Stratified patterns of divorce: The intersections between gender, economic resources, and ethnicity in Israel

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Objectives of the study

- To examine relations between major dimensions of social inequality and divorce in Israel.
- Firstly, we examine the effect of household income, couples' educational levels, couples' relative earnings, and ethnicity, on their likelihood of divorce.
- Secondly, we examine the intersections between couples' relative earnings and ethnicity as well as household earnings with respect to likelihood of divorce.

Social inequality and divorce

- Divorce studies point to the ways in which partnership dissolution is part and parcel of the making and shaping of social inequality.

- In some countries, a change has occurred in the social composition of divorce over time, as divorce has become more prevalent among weaker socio-economic groups (e.g., Esping-Andersen 2009; Härkönen & Dronkers 2006).

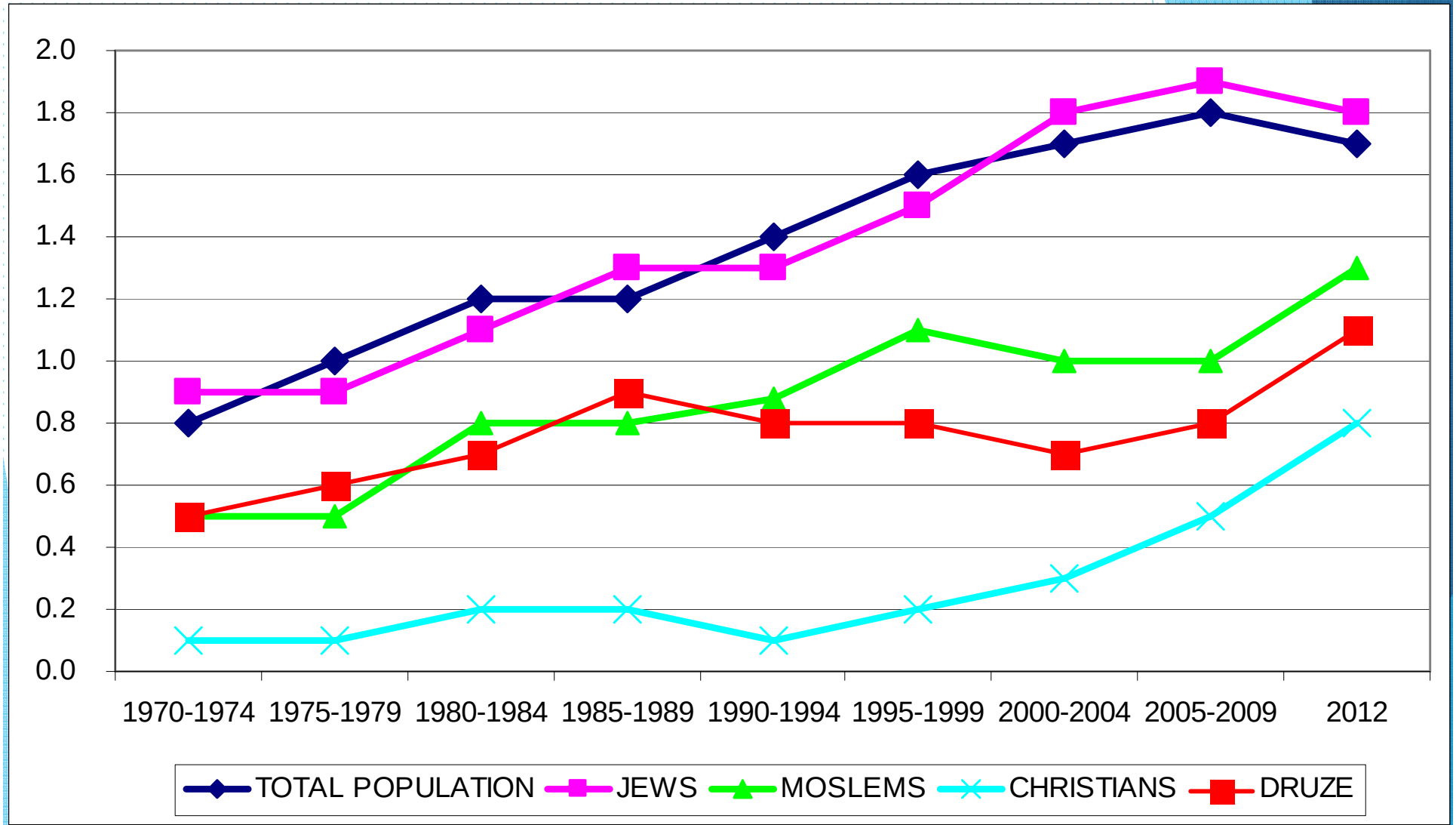
Divorce and the intersections between household economic status, ethnicity and gender

- Although scholarly debate recognizes the importance of inequality's dimensions (e.g. ethnicity, relative earnings) vis-à-vis divorce, one perspective deserves further inquiry – namely, *intersectionality*.
- This perspective suggests that social inequality is comprised of a mosaic of junctions between race, ethnicity, gender, and class.
- According to Amato (2010), although causes of divorce are well researched, little is known about how these play out among various ethnic groups.
- According to Oppenheimer (1997), relative earnings is a contextual concept, i.e., its effect on divorce changes as per households' economic status.

Divorce in the Israeli context

- Rates of divorce doubled from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, reaching a certain level of stabilization in the past decade (ICBS 2013).
- Yet the Israeli academic debate on inequality tends to exclude partnership dissolution from the analysis (for exceptions, see Lewin 2006; Raz-Yurovich 2012).
- The few important studies using Israeli data from the 1950s to the mid-1990s found that divorce is more prevalent among dominant groups, especially with regard to ethnicity and education.

Fig 1. Divorce rates in Israel 1970-2012



SOURCE: STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF ISRAEL, 2014

The Israeli context

- Israel is defined as a family-oriented and pro-natalist society (for example, the total fertility rate in 2012 was 3.05% compared to the OECD average of 1.73%).

- The Jewish population is characterized by relatively high labor force participation rates among women in general and mothers in particular, and a high percentage of women employed full time.

The Israeli context - Dimensions of inequalities

- Since the 1980s there has been a steady rise in **economic inequality between households**, which further intersects with **ethnic** and **gender** boundaries.
- With regard to ethnic inequality, the most prominent gap is between the majority of Jewish citizens and the minority of Israeli-Palestinians, resulting from systemic discrimination.

Among Jews there are further divisions, into mainly three groups:

- **Ashkenazim** – Jews of European background; represent, mostly, the middle and upper classes of Israeli society.
- **Mizrachim** – Jews from Muslim and Arab countries; primarily occupy the lower echelons of Israeli Jewish society.
- **Immigrants from FSU**, who immigrated since 1989.

Research Questions:

1. How do ethnicity, spouses' level of education, total household earnings, and wife's relative earnings affect the likelihood of divorce?
2. To what extent does gender inequality – as measured by wives' relative earnings – interact with total household earnings, educational level, and ethnicity in affecting the likelihood of divorce?

Data and Variables

Data

- **Data source**: The combined Israeli census files for 1995-2008 (from the Central Bureau of Statistics), annual administrative employment records (from the National Insurance Institute), and the Civil Registry of Divorce for each year.
- **Sample:** Women aged 18-65 who were married in 1995 and who defined themselves as heads of households or the head's spouse (n = 16,712). With each woman's file, we merged information on her spouse in 1995.
- From this starting point, we created couple-year files, to which each couple contributed an observation for every year they were married (130,641 observations).

Research Variables

***The dependent variable**:*

- Likelihood of divorce - The likelihood of a couple to divorce at time *t* during 1995-2008
- (1 = Divorce; 0 = Otherwise)

***Independent variables**:*

- **Ethnicity** of each wife and husband was measured by a 7-category variable: Ashkenazim (Europe-Americas, the reference group); Mizrachim (Asia-Africa); immigrants from the FSU prior to 1989; immigrated from the FSU as of 1989; second-generation Israeli Jews; mixed ethnicity; Israeli-Palestinians
- **Couples' ethnic homogamy** (1= yes; 0 = no)

Independent Variables

- **The household's socio-economic status**
  1) Each partner's level of education (reference group = academic education)
  2) Couple's combined level of education (reference group = both have academic education, see Lewin 2006)
  3) Couple's economic status: *dividing all households into tertiles*, based on the sum of husband's and wife's gross annual earnings

- **Relative earnings**
  1) Husband earns more (0-0.39) – the reference category
  2) Equal earnings (0.4-0.59)
  3) Wife earns more (0.6-1)

Research Variables

- **Control variables**

  No. of marriages, marriage duration, no. of children, woman's age, home ownership, age difference between spouses; annual working months (some models also control for wife's *and* husband's *gross annual earnings*)

- All earnings and work month data are time-variant variables, and are lagged by one year. All earnings were adjusted to 1995 NIS using the Consumer Price Index. The other independent variables that appear in the analysis (e.g., ethnicity, education) are based on the 1995 census data.

Findings

Descriptive Results

Fig. 2. % divorced by income tertile and ethnicity, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

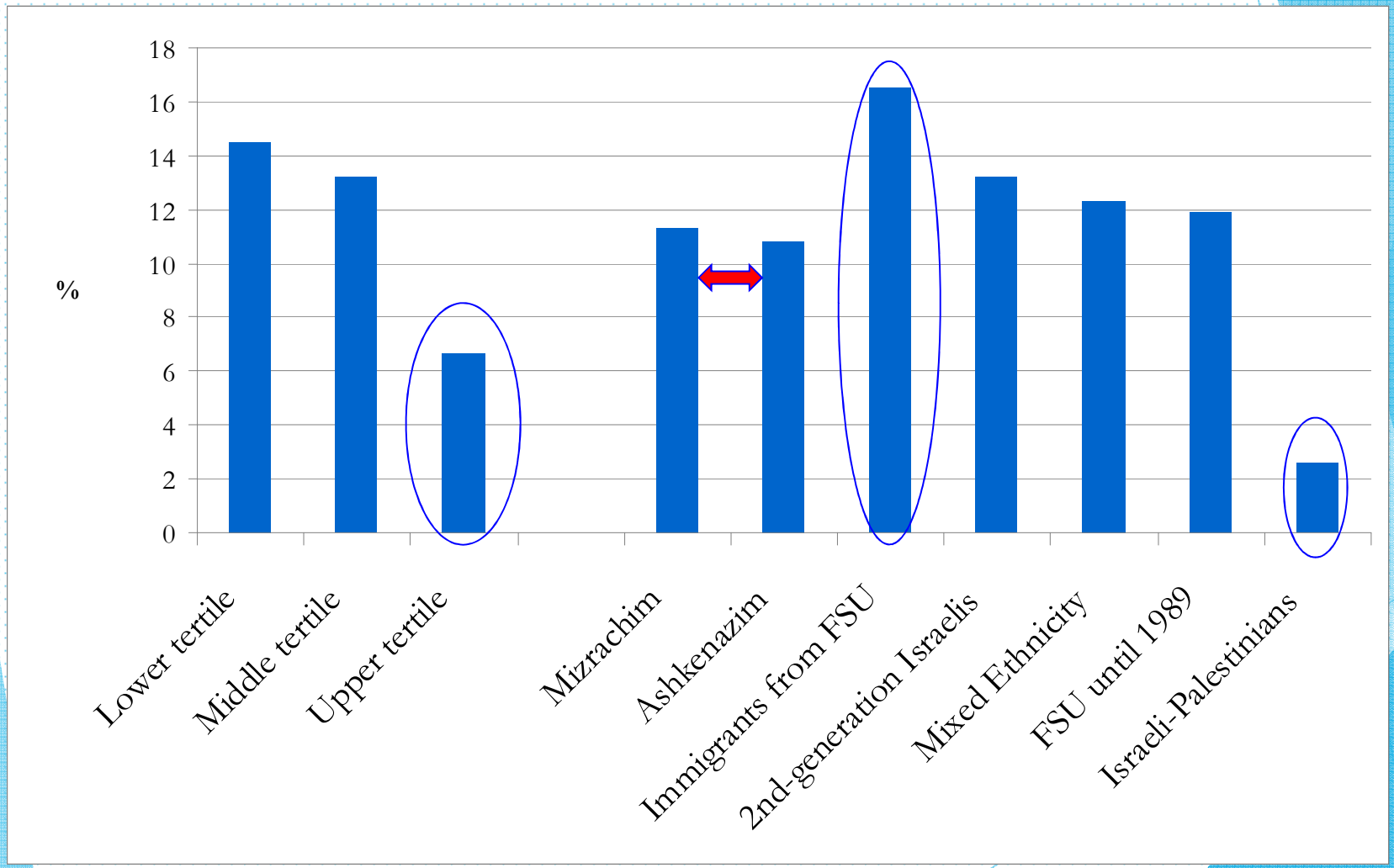
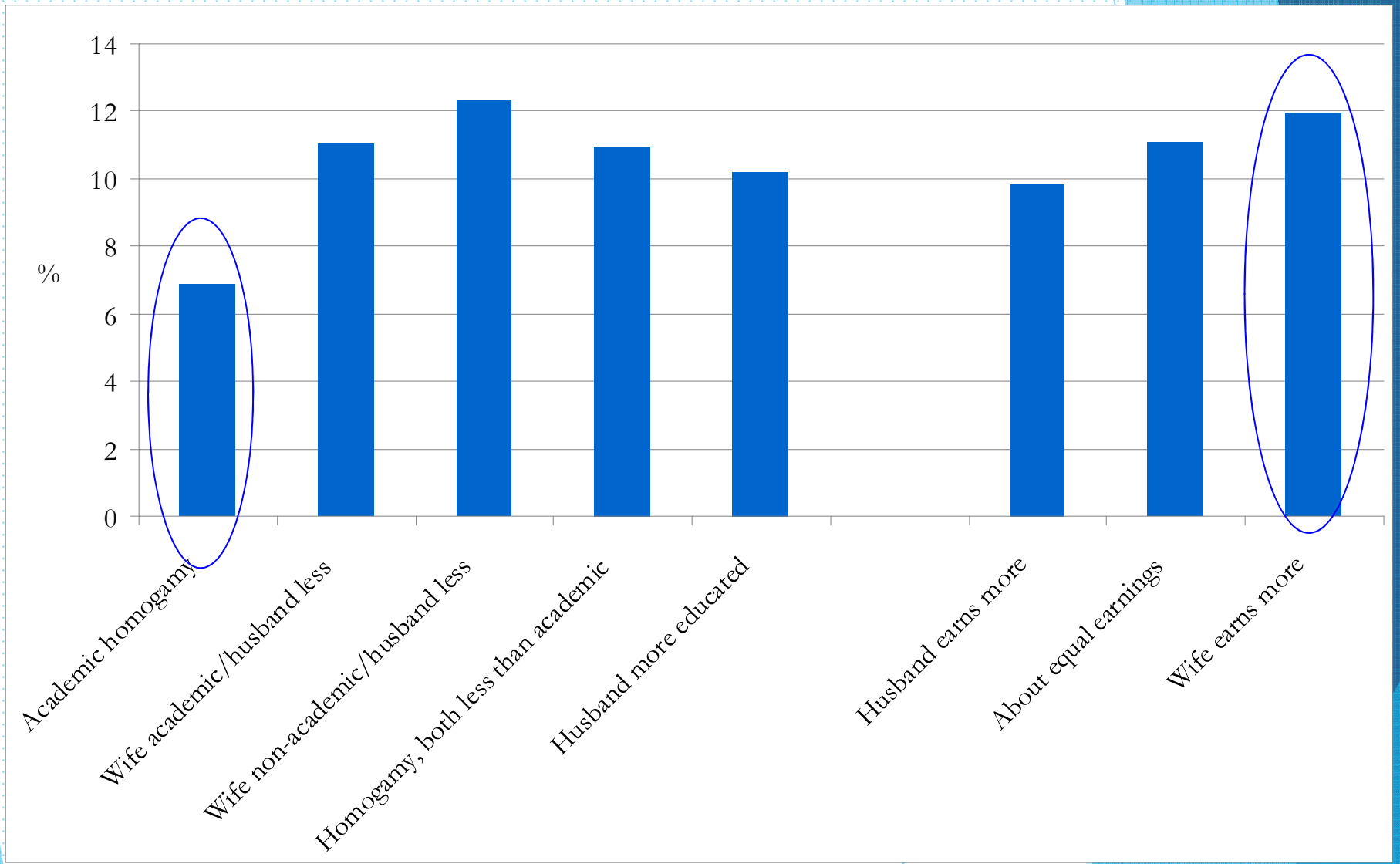


Fig. 3. % divorced by educational level and relative earnings, 1995-2008 Israeli census data



Findings

Multivariate analysis

1. How do ethnicity, spouses' level of education, total household earnings, and wife's relative earnings affect the likelihood of divorce?

Table 1. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

Variable	Coefficients	(S.E.)
Wife's ethnicity (base=Ashkenazim)		
Mizrachim	-0.04	(0.08)
FSU from 1989	0.24	(0.13)
FSU until 1989	-0.001	(0.14)
2nd-generation Israeli	0.21*	(0.09)
Mixed ethnicity	0.08	(0.13)
Israeli-Palestinian	-1.61***	(0.19)
Couple's ethnic homogamy (base=none)	-0.11	(0.06)

$p<0.001$***; $p<0.01$**; $p\leq0.05$* ;

Table 1. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce, 1995-2008 Israeli census data (cont')

Variable	Coefficient	(S.E)
Couple's educational level (base=both academic)		
Wife academic/husband less than academic	0.34**	(0.12)
Wife non-academic/husband less educated	0.69***	(0.11)
Homogamy, both less than academic	0.63***	(0.11)
Husband more educated	0.54***	(0.11)
Income tertiles (base=upper tertile)		
Lower tertile	0.47**	(0.09)
Middle tertile	0.19**	(0.07)
Couple's relative earnings (base= husband earns more)		
About equal earnings	0.13	(0.07)
Wife earns more	0.30**	(0.10)

$p<0.001$***; $p<0.01$**; $p\leq0.05$*

Table 1. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce, 1995-2008 Israeli census data (cont')

Variable	Coefficient	(S.E)
Woman's age	-0.02 **	(0.05)
First marriage (base=second and third)	-0.74***	(0.11)
Couple's age difference (base= > 9 years)	0.29**	(0.11)
Marriage duration	0.01	(0.01)
Number of children	-0.09*	(0.04)
Home ownership (base= no)	-0.26***	(0.06)
Annual working months (lag)		
Wife	0.01	(0.008)
Husband	0.01	(0.009)
Intercept	-4.46***	(0.32)
X^2(df)	347.76 (23)***	
N	130,062	

p<0.001***; p<0.01**; p≤0.05* ; p<0.1^

Findings

Multivariate analysis

2. Does the effect of gender inequality - as measured by relative earnings - change across various social groups?

Table 2. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce by interaction models, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

Variable	Coefficient	(S.E)
Couple's relative earnings (base= husband earns more		
About equal earnings	-0.03	(0.16)
Wife earns more	0.38**	(0.16)
Ethnicity (base= Ashkenazim)		
Mizrachim	-0.06	(0.10)
FSU from 1989	0.20	(0.18)
FSU until 1989	0.14	(0.19)
2nd- generation Israeli	0.08	(0.13)
Mixed ethnicity	0.06	(0.17)
Israeli-Palestinian	-1.60***	(0.26)
Wife's ethnicity * relative earnings		
Mizrachim * equal earnings	0.24	(0.18)
FSU from 1989 * equal earnings	0.33	(0.31)
FSU until 1989 * equal earnings	-0.73	(0.45)
2nd-generation Israeli * equal earnings	0.37	(0.23)
Mixed ethnicity * equal earnings	0.21	(0.31)
Israeli-Palestinian * equal earnings	0.04	(0.44)
Mizrachim * wife earns more	-0.09	(0.17)
FSU from 1989 * wife earns more	-0.01	(0.33)
FSU until 1989 * wife earns more	-0.06	(0.33)
2nd-generation Israeli * wife earns more	0.20	(0.22)
Mixed ethnicity * wife earns more	-0.09	(0.19)
Israeli-Palestinian * wife earns more	0.18	(0.45)
Intercept	-3.64***	(0.29)
Number of observations	130,062	
Wald chi2 (df)	339.31(33) ***	

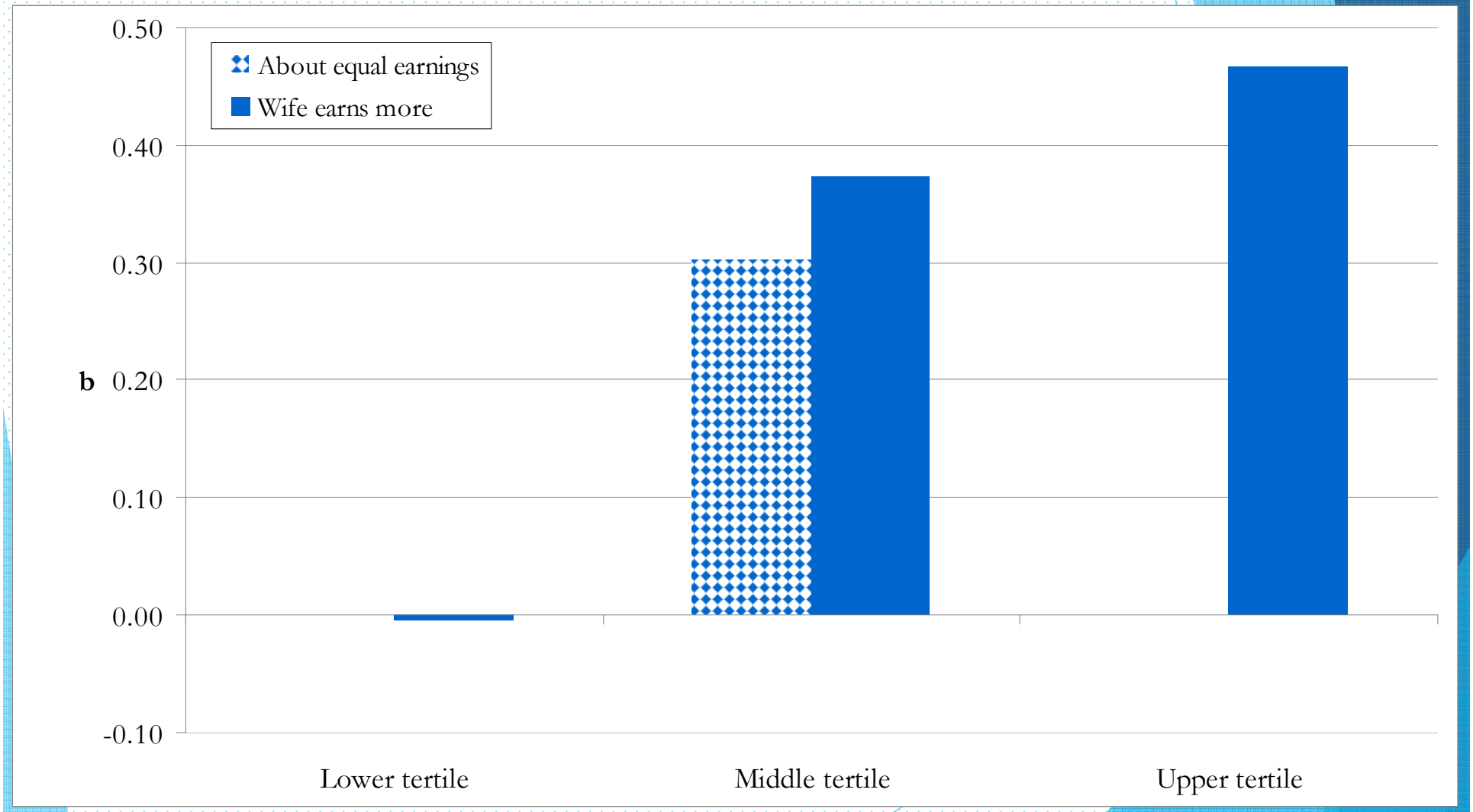
p<0.001***; p<0.01**; p≤0.05*

Table 2. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce by interaction models, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

Variable	Coefficient	(S.E)
Couple's relative earnings (base= husband earns more)		
About equal earnings	0.12	(0.13)
Wife earns more	0.52**	(0.17)
Income class (base=upper tertile)		
Lower tertile	0.61***	(0.11)
Middle tertile	0.15	(0.09)
Interactions: Income class * relative earnings		
Lower tertile * about equal earnings	-0.27	(0.18)
Lower tertile * wife earns more	-0.51**	(0.20)
Middle tertile * about equal earnings	0.19	(0.19)
Middle tertile * wife earns more	-0.15	(0.21)
Intercept	-4.36***	(0.32)
X^2(df)	357.55 (27)***	
N	130,062	

p<0.001***; p<0.01**; p<0.05*

Fig. 4. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce by household income tertiles, 1995-2008 Israeli census data



Conclusions

- Generally, we found that in the time period under study (1995-2008), couples from lower socio-economic position have, on the whole, a higher likelihood of divorce, as in other countries.
- Specifically, we found **lower-income couples** (measured by tertiles and quartiles of household income) to be at higher risk of divorce than are upper-income couples.
- We also found that **academic education** in general, and **academic homogamy** in particular, decrease the likelihood of divorce.

Conclusions

- With regard to ***ethnicity***, we found that the dominant group in Israeli society, Ashkenazim, who had the highest divorce rates in the past, now have a lower or the same divorce rates as underprivileged Jewish groups such as immigrants.
- Unlike previous research on divorce in Israel, our study includes both Jewish and Palestinian couples. Indeed, Israeli-Palestinian couples were found to have the lowest risk of divorce across all models.
- These differences are unrelated to educational and earning inequalities between these groups.

Conclusions

- Regarding ***relative earnings***, the risk of divorce was higher among couples in which the wives outearning their spouses.
- However, relative earnings have a different effect on the likelihood of divorce in different income (or educational) position - a wife who outearns her husband increases the log likelihood of divorce more in the upper and middle tertiles than in the lower tertile, where wives who outearn their spouses may not earn enough to exit the marriage.

Conclusions

- Gender inequality within couples intersects with household's economic and educational resources, but not with ethnic positions.
- In the US, as Raley and Bumpass (2003, 256-7) claim "those have the least resources to overcome the costs of family dissolution are experiencing the highest levels and the most increase in the risk".
- It seems that Israeli society has followed the same trajectory.

Table 3. Percentages and Means (S.D) of Variables Included in the Analyses, Pooled Couple-year file

Variables	Percentage	Mean (S.D.)
Marital status		
% Divorced	10.6%	
Woman's age		34.28 (5.34)
Man's age		37.63 (5.92)
Number of marriages		
First marriage		95.5%
Second and third marriages		4.6%
Couple's age difference (> 9 years)		5.9%
Marriage duration (years)		10.17 (3.31)
Number of children		1.02 (0.94)
Homeownership	62.2%	

Table 3. Percentages and Means (S.D) of variables Included in the Analyses, Pooled Couple-year file (cont.)

Variables	Percentage	Mean (S.D.)
Wife's ethnicity		
Mizrachim	41.8%	
Ashkenazim	19.6%	
FSU from 1989	3.7%	
FSU until 1989	3.9%	
2nd-generation Israeli	11.5%	
Mixed ethnicity	4.8%	
Israeli-Palestinian	14.8%	
Couple's ethnic homogamy	59.3%	
Wife's educational level		
Low education	11%	
High school without matriculation	24.5%	
High school with matriculation	25.9%	
Post-secondary	15.2	
Academic	23.5%	

Table 3. Percentages and Means (S.D) of variables Included in the Analyses, Pooled Couple-year file (cont.)

Variables	Percentage Mean (S.D.)
Husband's educational level	
Low education	18.2%
High school without matriculation	27.6%
High school with matriculation	18.0%
Post-secondary	15.4
Academic	20.8%
Couple's educational level	
Academic homogamy	13.3%
Wife academic/husband less than academic	10.2%
Wife non-academic/husband less educated	25.2%
Homogamy, both less than academic	29.6%
Husband more educated	21.8%

Table 3. Percentages and Means (S.D) of variables Included in the Analyses, Pooled Couple-year file (cont.)

Variables	Percentage	Mean (S.D.)
Couple's relative earnings		
Husband earns more	57.8%	
About equal	23.8%	
Wife earns more	18.4%	
Wife's annual earnings		94,838 (103,052)
Median		74,163
Husband's annual earnings		182,452 (221,082)
Median		138,407
Total household income		280,076 (264,264)
Median		225,206
Wife's annual working months		9.63 (3.93)
Husband's annual working months		9.74 (4.28)
Number of couple-year files	130,641	
Number of cases	16,712	

Table 4. Logistic regression coefficients predicting likelihood of divorce, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
Wife's ethnicity (base=Ashkenazim)	Coefficients	(S.E.)	Coefficients	(S.E.)
Mizrachim	0.12	(0.07)	-0.04	(0.08)
FSU from 1989	0.34**	(0.13)	0.24^	(0.13)
FSU until 1989	0.11	(0.14)	-0.001	(0.14)
2nd-generation Israeli	0.24**	(0.09)	0.21*	(0.09)
Mixed ethnicity	0.17	(0.12)	0.08	(0.13)
Israeli-Palestinian	-1.41***	(0.18)	-1.61***	(0.19)
Couple's ethnic homogamy (base=none)	-0.07	(0.06)	-0.11^	(0.06)

$p<0.001$***; $p<0.01$**; $p\leq0.05$* ; $p<0.1$^

Table 5.Logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood of divorce by couples' income tertiles, 1995-2008 Israeli census data

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variables	**Lower tertile**		**Middle tertile**		**Upper tertile**	
Woman's age	-0.01		0.01		-0.01	
	(0.008)		(0.08)		(0.01)	
First marriage	-0.88	***	-0.74	***	-0.48	*
	(0.16)		(0.20)		(0.24)	
Couple's age difference (base= >9 years)	0.49	***	-0.21		0.45	*
	(0.15)		(0.24)		(0.22)	
Marriage duration	-0.02		0.01		0.05	*
	(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)	
Number of children	-0.02		-0.13	^	-0.15	*
	(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.08)	
Home ownership	-0.37	***	-0.27	**	-0.04	
	(0.09)		(0.10)		(0.11)	

Table 5.Logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood of divorce by couples' income tertiles, 1995-2008 Israeli census data (cont.)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Variables	**Lower tertile**	**Middle tertile**	**Upper tertile**
Ethnicity (base=Ashkenazim)			
Mizrachim	0.06	-0.13	0.01
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
FSU from 1989	0.26	0.15	0.30
	(0.20)	(0.23)	(0.27)
FSU until 1989	0.19	-0.20	-0.09
	(0.21)	(0.27)	(0.29)
2nd-generation Israeli	-0.08	0.30 ^	0.37 *
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Mixed ethnicity	-0.01	0.24	0.01
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.24)
Israeli-Palestinian	-1.50 ***	-1.41 ***	-2.50 *
	(0.25)	(0.34)	(1.00)
Couple's ethnic homogamy	-0.34 ***	-0.03	0.09
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)

Table 5.Logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood of divorce by couples' income tertiles, 1995-2008 Israeli census data (cont.)

Variables	Model 1 Lower tertile	Model 2 Middle tertile	Model 3 Upper tertile
Couple's educational level (base=both academic education)			
Wife academic/husband less than academic	0.55 *	0.20	0.32 ^
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.17)
Wife non-academic/husband less educated	0.58 **	0.94 ***	0.57 ***
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.175)
Homogamy, both less than academic	0.49 *	0.86 ***	0.61 ***
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.16)
Husband more educated	0.44 ^	0.75 **	0.49 **
	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.16)
Wife's annual working months	0.01	0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Husband's annual working months	0.00	0.00	-0.04
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)

Table 5.Logistic regression coefficients predicting the likelihood of divorce by couples' income tertiles, 1995-2008 Israeli census data (cont.)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Variables	**Lower tertile**	**Middle tertile**	**Upper tertile**
Couple's relative earnings (base= husband earns more)			
About equal earnings	-0.15	0.30 **	0.14
	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.13)
Wife earns more	-0.01	0.37 *	0.47 *
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Intercept	-3.23 ***	-4.86 ***	-3.88 ***
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.65)
Number of observations	41,658	43,368	45,036
Wald chi^2 (df)	187.44 (21)	118.32 (21)	68.91 (21)
Prob> chi^2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000