



DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY

*in the World of
the Early Christians*

PHILIP A. HARLAND

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*Associations, Judeans,
and Cultural Minorities*

Philip A. Harland



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For Cheryl, Nathaniel, and Justin

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Preface

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All photos that appear in this volume were taken by me (© 2009 Philip A. Harland). I would like to thank the organizations and staffs responsible for maintaining the archeological sites and museums for permission to view and photograph these ancient archeological materials. The map base is used with permission from the Ancient World Mapping Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (www.unc.edu/awmc).

Chapters 1 and 5 are, on the whole, new and appear here for the first time. The following articles or portions of them form the basis of certain chapters in this book, and I would like to thank the following publishers or organizations for permission to incorporate material,

in significantly revised form, from these articles: *Part 1*: “Christ-Bearers and Fellow-Initiates: Local Cultural Life and Christian Identity in Ignatius’s Letters,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 481–99, with permission from the journal. *Part 2*: “Familial Dimensions of Group Identity: “‘Brothers’ (ἀδελφοί) in Associations of the Greek East,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 491–513, with permission from the journal and the Society of Biblical Literature. “Familial Dimensions of Group Identity (II): ‘Mothers’ and ‘Fathers’ in Associations and Synagogues of the Greek World,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 57–79, with permission from the journal. *Part 3*: “Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora: A Jewish Family and ‘Pagan’ Guilds at Hierapolis,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 57 (2006): 222–44, with permission from the journal and the Oxford Centre of Jewish and Hebrew Studies. *Part 4*: “Spheres of Contention, Claims of Pre-Eminence: Rivalries among Associations in Sardis and Smyrna.” In *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna*, vol. 14, edited by Richard S. Ascough; *Studies in Christianity and Judaism*, 53–63, 259–62 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), with permission from the publisher and the Canadian Corporation for the Studies in Religion. “‘These People Are . . . Men Eaters’: Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups.” In *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson*, edited by Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland, 56–75 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), with permission from Sheffield Phoenix Press.

Dynamics of Identity
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Italy and the Eastern Roman Empire

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Introduction

Drawing on insights from the social sciences, this study suggests that we can better understand certain dynamics of identity among groups of Judeans (Jews) and Christians by looking at archeological evidence for other contemporary associations and cultural minority groups. Ancient Judean and Christian answers to the question *Who are we?* come into sharper focus through close attention to the cultural environments and real-life settings of associations in the cities of the Roman Empire. Despite the peculiarities of both Judean gatherings and Christian congregations, there were significant overlaps in how associations of various kinds communicated their identities and in how members of such groups expressed notions of belonging internally.

Recent studies are shedding light on aspects of identity in the world of the early Christians.¹ And yet there is a tendency to neglect archeological evidence regarding real-life groups at the local level, groups that might provide a new vantage point to early Christianity. For instance, Judith Lieu's important contributions to the study of early Christian identity are particularly notable.² In her latest work, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (2004), Lieu investigates the emergence of Christian identity in literature of the first two centuries, drawing on concepts from the social sciences along the way. The strength of this work lies in its comparative approach, investigating various identity issues among Judeans, Christians, and both Greeks and Romans. Thus, for instance, Lieu shows how similar ethnographic discourses were at work in Roman perspectives on "foreign" peoples (e.g., Tacitus on the Germans and on the Judeans), in Judean definitions of the "gentiles," and in some early Christian processes of self-definition in relation to the "other."³ Like Denise Kimber Buell (2005), Lieu also helpfully notes the importance of discourses of ethnicity in the construction of Christian identity, to which I return below.⁴

However, Lieu's attempt to cover so much ground and her concentration on literary sources to the exclusion of archeology did not permit a focus on identity within small groups and associations in Greco-Roman settings. This lack of attention to group

1. See, for instance, Lieu 2004; Buell 2005.

2. See Lieu 1996 and 2002.

3. Lieu 2004, 269–97.

4. Lieu 2004, 239–68. Cf. Lieu 2002, 49–68.

identity and local groups as a comparative framework is, in part, a result of Lieu's stress on what she sees as a more "universal," "translocal identity" shared by Christians that, she implies, is a unique trait of the Christians.⁵ So despite her aim of comparison, she tends to focus on what is distinctive or unique about Christian identity, often to the exclusion of areas of overlap in identity formation and negotiation within groups in the Greco-Roman world.⁶ In the introduction, she explicitly sets aside "voluntary associations" (*collegia*, *θιασοί*) as somehow too "local" to be of any use in assessing dynamics of identity among early Christian groups, which are presumed to be primarily "translocal."⁷ An abundance of archeological and inscriptional evidence for group identity in the Greco-Roman world thereby gets left aside as somehow irrelevant.

Other scholars do see the value in comparisons that look to local archeological and epigraphic materials, including evidence for associations in the world of early Christian groups and Judean gatherings. Yet the topic of identity formation and negotiation with regard to associations is only beginning to be addressed. Associations in the Greco-Roman world first drew the attention of numerous scholars in the late nineteenth century, such as Jean-Pierre Waltzing (1895–1900), Erich Ziebarth (1896), and Franz Poland (1909), who focussed primarily on things such as the types of groups, group terminology, internal organization, and legal issues. As I discuss at length elsewhere, there were some initial attempts—by scholars such as Edwin Hatch (1909 [1880]) and Georg Heinrici (1876, 1881)—to compare such groups with Christian congregations.⁸ Yet many were hesitant to engage in such comparisons due, in large part, to ideological or theological assumptions concerning the supposed uniqueness and incomparability of early Christianity.⁹

As interests turned to social history since the 1970s, there has been renewed attention to studying such associations within the disciplines of Greek and Roman studies. There are many recent works, including those by Frank M. Ausbüttel (1982), Ulrich Fellmeth (1987), Halsey L. Royden (1988), Onno M. van Nijf (1997), Imogen Dittmann-Schöne (2000), Brigitte Le Guen (2001), Holger Schwarzer (2002), Carola Zimmermann (2002), Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser and Alfred Schäfer, eds. (2002), Sophia Aneziri (2003), Jinyu Liu (2004), Jonathan Scott Perry (2006), and Stefan Sommer (2006), to name a few.

This resurgence in interest was also reflected in the study of diaspora Judean gatherings and Christian congregations. There are now a significant number of works that compare associations with either Judean or Christian groups in the Roman period,

5. Lieu 2004, 4.

6. Lieu 2004, 11. At times, this focus on distinctiveness seems to reflect an idealizing approach to early Christians, as when Lieu speaks of "mutual support" or "love" (*agapē*) as "an inalienable element in the shared symbols that shaped early Christian identity" (Lieu 2004, 169).

7. Lieu 2004, 4. On problems with such local vs. translocal contrasts, see Ascoug 1997a.

8. See Kloppenborg 1993; Harland 2003a. For other subsequent attempts at comparison before the resurgence since 1980, see, for instance, Besnier 1932; Gilmour 1938; Reicke 1951; Guterman 1951 (on synagogues and the *collegia*); Judge 1960.

9. See J. Z. Smith 1990; Kloppenborg 1993.

including those by Robert Wilken (1972, 1984), S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley (1981), Hans-Josef Klauck (1981, 1982), Moshe Weinfeld (1986), John S. Kloppenborg (1993), John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen Wilson, eds. (1996), Thomas Schmeller (1995), Peter Richardson (1996), Albert Baumgarten (1998), Paul R. Trebilco (1999), Anders Runesson (2001), Richard S. Ascough (1997b, 2003), Eva Ebel (2004), and my own previous works listed in the bibliography, especially *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations* (2003a).

Such comparative studies are setting the stage for focussed explorations of specific aspects of association life, including issues relating to identity and belonging in the context of small groups. Explorations of this sort will provide new perspectives on both Judean gatherings and Christian congregations. The present study of identity in the world of the early Christians contributes towards this scholarly enterprise. I focus attention on the question of how associations and ethnic groups in the ancient Mediterranean provide a new angle of vision on questions of identity formation and negotiation among Judean gatherings and Christian congregations in the first three centuries. Archeological evidence and inscriptions provide a window into dynamics of identity within group settings in antiquity. Insights from the social sciences offer a constructive framework for making some sense of these materials.

Social-Historical Study of Group Life in the Greco-Roman World

This study is social-historical in at least two senses of the word. On the one hand, I am interested in the everyday life settings of average people in antiquity, in down-to-earth social interactions and cultural practices at the local level. Social history in this sense originally emerged as “history from below” in the discipline of history beginning primarily in the post–World War II period, especially since the 1960s.¹⁰ “History from below” or social history is history from the perspective of those who are often left out of traditional approaches to political and intellectual history. It gives attention to those who did not necessarily hold positions of influence or power, or who were not necessarily educated enough to write things down themselves (e.g., the lower social strata of societies, and women).

In time, this interest in social history began to play a role in other disciplines including classical studies and New Testament studies. Works by Ramsay MacMullen (1974), G. E. M. de Ste. Croix (1981), and Géza Alföldy (1985) illustrate the budding interest in social history of the Greek and Roman periods, for instance. Among the earlier cases of social-historical approaches to the early Christians are influential contributions by

10. See Burke 1992 [1980], 13–16. Among the earlier and more influential social historians were those of the French *Annales* school, including Fernand Braudel (1949) and, later, Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm (1959, 1969), E. P. Thompson (1964), and Christopher Hill (1971, 1972).

scholars such as Gerd Theissen (1982 [1973], 1978), John G. Gager (1975), Abraham Malherbe (1983 [1977]), John H. Elliott (1990 [1981]), Wayne A. Meeks (1983), and Richard Horsley (1985).

In the case of small group life in the ancient world, archeological and inscriptional evidence is particularly important in approaching social history. This is because this evidence frequently offers glimpses into everyday social and cultural interactions that are not as visible in literary sources. Literary sources were produced by a small segment of the population, the educated elites (although there was a range of statuses among this segment). Usually literacy levels are estimated to be approximately 10 percent of the population for antiquity and for the period before the invention of the printing press in 1453.¹¹ Nonetheless, one can approach literary evidence in careful ways to shed light on social and cultural practices among the population generally, keeping in mind the specific perspectives of the ancient authors in question.

On the other hand, this study is social-historical in the sense that it employs the social sciences. The social sciences in question are sociology (the study of social groups and structures), anthropology (the study of humans and human culture), and social psychology (the study of individual human behaviour in social group contexts). The social sciences came to play a role in social-historical studies in history quite early, as Peter Burke's survey of 1980 (repr. 1992) on *History and Social Theory* illustrates. Eventually such approaches began to be employed in the study of early Christianity and the New Testament, initially by scholars such as those I mentioned above in connection with social-historical studies and those belonging to the Context Group (formed in 1986).

Before outlining the social-scientific concepts that inform this volume, it is important to say a few words about how one goes about using social sciences in historical study. There is now a broad consensus among scholars of early Christianity, for instance, that the social sciences can and should be employed to shed new light on early Christianity. However, as Dale Martin (1993) also notes, this consensus is marked by a spectrum of opinion on how to approach the enterprise, as recent debates between Philip Esler and David Horrell also illustrate.¹² While some tend to emphasize the scientific nature of the enterprise and focus their attention on developing, applying, and testing models, others are less focussed on models and take what they would call a more interpretive approach to their use of the social sciences.

On the one hand, the Context Group has been particularly instrumental in developing social-scientific approaches to early Christianity. Scholars such as Philip Esler, Bruce Malina, John H. Elliott, and others associated with that group take what they would consider a scientific, model-based approach to their research.¹³ They correctly emphasize the value of employing explicit models or theories from the social sciences, since this approach helps the scholar to avoid the negative effect of implicit assumptions when our models of social interactions remain unrecognized or unstated.¹⁴

11. On the Roman era, see Harris 1989 and Beard 1991, for instance.

12. See, for example, Horrell 1996, 2000, 2002; Esler 1998a, 1998b. Cf. Martin 1993.

13. See esp. Elliott 1993 for a summary of this approach.

14. See Elliott 1993.

Elliott defines a model as an “abstract representation of the relationships among social phenomena used to conceptualize, analyze, and interpret patterns of social relations, and to compare and contrast one system of social relations with another.”¹⁵ Such models are considered to serve as heuristic devices in raising questions that help to explain the significance of social and cultural data reflected in the New Testament. It is particularly common for scholars such as Malina and Jerome Neyrey, for instance, to draw on models from recent studies of modern Mediterranean cultures, such as those associated with honour-shame societies, and to adapt them in ways that shed light on the ancient Mediterranean.¹⁶

Beyond participants in the Context Group, other scholars such as Gerd Theissen (1982, 1999), Wayne Meeks (1983), Margaret McDonald (1988), John M. G. Barclay (1996), and David Horrell (Horrell 1996, 2000, 2002) have engaged in historical studies of Christian origins or ancient Judean culture that employ the social sciences in various ways. Some of these scholars take a more interpretive approach to the use of the social sciences and tend to speak of themselves as social historians rather than social scientists. Some tend towards a piecemeal approach to the use of sociological theory, including Meeks. Others, such as Horrell, speak in terms of using social theory to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of ancient materials, and such scholars focus less on models specifically.¹⁷

Building on contributions from both of these scholarly areas, I approach the social sciences as heuristic devices, as things that help the social historian develop questions and *find* or notice things that might otherwise remain obscure. I tend to draw on social-scientific insights to develop a research framework for analysis, and I am less focused than some other scholars on testing models specifically. In this respect, I consider myself more a social historian than a social scientist. Throughout this interdisciplinary study, I explain and adapt social-scientific concepts and theories in order to further our understanding of specific historical cases in the ancient context.

Key Concepts and Insights from the Social Sciences

This study is informed by insights from two overlapping areas of social-scientific investigation: identity theory, on the one hand, and studies of ethnic groups and migration theory, on the other. For both of these areas of research, there is a high degree of interdisciplinarity involving sociology, anthropology, and social psychology. Let me begin by briefly introducing these two areas and by defining key theoretical concepts for this study along the way. It is important to stress that the concepts that I define here in the introduction are scholarly outsider (etic) terms that help us to make sense of social relations and cultural interactions in the ancient world. Most of the time these

15. Elliott 1993, 132.

16. See Malina 1981, or subsequent editions of that work.

17. Horrell 1996, 9–32, esp. p. 18.

concepts would not be used by the ancient subjects we are studying. Often, however, scholars take into consideration insider, or emic, perspectives or conceptions as part of their definition of an etic category, as we will see with both “identity” and “ethnic group.”

Identity Theory

Broadly speaking, there are two main ways in which the concept of “identity” is used in this study, corresponding to variant, though related and overlapping, uses in the social sciences, each with different purposes.¹⁸ There is the collective use of the term identity and the more individual-focused use of the term. In both uses, however, identity is seen as socially constructed by the subjects under investigation and as malleable, not as primordial, engrained, or static.

First, there is the *collective view* of identity that is most common in ethnic and migration studies. Roughly speaking, this view of identity best corresponds to our subjects answering the question Who are *we*? as well as What distinguishes us from other groups in this society? and Where do we draw the lines (or boundaries) between our group and others? This tradition within sociology and anthropology, which underlies much of my discussion in the following chapters, employs the concept of identity and especially ethnic identity in a collective way to refer to group-members’ common sense of belonging together in a particular ethnic or cultural minority group.

In the wake of the work of anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969), “ethnic identity” is often used to refer to a particular group’s shared sense of belonging together because of certain experiences and notions of connection deriving from group-members’ *perceptions* of common cultural heritage and common geographical and/or ancestral origins (emic perspectives are incorporated into an etic category).¹⁹ As Jonathan M. Hall emphasizes in his discussion of ethnicity in the archaic and classical Greek periods, fictive kinship is often central to the definition of ethnicity, alongside the historical subjects’ notions of a common history and a shared homeland.²⁰

The imagined connections and the categories used by participants to classify themselves or others in ethnic terms may, and often do, change over time (despite the common perceptions of some actors that such things are in-born, primordial, or static). Nonetheless, if a given ethnic group is to continue, what is maintained is the “continued interest on the part of its members in maintaining the boundaries” which are considered to separate members of the ethnic group (“us”) from others (“them”).²¹ It is important to emphasize that ethnicity or ethnic identity, in this view, is ascriptive and subjective rather than primordial and objective. What matters is how the partici-

18. Cf. Howard 2000; Stets and Burke 2003.

19. On ethnic identity see, for instance, Barth 1969; Romanucci-Ross and de Vos 1995, 13; de Vos 1995; Verkuyten 2004.

20. Hall 2002, 9–19.

21. Goudriaan 1992, 76; de Vos 1995.

pants categorize themselves and how they adopt a perspective that sees their belonging together as engrained.

There is a sense in which this collective concept of identity will be most appropriate in the present study. There are at least a couple of reasons why this is so. The fragmentary nature of ancient evidence means that we lack sufficient data on individual roles or individual self-conceptions, but we do catch glimpses of group life and interactions. Furthermore, recent studies by scholars such as Malina and others draw attention to the primarily collective character of ancient Greco-Roman societies and the dyadic or group-oriented nature of ancient personalities.²² This contrasts somewhat to the more individualistic tendencies of modern, Western societies and personality development in those societies. So a collective concept of identity is particularly fitting in studying the world of the early Christians.

Recent works have usefully employed such concepts of ethnicity in studying groups in the ancient context, including Hall's (1997, 2002) important studies of the emergence of *Hellenicity*; Philip F. Esler's (2003) discussion of tensions between ethnic groups within the Christian congregations at Rome; and Barclay's (2007) study of Josephus's expression of Judean identity in terms of common descent, history, territory, language, sacred texts, and temple. In the following section, I return to defining related concepts including "ethnic group" and "cultural minority group," but for now we need to consider some other social-scientific theories of identity.

The second main way in which the concept of identity can be employed relates to sociological and, especially, social psychological theories of identity. Here the term relates primarily to the *individual's self-concept* as it pertains to positions or roles within social groupings. This nonetheless has implications for group identity as a whole. Roughly speaking, this view of identity best corresponds to our subjects answering questions such as Who am I in this particular situation and how does this relate to who I am in other social groups? and How is my own self-conception based on, or affected by, my belonging in this particular group? The focus here, one could say, is on the interaction of individuals and the group in the construction and negotiation of identities and in affecting social behaviours.

There are at least two schools of research that employ identity in this second way. The most important for this study is what is known as "*social identity theory*."²³ The "social" descriptor in social identity refers to the part of one's self-conception that is based on, and influenced by, membership in a group, be that an ethnic group or some other cultural or social group.²⁴ Social identity theorists who follow the lead of the social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1981) tend to use the term "social identity" to refer to an "individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership."²⁵

22. Malina 1981.

23. For social identity theory see, for instance, Tajfel 1981; Tajfel, ed. 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Abrams and Hogg 1990; Verkuyten 2004, 39–73.

24. See Tajfel 1981, 13–56.

25. Tajfel as cited by Abrams and Hogg 1990, 2.

Social identity theorists in line with Tajfel also pay attention to interactions between different groups as they affect social identity. So issues concerning outsiders' categorizations of a particular group or its members, including stereotypes, are important here. Esler (1998a, 2003) is among the scholars that have fruitfully employed social identity theory to shed light on dynamics of group conflict reflected in Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans.

Another variant of the second main approach to identity is represented by sociologists such as Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, who speak of their own approach as "identity theory" (to be distinguished from Tajfelian "*social* identity theory").²⁶ This symbolic interactionist tradition in sociological social psychology stresses the interplay of self and social structure, paying special attention to "individual role relationships and identity variability, motivation, and differentiation."²⁷ In this view, the "core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role and incorporating into the self the meanings and expectations associated with the role and its performance."²⁸ "Identities are the meanings that individuals hold for themselves—what it means to be who they are," as Burke states.²⁹ This approach is focussed on the individual self, on identities housed in the individual, and on how these manifest themselves in social relations or social structures. Stryker and Burke's approach is most suited to conditions where the individual behaviours of subjects can be carefully analyzed, which is not the case in studying people in antiquity. I will nonetheless occasionally draw on insights from their theories and findings.

Both this interactionist approach to identity and other studies of ethnic identity specifically give attention to the multiple nature of identities among individuals, something that will be important to keep in mind when we turn to multiple affiliations among associations in chapters 6 and 7. Burke is interested in "questions of how multiple identities relate to each other, how they are switched on or off, and, when they are on, how the person manages to maintain congruence between perceptions and standards for each identity."³⁰ For Burke here, identities are "housed" in the individual and activated within certain situations. He notes three different conditions, the second of which is relevant to the discussion in chapters 6 and 7: (1) persons may have multiple role identities within a single group, (2) persons may have similar role identities in more than one group, (3) persons may have different role identities within intersecting groups.³¹

It is important to note that studies of ethnicities and migration make similar observations concerning the "situational" character of social and ethnic identities.³² How one identifies oneself in terms of social, ethnic, and other identities may shift

26. See Stryker and Burke 2000; Stets and Burke 2003.

27. Stets and Burke 2003, 133.

28. Stets and Burke 2003, 134.

29. Burke 2003, 196.

30. Burke 2003, 196–97.

31. Burke 2003, 200–201.

32. See Kaufert 1977; Howard 2000, 381–82; Waters 2000; Verkuyten 2004, 149–181.

from one situation to another, and there is potential for a blending of identities, or hybridity. Rina Benmayor, a historian of migration, stresses that the personal testimony of immigrants speaks “to how im/migrant subjects constantly build, reinvent, synthesize, or even collage identities from multiple sources and resources, often lacing them with deep ambivalence.”³³ Membership in, or affiliation with, multiple groups plays a role in these options for identification. Joseph M. Kaufert notes that studies of “multiple ethnic loyalties have stressed that individuals and groups have an array of alternate identities from which to choose. They will adopt—or be perceived by others as maintaining—different ethnic identities in different situations.”³⁴ Kaufert also notes the potential for “dissonance” between conflicting identities in different situations.³⁵

The collective and individual perspectives on identity outlined above do share in common certain features, including a recognition of the dynamism, malleability, and multiplicity of identities, as well as the situational nature and development of identities as understood and expressed in particular places and times. In other words, the answers to the questions *Who are we?* or *Who am I* in relation to this group or situation? varied and changed over time despite elements of stability.³⁶ Identities of groups or individuals are negotiated and renegotiated, expressed and reexpressed; they are not static.

Several recent social-scientific studies usefully combine insights from the perspectives outlined above to help explain dynamics of identity in terms of two main, interdependent factors: “internal definitions” within the group and “external definitions” (or “external categorizations”) by contemporary outsiders. This corresponds to ascribed (internal) and attributed (external) identifications. These two factors frame the discussion of identity throughout the chapters in this book, with some chapters concentrating more on the former or on the latter, and others dealing with both of these formative identity factors simultaneously.

Let me briefly explain internal and external definitions here, and then I will expand this explanation in subsequent chapters with case studies of Judeans, Christians, and others in the Greco-Roman world. Richard Jenkins (1994), for instance, who builds on the work of both Barth (1969) and Tajfel (1981), explains how social and ethnic identities are constructed and reconfigured in relation to both internal definitions and external categorizations.³⁷ Internally, members of a group express their identities and formulate what they consider to be the basis of their belonging together as a group, engaging in self-definitions and in the construction of boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

Externally, outsiders categorize and label a particular group or members of a group. This external process of categorization can range from a high level of consensus

33. Benmayor 1994, 15.

34. Kaufert 1977, 126.

35. Kaufert 1977, 127.

36. On the primordial vs. circumstantial debate about ethnicity, which cannot be fully addressed here, see Scott 1990; Verkuyten 2004, 81–90.

37. Cf. Tajfel 1981.

with internal modes of definition (as when an outsider's categories overlap significantly with internal modes of self-definition) to conflictual categorizations (as when outsiders categorize or label members of another group in terms of negative stereotypes). The relational nature of identity formulations and the shifting boundaries between a group and others means that even these negative categorizations or stereotypes of outsiders come to play a role in identity constructions through the process of internalization. Internalization involves the categorized person or group reacting in some way to external categorizations, as I explain in chapters 5 and 8. These interdependent internal definitions and external categorizations occupy the chapters in this volume.

Ethnic Studies and Migration Theory

Closely related to studies of identity, particularly ethnic identity, are social-scientific studies of ethnic groups, minority groups, and migration, including processes of assimilation or acculturation. Ethnic and migration studies have developed into somewhat of a subdiscipline within the social sciences, as reflected in journals such as *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, and *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.³⁸ I have already touched on the ascriptive (rather than primordial) nature of ethnicity as it is understood in the wake of Barth's (1969) anthropological study of ethnic boundaries. Although precise definitions vary within the social-scientific literature, there is a commonly shared use of the term "ethnic group" to describe a group that is perceived by members and, secondarily, by outsiders in particular ways. As Jimmy M. Sanders's survey of the literature points out, there are two common denominators in the social constructions of members and of outsiders that form the basis of many scholarly definitions of ethnic group—the cultural and the geographical:

The first of these elements is usually viewed as a social construction involving insiders and outsiders mutually acknowledging group differences in cultural beliefs and practices. Insiders and outsiders do not necessarily agree over the details of the acknowledged cultural division. . . . The second basic element used to define an ethnic group pertains to geographical origins, and therefore social origins, that are foreign to the host society. While this element usually has an objective basis, it is also partly subjective. The native-born generations of an ethnic group sometimes continue to be identified by outsiders, and in-group members may self-identify, in terms of their foreign origin. The ways in which insiders and outsiders go about characterizing a group, and thereby positioning it and its members in the larger society, are responsive

38. For an overview of this subdiscipline, see Brettell and Hollifield 2000, Banton 2001, and Vertovec 2007.

to the social and historical context within which intergroup interactions take place.³⁹

So an ethnic group is a group that sees itself as sharing certain distinctive cultural characteristics that are associated with a particular geographical origin or homeland. As mentioned earlier, this distinctiveness is usually described by participants in terms of a shared history and ancestry (regardless of whether or not this is objectively the case). The ethnic group is characterized by fictive kinship and participants often interpret these notions of kinship as primordial or inborn.⁴⁰ The existence of an ethnic group is maintained through what Barth and others call “ethnic boundaries” between the group and other groups within society. Ethnic identities are dependent on the everyday interactions among members of the group and between members and other groups. These interactions result in the formulation of notions of “us” and “them.”

The quotation from Sanders also indicates the primary importance of the category ethnic group in studying migration and in studying what I also call “immigrant groups” or “immigrant associations.” The majority of ethnic group studies in the social sciences are focussed on immigrants in a host society or a “diaspora,” as well as the relation of such groups to the homeland.⁴¹

Although related to the concept of ethnic group, it is important to clarify another concept that I employ in a particular way in this study: “cultural minority group” or “cultural minorities.”⁴² This concept is more generic than the specific category ethnic group. I use the term cultural minority group to describe a group that is, numerically, in the minority in a particular context and which has certain cultural customs that are often highlighted as distinctive by both its members and by those outside the group, especially by the “cultural majority” in a particular locale or region. So it is possible to have a cultural minority group that is not an immigrant or ethnic group that shares notions of ancestral kinship (e.g., certain Christian groups in the first two centuries, as I explain below). Still most migrant ethnic groups that settle elsewhere and represent a minority position in terms of certain key cultural practices (e.g., Judeans in the Greek cities of Asia Minor) would also be cultural minority groups.

My use of “minority” in this terminology is in line with that of the British sociologist Michael Banton, for whom a minority is “a category consisting of less than half the number of some named population.”⁴³ Philip Gleason’s (1991) history of the concept “minority” shows how Banton is here avoiding popular, political, and certain sociological definitions (e.g., avoiding Louis Wirth’s definition). These other definitions tend to problematically emphasize experiences of discrimination or prejudice as the main criterion in defining “minority” (even to the point of calling a group that

39. Sanders 2002, 327–328.

40. Cf. Verkuyten 2004, 81–90.

41. On the concept of “diaspora” as it has been developed in this area, see Brubaker 2005.

42. On problems with definitions of “minority,” see Meyers 1984 and, more importantly, Gleason 1991. Cf. Layton-Henry 2001.

43. Banton as cited by Gleason 412. See Banton 1977; Banton 1983, 130–31.