

WORKING PAPERS

JEW, ARABS AND ARAB JEWS: THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY AND REPRODUCTION IN ISRAEL

Clare Louise Ducker

February 2006

Working Paper Series No. 421

Institute of Social Studies

**JEW, ARABS AND ARAB JEWS:
THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY AND REPRODUCTION
IN ISRAEL***

Clare Louise Ducker

February 2006

Working Paper Series No. 421

Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the author:

c/o ORPAS - Institute of Social Studies - P.O. Box 29776
2502LT The Hague - The Netherlands

workingpapers@iss.nl

* This paper received an ISS MA Research Paper Award for the academic year 2004-2005.

The Institute of Social Studies is Europe's longest-established centre of higher education and research in development studies. Post-graduate teaching programmes range from six-week diploma courses to the PhD programme. Research at ISS is fundamental in the sense of laying a scientific basis for the formulation of appropriate development policies. The academic work of ISS is disseminated in the form of books, journal articles, teaching texts, monographs and working papers. The Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes the research of staff, PhD participants and visiting fellows, and outstanding research papers by graduate students.

For a list of available Working Papers and how to order see the last page of this Working Paper.

Some of the latest Working Papers are published full text (or abstract and content page) on the website: www.iss.nl (Publications / Working Papers Series).

For further information contact:

ORPAS - **Institute of Social Studies** - P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague - The Netherlands - FAX: +31 70 4260799

E-mail: **workingpapers@iss.nl**

ISSN 0921-0210

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Politics of Terminology	3
1.3 The Research	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
2.1 The Analytical Framework	6
2.2 The Methodology	10
CHAPTER THREE	11
3.1 The Jews of Dar al-Islam	11
3.2 The Jews of Palestine	12
3.3 The British Mandate Period & Zionism	14
3.4 Zionism & Arab Nationalism	16
3.5 “Jews in the Form of Arabs”	19
CHAPTER FOUR	21
4.1 Population & Fertility Trends	21
CHAPTER FIVE	28
5.1 Class & Racial Formation in Israel	28
5.2 Resistance & Identity	35
CHAPTER SIX	37
6.1 “Quality Control”: Concerns in the Zionist Establishment	37
6.2 Stolen Generations	41
6.3 “Malthusian Couples” & the Demographic War	42
6.4 Lies, Damn Lies & Statistics	44
6.5 Fertility Policy & Class Structure	46
CHAPTER SEVEN	50
7.1 Arab and Jewish?	50
7.2 Conclusions	52
REFERENCES	55
APPENDIX	58

*Excuse me for prying, but I just have to ask you, are you Jewish or Arab?
I'm an Arab Jew.
You're funny.
No, I'm quite serious.
Arab Jew? I've never heard of that.
It's simple: Just the way you say you're an American Jew. Here, try to say "European Jews."
European Jews.
Now, say "Arab Jews."
You can't compare, European Jews is something else.
How come?
Because "Jew" just doesn't go with "Arab," it just doesn't go. It doesn't even sound right.
Depends on your ear.
Look, I've got nothing against Arabs. I even have friends who are Arabs, but how can you say
"Arab Jew" when all the Arabs want is to destroy the Jews?
And how can you say "European Jew" when the Europeans have already destroyed the Jews?*

*It was only when I left that I remembered
I hadn't wanted to get so involved,
I really only wanted to tell her
that my first babysitter in Morocco was a Muslim girl
and that I have a black-and-white photo of her in an old album
sitting on the mosaic tiles in the courtyard
and that when I was a new Moroccan stiletto immigrant
I tried in vain to recall a little boy's conversation
with his babysitter in Moroccan Arabic.
And whenever we brought her up, my mother would say:
How she loved you, she never left you for a second.*

- An excerpt from the poem 'Who is a Jew and what kind of Jew?'
by Sami Shalom Chetrit (1996)

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

While the bulk of anti-Zionist literature has tended to focus on the disastrous effects of the creation of the state of Israel upon the indigenous Palestinian population and its consequences, including the present day endemic discrimination faced by Palestinian citizens of Israel (Lustick 1980), there is relatively little recognition of the tragedies that befell Jews from Arab countries (and also from Turkey, Iran, India & Ethiopia) during and after the creation of Israel in 1948. It is rarely acknowledged that Jews from the Arab world have been politically, economically and socially marginalized by the ruling Ashkenazi¹ elite and have suffered discrimination based on their appearance and cultural affinity – a phenomenon that is an inseparable part of the Zionist discrimination against Palestinians and Arabs as a whole (Giladi 1990:208). Professor Yehouda Shenhav (1996) has remarked that the new historians – those Israeli historians who have exposed the Zionist myths surrounding the creation of the state of Israel as ‘a land without people, for a people without land’ and revealed the massacres, expulsions and ill-treatment of Palestinians that occurred during the creation of Israel – have excluded from their revision of Israeli history the many injustices inflicted on Jews who came from the Arab world. The lack of recognition of the plight (and even existence) of Arab Jews is reflected in descriptions of the conflict in the Middle East as ‘a conflict between Jews and Arabs’ despite the fact that about fifty percent of Israel’s Jewish population are also Arab (Kanaaneh 2002:43).

Israel, defined as the “Jewish State” but whose founding members were all European asserted from the outset the European character the Jewish state would take: Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, wrote that the Jewish state would serve as “*the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to oriental barbarism*”.² Conceptions of East versus West, of the modern and civilized world against the backward and barbaric “other” are a recurrent theme in Zionist literature and which are directly associated with the colonial Europe Zionism emerged from. During the first Zionist Congress, European Zionists consistently addressed themselves only to Ashkenazi Jews, rejecting the non-Ashkenazim and opposing the “tainting” of the settlements in Palestine with an admission of

¹ Jews of European origin.

² Herzl T ‘The Jewish State’ cited in Giladi (1990:208).

“Levantine Jews” (Shohat 1999:9). Zionism’s answer to the “Jewish question” was therefore an analysis of the “European Jewish question” deliberately not concerning itself with the Jews from the Middle East, Asia and Africa (Massad 1996:54). It can thus be seen that Zionism is actually an Ashkenazi nationalist movement, a movement established by and for Jews of European origin (Giladi 1990:67).

The repercussions of this movement though have had far-reaching effects not only upon the identity of Palestinians but also on Jews from all over the world (Massad 1996:54). Within Israel, and beyond, conceptions of “Jewishness” were subsumed by Zionism’s growing hegemonic status and “Jewishness” made synonymous with Zionism itself and therefore with European Jewish history and culture (Yuval Davis 1991:85; Shohat 1999:8). Through the Zionists’ lens the European Jews were seen as modern and scientific, the bearers of civilisation. The Arabs, on the other hand, were seen as backward, superstitious and primitive (such ideas reflected the prevailing European colonialist attitudes of the time which Zionist settlers had been imbued with) and classified as the common historic Jewish enemy (Kananneh 2002:4). Thus “Jew” and “Arab” have been constructed as two separate and antagonistic categories. The existence of Arab Jews therefore confuses these essentialist definitions of identity and challenges the homogeneity of such categories, which like most conceptions of race or nation are just that – concepts, constructions, which in reality are never that simple (Shohat 1999:10). Shiko Behar an activist and academic in Israel writes (1997:3) that

prior to the eventual antagonist consolidation of Arab and Jewish nationalisms – we, Arab-Jews, were Arabs and we, Arab-Jews, were Jews. There would have been no need to state these tautologies was it not the case that many Israelis and Arabs still appear surprised to hear the term “Arab Jews”, or to historically discover our very possibility and existence...It seems our 2,500 years of continuing history in the entire Middle East should have been sufficient to clarify that no mystery is inherent in our allegedly oxymoronic Arab-Jewish entity. However, given the Zionist and Arab nationalist historiographic and academic brutality toward our history, it is clear why this phenomenon is not so coincidental.

Thus within the vast expanse of academic study on Israel and the conflict in the Middle East, exists a lacuna of academic research on the histories and experiences of Arab Jews, which as this paper will endeavour to show, offers an indispensable

perspective on the post-colonial creation of nations and identities in general, and on the conflict in the Middle East in particular.³

1.2 The Politics of Terminology

The “Oriental” identity that was imposed by the Ashkenazi establishment on Jews who came from the Arab world has been internalised and twisted around by Arab Jews themselves and used to lay claim not only to their heritage but also to their situation as a people facing widespread prejudice (Massad 1996:54). Ella Shohat (1999:13) argues that the delegitimization of Middle Eastern culture has boomeranged in the face of, what she terms as, ‘Euro-Israel’, as this new collective identity born out of resistance and solidarity against racial discrimination and oppression, uniting Jews from Yemen to Morocco emerged. The term “Mizrahim” (literally “Easterners” or “Orientals”) came to be used in the 1980s by leftist non-Ashkenazi activists and it gradually began to replace the term “Sephardim”, which literally refers to Jews of Spanish origin (Shohat 1999:13). The term “Mizrahim” is inclusive of all non-Ashkenazi Jews and signifies more than just place of origin as it evokes the specific experience of non-Ashkenazim in Israel (ibid.). The creation of a new collective identity served to recognise a shared experience and recent history comprised of high levels of poverty; of state ambivalence and discrimination; of over representation in Israel’s low paid jobs, isolated “development” towns, slum areas and prisons; of under representation in Israel’s universities and political institutions; but also of the resistance movements and struggles for equality and social justice (Aidi 2002; Giladi 1990; Shohat 1999; Swirski 2001). Although the terms “Mizrahi”, “Sephardi” and “Arab Jew” are often used interchangeably, “Sephardi” is seen as an inaccurate term

³ This is not to suggest that there is no research or academic writing by Arab Jews, or other anti-Zionist writers, on the histories and experiences of Arab Jews but that relative to the research on the Palestinian population and on the conflict (the focus of which is usually on Israelis and/or Jews as a whole, and the Palestinians, and/or the Arab Muslim world), it is far smaller in quantity. In addition the work that has been completed often lacks the same level of recognition that research on other Israeli/Palestinian topics receive and there are a number of reasons for this: Firstly non-Ashkenazim are excluded from the academic world in Israel, particularly in anthropology and other social sciences, thus a large amount of research about Jews from Asia & Africa in Israel has typically been conducted by the Ashkenazi elite and is heavily rooted in Modernization theory and Orientalism (Lavie 2003; Dahan Kalev 2001). Secondly those academics who do write about discrimination, the political economy, Zionism and the conflict are marginalised by the Israeli academic mainstream and as the bulk of their work is written in Hebrew and relatively little is translated (due to the lack of financial resources) it therefore rarely makes its way outside of Israel to a wider audience. Works by academics such as Ella Shohat and Sami Shalom Chetrit amongst others, are more well-known and this is because they are or have been based outside of Israel.

referring only to Jews of Spanish origins and has been perceived as privileging links to Europe while disregarding Jewish roots in Africa and Asia (Shohat 1999:13). Especially since Jews have been living in Ethiopia and in the region of what is modern day Iraq, Yemen and Iran before the establishment of the Jewish community in Spain (Allouche 2003:13). This paper will therefore use the term “Mizrahi” and will only use the term “Sephardi” when referencing another author who has done so. While it is recognised that the term “Mizrahim” covers all Jews of non-European origin including Jews of non-Arab origin, it will still be used with the term “Arab Jews”. There are a number of reasons for this: firstly the overwhelming majority of Mizrahi Jews are Arab Jews (Goldscheider 1996:30); secondly the term “Mizrahim” reflects the common historical discrimination faced by all Jews of non-European origin in Israel; and thirdly the term “Mizrahim” is directly linked with the uprisings and resistance movements that took place in Israel in the seventies led by the largely North African (Arab Jewish) community.

Even the term “Arab Jew” is a heavily politicised one but then all collective identities are inherently political (Shiran 1991:303). For Jews in Israel to define yourself as part of an ethnic group is still quite radical and few Mizrahim will actually define themselves as such, or as “Arab Jews”, or indeed “Jewish Arabs”.⁴ When these terms are used by Mizrahim it is deliberate and signifies a political consciousness that recognises the historical roots of the contemporary Mizrahi situation – the forced, deliberate severance of their Jewish identity from their Arab identity, the efforts to erase their Arab past and the monopolisation of power and resources by the Ashkenazim (indeed the term “Ashkenazi” has come to signify the hegemonic white elite in the Israeli context (Shohat 2001)). Thus to define oneself as an “Arab Jew” represents resistance against the forces of erasure, denial and self hate. The heavy politicisation of these terms reflects the politicisation of identity in Israel generally, indeed the primary criterion of belonging to the state of Israel is founded in identity not citizenship (Rouhana 1998:281), which accentuates the ambivalent position of the Arab Jewish identity in Israel, and why for some, this term is still considered a misnomer.

⁴ Conversation with Ilana Sugavker, Tel Aviv, 6/10/05.

1.3 The Research

By 1980 the fertility rate of Mizrahi Jews had decreased by fifty percent from fertility levels in 1950 (the beginning of the period of immigration of large numbers of Jews from the Arab world to Israel), a time period of just thirty years (Goldscheider 1996:205). This fertility decline is typically explained as a result of increased exposure to “Israeli norms”, and that as immigrants from the Arab world were more ‘exposed to Israeli culture and a modern economy’ the more easily they adopted ‘modern, Western patterns of fertility’ (see Okun 1997; Goldcheider & Friedlander 1986). These explanations reflect the Zionist narrative of “rescue” and “modernisation” of the Jews from the Arab world, which claim that the Mizrahim have been “saved” by Zionism from their “backward, oppressive” countries of origin, bringing them out of the “Dark Ages” and into the “Modern world” (Shohat 1998:5). In fact the higher fertility of non-European Jews was seen as evidence of their “primitive” and “uncivilised” cultures (Melamed 2005:35) and the transition to lower rates of fertility has therefore been presented as part of their “journey into modernity.” This “transition into modernity” is largely a euphemism for the eradication of their Arabic identity and assimilation into Euro-Israeli society (Shohat 1998:16). And this assimilation into Euro-Israeli society was, in turn, a euphemism for the channelling of Arab Jews into the low-wage end of the labour market. The objective of this research is therefore to demonstrate that these explanations, put forward by mainstream Israeli sociologists and demographers, do not reflect the complexities involved in reproductive decision making, nor the contextual ambivalence of Arab Jews in Israeli society.

The approach of this paper to understanding changes in fertility trends of certain groups of the population follows the ‘political economy of fertility’ framework described by Greenhalgh (1990) (see Chapter two), which understands changes in fertility to reflect changes in the structure of opportunities, which is shaped and defined by historically developed conditions and processes. The questions this study concerns itself with therefore, relate to how opportunity structures facing non-European Jews have been defined, controlled and shaped and by whom. It asks what role the assault on their Arab identity and the prevalence of modernisation and reproductive discourses, in policy and in the public arena, have played in constructions of the self and the family. This paper therefore explores the history of

Jews in the Arab world and the historical processes that led to their settlement in Israel; it also considers the historical processes behind the class and racial formations in Israeli society; and examines a range of demographic and welfare policies, concentrating particularly on the dynamics between poverty, ethnicity and class in Israel, and the power of modernisation and reproductive discourses on negotiations of identity. Because of the centrality of identity to political, social and economic entitlements in Israel, constructions of identity necessarily represent avenues for greater social mobility and access to resources. Thus this study also seeks to understand the nature of the dominant socioeconomic structures and discourses on the lives of Arab Jews in Israel and importantly the options through which social mobility and empowerment are perceived as possible.

So far I have provided a brief introduction to the issues presented in this paper and attempted to justify their merit as important points of research and analysis. The following chapter sets out the analytical framework of this paper, referring to key theories and important academic works in the field of population and fertility study that have informed the framework through which the issues in this paper will be considered.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 The Analytical Framework

The study of reproduction, and more specifically of fertility patterns, can be approached from a number of different perspectives. The approach adopted is largely informed by the researcher's political persuasion and world view: Proponents of Modernisation theory, or Structural-Functionalism, will tend to see the transition from high to low fertility as a defining part of the transition from "traditional" to "modern" societies and thus decreased fertility is seen as an important indicator of "development" and "progress". This understanding, termed as "demographic transition theory", has been particularly pervasive along with Modernisation theory, which both work to secure the central assumption that there exists a unilinear trajectory of modernisation and improvement on which the "Third World" is presumed to be moving along, and on which the pioneering Western world is on the frontier of, leading the way. Thus Modernisation and demographic transition theory thrive on simplistic binarisms of opposing twinned concepts: modernity / tradition,

development / underdevelopment, technology / backwardness, civilised / primitive (Shohat 1998:3) that compartmentalize the world (and its people) into neat and convenient developmental hierarchies. Demographic transition theory typically explains fertility declines as following patterns of other “factors of modernization” such as literacy, female autonomy and education – viewing fertility transitions as stemming from a list of common factors that are relevant to all places and all times and that produce the same general outcome, and thus demographic transition theory presents too mechanical and narrow a picture of demographic transformations (Greenhalgh 1990:86-100). Indeed demographic transition theory lacks any appreciation of the social diversity within communities and their demographic regimes, but it ignores the class-specificity of fertility changes in particular. It thus survives on an inaccurate historical understanding of the processes that provoked demographic change, viewing those who have not entered the demographic transition as “behind” and “having to catch up”, as if the poor and the “Third World” had lived in another time zone apart from the global system of the late capitalist world (Shohat 1998:11).

The theory of demographic transition is thus evident in the analyses of key Israeli demographers and sociologists concerning the Mizrahi fertility decline and in order to demonstrate the inadequacies of these explanations, this paper will reveal the complexities of the historically developed conditions and processes behind the trends toward lower fertility – which is profoundly linked with social and economic class formations and constructions of identity. The analytical framework which I have used to demonstrate this is based on Greenhalgh’s (1990) ‘political economy of fertility’ approach. This approach goes beyond the conventional demographic transition theory to show that fertility transitions are products of changes in class-specific opportunity structures in response to transformations of global and regional political economies (Ibid:98). To direct the process of the research I have focused on the five key attributes Greenhalgh (1990:94) states may contribute to a political economy of fertility analysis: time, method, process, causality and level:

The “time” aspect refers to the pre-requisite attention that must be given to the historical context, and Chapters three and five provide a thorough evaluation and description of events as they relate to the experiences of Arab Jews before and after the creation of Israel, in order to explore how patterns of access and use of resources developed and therefore how these historical processes have shaped contemporary

political, economic and social realities. This section of the paper is also crucial to understanding the processes that led to the rupture of the Arab Jewish identity and the profound consequences it has had for the Jews of Arab origin in Israel, and for the populations of the Middle East region as a whole.

The “method” attribute refers to the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in researching fertility declines. While this paper focuses on qualitative research methods drawing on historical accounts and a range of secondary sources, quantitative measures have also been employed to demonstrate the extent of changes in fertility, population structure and the social and economic segregation of ethnic groups, which supports and strengthens the qualitative findings. This can be found in Chapter four, where the arguments concerning the Mizrahi fertility decline are fully elaborated.

“Process” concerns the social, cultural, political and economic forces that underlie demographic change with particular emphasis placed on the political and economic and how these shape the social and cultural (Ibid:95). Thus I begin by focusing on the class and racial formations of Israeli society, this is alluded to in Chapter three, but Chapter five concentrates specifically on the processes of biased resource allocation, marginalisation, and the use of identity in creating and maintaining the class structures in Israeli society. This demonstrates how the structure of opportunities facing Mizrahim has been shaped and defined and what effect this structure has had on options for social mobility. Chapter six then explores the relationships between identity, class and reproductive status focusing particularly on the effects of modernisation discourse, and its Malthusian and Orientalist brethren, on conceptions of the family. Malthusian discourse is an important feature of the global politics of reproduction but is also visible within local contexts too, it is the defining narrative that explains poverty as a consequence of “irrational” reproductive habits, simply that people are poor because they have too many children (Hartmann 1987:6). Its portrayal as a “scientific” theory of population is intended to obscure its political agenda, namely to excuse dominant structural and institutional forces for their role in creating and sustaining poverty and inequalities, and indeed Malthusian theory has provided an enduring argument against social and economic change since it was first expressed by Thomas Malthus in his ‘Essay on the Principle of Population’ in 1798 (Ross 1998:6). It thus follows that the echoes of Malthusian rationale can be heard in Modernisation theory and in Orientalist narratives, which both offer convenient

explanations for disparities in socioeconomic well-being, focusing on the “pre-modern” or “primitive” status of the peoples concerned and not on the impact of the dominant political and economic forces that surround their lives. The prevalence of these discourses in the Israeli context is illustrated by reference to the minutes of Knesset meetings, statements made by members of the Zionist establishment, and to examples of demographic and social policies. In particular Chapter six focuses on how these discourses were utilised to reinforce the socioeconomic inequalities within Israeli society thus illustrating the political and economic agendas that are rooted in these discourses kept hidden beneath a developmentalist façade.

The fourth attribute, “causality”, shows how these dominant macro-level structures and processes have actually defined people’s options and motivations, illustrating how people may be *‘constrained by both internalized cultural parameters and external material and social limits’*.⁵ I have attempted to demonstrate the effect of particular structural forces on opportunity structures and group identity throughout the paper, but this aspect of the analytical framework is particularly evident in Chapter seven that deals with constructions of identity and strategies for social mobility and empowerment. It focuses on the consequences of the division of the Arab Jewish identity and the efforts to eradicate the mainly Arabic heritage of Mizrahi Jews, reflecting on the strategies Mizrahim have employed to placate their ambivalent position in Israeli society. This aims to illustrate how the process of formulating options for greater social mobility and access to resources has been constrained by dominant paradigms. This chapter also draws on the work of Kanaaneh (2002) on the reproductive strategies of Palestinian women in Israel, highlighting the power of reproductive discourse and the practice of reproductive “othering” on negotiations of identity, in order to explore the role these discourses have played in shaping the trend toward lower fertility for both Palestinians and Mizrahim. The main weakness in this part of the analysis is the lack of personal testimony from individuals and couples regarding the most significant factors in their reproductive decision making. However the focus on works by both Mizrahi and Palestinian academics to illustrate the power of modernisation and Malthusian paradigms on conceptions of the Mizrahi and Arab

⁵ Ortner S 1989 *‘High Religion: A Cultural & Political History of Sherpa Buddhism’* cited in Greenhalgh (1990:95)

identities, including reference to their own personal experiences and reflections, attempts to strengthen this part of the analysis.

The final attribute, “level”, requires that the research be “multi-levelled”, which means making connections at the local context that is being researched with broader global processes (Greenhalgh 1990:94). In this paper there are references to the shared post-colonial experience of the peoples of the “Third World” and the prevalence of Modernisation and Malthusian theory as a tool to disempower and blame the poor and oppressed for their own misfortune (Hartmann 1987:3). Indeed the power of these discourses in the process of reproductive “othering” is a central theme in the research, and one which has important global parallels. This paper also focuses on the constructions of identities and nations in the post-colonial world, reflecting how strategies for emancipation have often been formulated according to the same narratives imposed on people by their oppressors (Shohat 1999:9).

2.2 The Methodology

In carrying out the research I have relied upon a range of secondary sources to select data concerning the historical context of Jews in the Arab world and the processes that led to their displacement and settlement in Israel. I have used a number of secondary sources to explore the class and racial formations in Israeli society and the effect of reproductive discourses on these formations and on the negotiation of identities. These secondary sources include books, articles, newspaper reports and the minutes of parliamentary debates and government meetings. The main bulk of the demographic quantitative data was sourced from the works of key Israeli sociologists and demographers, in addition to the demographic data available on the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics website.

The qualitative data was supplemented by conversations with several Mizrahi academics and activists in Israel, and the information they provided is referenced throughout the paper. My observations and conversations during the research process in Israel have greatly informed the issues presented in this paper, however the main methodological limitation in this research is the lack of personal interviews regarding fertility preferences and reproductive strategies. The absence of these voices is due to many factors, not least the language barrier and restrictions on time which would have made successful interviews about sensitive topics highly unlikely. In addition, I was restricted to a limited amount of written sources on these issues as a significant

portion of the relevant materials are in Hebrew, which prevented me from accessing these rich sources of information. However I did manage to obtain a few translations of particular sections of these works.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 The Jews of Dar al-Islam⁶

The world's largest monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all originated in the Middle East and thus Jews have a long and ancient history in the region. Even after the spread of Islam across the region, the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa formed an integral part of Arab history, society, culture and language. The Arabic language is in fact closely related to Hebrew and Aramaic and all Jewish philosophy written in the Islamic world was written in Arabic and it constitutes an inseparable part of Islamic philosophy, and indeed many other important Jewish texts in medicine and linguistics were also written in Arabic (Giladi 1990:12; Shohat 1999:6). The famous Jewish philosopher and physician to Salah Edin, Maimonides (Arabic name Musa ibn Maymun), wrote his most famous philosophical work, 'The Guide to the Perplexed' in Arabic and he is considered a great example of peaceful coexistence and of the common Jewish Muslim past.⁷ While it is important that the situation of Jews in the Muslim world not be idealized as there were episodes of persecution and conflict, there are many significant examples of coexistence that have been pushed into the margins of history. For example the Jews of the Middle East did not live in ghettos but in mixed communities where they spoke the same language, wore the same clothing and ate the same type of food as the rest of the Arabic community (Giladi 1990:69). Great Jewish spiritual centres were established across the Muslim world in Fez, Morocco, and in Aleppo, Syria, for instance (Allouche 2003:14). In the eighteenth, nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries many Jews also occupied important positions in government, academy, literature and commerce in the Arab world. Thus it must be recognised that Jewish world history comprises a diversity of histories and experiences.

However the historical account of the situation of Jews in the Muslim world varies greatly depending on who is recounting that history and this history has

⁶ The term used for lands where Islam became the preponderant religion, literally the 'abode of Islam'.

⁷ See <http://www.maimonides-foundation.org/moses.php>.

specifically been distorted since the emergence of Zionism for evident political ends.

Shohat (1999:6) writes

When Zionist history does refer to what might be termed “Judeo-Islamic history,” the narrative usually consists of a morbidly selective “tracing the dots” from pogrom to pogrom as evidence of relentless hostility toward Jews in the Arab world, reminiscent of that encountered in Europe.

Shohat (1999:6) argues that this notion of a common victimization of all Jews everywhere and at all times is a crucial underpinning of Israeli discourse and produces a Eurocentric reading of Jewish world history, which hijacks Arab Jews from their own geography and subsumes them into the history of the European-Ashkenazi shtetl. This reconstruction of Arab Jewish history serves not only to eradicate positive historical links to the Arab world and to propagate the belief in an innate Arab hatred of Jews in order to further the Zionist nationalist project vis-à-vis the Palestinians; it also reinforces the Israeli Jewish identity as opposed to an Arab Jewish one, by emphasizing such hostility and tension between the two that the terms themselves become ideological polarities removing even the possibility of being both Arab and Jewish.

3.2 The Jews of Palestine

According to Giladi (1990:35) the local Jews of Palestine could hardly be distinguished from a local Muslim or a Christian - they wore Arabic clothing, spoke in Arabic and lived in mixed communities. The Ottoman authorities, ever mindful of European Christian penetration, attempted to strengthen both the Islamic and Jewish communities: The Palestinian Jews were given autonomy in religious, education and administrative affairs and to this end the Ottoman authorities allowed the Palestinian Jews to form a committee called “Knesset Yisrael” to run the affairs of the community and even granted them the right to mint coins for the use of the community.

The indigenous Jews remained the majority of the Jewish population in Palestine until the beginning of the 20th Century when Ashkenazi Zionist immigration began to increase (Giladi 1990:64). Many of the Ashkenazi immigrants kept themselves apart from the local Palestinian Jews and set up their own communities and schools, in spite of the availability of Jewish schools and community services already established by the native Jewish population.⁸ Giladi (1990:39) states that these

⁸ Eliachar E ‘*Life with the Jews*’ 1980 cited in Giladi (1990:37).

acts indicated the isolationist mentality which prevailed from the beginning amongst Zionists, not only with regard to the Arab Muslim and Christian populations but also in relation to the indigenous Jews and even to the non-Zionist Ashkenazim.

The separate Ashkenazi settlements required agricultural and construction workers and since many Ashkenazi Jews had been denied access to agricultural activities in Europe, local Arab workers had to be employed (Massad 1996:54) – usually the same peasants that had been driven off the land when it had been sold by absentee landowners to the incoming Ashkenazi settlers (Giladi 1990:39). However due to the self-described “socialist” Zionist principle of the use of “Hebrew labour”, which declares that Jewish labour must be used as opposed to the labour of “foreigners” (ie non-Jewish Palestinians), the use of Palestinian labour was seen to be corrupting this principle and so Jews from Yemen were encouraged to emigrate to Palestine (Giladi 1990:41 & Massad 1996:54). The party of Hapo`el Hatza`ir (which was renamed Mapai and later then became the Labour party) was the first Zionist organisation to have the Yemeni immigrants work on their settlements. In its 1908 conference the party passed a resolution stating the necessity for Ashkenazi employers to employ the Jews from Islamic countries to do the work of the “foreigners” (Giladi 1990:44). The Yemeni Jews were paid less than local Palestinian workers and suffered brutal discrimination as was demonstrated by the communiqué issued by the Yemeni Jews to the Ashkenazi community in 1913: *‘In your opinion we are insignificant and filthy dogs... We are despised by all for our poverty, but as God is our witness we only came from the Yemen on your advice’*.^{9, 10} The Yemeni Jews were also forbidden from living inside the settlements and had to construct their own quarters outside (Giladi 1990:47). By 1918 there were 5000 Yemeni Jews in Palestine, which represented ten percent of the Jewish population.¹¹ This increase in the number of non-Ashkenazi Jews worried many in the Zionist movement as was expressed by Ahad Ha`am in 1912: *‘Yemenite immigration affects the nature of the Zionist settlement by dint of their different culture and mentality’*.¹² The desire to keep Jewish settlements “European” in nature whilst using cheap, non-European but

⁹ There are many accounts of beatings and attacks and of complaints about slave-like treatment. See Nini Y *‘Reflections on the Destruction of the Third Temple’* cited in Giladi (1990:46).

¹⁰ Muharib A *‘The Yemenite Immigration and Hebrew Labour’* 1973 cited in Giladi (1990:47).

¹¹ Menahem N *‘Tension and Ethnic Discrimination in Israel’* 1983 cited in Giladi (1990:47).

¹² Ahad Ha`am *‘Complete Works of ‘Ahad Ha`am’* 1947 cited in Giladi (1990:47).

Jewish, labour laid the foundations of the future social and economic structures in Israel that are still acutely defined on religious and ethnic lines. In fact the Zionist anxiety concerning the “nature” of Jewish settlement remains deeply entrenched to this day and has fuelled great efforts to “ameliorate”, actually “Europeanize”, the make up of Israeli society.

3.3 The British Mandate Period & Zionism

When Palestine came under British control in 1918 they saw allies in the Jews of Western origin and not in the indigenous Jews whose leadership they saw as part of the enemy Ottoman system (Giladi 1990:50). The indigenous Jewish community were thus kept out of government and their influence weakened dramatically as their affairs were placed under the aegis of the Zionist Ashkenazi establishment (ibid.). The attitude of the Zionist leadership to Yemeni Jews was chauvinistic at worst, paternalistic at best, and the position taken toward the local Palestinian Jews was much the same – illustrated in this statement expressed by the revisionist Zionist, Vladimir Jabotinsky, in 1926: *‘Jews, thank God, have nothing in common with the East. We must put an end to any trace of the Oriental spirit in the Jews of Palestine’*.¹³ This rejection of the East was, and continues to be, an integral part of the Zionist project which in fact denies the actual origins of most European Jews: The expressed affinity with Western European culture and the desire to mimic ‘Western style capitalist democracies’ (as expressed by Herzl) or, as Ben Gurion fantasized, to create ‘a Switzerland of the Middle East’ (Shohat 1999:7) replaced the culture of the rural poor shtetls of Eastern Europe with that of Berlin or Paris where relatively few Jews originated (Massad 1996:55).¹⁴ It was this commitment to Western Europe that enabled the leaders of the Zionist project to *‘market its colonial endeavour as one of spreading European gentile culture with European Jews as its carriers’* and what must have made it so palatable to the European colonial powers at the time (Massad 1996:55).

It is of no surprise then that the British Mandate period saw the beginnings of the implementation of the Balfour Declaration which stated that a national homeland for the Jews should be created in Palestine. The British government was to be

¹³ Jabotinsky V *‘The East’* 1926 cited in Massad (1996:55).

¹⁴ Jabotinsky insisted *‘We are European and our musical taste is European, the taste of Rubinstein, Mendelssohn and Bizet.’* Cited in Massad (196:55).

instrumental in facilitating the setting up of the Zionist governing apparatus termed the 'State-to-be'. In 1948 this same apparatus became the state of Israel: the head of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion, became the Prime Minister of Israel, the Hagana (the secret army run by the Jewish Agency) became the Israeli Defence Force; the National Council became the Government of Israel and the Assembly of Deputies became the Knesset (Giladi 1990:51). There was not one non-Ashkenazi in any of the decision-making positions in these bodies (ibid.). It can therefore be seen that Ashkenazi Zionist domination of Jewish society in Palestine began in the British Mandate period and not in 1948.

The scale of this dominance during the Mandate period was evidenced by the boycotting of municipal elections by the Sephardi Community Council in Jerusalem in 1938 as the candidates were heavily biased in favour of the Ashkenazim despite the majority status of non-Ashkenazi Jews in Jerusalem (Giladi 1990:52). The Zionist leadership in Palestine was also adamant that agricultural settlement should remain in the hands of Ashkenazi settlers – out of the eighty settlements established prior to 1926, not one was for local Jews, only Har Tuv created in 1895 was for indigenous Jews and that was financed by Sephardic Jews in Bulgaria (Giladi 1990:54). The Zionist leadership insisted that local Jews be instead hired as agricultural labourers as part of the principle of "Hebrew labour".¹⁵ As the rate of Ashkenazi Zionist immigration grew, the indigenous Jews faced rising poverty as their housing, educational and health needs were increasingly ignored. Giladi (1990:53) comments that the discrimination against local Jews reached such an extent that their neighbourhoods became deplorable slums. However the local Jews were not the only non-European Jews to suffer such discrimination, particularly in the area of employment. Non-Ashkenazi Jews who had immigrated for religious reasons or who had been recruited to work in Palestine were assigned the menial and unskilled jobs by the Zionist establishment often despite their expertise or experience in particular trades and crafts: Giladi (1990:59) writes that during this period "*Salonikan*" came to mean "*porter*" and "*Kurd*" came to mean "*quarry-worker*". "*Yemenite woman*"

¹⁵ An advertisement put up by the office of Zionist Agricultural Settlement stated 'We are pleased to inform you [addressing itself to Yemeni Jews] that we have work for some families in the areas of water-transport, laundry and other domestic jobs.' Gluska Z 'For the Jews of the Yemen' 1974 cited in Giladi (1990:54).

meant “servant” and “shvartse” (“black” in Yiddish) meant “Sephardi Jew” or “Arab”.

Reference to this pre-1948 period illustrates how resources such as land were channelled toward the European population and denied to both the Palestinians and the Arab Jews. It shows how structures were built to only allow the Ashkenazim access to the means of production and to compel the Arab Jews into accepting their role as wage labourers. Understanding this enables us to see the obfuscatory nature of the “explanations” put forward by the Israeli state and mainstream Israeli academia for the growing social and economic disparities that currently exist between the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in Israel – explained as the result of the lower educational achievements and social status of the Mizrahi Jews when they arrived in Israel, coming as they did from “backward, undeveloped countries” (see Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein 2004; Allouche 2003; Eisenstadt 1951). Reference to the pre-1948 period demonstrates that these disparities have been created and developed as part of a deliberate discriminatory policy toward non-European Jews since the start of Zionist colonisation, before the majority of Mizrahi Jews immigrated and even before the creation of the Israeli state.

3.4 Zionism & Arab Nationalism

By 1950 around 800,000 Jews lived in the Arab world representing 5-6 percent of the Jewish world population (Allouche 2003:23). In the years following 1950 the overwhelming majority of Jews left the Arab world mainly for Israel, the United States and countries in Europe, leaving only a remainder of the Jewish community in Arabic countries. While the reasons for the emigration of the Jews of Dar al-Islam are various especially given the range of geographic localities Arab Jews inhabited, the two general principal causes that shall be focused on here are the rise of Arab nationalism, and the efforts of Zionists to recruit Jews from the Arab world. In the attempt to understand this pivotal chapter of recent history that has played such a profoundly substantial role in shaping the current geopolitical face of the Middle East, certain issues must first be addressed:

It is important to remember that while the Zionist project was gathering steam in British controlled Palestine most of the Arab countries were also under colonial rule, which was largely either British or French. As part of the archetypal colonial divide and rule policy, colonial authorities in the Muslim world emphasised religious

divisions by granting privileges to the minority non-Muslim population in particular favouring members of the Christian or Jewish communities in government and business, and supporting Christian and Jewish education establishments (Giladi 1990:79&80). Thus sectarian divisions were already being carved out, upsetting the inter-communal balance that had evolved in the region for over hundreds, if not thousands of years. These sectarian divisions were later to become desperate and violent as the situations created by colonial rule were exacerbated by Zionist activities and the reactionary stance taken by many Arab nationalist leaders. These issues are important facets of this discussion as it illustrates how these events (and the subsequent division of the Arab Jewish identity) were the product of a culmination of forces and not the result of some innate Arab/Muslim animosity toward Jews, as put forward by Zionist historians.

After World War One colonial authorities, the British in particular, began to facilitate Zionist activity in their Arab colonies. In fact Cohen¹⁶ writes that the British presence in Iraq was the most important factor for Zionist activity there as in 1921 the British allowed the Mesopotamian Zionist Organisation to operate inside the country. Needless to say few Jews from the Islamic world emigrated at this time, many were avidly opposed to Zionism which they saw as an extension of European imperialism. Indeed many Jews were involved in anti-colonialist activities, communist and other leftist organisations, and many were radical intellectuals.¹⁷ One of the Jewish leaders in Baghdad wrote a letter to the WZO warning of the havoc Zionism would wreak for the Jews of Iraq, and that Zionism could alienate Jews from Iraqis and damage inter-communal relations.¹⁸ He wrote that every Arab felt Zionism infringed upon their rights and that it was thus incumbent upon him to spare no effort to fight it. He said that Iraqi Jewry was in a particularly sensitive position given its economic power and government posts, particularly in Baghdad, where Jews formed one third of the population. But in spite of the fact that many Jews were involved in Arab liberation movements growing sectarian anti-Jewish sentiments were beginning to resonate in the region.

¹⁶ Cohen H Y 'Zionist Activity in Iraq' (in Hebrew) 1969 cited in Giladi (1990:72).

¹⁷ See Giladi 1990 chapter four.

¹⁸ Rejwan N 'The Jews of Iraq' 1985 cited in Giladi (1990:72).

As anti-colonialist struggles began to strengthen in the Arab world, as they were doing across the globe, the emergence of Zionism in the region and its affiliation with colonial Britain, would have a massive impact on Arab liberation movements. Shohat (1999:9) states that

At the height of imperialism, liberation from racial and colonial oppression could be formulated only along nationalist lines. In order to merit the end of colonial rule, third world nations had to be invented according to definitions supplied by the often Eurocentric ideologies of the nation as a coherent unit....On a realpolitik level, this was a “reasonable” response to colonialism. Unfortunately, however, formerly colonized people have often fallen into the very same conceptual traps that oppressed them during colonialism.

This was a great downfall of the Arab nationalist movements, as before the arrival of European powers in the region and the creation of borders and new nations, identities were defined very differently. However within imported European paradigms Arab liberation movements began to define themselves along religious lines and thus religious minorities were pushed out into the margins. This then had the unintended consequence of reaffirming the Zionist goal, of separating Jews from non-Jews, and in fact adopted the same Zionist rationale, that of producing religiously “pure” entities so as to allow the nation to emerge in all its “native glory” (Shohat 1999:11). Thus although the Arab nationalist movement defined itself as staunchly anti-Zionist, Zionism played an important part in shaping Arab nationalism: Behar (1997:6) writes that the presence of Zionism

largely contributed to the formation of a Middle Eastern socio-political situation in which the potentially progressive, anti-imperialist national movements for Arab liberation rapidly turned exclusionary in an early stage of their own formation. Eventually acting along religiously dominated nationalist lines, Arab nationalisms did not manage to include ancient, loyal and fairly well integrated non-Zionist Arab-Jewish minority groups both in their political agenda for national liberation and in the formation of independent post-colonial Arab states.

Thus Arab nationalism must be seen as a product of the Zionist impact on Arab anti-colonialist struggles and the failure of its leaders to distinguish between Jews and Zionists. Ironically this meant that Arab nationalist movements ended up reproducing the very Zionist discourses that they opposed, specifically the Zionist claim to speak on behalf of all Jews (Shohat 1999:13). It is this sequence of events that produced the “Arab Jewish dichotomy” and thus left Arab Jews on the margins of two restrictive and conflicting nationalisms, neither of which had space for their newly invented contradiction (ibid.).

Across the Arab world anti-Zionist riots led to violent, and sometimes fatal attacks on Arab Jews and their places of worship, their businesses and their schools, attacks that would mark the psyche of Arab Jews for generations (ibid.). Zionist forces were also behind attacks in an effort to whip up hysteria and panic amongst the Arab Jews, for instance cafes and synagogues were bombed in Iraq and blamed on sectarian Muslims, but were later found to be the work of Zionist agents (Giladi 1990:91; Shohat 1999:12).¹⁹ The head of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, Yitzhak Rafael, admitted that with regard to the Jews of the Yemen, Zionist agents had hired Arabs to “speed up” their departure.²⁰ There were also secret collaborations between some Arab leaders and the Zionist leadership to encourage the Jewish inhabitants to leave, the collusion with the government of Nuri al-Said in Iraq is fairly notorious (Giladi 1990:84; Shohat 1999:12). And so Arab Jews began to leave the region their ancestors had inhabited for millennia – this is the other, not-so-well-known side of Zionism’s displacement of the Palestinians; though they and the Arab Jews have been cast into antagonistic roles on opposite sides of the political and ideological border (Shohat 1999:12).²¹ By failing to stop the attacks against the Jews and their subsequent departure, the Arab nationalist movements had in fact handed the Zionists a “great gift” because, as Behar (1997:6) explains, the post-1948 economy of Israel was by and large based on Arab Jewish immigrants who were effectively utilized by the European Zionist state not only economically but also politically, demographically and militarily.

3.5 “Jews in the Form of Arabs”

The journey to Israel was brutal, many Jews were forced onto ships against their will which were characterised by gross overcrowding and unsanitary conditions.^{22, 23} The

¹⁹ See Naeim Giladi ‘Ben-Gurion’s Scandals: How the Haganah & the Mossad Eliminated Jews’ 2003, banned in Israel and the United States when it was first published in 1992.

²⁰ 22nd January 1951, Central Zionist Archive cited in Giladi (1990:90).

²¹ It is of relevance to note that this displacement of Arab Jews echoes around the post-colonial world in many different places, yet in similar ways. Shohat (1999:12) states this displacement ‘*forms part of a more general process of the formation of third world nation-states, which often involved a double process of joining diverse ethnicities and regions previously separated under colonialism while at the same time partitioning regions and peoples within new regional definitions and cross-shuffling populations.*’

²² Report of Elie Peleg 24th July 1949, Central Zionist Archives S20/562 cited in Giladi (1990:97).

²³ The Jewish Agency accused the Mosad of making exorbitant profits on transporting immigrants by doubling the number of passengers allowed to travel on the ships. (Minutes of the Zionist Executive 21st March 1949 & 29th April 1949 cited in Giladi 1990:93).

young men were generally separated from their families and sent directly to Israel to join the army, others were taken to immigrant camps (ma`barot) in places such as Marseille in France to await their transportation to Israel (Giladi 1990:96). A letter from a doctor²⁴ in the transit camp of Marseille to the Immigration Department in Israel illustrated the deplorable and discriminatory conditions North African immigrants were suffering:

... they have almost no clothes and have had nothing to eat during the three-day journey by ship. Conditions on board are horrific...There is a great lack of blankets in the two camps in Marseille...As a result of the dreadful living conditions and the deterioration in the standard of nourishment lately, twelve children have died...I fail to understand why clothing is distributed to all European immigrants, whereas nothing goes to the North Africans?

Giladi (1990:99) argues that the conditions in the camps served to get rid of the weak, sick and aged so that only the strong and healthy would be absorbed in Israel. This analysis, he argues, is supported by the role Arab Jewish immigrants were assigned to fulfil, namely to serve as a supply of cheap labour and as demographic cannon fodder for the newly created Jewish state. As much of European Jewry, which the Zionist leadership saw as the prime candidates for immigration to Palestine, had been annihilated by the Nazis – Ben Gurion stated that this had destroyed ‘*the main and central constructive power of the Jewish state*’ – the mass importation of Arab Jews became a demographic and economic necessity for the newly created state (Massad 1996:56).²⁵ Without the Arab Jews there would have been no cheap Jewish labour to service the massive construction, agricultural and military demands of the state, and instead Palestinian labour would have had to be relied upon; which for ideological, but also importantly, demographic and political reasons was not viable. Therefore by presenting the mass importation of Arab Jews as a “rescue operation” from their oppressive and backward Arab countries of origin, the Zionist state masked its own need to rescue itself from political and economic collapse (Shohat 1999:10). For Zionists it was absolutely essential that a de facto majority Jewish population be created on the land of Palestine, which explains their efforts to recruit “Jews in the form of Arabs” to Israel (ibid.); despite the Zionist disregard for non-Ashkenazim in the early days of the Zionist project, and even despite the concerns of Zionists

²⁴ Dr Goldman to Dr Kornblitt, 31st December 1948, Central Zionist Archive, S20/550 I cited in Giladi (1990:97).

²⁵ Cited in Massad (1998:56).

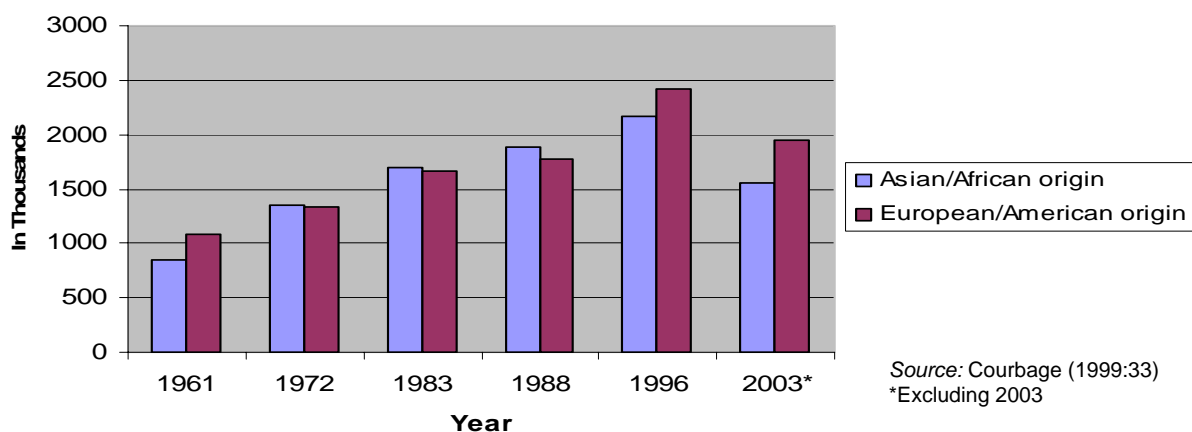
regarding the demographic “make-up” of the Jewish settlement. It was the arrival of over 450,000 Arab Jews between 1948-56 (Allouche 2003:24) that provided the Jewish demographic majority in historic Palestine (in combination with the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian population). But this was also perceived as creating an “internal” demographic threat within the Jewish population as the increasing number of Arab Jews threatened to outnumber European Jews and this was seen as jeopardizing the desired “Western” character of the Jewish state (Melamed 2005:21). And as will be shown, the population balance between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews became a major demographic issue for the Zionist establishment, with specific emphasis placed on the differential fertility rates of the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Population & Fertility Trends

This chapter will discuss changes in the composition of the population and then proceed to analyse the various fertility patterns by first presenting and describing the collected data and then by discussing the explanations given for the fertility changes in demographic and sociological literature. It should be noted that the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) does not group Jews into categories of Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. The categories for classifying the different ethnicities of Jews are “Europe/America born”, “Asia born”, “Africa born”; and for those born in Israel “Europe/America origin”, “Asia origin”, “Africa origin”. It is further complicated by the category of “Father Born in Israel”, as this represents both Ashkenazim and

Graph 1
Jewish Population Distribution in Israel by Geographic Origin



Mizrahim. Giladi (1990:6) states that the exact figures for the population of Mizrahim are not disseminated for ‘security’ reasons and that these categories have been constructed deliberately to render statistical analysis problematical. For this reason I have had to rely on the previous calculations of demographers and sociologists, however where possible I shall provide the most up-to-date statistics.

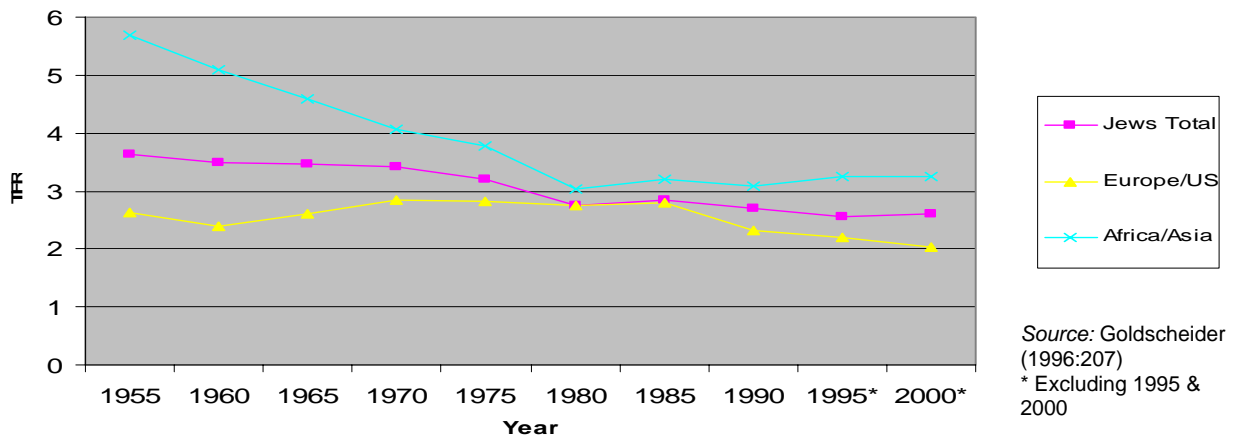
The graph above illustrates the composition of the Jewish population from 1961 to 2003. The graph shows that Jews of Asian and African origin grew to be the majority in the Jewish population, Courbage (1999:32) states that this growth is a result both of immigration and their higher levels of fertility. After the 1990s the Mizrahi Jews lost their majority status due to the wave of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union (ibid.). Though there has been substantial immigration from Ethiopia this is outweighed by the immigration from the former Soviet Union. The source of the 2003 data comes from the Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2004 (table 2.12). Because of the “Father born in Israel” classification, which includes both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, this data has not been added to the population calculations and so the overall population numbers appear to have decreased since 1996 but this is not the case. The 2003 calculations do not represent the distribution of the geographical origin of the *total* number of Jews in Israel, only the geographical origin of the number of Jews who themselves were born outside of Israel or whose fathers were born outside of Israel. The statistic that is generally given as the most up-to-date estimate for the entire Jewish population of Israel is that the ratio now remains fairly even between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, with Mizrahi Jews accounting for just under half of the Jewish population of Israel (Beinin 2000; Kananneh 2002:234). Though according to Chetrit (2000:63) many of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union are in fact Sephardic Jews despite the fact that they have been counted as Ashkenazim and so it is likely that the proportion of non-Ashkenazi Jews is in actuality much higher. If the 1.3 million Palestinian citizens of Israel (19.3% of the population)²⁶ are added to the proportion of Mizrahi Jews it can be seen that the total non-European population of Israel is just under 70%, which means that the majority of Israeli citizens are actually of Arab descent.²⁷ But despite their demographic

²⁶ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2003 CBS.

²⁷ If the Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories are included this proportion rises to 90% (Hanieh 2002).

minority, European-Israelis are visibly dominant in every sector – in politics, education, the economy and culture (Shohat 1999:8). The minority status of European Jews is disguised by the official state terminology which never refers to the Mizrahim as “Arab Jews” but as “African-Asian Jews” and always refers to the Palestinian citizens of Israel as “Israeli Arabs”, never Palestinians. The use of the term “Israeli Arab” instead of “Palestinian” is not only an attempt to sanitize and rewrite a brutal and politically threatening history but also conveniently erases the existence of other Arabs in the country – the Arab Jews (Kanaaneh 2002:11).

Graph 2
Total Fertility Rate of Jews in Israel by Continent of Birth, 1955-2000



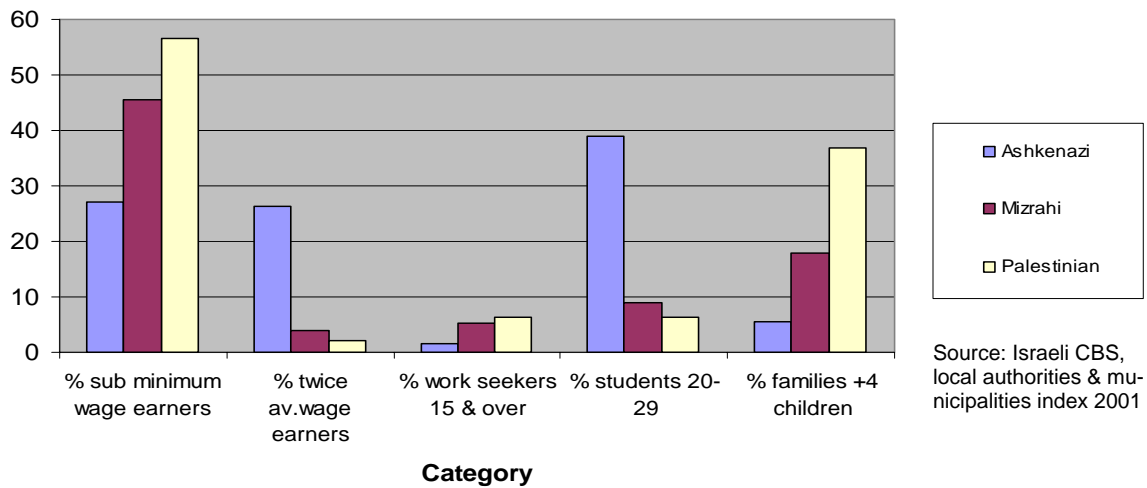
This graph illustrates the total fertility rates of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews between 1955 and 2000. The data for the years 1995 and 2000 were sourced from the Statistical Abstract of Israel 2001 (table 3.12) which showed the fertility rates for women born in Asia & Africa, women born in Europe & America and women born in Israel. The graph above shows only the data for the first two categories, the fertility rate for women born in Israel is left out for the reasons discussed previously. The graph illustrates the rapid fertility decline of Jewish women from Asia and Africa between 1955 and 1980. In fact the total fertility rate halved in this time with 5.7 being the average number of children per woman in 1955 to 3.04 children per woman in 1980. The fertility rate has remained steady at around 3.1 children per woman for the last twenty years. The fertility of Ashkenazi women has fluctuated slightly over time, rising in the 1970s to a high of 2.8 children per woman, and declining slightly in the 1990s to an average of 2.2 children per woman (ibid.). It can be seen that the differential fertility rates for Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews have narrowed

considerably, though Mizrahi women still have, on average, one child more than Ashkenazi women. The widening gap in the fertility rates shown on the graph is a result of the arrival of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who have a lower fertility rate than other Ashkenazi Jews, and the arrival of immigrants from Ethiopia who have boosted the percentage of Asian-African Jews who tend to have higher fertility rates (Courbage 1999:34).

The reasons given for the rapid fertility decline of Mizrahi Jews in mainstream Israeli sociological and demographic discourse have largely centred around the typical explanations provided by the school of Modernisation theory. These analyses have concluded that the Mizrahi fertility decline was a response to ‘the exposure to a modern economy and to Israeli culture’ and as a result Asian and African immigrants adapted to ‘modernised patterns of fertility regulation behaviour, typical of populations in the developed countries of the West’ (Goldscheider & Friedlander 1986; Okun 1997). Much of the literature concentrates on the positive association between the length of exposure to Israeli society and the effect on family-size limitation for Asian-African immigrants as Goldscheider (1996:213) has stated: ‘*As length of exposure to the norms and values of Israeli society and to the institutions that shape the lives of those married and educated in Israel increases, fertility patterns lose their ethnic distinctiveness.*’ There is thus a general consensus that the fertility transition of the Mizrahim followed the improvement in mortality rates; increased access to education; improvements in the socioeconomic conditions and the exposure to “Israeli norms of behaviour” – which implies the “rationalisation” of fertility behaviour as the Mizrahim adapted to “modern ways of thinking” concerning the negative association between the number of children and the amount of investment in each child (Friedlander et al 1980:583; Goldscheider 1996:213; Okun 1997:319). While it is not doubted that the decrease in mortality rates over time played an important role in the reduction of Mizrahi fertility, many of the other explanations contradict the fact that the Mizrahim have not adequately benefited from Israel’s socioeconomic development and still overwhelmingly occupy (together with the Palestinians) the lower strata in society, particularly in the areas of income, education and housing (see Chapter five). Indeed the graph below shows various socioeconomic data for different municipalities distinguished by their majority Ashkenazi, Mizrahi or Palestinian populations and it illustrates the marked differences in the social and economic characteristics of the different municipalities. The data for

the graph was compiled by selecting, at random, five towns where the population is largely Ashkenazi and then calculating the average of their values for each category. The same was calculated for five development towns which are all overwhelmingly inhabited by Mizrahim and for five towns inhabited mainly by Palestinians. (For the individual values of each of the towns chosen see table 1 in the Appendix.)

Graph 3
Comparison of Municipalities by Various Socioeconomic Data



The pattern in the socioeconomic characteristics of the different municipalities is clear: the towns with an Ashkenazi majority are the highest up on the economic and educational scale; the towns set up for the Mizrahim are well below the Ashkenazi municipalities in their income and educational level but are slightly better off than the Palestinian localities. Indeed it is interesting to note that the development towns are closer to the Palestinian localities than the Ashkenazi towns in many of the categories, particularly concerning the number of twice average wage earners, work seekers and the number of students. This indicates a similarity in the lack of employment and educational opportunities for the residents in these municipalities. Yet in the largely Mizrahi towns, the percentage of families with four or more children is less than half the percentage of families with four or more children in the Palestinian localities. If the Mizrahi fertility decline was a result of their increasing modernisation due to the ‘exposure’ to Ashkenazi-Israeli society, then why is this group consistently underperforming in measures of socioeconomic development compared to the Ashkenazim? It can be seen that the Mizrahim occupy a very different position to the Ashkenazim in the socioeconomic structure of Israeli society and thus while the

sociological and demographic literature has stated that it was the ‘forces of modernisation’ that were responsible for the rapid fertility decline, I contend that it was the pervasiveness of the modernisation discourse itself, and its role in masking the calculated discriminatory distributional policies of the Israeli state, that has played a significant part in the reproductive decision making of Mizrahi Jews favouring lower fertility.

It is recognised that there will have been a variety of factors in the reproductive decision making process that will have had different levels of significance for different groups of people – women of different ages, of different means, in rural or urban areas, and between men and women – and this reflects the complexity of reproductive decisions, as they are the result of individuals and couples negotiating different sets of demands for which there is often no optimal solution. But given the highly racialised nature of the class structure in Israel and the ambivalent status of the Arab Jewish identity, social mobility necessarily depends on suppressing any “aspect” that is perceived to be connected with “Arabness”, and on presenting an image of a modern, Westernised Jew to fit with the Euro-Israeli discourse on modernity:

All that is Mizrahi is retarded, degenerate, and primitive, and therefore I had to choose the Ashkenazi alternative – I had to Ashkenazi-size myself (become “white”). For me this meant establishing a modern, progressive, clean identity and destroying, down to the roots, the identity my parents gave me. This meant rejecting everything: their past, their language, their values... (Dahan Kalev 2001:4)

Considering that notions of the modern (and pre-modern) are inextricably bound up in constructions of the family, specifically the Malthusian connection between large families, poverty and backwardness; the small, Westernised, nuclear family has therefore been posited as the ideal modern family unit. The pervasiveness of the language of modernisation in labelling Mizrahim as “pre-modern” and “primitive”, in order to justify their position in the lower socioeconomic strata of Israeli society, and the use of this same narrative to deny the deliberate racialised formation of class structures in Israel; has powerfully shaped and defined the options through which social mobility for Mizrahim in Israeli society is perceived as possible. It is argued therefore, that a desire to be free from the stigmas attached to large family size and its association with poverty and backwardness, and indeed “Arabness”, played a significant part in the fertility decline of the Mizrahim. A similar argument is

made in the work of Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh (2002) on the reproductive strategies of Palestinian women in Israel:

Reproductive practices and discourses have become an important marker of self and other because, they are a central framework in Israeli definitions of self and Palestinian other...Israeli views are dominated by images of Palestinians as breeders, irrational out-of-control reproducers... The rhetoric of development and modernization – that “they” need to stop breeding – here is heightened and takes on strong racial overtones.....It is thus ironic that Palestinians have come to mimic this structure by defining themselves in terms of fertility and using reproductive control as a measure of modernity or alternatively, Arab authenticity. It is not surprising, however, that options for empowerment and advancement...largely follow lines of power that Palestinians simultaneously are subject to and try to resist. It is not uncommon that dominant structures define the few means through which empowerment is conceivable... (p. 105-6)

Thus the argument is not one that implies a simple conformity to the dominant discursive structures but rather it suggests a negotiation, a strategy, for greater social mobility and access to resources. Though this strategy by no means guarantees greater mobility or improved socioeconomic standing, but given the Mizrahi context where the structure of opportunities has been tightly defined and controlled (which is even more restrictive for the Palestinian population) it can be seen that routes for socioeconomic advancement are limited. And indeed, negotiations of identity through reproductive discourses and practices are not just abstract debates about identity and modernity – the repercussions of being labelled “reproductively primitive” or “reproductively modern” can be felt in very unabstract ways (Kanaaneh 2002:107). It is not surprising that the language used to describe the reproductive habits of the Palestinians is the same that has been used to describe the reproductive practices of the Mizrahim; in fact the official discourse has attributed the inferior socioeconomic status of Mizrahi Jews both to their origins in “pre-modern” societies and their high fertility (see Chapters five & six). Thus the common language of modernisation and Malthusian theory has been utilised to effectively excuse the racialised class formations of Israeli society for the underdevelopment of Mizrahim, and Palestinians (Shohat 1998:15; Melamed 2005:36).

Though the decrease in Mizrahi fertility cannot solely be attributed to the dominance of the Euro-Israeli modernisation discourse and its relationship to the class formation of Israeli society and the Arab Jewish identity dilemma. And indeed this paper recognises that increased marriage ages; compulsory army service for young women; increased access to higher education for some Mizrahi women; and even the constraints of poverty itself such as inadequate housing, low incomes; and the dual

pressures of work and childcare, will have been, to differing extents, important factors in the trend toward lower fertility. The fact that mainstream Israeli sociological literature has nested itself in the “safety” of demographic transition theory, which provides uncontroversial explanations for the Mizrahi fertility transition, thus finds its perfect match in establishment needs, denying any disjuncture in the integration, or “modernisation”, of the Asian-African Jews into Western Israeli society. The next few chapters will therefore illustrate the devastating consequences the Zionist modernisation discourse and its policies have had for Mizrahim (Shohat 1998:5). They will explore the relationship between identity and the formation and preservation of class structures and its effect on the reproductive discourse as it relates to the Mizrahim, and consider how this reproductive discourse has, in turn, shaped the processes of class and racial formation in Israel in an ever dynamic process (Melamed 2005:16). This will demonstrate the dominant language of modernisation and Malthusianism in policy and public discourse, revealing the limited opportunities available to Mizrahim for increased socioeconomic well-being and enable us to appreciate the power reproductive “othering” has had on strategies for social mobility.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Class & Racial Formation in Israel

After the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 the Zionist establishment was not only concerned with settling the land but also with the crucial task of constructing different socioeconomic classes for the development of its industrial capitalist economy (Hanieh 2002). The formation of these classes continued along the same trajectory that had been established in the pre-state period but on a much larger scale and so the discriminatory systems by which resources were allocated became more complex.

Upon arrival in Israel systematic measures were taken to strip Arab Jews of their Arabic identity: They were given Hebrew names to replace their traditional Arabic names, “*Said*” became “*Hayyim*”, “*Su`ad*” became “*Tamar*” (Giladi 1990: 104). Yemeni Jews were shorn of their sidelocks and in some cases their clothes were taken from them and exchanged for European clothes instead (ibid.). They were then taken to the transit camps (*ma`barot*) which had been erected outside Ashkenazi settlements or large cities (Massad 1996:56). These camps consisted of rows of tents that later became tin or wooden huts and then were built of cement and consisted of

no more than a single room (Giladi 1990:106). At the Zionist Executive Council in March 1949 it was asserted that the state was moving towards erecting slums and causing chronic overcrowding (ibid.). There was a serious lack of medical facilities and sanitation services, outbreaks of disease were rife, and the child mortality rate was much higher than in the large cities and in the Ashkenazi settlements (Ibid:123). The discrimination between the treatment of the Ashkenazim and the Arab Jews was evident – only Ashkenazi Jews were given the homes of the displaced Palestinian population or newly built houses (Massad 1996:58; Giladi 1990:111). Though many Ashkenazi Jews had to live in the transit camps also, they were separated from the non-Ashkenazim, and Shohat (1998:14) reports that they were given privileges that the non-Ashkenazim did not experience: Their housing needs were prioritised and they did not have to spend the years most Mizrahi Jews did waiting for proper housing. The calculated discrimination against Mizrahi Jews waiting in the transit camps compared to Jews from Europe is demonstrated in the minutes of the meetings of the Zionist Executive Council who were discussing preparations for the arrival of Polish immigrants:²⁸ *'We have got to hurry so that we won't be taken by surprise, and so that respectable people will not be forced to go to the camps. There are people of rank amongst the immigrants and it will be a disaster if we are forced to send them to the camps.'* Racist attitudes that saw Europeans as cultured and knowledgeable and therefore requiring better living conditions than immigrants from non-European countries whose 'level of development was far behind the more advanced Ashkenazim' were widespread as is illustrated by this statement recorded at the Zionist Executive Council meeting:²⁹

The Polish immigrants are not like immigrants from other countries...If we exempt them from the camps and give them priority in housing, they will settle down much more quickly than the Orientals in the camps for there are amongst them professionals who are much in need in the country...The Jews of Poland come from a comfortable background and thus camp life would be more difficult for them than for Yemenite Jews who consider the camps a rescue operation...

After the initial provision of rations and social services the government informed the camp residents that they needed to provide for themselves (Massad 1996:58). The camps thus supplied an army of workers to the nearby cities and

²⁸ Zionist Executive Council Minutes 26th December 1949, quoting Greenbaum, cited in Giladi (1990:112).

²⁹ Ibid, quoting Rafael, cited in Giladi (1990:113).

Ashkenazi settlements (Giladi 1990:115). Regardless of educational or skill levels, the lack of opportunities forced many Mizrahim to take up poorly-paid menial jobs (Massad 1996:58). And indeed documents reveal that discrimination against Mizrahim was a calculated policy that knowingly privileged European immigrants, at times creating anomalous situations where educated Arab Jewish immigrants became unskilled labourers while much less educated Ashkenazim occupied much higher administrative positions (Shohat 1998:14). In the camps themselves the top employment posts such as camp director, labour office director and intelligence officer were all occupied by Ashkenazim, the only positions available in the camps for Mizrahim were as sanitation workers (Giladi 1990:118). The predominance of the Mapai party (Labour) in government and in the Histadrut, meant that it enjoyed wide control over the political and economic system, including employment, health care and housing. Its practice of favouritism and of providing jobs and other services in exchange for votes was widespread: *'in the period of the elections we created havoc in the cooperative immigrant villages and in the transit camps by meaningless promises and by the base system of vote buying'*.³⁰ This also meant that criticism of the government in relation to their discriminatory treatment was suppressed as those who complained were liable to lose their jobs, or fail to get a job at all, and were less likely to receive proper non-temporary housing. Residents of the camps were also unable to take part in local council elections as they were classified as "temporary residents" (Massad 1996:59) and the Ashkenazi councils in whose jurisdiction the camps lay had little contact with those in the camps (Giladi 1990:119). Thus health and education services were extremely lacking, the camps were not linked to the electricity grid and there were no surfaced roads linking the camps with the neighbouring municipalities (Ibid:122). This meant that few doctors and medical supplies were available and that a substantial portion of the children in camps never attended school, despite Israel's compulsory education policy (Ibid:126). A study conducted in 1958 about the camps in the Beer Sheva region found that a third of children aged between 6 and 13 did not go to school and of those that did 90 percent left before fourth grade (ibid.). The proportion of Mizrahim in secondary school was

³⁰ Yosephthal G *'Life & Works'* 1963 cited in Massad (1996:59).

close to zero (ibid.).³¹

Thus the educational disparities between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim did in fact exist early on, but this was not because of the lack of educational opportunities in their countries of origin (which as has been explained earlier, in Arab countries Jewish educational establishments had been prioritised by the colonial government), it was the lack of educational services provided to the Mizrahi immigrants in Israel that was the cause of this disparity. This is significant because Israel sees itself as the “great moderniser” which has brought the immigrants from the Arab world up to its “advanced standard of civilisation”. But yet, as will be shown, it is the Israeli “civilising” or “modernising project”, which has continually generated the underdevelopment of the Mizrahim (Shohat 1998:20).

By 1952 Mizrahi immigrants, mostly Moroccans, were being sent to “development towns” which were set up exclusively for the “development”/“modernisation” of the Mizrahim (Massad 1996:58). The development towns are located in remote parts of the Negev desert or near the Lebanese border area and were set up for ‘economic, security and settlement reasons’ (Giladi 1990:129). In other words to supply Ashkenazi settlements with a constant source of cheap labour; to settle remote districts with Jews to prevent the return of the displaced Palestinian population; and to protect Ashkenazi settlements from Palestinian guerrilla activity (the development towns due to their situation on frontier areas became the target of Palestinian attacks (Massad 1996:58)). According to Giladi (1990:129) settling Mizrahi immigrants in these towns was a much cheaper method of absorption than the transit camps since it was direct and permanent. Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein (2004:4) report that in 2004 *‘these [development] towns that are characterised by labour intensive industrial structure and limited occupational opportunities are [still] inhabited mostly by North Africans.’* Most of the development towns are set up around one factory or quarry that is owned by the state, the Histadrut

³¹ The desperate situation of those in the camps is reflected in this excerpt of a letter written to the Prime Minister by residents of Camp Bet and Camp Gimmel near the town of Ramleh in 1954: *‘The overwhelming majority of residents are unemployed or partially employed... We have lived in these dreadful conditions for more than three years with no interest or help from government or municipal establishments. There are 8-10 people per hut and we are living amidst mounds of filth.... A large percentage of our children is not sent to school due to a shortage of financial resources. We have one doctor and one nurse for 5,000 people. We have no paved road connecting the camp to the town... The Social Welfare Office gives the needy 4-8 Israeli pounds a month, but this small sum is not enough to solve the problem since it is nowhere near enough to support a family of 6-8 members...’*. Cited in Giladi (1990:123).

or Ashkenazi businesses (Massad 1996:58). Indeed over 85 percent of the factory managers in the development towns are Ashkenazi though they themselves do not live in the towns (ibid.). The industries that have received the most government support are textiles and food, which do not require huge amounts of capital but which need plenty of cheap unskilled labour (Giladi 1990:130). The wages in the development towns are much lower than in the rest of the country, even within the same industry (Massad 1996:58): A report in 2001 into inequality in Israeli society showed that the salary of an Ashkenazi employee was on average one and a half times greater than that of a Mizrahi employee (Swirski & Konor-Attias 2001:8). The racialised structure of employment in Israeli society explains why 88 percent of upper income Israelis are Ashkenazim while 60 percent of low income families are Mizrahim (Wurmser 2005:5). It also illustrates that Israel's rapid economic development in the fifties and sixties was achieved on the basis of a systematic unequal distribution of advantages, which relegated Mizrahi Jews *'to a future-less bottom [and] propelled Ashkenazim up the social scale, creating mobility in management, marketing, banking and technical jobs'* (Shohat 1998:14).

In education the services provided in development towns are poor, there are high drop out and repetition rates, and this is reflected in the fact that as late as 2000 there was still only one Mizrahi with a university degree for every four Ashkenazim with the equivalent (Wurmser 2005:5). Due to the high unemployment and poor educational opportunities large numbers of Mizrahim have left the development towns. And thus the poor districts of the cities spread and the poverty deepened, Giladi (1990:149) comments that

the only basic difference between the development towns and the slum areas is geographic. The development towns lie in the country and supply Ashkenazi settlements with cheap labour whereas the slum areas form a belt around the large towns and supply Ashkenazi capital with cheap labour.

The socioeconomic differences between the predominantly Mizrahi development towns and the Ashkenazi settlements is striking, as is the difference in state support given to these communities: When a new Ashkenazi settlement is set up the state immediately provides it with enough good quality land for agricultural production, with the necessary means of production such as livestock and machinery, together with annual allowances for subsistence and development (Giladi 1990:144). The Ashkenazi kibbutzim have received 54 percent of all state funds

invested in agriculture despite the fact they constitute 12 percent of Israel's agricultural settlement (Massad 1996:58). Moreover the Ashkenazi settlements were built in the centre of the country which facilitated the marketing of their produce compared to the Mizrahi agricultural cooperatives that were located in remote areas (ibid.). Indeed the peripheral physical locality of the majority of the Mizrahi population symbolises their location on the socioeconomic periphery of Israeli society.

In the slums of the cities and large towns there is chronic overcrowding and many generations live together in two or three rooms at most (Giladi 1990:150). The building of unlicensed extensions was a method many families have resorted to when a son or daughter got married as they could not afford to rent or buy new apartments. But if an extra room was built without planning permission it was knocked down by the authorities (ibid.).³² The government owns a number of public housing apartments which are managed by different public housing companies, and whose tenants are primarily Mizrahi Jews (Yonah & Saporta 2002:95). However since 1997 the government has been trying to privatise the public housing sector, allowing tenants to purchase their apartments at straight market value but since much of the public housing in cities and large towns is on land real estate developers have been attracted to, tenants cannot afford to purchase their apartments at such high market values (ibid.). Shohat (1998:29) explains:

The pattern is clear and systematic. The areas forcibly vacated by the Sephardim soon become the object of major investments leading to Ashkenazi gentrification, where the elite enjoys living within a "Mediterranean" mise-en-scene but without the inconvenience of a Palestinian or Sephardi presence, while the newly adopted Sephardi neighbourhoods become de-capitalized slums.

The inequalities in space allocation for different ethnic groups are demonstrated by the fact that in the Negev, municipalities with an Ashkenazi majority cover 55.4 percent of the area though their residents constitute just 4.9 percent of the region's population; whereas municipalities with Mizrahi majorities cover only 20.8 percent of the area and have 62.1 percent of the population (Yiftachel 1998:10).³³ According to Yiftachel (1998:4) the politics of space is central to the organisation of

³² In 1982 this led to the shooting of a Yemeni Jew as he tried to resist the demolition of an extra room he had built on his house for him and his new spouse in order to alleviate the cramped conditions in the house where his family of nineteen were living in three small rooms (Giladi 1990:290).

³³ This is much worse for the Palestinian population of the Negev who cover only 1.5 percent of the region despite constituting 24.8 percent of the region's population (Yiftachel 1998:10).

group relations as it determines to a large extent the reproduction of social inequalities and of group identities. The Ashkenazi elites and middle classes have been able to preserve their privileged position by creating an uneven division of space by controlling the state apparatus of urban and regional planning, directing the settlement of areas of the country and regulating land ownership and use (ibid.). The dominant Ashkenazi establishment has also constructed more subtle institutional barriers such as school districts and zoning regulations that serve to reinforce and reproduce the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities (ibid.). As has been shown the Ashkenazi establishment confined Mizrahi Jews to a separate housing market, one in which they did not have the choice in the type of housing or location. This process has encouraged geographical segregation not just in housing but also in schooling, employment and healthcare, and therefore perpetuated the connection between housing and socioeconomic status.³⁴

In 1985 the government began restructuring the economy and adopted neo-liberal economic policies, which have had massive impacts on many Mizrahim (Beinin 2000): After peace and trade agreements were signed, work in the “traditional” manufacturing industries, particularly textiles, have been outsourced to Egypt and Jordan where labour is much cheaper, and thus many manufacturing bases have been downscaled or have closed down altogether (ibid.). The national rate of unemployment has now risen to 11%, and this is much higher in the development towns.³⁵ These neo-liberal policies have also seen sharp cuts in government expenditures on health, education and welfare and a reduction in real wages (Hanieh 2002). Indeed welfare payments to single mothers, the unemployed and pensioners were cut by a third in 2003.³⁶ This disproportionately affects the Mizrahim (along with the Palestinian citizens of Israel) who form the bulk of Israel’s poor and low income classes, and who are therefore the majority of welfare recipients (Melamed 2005:40). The welfare cuts also disproportionately affect Mizrahi women as they are the majority of single mothers in Israel (Swiski et al 2003:16). Thus demonstrating the important intersection between gender and race in class formations that should not be underestimated. Indeed this is starkly illustrated by the fact that *over a third* of

³⁴ Law-Yone & Kalus ‘*Housing in Israel: Policy & Inequality*’ cited in Yonah & Saporta (2002:110).

³⁵ The Guardian, ‘Trolley dash: the last resort of hungry Israelis’ 19/02/2004.

³⁶ Ibid.

Mizrahi women who are single mothers, live below the poverty line (Dahan Kalev 2005:2). As a result of these policies the gaps between Israel's rich and poor have widened even further and according to the Gini index, Israel ranks second only to the United States for inequality in the developed world (Hirschberg 2004).

Despite the evidence which illustrates how classes were formed along distinct ethnic lines in Israel and even the collection of the minutes of the meetings of the Knesset and the Zionist establishment, which demonstrate the mass of calculated discriminatory policies toward Mizrahi Jews; it is still asserted, by politicians and academics alike, that it was the "superior skills" and the "cultural background" of the European immigrants that has led to the overwhelmingly European presence in the middle and upper middle classes of Israeli society. This analysis from Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein (2004:4) of the Israeli Sociological Society is typical:

The immigrants that arrived from Europe after Israel's independence were able to rapidly ascend the socioeconomic ladder both as a result of the favourable treatment from their compatriots who were in positions of influence and their cultural affinity with the dominant groups as well as the skills and the **cultural orientation** that were suitable for a rapidly growing modern economy. [My emphasis]

Thus the channelling of the Mizrahim into peripheral locations, poorer housing, and the low-wage end of the labour market, together with the lack of educational opportunities, is purposefully ignored, and instead their "cultural orientation" is emphasised for their lack of success. The Mizrahim therefore still face the degradation of their heritage and identity so as to mask Israeli state policies that have marginalised them socially, economically and politically. It thus enables us to see, that while it is claimed that the Mizrahim have been "modernised" by Ashkenazi Israeli society, in fact the reverse is true, as it was the cheap labour provided by Mizrahi mass immigration that has made Ashkenazi "modernity" possible in Israel (Shohat 1998:17).

5.2 Resistance & Identity

Wherever there is exploitation and repression there will be resistance. This resistance often takes many forms and extends well beyond organised protest to include far more nuanced, subtler forms of dissent that are often overlooked. Indeed there has been a steady stream of what Sami Shalom Chetrit (2000:52) calls "passive radicalism" involving disobedience of the law, low rates of conscription in to the military and high dropout rates from school. The founding of the Black Panthers in 1971 was the

watershed event which heralded a new Mizrahi discourse (ibid.). They took their name from the black revolutionary struggle in the United States and were the first to draw parallels with their oppression and similar situations around the world, particularly the movement of their namesake (ibid.). They were also the first Mizrahim in politics to make the connection between the discrimination against the Palestinians and their own communities (ibid.). Not surprisingly they were targeted by the establishment and due to many factors including the lack of political experience and organisation the movement collapsed (ibid.). However the Black Panthers had a formidable impact on Israeli politics and on the construction of the Mizrahi identity.

However for the purposes of this research what shall be discussed here is the Wadi Salib uprising of 1959, named after the Wadi Salib slum area of Haifa where the protests began. The immediate cause was the provision of newly built housing to recently arrived Polish immigrants, that had been earmarked for Mizrahi families still living in slum conditions (Giladi 1990:253). Then rumours swept through the neighbourhood that a Moroccan had been shot dead by the police during the protests and riots began (Massad 1996:60). Political activists called for an end to the Ashkenazi discrimination and hegemony and the riots later spread across the country throughout Mizrahi camps and slum areas (ibid.). The government responded by delegitimising the leaders labelling them “criminals” and “hooligans”; adding that they were trying to create sectarian divisions amongst the Jewish people (ibid.). The Israeli state has developed effective means for dealing with the organised dissent of the Mizrahim: the typical strategy is to co-opt key figures in these movements with apartments and jobs, and reiterate to the public the critical necessity of “Jewish national unity”. Indeed the Wadi Salib uprising was largely diffused by the massive co-optation of leading activists in the rebellion (Chetrit 2000:53). This is significant as it illustrates the extent to which the Mizrahi identity dilemma is part of maintaining the organised class structures in Israeli society as the dichotomy between “Arab” and “Jew” discourages solidarity and cooperation with the Palestinians, as “Arabness” is the lowest rung on the socioeconomic ladder and simply leads to rejection (Shohat 1999:16); whilst “Jewishness”, is perceived to provide access to a valued identity, nationalist alliances and the benefits of the modern Jewish state. Thus the belief is created that there is no intra-Jewish discrimination, all the Mizrahim have to do to

progress in society is become “Israeli” by forgetting their history, dropping their accent and discarding their “Arabness” – in fact they just have to “Ashkenazify”.³⁷ This serves to keep the majority of Mizrahim loyal to the Israeli state by co-opting them into the nationalist narrative and its duplicitous promises of solidarity, security and modernity.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 “Quality Control”: Concerns in the Zionist Establishment

In the face of growing Yemenite immigration to Palestine, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of Zionist Revisionism, was adamant that Ashkenazi Jews preserve their majority status in Palestine, and moreover expressed his opposition to marriages between Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi Jews because he did not know if this would be beget ‘a brilliant people or a dull race’.³⁸ In fact, as was discussed earlier, the Zionist establishment was not too keen, in the beginning, on bringing Jews from Arab countries to Israel at all: ‘There are countries, and here I am talking about the countries of North Africa, whose Jews need not emigrate. It is not a question of the number of people, but of their quality.’³⁹ These statements regarding the “quality” of non-Ashkenazi Jews were echoed by many of Israel’s founding members and reveal the eugenic concerns that are inextricably bound up in the Zionist narrative itself:

For Ashkenazim, Zionism represented a movement of transformation, in which the European Jews, perpetually marginalised, could be reborn as the “new Jews”, free from the stigmas of old. The “new Jew” would be physically strong, agile and without the weaknesses that had been perceived to plague them in the Diaspora (Khazzoom 2003:493). In the pre-state Zionist establishment much emphasis was placed on generating the desired characteristics of the “new Jew” and indeed Sachlav Stoler-Liss has researched some of the eugenic proposals such as castrating the mentally ill and sterilizing the poor advocated by key figures in the Zionist establishment.⁴⁰ These included Joseph Meir, who served as head of the Israeli Sick

³⁷ Conversations with Dr Smadar Lavie, 28/09/05, Tel Aviv & Dr Rafi Shubeli, 29/09/05, Rehovot.

³⁸ Jabotinsky V ‘*Jews of the East*’ 1919 cited in Haaretz 22nd July 1983.

³⁹ Quoting Moshe Sharett, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the Shared Report 12th December 1948 cited in Massad (1996:56).

⁴⁰ See “Do not have children if they won’t be healthy!” Haaretz 11/07/2004.

Fund (*Kupat Holim*) for thirty years, and who explicitly stated in 1934 that European Jewish mothers had an obligation to bear only healthy children:

Who should be allowed to raise children? Seeking the right answer to this question, eugenics is the science that tries to refine the human race and keep it from decaying... Doctors, athletes, and politicians should spread the idea widely: Do not have children unless you are sure that they will be healthy, both mentally and physically.⁴¹

Stoler-Liss (2003:110) demonstrates that those in the Zionist establishment saw connections between the Zionist movement and Social Darwinism, believing that Zionist children tended to be taller and stronger than those from non-Zionist circles as only the strongest and healthiest Jews accepted Zionism. Physicians and psychologists in the Zionist movement went to great lengths imposing an onslaught of information, indoctrination and systems of regulation on European Jewish women throughout their childbearing years in order to ensure the high quality (European) Jewish population they perceived as essential for building the Jewish state (Ibid:104). Indeed many of the population “quality” concerns expressed by the Zionist establishment are reminiscent of those levelled at Jews in European anti-Semitic discourse. In this discourse Jews were characterised as dark, dirty and poor and chastised for having too many children (Khazzoom 2003:490&495). These characterisations echo in the Ashkenazi descriptions of the Mizrahim (and the Palestinians), also portrayed as dirty, lazy and poor, along with other pejorative descriptions (Dahan Kalev 2001). In anti-Semitic Europe the Jews were constructed as backward and inferior precisely because they came from the East and so were orientalised by a Europe that wished to define itself in opposition to the Eastern “other” (Khazzoom 2003:491). Khazzoom illustrates how these Orientalist stigmas were internalized through a complex process and then imposed on another group (the Jews from the Arab world & the Palestinians) through Zionism as part of the destigmatization process of the Jews from Europe. This process is clearly explained by Shohat (1998:31):

The leitmotif of Zionist texts was the cry to be a “normal civilized nation”, without the “distortions” and forms of pariahdom “typical” of the *gola* (diaspora), of the state of being a non nation-state. The “Ostjuden”, perennially marginalized by Europe, realized their desire of becoming Europe, ironically, in the Middle East, this time on the backs of their own “Ostjuden”, the Eastern Jews.

⁴¹ Meir Y & Rivkai A *'The Mother & The Child'* 1934 cited in Stoler-Liss (2003:110).

Thus Israel continuously represents itself as a Western entity with a solid East/West dichotomy because by defining other groups (the Mizrahim & the Palestinians) as defective it simultaneously reinforces its own (Ashkenazi) more favourable identity. Importantly this is then used to legitimize the Ashkenazi dominance and monopolization of resources (Khazzoom 2003:483).

The potency of the Orientalist narrative and its committed relationship to Modernisation theory is clearly visible in its application to the Mizrahim and thus demonstrates its capacity for being reshaped, reproduced and transposed according to the needs of the dominant group (ibid.). Indeed Israel's leading intellectuals spent great efforts researching what was termed the "primitive mentality" of the Mizrahi Jews: Karl Frankenstein, a celebrated professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the man considered the founder of the Israeli education system, wrote *'the primitive mentality of many of the immigrants from backward countries can be compared to that of the primitive expression of children, the retarded or the mentally disturbed'*.⁴² The "retarded mentality" of Mizrahi Jews was confirmed by such "scientific" analysis as described in the book *'The Children of the Melah: The Cultural Retardation Among Moroccan Children and Its Meaning In Education'* by Fuerstein and Richel (1953) where they stated:

Various non-verbal examinations conducted prove retardation of one to two years, and very often even more, in comparison with youth of similar age in Europe. Are we to interpret this as biological inferiority and to see their difficulties as an expression of lack of intellectual abilities and limitations in psycho physiological activity?⁴³

This symbiosis of social science and biology was a deep-seated characteristic of mainstream Israeli sociology producing work centred on Social Darwinist notions. In more contemporary sociological research, mainstream Israeli academia has attached itself to the edifice of modernisation theory, which instead of explicitly linking poverty and underdevelopment to ethnic or racial inferiority, conveniently targets "traditions" and "culture" as explanations for social and economic inequality. Indeed Dahan-Kalev (2001) explains that the proximity of the founders of Israeli sociology to the Zionist project blurred the difference between the academy and the political establishment and as such, the "scientific" conceptualisation of Mizrahi

⁴² Cited in Shohat (1998:8) & Wurmser (2005:3).

⁴³ Cited in Dahan-Kalev (2001).

defects in the spirit of modernisation theory, not only formed the contours of Israeli sociology but also constituted the basis of state policy. This is apparent in the analyses of the Mizrahi fertility decline which reproduce the official modernisation narrative, frequently citing “culture” as a reason for the “pre-modern” fertility rates of non-European Jews (see Okun 1997).

It can be seen that in orientalising the Mizrahim, the Ashkenazi elite simply took the arsenal of images and symbols that had been used to exclude them and applied them, largely unchanged, to the Mizrahim (Khazzoom 2003:500). One area where this is particularly conspicuous is the family: As the large families of European Jews had once been a symbol of their “otherness” and “inferiority”, family size became the signifier between “modern” and “pre-modern” Jews in Israel (Melamed 2005:18; Khazzoom 2003:501). The larger family size of Mizrahi Jews was heavily stigmatized and Mizrahi Jews labelled as “irresponsible breeders” in media reports and in parliamentary debates (Melamed 2005:16). Even today in discussions on the economy and state benefits, “large families” are described as a burden on the state, and indeed the phrase “families of many children” has a racialised and degrading connotation in the Israeli context (ibid.). In fact by the late 1950s having a large family was beginning to be embarrassing, as mothers with many children were ridiculed by medical staff and social workers.⁴⁴ Indeed because large families were beginning to be seen as a marker of social inferiority this prompted some members of the Zionist establishment to issue statements regarding the respect that should be accorded to mothers of large families, as it was felt this attitude was harming the demographic needs of the state (Melamed 2005:34).

The fact that higher fertility is implicated as a cause and signifier of poverty is testament to the widespread presence of Malthusian rationale in Israeli social policies, educational materials, the media and society (see Kanaaneh 2002). In fact Melamed (2005:15) states that Malthusianism is more than just a population theory; it is in actuality a powerful cultural and political discourse that not only provides a “justification” for understanding high fertility as a causal mechanism for poverty and underdevelopment, but is also a highly effective tool in the process of reproductive “othering” – categorizing groups into “reproductively modern” and “reproductively primitive”. Since Zionism adopts the Orientalist narrative and was partly a

⁴⁴ Conversation with Yali Hashash, Tel Aviv, 6/10/05.

transformation project aimed at “modernization” through “Westernization”; the synergy of Zionism, Orientalism and Malthusianism serves to classify only the reproductively modern – those of small, planned, Westernized families – as capable of producing citizens of quality for the Jewish state. Thus in the case of Israel (as in many other contexts) this reproductive othering serves to distinguish between those who should be encouraged to reproduce and those who should not.

6.2 Stolen Generations

Possibly the most shocking example of this rationale is the thousands of babies stolen from Arab Jewish women that were given, and very often sold, to Ashkenazi families (Giladi 1990:90; Massad 1996:56). This was a practice that began in the 1920s and carried on right up until the 1970s when the last cases were reported.⁴⁵ It is most commonly known to have happened to Yemenite children but there is evidence that shows many Jewish children from other Arab countries suffered the same fate.⁴⁶ The taking of Arab Jewish children was an attempt to “Europeanize” a generation by bringing them up in European families, protecting against the growing numbers of non-Europeans in the Jewish population and their effect on the “modern” Western culture of Israel. This is an episode in the history of the Mizrahim, which still resonates painfully with many Mizrahi families and has been the subject of a number of official enquiries and television documentaries (Massad 1996:56). Indeed it happened on such a vast scale and with the complicity of large numbers of doctors, nurses and social workers that it is hard to believe that there was no official policy encouraging this practice.⁴⁷ Yet the Israeli state has never apologised nor stated that there was any official policy for removing Arab Jewish children. Instead the “bureaucratic chaos” of the early state period has been blamed, together with the portrayal of the Yemenites as “irresponsible parents” (Massad 1995:57). This episode reflects the Zionist view of the Arab Jewish family, casting the Mizrahim, as a whole, as “irresponsible breeders” and their large families as evidence of their “uncivilised and backward” cultures. This not only provided the justification for the removal of children from their parents but also gave further credence to the perception of the Arab Jews as an “internal demographic threat”.

⁴⁵ Conversation with Dr Rafi Shubeli, 29/09/05, Rehovot.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

6.3 “Malthusian Couples”⁴⁸ & the Demographic War

When discussing Israeli population policies many feminist and other anti-Zionist analyses have fallen into the trap of understanding these policies as either aimed at “Arabs” or “Jews”, and understandably so, given the Israeli preoccupation with the demographic number battle of Jews versus Palestinians. This “war of the cradles”, as it is referred to, flows directly from the Zionist project to settle the historic land of Palestine with Jews and thus demographic obsession has become a central feature of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Where immigration once played so vital a role, its decline in recent years and the tendency toward out migration has meant that the demographic future of the region will largely be determined by decisions about reproduction (Courbage 1999:25). But what is missing from feminist and other anti-Zionist analyses of the demographic issue generally, and fertility policies in particular, is the story as it relates to the Mizrahim. As what these analyses have failed to explore is the relationship between poverty, ethnicity and class in the Jewish population and how this interacts with and shapes the demographic political economy (Melamed 2005:16). Thus the focus on the conflict’s nationalist dynamic has meant that the conflicts, inequalities and tensions within Israel’s Jewish population are lost. This prioritises the Ashkenazi Zionist narrative and to a certain extent, reproduces it, by reinforcing the dichotomy between “Arab” and “Jew” (ibid.). It is therefore crucial to recognise that pro and antinatalist policies cannot simply be defined as directed at the Jewish or the Arab population, it is much more complex than that. As while Israeli nationalist rhetoric exhorted Jewish women “to produce for the nation” and emphasised the necessity for Jews to win “the war of the cradles”, those in the establishment, in government committees, in health and social services were producing and implementing policies that would encourage Mizrahi Jews to have fewer children. The higher Mizrahi fertility rate has been instrumental to the demographic Jewish majority in Israel, but like the split between the “desired Jewish part” of their identity with the “repugnant Arab part”, this has also been treated as both welcomed and unwanted:

⁴⁸ A reference to the term used by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) cited in Melamed (2005:27)

... large families are perceived as undermining the “modern” character of the state – the very “quality” – of the Jewish “nation”. Yet, large families are also elevated as important donors to Jewish demographic “quantity” and strength... (Melamed 2005:18)

This is the crux of the seemingly contradictory nature of Israeli fertility policy. For how were policies aimed at reducing the Mizrahi family size justified in a context where a Jewish majority was deemed necessary to maintain the Jewish state?

Couples with large families are often perceived as ignorant – lacking knowledge about proper birth control methods and the rationale to limit the number of children they have because of their attachment to “backward traditions” – and thus procreating “thoughtlessly” and “uncontrollably” (Kanaaneh 2002:104).⁴⁹ This is the mutual language of modernisation and Malthusian theory as it applies to the Third world, the global “reproductive others”, whose high fertility rates – evidence of their “ignorance” and “irrationality” – are pinpointed as the cause for their poverty and discontent (Hartmann 1987:6). These Malthusian stigmas have thus enabled Israeli policymakers to create distinctions between so-called “planning” and “non-planning” couples, utilising this to design fertility policies meant to encourage “modern, educated couples” to increase their family size while encouraging “the reproductively primitive” to limit theirs (Melamed 2005:24). As while the demographic battle between the Palestinians is fundamentally important to the Zionist project, the Ashkenazi establishment did not consider the Mizrahim to have the suitable characteristics to be at the forefront of this particular battle: For the Zionist project, building the “new Jew” and the new nation meant that while the quantity of children was fundamentally important, this was coupled with a considerable emphasis on the “quality” of the children produced (Stoler-Liss 2003:115). This statement by Joseph Meir clearly illustrates his disregard for the Mizrahi contribution to the Jewish population in Israel: “*We have no interest in the tenth or even the seventh child of the poor Mizrahi families....We must pray for the second child of the families of the intelligentsia*”.⁵⁰ It was understood that in order to produce “children of quality” the

⁴⁹ It should be noted that people have been regulating their fertility for centuries, well before the availability of modern contraceptives (Harris & Ross 1987). The most common non-modern method of fertility regulation is coitus interruptus, or withdrawal. This method of fertility control was, until well into the second half of the twentieth century, one of the most popular and effective forms of contraception (Ross 1998:3). High fertility should therefore rather be understood in its specific context; indeed high fertility is often a conscious response to the class-specific demands of the political economic system and not a result of “primitivism”, or “ignorance”.

⁵⁰ Meir Y ‘*Increasing Birth Rates or Increasing Fertility Rates?*’ 1952 cited in Stoler-Liss (2003:114).

mother had to be “highly civilised and cultured” – clearly in the “reproductively modern” category, and therefore the “lower educational status” of Mizrahi women and their propensity for large families were seen as evidence of their “cultural unfitness” for proper motherhood (Melamed 2005:26). Even today Mizrahi women are portrayed as improper mothers, the junkie or the prostitute mother who neglects her children depicted in training manuals for health and social workers are all Mizrahi women.⁵¹

By relying on the language of modernisation and extolling the “scientific” logic of Malthusianism, members of the Zionist establishment and its policymakers were able to mask the controversial nature of their population policies in relation to the Mizrahim (Ibid:14). Which were prompted in large part, to delay the time the Mizrahim would form the majority of the Jewish population in Israel: *‘The situation around the country is worsening in relation to the immigration from Oriental countries. The future teller has calculated and found out that within decades from now we will all become Orientals...’*⁵² As such the desired reduction in the Mizrahi family size was presented as a crucial part of the “modernisation process” of the Mizrahim, necessary for their own advancement.

6.4 Lies, Damn Lies & Statistics

A report into the events of the Wadi Salib uprising in 1959 highlighted the large size of families as a “difficult factor” in the integration of immigrants particularly in areas relating to housing and income.⁵³ Thus excusing the skewed distribution of resources in favour of the Ashkenazim and blaming the higher fertility of Arab Jews as a reason for their discontent. Such a strategy reflects the typical usage of Malthusian theory, which Hartmann (1987:28) explains serves to legitimize the status quo by reasoning that if the poor are rising up it is because their numbers are too many. Thus as a response to the events of Wadi Salib and the report, the government set up the Natality Committee in 1962, which was established to *‘consider the means by which large and deprived families could be assisted and to advise the government on matters concerning natality policies’* (Portugese 1998:76). Professor Roberto Bachi, who had been appointed government statistician in 1948 and who founded the Central Bureau

⁵¹ Conversation with Dr Rafi Shubeli, Rehovot, 29/09/05.

⁵² The Knesset Protocols January 24th 1950, p.640 cited in Melamed (2005:22).

⁵³ Report of the Wadi Salib Inquiry Committee 1959 cited in Massad (1996:61).

of Statistics in that same year, headed the committee which was concerned both with the gap between the Jewish/Arab (Palestinian) birth rate and the gap between the European Jewish and Arab Jewish birth rate (Melamed 2005:41). Despite the fact that demographic data showed at the time that Mizrahi fertility had begun declining considerably and that Ashkenazi fertility was on the increase, Professor Roberto Bachi distorted the data to show the contrary, in order to heighten fears over the “looming demographic threat” posed to the Ashkenazi population (Hashash 2004:49-57). Thus while the evidenced showed that Mizrahi women were beginning to have fewer children, the committee produced a report in 1966, stressing the concern with the lower national Jewish birth rate as a whole compared to the higher Palestinian birth rate, but making clearly selective pronatalist policy recommendations based on an ethnic division between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews – though this was expressed in the report using the terminology of “small families” and “large families” (Melamed 2005:40). There are two main reasons why the pronatalist policy recommendations proposed were not explicitly linked to the European Jewish population: firstly the protests launched by Mizrahim who were organising politically and accusing the state of discrimination necessitated that “Jewish national unity” be emphasised and any ethnic differentiation obscured. Secondly the identification of Ashkenazim as “reproductively modern” and Mirzrahim as “reproductively primitive” was already institutionalised in policy approaches of the state and so the categories of “small” and “large” families were already well established and understood (Ibid:44). For “large families” therefore, the report recommended access to family planning information, education for women and men to improve the “quality” of their parenthood, and the provision of direct services to children from large families, in order to ensure that parents would not “misuse” family grants (ibid.). For “small families” economic incentives were recommended such as assistance with obtaining a bigger house and reducing the cost of children’s education (ibid.). These policies thus served to ingrain more deeply the social and economic inequalities between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews. By offering parenting classes and family planning information to large, primarily Mirzrahi, families the state was “affirming” their place as irresponsible and incompetent parents, incapable of controlling their fertility and raising their children. Thus having fewer children and becoming better parents were presented as solutions to the economic and social problems of the Mizrahim. The fact that family planning

clinics have been concentrated in peripheral zones, which are inhabited largely by Mizrahi, is evidence of these policy recommendations (Portugese 1998:125).

In contrast, the assistance with housing and education for smaller, primarily Ashkenazi, families was justified on the basis that responsible parents had fewer children in order to invest more in each child and so to encourage these families to have a greater number of children, material and social goods like more spacious housing and education, would have to be made more easily accessible for these families (Melamed 2005:44). It is highly significant that most of Israel's pronatalist policies aimed at providing incentives to middle and upper-middle income, small (European) families to encourage them to have more children has had little overall effect (see chapter four). This is even acknowledged by the committees themselves where it was stated that grants and incentives to smaller families did not ensure an increase in births (Melamed 2005:43). Considering this and the fact that the population data actually showed that Mizrahi fertility was beginning to decline, the question arises, what purpose were these policies designed to serve? It is argued that these policies were not only intended to limit the Mizrahi demographic majority, but were also designed to assist and sustain the racialised class formation of Israeli society.⁵⁴

6.5 Fertility Policy & Class Structure

Pronatalist (and antinatalist) policies are not generally formulated for ideological sake but rather as tools to further economic and political agendas. While the Israeli pronatalist policies directed at the Ashkenazim were certainly sincere in this desired goal, these policies primarily acted as mechanisms to assist the creation of an affluent middle class that was predominantly white European.⁵⁵ In order to see this more clearly it is necessary to review a range of these policies:

In the 1960s a series of state sponsored balcony closures were carried out in Tel Aviv, where balconies were converted into an extra room for the family so as to provide more space for another child. However this policy was carried out only in the homes of Ashkenazim, identified often by the location or by the resident's family name.⁵⁶ Given that Mizrahi families of six or seven members had homes of similar, or

⁵⁴ Conversation with Yali Hashash, 6/10/05, Tel Aviv.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Conversation with Dr. Smadar Lavie, 28/09/05, Tel Aviv.

in some cases of smaller size, to the homes of Ashkenazi families of three or four members (Allouche 2003:46; Giladi 1990:231) clearly illustrates the skewed distributional priorities of government social policy. Providing smaller families with extensions to their homes whilst disregarding the cramped conditions of larger families is about more than pronatalist concerns (especially since there was little guarantee that such a policy would actually result in an increased number of births) it is designed to create social and material differences between ethnic groups. The justification for providing more spacious housing to Ashkenazi families was based on the notion that only more readily accessible social and material goods, such as cheaper schooling and spacious housing, would encourage an increase in the low Ashkenazi birthrate due to their status as responsible Malthusian couples. Even in the 1980s demographers Goldscheider and Friedlander (1986:34) stated that

... the higher ideal than actual family size among low fertility European Jewish population groups will persist unless the socioeconomic constraints on fertility are lessened. Pronatalist policies that are designed to increase fertility, particularly among European Jewish subgroups, must take into account these constraints.

Thus according to Goldscheider and Friedlander the answer to the low Ashkenazi birthrate was to remove the socioeconomic constraints facing this section of the population. While no similar recommendation was made for the Mizrahim, despite the fact that the Mizrahim face enormous socioeconomic constraints given their situation on the geographical, economic and social periphery. This approach to fertility policy has therefore assisted the ethnic division of Israeli society into a class of low paid blue and white-collar, largely Mizrahi (and Palestinian) workers and an educated, highly skilled, managerial middle class that is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi. These divisive policies were presented however, as impartial means to encourage smaller families to have more children and thus as part of the all encompassing nationalist concern for the demographic welfare, indeed the very survival, of the Israeli state.

Another interesting example of the connection between fertility policy and class structuring is the Large Families Insurance Scheme (LFIS) 1959. After the Wadi Salib riots in 1959 the state was anxious to quell the social discontent and take the focus off the unequal distribution of resources. As a response to the riots the LFIS was rapidly introduced, after the report into the riots (mentioned previously) highlighted the large size of Mizrahi families to be a difficult factor in their absorption into Israeli

society (Melamed 2005:29). This scheme formed the basis of future child allowance policies and has undergone many changes since its inception (ibid.). In its 1959 form it provided grants to families with four or more children under fourteen years old, this was later increased to eighteen in 1965 (Portugese 1998:95). It was presented as a policy supporting Jewish pronatalism and social welfare, which was particularly targeted at poor, large Mizrahi families. The context of social unrest and resentment prompted the enactment of the LFIS, and was crucial to the way it was depicted as Melamed (2005:36) explains:

In a social reality in which large family became not only a code name for the poverty and inferiority of Arab Jews, but also perceived as their very generating mechanism, the legislation of the LFIS was supposed to carry a multiple message – of inclusion on the one hand, and of a concrete solution for poverty on the other – to the protesting Arab Jews.

This message of inclusion was seen as essential for maintaining national unity in the face of growing discontent and thus the LFIS was portrayed as a policy aimed at promoting the socioeconomic welfare of large families in a bid to demonstrate that the Mizrahi Jews were a valued part of the Israeli nation. But as Portugese (1998:95) points out *'had welfare been the main concern of the government, it would have tied child allowances to the poverty level of a family rather than to its size.'* The LFIS clearly implicated the reproductive habits of the Mizrahim as a central factor for their poor living conditions that they were protesting against, and thus deflected attention away from the role of the state and its institutions in creating and sustaining structural inequalities (Melamed 2005:37). Indeed many of the Knesset members themselves doubted if the act would achieve significant improvements in the harsh socioeconomic conditions of the Mizrahim because the allowances were too low and only began with the fourth child (Ibid:32). Portugese (1998:95) sees this as a policy that was therefore really aimed at encouraging the Jewish fertility rate but Melamed (2005:32) contends this, arguing that *'paradoxically, the fact that family allowances were tied to large family size undermines, rather than reinforces, the argument of Jewish pronatalism.'* By connecting family welfare provisions to the size of the family, this strengthened the perceived link between large family size and poverty; and thus large family size became the explanation for why the Mizrahim were locked into the cycle of poverty, inferiority and underdevelopment (Ibid:39-40).

What is most illustrative is the fact that the scheme provided allowances to all families with four or more children including Palestinian citizens of Israel. Indeed the

“Israeli Arabs” (Palestinians) and the Mizrahim were discussed together as the main groups that would enjoy the allowances due to their similar reproductive habits (Ibid:36). If Jewish pronatalism had been the main goal of the act the inclusion of the Palestinians under the scheme would have undermined this objective. As it was, the language of welfare and socioeconomic hardship served to highlight the “culturally primitive” reproductive behaviour of both the Mizrahim and the Palestinians (Ibid:35). In addition the fact that the LFIS remained the main attempt to address poverty did nothing to alleviate the actual conditions of poverty as one Knesset member was well aware:

... [the allowances are] like one drop in the big sea of needs. The government is responsible to this grave socioeconomic state of the Mizrahim ... [we] cannot ignore [the fact] that the fundamental problems such as unemployment, low wages, terrible crowded housing conditions, remain in their validity and cruelty.⁵⁷

Without addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality, the LFIS, and subsequent welfare policies of the Israeli state, ensured that the Mizrahim (and the Palestinians) would be cast as “dependent on welfare” and as a “burden on the state”. The fact that over forty years later, even after the dramatic Mizrahi fertility decline, the Mizrahim are stigmatised as the major recipients of welfare is, in part, a testament to this failure (Melamed 2005:40).

The LFIS should be seen in direct contrast to the system of tax credits for families with dependent children introduced in 1968 (Hashash 2004:84). This scheme was in fact specifically designed for small, wealthier families who did not qualify for the LFIS because they had less than four children (Portugese 1998:96). The qualifying tax threshold set for the tax credit scheme was too high for the poor, which meant that only middle and upper middle income families benefited (ibid.). Thus the more affluent, mostly Ashkenazi families had their position in the Israeli middle and upper-middle classes reinforced by the provision of extra disposable income that was provided with no negative stigmas attached, unlike welfare payments. This system of providing family allowances through different mechanisms, one for the more affluent members of society and another for those on low incomes, was designed to maintain the socioeconomic status quo whilst pacifying calls for social justice and redistribution. It also served to encourage increased reproduction for wealthier

⁵⁷ Knesset Protocols, July 22nd 1959, p.2661 cited in Melamed (2005:32).

families and discourage it for poor families. What is significant is that the range of policies discussed here, were presented as schemes to aid families in need, emphasising “Jewish national unity” at a time when a large proportion of the Jewish population was feeling resentful. But instead what these policies achieved was to entrench the inequalities even further, strengthening the racialised class structures in Israeli society.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 Arab and Jewish?

Shohat (1998:16) states that the Zionist project of “ingathering the exiles” largely transformed itself into a “modernisation mission” where the immigrants from Asia and Africa were concerned. The Jews from Europe were perceived as simply having to be “absorbed” into Israeli society, whereas those from Asia and Africa could only be “absorbed” through the process of “modernisation” – a euphemism for the erasure of their largely Arabic identity and their assimilation into Euro-Israeli life (ibid.). In a Knesset meeting about the Yemeni immigrants in 1951, Ben Gurion stated that *‘the aim of the government is to inculcate the Yemeni immigrant with Israeli values to the point that he forgets where he came from...’*⁵⁸ As such the efforts to “de-Arabise” the Arab Jewish immigrants have been relentless, indeed everything associated with “the Arab” has been despised and ridiculed in Zionist literature, public media and in school books, to the point that this contempt for the Arab identity has been internalised by many Mizrahim (Giladi 1990:188). Shohat (1999:15) states that under Zionism, Arab Jews have lived a visceral schizophrenia, mingling stubborn self-pride with an imposed self-rejection:

Mizrahim in Israel were made to feel ashamed of their dark, olive skin, of their guttural language, of the winding quarter tones of their music, even of their traditions of hospitality. Children, trying desperately to conform to an elusive Euro-Israeli Sabra norm, were made to feel ashamed of their parents and their Arab countries of origin. At times Mizrahim were mistaken for Palestinians and arrested or beaten. Since Arabness led only to rejection, many Mizrahim became self-hating. In a classic play of colonial specularities, the East came to view itself through the West’s distorting mirror.

Thus the suppression of the Arab Jewish identity has meant the rejection of Arabic language, music and customs, and indeed Chetrit (2000a:60) argues that this

⁵⁸ Knesset Minutes, February 14th 1951, Volume 8/1102 cited in Giladi (1990:197).

identity had been suppressed so deeply that it makes any discussion of its existence extremely painful. This is illustrated by the fact that few Mizrahim will refer to themselves as “Mizrahim”, or as “Arab Jews”, preferring “Israeli” as this avoids any inferences of inferiority and provides access to a powerful nationalist discourse, and all that it promises. The Arab Jewish identity, on the other hand, represents a past which has been systematically denigrated and indeed the Arab Jews have been trapped in a no-exit situation, unable to return, unlike the Jews from Europe or North America – *‘Arab Jews have been forbidden from nourishing memories of having belonged to the peoples across the river Jordan, across the mountains of Lebanon and across the Sinai desert and Suez canal’* (Shohat 1999:7). In some ways, it seems the Mizrahim have even more invested in the Israeli nationalist discourse than the Ashkenazim. Thus recognizing the Arab Jewish identity means confronting uncomfortable truths and requires making a painful inner journey, Chetrit (ibid.) states that *‘it is because of the difficulty of the journey that not many undertake it.’* Indeed accepting oneself as both Arab and Jewish in the Israeli context is largely a privilege of educated intellectuals.⁵⁹

It is not surprising therefore, that many Mizrahim have undertaken to “modernise”, indeed “Ashkenazify” themselves, as a means to affirm their place in Israeli society and as an attempt to move up the social scale, as Dahan Kalev (2001:10) explains: *‘I finally made my choice in favour of the rich, successful and strong (winning) side – Ashkenazi action. The price I paid for this effort was full alienation from my self and my identity....’* And even this choice has not guaranteed upward social mobility as while the Mizrahim are “encouraged” to integrate into the Ashkenazi fabric of Israeli life, the basic social infrastructures of the economy and capital, of education and culture still mainly serve the Ashkenazi dominated upper middle classes and elites (Chetrit 2000a:62).

The bifurcation between the Jewish and the Arabic identity has been fundamental to the Zionist project, not simply for the furtherance of Zionist ideology, but also for the preservation of the racialised class structures and the Ashkenazi hegemony within Israeli society. Indeed the policies of underdevelopment and impoverishment cannot be separated from the policies of erasure and cultural suppression (Giladi 1990:187). Just as these policies cannot be divorced from the

⁵⁹ Conversation with Dr Smadar Lavie, Tel Aviv, 7/10/05.

wider conflict with the Palestinians, as while the Mizrahim erased the Arab image in themselves, the Arab was marked out as their new enemy both on the battlefield and in the quest to create a new Israeli Jew (Chetrit 2000a:62):

The Ashkenazi does not have to stress his Jewishness, since it is obvious to him that he/she is not an Arab. He has no such problem. The Ashkenazi has a clear stand regarding his relations with Arabs – you are there and we are here – and there is nothing there to mix. But the Mizrahi is similar to the Arab in outward appearance, customs, dialect and in other things that force him to distinguish himself from the Arab, in order to achieve equality on the basis of a national identity. If the criterion for equality is nationalism, so they must prove their nationalism.⁶⁰

Proving this nationalism has meant, amongst other things, the rejection of all things “Arab” and the emulation of the characteristics of the “Sabra”, the “new Israeli”, as dictated by the hegemonic Euro-Israeli discourse. Thus forbidding any expression of sympathy or solidarity with the “other oppressed Arabs” – the Palestinians:

Israel imposed the “Oriental” identity on those immigrants in order to set them apart from those citizens perceived as entitled to the “Israeli” identity, the Ashkenazi Jews; and also, to a certain degree, to set them apart from the Palestinian Arab citizens, who were entitled to almost nothing. (Shiran 1991:304)

So while the Oriental identity has meant discrimination, the Arab identity has meant even greater discrimination (ibid.) and therefore the necessity to distance oneself from both these images has been compelling, and given the no-exit situation which Mizrahim have found themselves, it is not surprising that many Mizrahim followed the example of their Ashkenazi oppressors and imposed their stigmas on the definitive “others” in Israeli society, the Palestinians.

7.2 Conclusions

The discussions in chapters five and six demonstrate how the Zionist modernisation project has generated the underdevelopment of Mizrahim on the premise of developmentalist orientated goals toward “modernisation”. Indeed the modernisation discourse has been used to engineer the socioeconomic class structures in Israeli society along ethnic lines and also to deny the establishment’s role in these deliberate constructions. Chapter six illustrates how the reproductive habits of Mizrahim were instead implicated for their socioeconomic underdevelopment and how the

⁶⁰ Azmi Bishara MK, ‘A Mizrahi-Palestinian Discourse’ July 1993 cited in Chetrit (2000b).

reproductive differences between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim were utilised to reinforce the class formations in Israeli society. Within both these chapters the connections between underdevelopment, class positioning, reproductive status and identity are clearly set out. It thus highlights the importance reproductive discourses and practices have on constructions of identity, which is heightened in the context of the Mizrahim, and thus high fertility has become an ethnic and class mark. Indeed it is interesting to note that middle class families with a greater number of children than the lower fertility averages are not posited as “reproductively primitive”, and thus reproductive “othering” is, in essence, an exercise of power, which reflects the dominant hierarchical structures in society, underlining their presence in the lives of those on the periphery (Kanaaneh 2002:165).

What is striking about the stigmatisation of Mizrahi reproductive habits and the reproductive “othering” of the Palestinians is the similarity in the language: both are described as backward, primitive, irrational and both Mizrahi and Palestinian women have been constructed as improper, even pathological mothers, primarily due to their higher fertility (Melamed 2005:26; Stoler-Liss 2003:108). The fact that the LFIS was targeted at Mizrahi as well as Palestinian families illustrated the prevalence of Malthusian thinking regarding both Mizrahim and Palestinians, and thus this high profile connection between poverty and higher fertility also implied the link between these characteristics and “Arabness”. In fact the higher fertility of Mizrahi Jews was seen as a demonstrative feature of their “Arabness” by the Zionist establishment (Melamed 2005:18) and therefore of their inferiority.

The discussions in this paper illustrate the profound crisis the rupture of the Arab Jewish identity has produced for Mizrahim, and given the dominant socioeconomic and political structures, their manoeuvrability outside of these conceptions of modernity and these reproductive discourses has been highly restricted, and has meant that identification and cooperation with the dominant Ashkenazi groups have been the primary means for social mobility and acceptance (Chetrit 2000a:62). The trend toward lower fertility is just one aspect of the wide-ranging reform of their Mizrahi identity into the more desirable, acceptable identity of the “modern Israeli”. While this paper lacks evidence from individual testimony for the role the dominant reproductive discourses have played in the reduction of fertility; the discussions in academic literature, in the Knesset and in public media, in addition to the analysis this paper provides, clearly illustrates the prevalence of the

modernisation narrative in constructing nearly every possible social and personal characteristic, including reproductive habits, as “modern” or “backward”, or indeed as evidence of “Jewishness” or “Arabness” . In addition the fact that antinatalist policies were aimed at poor Mizrahi families and were justified using both the language of modernisation and eugenics, raises significant doubts as to the “uncontroversial” classification given to the Mizrahi fertility decline (see Okun 1997:317). Thus this paper demonstrates that the explanations in Israeli sociological literature for the Mizrahi fertility decline are lacking as they do not reflect the full reality of the processes behind the fertility decline nor do they appreciate the complexity of the ambivalent status of Mizrahim in Israeli society and the strategies employed by Mizrahi Jews to placate this.

The purpose of this research was not to extrapolate a definitive list of reasons for the fertility decline of Mizrahi Jews in Israel but to explore the power of narrative and reproductive “othering” in a context where identity is central to political, social and economic entitlements. In fact, it is important to note that the discourse of reproductive “othering” reveals more about the assumptions and attitudes of the speaker than about the practices of the “others” it is imposed on (Kanaanah 2002:166). In essence, this paper has endeavoured to show how issues of reproduction, identity and class intersect and interact with each other, and how the language of modernisation and its reliance on Malthusian rationale are used to further class interests, and how these discourses define and shape the structures through which social mobility and empowerment are perceived as possible. It therefore also tells us something about the efforts of people to undo their marginalisation (*ibid.*), specifically, the seemingly paradoxical fact that dominant narratives are often used by the very people they oppress to formulate strategies for their emancipation and thus the limitations on the ability of these strategies to deliver becomes apparent.

REFERENCES

- Aidi, H., 'Hip Hoppers & Black Panthers in the Holy Land' Washington Report on Middle East Affairs December 2002.
- Allouche, J., 'The Oriental Communities in Israel, 1948-2003: The social & cultural creation of an ethnic political group' Working Paper: Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva 2003.
- Behar, S., 'Is the Mizrahi Question Relevant to the Future of the Entire Middle East?' Kedma 1997.
- Beinin, J., 'Israel's Cabinet Crisis & the Political Economy of Peace' Middle East Report Online, 19 June 2000 www.merip.org/mero/mero061900.html accessed on 18/10/05.
- Chetrit, S., 'Who is a Jew and What Kind of Jew?' in *Keys to the Garden, New Israeli Writing* Alcalay A (Ed) City lights Books, San Francisco 1996.
- Chetrit, S., (a) 'Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between integration & alternative' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2000 (4) Pp. 51-65.
- Chetrit, S., (b) 'Some Gloomy Comments on Mizrahi-Palestinian Cooperation in Israel: Wild Mizrahi Imagination' *News From Within*, October 2000.
- Courbage, Y., 'Reshuffling the Demographic Cards in Israel/Palestine' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1999 (4) p21-39.
- Dahan-Kalev, H., 'You're So Pretty – You Don't Look Moroccan' *Israel Studies* 6 (1) 2001, p1-14.
- Dahan-Kalev, H., 'Black in Women' paper presented at International Conference of Women in Black, Jerusalem, August 2005.
- Friedlander, D., Z. Eisenbach & C. Goldscheider, 'Family Size Limitation & Birth Spacing: The fertility transition of African & Asian immigrants in Israel' *Population & Development Review* 1980, 6 (4) p581-593.
- Giladi, G.N., 'Discord in Zion: Conflict Between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in Israel' Scorpion: London 1999.
- Goldscheider, C., 'Israel's Changing Society: Population, ethnicity & development' Westview Press: Colorado 1996.
- Goldscheider, C. & D. Friedlander, 'Reproductive Norms in Israel' in *Studies in the Population of Israel* Schmelz U & Nathan G (Eds) Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1986.
- Greenhalgh, S., 'Toward a Political Economy of Fertility: Anthropological Contributions' *Population & Development Review* 1990, 16 (1) p85-105.
- Hanieh, A., 'Class, Economy & the Second Intifada' *Monthly Review*, October 2002.

- Hashash, Y. 'Ethnicity, Class & Gender In Israel's Fertility Policy: 1962-1974' (in Hebrew) Unpublished paper, Haifa University, 2004.
- Harris & Ross E., 'Death, Sex & Fertility: Population regulation in pre-industrial & developing societies' Columbia University Press, New York 1987.
- Hartmann, B., 'Reproductive Rights & Wrongs: The global politics of population control & contraceptive choice' Harpers & Row, New York 1987.
- Hirschberg, P., 'A Nation Divided' New Statesman, July 12 2004.
- Kanaaneh, R. 'Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel' University of California Press 2002.
- Khazoom, A. 'The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish identity, stigma management, and ethnic exclusion in Israel' American Sociological Review 68, 2003 p481-510.
- Lavie, S., 'Lily White Feminism & Academic Apartheid in Israel' Anthropology News October 2003 p10-11.
- Lustick, I., 'Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's control of a national minority' University of Texas Press, Austin 1980.
- Massad, J., 'Zionism's Internal Others: Israel & the Oriental Jews' Journal of Palestine Studies 1996 (4) p53-68
- Melamed, S. 'Beyond Nationalism: The workings of neo-Malthusian Discourse in a Pronatalist Context' Unpublished paper, Yale University 2005.
- Okun, B., 'Innovation & Adaptation in Fertility Transition: Jewish immigrants to Israel from Muslim North Africa & the Middle East' Population Studies 51, 1997 p317-335.
- Portugese, J., 'Fertility Policy in Israel: The politics of religion, gender and nation' Praeger, Westport 1998.
- Ross, E., 'The Malthus Factor: Poverty, politics and population in capitalist development' Zed Books, London, 1998.
- Rouhana, N., 'Israel and its Arab Citizens: predicaments in the relationship between ethnic states and ethnonational minorities' Third World Quarterly 1998 19 (2) p 277-296.
- Semyonov, M. & N. Lewin-Epstein, 'Past Insights & Future Directions: Studies of Stratification in Israel' in *Stratification in Israel: Class, ethnicity & gender*, Semyonov M & Lewin-Epstein N (Eds) Studies of Israeli Society 10, 2004.
- Shenhav, Y., 'A Conspiracy of Silence' Haaretz Weekend Supplement, December 27th 1996.
- Shiran, V., 'Feminist Identity vs Oriental Identity' in *Calling the Equality Bluff*, Swirski B & Safir M (Eds) Pergamon Press, New York, 1991.
- Shohat, E., 'The Narrative of the Nation & the Discourse of Modernization: The case of the Arab-Jews in Israel' Economic Development & Poverty Reduction Workshop: Mediterranean Development Forum, September 1998 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/mdf/mdf2/papers/econdev/shohat.pdf> accessed on 27/08/05.

- Shohat, E., 'The Invention of the Mizrahim' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1999 (1) p5-20.
- Shohat, E., 'Rupture & Return: A Mizrahi perspective on the Zionist discourse' *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* May 2001 (1) <http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes> accessed on 25/10/05.
- Stoler-Liss, S., 'Mothers Birth the Nation: The social construction of Zionist motherhood in wartime Israeli parents manuals' *NASHIM: Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 2003 p104-118
- Swirski, S. & E. Konor-Attias, 'Israel: A Social Report' *Adva Center* 2001 <http://www.adva.org/socialreport2001english.pdf> accessed on 5/09/05.
- Swirski, S., V. Kraus, E. Konor-Attias & A. Herbst, 'Solo Mothers in Israel' *The Israel Equality Monitor*, 12th March 2003(12).
- Wurmser, M., 'Post-Zionism & the Sephardi Question' *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2005
- Yiftachel, O., 'Nation-Building & the Division of Space: Frontiers & Domination in the Israeli "Ethnocracy"' 1998 <http://www.bgu.ac.il/geog/members/yiftachel/paper2.html> accessed on 27/08/05.
- Yonah, Y. & I. Saporta, 'The Politics of Lands & Housing in Israel: A Wayward Republican Discourse' *Social Identities* 8 (1), 2002, p91-117.
- Yuval-Davis, N., 'Zionism, Anti-Zionism & the Construction of Contemporary "Jewishness"' *Review of Middle East Studies*, 1991 p84-109

Newspaper Reports:

- The Guardian, February 19th 2004 by Chris McGreal 'Trolley dash: the last resort of hungry Israelis'
- Haaretz, June 11th 2004 by Tamara Traubmann "'Do not have children if they won't be healthy!'"

Website:

Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics www.cbsgov.il

APPENDIX

TABLE 1: Comparison of Municipalities by Various Socioeconomic Data

Development Towns	Average Income per capita (NIS)	% Sub Minimum Wage Earners	% Twice Average Wage Earners	% Work Seekers 15 & over	% Students 20-29	% Families + 4 Children
Kiryat Gat	2,481	44.87	3.02	5.74	10.34	13.61
Dimona	2,761	43.17	6.82	7.12	8.5	15.51
Yeroham	2,455	45.04	4.81	6.07	8.67	20.98
Netivot	1,854	51.25	1.87	4	6.22	29.81
Kiryat Shemona	2,937	42.91	3.5	3.56	10.83	10.18
Average	2497.6	45.448	4.004	5.298	8.912	18.018
Ashkenazi Towns						
Giv'atayim	4,714	30.21	16.81	1.89	25.83	2.07
Lehavim	6,595	23.14	31.13	1.49	52.96	5.93
Savyon	6,497	25.16	33.57	0.79	34.25	5.35
Omer	7,627	26.05	34.01	1.49	56.12	10.48
Kiryat Ono	4,784	30.83	16.5	2.21	26.2	4.21
Average	6043.4	27.078	26.404	1.574	39.072	5.608
Palestinian Towns						
Umm Al-Fahm	1,255	60.83	1.39	5.62	3.91	36.34
'Arrabe	1,354	57.6	1.73	5.51	8	37.08
Mughar	1,518	52.34	3.68	5.64	7.23	37.2
Sakhnin	1,427	55.47	1.33	7.44	6.38	32.79
Kafar Kanna	1,362	56.64	1.75	6.88	6.04	40.38
Average	1383.2	56.576	1.976	6.218	6.312	36.758

(Source: Local Councils & Municipalities Socioeconomic Index 2001, Table 1)

