
The Israeli population-geneticists' conceptualisation of "Jewish Difference" - 1945-2012.

Snait Gissis*¹

¹Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas, Tel Aviv University (Cohn Institute, Tel Aviv University) – Tel Aviv University, Haim Levanon Str. Ramat Aviv Tel Aviv, Israel

Abstract

session: Clustering Humans

Participants: Quayshawn Nigel Julian Spencer, Lisa Gannett, Adam HOchman, Snait B. Gissis.

The ways biological boundaries are delineated to create and maintain dichotomous individual and collective identities apart, such as 'Jew' and 'non Jew', are intertwined with the work of culture and its practices. To understand the endeavor of the three generations of **Israeli population geneticists** who have worked on the genetics of Jews since the establishment of the state of Israel, and in order to conceptualise the mutual constituting and entanglement between science (genetics, genomics and medicine), culture and state policies and practices, I have surveyed and analysed all the relevant genetics papers written by Israelis in the issues of the major periodicals (both in Hebrew and in English, local and international) in the period from 1946 until 2012. This corpus of scientific work has been deeply affected by the changing tools and technologies of genetics during that period, by advances in genomics and the changing notions of clustering humans. In particular, I looked at the evolutionary questions and explanatory mechanisms that the Israeli population geneticists and medical geneticists used in constructing their work: questions on genetic diversity, differences and genetic similarities, which particular genetic diseases were investigated among which sub-populations, controversies on the use of genetic evolutionary mechanisms, the role of non-genetic narrative components and their entanglement into a population evolutionary narrative. I shall argue that while maintaining biological boundaries, these investigations by Israeli population geneticists, and their transformations, are part and parcel of the work of culture and state.

*Speaker