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I

Theoretical and empirical background

Ethnicity, class, and religion provide important foci for social cleavages, identifications, and consciousness in many societies, including Israeli society. They differ in many respects but they also converge and interrelate in complex ways. An empirical study of these divisions, including their institutional, behavioral, and subjective forms, is the centerpiece of this book. The dimensions that we decided to study and the questions that we asked can be best understood within the theoretical and empirical framework provided in this part. Here we give the greatest amount of attention to ethnicity, and chapter 1 provides an overview of the definitions, concepts, and theoretical perspectives in the sociological study of ethnicity. The intention is not to provide a complete review of the literature in one chapter but to focus on those topics in the general literature on ethnicity that we believe are relevant to an analysis of ethnicity in Israel. A short review of the relationships between ethnicity and class and between ethnicity and religion is also provided. Chapter 2 sets out the general historical development and present state of ethnic divisions among the Israeli-Jewish population, and chapter 3 discusses critically the theoretical perspectives on ethnicity in Israeli sociology. Our study focuses on four of the largest groups of origin in Israel: Jews from Morocco, Iraq, Rumania, and Poland. Chapter 4 describes the cultural and social background of these groups in the diaspora, their cultural and social profiles in Israeli society, and their position in Beer Sheva, the specific setting of our empirical research.

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Ethnicity and society

Many social scientists have perceived a "resurgence" or "revival" of ethnicity in recent decades in many societies. The analysis of the reassertion of ethnic identities, the emergence and growth of ethnic movements, and the pervasiveness of ethnic conflicts has been one of the most important growth areas of sociology in the last two decades. It is admitted that sociologists and political scientists in the 1950s and early 1960s had assumed that ethnicity was declining in importance, and that it would continue to decline in the future. Western states had been held up as "nation states" that had succeeded over the centuries to assimilate and amalgamate diverse peoples, and many expected that the newly independent states in Africa and Asia would follow suit. Ethnicity was often associated with traditional societies, and it was expected that the process of modernization would weaken such ascription-based groups.

The growth of ethnicity and ethnic conflict has been analyzed as a universal or world-wide phenomenon. Not only have "tribal" or ethnic differences posed acute obstacles to the "nation-building" of newly independent states, but ethnic groups have appeared to endanger what had been considered the accomplished unity of European states. In multinational states, such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, ethnic divisions and conflicts have perhaps only become more manifest and politicized, but indigenous ethnic movements have also appeared in countries, such as Britain and France, which had been considered unified nations. Post-Second World War immigrants, such as Indians, Pakistanis, and West Indians in Britain, North Africans in France, and "guest workers" in other western and central European states, have added to the number of "race relations" predicaments. The "nation of immigrants," the United States, has also received new waves of immigrants, especially from Central America and from South East Asia, but ethnic conflicts have taken their most violent forms among American blacks in the ghetto riots of the late 1960s, and there was also what many termed an "ethnic revivalism" among white ethnic groups who were well into their third or even fourth generations in America.

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Some authors have emphasized that the recent ethnic upsurge is only a wave in a long historical process, but the apparently global nature of the "revival" has brought forth global explanations. Intensified ethnicity is said to be a response to the decline of traditional groups, such as the extended family and the local community in modern mass society. It is claimed that, in the impersonal modern society, people still have the need to identify with a social unit that is larger than the nuclear family and smaller than the state, and that the ethnic group provides such an identity (Glazer, 1983: ch. 12). Ethnic problems become more acute in the process of "nation-building," because modern states aspire to national integration and some groups have objected to becoming an integral part of a single order (Orans, 1971; Alexander, 1980). By becoming the major distributor of national resources, the state has unintentionally encouraged ethnic groups to mobilize in order to seek concessions (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). Urbanization and mobility have increased contacts among ethnic groups, some of whom feel relatively deprived in comparison with other groups or have come to feel that their cultural distinctiveness is threatened. The development of communications has also had a "demonstration effect"; an awareness of ethnic groups who have achieved special rights or independence encourages other groups to seek the same for themselves (Connor, 1977).

Although the global explanations may explain part of the phenomenon in many cases, they tend to fit some cases better than others where they may be much less important or totally irrelevant. Ethnicity as a response to alienation in mass society is hardly a factor in undeveloped countries, and explanations such as relative economic deprivation or cultural deprivation are belied by a case such as the Basques who are relatively prosperous in comparison with other groups in Spain and demonstrate little interest in using their own language (Connor, 1977). The problems of finding common explanations point to the complexity and multidimensionality of ethnicity and the variety of ethnic situations and relations. Different causes and combinations of causes will be found because what is defined as ethnicity covers a very wide range of phenomena with many different characteristics.

One important difference among forms of ethnicity is that between nationalist and non-nationalist forms; the former, ethnonationalism, includes a demand for an independent state or at least considerable political autonomy. Ethnonationalism is a widespread phenomenon in a world where there are very few nation-states; that is to say, there are few states or territorial-political units in which the great majority of the population identify with a single nation or people who believe that they

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have a common ancestry (Connor, 1978). Since the French Revolution, in which the demand for popular sovereignty and national identity were fused, nationalism as an ideology and social movement has spread throughout most of the world. In many countries, the recent revival of ethnicity would appear to be related to the widespread acceptance of nationalist ideologies (Smith, 1981; Connor, 1977).

A nation is a particular type of ethnic group or community; its members, or a significant proportion of them, live within a definable territory, and if they are nationalists, they maintain or aspire to some degree of political autonomy. Not all ethnic groups are nations, and ethnonationalism is only one form of ethnicity. There are important differences, for example, between the ethnicity of Italian-Americans or Polish-Americans in the United States, and the ethnicity of separatist and irredentist movements in many multinational states.

Although there may be many alternative explanations of ethnonationalism, its strength and characteristics are often very evident. The same cannot be said of the non-nationalist forms of ethnicity whose features appear to be far more problematic and have occasioned many disputes among sociologists, not only over appropriate models and theories, but also over empirical issues regarding the forms and directions that ethnic group identities and strategies are taking. For example, the "new ethnicity" of white ethnic groups in the United States has been viewed as an important phenomenon by some, and as such it has been both celebrated and condemned (Novak, 1972; Stein and Hill, 1977), whereas others have judged it a "myth" or a phenomenon with little real content (Gans, 1979; Steinberg, 1981; Patterson, 1979).

Disagreement among sociologists over the characterization and conceptualization of ethnicity among different Jewish groups of origin in Israel is at least as great as that among sociologists of ethnicity in the United States. Sociologists of Israeli society might agree that ethnonationalism is confined to the division between Jews and Arabs, and that the form of ethnicity that divides Israeli-Jewish groups remains within the boundaries of Israeli and Jewish identities shared by the vast majority of Israeli Jews, but they have hotly disputed the nature and forms of those identities that relate to the countries and continents of origin of Israeli Jews. Although the ethnic division between Jews and Arabs in Israel may be thought of as a more important problem, in the sense of separation and divisiveness, the problematical and possibly paradoxical nature of ethnic divisions among Israeli Jews have made it a more intricate puzzle for sociological inquiry.

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Definition of ethnicity

A few sociologists have questioned the appropriateness of the terms ethnicity and ethnic groups to the Israeli-Jewish context. The term *edah* (plural, *edot*), meaning community, is used in Israel to distinguish Israeli-Jewish groups according to their country of origin. The term is used more commonly to refer to the Jewish groups from North Africa and Asia ("Moroccan *edah*," "Yemenite *edah*," etc.) who are often referred to collectively as *edot ha'Mizrach* (communities of the East) or Mizrachim (Easterners). Less commonly, the term *edah* is applied to Jews from Europe and America ("Poles," "Anglo-Saxons," etc.), who are collectively known as *edot Ashkenaz* or Ashkenazim. When they have written in English, most Israeli sociologists have used the term "ethnic group" interchangeable with *edah*, and have referred to the communal consciousness of these groups as "ethnicity." Ernest Krausz (1986) objects to this usage as misleading and suggests that the term "subcultures" is sufficient in order to delineate the differences among Jewish groups of origin in Israel. Our disagreement with Krausz is not only a semantic or definitional quibble, but reflects our different understanding of the phenomenon in question. However, some discussion of definitions would be useful at this point.

Many recent definitions of "ethnic group" have included both objective and subjective components (Marger, 1985: 7–8). The objective elements refer to the distinctive cultural and symbolic characteristics of the group. These may include "core" elements such as language or religion, but a distinctive language or religion is not generally regarded as a necessary condition; subcultural differences may be sufficient, or physical appearance, such as color, may also provide the major symbolic differentiation. The subjective element is the sense of kinship and community, the "we" feeling that relates to a belief in a common ancestry and group history. There may be little or no objective evidence of common ancestors, and it is possible that the presumed history of the group is largely fictitious, but myths can be potent and it is the group's representations of itself that are important here.

When defining and characterizing the ethnic group, some social scientists have focused exclusively on one or the other of these two elements. Barth (1969), for example, wrote that ethnic groups can only be understood in terms of boundary creation and maintenance, and that a shared culture should be regarded as a result rather than a primary or definitional characteristic. According to this conception, ethnicity is a corporate identity that exists independently of any particular cultural

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features. The latter may be used to indicate the boundary, but they are likely to change in accordance with boundary maintenance. Alternative definitions, focusing on culture, have emphasized that phenomena such as religion and language are "primordial" or "natural" attachments on a par with kinship; they are absolute ties that can not be reduced to or explained by other factors (Geertz, 1963).

There is no need to accept either of these extreme positions. Cultural factors need not be characterized as primordial, but, without some reference to cultural similarities and differences, it would not be possible to locate ethnic categories or groups (Smith, 1984). With regard to the subjective element, some knowledge or awareness of common characteristics would not be sufficient to characterize an ethnic group; another term such as "ethnic aggregate" or "category" might be used instead. The term "ethnic group" is more usefully limited to cases where members attribute importance to such characteristics, and these feelings have implications for their social interaction with others. Ethnicity or an ethnic consciousness implies an affective identification with the group and a commitment to the group's cultural heritage (cf. McKay and Lewis, 1978).

In his critique of the application of the term "ethnic group" to refer to Jewish groups of origin in Israel, Krausz takes as his point of reference Ben-Rafael's (1982: 24) definition. According to this definition, a group qualifies as ethnic when it has some primordial attributes, particular socio-cultural features, and a consciousness of constituting a group different from others in the same setting. Krausz admits that Israeli Jews may be divided by these characteristics, but he argues that with respect to all three attributes, what unifies Israeli Jews is stronger and more important than what divides them.

Even though Krausz refers to Israeli-Jewish groups as having "primordial bonds," he states that the primordial element of the definition is the most problematic in the Israeli-Jewish case. He writes that Israeli Jews share a common religion, trace their origins to a common source and, in addition to the ancient history of their common ancestors, they share parallel historical experiences of dispersion and persecution. These commonalities represent the deepest level of primordialism upon which are superimposed the "subcultural" differences in communal histories, languages, and culture that were brought from the more immediate countries of origin.

Krausz does not address Ben-Rafael's argument that the ethnicity of the *edot* from North Africa and Asia stems from the fact that they do not differentiate between their Judaism (what Krausz terms the deeper

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primordialism) and their specific cultural legacies (what Krausz terms the superimposed primordial elements). Krausz implies that the *edot* from Asia and North America consider their "subcultures" as only variations of a common core, and they are not, therefore, interested in perpetuating their separateness; their aspirations are limited to achieving socio-economic equality and finding acceptance on equal terms in Israeli society. The implications of Ben-Rafael's argument are different. He acknowledges that there is almost unanimous acceptance of the ideology of the "fusion of the exiles," but the groups' identification of their Judaism with their cultural heritage is likely to perpetuate differences, at least in the lower strata of the North African and Asian *edot* who have little social interaction with Ashkenazim at the primary group level.

Krausz argues that relations among Israeli-Jewish groups are not a variation of, but quite different from, the type known as interethnic relations. However, his comparisons with other societies point to differences in degree rather than kind. He admits that boundaries exist but argues that they are less rigid than among ethnic groups in other societies, pluralism exists but it is less divisive because of the overall unifying bonds, and conflicts exist but they are less fundamental than elsewhere. But if these are only differences in degree, it is not clear at what point it is possible to distinguish between ethnic differences and those that are merely "subcultural." Pointing to examples, such as black–white relations in South Africa and England, emphasizes the differences, but other examples, such as the relations among white ethnic groups in the United States, appear much less evidently different in type. Socio-cultural differences and consciousness of kind among some American ethnic groups may even be weaker than among some Israeli-Jewish groups.

In a case such as the United States, it might also be argued that the factors that unify most of the groups of origin are stronger than the factors that divide them. Of course, the factors that unify in the United States are not as "ethnic" as those that unify Israeli Jews; most Americans do not lay claim to a common ancient ancestry or history. However, most Americans do identify with the "founding fathers" and the history of the American "nation," even if their own particular ancestors were not among the participants. In a sense Americans adopt (and are adopted by) common ancestors and the national history, and this adopted nationhood is not generally considered less fundamental than the particular ancestry and history of the ethnic groups.

Just as it is too general to understand ethnic groups in the United States, the term "subcultural" is too general to understand the specific character of Israeli-Jewish groups of origin. We can agree that the

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differences are subcultural (as they are among ethnic groups in some other societies), but there are also subcultural differences among socio-economic strata and among communities that differ in their levels and forms of religiosity. How then should the subcultures of groups from different recent origins be characterized? We submit that "ethnic sub-culture" is a suitable characterization.

General statements that the common cultural and identificational components among Israeli Jews are more fundamental than their cultural and identificational differences are true in a sense, but they lack contextual qualifications. If the context is the Israeli-Arab conflicts or Jewish-Arab relations within Israel and the occupied territories, such statements are likely to be accepted. If the contextual frame is limited to the Israeli-Jewish population, such general statements are far more contentious. Most Israeli Jews will rank their Jewish and Israeli identifications before any subethnic identification based on country or area of origin – and these ethnonational identities have no doubt been reinforced by the protracted conflict of Israeli Jews with Arab countries and with the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza – but in their perceptions and interactions with each other these identities often remain in the background and it is the subethnic identities that become the focus of differentiation and symbolization.

Krausz implies that the common Jewish ethnic identity of Israeli Jews rules out the possibility of ethnic identities based on communities of origin. Our position is that it is possible for people to have more than one identification based on common descent. National and ethnic identifications contain cultural definitions of kinship, and they can vary, like biological kin, in terms of "closeness" and "distance" and in their relative importance with regard to loyalty, pride, social activities, and cultural orientations. It is possible for a national-ethnic identification, encompassing the entire "extended family," to coexist with ethnic or subethnic identifications that encompass branches of that "family." All Jews are said to stem from one family that began with the Patriarch Abraham and many Israeli Jews do conceive of themselves as kinsmen, but the association of recent geographical origins with cultural and socio-economic divisions has led many of them to distinguish these ties of putative kinship in terms of "closeness" and "distance" (cf. Shokeid and Deshen, 1982).

Dimensions of ethnicity and ethnic group relations

The concepts and theories in the field of ethnic relations and ethnicity have been usefully applied to the study of *edot* in Israel. A recent

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typology (George, 1984) that distinguishes four sociological approaches in the general field will be shown in chapter 3 to describe the different theoretical orientations among Israeli sociologists. The first approach, that was largely initiated by the Chicago school in the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. Park, 1928), focuses on the problems of immigrant groups and their difficulties in adapting to their environment. The second, a socio-psychological orientation that was classically formulated in the Authoritarian Personality study (Adorno *et al.*, 1950), focuses on prejudice and attitudes toward minorities. The third, the pluralist approach, emphasizes power and relationships of dominance and conflict (e.g. Kuper, 1965; van den Berghe, 1978). Finally, the fourth approach considers ethnicity as a reflection of class interests and divisions (Bonacich, 1980).

This typology may not be exhaustive, but perhaps the major concern of all approaches in the field has been to describe and explain the degrees and modes of integration and separation of ethnic groups. The recognition of the complexity of ethnicity has led a number of scholars to propose typologies of dimensions. One of the best known is that of Gordon (1964) who distinguished a number of variables of assimilation, among the most important being acculturation, structural assimilation, and identificational assimilation. Acculturation refers to the process when an immigrant or ethnic group changes its cultural patterns to those of another group or the host society. Structural assimilation refers to the entrance of members of an ethnic group into the institutions, organizations, and primary groups of the host society. Identificational assimilation refers to the development of a sense of peoplehood based on that of the host society.

The relationships among these variables can vary considerably, but Gordon argued that, whereas acculturation could occur without any of the other types of assimilation, if structural assimilation occurs, the other types of assimilation will accompany or follow it. Extensive acculturation and assimilation are likely to weaken a group's identity, but studies of white ethnic groups in the United States indicate that this process often falls short of deleting ethnic affinity entirely. Whether through food, the naming of the newborn, or participating in ethnic festivals, the ethnic identity often survives, even though it may appear to many as shallow or merely symbolic (Gans, 1979).

Gordon did not suggest that assimilation is inevitable, and it is quite possible for the processes discussed to move in an opposite direction. For example, the term deacculturation might be used to refer to a situation where an ethnic group reinforces or extends its cultural distinctiveness and moves culturally further away from the host society (Sharot, 1976: 2).

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However, Gordon's major empirical reference was the United States, and his discussion tended to stress the varying degrees and forms of assimilation of immigrant groups into the host American society. Other authors, using the term pluralism rather than assimilation, have emphasized the continuation or emergence of group divisions in a variety of settings. Their conceptual distinctions largely parallel those of Gordon. An important distinction is made between cultural pluralism, that refers to differences in values, norms, and customs, and social pluralism, that refers to the social boundaries or limited social interaction among groups. Further distinctions within these dimensions are sometimes made, such as the distinction between secondary or formal pluralism, referring to the level of separation in impersonal frameworks or institutions, and primary or informal pluralism, referring to the level of separation in areas such as friendship and marriage (Marger, 1985: 79–84).

A further dimension of the integration or separation of ethnic groups is ethnic stratification or inequality. In Gordon's discussion there was an emphasis on the "criss-crossing" of class and ethnic groups, and he suggested the term "ethclass" to refer to the subsociety that was created by the intersection of the vertical line of ethnicity and the horizontal line of social class. He noted that those of the same ethnic group will share a historical identification or sense of peoplehood, but only within the ethclass will there be behavioral similarities and primary social interaction. Sociologists advocating the pluralist and class approaches to ethnicity have tended to emphasize the overlap of ethnic and class divisions. It is evident, however, that the relationships of ethnic and class differences vary greatly. They range from cases, such as those in Switzerland, where the ethnic lines approximate to the vertical crossing of the class structure, to cases, such as those in South Africa, where the ethnic lines converge largely with class differences.

In discussing ethnic stratification, it is important to distinguish socioeconomic or class differences, that refer to the ethnic groups' relative distributions of wealth, income, occupations, and education, and ethnic status, that refers to the relative prestige of an ethnic group within a society. The class distribution and status of an ethnic group are likely to be related, but in many cases they can also be differentiated (cf. Weber, 1968: ch. 9). A combination of factors may result in an ethnic stigma, so that economic or occupational mobility will not be accompanied by an equivalent rise in status. The status of an ethnic group may be evaluated by other groups with reference to physical characteristics, such as color, or cultural characteristics, such as the degree of "westernization" or closeness to the dominant culture. A further dimension of ethnic stratifi-

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