

Models of Israeli Social Analysis

Steve Zipperstein

Regents Scholar, Political Science Department University of California at Los Angeles

and

Eliezer D. Jaffe

Senior Lecturer, School of Social Work, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

... The persistence of a majority of Sephardim at the lower rungs of the socio-economic hierarchy can only be solved, according to the dominant model (of explanation of Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations) by modernizing them ... The big question, of course, is what is meant by "modernization?"

One of the main features of Israeli society today is the existence of a substantial socioeconomic "gap" between Jews of European origin (Ashkenazi Jews) and Jews of Near Eastern and North African origin (Sephardi or Oriental Jews). The purpose of this article is to analyze the Sephardi-Ashkenazi gap in terms of socio-political explanations which have been espoused by Israeli scholars over the years, and which for several decades became the rationale and formula for social policies and relationships between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi groups.

Since the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948, the problem of Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations has remained one of the major preoccupations of Israeli sociologists. As a result, competing explanations have arisen attracting varying degrees of support and criticism. By far the most widely accepted of these perspectives is the "Immigrant Absorption and Modernization" model. Among the other analytical approaches available are the Marxist, Culturist, and the Structural Pluralist models. All of these models are presented and reviewed below, along with our own assessment as to which of them seems most helpful for analyzing and

understanding ethnic relations in Israel today.

The Absorption-Modernization Model The "Dominant" Model

As indicated, this model has easily attracted the most widespread support and has generated the most amount of research into Israeli social problems. Its main spokesman is the internationally famous S.N. Eisenstadt¹ of the Sociology Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Some of Eisenstadt's main collaborators include Rivka Bar-Yosef,²

¹ S.N. Eisenstadt, "The Oriental Jews in Israel," *Jewish Social Studies*, 12(3), 1950, 199-221; *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study Based Mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954; *Israeli Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1967; with Rivka Bar-Yosef and Chaim Adler (eds.) *Integration and Development in Israel*, Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1970; "The Process of Absorption of New Immigrants in Israel" in Eisenstadt, et al (eds.) 341-67.

² Rivka Bar-Yosef, "Desocialization and Resocialization: The Adjustment of Immigrants," *International Migration Review*, 2(3) 1968, 27-43; "The Moroccans: Background to the Problem," in Eisenstadt, et al. (eds.) 419-428.

Chaim Adler,³ Judith Shuval,⁴ and Abraham Shumsky.⁵

Three decades ago, Eisenstadt developed a framework for analyzing relations between Sephardi (Afro-Asian) and Ashkenazi (Euro-American) Israeli Jews which basically followed the example of a standard functionalist nation-building model. Eisenstadt's formulations emphasized the elements of stability and gradual change, and his later writings (especially 1967) depicted Israel as a basically successful example of national development primarily because of the survival of democracy, the pursuit of Westernization, and the military's ability to insure national security.

Inherent in Eisenstadt's work is a fundamental interpretation of Zionism for nation-building purposes. Indeed the Absorption-Modernization model reflects a complete utilization of all the classic notions of Zionism, most importantly pioneering, modernization, diaspora-negation, and Jewish unity. "Jewish unity" implied an immediate identification with the whole of the Jewish people, but it also assumed automatic, voluntary embrace of the dominant Western culture.

The emphasis on Jewish unity is very important because it denies any possibility of socio-ethnic heterogeneity, and with it structural pluralism. Bar-Yosef expressed the situation in these terms:

The problem, well-known from the process

of nation-building of new nations—that of providing a basis of legitimacy for a social-national identity—was non-existent in Israel. This is also the reason that the Israeli-Jewish society never in any sense presented a picture of a pluralistic society and that no tendencies to regard it as such were evident. In the sense that pluralism was relevant to the Israeli situation, it referred solely to the relations between Jews and non-Jews in Israel.⁶

Eisenstadt elaborated upon this notion of Israel's uniqueness a few years later, when he stated that "being a Jew in Israel does not necessitate the definition of one's self-identity in relation to a majority group or culture and does not involve the various problems, uncertainties, and anxieties which have constituted such an important aspect of Jewish life and identity throughout the modern world."⁷

The failure of this dominant model to appreciate fully the heterogeneity of the Jewish population carries enormous ramifications, which we shall deal with later. Suffice it to say here that the belief in Jewish unity represents perhaps the greatest flaw in the dominant model, yet it has guided official policy toward the Sephardi group since the establishment of the State.

The absorption-modernization model thus closely corresponds to the official national ideologies and therefore can be labelled the "establishment" view. The official ideology of "ingathering the exiles" (*mizug ha'galuyot*) and transforming them into modern Israelis is never questioned by dominant model theorists; rather, the cultural transformation, as well as the "ingathering" are equally upheld as high national goals. Nor is the idea that Sephardi immigrants should be "Westernized" (modernized) ever seriously questioned. The dominant model instead seeks to explain Sephardi cultural subordination

³ Chaim Adler, *Some Basic Features of the Social Structure of Israeli Society*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University Monograph, 1971, and *An Action Statement*, Jerusalem: The Center for Research in the Education of the Disadvantaged, Hebrew University, 1972.

⁴ Judith Shuval, "Emerging Patterns of Ethnic Strain in Israel," *Social Forces*, 40(4), 1962, 323-30; "Ethnic Stereotyping in Israeli Medical Bureaucracies," *Sociology and Social Research*, 46(4), 1962, 455-65; *Immigrants on the Threshold*, London: Prentice Hall International, 1963.

⁵ Abraham Shumsky, *The Clash of Cultures in Israel*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955.

⁶ Quoted by Sammy Smooha in *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 23.

⁷ Quoted by Smooha, *Ibid*, p. 24.

not as a result of policy but as an outcome of the "cultural inferiority" (relative to Ashkenazi culture) of the Sephardi group. It is the failure of the Sephardim to respond successfully to the absorbing nation that attracts the most attention from the dominant model. Eisenstadt, for example, explained that deficiencies in the Sephardi family structure and social orientation contributed to their "considerable difficulty in assuming the appropriate, and establishing stable, social relations with members of the wider (Ashkenazi) community."⁸

Moreover, Shumsky declared that the Sephardi Jews were relegated to lower class positions because of "their traditional lack of technical knowledge, their lack of readiness to change, and their relative passivity."⁹ Gross generalizations dealing with Sephardi "cultural inferiority" pervade many dominant model writings. One recent study claimed that "it is generally fair to characterize the Oriental family as being large, bereft of financial resources, with the adults either ill or noneducated in Western terms and certainly unprepared for taking an active role in a modern, western, industrial state."¹⁰ Golda Meir referred to the Oriental immigrants as a "Generation of the Desert" (*Dor Ha'Midbar*), and David Ben-Gurion, the man who led Israel to independence and served as its first Prime Minister, reflected similar beliefs about Oriental inferiority:

(Israel's Oriental immigrants) "have come from a society that was backward, corrupt, uneducated, and lacking in independence and self-respect," (and they must be made) "to acquire the superior moral and intellectual characteristics of those who created the state."¹¹

(Jews) from Morocco have no education.

⁸ "The Oriental Jews in Israel," *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁹ Shumsky, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁰ Ziona Peled, 1973, p. 391.

¹¹ Speech to Knesset, Oct. 24, 1960, as quoted by Michael Selzer, *The Aryanization of the Jewish State*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 65.

They love their wives, but they beat them . . . Maybe in the third generation something will appear from the Oriental Jews that is a little different. But I don't see it yet. The Moroccan Jew took a lot from the Moroccan Arabs. The culture of Morocco I would not like to have here. And I don't see what contribution present Persians have to make.¹²

Because of its links to Zionist and establishment views and its assumption of Sephardi cultural inferiority, the absorption-modernization model understandably casts a positive light on Israeli society. The model tends to downplay evidence of persistent socioeconomic separation between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, instead stressing the overall successes of the government in absorbing the Orientals. Adler, for example, contends that "the Oriental Jewish group within the Israeli society has considerably improved its conditions and social position, especially if compared with its own conditions and position two decades earlier."¹³ Similar assessments appear in all official governmental and quasi-governmental publications. The message put forth is that while "gaps" between the two groups remain, impressive progress has been made thus far and that all that is needed to solve the problem completely is a little more time. The view that "time will solve the problem" also helps to deprive the issue of any sense of urgency or severity. As Selzer critically explained it, "The assumption underlying this understanding of the common situation is that 'time will solve the problem.' The corollary to this is, of course, that human intervention in the situation is

¹² Interview with *Look* magazine, Oct. 5, 1965; quoted by Nissim Rejwan in "The Two Israels—A Study in Europecentrism," *Judaism*, 16(1) 1967, p. 99. "From Mixing to Participation: Social Implications of the Rise of Israel's Black Panthers," *New Middle East*, 32, 1971, 20-24.

¹³ Chaim Adler, "Social Stratification and Education in Israel," *Comparative Education Review*, 18(1) 1974, 10-23.

neither necessary nor possible. This conclusion is never expressed in so many words, but it does seem to account for the general lack of urgency in dealing with the problem and for the casual approach to it which characterizes most official Israeli thinking."¹⁴

The Absorption-Modernization model contains four basic casual relationships. They all reflect to varying degrees the analytical biases underlying the basic assumptions of the model. The first relationship of causality suggests that *Sephardi inferiority* led to their low status. This reduces the overall problem to the specific issue of Sephardi cultural inferiority, and looks at Sephardi subordination as more of an unintended outcome about which the Ashkenazim could do very little rather than an intended, planned, outcome.

Secondly, the model asserts in a similar vein that *Ashkenazi cultural superiority* led to Ashkenazi dominance within the Israeli social system. This also suggests a natural outcome about which the Sephardim could do little except acquiesce.

The third causal relationship stipulates that *cultural misunderstanding* led to instances of individual prejudicial behavior. That is, the dominant model admits that the Sephardi group has suffered inequities since their arrival in Israel, but the blame is placed on individual bureaucrats preferring their own ethnic group or acting out of prejudicial paranoia, rather than implementing fundamental features of the social system. The dominant model thus maintains its faith in the establishment, rejecting any notions of institutionalized stratification or status hierarchies. This represents another major deviation from the structural pluralist approach, which considers institutional arrangements for ethnic stratification crucial when examining heterogeneous societies.

The final causal relationship for ex-

plaining Ashkenazi cultural dominance states that *modernizing (Westernizing) the Sephardim will ameliorate the communal gap*. According to Bernstein,¹⁵ the process of absorption seeks to provide the immigrant with a new identity, new values, and new expectations compatible with those of the absorbing society. One of Zionism's main goals is to create a modern, western, nation-state, not a traditional, "Levantine" middle-eastern state. The notion of Levantinization has always aroused frenzied opposition among most Israelis (including Sephardim), who have frightful visions of an Israel on the brink of total modernization and Westernization collapsing into a group of dusty, corrupt Jewish feudal fiefdoms. Unfortunately, the Sephardim (because of their "cultural inferiority") have been perceived as the single element most likely to pull all of Israel down into that nightmarish morass.

The persistence of a majority of Sephardim at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic hierarchy can only be solved, according to the dominant model, by modernizing them, thus enabling them to function successfully in Israel's western, free-market society. The big question, of course, is what is meant by "modernization"? The Sephardim may have perceived modernization as a process of increasing one's standard of living by learning certain new skills or by benefiting from society's overall wealth in a trickle-down fashion. The Ashkenazi establishment, however (at least in the way it implemented the term), viewed modernization as a process of stripping the Sephardim of their backward culture and "Israelizing" them. Ben-Gurion expressed the goal of this policy when he wrote that "... the whole of this vast and variegated influx we shall have to melt down afresh and recast ... we must break

¹⁴ Michael Selzer, *The Aryanization of the Jewish State*. New York: Black Star Publishers, 1967, p. 83.

¹⁵ Deborah Bernstein, *Absorbed with Absorption—A Critical View of the Dominant School of Israeli Sociology*. Haifa: University of Haifa Monograph, 1977.

down the geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers between the sections (ethnic groups) and endow them with a single language, a single culture, a single citizenship . . ."¹⁶ The mold that the newcomers were "recast" into was a decisively Ashkenazi one.

The main goal, then, of the Absorption-Modernization model is to assimilate the Orientals via "Ashkenazation." This goal, according to the literature, conceivably can be (and already has been to a great extent) accompanied by several means, including acculturation via the media, schools, etc., provision of normal social welfare services, relying on the army (where three-year regular duty and reserve service is mandatory for all Jews) to act as a socializing instrument, and relying on Zionism and religious heritage to bind everyone together in pursuit of a common mission.

Variations of the Absorption-Modernization Model

As already noted, the dominant model has spawned a great deal of research into Israeli society, and there exists today a large body of academic literature in both Hebrew and English on the subject. It is evident from these analyses that several variations of the dominant model have emerged over the years, all of which extoll the same basic assumptions and goals of the dominant theorists, differing only in their explanations of why Sephardi Jews have not "made it" in Ashkenazi society. The more prominent of these dominant "sub-sets" are reviewed briefly below:

(a) *Prejudice Approach*

This approach emphasizes the role of prejudice and subtle forms of discrimina-

tion among individuals in causing ethnic tensions and socioeconomic disparities. Prejudice, however, is not seen as exclusively ethnic; instead, instances of prejudice against impoverished people, regardless of ethnic background, are viewed as equally important in creating social inequities in Israel. Shuval first developed this strain of the Absorption-Modernization model;¹⁷ Peres, although less-easily identifiable as a dominant theorist, based his first important work on the phenomenon of prejudice and stereotyping in Israel.¹⁸

(b) *Cultural Conflict Approach*

This variation, advocated chiefly by social anthropologist Raphael Patai¹⁹ contends that cultural misunderstanding due to the ethnic diversity of the Jewish population in Israel and the difficulties encountered in coping with this fact led to unequal treatment of certain groups and to the appearance of ethnic tension. For example, Patai's analysis of the Wadi Salib riots of 1959²⁰ focuses on the differences between the Moroccan and Israeli cultures as a root cause of that violent outburst. Other researchers have utilized culture-clash to explain high rates of delinquency among Oriental Jewish youth.

(c) *Social Pluralism Approach*

This variation, not to be confused with Structural or Socio-Cultural Pluralism, describes the ethnic gap mainly in terms of differential rates of social, economic, and intergenerational mobility. This approach,

¹⁷ Judith Shuval, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Yochanan Peres, "Ethnic Relations in Israel," *American Journal of Sociology*, 76(6), 1971, 1021-1047.

¹⁹ Raphael Patai, *Israel Between East and West*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1953; "The Riots of Wadi Salib," *Midsream* 6, 1960, 5-14; *Cultures in Conflict*, New York: Herzl Institute, 1960. "Western and Oriental Cultures in Israel" in M. Curtis and M.S. Chertoff, eds., *Israeli Social Structure and Change*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1973.

²⁰ *Cultures in Conflict*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Quoted by Gilbert Kushner, *Immigrants from India in Israel: Planned Change in an Administered Community*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973, p. 41-2.

developed by Lissak,²¹ Matras²² and Weintraub²³ also contends that problems of mobility are not clearly demarcated along ethnic lines, as the problem is assumed to be basically economic in nature.

(d) *Socio-Spatial Approach*

This approach demonstrates how empirical disparities in geographical patterns of residence and settlement along ethnic and class lines led to social separation. The ethnic factor often receives less attention here, because the emphasis rests on differing housing policies directed toward both new immigrants (of all ethnic origins) and veteran citizens, and the socioeconomic disparities stemming therefrom. Recent advocates of this view include Klaff,²⁴ Hasson,²⁵ and Berdichevsky.²⁶

²¹ Moshe Lissak, *Social Mobility in Israeli Society*, Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1969. "Pluralism in Israeli Society," in M. Curtis and M.S. Chertoff (eds.) *op. cit.*

²² Judah Matras, "Socially Deprived Families and the Network of Social Welfare Services," Jerusalem: Hebrew University School of Social Work, Monograph, 1972. "Israel's New Frontier: The Urban Periphery," in Curtis and Chertoff (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 3-14; "Intergenerational Educational Mobility in Israel—An Overview," Jerusalem: Brookdale Institute, offprint, 1976; "Ethnic and other Primordial Differentials in Intergenerational Mobility in Israel," Jerusalem: Brookdale Institute offprint, 1977; "Ethnic and Social Origin 'Dominance' in Occupational Attainment in Israel," Jerusalem: Brookdale Institute offprint, 1977.

²³ Dov Weintraub and F. Bernstein, "Social Structure and Modernization: A Comparative Study of Two Villages," *American Journal of Sociology*, 71, 1960, 509-521.

²⁴ Vivian Z. Klaff, "Ethnic Segregation in Urban Israel," *Demography*, 10(2), 1973, 161-83; "Residence and Segregation in Israel: A Mosaic of Segregated Peoples," *Ethnicity*, 4, 1977, 103-21.

²⁵ Shlomo Hasson, *Immigrant Housing Estates in the Veteran Towns of Israel: A Study of Social Differentiation*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1977.

²⁶ Norman Berdichevsky, "The Persistence of the Yemeni Quarter in an Israeli Town," *Ethnicity*, 1977, 287-309.

(e) *Public Policy Approach*

As its title suggests, this variation stresses specific inadequacies in social planning in terms of misplaced priorities, bureaucratic inefficiency, and blatant negligence. The approach is basically action-oriented. It advocates revising key social policies within existing overall frameworks and using grassroots techniques to help achieve this goal. Most of the adherents to this view comprise members of social work, grassroots movements and political circles. Jaffe,²⁷ Elazar,²⁸ and Danino²⁹ represent some of the voices behind this approach.

(f) *Eclectic Approach*

For lack of a better term, this approach represents those analysts who offer an all-around interpretation of the Oriental-Ashkenazi gap. Integrating concepts from all the above variations, these commentators seek to analyze a complex problem with an extremely complex approach. No single theory appears to dominate, yet this variation remains under the umbrella of the Absorption-Modernization model because it nonetheless reflects the overriding assumptions and goals of the dominant writers. Most prominent among the

²⁷ Eliezer Jaffe, "Post-War Welfare: Unfinished Business," *Jerusalem Post*, 25 February 1974; "Division and Unity," Jerusalem: United Jewish Appeal pamphlet, 1975; "What you Should Know About Welfare in Israel," *The American Zionist*, 1975; "The Jewish Right to Multiply," *Jerusalem Post*, 14 September 1976; "Ashkenazi Social Workers for Sephardi Clients," *Jerusalem Post*, 6 September 1976; "Manpower Supply and Admissions Policy in Israeli Social Work Education," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 5(3), 1977, 242-48; "Social Problems as Election Material," *Jerusalem Post*, 18 January 1977; "Welfare in Israel: No Time For Policy," *Shdemot* 8, 1978, 98-100.

²⁸ Daniel Elazar, "Local Government as an Integrating Factor in Israeli Society," in Curtis and Chertoff (eds.) *op. cit.*, 15-26; "A New Look at the Two Israels," *Midstream*, 24, 1978, 4, 3-18.

²⁹ Abraham Danino, *The Child-Favored Family: Large Families in Israel*, Haifa: Zahavi Association of Large Families, 1978.

eclectics are Weingrod,³⁰ Liron,³¹ and P. Cohen.³²

Critique of the Absorption-Modernization Models

In retrospect, the dominant model's acceptance of the Zionist notion of Jewish unity, as previously mentioned, represented an over-optimistic idealization of social reality and unfortunately led to serious misdirections in policy-making. In this respect the model is also basically ahistorical, because it lacks a proper appreciation of the significance of nearly 2,000 years of Jewish dispersion beginning in 70 A.D., when, after the destruction of the second Temple, the Romans forced thousands of Jews to flee the ancient land of Israel and to seek new homes throughout the world. The Jewish population in Israel today comprises immigrants from over seventy countries on five continents where more than 100 languages are spoken.³³ The acculturation which took place among Jews living for centuries within the Moslem diaspora communities was grossly misunderstood and unappreciated by many of the early European Zionists, who began issuing the call for the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland in the late 19th century.

Another problem with the Absorption-Modernization model concerns its assumption of Sephardi cultural inferiority. Not only do the Sephardim have an impressive historical record of accomplishments in

their diaspora communities, a record admittedly neglected in present-day Israeli school curricula, but they have indeed produced some of the most basic, universally significant works of Judaism such as the *Talmud* (written in Babylonia) and the *Shulhan Aruch*, two of the most important codifications of Jewish law.

Moreover, Sephardi Jews who chose to immigrate to western countries other than Israel (for example France, Canada, or the United States) have made impressive contributions and enjoy a higher relative standard of living than their brethren in Israel. Inbar and Adler made a comparative study of Moroccan Jewish brothers who immigrated to France and Israel.³⁴

Some analysts have argued that this attitude of cultural superiority among the Ashkenazim contributed to, rather than abated, ethnic tensions in Israel. Frankenstein, for example, warned as early as 1953 that "the self-assumed superiority of the western sector over the 'backward' eastern communities" would lead to "friction, bitterness, and open rebellion."³⁵ Celia Heller, a more recent sociologist critic, stated her opposition to this aspect of the Absorption-Modernization model in the following terms:

Great numbers of immigrants arrived from the Islamic countries, and what was expected of them was conformity. That conformity was expected of the immigrants is even reflected in the "objective analysis" of Israeli sociologists—themselves members of the dominant group—who speak of the failure of absorption and integration of Orientals as compared with European immigrants. The main thrust of their analysis is on the characteristics of the Oriental immigrants which impeded their successful integration. Were these sociologists

³⁰ Alex Weingrod, *Israel: Group Relations in a New Society*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1965; *Reluctant Pioneers: Village Development in Israel*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1966; with Michael Gurevitch, "Who Are the Israeli Elites?," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 14(1), 1977, 93-109.

³¹ Yocheved Liron, *Deprivation and the Socioeconomic Gap in Israel*, Jerusalem: Israel Economist, 1973.

³² Percy Cohen, "Ethnic Hostility in Israel," *New Society*, 22, 1963, 14-16.

³³ Patai, *Israel Between East and West*, op.cit.

³⁴ Michael Inbar and Chaim Adler, *Ethnic Integration in Israel*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1977.

³⁵ Carl Frankenstein, *Between Past and Future: Essays and Studies on Aspects of Immigrant Absorption in Israel*. Jerusalem: Henrietta Szold Foundation, 1953.

Orientalists, they would more likely focus on the failure of the governing elite to be concerned with the goals of Jews hailing from the Islamic countries; the failure to recognize the goals and the ways of these people as legitimate alternatives in Israel.³⁶

Our final criticism of the Dominant Model relates to its neglect of evidence which points to the institutionalized nature of ethnic stratification in Israel. The model ignores important economic and political power factors which bear on the long-term prospects for ethnic inequality. Moreover, the Dominant Model provides no room for legitimizing cultural differences, and defines "integration" as acculturation into the dominant, Western culture. It stigmatizes by negating and defining cultural differences as culture "gaps." The dominant viewpoint tends to believe that time will narrow the "gap," but the economic gap between Ashkenazi and Sephardi citizens has widened in recent years and social stratification has developed very much along ethnic lines.

The Marxist/Colonial Model of Social Analysis

This model views Israel as a white settler, neocolonial society exploiting all non-white proletarians, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Zionism is presented as a sectarian colonial ideology which is intertwined with worldwide capitalism and imperialism. The goal of this approach is to eliminate the State of Israel and to establish a secular dictatorship of the proletariat in Palestine. The major supporters of this view within Israel are found in the Israel Communist Party and also among members of the Matzpen movement, a small, radical political group. This view is often voiced by some Arab students in Israeli universities and in the propaganda of hostile neighbors. Most non-Israeli radical critics usually compare

Israel to South Africa in terms of the white settler colonial notion. No significant publications have appeared which support this view, although the Matzpen group has attracted considerable attention outside of Israel for its political views and because it fits the ideology and propaganda needs of both the Communist block and the P.L.O. Few Israelis pay much attention to this view of analysis and solution to ethnic issues, since they are predicated upon the abolition of a Jewish State *per se*. The Marxist approach places class conflict on a higher level of importance than ethnic conflict, which we feel is not the case in Israel.

The Culturist Model

This approach argues, often in a very elaborate way, that the cause of the Oriental-Ashkenazi gap stems from the Ashkenazi belief in their own total superiority and in their fanatical adherence to Zionism. Rejwan³⁷ called this phenomenon "Eurocentrism," while Selzer charged that Zionist dogma compelled the Ashkenazi pioneers to reject anyone who reminded them of the *shtetl*, or peasant village society, from which they were fleeing. In effect, according to this view the Oriental immigrants did not fit the mold of the Zionist-pioneer, so they were subordinated and stripped of their cultures by the ruling Ashkenazim. Selzer describes the Ashkenazi ideal-type as follows:

The sallow, emaciated, cringing Jew of the European *shtetl*, with his long beard and greasy caftan, the Fagin and the Shylock, had in Israel given way to a new type—pioneering and adventurous, blond, sturdy, and fearless, who typically spent his days plowing fields with a modern tractor and his nights around the campfire making love to a succession of fair maidens who could have walked straight out of Wagner's own Valhalla.³⁸

The proponents of the Culturist model,

³⁶ Celia S. Heller, "The Emerging Consciousness of the Ethnic Problem Among the Jews of Israel," in M. Curtis and M. Chertoff (eds.) *op.cit.*, 313-332.

³⁷ "The Two Israelis—A Study in Europe Centricism," *op.cit.*

³⁸ Michael Selzer, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

as evidenced by the above quote, often fall victim to over-dramatization, and they consequently have trouble remaining analytically objective. Very often these are the voices of intelligent, angry Sephardi leadership. For example, the Sephardi Council of Jerusalem has published numerous monographs (e.g., 1971) which demand "an end to Ashkenazi dominance." The current President of the Council, David Sitton, speaks and writes in the Council's journal *Bamaracha* (the "Battlefield") about the Ashkenazim as if he were speaking about his worst enemies. In his words, the ethnic issue "is a Sephardi versus Ashkenazi struggle." The rhetoric of the culturists is often quite strong and their emotions are often highly charged, yet the arguments of Selzer and especially Rejwan³⁹ merit consideration. Although we chose to reject their overall approach because of its oversimplification of the problem, lack of empirical research and its emotionalism, the hypotheses raised about Zionism and Israeli "machismo" are noteworthy.

The Structural Pluralist Model

Perhaps a more fruitful conceptual model for explaining the current ethnic situation or relationship between Jews from various origins is what we would call, "the Structural Pluralist Model," or what Smootha calls "the Dynamic Paternalism-Cooptation Model". Smootha's formulation seems to best describe the nature of structural pluralism in Israel.⁴⁰

The term "pluralism" actually connotes two sets of ideas. Ideologically, pluralism refers to the notion that cultural diversity between ethnic groups is desirable and worthy of retention. Structurally, pluralism

refers to cultural diversity in a wider sense, i.e., it emphasizes significant differences in cultural and social institutions which distinguish and isolate social groups.

The modern formulation of structural pluralism stress the existence of conflict, rather than equilibrium, in plural societies, and they isolate several types of structural pluralism (social, cultural, and institutional). The main spokesmen of this perspective include Furnivall, Smith, Kuper, and Van den Berghe.

Furnivall applies his notion of pluralism strictly to white-nonwhite conflict in colonial societies. Writing in the late 1940's, Furnivall argued that the nature of colonial capitalism fostered unequal social relationships between indigenous populations and resident representatives of the mother country. Although this formulation explicitly restricted the application of the theory, Furnivall's efforts laid the groundwork for pluralist writings in the years to come.

Smith provided the first major revision of the theory in 1960. He expanded Furnivall's concept of pluralism, applying it to all societies that fit these refined criteria:

Pluralism simultaneously connotes a social structure characterized by fundamental cleavages, and a cultural complex based on systematic institutional diversity.⁴¹

For Smith, the existence of parallel yet incompatible institutions was second in importance only to the existence of cultural diversity:

Where culturally divergent groups together form a common society, the structural imperative of this inclusive unit involves a type of political order in which one of these cultural sections is subordinated to the other.⁴²

Working together with Smith, Kuper clarified and refined the theory into several workable components. Kuper begins by

³⁹ Nissim Rejwan, "Israel's Communal Controversy: An Oriental's Appraisal," *Midstream*, 10(2), 1964, 14-26; "From Mixing to Participation; Social Implications of the Rise of Israel's Black Panthers," *New Middle East*, 32, 1971, 20-24.

⁴⁰ *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, op.cit.

⁴¹ Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith (eds.), *Pluralism in Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, p. 27.

⁴² Quoted by Kuper, *loc.cit.*, p. 12-13.

defending the "conflict" interpretation of pluralism. He argues that the "equilibrium" approach (as developed by Durkheim and later by Kornhauser) takes for granted ethnic homogeneity and equality and places too much emphasis on the ability of cross-cutting affiliations and multiple loyalties to countervail successfully intergroup tensions. On the other hand, the conflict model, while allowing for the existence of multiple loyalties and cross-cutting affiliations, sees these factors outweighed and societal stability "threatened by sharp cleavages between plural sections, whose relations to each other are generally characterized by inequality."⁴³

Kuper presents two "summary measures" of pluralism. The first, "Discontinuity-Continuity," refers to cultural differences, disparities in possession of power and material resources, segregation, etc. The second, "Superimposition-Dissociation," refers to the degree to which lines of affiliation and cleavage coincide or diverge throughout society.⁴⁴

Van den Berghe⁴⁵ and Smootha⁴⁶ refined Kuper's summary measures to include specific indicators, or dimensions of pluralism. Van den Berghe posits two "basic features" of plural societies. The first he defines as "segmentation into corporate groups that frequently, though not necessarily, have different cultures or subcultures," and the second is defined as "a social structure compartmentalized into analogous, parallel, noncomplementary

but distinguishable sets of institutions."⁴⁷ From these ideas Van den Berghe developed several "dimensions of pluralism," including demographic, institutional, socio-spatial, mobility, etc.

Smootha, who applied the theory of structural pluralism to intergroup relations in Israel, includes in his formulations eight "conceptualizations" of pluralism. They include "large subcultural rather than cultural differences, some degree of social and residential segregation, integration through consensus, crosscutting affiliations and balance of power, political domination, economic interdependence, exploitation, and institutional arrangements for peaceful change rather than a fundamental vulnerability to instability and violence."⁴⁸

These conceptualizations conform to the conflict interpretation of pluralism as explained by Kuper. Even though the likelihood of violence and serious instability is low, the relationship between societal groups is characterized by institutionalized, *relatively stable inequality along ethnic lines*, with one overall group clearly dominant and a second overall group clearly subordinate.

Assumptions of the Structural Pluralism Model In Israel

The Dynamic Paternalism-Cooptation approach developed by Smootha assumes firstly that the Oriental-Ashkenazi gap is now an institutionalized feature of Israeli society. The term "institutionalization" can be explained by the following three sub-concepts. First, a correlation exists between socio-economic status and ethnic identity. In other words, a status hierarchy based upon ethnic background exists empirically and is perceived to exist by those within the hierarchy, especially by those at the lower levels. Second, this hierarchy is

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Leo Kuper, *Race, Class, and Power*. London: Duckworth, 1974, 242-3.

⁴⁵ Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Pluralism and the Polity: A Theoretical Explanation," in Kuper and Smith (eds.), *op.cit.*

⁴⁶ Sammy Smootha, *Pluralism: A Study of Intergroup Relations in Israel*. Los Angeles: UCLA Ph.D. Dissertation, 1973; and with Yochanan Peres, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Inequality: The Case of Israel," *Social Dynamics* 1 (1), 1975, 63-79.

⁴⁷ Van den Berghe, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

⁴⁸ *Pluralism: A Study of Intergroup Relations in Israel*, *op.cit.*, p. 7-8.

perpetuated. That is, inherent mechanisms in the societal structure (such as the nature of the economic and political systems), especially the practice of cooptation, help to stabilize the situation of inequality. Smootha explains it this way:

The common practices attest to the general attitude of the dominant group . . . The system was opened up for the Orientals from the middle section down. Most Orientals entered lower and lower-middle positions, some obtained middle slots, and a few who enjoyed benign quotas reached higher token appointments. This wholesale cooptation of the Orientals did not only provide them with a stake in the society but also furnished the Ashkenazi group with large-scale upward mobility . . . The existence of a rigid Arab-Jewish division, in which Oriental Jews were assured certain status, economic and power gains denied to Israeli Arabs, facilitated the dismantling of the Oriental culture and guaranteed Oriental backing of the regime.⁴⁹

Third, the system was psychologically and ideologically incorporated. In other words, the Ashkenazi leadership explain or justify the status quo with any number of explanations such as, "time will solve the problem", or "national security considerations prevent us from diverting money to solve the problem immediately." These explanations are designed to defuse the situation and to allow the status quo to remain basically unaltered.

The second main assumption of the dynamic paternalism-cooptation model is that national ideologies have sometimes undermined official intentions regarding the Sephardi group, thus demonstrating the inadequacy and need for reinterpretation of certain national ideologies. For example, the 2,000 years of separation of the Jewish people and the shock created after the massive Oriental immigration in the early 1950's represented a challenge to refine and explicate theoretically and optionally, the concept of Jewish unity. The dynamic paternalism-cooptation approach

thus assumes by implication that the Jewish people are not "unified" and that they should not all have to conform to a common image and culture. Also, the dynamic paternalism-cooptation approach officially condemns discrimination as undermining the national commitment to individual equality, although other policies in the areas of housing and education do not open fully the opportunity structure needed to eliminate the need for paternalistic remedies.

Overt and Covert Goals of the Model

The main goal of the proponents of the dynamic paternalism-cooptation approach, aside from offering a model of social analysis, is to spark a radical change in Israeli society, a change which would recognize the cultural integrity of the Sephardi Jews and accept them as full partners in society, rather than as relatively inferior citizens who must be "cared for." Economic reforms must also occur in order to redistribute the national wealth more equitably; thus progress must be made, as Smootha clearly puts it, "at the expense of the Ashkenazim."⁵⁰ (1978: 182) Supporters of this view hope that by "exposing" and moving away from paternalistic-cooptation they stimulate awareness of ideological and social changes which enable Israel better to fulfill its dream of an enlightened, socially egalitarian Jewish state. They also believe that change cannot occur without Sephardi ethnic identity and solidarity, a process which they believe is underway as a reaction to institutionalization stratification along ethnic lines.

In his work on ethnic solidarity in the United Kingdom, Hechter⁵¹ argues that "ethnic solidarity," or unity, arises among

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 182.

⁵¹ Michael Hechter, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Change". *Politics and Society*, 1971; *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. Berkeley, University of Calif. Press, 1975.

⁴⁹ *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict, op.cit.*, p. 42.

subordinate groups as a reaction to economic deprivation at the hands of a dominant group. Some components of ethnic solidarity are identity, organization, protest, and conflict. The forces at work here are mainly economic and psychological—perceptions of deprivation and their form of expression contribute to the phenomenon of ethnic solidarity.

The key indicators of ethnic solidarity are the existence of a cultural division of labor, group demands, equation of economic status with ethnic background, and disparities in resource allocation. In Hechter's words, the existence of ethnic solidarity depends upon the following conditions:

In any complex (plural) society, then, patterns of group formation should depend on two separate kinds of factors: the degree to which particular aggregates are differentially

stratified (with the caveat that this differential stratification be commonly perceived) and the degree to which interaction within these aggregates is maximized. To the extent that these conditions fail to be met prospects for group solidarity are diminished.⁵²

What emerges from the formulation of this conceptual model for understanding Israeli ethnic group relations is a fusion of two approaches to ethnic conflict. Structural pluralism represents the basic theoretical orientation of the model, while reactive ethnic solidarity fulfills a sort of secondary, yet necessary, role as it symbolizes the outcome of structural pluralism. In a society like Israel, where social equality and national unity are official goals, the rise of ethnic solidarity, if and when it does occur, may result in important and quite unpredictable social events.

⁵² Michael Hechter, "Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor," *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(2), 1978, p. 299.