

Snait Gissis, Cohn Institute, Tel Aviv University: “Biological Conceptualization of ‘Jewish Difference’ - 1945-2012. The work of Israeli population-geneticists”

ABSTRACT: The ways 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, and, since the establishment of the state of Israel, of state policies and practices. To understand the endeavor of the three generations of Israeli population geneticists, who have worked on the genetics of Jews and in order to conceptualize the mutual constituting and entanglement between science, culture and state, I have surveyed and analysed all the relevant genetics papers by Israelis from 1946 until 2012 appearing in major research publications (both in Hebrew and in English, local and international). The scientific work has been deeply affected by the changing tools and technologies during the period, and in particular, by the advances in *genomics*. I have come to see the investigations by these population geneticists, and their transformations while maintaining biological boundaries, as part of the work of culture and state.