'lifestyle' see Kipnis, 2004a; for a formal description of the value stretch model see Kipnis, 2004b.

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