

ETHNICITY, CLASS AND FRIENDSHIP: THE CASE OF ISRAEL*

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Abstract Debates over the forms and levels of ethnic pluralism and the relationship between class and ethnicity in the Israeli Jewish population provide the background of an analysis of friendship networks of four groups of origin, two from the Middle East and two from Europe. It is shown that, whereas only small minorities have homogeneous networks based on country of origin, the broad ethnic division between 'Middle Easterners' and 'Europeans', and the class division between white-collar and blue-collar workers are important bases of friendship. Differences among the eth-class categories in the ethnic heterogeneity/homogeneity of their networks are largely a consequence of the class distribution of Jews of Middle Eastern and European origin in Israeli society.

In his well-known delineation of the dimensions of assimilation, Milton Gordon noted that structural assimilation was 'the keystone of the arch of assimilation'. A minority's interaction with the majority at the primary group level was bound to be accompanied or followed by its assimilation in other dimensions (cultural, marital, identificational, etc.), and this would lead to its disappearance as a separate entity (Gordon 1964). Recent studies of ethnicity have tended to move away from the implicit one-directional emphasis of assimilation and have reconceptualised inter-ethnic relations in terms of boundaries, but the importance of extensive inter-ethnic friendships in the weakening or dissolution of ethnic groups has been reiterated. There have, however, been few studies of the ethnic composition of friendship networks, and most of these have been confined to the United States (Laumann 1973; Cohen 1977; Yancey et al. 1985).

In Israel, as in the United States, ethnic boundaries are more permeable between certain ethnic groups than others. Pluralism is most evident in the divisions between Jews and Arabs; they are distinguished by their religious and national identities and are separated institutionally, residentially, and in their socio-economic distribution (Smootha 1978; Zureik 1979; Lustick 1980). The great majority of Jewish Israelis share a national identity, religion and language, and they express their agreement with the ideology of 'fusion of the exiles'.¹ There are, however, important differences among Jewish groups of origin in their sub-cultures, residential distributions and socio-economic profiles, especially between groups from North Africa and Asia, and those from Europe and America. Cultural differences stem, in part, from the cultural heritages brought by immigrants; in 1984, 41 per cent of Jewish Israelis were born in other countries, and less than 18 per cent had fathers who were born in the country. There is also considerable ethnic stratification: higher white-collar occupations in Israel are filled largely (but not exclusively)

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by Europeans, the majority in manual occupations are of North African or Asian origin with a significant proportion of Europeans, and lower white-collar occupations have a fairly equal ethnic balance (Central Bureau of Statistics 1985a).

Sociologists of Israeli society would no doubt agree that the divisions among Jewish groups from different countries of origin are not as great as the division between Jews and Arabs, but there is very little agreement concerning the existence, forms and levels of ethnic pluralism within the Israeli Jewish population (Smootha 1978, 1984; Swirsky 1981; Ben-Rafael 1982). This disagreement reflects, in part, a lack of consensus over the conceptualisation of ethnicity, but the absence of a core or focal boundary marker, such as colour or religion, and the overlapping but far from consolidated relationship of ethnic origin and socio-economic status has allowed considerable room for disputes over the nature and extensiveness of ethnicity among Israeli Jews.² The analysis of friendship networks in this paper is intended to contribute to a clarification of ethnic boundaries in Israel.³

The debate over the strength of ethnic boundaries among Israeli Jews is complicated by disagreement over the relative importance of boundaries based on the many communities of origin ('Moroccans', 'Yemenites', 'Poles', etc.), or on a broad dichotomy between *Ashkenazim*, Jews from mainly European origin and *edot ha'Mizrach* (communities of the East), Jews from North African and Asian origin. It is often asserted that the *eda* (community of origin) remains far more important as a focus of cultural heritage and identification among Jews from Africa and Asia than for Jews from Europe. Immigrants from the Middle East (understood here to include North Africa) tended to be less secularised than most European immigrants, and in Israel they continued to uphold central elements of their cultural heritage, particularly in the contexts of the family, synagogue and religious festivals (cf. Deshen and Shokeid 1974; Shokeid and Deshen 1982; Weingrod 1985). It has also been found (Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1985) that a far higher proportion of respondents of Middle Eastern origin identified strongly both with the *eda* and with the broader ethnic category (*edot ha'Mizrach*). The specific *eda* (Moroccan or Iraqi) and broader ethnic (*edot ha'Mizrach*) identifications were not alternative identifications but reinforced each other.

Sociologists supporting perspectives emphasising economic inequality rather than cultural factors have argued that the differences among *edot ha'Mizrach* have declined considerably and that there is now only one major ethnic division of Israeli Jews between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*. Smootha (1978) argues that, although cultural pluralism among Israeli Jews has narrowed considerably, there remain clear social or structural divisions, especially in the more intimate areas of social interaction. The most radical formulation of a single ethnic division is presented by Swirski (1981) who argues that the subordinate position of *edot ha'Mizrach* in the ethnic division of labour and their subjection to discrimination by *Ashkenazim* have erased their differences and produced a new social entity. Friendships will be confined, therefore, not so much to country of origin but to continent of origin (Europe/America or Africa/Asia). Weimann (1983) used the small world

method to trace acquaintance networks and concluded that they were dichotomised between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*. It is reasonable to assume that if acquaintances are dominated by the ethnic factor, intimate friends will be even more so.

Weimann noted the inequality between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, but he did not ask (and his data would not enable him to answer) the question of the extent to which the ethnic homogeneity of acquaintances is a consequence of ethnic self-selection or a function of the socio-economic distribution of the categories. Since broad geographical origin and class overlap are but far from identical, it is possible to investigate the relative importance of class and broad geographical origin on friendship networks. In addition to the question of the relative importance of countries of origin and the broad distinction between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, it is possible to pose two further questions. Firstly, are friendships more homogeneous in terms of the broad ethnic distribution or in terms of class? Secondly, what is the relative importance of broad ethnic origin and class in the choice of friends?

A number of possible combinations of the relative homogeneity/heterogeneity of class and ethnic friendships networks may be distinguished. Different perspectives in sociology, and in Israeli sociology in particular, generate conflicting expectations of these possibilities. The first possibility, where friends are heterogeneous in both class and ethnic origin, is a melting-pot, and is close to the position of the 'absorption through modernisation' perspective in Israeli sociology, especially in the 1950s and 1960s (Eisenstadt 1955, 1969). It was expected that the 'Oriental' immigrants from Asia and North Africa would abandon their traditional cultures, acculturate to the 'modernised' or 'westernised' Israeli culture, become distributed throughout the socio-economic hierarchy and institutional sectors of the society, and finally amalgamate with the Jews of European origin.

The second possibility, homogeneous class networks with heterogeneous ethnic networks, is in accord with a classical Marxist perspective: common economic or class interests unite and amalgamate groups who come to see the irrelevance of differences in ethnic origin. This is not a position found among Israeli sociologists who have often cited ethnicity as a major reason for the relative absence of overt or politicised class consciousness in Israel. The unequal distribution of income is similar to that of western societies, but class boundaries appear comparatively diffuse. The distinction between ownership and non-ownership of the means of production is especially muted in Israel because the public sectors account for a larger part of the economy than in other capitalist societies. Of central importance here is the *Histadrut* (The General Federation of Israeli Workers); in addition to its trade union functions, it is a vast industrial, commercial, and financial conglomeration which employs nearly one quarter of the total labour force. With respect to the distinction between blue and white collar, the average income of lower white-collar positions is somewhat higher than skilled blue-collar positions and job security and the possibilities for advancement are greater in white-collar than in blue-collar work, but the overall status distinction is not as important as in

other countries, such as Britain. Israel's 'exceptionalism' with respect to class should not, however, be exaggerated (Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1987), and it is possible that, as the native born replace the immigration generation, class is becoming a more important basis of culture and primary association (cf. Weingrod 1979).

The third possibility, heterogeneous class networks with homogeneous ethnic networks, conforms to a pluralist model: the 'vertical' ethnic distinctions cut through the 'horizontal' divisions of class. Smooha (1978), the major exponent of the pluralist model in Israel, does not ignore class, but his emphasis is on inequality between the ethnic categories. The tendency to conflate ethnic and class divisions is found in a more radical form in Swirski's (1981) emphasis on the ethnic division of labour and relations of dependency. An expectation with respect to social networks would logically conform here to the fourth position: friends are homogeneous in both ethnic origin and class.

Ethnic groups are rarely coterminous with classes and many eth-classes may develop if people choose their friends on the basis of both ethnicity and class (Gordon 1964). Another possibility is that one class is a melting-pot of ethnic groups, while another is divided ethnically. This is likely in immigrant societies when new immigrants wish to retain their traditional culture in ethnic associations and are concentrated in the lower strata and less modernised sectors of the society where ascriptive rather than achievement criteria remain important. The more socially mobile immigrants and their children may have greater opportunities to move into social circles where the veteran population is numerically dominant. A relationship between socio-economic status and de-ethnisation has been taken as evidence to support a melting-pot portrayal of the society (cf. Cohen 1977), but if ethnic groups continue to be disproportionately concentrated in different classes, it is possible that amalgamation will be restricted to the middle class and that eth-classes will remain the rule in the lower stratum.⁴

A former work (Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1986b) on ethnic identification found that, although differences between Middle Eastern and European Israelis in the importance that they attributed to their *eda* and broad ethnic identifications were greater than differences among socio-economic strata within these categories, in all groups of origin investigated there was a significant negative correlation between ethnic identification and socio-economic status. Among Middle Easterners, high socio-economic status operated to reduce otherwise high ethnic identifications, whereas among European groups, low socio-economic status operated to increase otherwise low ethnic identifications. If social networks were congruent with identification, we would expect the lower-class categories to have more homogeneous ethnic networks than the middle class in all origin groups.

It should not be assumed, however, that friendship networks will be congruent with levels of ethnic identification. A largely 'symbolic' ethnic identification with little cultural or political content may have little or no effect on the choice of friends (Gans 1979), and ethnic identification may be higher among those who interact more closely with individuals from outside their

ethnic group. The effect on ethnic identification of interaction with 'others' will depend, in part, on whether those 'others' constitute an ethnic group and whether they emphasise ethnic identification. We already know that the *Ashkenazim*, who constitute the majority of the middle class, reveal lower ethnic identifications than *edot ha'Mizrach*, who constitute the majority of the working class. Thus, to the extent that they interact with 'others' within their class, middle-class *edot ha'Mizrach* will interact with low ethnic identifiers and working-class *Ashkenazim* will interact with high ethnic identifiers.

Another reason why friendship networks may not be congruent with levels of ethnic identification is that the relative opportunities for making friends from the same class and broad ethnic group are greater for some eth-class categories than for others. The general data on Israeli society show that Middle Eastern Israelis in white-collar occupations and European Israelis in blue-collar occupations are demographic minorities in both their classes, where the other broad ethnic category is in the majority, and in their broad ethnic groups, where the other class is in the majority. It may be assumed, therefore, that they have fewer opportunities than white-collar *Ashkenazim* and blue-collar Middle Easterners to have friends similar in both class and broad ethnic origin.

In brief, the socio-economic distribution of the ethnic categories has to be considered when dealing with the relative importance of class and ethnic origin in the choice of friends. If middle-class Middle Easterners and working-class Europeans are found to have more heterogeneous ethnic networks, this would indicate that the levels of ethnic homogeneity are in part a function of the class distribution of the ethnic categories. If, despite their fewer opportunities to find ethnic members in their class, their class networks are no more heterogeneous than the categories in a majority, this would be a further indication that the level of intra-ethnic friendship is a function of class distributions rather than intra-class friendships being a function of ethnic distribution.

Sample and findings

An analysis of data on social networks was collected from interviews in 1982/3 with 826 male residents of Beer Sheva, the largest town in Southern Israel. The town has a population of 110,000, all but one thousand are Jews, one third of European or American origin and two thirds of African or Asian origin. Nearly half of the population was born abroad, and the other half are mainly second generation. For the purposes of our investigation, a disproportionate stratified sample was composed of about equal proportions of four origin categories: Iraqi, Moroccan, Polish and Rumanian. These groups are among the five largest in the Israeli Jewish population: the largest is the Moroccan group who made up 14 per cent (first and second generations together) of the population, followed by the Poles (9 per cent), and then the Russians, Rumanians and Iraqis (8 per cent each). The four groups were chosen for the sample, not mainly because of their size, but because their differences in socio-economic profiles and ethnic status cover almost the entire

distributive range of Israeli Jewish groups: within the broad category of *edot ha'Mizrach*, the socio-economic profile and ethnic status of Moroccans are low compared with the Iraqis; within the broad *Ashkenazi* category, the socio-economic profile and ethnic status of Rumanians are low compared with the Poles. This sampling allowed a more sophisticated analysis than the crude division between Jews from Europe–America and Jews from Africa–Asia that has been the basis of most statistical comparisons in Israel.⁵ The sample was further stratified to obtain a similar distribution of socio-economic status in each group of origin and this enabled us to analyse categories that have largely been ignored in Israeli sociological studies: middle-class Israelis from Asia and North Africa and working-class Israelis of European origin.

In Israel's large towns and cities there is considerable overlap between the socio-economic composition of neighbourhoods and the geographical origin of their population (Klaff 1973). This overlap is especially obvious at the two extremes of the socio-economic scale: the most deprived neighbourhoods are overwhelmingly populated by Jews from Asia and Africa, and the wealthiest areas have a heavy predominance of *Ashkenazim*. There are, however, many middle-class or lower middle-class, or 'comfortable' working-class, neighbourhoods that are heterogeneous with respect to origin (Gonen 1985). Our sample was deliberately taken from relatively heterogeneous neighbourhoods with respect to both countries and continents of origin.⁶ The population of the major middle-class neighbourhood in Beer Sheva is divided in about equal proportions between European–American origin and Asian–African origin. Working-class respondents came from neighbourhoods with approximately two thirds of African–Asian origin and one third of European–American origin. Thus, the make-up of the population allowed for a possible wide choice of friends in terms of their origins. One third of the best friends of our sample lived in the same neighbourhood as respondents and over 80 per cent lived in Beer Sheva.

Respondents were asked to name three men, not including relatives, whom they considered their best friends and then to provide information about their friends' countries of origin and occupations. If a friend was born in Israel, his father's country of birth was noted. Based on this information the relative homogeneity or heterogeneity of friendship networks were analysed in terms of three dimensions: country of origin, a dichotomous ethnic categorisation of *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, and a dichotomous class classification of blue collar and white collar.⁷

The following discussion is divided according to questions posed in the introduction. Comparisons are made of the relative homogeneity/heterogeneity of friendship networks according to country of origin, the dichotomous ethnic categorisation and class. We then examine whether intra-ethnic friendships (within the *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach* categories) are a consequence of the class distribution of the ethnic categories or whether intra-class friendships (within the blue-collar and white-collar categories) are a consequence of the ethnic distribution of the class categories.

Logit analysis (Goodman 1972; Knoke and Burke 1980; Swafford 1980) was adopted to estimate the main effects and interaction effects of country of

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origin (four categories) and social class (a dichotomous variable) on the odds of having at least one out of three best friends from a different country of origin. The first line of Table 1 shows the relative openness in all three network dimensions; the general odds of having at least one close friend from another group are greater than the odds of not having one. However, the general odds of having at least one close friend from a different country of origin are considerably greater than the odds of having at least one close friend from the other broad ethnic category or from the other class.

All four categories of origin tend to form networks outside the *eda* (column 1),⁸ but Moroccans reveal a somewhat greater tendency towards closure.

Table 1
Multiplicative (τ) Parameters for the Effects of Country of Origin (A) and Class (B) on the Odds of Ethnically Heterogeneous and Class Heterogeneous Social Networks (C)

	According to friend's country of origin (N = 720) ¹	According to friend's continent of origin (N = 720) ¹	According to friend's social class (N = 573) ¹
General Odds	7.23	1.52	1.18
<i>Country of Origin</i>			
Morocco	.50*	.54*	1.49*
Iraq	2.14*	1.20	.76
Poland	1.23	1.17	.80
Rumania	.75	1.31*	1.11
<i>Social Class</i>			
White-collar	—	1.22*	.70*
<i>Interaction of Social Class and Country of Origin</i>			
White-collar			
Moroccans	—	1.25	—
Iraqis	—	1.75*	—
Poles	—	.73*	—
Rumanians	—	.63*	—
Blue-collar			
Moroccans	—	.80	—
Iraqis	—	.57*	—
Poles	—	1.78*	—
Rumanians	—	1.23	—
Type of Model	Saturated	[AB][AC]	[AB][AC][BC]

*significant ($\alpha \leq .05$)

¹ reduction of N is due to missing data (lack of information about R's friends).

Moroccan origin reduces the general odds from 7.23 to 3.62. A general distinction between 'ethnic' *edot* from the Middle East and 'non-ethnics' from Europe is not, however, substantiated; the Iraqis reveal the greatest tendency to form networks outside the *eda* ($\gamma = 2.14$), and the Poles and Rumanians fall between the two Middle Eastern groups in this respect. The relative homogeneity of *eda* networks among Moroccans may be attributed in part to the greater number of Moroccans in Beer Sheva, but the greater heterogeneity of the Iraqi networks cannot be explained by population size; the Iraqi networks are more heterogeneous than the two *Ashkenazi* groups, even after the relative proportions in the population are considered.⁹

Social class has neither main effects nor interaction effects on the heterogeneity of networks according to country of origin. It would appear that in many groups, including some from the Middle East, the overall importance of country of origin in friendships has declined to such an extent that there is no longer any relationship between *eda* association and class. The cultural heritage of the *eda* may be 'carried' by the family and *eda* synagogue, but only among a small minority is it likely to be reinforced by best friends.

There is the further question of whether the Israeli Jewish population is amalgamating in a melting-pot of all groups of origin, dividing into two melting-pots of *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, or, a third possibility, becoming a melting-pot in the middle class and remaining divided ethnically in the working class. In fact, the reality is more complex than any of these three models (column 2 in Table 1). Moroccans are the most homogeneous group according to the broad ethnic categorisation and Rumanians are the most heterogeneous (γ values are .54 and 1.31 respectively). However, as with the country of origin pattern, there is not a general division between *edot ha'Mizrach* and *Ashkenazim*; Poles and Iraqis are both intermediate groups and very similar in the levels of their networks' heterogeneity.¹⁰

In contrast to the country of origin pattern, class does have significant effects on the broad ethnic networks: white-collar occupation multiplies the general odds for heterogeneous networks by 1.22. The interaction between class and country of origin reveals, however, that there is no overall distinction, encompassing all groups of origin, between a middle-class melting-pot and an ethnically divided working class. Social class affects differently the relative openness or closure of the two broad ethnic categories. Among Middle Easterners, white-collar occupations increase the tendency to form networks outside the broad ethnic category: the values for white-collar Moroccans and Iraqis are 1.25 and 1.75 respectively.¹¹ Among Europeans the effect of class on the heterogeneity of broad ethnic networks is in the opposite direction: blue-collar occupations increase the tendency of Poles to heterogeneity by 1.78 and of Rumanians by 1.23.

Networks are substantially more homogeneous in terms of the broad ethnic categorisation than in terms of *edot*, but only blue-collar Moroccans and Iraqis include more than fifty per cent whose three best friends are all from their broad category. Blue-collar Moroccans, in particular, have homogeneous networks; about two thirds have all three best friends from *edot ha'Mizrach*. Blue-collar Iraqis have slightly less homogeneous networks, but

the homogeneity of their broad ethnic networks stands out in comparison with the heterogeneity of their specific ethnic networks; only 7 per cent have homogeneous Iraqi networks. These findings give some support to those perspectives that emphasise the division between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, but it should be emphasised that this broad ethnic homogeneity is restricted to blue-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* and that among *Ashkenazim* blue-collar workers have the most heterogeneous networks. Since Middle Easterners constitute the great majority of blue-collar workers in Israel, the importance of inequality for the broad ethnic division is apparent.

Sociologists who have paid attention to class divisions in Israel have usually done so only in so far as they overlap with the broad ethnic division ('the ethnic gap' or 'the ethnic division of labour'). Our data indicate that class should be given greater attention as an independent dimension. For the total sample, the general odds of having one close friend from a different class (1.18) are less than the odds of having one close friend from a different ethnic category (1.52). Social class has a main effect on the odds of heterogeneous class networks (column 3); white-collar occupation increases the class closure (it reduces the general odds, multiplying it by .70). The absence of significant interaction effects between class and ethnic origin indicates that the relative closure of white-collar categories is common to all four groups of origin. Moroccans, however, have the most heterogeneous class networks independent of their social class.

Further evidence of the relative importance of ethnic origin and class is shown in Table 2, which presents the odds in eight categories of respondents (four groups of origin each divided by class) of having class and ethnically heterogeneous networks. Blue-collar Moroccans and Iraqis are the only categories whose broad ethnic networks are more homogeneous than their class networks. Among white-collar Moroccans the odds of class heterogeneous networks are about equal to the odds of their ethnically heterogeneous networks, but among the Iraqi, Polish and Rumanian white-collar categories, the difference in odds is especially great; they tend to combine ethnic openness with class closure. Although the data do not support the existence of a clear class boundary in social relations between blue and white-collar workers,¹² for most categories this distinction is more important than ethnic origin in the composition of friendship networks.

Differences among groups in the heterogeneity of their networks may be a consequence of the size of their populations (Blau 1977), and the relative sizes of the eth-class categories must be taken into account when considering the relative determinants of class and ethnic origin in the choice of friends. In accord with their fewer opportunities to find friends from their ethnic category in their class, the odds of white-collar Middle Easterners and blue-collar Europeans having at least one friend from the other ethnic category are greater than those of the other class categories in their respective ethnic groups. Comparisons of the ethnic networks within the class categories also indicate the relative importance of class; the ethnic networks of blue-collar Europeans are considerably more heterogeneous than blue-collar Middle Easterners, and those of white-collar Iraqis are considerably more

Table 2
Odds of Having at least one Close Friend from the Other Broad Ethnic Category, and the Other Class*

	Different broad ethnic category	Different class
<i>Blue-collar</i>		
Moroccans	.54	2.51
Iraqis	.85	1.18
Poles	2.59	1.35
Rumanians	2.00	1.87
<i>White-collar</i>		
Moroccans	1.25	1.23
Iraqis	3.89	.62
Poles	1.53	.66
Rumanians	1.58	.92

*The odds (Ω) are computed according to the parameters presented in Table 1. The formula for column 1 (saturated model) is:

$$\Omega_{ij} = \tau_{i1} * \tau_{j1} * \tau_{ij1}$$

The formula for column 2 ([AB][AC][BC]) is:

$$\Omega_{ij} = \tau_1 * \tau_{i1} * \tau_{j1}$$

where: i = represents the category of country of origin (A; ranges from 1 to 4); j = represents the category of class (B: dichotomous); 1 = represents the category of the dependent variable which pertains to heterogeneous network.

heterogeneous than white-collar Europeans. White-collar Moroccans have the least heterogeneous ethnic networks of the white-collar categories indicating the greater importance of ethnicity for Moroccans.

Despite the fact that white-collar Moroccans and Iraqis have fewer opportunities to find Middle Easterners in their class, their class networks are less heterogeneous than blue-collar Moroccans and Iraqis. There is also little difference between the levels of class heterogeneity of white-collar Iraqis and white-collar Poles and Rumanians, but the slightly more heterogeneous class networks of white-collar Moroccans is a further indication that the high level of intra-ethnic friendships among Moroccans cannot be reduced to their class distribution. The ethnic factor may also account for the finding that the fewer opportunities of blue-collar *Ashkenazim* to find *Ashkenazi* friends in their class are reflected in the greater heterogeneity of their class networks compared with white-collar *Ashkenazim*. There is, however, no significant difference between the class networks of blue-collar Rumanians and blue-collar Iraqis, and the class networks of blue-collar Moroccans are clearly the most heterogeneous.

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A further test of the relative importance of class and ethnicity in the choice of friends can be made by comparing the percentage of respondents in each category who have networks that are homogeneous in class but heterogeneous in ethnic origin with those that are heterogeneous in class but homogeneous in ethnic origin (Table 3).

Table 3
Percentage of Respondents with Networks in Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Categories

	Same class/ same ethnic	Same class/ different ethnic	Different class/ same ethnic	Different class/ different ethnic	N
<i>Moroccans</i>					
<i>and Iraqis</i>					
Blue-collar	25.4 (49)	14.0 (27)	35.2 (68)	25.4 (49)	193
White-collar	14.3 (13)	30.8 (28)	22.0 (20)	33.0 (30)	91
<i>Poles and</i>					
<i>Rumanians</i>					
Blue-collar	5.5 (7)	28.3 (36)	25.2 (32)	40.9 (52)	127
White-collar	30.2 (49)	29.0 (47)	11.1 (18)	29.6 (48)	162

We have noted that blue-collar *Ashkenazim* and white-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* have fewer opportunities to find friends who are the same as them in both broad ethnic origin and class. This is reflected in the networks of the categories: 14.3 per cent of white-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* and 5.5 per cent of blue-collar *Ashkenazim* have networks that are homogeneous in both class and broad ethnic origin compared with 25.4 per cent of blue-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* and 30.2 per cent of white-collar *Ashkenazim*. The question is whether friends that are not from the respondents' eth-class are chosen more on the basis of ethnicity or class.

Among blue-collar *Ashkenazim* and white-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* the proportional differences between the same class/different ethnic and different class/same ethnic networks are insignificant. White-collar *Ashkenazim* and blue-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* are almost identical in the proportions with eth-class networks, but when the heterogeneous categories are compared, there is a clear difference between them. Among white-collar *Ashkenazim*, networks that are homogeneous in class but heterogeneous in ethnic origin are more than twice as great as those that are heterogeneous in class but homogeneous in ethnic origin. Among blue-collar *edot ha'Mizrach* the opposite is true, and this is especially the case among the Moroccans: whereas nearly half of

blue-collar Moroccans have networks that are homogeneous in ethnic origin but heterogeneous in class, only 10 per cent have networks that are homogeneous in class but heterogeneous in ethnic origin.

Conclusions

Our major findings may be summarised as follows: (1) The friendship networks of the total sample are relatively heterogeneous with regard to all three network dimensions. (2) In all four groups of origin, only small minorities have homogeneous friendship networks based on country of origin. (3) Networks based on the broad division between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach* are substantially more homogeneous, but, with the exception of blue-collar Moroccans and Iraqis, networks based on the blue-collar/white-collar distinction are the most homogeneous. (4) In all three dimensions, there is no overall distinction between Middle Eastern and European Israelis in their levels of network heterogeneity. (5) White-collar respondents have more homogeneous class networks than blue-collar respondents. (6) Blue-collar Middle Easterners have the most homogeneous broad ethnic networks; blue-collar Europeans and white-collar Iraqis have the most heterogeneous broad ethnic networks. (7) Moroccans, especially blue-collar Moroccans, have the most homogeneous ethnic networks and the most heterogeneous class networks. (8) With the exception of the Moroccans, most of the differences among the eight categories in their levels of broad ethnic heterogeneity can be attributed to the overrepresentation of Middle Easterners in blue-collar work and the overrepresentation of Europeans in white-collar work.

These findings do not give unequivocal support to any one perspective in Israeli sociology; most contain some truth, but all have to be substantially modified. Firstly, regarding the importance of the community of origin or *eda*, it is necessary to qualify any general distinction between 'ethnic' *edot ha'Mizrach* and 'non-ethnic' *Ashkenazim*. Although we found in a previous study that this distinction held with respect to identification with the *eda* and the broad ethnic category (Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1985), it does not describe adequately the patterns of friendship networks. There are no majorities with homogeneous *eda* networks in any category, and only among Moroccans does the *eda* retain significance as an important basis of association. Our findings here support the characterisation of pluralism or assimilation as multi-dimensional phenomena (Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1988). More specifically, it is clear that association at primary levels is not necessarily accompanied or closely followed by the disappearance of ethnic identities.

With respect to friendship networks, the broad ethnic division between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach* has by far supplanted the importance of divisions by countries of origin, but substantial qualifications have also to be made to the model of an ethnic dichotomisation within the Israeli Jewish population. Homogeneous broad ethnic networks are found in a majority only in the blue-collar Middle Eastern categories, and these are the only categories with networks that are more homogeneous in terms of broad ethnic

origin than in terms of class. The suggestion that the middle class is an ethnic melting-pot is substantiated with the qualification that the assimilation of white-collar Moroccans is less extensive than that of white-collar Iraqis. However, from the perspective of blue-collar *Ashkenazim*, the working class is also a melting-pot. In fact, the assimilation of blue-collar Poles and Rumanians into *edot ha'Mizrach* is greater than the assimilation of white-collar Moroccans into the *Ashkenazim*.

Even though the predominantly *Ashkenazi* middle class accepts middle-class *edot ha'Mizrach*, and the predominantly *edot ha'Mizrach* working class accepts working-class *Ashkenazim*, it would be an exaggeration to describe the whole society as a melting-pot. This is because the substantial degree of ethnic stratification restricts, and is likely to continue to restrict in the foreseeable future, the overall levels of interaction between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*.

Among Middle Easterners there is a congruence between ethnic identification and friendship networks; the working class have the highest levels of ethnic identification with the *eda* and as *edot ha'Mizrach*, and they have the most homogeneous ethnic networks. Among the Europeans, there is incongruence; the blue collars have higher levels of ethnic identification with their *eda* and as *Ashkenazim* than the white collars, but the blue collars have the most heterogeneous ethnic networks. These findings suggest that levels of ethnic identification are influenced by interaction with 'others'; the ethnic identification of middle-class Middle Easterners is weakened by their interaction with Europeans who have weak ethnic identification, and the ethnic identification of working-class Europeans is strengthened by their interaction with Middle Easterners who have strong ethnic identification.

Whereas friendship networks appear to influence levels of ethnic identification, ethnicity explains little of the pattern of friendship networks; much of the pattern of intra-ethnic friendships is a function of the class distribution of the ethnic categories, and the pattern of intra-class friendships is largely independent from the ethnic distribution of the class categories. The choice of friends is made more frequently on the basis of class rather than ethnicity, and for *Ashkenazim* and white-collar Iraqis, ethnicity appears to have little independent influence. Ethnicity remains a significant factor among blue-collar *edot ha'Mizrach*, especially Moroccan, and, to a lesser extent, among white-collar Moroccans.

The different patterns of Moroccans and Iraqis show the dangers in making generalisations regarding *edot ha'Mizrach*. Iraqis demonstrate a pattern very close to a modified melting-pot model: the middle class assimilate into the predominantly *Ashkenazi* middle class and emphasise class rather than ethnic closure, and the working class retain a high level of ethnic separation from *Ashkenazim*. The Moroccans, white-collar as well as blue-collar, retain a higher degree of ethnic closure, to some extent as an *eda*, but more especially as part of *edot ha'Mizrach*. That they have the most heterogeneous class networks is consistent with their relative ethnic homogeneity.

The difference between Moroccans and Iraqis are likely to be found among other *edot ha'Mizrach*; we would expect groups, such as those from Turkey,

Egypt, Syria and Lebanon to be closer to the Iraqi pattern, and groups, such as those from Tunisia and the Yemen to be closer to the Moroccan pattern. These differences cannot be explained by demographic factors, such as relative numbers and years of immigration, and they are not simply the consequence of the socio-economic profile of the groups; levels of cultural and religious traditionalism are also important (cf. Ayalon, Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1985, 1986a).

If the neighbourhoods in Beer Sheva, from which our sample was taken, presented a representative picture of Israel as a whole, one might conclude that a modified melting-pot model is closer to the truth than the model of an ethnic dichotomy within the Jewish population. The residential distribution of our sample is not atypical, but it is considerably more heterogeneous than in many other neighbourhoods and towns; a significant proportion of Middle Eastern Jews in Israel live in areas such as 'development towns' and deprived neighbourhoods in the major cities, where they constitute the great majority of the population. The evidence from this study suggests that, within relatively ethnically heterogeneous residential areas, there is little ethnic selection and rejection at the interpersonal level. Ethnic pluralism would appear, therefore, to be tied to the unbalanced geographical distribution and substantial residential segregation of different groups of origin (Klaff 1977; Gonen 1985). The causes of the residential pattern of groups of origin are complex and vary from group to group. Yemenite neighbourhoods have persisted despite their socio-economic mobility and differentiation (Berdichevsky 1977; Lewis 1985), but the geographical and residential concentrations of Moroccans may be attributed, in part, to political and administrative policies and decisions regarding the distribution of immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Inbar and Adlar 1977).

Comparing Israel with other societies, neither ethnic nor class boundaries are especially rigid among Israeli Jews; there is considerable 'crossing of the lines' in both respects.¹³ The absence of clear class boundaries is not difficult to understand; Israel is a new society of immigrants that did not develop out of a feudal or estate system and whose recent industrialisation involved high levels of both upward and downward mobility. The absence of rigid ethnic boundaries within the Jewish population is related to the lack of core cultural differences (although important sub-cultural differences are present), and to the dominant ideology of 'fusion of the exiles'. There may be a considerable distance between Israeli ideology and reality, but the majority's unconditional support for the ideology stamps ethnic prejudice or discrimination against other Jews as illegitimate.

There is a rigid ethno-national division in Israel, that between Arabs and Jews, and here Israel demonstrates certain similarities to the United States: a comparatively rigid ethnic line, based in the United States on race and in Israel on religion and national identity, exists together with comparatively permeable ethnic divisions based on origin from many countries and sub-cultural differences. The black-white boundary in the United States and the Arab-Jewish boundary in Israel are more determinant of friendship than class (on the United States, see Jackson and Jackson 1983), but class is more

important than the divisions among white ethnic groups in America (Laumann 1969, 1973) and Jewish groups in Israel. The threefold religious division in the United States of Catholics, Protestants and Jews, and the broad ethnic division in Israel between *Ashkenazim* and *edot ha'Mizrach*, are comparable in importance but, unlike religious pluralism in America, structural ethnic pluralism in Israel is largely a function of class distribution. The importance of class as an independent dimension, and not just as a feature of the 'ethnic gap' or 'ethnic division of labour', requires far more investigation in Israeli society.

Notes

1. As part of our study we asked the question, 'What is your attitude towards *mizug hagalyot* ('fusion of the exiles') and the disappearance of different groups of origin within one people'? The majority of respondents (90 per cent) of both European and Middle Eastern origins indicated either 'positive' (23 per cent) or 'very positive' (67 per cent); very few indicated either a negative or neutral position (for similar findings from an earlier study, see Peres 1969).

2. Somewhat parallel disputes are to be found in the literature on the 'ethnicity' of white ethnic groups in the United States. Compare, for example, Steinberg (1981) and Greeley (1974).

3. Inter-marriage is a clear indicator of a change in ethnic boundaries, and in the United States the increase and extensiveness of inter-marriage among most white ethnic groups probably signals the 'twilight of their ethnicity' (Alba 1984). In Israel marriages between those born in Europe–America and those born in Asia–Africa have increased from 9 per cent in the early 1950s to approximately 20 per cent today. However, from the middle 1970s there has been little change in the 'endogamy index', and it is evident that geographical origins continue to be an important perimeter of marriage. For somewhat different evaluations of the effect of inter-marriage on ethnic integration in Israel, see Peres and Schrift (1979) and Rosen (1982). In a society where the vast majority of the adult population is first or second generation, friendship networks may provide a better indicator of the permeability and future of group boundaries.

4. For a discussion of the relationship of ethnic culture and the urban working class, see Gans (1962) and Yancey et al. (1976). A study of a relatively unassimilated Ukrainian group of the third and fourth generations in Canada found a negative correlation between education and ethnic homogeneity of friends (Borhek 1970), but studies of white ethnic groups in the United States have found no significant relationship (Laumann 1973; Yancey et al. 1985). Cohen (1977) noted that the 'old' ethnic groups in the United States have reached such a degree of assimilation that no relationship with socio-economic status was to be expected. Among the 'new' Catholic immigrant groups he found an inverse relationship between education and in marriage, but even among these groups there was no inverse relationship between education and intra-ethnic friendships.

5. In the country as a whole the first and second generations of African and Asian Jews make up 44 per cent of the Jewish population, the European and American Jews 39 per cent, and third and subsequent generations 18 per cent. Iraqis and Moroccans together constitute 49 per cent of the broad Asian–African category. Poles and Rumanians together constitute 44 per cent of the broad European–American category. In their cultural orientations and socio-economic profiles, Iraqis are similar to groups such as the Egyptians, Syrians, Persians, Turks and Lebanese; Moroccans to Tunisians, Algerians and Libyans; Poles to Russians, Lithuanians and other Baltic groups; and Rumanians to Czechs, Hungarians and Yugoslavs. The Moroccan group is the largest in Beer Sheva; together with Jews from Tangier, its first and second generation constitutes 28 per cent of the total first and second generation population of the city. The next largest are the Algerians–Tunisians (14 per cent) and the Russians (12 per cent). Following them are the Rumanians (10 per cent), Iraqis (7 per cent) and the Poles (4 per cent). The many other groups of origin in Beer Sheva (German, Czech, Bulgarian, Egyptian, Libyan, Indian etc.) are smaller (Central Bureau of Statistics 1985a, 1985b).

6. Lists of appropriate respondents were made up from primary and secondary school records, supplemented in some schools by questionnaires administered to children, that give the

country of origin, years of education, and occupation of parents. Thus, a further perimeter of the sample was that all respondents were fathers of school-age children. If parents were born in Israel, enquiries were made to discover the origin of their parents. All the background details of respondents, including origin, education and occupation, were checked when the questionnaires were administered by our interviewers. Since the sample is not a probability sample, we use tests of significance mainly for the allocation of meaningful relationships and not as an indication of the generalisability of the findings (for a similar approach, see Gold 1969).

7. A division of the sample into two classes (blue and white-collar) was dictated, in part, by the sample size. A breakdown into a greater number of classes or socio-economic strata, together with the fourfold breakdown according to country of origin, produced too few cases in each category for analysis. A fourfold breakdown based on occupational strata was made without the country of origin differentiation in order to look more closely at class networks (see Note 12). To what extent the distinction between blue and white-collar workers represents a genuine break in the social hierarchy in Israel has yet to be investigated. This paper is, in part, an investigation of one facet of that distinction.

8. Only 13.9 per cent of the total sample reported that all three of their best friends were from their country of origin. According to country of origin of respondents: Iraqis, 6.7 per cent; Poles 10.1 per cent; Rumanians, 15.5 per cent; and Moroccans 22.6 per cent.

9. Differences among the four groups of origin regarding their years of primary socialisation in Israel do not account for the variation in their ethnic networks. The percentages of respondents who were born in Israel or who immigrated to Israel before age 14 were 45 per cent of the Rumanians, 59 per cent of Moroccans, 62 per cent of Poles, and 86 per cent of Iraqis. The proportion of marriages of respondents across the broad European/Middle Eastern distinction were as follows: Iraqis 21 per cent, Moroccans 10 per cent, Poles 20 per cent and Rumanians 16 per cent. The correlations between these 'mixed marriages' and heterogeneous networks (in the broad ethnic sense) were not high: Iraqis .33, Moroccans .38, Poles .39 and Rumanians .23. Wife's origin had no major effect on the heterogeneity of networks, but it had an effect interacting with origin of respondents. Among Iraqis and Moroccans marriage to an *Ashkenazi* wife increased the odds of heterogeneous networks, but among Poles and Rumanians marriage to a wife from *edot ha'Mizrach* decreased the odds. Thus, in both types of 'mixed marriages', the tendency was to associate with the *Ashkenazim*, the most prestigious category.

10. An analysis of the odds of broad ethnically heterogeneous networks after controlling for primary socialisation in Israel showed that this additional variable had no significant effect in the Moroccan and Polish groups. The odds among Iraqis decreased to some extent (1.03 compared with 1.20), but the effect of Iraqi origin had no statistical significance. Among Rumanians, control of primary socialisation increased the odds of a heterogeneous broad ethnic network (1.55 compared with 1.31).

11. The interaction of Moroccan origin and class lacks statistical significance, but it is in the same direction as the interaction of class and Iraqi origin which is substantially as well as statistically meaningful.

12. A further socio-economic breakdown of the sample into four categories (blue-collar employees, self-employed, lower white-collar employees, and professional employees) showed the importance of class but the absence of a clear class boundary. Of the employees, 39 per cent of blue collars had homogeneous blue-collar networks, 40 per cent of the lower middle class and 66 per cent of the professionals had homogeneous white-collar networks.

13. The absence of rigid class and ethnic boundaries is, in part, a consequence of class and ethnic differences cross-cutting each other; people from the same ethnic group finding friends across class lines, and people from the same class finding friends across ethnic lines.

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