

# INTRODUCTION

This book examines how ordinary people understand stigma and discrimination, and how they respond to such experiences. We conducted more than 400 in-depth interviews with middle- and working-class men and women—African Americans in New York suburbs, Black Brazilians in and around Rio de Janeiro, and Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel and two Jewish ethnic groups in and around Tel Aviv. When asked about incidents where they were treated unfairly, these individuals described interactions where they felt underestimated, overscrutinized, misunderstood, feared, overlooked, shunned, or discriminated against. They discussed their responses, including how they confronted stigmatizers, aimed to avoid confirming racial stereotypes, used humor, and chose to ignore the incident—often motivated by a desire to get respect. They also discussed what affected their courses of action. Three examples, one from each country, illustrate some of these experiences and what they have in common.

First, take the case of Joe, a middle-class African American man who found himself alone with several white men in an elevator at work. He remembers the interaction as follows:

One made a joke about blacks and monkeys. I said, “Man, listen, I ain’t into jokes.” . . . His demeanor changed, my demeanor changed. All of the positive energy that was in there was being sucked out because of the racial part. . . . [I told myself] get out of it because if I stay in it, I’m going to be in that circle and [won’t be able to] get out. . . . The stress level rose. My tolerance was getting thin, my blood pressure peaking and my temper rising. By the grace of God, thank you Jesus, as I stepped off the elevator, there was a black minister walking past. I said, “Can I speak to you for a minute because I just encountered something that I got to talk about because I’m this far [from exploding]. . . .” I had been at the job for a week. This is all I need to get me fired. . . . [Now]

2 | INTRODUCTION

I'm trying to get through the affair [to decide] if I should go to the city [to complain].

In the second case, Ana, a Black Brazilian journalist, is traveling for work. After attending a fancy party, she gets to her hotel late at night and gives the receptionist her room number to get her key. Instead of handing it to her, he calls the room. When no one answers, he winks and says, "Sorry, he is not answering." Ana replies that it is the key to *her* room she is asking for. The hotel clerk blushes and gives her the key. When asked to reflect on what happened, she says:

He thought I was a prostitute and was there to visit a client. A well-dressed *negra*, in the hotel, at 1:00 a.m., he could not register. When he realized [his mistake], he immediately gave me the key. He was embarrassed. I was embarrassed. Usually I am prepared to react, to complain. But in this situation, nothing was said. It was a game of impressions—the half smile he gave me when my "client" was not answering and his embarrassment once he realized his mistake. But he never apologized because he did not "do" anything wrong. I could not call him out because he could say I was crazy. So he did not say anything. It was just a misunderstanding. That really hurt me! It made me cry! There was nothing I could do because there was nothing explicit—no offense, he did not refuse to give me the key, there was nothing.

Once in her room, she calls home, hoping to be comforted by her husband, who happens to be white. Instead of reassuring her, he tells her that she is overreacting, which adds to her aggravation and feeling that she is isolated and misunderstood.

In the third case, Abir, a single Israeli Palestinian woman, faces harassment at a border crossing between Israel and the West Bank during a routine weekend outing. She pounds the table to express her anger as she describes the incident:

Not long ago, I was [traveling] with my girlfriends. All of us, including myself, are Israeli citizens and we had our standard identity cards with us. We spent time in Bethlehem, and on our way home we went through a security checkpoint. There a soldier came up to us. He was a lot younger than me, about 18, so what does he know about life? He asked for our identity cards went away to check them. . . . He kept us waiting for half an hour. He came back and told us to pull over to the side. And then he began a series of humiliations as he "played" with us. He came up to the car and pretended to give us our identity cards through the window. But when I raised my hand to take them,

he pulled his hand away. Offering them a second time, he did not let them go. . . . I started to get irritated, but because I was afraid I didn't say anything. . . . All of this was just because we are Arabs. This is just humiliation and provocation.

These three cases illustrate how the same course of action—outwardly *not* responding—is the result of very different contextual dynamics. In the first case, it is without hesitation that Joe interprets “the monkey joke” as a case of racism, but he does not respond because he wants to avoid a violent escalation and needs to keep his job. He controls his anger and finds comfort thanks to a chance encounter with an African American pastor who “can relate.” In the second case, Ana, the Black Brazilian journalist, does not respond to being stereotyped as a black prostitute because she believes she cannot prove harm and fears denial and being ridiculed. In the third case, Abir, the Israeli Palestinian woman, cannot respond to mistreatment since doing so could result in arrest or further harassment.

We argue that responses are enabled by the broader context in which these individuals find themselves. Joe initially feels he should confront the man in the elevator. Confrontation is the most frequent response to racist incidents reported by our American interviewees; we will argue that this is the result of African Americans' shared understanding of the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and familiarity with a legal context that strongly discourages racial slurs. However, confrontation is not the only response possible. Joe ultimately retreats; he fears losing his job (not surprisingly, given the high unemployment rate that prevailed in 2007–2008, when we conducted our interviews). When factoring pragmatic considerations, he is reluctant to engage given prevalent stereotypes of black men as violent and dangerous. The silence of Ana, the Black Brazilian journalist, is likewise shaped by the context, one in which, compared to the United States, there is less shared understanding about the appropriateness of calling out people who engage in what may be racist actions. As for the Arab Palestinian, Abir, she also avoids confrontation. She does not hope for redress given a national context where Arab Palestinians are often viewed as “the enemy within.” Instead, she simply wants to be on her way. But she does not miss the opportunity to vent her anger and denounce the abuse when interviewed.

## OUR APPROACH, CHALLENGES, AND QUESTIONS

Our approach in this book is to explore the experiences of and responses to stigmatization and discrimination across contexts. We further analyze how national configurations of cultural repertoires and group boundaries

enable and constrain different experiences of and responses to stigmatization and discrimination. We focus on three countries and some of their most excluded groups: African Americans;<sup>1</sup> Black Brazilians;<sup>2</sup> and in Israel, Arab Palestinian citizens,<sup>3</sup> Ethiopian Jews, and Mizrahim\* (Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent). While much of the literature on racial attitudes most often focuses on the perpetrator's prejudice (conceptualized as a biased view of the out-group), we shift the attention to the experience of the stigmatized and on his/her subjectivity.<sup>4</sup> We offer a counterpoint to the fascination with the pathology, criminality, and social problems of the stigmatized, which is particularly salient in the internationally influential US literature on race.

As described in Chapter 1, we examine microphenomena (the phenomenology of experiences) through a macrocomparative approach (focused on history and case commonalities and differences), while focusing on how mesophenomena (e.g., cultural repertoires, groupness, and institutions) interpolate the two.<sup>5</sup> Our five groups live in different sociopolitical contexts and face social boundaries that are permeable to varying degrees. These groups experience different levels of residential or job market segregation or access to marital partners from outside their own ethnoracial group. Their places in the histories of their countries vary, as does their access to cultural repertoires (e.g., the American Dream, Brazilian racial democracy, Zionism, but also human rights), with which they make sense of their situations and make claims for equality and respect. Moreover, they differ in the extent to which their members perceive themselves as belonging to a group (this is part of what we call "groupness"). These dimensions, we argue, help us make sense of how these groups experience and respond to stigmatization and discrimination. Thus, we go beyond the analysis of individual cases to consider how macropolitical structures and meso-level explanations help account for micro-level experiences.

Why study these groups in particular? Originally, we wanted to compare ethnoracial groups marginalized within their respective countries by their degree of social exclusion in both the symbolic and the social boundaries they face.<sup>6</sup> Our focus was the United States, Brazil, and Israel, as our goal was to compare cases where boundaries ranged from fluid (Black Brazilians) to rigid (Arab Palestinians), with a case somewhere in between (African Americans): we wanted to assess whether those who face more heavily policed boundaries have more elaborate ways of dealing with those experiences.<sup>7</sup> As our understanding of the cases and the puzzles at hand deepened,

\* In Hebrew, the suffix "-im" denotes a plural noun. We have chosen to preserve the Hebrew term, and so throughout the text we refer to this group as "Mizrahim" rather than "Mizrahis." We use the term "Mizrahi" as a modifier, for example, when we refer to "Mizrahi responses."

the rationale for including each group changed. We came to examine the role of groupness in shaping people's experiences and responses, as well as the influence of cultural repertoires, based on the historical locations of groups in their respective polities, and various characteristics of their societies. Consequently, we included Mizrahi Jews, who are stigmatized ethnically in relation to Ashkenazim (European Jews) but whose ethnic self-identity is not very salient, with the goal of comparing them with another group whose groupness is partial and contested (at least relative to African Americans): Black Brazilians. We also brought into the comparison Ethiopian Jews living in Israel, who are stigmatized as phenotypically black (among other markers). The inclusion of these groups in our study informs the differences in the experiences of three phenotypically black groups living in different national contexts. It also serves to put the comparison between United States and Brazil (both former slave societies) in a broader perspective, through a comparison with Israel, a society where one ethnic group (Arab Palestinians) is both symbolically and institutionally excluded from full national membership. Finally, the intranational Israeli comparison enables us to consider "difference in difference," that is, how experiences and responses differ among groups that are exposed to varying levels and types of exclusion based on phenotype, ethnicity, and national belonging.<sup>8</sup> While comparative studies on race and ethnicity are generally Europe-centered (see Bail 2008 for a review), we made the gamble that bringing together this quintet of cases would be a theoretically generative strategy and a fruitful empirical puzzle. We also made the decision to not include a comparison of various ethnic groups in the United States and Brazil, but to privilege instead a comparison of the middle class and the working class across countries. This decision was motivated by growing economic inequality and the relative neglect of comparative class analysis within and across countries. We hypothesized that the varying life conditions and degree of material security across these two class groups would enable different types of responses.

### **Incidents: Assault on Worth and Discrimination**

Racism as it is experienced has been written about by a great many classical and contemporary authors,<sup>9</sup> as well as analyzed in its multifarious manifestations in the United States and elsewhere, creating a vast literature that has generated a large number of definitions across the disciplines.<sup>10</sup> What distinguishes our inquiry is our effort to trace inductively, systematically, and in a detailed fashion (using software-assisted content analysis) (1) the relative salience of various experiences and class patterns across groups and selected national contexts and (2) the different ways experiences are interpreted. In discussing each group under study, we describe the typologies of incidents

and responses, their meanings, as well as their frequency. Our contribution also stands out by offering an analysis of what enables and constrains these experiences by reference to groupness, repertoires, and historical contexts. Few studies of responses to racism offer a sustained explanatory framework.

We examined how our interviewees responded when asked: “Have you ever been treated unfairly?” “Can you describe what happened and where?” “Do you think you have been discriminated against at work?” “Can you remember encounters with racism outside of work?” and “Do you remember cases where you interacted with whites and felt misunderstood?”<sup>11</sup> We explored how they described their own responses to actual incidents they experienced and how they think people should respond (what we call “ideal” or “normative” responses). We inductively analyzed what they said by conducting detailed coding of narratives of incidents and responses in their contexts. We categorized narratives based on similarities and differences, and we developed meta-codes that enabled us to theoretically make sense of what interviewees said they were experiencing.

Are these accounts worthy of our attention? We think so. While some dismiss narratives as “merely” representations of subjective experience, we share a sociological perspective that takes what social actors say seriously (as *sui generis* social facts) instead of aiming to show how they are blind to their own reality (see Boltanski’s 2008 critique of Bourdieusian sociology). In our view, establishing that an assault-on-worth incident has occurred requires establishing the participant’s belief in such an incident, as instantiated in his or her narrative. Narratives guide action (Somers 1994) and enable and constrain it (Polletta et al. 2011).<sup>12</sup> They influence micro-interactions, even when they are contested.<sup>13</sup>

Discrimination was highly salient in the interviews. Our use of the term “discrimination” refers to incidents in which our interviewees believe they were deprived or prevented from getting access to opportunities and resources (e.g., credit, jobs, housing, access to public places) due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality. It also includes instances of racial profiling, being excluded from public places, and the like.

Even more frequent were mentions of incidents of stigmatization. Under this category, we include a wide range of subjective experiences, namely, incidents in which respondents experienced disrespect and their dignity, honor, relative status, or sense of self was challenged. This occurs when one is insulted, receives poor services, is the victim of jokes, is subjected to double standards, is excluded from informal networks (e.g., is not invited to parties), is the victim of physical assault, or is threatened physically. It also includes instances where one is stereotyped as poor, uneducated, or dangerous, or where one is misunderstood or underestimated. These instances can be described as targeting an individual *qua* individual or as targeting the individual’s group.

Discrimination (being deprived of resources) generally goes hand in hand with feeling stigmatized (being assigned low status)—although the reverse is not necessarily true. As Link and Phelan (2013) point out, steps leading to discrimination are often overlooked or difficult to prove, but they often involve stigmatization, intolerance, exclusion, fear, and mistrust on the part of the “perpetrator.”<sup>14</sup> According to Pescosolido and Martin (2015), discrimination may also entail social distancing, traditional prejudice, exclusionary sentiments, negative affect, perception of dangerousness, and more. However, as described by our respondents, stigmatization is frequently experienced without discrimination. Thus, we use the term “assault on worth” to refer explicitly to stigmatization that is not perceived as leading to or is not associated with discrimination. But we also use the terms “stigmatization” and “assault on worth” interchangeably at times. We refer to stigmatization and discrimination as forms of *ethnoracial* exclusion (for short), because we are concerned with groups that are excluded based on phenotype, ethnicity, nationality, or some other ascribed characteristics.<sup>15</sup>

Note that with stigmatization, we are concerned not only with micro-aggressions and the experience of being stereotyped but also with the experience of being ignored and overlooked (which are not cases of aggression per se but of non attention).<sup>16</sup> We also view the notion of “assault on worth” as more encompassing than the kindred notion “implicit association” (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998), which is concerned with sorting and classifying but not with narratives as a means for meaning-making. We focus on assault-on-worth experiences that are at times hard to identify as incidents and are difficult to measure, because much of their manifestation is intrapsychic, the result of neglect, and they often generate (and are generated by) non-responses. Yet, as we will see, such experiences are often what people actually talk about when they are invited to reflect on their quotidian experiences with ethnoracial exclusion. These are consistent with the experience of “laissez-faire racism” (Bobo and Smith 1998), which points to experiences of neglect more than to overt aggression or blatant racism. Such experiences, we will argue, are an essential, yet too often undertheorized and unnoticed, component of a phenomenology of experiences of ethnoracial exclusion.

As a specific example of the distinction between stigmatization and standard discrimination, consider the following case from our interviews: an African American teacher is not greeted by her coworkers when she enters the teachers’ room in the morning, while her white male colleague who walks in with her is. She cannot readily sue her peers for not greeting her, yet such an experience, especially when repeated, affects her well-being. It adds to the “wear and tear” that accompanies perceived racism, factoring into the large racial disparities in health found in the United States (Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson 2003; Williams and Sternthal 2010; Krieger 2014). Stigmatization is of particular importance in the symbolic ordering

of ethnoracial inequality, just as symbolic violence is essential to class domination (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009).

Across our three societies, incidents of stigmatization are more frequently mentioned compared to those of discrimination. Their prominence is one of the most significant findings of our study. Indeed, the literature has primarily focused on discrimination, especially on instances where being deprived of resources (in housing, employment, education, healthcare, banking, etc.) meet legal standards of proof. This is hardly surprising, given that meritocracy and the myth of the American Dream are predicated on equal opportunity and access to resources. But to focus too exclusively on these forms of unfair treatment misses important aspects of the experience of living with a stigmatized identity. Tackling this challenge has become particularly important in the current context, where self-worth, respect, and dignity have gained centrality in social debates as multicultural societies become more concerned with recognition as an essential dimension of equity and social justice (Fraser 2000; Hodson 2001; Honneth 2012; Myszal 2013). In multicultural societies, such concerns are often associated with educated liberals (see Mizrahi 2014 on “liberal isomorphism”), but they are shared by many who are concerned with asserting self-worth. Against this background, it is important to examine how stigmatization manifests itself and to document its relative salience in relation to discrimination. We aim not to downplay the importance of discrimination but to situate it within the full range of incidents that individuals experience.

The greater salience of stigmatization for our interviewees was unexpected, particularly given what appears to be a greater attention given to discrimination in the US literature on race,<sup>17</sup> in line with US laws and social policies that are concerned with protecting access to opportunities for minorities (affirmative action, antidiscrimination laws, Moving to Opportunity, etc.). This is in strong contrast with most European antiracist law, which puts more emphasis on the control of blatant racism and hate speech than on protection against discrimination.<sup>18</sup> As shown by Bleich (2011), American social policy does comparatively little to limit stigmatization (often in the name of the defense of the First Amendment), as policymakers and the American public are mostly concerned with equality of opportunities. Bleich mentions that less attention is paid to how condoning stigmatizing symbolic acts (e.g., public cross burning by the Klu Klux Klan) signals implicit support for assigning low status to specific groups (in this case, denying African Americans equal respect and cultural citizenship). Such indignities contribute to processes of inequality and should be given full consideration. This is a lacuna we hope to correct.

We are also concerned here with how victims interpret and respond to incidents they identify as stigmatizing or discriminatory. There is often unequal

power between stigmatizer and stigmatized such that the definition of reality produced by the former minimizes that of the latter. The perspective of the stigmatizer cannot be a necessary or sufficient condition for demonstrating that stigmatization has occurred; instances of assault on worth are to be inferred via the subjective experience of the stigmatized as conveyed by narratives. Intersubjective data would be needed to document how widely diffused stigmatization's effects are and whether a negative label "sticks" in such a way that one indeed gets stigmatized in ongoing interactions. Establishing this would require determining the extent to which meaning is shared within networks. This is an object of inquiry beyond the scope of our study. By documenting patterns in narratives of the stigmatized across our three sites, we hope to gain significant knowledge of how stigmatization is experienced across places.

### **Responses to Incidents: Actual and Ideal**

In addition to examining experiences of assaults on worth and discrimination, we also explore how people respond to such incidents, because responses to acts of ethnoracial exclusion are fundamental to social and cultural processes that contribute to the transformation of group boundaries and the reinforcement of inequality.<sup>19</sup> This is true both in terms of how people actually respond to spontaneous incidents and in terms of what they perceive as the ideal responses for dealing with racism—what they feel people should do. Our analysis thus focuses both on how people report reacting (or not) to being stigmatized or discriminated against and on the individual and collective strategies that our respondents perceive as fruitful, which include their views on race-targeted policies and lessons for children about racism (among other topics).

Responses matter, because the stress (or "wear and tear") generated during responses may compound inequality and disadvantages. Types of responses may affect health differently, depending on the social context. In such contexts as the workplace, for example, confrontational responses may impact health negatively, in part because of the necessity of maintaining an occupation for mental well-being.<sup>20</sup> Normative responses raise important questions concerning how social change can be produced moving ahead, through individual and collective strategies aimed at social transformation.

We innovate in relation to the available literature by paying close attention to how individuals think about the consequences of responding and coding how respondents consider the emotional, material, or legal costs of various types of responses. As suggested in Hirschman's (1970) classic *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, which models three basic types of responses, there are many reasonable ways to respond to a challenge.<sup>21</sup> Our inductive analysis

reveals five categories of responses: confronting (including taking legal recourse), management of the self, not responding, a focus on hard work and demonstrating competence, and self-isolation/autonomy.

Interviewees most frequently confront the stigmatizer, especially in the United States. While the high frequency of this meta-category of response could be explained as a desirability effect, descriptions of how confrontation occurs are so varied as to confirm its *de facto* centrality.<sup>22</sup> Yet, it is as prevalent as no response and management of the self in Brazil: there, interviewees are more hesitant to describe an incident as demonstrating racism and prefer a polite exchange to “educate racists.”<sup>23</sup> And they spend considerable energy managing relationships so as to deflate conflict. Compared to African Americans, Arab Palestinians also confronted somewhat less frequently, often opt to stay silent due to cynicism over the perceived intractability of their situation.

Management of the self, the second most common type of response, entails individual calculations (in terms of emotion, energy, reputation, and resources) concerning the personal cost of responding.<sup>24</sup> In Goffmanian terminology, it involves managing the “front stage” presentation of the self in a way one considers satisfactory. This may mean making the effort not to be perceived as a “loud black woman” or to confirm other stereotypes frequently applied to one’s group. It may also mean wanting to preserve energy or avoiding getting caught in a vicious cycle of anger, which depletes resilience. With this category, we capture the fact that respondents spend substantial energy considering what response is best to offer in an incident. While some scholars have analyzed the salience of such a response in various contexts (Lacy 2007; Wingfield 2010; Patterson and Fosse 2015), its relative significance *vis-à-vis* other types of responses to stigmatization and discrimination has not been systematically assessed to date, even within a single context.

A third common response type (as frequent as management of self) is simply not responding. Like management of the self, this is a category where the response is not obvious to an onlooker. While the literature rarely theorizes the meaning of non-response, we pay careful attention to how people account for their not responding. While “management of the self” responses result from deliberation about the personal costs of responding, there are cases where respondents do not give consideration to the consequences of not responding, because they are surprised or inattentive. In other cases, they don’t respond due to habit or other circumstances. Or else they say that they chose to not respond because they believed it was pointless or that the stigmatizers should be ignored or forgiven, or because ignoring is perceived as a way to insult the stigmatizer.

Other salient responses are to demonstrate a strong work ethic and competence in professional and educational (especially formal educational) contexts, or to engage in isolation or autonomy, a strategy of making the group

more self-sufficient and less dependent on the socially dominant group. We will see that these are less common forms of response across sites.

However, self-improvement, which can be achieved through work or education, is in most cases particularly salient among ideal strategies that respondents offer as ways to deal with ethnoracial exclusion. We consider whether in these cases the beneficiary is the individual or the collective. This is important in a neoliberal context, where the social conditions that may have encouraged collective mobilization in earlier decades are receding, given the current emphasis on the privatization of risk and individualism (Bobo 1991; Hall and Lamont 2013).<sup>25</sup> Considering ideal responses raises many questions for the future of social movements and of individual and collective strategies.

### **Class, Gender, and Age Cohorts**

The selection of interviewees in all three sites was originally inspired by a desire to consider whether the resources at the disposal of middle- and working-class individuals affect patterns of responses to incidents. To take the case of African Americans, Drake and Cayton (1945) have argued that the black middle class has historically been more conscious of discrimination than its working-class counterpart and has been more eager to confront (see the “race man/race woman” theory; Drake and Cayton 1945: 394). Du Bois (1899) has written to great effect on the same question. Thus, we pondered whether individuals with more resources are more likely to confront racism across the three societies under consideration. Here we also drew on the broader literature on American middle- and working-class culture, which has documented middle-class norms of conflict avoidance (Morrill 1995; Jackall 2010) and this group’s attachment to professional identity (Brint and Proctor 2011), which could prompt its members to downplay racist incidents and avoid confrontation. Alternatively, would experiencing racism be so similar across classes as to deflate class difference in responses?<sup>26</sup> Having a small number of respondents in each of our Israeli groups, we could not draw conclusions about class in this national context.

Even if our main focus was class similarities and differences in the US and Brazil, we also considered gender differences. As with class differences, patterns of gender differences in interviewees’ responses are much less than originally expected and revolve around specifically gendered areas of discrimination, such as racial profiling. Their responses also resonate with gendered narratives of behavior, for instance, violence and confronting. In the United States, interviews suggest that African American men perceive themselves slightly more frequently to be stigmatized and discriminated against, and in particular to be more often feared and underestimated, and men mention

more incidents than do women. In Brazil, gender differences in the number of excluding experiences and types of responses were quite limited, even if we found more mentions of experiencing sexualized stereotypes by women and more mentions of being stereotyped as violent among men.

In the US case we also considered the relevance of age cohort differences. The differences, though small, are worth noting. In the United States, those born before the Civil Rights Movement are more likely to refer to the law and legal recourse in their responses. Because Brazil interviewees are somewhat younger, cohort differences are not relevant. In Israel there were fewer respondents for each group, which also prevents discussion of cohorts (and gender). However, the secondary literature suggests that the younger generation of Arab Palestinians is more ready to confront stigmatizers and to be involved in political activities than previous generations (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). Similarly, Sansone (1997) has argued that younger Black Brazilians are more affirming of their black identity than the older generation. But it is unclear from his findings whether the younger generation would be more likely to respond to an incident of exclusion with confrontation.

Before delving into the details of our objectives, we turn to the making of the study to further specify how our comparison fosters a novel perspective. In Chapter 1, we describe our explanatory strategy as well as some of our contributions. This discussion is more theoretical and can be skipped by those not interested in the scholarly conversation in which we locate our work.

## HOW WE DID OUR STUDY

### Our Cases

Our study honors the tradition of comparing race relations in the United States and Brazil, which are often regarded as reversed mirror images of one another when it comes to racial relations.<sup>27</sup> Our third point of comparison, the Israeli case, serves to denaturalize widely shared and deep-seated notions about the centrality of the racial divide that characterizes US and Brazilian societies. It also permits a broad reframing of the question of exclusion, as social scientists typically treat Israel as an exception that would require distinct analytical lenses to understand. Approaching the three countries through similar lenses, we hope to unsettle widely held assumptions and offer new analytical leverage in our understanding of all three national cases.

Originally, we thought of incorporating only Arab Palestinians into the study, as this population represents the most deeply and explicitly excluded

group in the Israeli landscape, and as such it is the most comparable to African Americans and Black Brazilians. However, as spelled out earlier, as the investigation proceeded, we came to appreciate the heuristic value of considering the interplay among different sources of stigma, so we included two additional, differently marked, Israeli groups, Ethiopian and Mizrahi Jews.<sup>28</sup> Initially, we treated these as “shadow cases,” thinking that it was simply too overwhelming for the reader to go into the same depth and detail for the Ethiopian and Mizrahi Jews as for the Arab Palestinians. In practice, however, it became difficult to maintain this shadow status throughout. Thus, in the introductory section of the Israeli chapter (Chapter 4), they receive equal weight, more or less. But in later sections they are treated as foils to compare to the Arab Palestinian case, and we highlight mainly how they are different from that group. In places where it makes sense to compare them to the groups in the United States and Brazil, we do that. In a sense, we have given them more space when discussing the explanatory factors, and less space and emphasis when it comes to the explanandum (experiences and responses).

Mizrahi Jews are Israeli citizens who immigrated from Arab or Muslim countries or whose parents or grandparents did. Like Brazilians, they experience an ambiguous status in their society because of the historical denial of the existence of discrimination against their group. While not strongly marked in part due to their relatively large size (Mizrahim and Black Brazilians represent, respectively, 27 percent and 51 percent of the population of their countries),<sup>29</sup> both groups are relegated to an inferior position in their country’s status and economic systems.

Ethiopian Jews represent only 2 percent of the population, and they are strongly marked phenotypically, as the size of Israel’s black population is very small (it also includes some African migrant workers) and the Israeli population is not multiracial, although there is significant ethnic heterogeneity. While religion is the basis of their national inclusion, their phenotype and recent migration from Africa are often viewed as markers of inferior status. The fact that they share their phenotypical marking with Black Brazilians and African Americans enables us to consider the impact of skin color in ethnoracial inequalities across three national contexts (Banton 2012; Telles and PERLA team 2014).

In short, the fact that our analysis concerns not only three countries, but also, in one national case, three groups, enriches our analysis. It allows us to explore not only how middle- and working-class men and women experience and react to stigma and discrimination, but also how different types of boundaries (ethnic, national, phenotypical, and religious) operate in relation to one another in one national context. We can also consider how, even within the confines of a single nation, one principle of exclusion (e.g., being stereotyped as poor) operates differently across groups.

Although our analysis is largely organized around cross-national comparisons, we are mindful of the dangers of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), and we also pay attention to similarities and exchanges across settings, particularly in the mobilization of transnational narratives for making claims pertaining to such issues as racism, social justice, human rights, and reparation. We locate our three national contexts within the global landscape in several ways. First, we consider how transnational movements have informed the way individuals look at difference, equality, and inequality, and how their responses are shaped by transnational cultural repertoires, whether those of human rights (Jenson and Levi 2013; see Mizrahi 2014 for the concept of liberal isomorphism) or others. Second, we pay attention to cross-national influences, such as how the United States has been an important point of reference for current debates on recognition (e.g., Mizrahi and Herzog 2012; Roth 2012) and the black diaspora (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001b for a critique). Third, we maintain a comparative emphasis on differences in how national laws, customs, and practices evolve. Countries and nation-states remain important structuring actors and objects of analysis, even in the context of increased globalization and interdependency.

A reminder of the importance of national contexts is the fact that our interviews captured these three countries at different phases in their respective social and economic trajectories. During the phase of data collection (2007–2008), the United States was in a recession, and Brazil and Israel were experiencing economic growth. While in the United States and Israel inequality has been growing in the past decades, the reverse has been the case in the Brazil (even if inequality is still substantially larger in this country compared to the other two).<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the gap between the middle and working classes (or between the working class and the unemployed) may be getting larger (in the United States and Israel) or smaller (in the case of Brazil).

Finally, the three societies vary in their ethnoracial diversity. The United States faces a rapid expansion of its immigrant population, especially Latinos, and is quickly becoming a minority-majority society. In Israel, the 1990s were a period of accelerated immigration from Russia, and the 2000s, from Africa (both Jewish Ethiopians and non-Jewish migrant workers). In Brazil, while the 1980s were a period of emigration to the United States and Europe, the 1990s saw increased immigration from other Latin American countries.<sup>31</sup> These changes have influenced the overall ethnoracial hierarchy in each country in the past couple of decades. For example, some authors have referred to the Latin Americanization of the color line in the United States, which is moving from the “one-drop rule”<sup>32</sup> to a color spectrum.<sup>33</sup> In Brazil, there has been growing recognition of racial differences (Costa 2001), partly attributed to the increasing mobility of Brazilian immigrants

to and from the United States (Joseph 2013). In Israel, this period has witnessed a decline of the dominant Ashkenazi groups and the emergence of subgroups that challenge the dominant national identity (Kimmerling 2001). These different contexts surely impact perceptions about opportunities and constraints for social change among our interviewees.

### **Our Participants and Methods**

Our study is based on in-depth interviews conducted between 2007 and 2008<sup>34</sup> in or around a prominent multiethnic metropolis in each of the three countries under consideration: New York, Rio de Janeiro, and Tel Aviv. Our aim is not to generalize from our three metropolitan contexts to the countries themselves. In each national case, there are important regional differences in the character of race/group relations.<sup>35</sup> Instead, the logic of our analysis is one of theoretical sampling in which each group is considered a case study in and of itself (Small 2009). When possible, we mobilize national data to consider whether and how our interviewees' views resemble those of the broader population. But overall, our goal is to contribute by improving the analysis of cultural processes of ethnoracial exclusion than to describe national trends for which data are not always available.

Our approach incorporates a cultural and cognitive approach to consider how groupness is organized around race, ethnicity, phenotype, nationality, or religion. We understand ethnicity and race as cognition, with a focus on how groups classify and differentiate themselves from one another.<sup>36</sup> We capture this boundary work through narratives produced in interview situations. We take these to be significant expressions of intersubjectively shared classification systems or collective representations as they manifest and are captured at one point in time. While a focus on boundary work as it manifests in interactions and is captured through ethnography would be useful (e.g., Sherman 2005), ethnography is insufficient for tapping broadly shared classification systems across different participants (Lamont and Swidler 2014). An ideal approach would combine observation and interviews, which is not feasible in the context of this already sprawling study.

An additional limitation of our interview-based approach is that it taps only the perspective of the subordinates and ignores that of the dominant group they are exposed to—except as captured through the descriptions by the subordinates. However, the dominants are also present in the background to the extent that they share some of the contexts experienced by the stigmatized (e.g., through cultural repertoires). We hope that our contribution will inspire other scholars to examine the worldview of the dominant in a complementary fashion (e.g., DiTomasso 2013).

In-depth interviews were conducted among 150 residents in New York suburbs, 160 in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, and 137 in and around

Tel Aviv. While slightly different protocols were followed to recruit respondents across sites (Appendix 1 provides details on the methodology), our sample composition was overall similar across sites (unless otherwise noted) to maximize their comparability. In each case, we aimed to interview a roughly equal number of men and women, and of middle- and working-class individuals (adjusting the boundaries of the class groups to the distinctive class structure of each country). Although the American and Brazilian research procedures largely parallel one another, in Israel these procedures were less parallel, in part because three groups were studied, with smaller numbers for each group.

In interviews, we pay attention to how respondents describe stigmatizing and discriminatory incidents, although we cannot say with certainty that the incidents actually occurred in the way they were perceived. Indeed, respondents' certainty about viewing an incident as an example of racism, is likely to vary with the character of the specific event, the typical relationship between the stigmatized and the dominant groups, the time lag between the interview and the incident, and broader expectations based on past modes of interaction between groups. To illustrate, in some instances, the respondents reported feeling hesitant to label an event or individual as "racist" for fear of not having proof, as recounted at the beginning of this chapter in the case of the Brazilian woman Ana. We regard such hesitations as data, not evidence that our respondents do not experience racism.

When analyzing the interviews, we used content-analysis software to categorize inductively the most salient aspects of identification and the types of subjective experiences of such incidents that our interviewees described. This inductive approach reveals many dimensions of the life-world of our respondents that we had not suspected beforehand that are quite variable when looked at comparatively. Because researchers do not inhabit the world of respondents, it would be easy to overlook or exaggerate differences without the benefit of specific inductively derived information about similarities and differences. Thus, this approach makes possible a much more detailed empirical portrait of our groups' experiences and responses to ethnoracial exclusion.

This analysis also reveals differences in raw or absolute numbers of experiences and responses across sites. These differences depend on how likely interviewees were to interpret experiences through the lens of ethnoracial exclusion, which is one of the main focuses of our analysis. They are also influenced by how extensively interviewees were probed during the interviews at each site, despite the extensive efforts we made to increase consistency in our interviewing procedures and in the training of interviewers. Nevertheless, we believe comparing the relative frequency of incident types for each group of respondents (as opposed to across groups) is an informative and significant contribution.

So far, we have described the book as offering:

1. A phenomenological analysis of experiences and responses of ethnoracial exclusion that explains micro-phenomena by the meso- (cultural repertoires, groupness) and the macro- (societal characteristics, history, etc.) levels;
2. A fine-grained analysis that brings to light the relative frequency of types of experiences of stigmatization and discrimination and responses to those incidents;
3. The salience of stigmatization in relation to discrimination in incidents mentioned by our interviewees;
4. Different patterns of responses across cases, such as the greater prominence of confrontation in the United States; and
5. Surprising results through our inquiry into class, gender, and cohort differences in the United States and Brazil.

Now we turn to our multidimensional explanation. Here we will see three other contributions: (1) a multidimensional explanation that focuses on groupness and the cultural tools available to make sense of reality; (2) a multidimensional operationalization of groupness that takes into consideration both self-identification and group boundaries; and (3) an analysis of the varied types of groupness across our five cases.

.....

Before proceeding to the next chapter, we visit the story of another respondent to signal that, with all the detailed analysis deployed in this study, above all, we are concerned with the challenging experiences that taint the daily lives of individuals belonging to stigmatized groups. We quote from an African American artist who recalls his experience while attending an almost all-white elite high school as a teenager. He describes how he dealt with the fact that he was made to feel invisible by his white schoolmates and his uncertainty about the ambiguity of these racial incidents. His description alludes to themes reminiscent of Ralph Ellison's classic *Invisible Man* (1952). He describes how his friends helped him by corroborating his interpretation of reality and bolstering his self-confidence:

When I first started getting hit with that invisibility trick . . . oh man, I was like, "Did I say it wrong?" But fortunately I didn't spend a lot of time on that because I had my buddies and we would always be hanging out. . . . On Saturday we would be going to play baseball and I'd say, "You know what happened to me?" They [would] say, "That happened to you—oh man, let me tell you what happened to me!" . . . Even though for the rest of that week I felt like "Was it me? Was it something

I said?” by the time I got to the weekend, just because of the fact that I had a positive group of people around me, I had a way of talking about it, and I couldn’t talk about it like the way I am talking about it now. I mean, we understood it from the perspective of somebody who was like 16. Oh it’s “the man,” you know, “The man does that stuff.” . . . You might not really understand the true dynamics of it or how you really want to deal with it, but at least it got me out of feeling inferior. . . . I had a sounding board that would reflect back to me: “No, it’s not you, man.”

This passage illustrates the importance of intersubjectivity as a resource for defining and confirming definitions of reality (Sauder 2006), and, conversely, the dangers of self-isolation. The uncertainty surrounding the appropriate interpretation of an event is part of the event, just as being able to establish legally the fact that discrimination has happened is itself part of the event. Assaults on worth are frequently more open to varying interpretation than are discrimination events, because they do not involve specific effects that can be demonstrated, such as being deprived of education, a job, housing, or other resources. Subjectively experienced and defined, the harm is no less real for those who believe they are being underestimated, ignored, or stereotyped. The need to better understand such painful human experiences is what motivates our study. While these experiences are all too familiar to members of stigmatized groups, it is particularly crucial that we engage fellow human beings across color and class lines in an effort to work together toward the transformation of racial and class hierarchies.