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Rites of Backpacking: An Ethnographic Study of Backpacker Culture and Identity in Western Europe

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Rites of Backpacking: An Ethnographic Study of Backpacker Culture and Identity in Western Europe

Abstract

"Abroad changed me" is a popular joke on social media and in banter between friends, but it actually has anthropologic merit. The act of long term travelling, or backpacking, can be understood as a rite of passage, and like other rites it impacts the identity of the traveler. This ethnographic study examines how the backpacker's identity undergoes change as it passes through the three phases and highlights the crucial role of the liminal period. In this cyclical liminal period, backpackers are repetitively integrated and separated from communities in hostels in Western Europe where they experience *communitas* and collective effervescence. At the end of their trip, the backpacker reintegrates at home as a more cosmopolitan citizen of the world.

Keywords

backpacking, rites of passage, liminal, *communitas*, collective effervescence, identity

Disciplines

Anthropology

rites of backpacking:
an ethnographic study of backpacker culture and identity
in western Europe

By

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In

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ABSTRACT

“Abroad changed me” is a popular joke on social media and in banter between friends, but it actually has anthropologic merit. The act of long term travelling, or backpacking, can be understood as a rite of passage, and like other rites it impacts the identity of the traveler. This ethnographic study examines how the backpacker’s identity undergoes change as it passes through the three phases and highlights the crucial role of the liminal period. In this cyclical liminal period, backpackers are repetitively integrated and separated from communities in hostels in Western Europe where they experience *communitas* and collective effervescence. At the end of their trip, the backpacker reintegrates at home as a more cosmopolitan citizen of the world.

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PART I - BACKGROUND

For my senior thesis, I conducted an anthropological study on the backpacker culture and identity and the role of the hostel in Western Europe. This paper uses the participant observation method to examine how backpackers' identities can change through the 'rite of passage' that is backpacking.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

My research question has changed considerably since I began formulating this project two years ago. I shaped my original research from academic literature, which was all at least 10 years old, not off any personal experience. Initially I focused on the demographics about backpackers and the culture created within hostels, with an emphasis on how backpackers create and perform their identities while travelling. However, despite my extensive research into backpacking and its culture while creating my research plan, it was quite different when I began to experience it. I realized I was asking the wrong questions, but the right questions still eluded me. Finally, after finishing my participant observation and revisiting anthropological theory upon my return, I realized the question is less focused specifically on how the traveler presents their identity, but rather the effect that travelling can have on that identity.

My methodology also changed with my research question. Originally, I planned a mixed-methods approach: to conduct participant observation, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. When I began applying my research methods, I noticed several things. I realized that my survey was not asking the right questions, that asking people to take the survey impacted the interactions that were occurring, and that my selection method would create biased results.

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The survey questions were all aimed towards answering my original research question, so when that changed, my survey did not seem like it was asking the proper questions. By the time I realized that my survey was not gathering the right information, I could not do much to change it, as I did not have my computer with me as I did not anticipate needing to make drastic changes to my research plan. I also worried about how a delay while I waited for a new survey to be approved by the IRB would affect the information I was gathering. In a tough decision, I decided to take out my survey, (and interviews as they came from the survey pool) and put all my focus instead on my participant observation.

There was a second motivation for abandoning my surveys and interviews, and that is that it didn't seem to fit into the culture of the hostels. I think people would have been willing to take the survey and do interviews, in fact I gathered about five survey responses and conducted one interview before I decided to get rid of them. However, in doing the surveys and interviews, I detracted from the short amount of time people had in each hostel to go through the phases of the rites of passage (I will go into more detail about the rites of passage later.)

Finally, I realized that with the surveys and interviews I would be getting biased results. My method of sampling was convenience, or people I was interacting with at the hostels. I learned quickly that I was mostly interacting with people like me – English speaking, white, etc. I noticed that people in hostels tend to gravitate towards people that have shared aspects of identity. I do not think the people I was interacting with are indicative of the demographics of backpackers, or simply of the people who wanted to be social with English speakers.

In the end, I focused on my participant observation and taking extensive field notes over the course of my research. The experiences and observations found in this paper are from these field notes unless cited otherwise.

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MY EXPERIENCE

For this project, I spent 2 and a half months backpacking through Europe. This means that I travelled from place to place with only one bag. I was not hiking or camping between places. I travelled from city to city via busses, trains, or planes. I stayed in hostels, which are budget accommodations where you pay for a bed in a shared dorm room. Sometimes I would plan my stays and transportation in advanced, and sometimes I would take it day by day.

I backpacked for 78 days across 11 countries, staying in 27 different hostels. My trip started on May 17th in Chania, on the island of Crete in Greece and ended on August 2nd in Athens, Greece. Between these cities, I went to Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, and Hungary. See figure 1 and table 1 for the route taken.



Figure 1: My travel route. Map from Google Maps with edits

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Breakdown of Travel Route					
# on Fig. 1	City/Country	Hostel Name	Dates (2019)	# of Nights	Travel To
1	Chania, Crete	Cocoon City Hostel	May 17 - May 22	5	Plane
2	Rethymno, Crete	Rethymno Youth Hostel	May 22 - May 25	3	Bus
3	Heraklion, Crete	Intra Muros	May 25 - May 29	4	Bus
4	Venice, Italy	The Generator Venice	May 29 - June 1	3	Plane
5	Florence, Italy	The Emerald Palace	June 3 - June 5	2	Bus
6	Florence, Italy	Ostello del Bigallo	June 5 - June 8	3	Bus
7	Siena, Italy	Camping Siena Colleverde	June 8 - June 10	2	Bus
8	Nice, France	Villa St. Exupery Beach	June 11 - June 15	4	Bus
9	Marseille, France	Vertigo Vieux-Port	June 15 - June 16	1	Bus
10	Lyon, France	La Flaneur Guesthouse	June 16 - June 18	2	Bus
11	Barcelona, Spain	360 Arts and Culture	June 19 - June 22	3	Bus
12	Valencia, Spain	Home Youth Hostel	June 22 - June 15	3	Bus
13	Seville, Spain	Hostel One Catedral	June 25 - June 27	2	Train
14	Lagos, Portugal	Sol a Sol	June 27 - June 30	3	Bus
15	Lisbon, Portugal	GSpot Party Hostel	June 30 - July 2	2	Bus
16	Porto, Portugal	Yes! Hostel	July 2 - July 4	2	Bus
17	Madrid, Spain	Cats Hostel Sol	July 4 - July 8	4	Plane
18	Brussels, Belgium	Sleep Well Youth Hostel	July 8 - July 10	2	Plane
19	Paris, France	St. Christopher's Inn	July 10 - July 15	5	Bus
20	Amsterdam, Netherlands	The Bulldog	July 15 - July 18	3	Bus
21	Berlin, Germany	Grand Hostel Classic	July 18 - July 21	2	Bus
22	Prague, Czech Republic	Czech Inn	July 21 - July 24	3	Bus
23	Salzburg, Austria	YOHO International	July 24 - July 26	2	Bus
24	Vienna, Austria	Hostel Ruthensteiner	July 26 - July 28	2	Train
25	Budapest, Hungary	Hostel One Budapest	July 28 - July 31	3	Bus
26	Athens, Greece	Student and Travelers Inn	July 31 - August 2	2	Plane

Table 1: Breakdown of my travel route

PART I – BACKGROUND

When I began the trip, I only had a rough idea of where I wanted to go. Personally, I had some “bucket list” places that I had to see – like Venice, Barcelona, and Paris. Other places I went to because the reputation of the hostel/ traveler life there was very strong – like Ostello del Bigallo in Florence, Lagos, and Budapest. Some other places were chosen because they were good places to break up longer journeys – like Marseille, Seville, and Brussels. There were a lot of factors that went into which cities I decided to stay at.

I took this trip solo, meaning that I did not plan on travelling with anyone for it. I hoped I would meet people at the hostels, and I did have plans to meet up with two friends in two cities. I personally found that solo travel worked really well for me as I could make decisions based on what was best for me and my research.

I was also on a budget during this trip. While I was not extremely strict with myself about my budget, my goal was \$50 a day for accommodation, food, and activities. Outside of this budget was the cost to move between cities, which I would just try to find the most reasonable option and route. Before I started travelling, I expected for my main mode of transportation to be train. However, last minute train tickets were quite expensive, and bus usually ended up being the cheapest option. I also did not really intend to fly between Porto and Madrid and then Madrid and Brussels, but it ended up being the most logical option. As can be seen in Table 1, I took a bus between cities 19 out of 26 times; a train 2 out of 26; and a plane 5 out of 26.

While on this trip, I would spend most days exploring the cultural aspects of the city I was in. In the evenings/ at night I would explore the social scene of the hostels and cities. I would usually not make very many plans, so that I could be open to whatever came my way. I would usually not decide what I was seeing in the city until the night before or morning of. This was usually in an effort of making plans or being able to make plans with others that were in the

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hostel. The same would happen in the evenings. Sometimes the hostels would organize bar crawls and those were usually good ways to meet people, or sometimes a hostel bar would have a happy hour, or generally people would just gather in the evenings. Sometimes I would go on bar crawls, sometimes some of us from hostels would find bars/clubs on our own, and sometimes we just stayed at the hostel to be social. It really just depended on the day and the people.

WHAT IS A BACKPACKER

Although backpackers are not a homogenous group, it is generally understood that a backpacker is a “long term budget youth traveler with a flexible itinerary multiple-destination trip, who travels away from their home country to experience ‘authentic’ local culture, meet locals and other backpackers, and achieve personal goals,” (Kerry 2013, 15). Backpacking is typically associated with young people because they, typically students or employed for the first time, therefore having more free time and typically a strong desire for travel.

Backpackers claim to set themselves apart from the “traditional tourist” in many ways. The biggest difference is that they consider themselves to ‘experience’ an ‘authentic local culture’ and finish their journey ‘transformed’ while the tourist merely ‘sees’ and goes home the same as they were prior to the trip. However, from my own experience I would say that the average backpackers does not experience the local culture any more than a traditional tourist.

Additionally, while a tourist is thought to be on vacation from ‘real life,’ a backpacker considers their travel to be important and impactful for their futures. “Backpackers often see their travels as a form of self-development, in which they learn about themselves, their own society and other cultures. This knowledge can be used to advantage in the future – if you can survive as a backpacker, you can deal with any problems that life may throw at you later,”

(Richards & Wilson, 2004, 6)

PART I – BACKGROUND

While backpacking is associated with budget traveling, it is important to note that those who are able to backpack traditionally come from a place of privilege, as these experiences are only valued and possible for certain groups of people from certain socio-economic backgrounds. To illustrate this point, Kerry (2013) recalls a pushpin map from a hostel in Barcelona, Spain where guests were encouraged to put pins where they were from.

The result was a striking visual representation of the relatively few countries that backpackers call home. Clusters of red tipped push pins indicating country of origin studded wealthier European and English-speaking countries, with only a smattering of a few straggler pins in other countries. Backpackers do come from many countries and in this sense are a diverse group, but when seen in aggregate, the political economy of backpacking jumps into sharp relief. While these pins cannot indicate the specific conditions of individual backpackers or their socioeconomic status, and it is certain that not all individuals or groups in these countries of origin has equal access to the backpacking trip, these pins, a stand-in for backpacker bodies, do present histories of colonialism and empire and specific geopolitical geometries. To illustrate, this hostel had only housed one Colombian backpacker (from Bogotá) in its 20 years of existence. Also, there was no longer room to stick push pins into the city of London, England, but historically poorer, industrial towns in England had not sent any backpackers. Asia and Africa were radically underrepresented on the map, with the exception of South Africa. (Kerry 2013:14-15)

Several scholars have compared or evaluated the comparisons between historical nomads and modern backpackers. Though many aspects of the lives of these two groups are very different, backpackers are still often described as having “nomadic lifestyles.” However, it seems the only comparisons that can be made between nomads and backpackers are the fact that each travel from place to place. “Backpackers seem to be driven into the far corners of the globe by the ‘experience hunger’ of modern society which also forces them into becoming nomadic. One they have consumed the experiences offered by one place, they need to move on to find new ones. Just like the traditional nomadic peoples, the global nomad constantly moves from place to place,” (Richards 2004, 6).

The political, social, and economic factors influencing these two groups are very different. Historical nomads would travel from place to place to have pastures for their livestock

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or other economic reasons. Modern backpackers travel for a wide variety of motivations, but to make a living economically is usually not one of them. Backpackers are more similar to tourists than nomads, even though they would hate to admit it.

Adler (1985) theorizes that the differences between tourism ideals and backpacking ideals can be traced back to around the 18th century. She argues that tourism comes from the “Grand Tour” that was popular among the young aristocracy, while “tramping” or a low-budget, long term, religious or labor-related travel, is the origin of backpacking among middle class youths. However, Cohen (2004) asserts that, though backpackers may aspire to the ideology of tramping, or as Cohen calls it drifting, very few succeeded in merging ideology and practice. “While some degree of historical continuity thus apparently exists between the ‘tramping’ of the past and contemporary backpacking, the emergence of the latter as a large-scale touristic phenomenon is related to some distinctive traits of modern Western societies and the position of youth within them,” (Cohen 2004, 44).

Cohen (2004) goes on to argue that contemporary backpacking began during the social and political upheavals of the 1960’s. Youth travel to less developed regions of the world began as a kind of political statement. During the 1980’s, the views of backpacking began to shift to a view of consumerism and marketing. “The dominance of global markets and consumerism changed the guise of the ‘hippie’ drifter in favor of budget-oriented independent travelers seeking lifestyle enhancement and travel as an agent of personal growth,” (Ateljevic 2004, 74).

It is significant to recognize that the definitions and conceptualizations of backpackers have been influenced by contemporary political, social, and economic contexts. It is interesting to examine how changing contexts continue to impact the perspectives of backpackers.

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THE HOSTELS

The idea of the hostel intrigued me from the moment I started reading backpacking blogs in high school. It is a space where people from across the world and all different backgrounds come together for similar reasons – to travel on budget, and usually to be social. I pictured all hostels being the same and getting similar experiences from them. That is definitely not the case, as I'll detail later.

Hostels come in all shapes and sizes. There are small hostels and large hostels, party hostels and chill hostels, family owned hostels and corporate run hostels – and everything in between. Most hostels also have many different room options – from 3 bed dorms to 32 bed dorms, private rooms, or an all-female dorm. Hostels can range drastically in price as well depending on location, amenities, time of year, and dorm size. This all creates a lot of mini-choices within the big choice of where to stay.

Different hostels would also have different amenities and offerings in addition to the beds and bathrooms. Some had communal kitchens, some offered a free (or paid) breakfast, some offered a free (or paid) dinner, some had daily activities, and all would have at least one common space.

To help me make these choices, I booked all my hostels through HostelWorld, an app and website designed for people who are travelling. The app has every hostel in every city with pictures, prices, reviews, and the ability to book a room using the app. I used HostelWorld because I enjoyed the convenience of having all my options in one place, the reviews were broken down by category so I could see which would be the best fit for me, and I knew it was a secure and reliable site for making reservations and payments.

Before I started this trip, I wondered how I would fare staying in hostels for 78 days, since I had only stayed in 2 before I began this trip and both times were with a friend instead of

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solo travelling. I had a lot of expectations about myself in a hostel that ended up being wrong. Figuring out the tricks to choosing good hostels was a learning curve.

These breakdowns, that can be seen in figures 2, 3, and 4 became very important in how I would choose a hostel. For my own sanity and for the purposes of this research, the category of “atmosphere” was usually the deciding factor if I was between different hostels. Of course, you want a decent location, for it to be clean, and secure, but for me, the atmosphere is what was make or break for a hostel.

When I first started staying in hostels, I thought small rooms and female only rooms were going to be what I preferred. But it actually ended up being the opposite. I didn’t like huge rooms, like 20 – 30 beds, but I found that my favorite size room was between 10 and 16 beds. I also found that I preferred mixed dorms to all female dorms. But these were just my personal preferences and I tried a large variety of different room types on my travels.

I have never had a roommate in my life, so I didn’t know how I would cope with never having private space. Because of these concerns, I planned in my budget that I may occasionally need to splurge and get a private room for myself. I never ended up needing to do that.

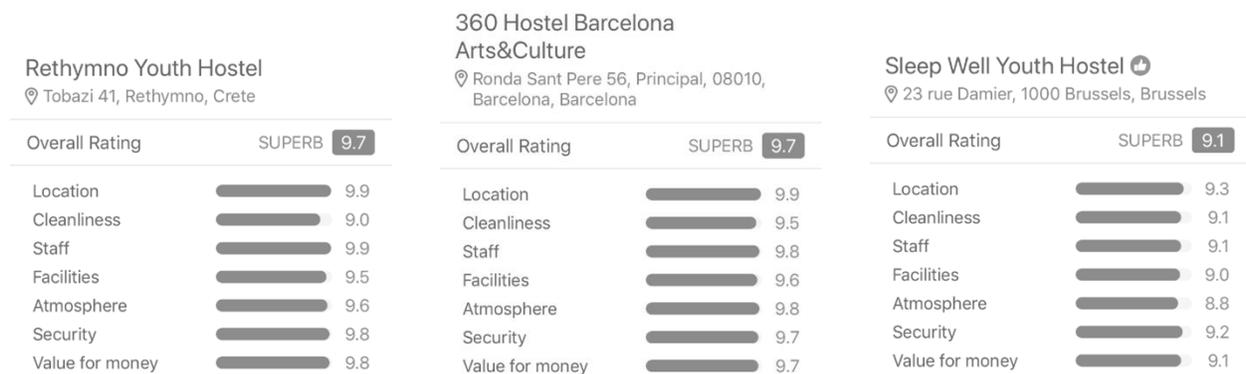


Figure 2, 3, and 4: Reviews of three hostels I stayed in. From HostelWorld.

PART II – THE RITES OF BACKPACKING

Those who have gone on an extended trip abroad often say “abroad changed me”. This change, or transition, in identity could be considered a ritual and rite of passage. Arnold van Gennep (1909) laid groundwork for the idea of “rites of passages” or transition periods. He detailed three phases that exist in every rite: the first phase is separation (preliminal rites), the second phase is transition (liminal rites), and the third phase is incorporation (postliminal rites). While Van Gennep developed this framework in reference to religion and ritual, I argue this framework can be applied to travel as well: the preliminal rite is leaving home and other familiar things, the liminal rites are the traveling, and the postliminal rites are returning home afterwards. This is not to say that additional rites of passages cannot occur within the phases of this larger, broader rite. In fact, for backpackers, I argue that the rites of passage are repeated almost constantly within the broad liminal phase, as illustrated in Figure 5. In fact, it is this cyclic repetition that sets the kind of backpacking talked about in this paper apart from other tourism.

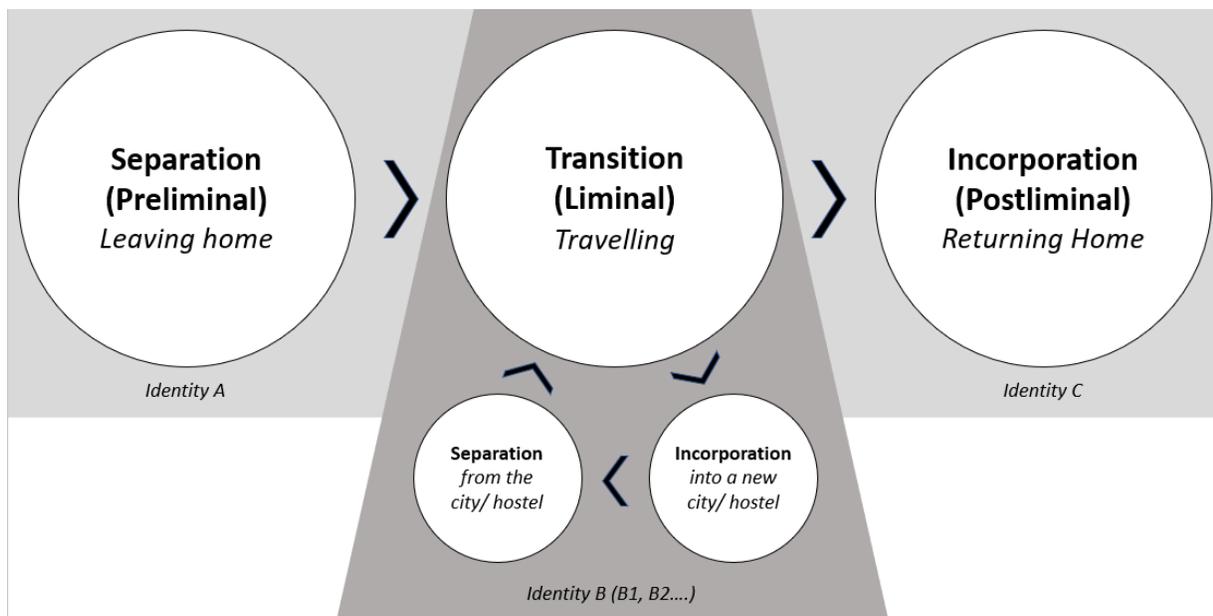


Figure 5 A Diagram of van Gennep's rites of passage applied to backpacking

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Van Gennep outlines many categories of rites of passage, and travelling - and backpacking specifically - fits into several of them. One type of rite is *territorial passage*, or the passage between physical spaces: to separate from home; to pass through countries, cities and hostels; and to finally return home. Within these physical spaces, individual travelers will also experience the *passage between individual and groups*: the rites of incorporation and separation from the people they meet - locals and fellow backpackers. These two categories of rites of passages work hand in hand, as it is usually people who help incorporate one into a physical space. Finally, many of those who backpack will experience a change in their life stage from travelling. Some will intentionally do this, as they are motivated to travel by a 'life crisis' or a change in their position in society. Others will experience this *de facto* as their travels have altered their identity and created a more cosmopolitan world citizen. Many of these travelers are young adults (between 18 and 28 years old) and long-term travelling can be seen as a kind of 'initiation' into adulthood.

Van Gennep states that different rituals and rites will have emphasis on different stages. In the case of long term travelling, it is the transitional or liminal phase that has a greater weight. For it is in this phase that has its own autonomy as rites are repeated. An essential characteristic of this repetition is the integration and separation from groups and places as the travel progresses. A key to the integration phenomenon is *a group of individuals sharing a unifying, bonding common experience*. This type of temporary experience has been named by Durkheim ([1912]1995) as "collective effervescence" and by Turner (1969) as "communitas". While developed separately, these two concepts are quite similar (Olaveson, 2001).

While Durkheim's collective effervescence came before van Gennep's rites of passage, Turner's communitas was used in his writings on Van Gennep's rites of passage and the liminal

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phase particularly. Turner frames life as a cycle between “structure and anti-structure” with *communitas* and liminality existing within anti-structure. Durkheim’s collective effervescence also contains the dialectic between ritual and society. Both of these concepts create instances which are outside of social norms and can permit behavior that is typically not accepted. Another characteristic within these two concepts is the equalization of status between the individuals of the group.

Both Turner and Durkheim recognize the necessity of these experiences as tool to revitalize the structure of society and act as “templates for the periodical reclassification of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture” (Olaveson, 106). The individuals who experience *communitas* or collective effervescence are encouraged to question structured society which can lead to positive outcomes and revitalized involvement on the return to structure. However, both men also argue that these states of anti-structure are temporary and cannot be sustained beyond a certain point, and that structure is necessary.

Turner explains how *communitas* can be appealing, and why individuals would seek out *communitas*, which could be achieved through long term travelling.

“Spontaneous *communitas* is richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable ones. Life in ‘structure’ is filled with objective difficulties: decisions have to be made, inclinations sacrificed to the wishes and needs of the group, and physical and social obstacles overcome at some personal cost. Spontaneous *communitas* has something ‘magical’ about it.” (Turner 1969, 139).

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SEPARATION

One of the tenants of van Gennep's theory is that through the rites of passage, a person's identity changes over time. When examining the changes over the passage of traveling, I will term the identity at the time of separation as "Identity A". Identities consist of many factors, and some change while others do not.

My Identity A is such: a white, cis female; born and raised in a small town outside St. Louis, Missouri; an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania studying anthropology, philosophy, and theater; a member of a sorority; only been outside the United States once, and never been to Europe; never solo travelled; most of my interactions occurred within the bubble of UPenn; only fluent in English, but with some knowledge of Greek and Spanish; introverted around strangers while extroverted around friends; 21 years old. As an undergraduate student, I have two major "societies" that I belong to (university and home), and thus I had to go through the separation phase with each society.

In the age we live in now, with technology connecting people at all times across the globe, it is easy to wonder how separated one can really be from their home or other communities. Through cell phones, social media, and news it is easy to stay connected to the things happening in different societies. Though time changes didn't always make it ideal, I knew that at any moment I could call my mom or my best friend if I needed to. Though it is interesting to note that I recorded very few of my interactions with home in my field notes, I considered them removed from what I was doing as a traveler, and my identity as a daughter and friend was not usually at the front of my mind.

Even before social media, van Gennep recognized that one cannot be removed completely from previous societies; "however the traveler's departure does not completely

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separate him either from the society to which he originally belonged or from the one he joins during this trip,” (van Gennep 1909). The societies that one was incorporated within will make a mark on a person’s identity, preventing them from separating wholly. The inability to completely separate from society is not new because of technology and rapid communication, rather it has been magnified because of it.

Another consideration in the separation phase is the motivation behind the separation. For some, like myself, it was motivated by opportunity. But for many, their motivation to separate from their original society came from a different part of their life being in a different transitional phase or “life crisis”. Many travelers were experiencing a life cycle change such as graduation, career change, or change in relationship status. Those who are motivated by opportunity also tend to be those with return tickets, while those who were motivated by a different transitional phase did not. As mentioned previously, most travelers were between 18 and 28 and were transitioning into adulthood. Travelers can also be motivated by a break from Turners ‘structured’ life or mechanical routine.

Whatever motivates the separation phase, it is accomplished by crossing boundaries, which these days is accomplished usually by plane, train, or automobile. Van Gennep claims that portals, such as doors, are a transitional space, so separation occurs prior to crossing through airport security or stepping onto the train. Once you are through, you have begun the next phase.

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TRANSITION

As mentioned earlier, in different rites, different stages are longer and/or more emphasized. In long-term travelling, it is the transition or liminal phase that is the most emphasized due to the repetition of the rites. Within this phase, one assumes a new identity – Identity B – and can go through mini cycles of the stages creating Identity B1, B2, and so on. Each time a person is integrated and separates from a new city, hostel, or group of people, a new sub identity is created. However, in the sense of this rite of passage, they are sub identities not new identities because it all still happens within the broader transitional phase.

These new identities will still maintain aspects of Identity A and all the sub identities that come before, which can create some moments of disconnect for a traveler. I mentioned in the separation phase that through social media one cannot fully be separated from home, but it can still be hard to connect with home while travelling. Before travelling I would talk to my mom on the phone at least once a week, but while travelling I struggled to remember to be in contact with her and update her about what was happening. Part of that could have been because of the time difference, and partly because I was too busy with my Identity B's to prioritize it. I am also a person who normally keeps a very clean email inbox, but while travelling my inbox overflowed as I didn't tend to most emails I was receiving.

Many traveler's identity shifts could also be seen in their social media. While traveling, people's social media presence changes, and they tend to post more frequently. I know this was true for myself; I would post something on Instagram every few days (something from each city I visited) and I was much more cognizant of what I was posting. I would only post about the positive things that happened, and part of me wanted to make others from back home jealous about my posts. Which is different from my normal Instagram presence where I post much more

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infrequently, and my pictures don't have to be "perfect". I also began using the Instagram story feature more often both the post where I was at the time and also to see where the other travelers I had met were now.

In his section about territorial passage, van Gennep emphasizes the importance of the physical act of entering territories and the ritual aspects that can accompany that. He claims, "foreigners cannot immediately enter the territory of the tribe or the village; they must prove their intention from afar and undergo a [preliminary] stage," (1960, 28). While in modern Europe, one does not necessarily have to declare their intentions for each tribe/village/city, when crossing borders there is official government control they must answer to, and arguably one must prove their intentions to hostel reception upon entering as well.

When travelling in Western Europe and the Schengen Area, IDs/passports had to be checked when moving between two countries, whether travelling by plane, train, or bus. Sometimes the checking would be handled by a government agent, sometimes an employee of the transportation company, and sometimes both. When flying, ID's are checked before security and at the gate when boarding as well. When exiting the planes in the Schengen Area, it was not necessary to go through customs or show ID again. I did not take a train across country boundaries so I cannot speak to those practices. There was no consistent practice on busses across country line. When boarding the bus, the bus driver would usually check that your ID matched the name on the ticket. Sometimes as busses drove across borders, we would stop for border control and sometimes we would not. For example, when travelling by bus from Italy to France, the bus was stopped by Italian border control who help up the bus for 45 minutes or more as they thoroughly checked every passport yet did not really ask questions, and then was stopped again by French border control who once again checked every passport. However, on the

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drive between France and Spain we were not stopped by either country's border control. When travelling France to the Netherlands we were stopped by Dutch border control who asked each foreign passenger their reasons for entering the Netherlands, where they were coming from, how long they planned on staying, and such. Even though the French border was being crossed in all of these cases, the ceremony of border control was different each time.

Additionally, when entering hostels guests must first stop at reception where they check in – show ID, confirm dates, and pay for their room. Then depending on the hostel, they are released on their own into the hostel to find their own way, or they are shown through the hostel and introduced to people along the way. What is unique in hostels is the simultaneity of the start of incorporation to both the physical space and social space.

Some hostels work to facilitate the social incorporation more so than others, and sometimes incorporation happens very quickly and sometimes not at all. In those hostels with communal meals, activities, and/or sell alcohol on the premises tend to incorporate new travelers easier. This aligns with van Gennep's assertion that communal eating and/or drinking is a ritual of incorporation. Figures 6 – 9 show how many hostels I stayed at offered certain things that helped incorporate people into the group of the hostel.

What's interesting about incorporation into groups of people in hostels is that one is not being incorporated by people who control the physical space. You are incorporated by other travelers who are also in a liminal phase. Perhaps they got there before you and have established a social group already that you can be incorporated into, or perhaps everyone in a certain social group is incorporated at the same time, meaning that social group did not exist until the moment of incorporation.

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I noticed that many times these groups would consist of people who had shared identity markers. English was definitely the dominant language, and fluent English speakers *appeared* to be the most social. Most of my interactions in hostels occurred with white passing people who had English as their first language. Most people of color that I interacted with came from the United States. Outgoing people would hang out with other outgoing people, people who liked to drink would congregate, people who wanted to see a certain cultural aspect of a city, etc.

Most of the times, in these groups there would be no social hierarchy or status structure. People were not ranked based on wealth, gender, age (except in extreme outliers), or travel experience. All members of a group would be equal. This aligns with Turner's *communitas* and Durkheim's *collective effervescence*. This lack of stratification helped enable communal experiences.

While less than one third of the hostels offered communal dining of any kind, see figure 6, those that did stood out in how easily and quickly groups became incorporated. For the hostels that offered dinner, if someone was not already incorporated before dinner began, they were by the end of dinner. In several cases, people would bring wine or other alcoholic drinks and would usually share them with the table.

Alcohol is a large player in the incorporation that happens within hostels. Most hostels sold alcohol in some capacity, see figure 7. Out of the 17 that sold alcohol, 14 hostels had a bar located within the hostel.



Figure 6



Figure 7

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The other 3 simply sold beer/wine from a fridge. Out of the 26 hostels, only one hostel did not allow alcohol on the premises. Whether or not a hostel sold alcohol, travelers would also go to nearby grocery and convenience stores to get cheaper alcohol options. Those who bought bottles were usually more than willing to share with others. In my experience, it was rare for people to find a bar outside of the hostel unless it was a part of an organized bar crawl.

The act of drinking alcohol became ritual like in the context of hostels. Most people would begin drinking around dinner time – a drink with their meal. Afterwards, it was not uncommon for drinking games to begin. The time between dinner and going-out was usually a very social time at the hostels – especially if they had an organized pub crawl, which about half did according to figure 8. Travelers would begin drinking, trying to incorporate in a group that would be trying to have the same nights as them. Pub crawls were the easiest way to accomplish this, as it would guarantee interactions with others because the group would usually leave from the hostels all together. Many people would not pub crawl if it was their last night, so by meeting people on the pub crawl you meet people who will be around the hostel with you, and you can make potential plans for the next day or two. Pub crawls would usually cost between 15 and 20 euros plus drinks.

Pub crawls were not the only things organized by hostels to help travelers incorporate with one another. Many hostels also had some sort of walking tour option set up, see figure 9. Sometimes these would be tours just for those staying in the hostel, and sometimes it would

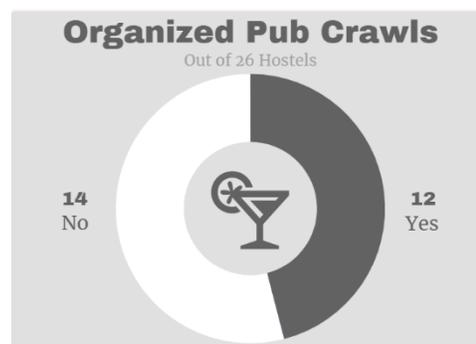


Figure 8

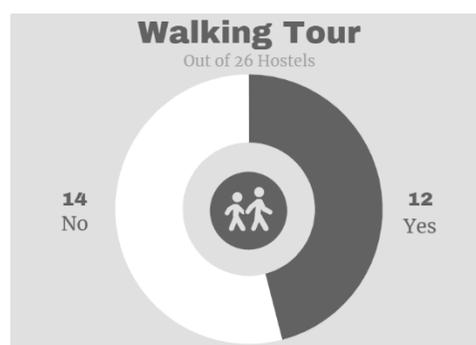


Figure 9

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simply be a connection to a tour company. These would be free walking tours to help tourists learn more about the city they were visiting. In my experience, there were fewer people from the hostel on the walking tours than who participated in the pub crawls.

Some hostels would offer other organized activities outside of pub crawls and walking tours and these could range in options and in price. Some of these were organized hiking trips, beach excursions, Greek dancing lessons, a flamenco show, drinking games, boat tours, movie nights, and more. While some of these activities may also have a goal of integrating a traveler with the new city or country's culture, they also had the purpose of bringing travelers together with shared experiences.

Travelling, like other rituals, does not come without risk. When a ritual involves the human body, such as bloodletting or circumcision, there is always the chance that something can go wrong. While travelling, there are many risks being taken. There are health risks, such as an accident in a foreign country, assault, or sickness. There are monetary risks with converting currencies and thefts. There are political and environmental risks with border closings, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters. I was lucky and did not face a major threat; I still experienced petty theft, sunburn, and by the end of my trip I had used 5 boxes of Band-Aids. However, I heard stories from other travelers who did experience some of these things.

In this cycle, separation happened just as often as integration. Most people only stay in each place for a couple of days. Every time you leave, you are separating from the hostel and group you were integrated into. Sometimes a group you were integrated into will leave before you and separation will occur. Like when leaving home, the separation is rarely a complete separation – with social media and technology it is easy to stay connected with those in the social group you integrated with. However, there are also times when you do not exchange any kind of

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contact information, and the separation does feel complete. It is still not the case because the integration and separation have led to another shift in sub identities, so one is never completely divorced from the groups they were integrated in. It is also not uncommon to run into people again whilst travelling. Van Gennep argues that there are rites that accompany separation that mirror integration, “a meal in common, a last drink, accompaniment on the road,” (insert citation). A group grabs lunch together before some people head on to their next city, a cheers the night before to friends you know will be leaving in the morning before you are awake, or if you’re headed the same direction you head that way together.

Though your connection with these groups may have been short, the separation can still be as hard as the initial separation from home. Shared experiences through *communitas* or collective effervescence can create emotional attachments through the experiences that are shared. However, Turner argues that *communitas* cannot last and that this separation is necessary. “*Communitas* itself soon develops a structure, in which free relationships between individuals become converted into norm-governed relationships between social personae,” (1969, 132). This effect can be seen in maintained communications with other travelers, as many times those communications become no different than how you would relate with others that you did not share the *communitas* experience with.

The separation from the group and place puts one back into the transitional phase – when travelling between cities/hostels/groups you are neither one thing or another, or what Victor Turner terms “betwixt and between” (1969, 95) You are no longer incorporated with anything at the time. These are the true transitional moments for a traveler.

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CASE STUDY 1: RETHYMNO, CRETE, GREECE

I arrived in Rethymno on Wednesday, May 22, 2019 around 2 pm. This was my second hostel during this trip, after spending 5 days in Chania. I had taken a bus, which took about an hour and a half, with an older Chinese lady that had been in my hostel in Chania. We had met a few days ago in Chania when we discovered that we had very similar itineraries for Crete and decided we would take the bus from Chania to Rethymno together. I would be staying in Rethymno for 3 nights before moving on to Heraklion, which I had booked at the same time.

When we arrived at the hostel, we found out that reception was closed from 12 to 5 so we could not check in yet. There were a couple people sitting on the porch area and we sat and chatted with them for a bit. They were long term guests who were working in the area. The Chinese lady and I decide to leave our bags and went to walk around the town and stopped at a little market to get food for dinner. The Chinese lady was probably in her 50's, has travelled a lot in her past, and was at the beginning of a long Greece, Italy, and France trip. Everyone who met her agreed she was a bit odd, but she was very nice.

When we got back to the hostel, there were more people on the porch and more gathered as they came back from their day's activities. This is when I met Matt, a 32-year-old American who had also just arrived at the hostel that afternoon. While talking we discovered that we would be staying for the same amount of time. As everyone mingled, I made myself some dinner and as I was finishing up making dinner two American girls who were 19, from Portland, and were on a gap year came in with a bunch of groceries and started making their dinner. They had been at this hostel for about a week so far and loved it I am not sure how long they stayed after I left.

After I had made my dinner, I returned to the porch to eat it and continued to meet people. I had a bottle of wine that I opened while I was eating and some others were drinking as

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well. I had also bought some strawberries from the market and I shared them. At some point in the evening the conversation turned to playing games. This shift was predominately led by a French guy and Austrian girl who did not actually stay at the hostel. They met while at the hostel and both got jobs taking care of a park in the area and had housing at the park. However, they returned to the hostel most nights for social interaction, and they had a good relationship with the owner of the hostel and knew the long-term guests. They had become good friends with the American girls by that point so they all four enthusiastically switched us to playing games.

We started by playing the “noun game” which is a team game. Everyone writes down 3 nouns on a piece of paper, and then the game is played in three rounds starting with charades then describing the word, then only using one word for your teammate to guess what the word was. There were 10 of us playing and we were divided into 5 pairs. (Me, Mike, the two American girls, an American scientist, two Greek brothers (one of which worked at the hostel), French guy, Austrian girl, and a young German guy) This game was a good ice breaker and broke any shyness that may have still been lingering for anyone.

Then we changed to a game called werewolf, a social deduction game, which we played for hours. At one point during the games, it became the hostel quiet hours so we moved into a square that was right down the road to continue playing. We sat on the ground in a circle; people would occasionally run to the *periptero* (like a convenience store) for more beer. After a while we switched and played some other games like truth or dare. We played late into the night and it was a lot of fun. By the end of that night everyone was familiar with each other, and it felt like there was a strong group connection. Because of the long term guests, this group was created before I arrived, but I was welcomed into it easily.

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There was only one other person in my 8-person, female only room that night. I hadn't interacted with her earlier in the day and when I got back from the games, she was already asleep. In the morning we talked a bit though – she was a black American who just got to Crete from Santorini and was on a shorter vacation. I didn't really have plans for the day, so I went down to the patio to see what others were up to. Down at the patio people are making various plans for the day. Some people rented a car and went to the pink beach while a couple of others had left early in the morning for Samaria gorge. I had already done these two activities when in Chania. Still undecided were Matt, my roommate, and I. Matt and I were both interested in hiking, so we talked with the owner and got the recommendation of a nearby gorge. My roommate decided to go with us even though she had never been hiking before.

On our way from the hostel to the bus station I introduced Matt and my roommate to the Greek breakfast pastries of *tiropita* (cheese pie) and *spanakopita* (cheese/spinach pie). Then we went to the bus stop and struggled to know which bus was ours, and there was a large crowd of people waiting for the various busses that came through that stop. We eventually got on the right bus but then weren't exactly sure of our stop so we bugged the bus driver quite a bit I'm afraid. On the way there the three of us had pretty surface level conversation getting to know each other. On the hike, my roommate decided to kind of go at her own pace and listen to music as we went since it was her first hike, but Matt and I hiked at pretty much the same speed, so we talked for most of the hike.

He grew up in Chicago but moved to Georgia when he moved out of his house and lived down there for a while. He had bought a property that he fixed up that he now rents out and that provides him with enough income to travel. He has travelled a lot and had recently been living in Macau for a few years with a girlfriend. She got a job in China, he didn't want to go, so they

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broke up, moved out, and he started travelling. He said he'd be travelling at least 10 months, Europe for a while and then to South America, but it could be longer because he didn't know what he would do if/when he stopped travelling.

The gorge let us out on the beach but a bit away from the town. We got in the water to cool off for a bit and then all walked together back to town along the beach. When we got back into the town we were all pretty hungry so we got some gyros and continued chatting. We got back to the hostel and freshened up and then hung out on the porch for a while. Matt was reading the book "Americanah" and he showed me a few passages and we talked about it. Later on my trip I bought the book to read because it seemed very good, which it was. The three of us from the hike also went out to dinner. The girl from my room told us about her experience being black in Greece when the waitress was acting strangely – not meanly racist but still treating her different. After a delicious dinner, we got back from the hostel and had found out that a lot of people had left for a bonfire at the French guy and Austrian girls place. The younger brother of the hostel worker was still at the hostel and we convinced him to take us to the bonfire, because he knew where it was and we had no idea. The Greek boy, his friend, Matt, my roommate and I got there after a long walk, a stop for drinks, and getting a bit lost. Their place was at the top of a hill, but it had amazing views over the sea and city as well as of the sky and stars. There was a really large group around the fire that night; there were the people from the night before and a few more it seemed. We played more games, drank more, and just socialized. People would head back a few at a time. At the end of the night there were six of us that were going to walk back together, but four got distracted at the French guy and Vienna girl's house that Matt and I ended up walking back without them.

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Friday morning my roommate checked out and I went down to the porch without plans again to see what others were up to. A couple of the guys were also checking out that day so we had to say goodbye to them. The two American girls, Matt, and I decide to take another recommendation by the hostel owner and rented a car to go to a beach on the southern part of the island. Matt drove; neither of the American girls could drive a manual. I wanted to drive but it was cheaper this way since I was under 25, so I was the copilot. The drive was full of beautiful scenery and we all just kind of chatted. When we got to the beach it took some effort to find a place to park. The hostel owner told us that there was a hike from the first beach to a second, more secluded and less busy beach. However, we had been in the car for about 2 hours by that point, so we decided to chill out on the first beach for a little bit. There were strong waves that day and after I went into the water I got caught in a wave on my way out and got thrown up against the shore on my way back which cut up the top of my foot and put a few scratches on my back. I was really serious about my sunscreen the whole day, but the other girls who were already sunburnt were not. I had brought my lunch but the others grabbed a gyro on the first beach.

Then we did what was suggested by the hostel owner and hiked to the second beach, which was a beautiful cove beach that also had somewhat calmer water. Almost all the beaches in Greece are nude friendly, but even more so the smaller beaches. We stayed for most of the day on the beach. We would alternate between the water and the beach. We all had our own things to occupy us, but we would have conversation as well. Stopped at a convenience store on our way back to the car for water and snacks; none of us had taken nearly enough water for sitting out in the sun all day. The American girls fell asleep on the way back to the hostel.

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We went back to the hostel, but not too many people were around at the time. The girls still had food they had made, so Matt and I went to grab some dinner. On the way there I needed to stop at an ATM because I was out of cash. I withdrew about 200 Euros because I have to pay ATM fees so it made sense to withdraw more at a time and then I would split it up when I got back to the hostel and lock it with my luggage. We walked around looking for a place to eat and ended up getting pizza. When we got back, people were leaving for another bonfire that night, but this time it was a smaller group. We were kind of rushing out the door to buy wine and catch taxis this time; I forgot to take my money up to my room and lock it up. The girls went with the French guy and Austrian girl. Matt and I went with a couple that had arrived at the hostel that day, from the hostel that Matt was going to next. The girl was raving about the hostel and said people never want to leave it. The group at the bonfire was much smaller and more lowkey that night. People were tired by this point and left few by few. Matt and I were the last to leave and walked back. We just walked around the town and talked. Then I still took a shower before going to bed, so I went to bed pretty late.

By this night there were 6 people in my 8-person room and getting back late I didn't want to be rude and wake anyone up by being loud. I forgot by that point that I had so much cash in my wallet and I had my bag on the floor right next to my head, without thinking much of it. The next morning, I woke up and started to pack. I realized that someone had taken my cash that I had just got out the night before and a few other things from my bag. I was of course kind of upset, but I tried not to let it get to me too much and tried to take it as something that was bound to happen at some point during my trip even though it was definitely not ideal. After that I always locked my wallet up. After I finished packing, I went down to the patio and talked to Matt and the girls about it. It was super unfortunate but couldn't let it bring me down too much.

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Matt grabbed breakfast for several of us from a café. Then he left to go to his new hostel at the south of the island, and the goodbyes started again. I was leaving for my new hostel too, I just had to pick a bus time. First, I went around town to get more cash, a new charger, and headphones to replace what I had lost. Then I headed out. On the bus I downloaded and started reading “Americanah”.

Matt would end up needing to spend one night in Heraklion to catch his ferry to Santorini, and he ended up grabbing a room in my hostel, so we got to see a bit of Heraklion together as well. We became good friends in Rethymno, and out of everyone I met on my trip, he is probably the person that I am in contact with most often. We texted pretty regularly after leaving Greece and originally we thought we would both be in Budapest around the same time. His travel plans got altered so that didn’t work. This past fall he had a 12-hour layover in Philadelphia, and we talked about getting dinner during it but then I had responsibilities come up so that didn’t work either. But we are still in contact, and we talk to each other about once a month. We actually just Facetimed because I was curious how COVID-19 affected his indefinite travel plans. His travels are currently on pause as he is ‘quarantining’ at his Dad’s house in Minneapolis. He left Argentina right as the borders were closing, but he has friends who are still in South America – some by choice and some not so much. One of his friends was stuck in Peru after they closed their borders with less than an 8-hour notice until the Canadian embassy was able to extract her. We joke because it was just two months ago that I was telling him I missed travelling and he told me not to worry, “the borders aren’t changing anytime as far as I can see,” yet now travelling is not possible for the foreseeable future.

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CASE STUDY 2: BARCELONA, SPAIN

I arrived at the hostel early in the morning, about 9 am after my overnight bus. It was too early to get into my room, but the guy at the front desk did the check in, showed me around, let me store my bag, and then said I could use the showers or hang out in the common room or whatever I liked. There was going to be a walking tour at 11 through the hostel so I decided to wait around for that. I used the time to catch up on “being a real person” and my field notes. I was sitting in a living room off of the kitchen, but I could see a lot of what was occurring in the kitchen. Regularly, someone would come out into the kitchen and those already in the kitchen would acknowledge them and then they would usually talk about how hungover they were but how fun the previous night had been. I found out later that most of the people just hanging around in the kitchen were staff members. As I was sitting in the living room, I heard a familiar voice in the kitchen, and it turned out to be the Australian girl from Florence. I talked to her for a bit and she introduced me to some people she had already met because she had been there for a few days. One of these was a guy who played around on the keyboard in the living room while we were talking, but then left to get a pedal for the keyboard. He was just a guest, not a staff member, but wanted to be able to play it correctly so he got one. The Australian girl was actually checking out that day because 360 was full and she was moving to a different hostel for the weekend. So she checked out and went to do that. Then a group gathered for the walking tour, most people were a bit hungover. The leader of the tour then came by to join us. All the activities in the hostel weren’t actually organized by the hostel but by an outside company. However, this outside company was different than others because it was run by one guy who had like 2 staff members and it only worked with the two 360 hostels in Barcelona. (He and his two staff members would be the people who ran all the activities: tours, dinners, pub crawls) With people

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from both hostels, the tour was a pretty large size (the guy said it was the largest of the season so far). At the beginning of the tour, he introduced himself to us – he was born in the US but moved to Barcelona several years ago and had started this partnership with 360 hostels. Then he had all of us introduce ourselves to each other. Along with him on this tour was someone he was training for the summer; she was staying at our hostel and was from California. She had been in Spain for several months as she had spent the spring in the Andalusian area teaching English.

After the tour, several people were going to lunch together but I had food back at the hostel and I was exhausted from the overnight bus, so I decided to go back to the hostel, shower, and take a nap. When I was back at the hostel in the early afternoon almost no one else was there. After my nap, I joined a group of people on the terrace where we all hung out talking and drinking until dinner. The group that had gone to lunch was there, and that lunch really seemed to bond them together, but they were still very open with everyone else. I can't even speak to the groups demographic makeup because people were constantly coming and going, and we weren't really doing "introductions" each time. I would say though that there were at least 10 people on the terrace at all times. We were all sitting out there waiting for dinner, which was at 9 pm and every now and then people would comment on how hungry they were. Someone had a bag of Cheetos that became like "the snack" of the weekend; as a group I can't even estimate how many bags we went through.

At 9 we went inside for dinner. This hostel had what they called "family dinner" and everyone would "make it together, eat it together, and clean up together". So, when we went inside, we started to help make it. The dinner was chorizo and various sides. An Aussie girl and I were put in charge of making hummus – something neither of us had ever done before. So, we were winging it and hoping we were doing it right. We kept asking others if we were, but no one

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really knew. As we were preparing food, the group was discussing cooking vs. cleaning and it was fairly evenly split between those who prefer cooking over cleaning and vice versa. Which was nice because it meant since I had cooked, I wouldn't have to clean. The distribution of the food did not go very well and only ½ of the table got chorizo, but it was a bonding experience for the half that didn't get much. At the table the Aussie girl that I had made hummus with was on my left (she and her friend were also on the walking tour), they were drinking sangria and shared it with me. On my right was an American guy and his friend was across from him. While most other people on the terrace were drinking beer/sangria/wine, they were drinking mixed drinks, I think rum and coke. During dinner the older one was trying to get the younger one to drink more.

I'm going to digress for a moment here and talk about these two guys because I thought their story was pretty interesting. Learned about it across the course of the weekend, but it seems to make the most sense to put it all together right here instead of leaving it spread out. These two are both from California, but they actually met in Berlin a few weeks ago on separate trips. The younger one celebrated his birthday while in Barcelona, he said it was his 21st but I later found out it was his 18th birthday. I talked to him about it later and he said he was lying on his whole trip; he told everyone he was going into his junior year of college and was 20/21. The only person on the trip that he actually told the truth to was the guy he was travelling with. The other guy was older, I believe 28, black, bisexual, and a veteran. They met in Berlin and got along amazingly well. The younger one had kind of a trip path but the older did not, and the older decided to join the younger one on the rest of his trip. When I met them, I couldn't believe they had only known each other a few weeks. The younger guy was ending his trip in Barcelona, he had a flight home at the end of the weekend.

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After dinner was an organized pub crawl. We all kind of had to rush after dinner to get ready for the crawl. Like the tour, the group for the pub crawl was the biggest they had so far this season, and they seemed slightly overwhelmed. The first bar was a small place and we learned quickly that when getting a drink order two because it takes too long in the line because there were so many people. The group from the terrace and who didn't get chorizo at dinner all sat together at a big table at the bar. This group ended up sticking together for the night, and the rest of the weekend. Then we went to a bar/club with live music. Then we went to a place on the beach, and as I learned in Nice I don't make it past places on the beach because I like to disappear to the beach. The younger American guy went with me and we walked along the beach for a while and then back to the hostel. I wasn't super aware of how dangerous Barcelona apparently was for walking at night. But the American guy had refused to bring his phone or cards out with him and he said I needed to make sure mine was put away well. We jokingly were making an attack plan in case someone tried to mug us. We stopped at a convenience store that was open and grabbed some snacks because we were hungry. When we got back to the hostel, a large group of people from the crawl were sitting in the stairwell hanging out instead of going upstairs to common areas because it was quiet hours. There was one guy passed out in the corner and he became a bit of a joke the rest of the weekend.

The next morning the group went to St. Josephs market and I joined them a little late. Before I left the hostel, I found out that another guy in our room had his phone stolen from him the night before. We got breakfast/lunch at the market and started discussing our plans for the rest of the day. We decided that we would go to the beach. Originally, we thought we would walk, but several people had blisters on their feet from the day before and while at the market the back of my ankle got run over by a wheelchair, so I was in a bit of pain as well. So, we agree that

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we'd take taxi's there. There were 8 of us so that would work with 2 taxis perfectly. We went back to the hostel to get ready and get snacks. It took quite a while for everyone to get ready and gathered, but that seems to be typical doing anything with a large group. Then right when we were almost ready, 3 of the group go to get snacks so we said we would meet in front of the hostel. Sometime later we were waiting and waiting. Then we see them coming back, so we cross the street to attempt to get a cab and the 3 lose us. They then text us that they're already in a cab. So then the 5 of us have to find a large cab and because we didn't catch them together, there was no coordination as to where on the beach we would be and we ended up a decent distance from them and because of injuries we weren't walking to each other so we stayed separate on the beach. We stayed on the beach for a while and then went back to the hostel. We all showered/ freshened up then we returned to the terrace to start drinking again until dinner. By this point, we had an unspoken agreement that we would all just take turns buying sangria and share it. The other group returned around the same time as us as well. By this time, we were comfortable with each other and the conversation consisted of a lot of jokingly making fun of people. The group of 3 that was at the beach had to go to a hospital that was right on the beach when one of the guys cut his hand opening a beer bottle. We also discussed things that were considered "common knowledge" trying to figure out how common the knowledge actually was. We also took turns imitating each other's accents. It was all in good fun though. I found out that another guy who was there, also a younger American but from Florida, had actually been to the exact place in Guatemala that I had been so we talked about that for a while. When we went onto the terrace the two American guys were eating McDonalds and that inspired a few other people to go get some. The rest of us decided that we weren't very excited about the Paella dinner, especially since we hardly got any food the night before, so we all go out to dinner and we chose

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to get kebabs. After dinner we went back to the hostel to get ready for the pub crawl. I ended up not going on the pub crawl but out to a bar with the two American guys because the older one had made some local friends the night before in a wild story that I don't understand how it happened or how he survived the night. But we went to that bar to meet his local friends for a while and then we went to Opium, one of Barcelona's favorite clubs to meet up with the rest of the group. While there, I also ran into the Australian girl from Florence again. After the club a couple of us went in search of food, but the only thing we could find open was the same convenience store by the hostel. Then there was a group of people hanging out in the stairwell again.

The next morning several people had to be awoken by the staff because they overslept their checkout time. There was also one guy in our room that was having a full volume phone conversation at 8 am. Complaining about that became a popular conversation topic. Then a group of us went to brunch because it was one of the girls' last day in Barcelona. After brunch, we went on another walking tour, this time a longish uphill walk past the Sagrada Familia to the bunkers that overlook the city. We lost several people along the way who couldn't do the walk/ heat/ hangover. But a couple of them ended up meeting us up there so I think they took a cab? We hung out at the bunkers for a while. Lots of pictures were taken and everyone joking around about it. Then we took a bus back to the hostel and people changed/freshened up/napped and returned to the terrace for drinks and conversation. Dinner that night was assorted tapas and we were all very excited about that. Afterwards we went to a bar called the "stock market" bar, where drink prices changed based on how popular the drinks were at the moment. There were some guys playing pool that were not following the rules at all/ kind of cheating/ too drunk to

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realize and it was very entertaining to watch. We stayed there for a bit but then a group of us left to get McDonalds. Then I went to bed.

The next day was my last day so I had to get up and pack. By this point several people in our group had gone, and the few that were left didn't really plan on leaving the hostel that day. So in the bit of time before my bus I walked to see the Gaudi Houses and get lunch. Then I went back to the hostel, said goodbye, and left.

Overall, this hostel experience was pretty similar to the idea or picture I had in my head about what hostels were like. The staff at the hostel were really great and interactive. They would participate in the activities too. There was one guy who worked there who was also a tattoo artist and gave I think 3 people tattoos. The guy who checked me in would greet me by name every time he saw me. The organized activities and the great common space really bonded people together. We would all just walk in and out of each other's rooms, doors were like never locked, we were sharing a lot of things: band aids, drinks, fingernail clippers, etc. Several people commented on how this was the best hostel they've stayed at. The young American from California bookended his trip here; it was the first place he stayed when he arrived in Europe. Several people wanted to stay longer but it was full, but at least a couple would come back and hang out even though they were staying at a different hostel. That included the guy who bought a pedal for the keyboard; he checked out my second day here but hung out with us on the terrace every day. I think this hostel experience rates towards the top for me as well.

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CASE STUDY 3: BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

I did not originally think that I would end up in Belgium at all for this trip. I thought that I would travel through Spain and France to get from Madrid to Paris. However, when I looked at those options, they were long travel times when I really only had 2 or 3 days to get from Madrid to Paris. But since I had that time I didn't want to fly from Madrid to Paris. There were cheap flights from Madrid to Brussels and then busses from Brussels to Paris weren't bad so I decided that would probably be my best option. Most of the trip I had booked maybe a leg or two in advanced, but from Lagos through Paris I booked everything while I was in Seville because I was on a timeline to meet one friend in Madrid and another friend in Paris.

Since my flight was at 7 am, I arrived in Brussels pretty early in the day. Also, it turned out that I flew into Brussels smaller airport that is quite a way outside the city and the only way to get into the city is a 20 euro bus. So, I didn't save as much money as I had hoped there. Then the bus only took me to the central station in Brussels and my hostel was by the north station, so I ended up taking the metro to get to the right part of Brussels. I finally made it to my hostel, but I could not get into my room yet. The hostel seemed to be full of school groups – the common areas were full but of children that seemed to know each other. I had time to kill, so I found a free walking tour and went on that. On my way to get to the tour I stopped at a grocery store and got lunch and ate it at the meeting spot for the tour while I waited for it to start. I didn't socialize too much with other people in the tour; there weren't other solos on the tour. The tour stopped at a bar for people to try Belgian beers. I wasn't really in the mood for a beer, so I decided against it. After the tour I went back to the hostel, settled into my room (there wasn't anyone in there), and took a nap. After my nap I went down to the kitchen to make something to eat for dinner. While I was heating up my leftover sandwich pieces from lunch, there were three younger boys

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and a woman in her twenties or so in the kitchen. The boys were a part of a school group and the woman was just talking to them. Her and one of the boys ended up on a conversation about planes for a really long time – one of the boys wants to be a pilot. Then some other girls from the school group came in and started making pasta. It became quite crowded in the kitchen so after I was done eating, I went back upstairs. I wasn't really sure what to do so I just laid in my bed and rested. Three girls who were together came into the room and got ready to go out for the night, I tried to have a conversation with them, but it didn't really work. I decided I would try to go to Bruges the next day, so I figured out how to do that and I went to sleep.

The next day I got up in the morning and went to Bruges. I walked around a little bit and then I decided to take another walking tour. I got some fries for lunch while I waited for the tour. This time I did try to be social but didn't really connect with anyone. After the tour I walked around the center more, went out to the windmills, came back and had some hot chocolate, and then got on the train back to Brussels. Back in Brussels I decided I wanted to watch the sunset, so I wandered around trying to find a good place. I was sitting on the steps enjoying the sunset when a guy who didn't speak very good English came up by me and started talking to me. At first, I had a conversation because I didn't want to be rude, but I just felt kind of strange about it; he stayed even when I tried to give signals that I wasn't interested in a conversation anymore. And then my phone died even though it had 30% battery left so I used that as an excuse to leave. I had to find my way back to the hostel without a map, just based on memory from going back after the tour. Luckily, I was able to make my way back without getting lost, but there was an alley I had to walk through that made me pretty nervous because I had heard yelling and such. It seemed like it kind of cleared out between when I heard the yelling and when I walked through it. I made it back to the hostel and charged my phone. Then I wanted to see the Grand Place lit

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up at night, so I went back out after my phone was charged. Honestly, it was underwhelming, and I didn't stay very long. There seemed to be a large homeless population around that area. I thought about getting a waffle, but they were all closed so I just went back to the hostel.

My bus the next day was not until late afternoon, and I had a lot of things left to try – beer, waffles, chocolate. So, I went on a hunt for them before I left. I got the waffle first. I also was still looking for new clothing items and there were a lot of stores by my hostel. Then I went to a shop recommended by the tour guide to buy some chocolate – it was the first chocolate shop owned by a woman in Belgium. Then I went to a bar to try some beer; I went to Delirium. Apparently, I didn't pick the one with the most beer options; there are like 8 different bars on the same street that all belong to Delirium but have different specialties. I didn't really know. Anyway, I sat at the bar and there were 3 other people at the bar – two men travelling together; I want to say they're American, but I wasn't sure. And another American guy. The bartender was younger and at one point said that he doesn't normally work during the day or at this specific bar. I ask for his recommendation on what beer to drink and it was pretty good. The solo American asked me details about my trip; he was just taking a shorter trip. The bartender told us about a certain kind of alcohol that was really strong but tasted terrible and offered to play a game and loser took a shot. The game was trying to get coasters thrown like frisbees to hit a certain spot on the wall. The bartender was the one throwing them and if he made it, we would have a shot, if he didn't make it he would take a shot. I can't even remember if he made it or not because we all just took a (free) shot of the terrible alcohol; it tasted like nail polish remover. The bartender also gave us bowls of chips and cheese. I was enjoying the conversation and I still had time before my bus, so I ended up ordering a second beer before going back to the hostel to get my bag and to the bus stop.

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INCORPORATION

The final stage of any rite of passage is incorporation. In the case of travelling, this is reincorporation upon returning home from the time spent abroad. However, one returns home more cosmopolitan – travel was used as a form of education, to increase worldliness, social awareness, and sophistication (Ting & Kahl, 2016). I will term this more cosmopolitan identity as “Identity C”. Though ritual, one usually passes from a lower status to a higher one, and I would consider a more cosmopolitan identity to have a higher status. This change between statuses is accomplished by a period of statuslessness, (Turner, 1969).

All travelers must return to structure as some point, and most intend to return to their original lifestyles upon returning home, but reintegration can be strange. The process of reintegration looks different depending on the motivation to travel. Those who were motivated by a separate transitional phase or “life crisis” will go through multiple incorporation phases and their new lifestyle could be quite different. There are a few who do not return though and instead make travelling their indefinite alternative (Ting & Kahl, 2016) like Matt from Rethymno. Those who were motivated by opportunity, like me, must reintegrate into the same societies and structure from before they left. There can be a disconnect between the way you occupied this society with Identity A and with Identity C. A point of *communitas* and collective effervescence is the escape from societal norms and returning to them can require adjustment. Another point is that this anti-structure can help you scrutinize the culture and values of structure and may leave one skeptical of many facets.

I have experienced this shift in occupation within your own society, but the shift wasn't felt upon my immediate return, but rather on my return to routine. My immediate return was met with exhaustion. I spent two days in Philadelphia visiting a friend who was about to leave for her

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own abroad adventure. I spent most of those two days in bed watching Netflix because I was so worn out from my trip to do anything else. Then I went home to Missouri for two weeks of whirlwind activity. The first weekend I was home, my extended family went camping at the lake and rented a boat. This was my idea, as this was something we would do all the time when I was younger but hadn't done as much recently so it was a special treat. Then in that next week I was trying to see as many family members and friends as possible since it had been at least 8 months since I had seen any of them. I was recounting my travels and answering the impossible questions about favorite places over and over.

Once I returned to Penn, I thought I would be returning to my original lifestyle and routine. I was returned to being a student, my sorority, my theater group, and my friends. But in a lot of ways things were different. I struggle to have the same study and work habits I had before I left. I feel disconnected from my sorority because we had 50 new members who I did not know, and they did not know me. I also felt disconnected because some of the people I was closest with, because they either graduated or were abroad. My theatre groups fall show had a lot of freshman, so it was all new experiences there as well. The people that I spend most of my time with now are different than the people I spent most of my time with before I left. I am closer now with some people who I was not very close with before I went abroad. But I am also more distanced from other friends, like my roommate of 2 years whom I hardly see anymore because we don't live together. I also became more critical of the social atmosphere at Penn, constantly comparing it with the social fluidity that you can find abroad in hostels.

As I returned and started planning for my post grad life, I found myself wishing that instead of finding a job and leading a responsible life, I could travel again. I liked my Identity B's (mostly) and want to be back in a transitional phase.

PART III – CONCLUSIONS

Reasons to travel vary greatly from person to person, but those who embark on a long-term trip hope the trip will bring personal growth. They hope to become more cosmopolitan, more aware of social issues, and understand themselves better. Travelling is a rite of passage to this new identity.

My participant observation research of backpackers in Western Europe affirms these ideas. Not only did I witness people change through their travels, I also experienced the rites of passage and was changed by my time abroad.

This passage and change is accomplished primarily during the liminal phase of the rites of passage. In long term travel, the liminal phase earns a kind of autonomy in which the rites of passage are cyclically repeated. Through the repetitive separation, transition, and integration, the identity goes through changes at a high rate. This integration (and subsequent separation) is fueled by the communal experience of *communitas* and collective effervescence which foster strong bonds.

To continue this research, I think it would be interesting to compare and contrast my findings with experiences in other parts of the world that are popular for backpackers, like South East Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe. I predict that the framework of the rites would be the same, but the rituals would vary slightly.

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