



Education, social integration and minority-majority group intermarriage

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ABSTRACT

This article challenges the well-established finding that persons with higher levels of education are more likely to marry outside their own ethnic group. The empirical research upon which that finding is based has been dominated by studies of groups of either immigrant or low socio-economic status. We revisit the question by examining census of population data on two minorities – Protestants in the Republic of Ireland and the Swedish-speaking Finns – which are indigenous, traditionally of high socio-economic status and have strong communal institutions. For this type of minority, we reject the hypothesis that persons with higher levels of education are more likely to form intermarriages. We explain our finding in terms of the association between level of education and social integration into the minority sub-culture. Our findings also provide insights into the process whereby after national independence the high socio-economic status of formerly politically dominant minorities is maintained.

KEY WORDS

education / ethnicity / Finland / intermarriage / Ireland / minority

Intermarriage refers to marriage between persons of different social groups such as different ethnic or religious groups. It is a well-established finding that persons with higher levels of education are more likely to enter intermarriages (for example, Besanceney, 1965; Christiansen and Barber, 1967; Hendrickx, 1994; Lehrer, 1998; Stevens and Schoen, 1988). This relationship

between education and intermarriage can be understood in terms of preference and opportunity. The usual explanation is that higher education promotes liberal attitudes in terms of greater tolerance for partners of other groups and lower in-group marriage preferences (Hendrikx, 1994). This disposition may be increased directly through contacts with persons of other groups at institutions of education or indirectly through the content of the education to which the individual is exposed.

It is recognized that underlying the opportunities for inter-group contact and intermarriage is the relative availability of partners from within and outside a particular group. According to Goldscheider (1986) and Stevens and Schoen (1988), among the higher educated there is more interaction among persons of different backgrounds, and therefore greater potential for intermarriage. Goldscheider also refers to the greater autonomy of the higher educated from the constraints of family and community of origin. Participation in higher levels of education may involve greater geographical mobility and this undercuts the ability of the family to supervise an offspring's premarital choices (Lieberson and Waters, 1988). Availability can also be seen as being strongly affected by the structure of the population. For example, where a group is small the availability of mates from one's own group is reduced. Likewise, where members of a group are geographically scattered the availability of mates may be adversely affected (Blau, 1994).

In our article we challenge the conventional wisdom that persons with higher levels of education are more likely to be intermarried. We stress the need to take into account not just the opportunities inherent in the population structure, but the social organization of groups which affects the extent of contact individuals have with persons of their own and other groups. Furthermore, very few studies investigate under what circumstances mate selection actually takes place. In one such study Bozon and Heran (1989) illustrated that in France there were clear differences between the social groups with respect to the places the spouses meet. Among the lower social classes, public places in a broad sense (public festivals, dances, shopping centres, public transport, etc.) seem to be the most successful meeting places. Members of the higher classes, on the other hand, tend to meet their spouses in places with limited access, such as societies, school or university, work. Since the composition of the population differs between different social venues this will have an effect on the mate selection. We think that in order to increase our understanding of education and marriage, we must go more deeply into the marriage market and discuss how opportunities differ by level of education.

Our starting point is to note that the empirical research on education and intermarriage has been dominated by studies of groups of immigrants or groups with low socio-economic status. However, not all minority groups need be immigrants or under-privileged. There also exist groups that are indigenous, and that traditionally are of high socio-economic status and have strong communal institutions. For populations of this kind we doubt the conventional view on the link between education and intermarriage. On the contrary, the

milieu of mate selection for such groups may be such that the opportunities for own group contact may be considerably increased with higher levels of education.

We are particularly interested in educational institutions, and related adult organizations, as a bulwark against intermarriage. For ethnic minorities generally, the availability of communal institutions would appear to increase marital endogamy (Caulfield and Bhat, 1981). Schools may be particularly important. Hornsby-Smith (1987) emphasizes the importance of religious socialization in separate schools as part of the process whereby the Catholic minority in Britain maintained their distinctiveness and endogamy. Indigenous minorities, and especially those of high socio-economic status, are more likely to have developed the communal institutions, such as institutions of higher education, which can facilitate endogamy. Furthermore, high status minorities are likely to have established social activities for their middle class, which may facilitate homogamous mate selection for their higher educated members. The mechanism affecting intermarriage is envisaged to be social integration. This leads to the alternative hypothesis that the rate of intermarriage will be lower for minority group members with higher rather than lower levels of education. We will test this hypothesis for the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland and the minority in Finland whose mother tongue is Swedish (also known as the Swedish-speaking minority). Our two minorities in western and northern Europe were historically privileged in the context of the 19th century British and Russian empires respectively, although they have received far less attention than the formerly dominant minorities of Eastern Europe such as the Germans and the Russians (see for example, Brubaker, 1995).

An examination of groups with high socio-economic status also allows us to consider a wider issue of the process whereby the high socio-economic status of formerly politically dominant minorities is maintained. Merton (1941) proposed that endogamy can serve to maintain social prerogatives within a group helping to prevent the diffusion of preferred status and supporting the social structure by helping to fix social distances between groups. Since national independence in Finland and in Ireland, the formerly politically dominant minorities (Swedish-speakers and Protestants respectively) have been apparently remarkably successful in maintaining their relatively high socio-economic position. Their ability to do so may be related to differences within the minority group in the rates of intermarriage depending on a person’s level of education and class and we intend to investigate this. If it is the lesser educated and lower social class persons of a minority group who are more likely to enter into intermarriages, the assimilation of these persons into the majority group in the society could over time serve to maintain the high socio-economic profile of the remaining members of the minority group.

In the rest of this article we first propose to examine our claim that the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland and the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland are comparable. Then we describe the census of population data which we use to test our hypothesis. We present findings on the rates of

intermarriage by level of education and on the situations where partners meet, followed by a discussion of the social context of mate selection.

The Comparability of Protestants in the Republic of Ireland and the Swedish-speaking Minority in Finland

Our two minorities are comparable in terms of being understood as ethnic minorities, being historically dominant, having strong educational and social organizations and having a similar demographic situation. Smith (1989: 344) refers to ethnic groups as comprising a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, a link with a historic territory or homeland, shared memories and cultural elements and a measure of solidarity. Both the Protestants in the Republic of Ireland and the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland can to a large degree be viewed in these terms. It is not so important that our Irish Protestants are a religious-based community and that the Swedish-speakers are a linguistically defined community. The important factor is not what people have in common (religion, language) but rather that they distinguish themselves from the majority in their society and have opportunities for contact with other members of the ethnic group.

Protestants in the Republic of Ireland (also known as the Southern Irish Protestants) are part of the larger Protestant population on the whole island of Ireland. Their historical origins lie in waves of colonial plantation from Britain, most notably in the 16th and 17th centuries. In these centuries, the English government seized the lands held by the rebellious Gaelic Catholic Irish and planted them with Protestant settlers loyal to the Protestant English Crown. A strand in Irish history since the Reformation has been religious group conflict which perpetuated the distinction between the Catholic majority and Protestant minority populations. However, since the partition of the island in 1921, Catholic-Protestant relations have been non-violent in the Republic of Ireland. Although the Southern Irish Protestants traditionally saw Britain as their historic homeland, since Irish independence from Britain they have gradually ceased to see Britain in this way. Although usually referred to as a religious minority, a number of researchers have treated them as an ethnic minority (for example, Hayes and Brewer, 1997). Although their political dominance ended with Irish independence in 1922, they continued to be economically privileged through their over-representation among higher occupational categories. They have also maintained their own communal organizations and prestigious schools (discussed below).

The roots of the community in Finland whose mother tongue is Swedish go far back in history. During several centuries, Finland was an integrated and equal part of the Swedish realm and Swedish was the dominant language of government, business and culture. In 1809, when Finland became a part of the Russian Empire, the Swedish-speaking population was about 15 percent of the total population. In 1917, Finland declared its independence. During the 1920s

and 1930s the attitudes to the language issue sharpened, but the wars against the Soviet Union in 1939–40 and 1941–44 united the Swedish and Finnish speakers of the Finnish nation. It was not until the end of the 19th century that the Finnish language achieved equal status with Swedish. According to the Constitution Act of 1919 Finnish and Swedish have equal status as official languages.

We use the terms Swedish mother tongue and Swedish-speaking synonymously (likewise Finnish mother tongue and Finnish-speaking). In Finland, all persons are required in the census of population to register uniquely as either a Finnish-speaker or a Swedish-speaker and people readily identify themselves, and are identified by others as either one or the other, even if they have some ability in the other language. Indeed there are very few cases where an individual of one linguistic group declares that he/she has switched to the other linguistic group. Bilingualism as a category does not officially exist in the central population register. Furthermore, the ability in the general population to communicate in the other language should not be overestimated. While students learn both languages as school subjects, among the majority whose mother tongue is Finnish, their knowledge of Swedish is often very basic. The minority whose mother tongue is Swedish tend to have a better command of Finnish, which is especially useful in linguistically mixed workplaces or intermarriages, but even when they can communicate in Finnish their mother tongue and official and personal identification will remain as Swedish-speaking. The public administration in Finland provides for the cultural and social needs of both language groups. Thus, for example, there exists two parallel school systems from the elementary level to university level. Given some degree of regional concentration of the linguistic groups and the availability of separate TV stations, print media and social organizations, there is a considerable degree of social separation between the linguistic groups.

Typically the research on immigrant and minority groups of low socio-economic status shows that it is among manual and working-class occupations – occupations requiring lower levels of education – that these groups are over-represented (for example, the Irish in Britain, Mexicans in USA). However, in our study the ethnic minority groups are over-represented among non-manual and middle-class occupations – occupations requiring higher levels of education. For Ireland, we report the occupational distributions of Catholic and Protestant¹ males in 1981. There is a higher percentage of Protestants than Catholics in occupational groups where higher levels of education are normally required: professions (12.3 versus 8.2 percent), administration and managerial (7.7 versus 3.2 percent), commerce and insurance (15.3 versus 9.8 percent). Due to its historical dominance the Swedish-speaking population is over-represented among administrative and clerical employees and clearly under-represented among manual workers. This is true especially for the Helsinki metropolitan area. In 1995, 43 percent of the economically active Swedish-speakers in the metropolitan area were employers or higher officials while the corresponding proportion among the Finnish-speakers was 34 percent. For the

manual workers the proportions were 15 and 25 percent, respectively. Hechter (1978) has argued that not only segmentation in the labour market in the form of an association between ethnic group and occupational specificity, but also hierarchy, in the form of an association between ethnic group and high status occupation, promotes ethnic solidarity and endogamy.

Barth (1969) emphasizes that among the critical features of what constitutes an ethnic group is that such a group makes up a field of communication and interaction and has a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others as constituting a distinguishable category. Gordon (1964) uses the concept of primary groups to refer to personal, informal, intimate contact between persons. Important primary groups include the family, segregated schools, church affiliation and friendship cliques. Gordon sees primary groups within the ethnic group as part of the social structure of that ethnic group and that they serve to maintain group difference. Intra-group interaction is identifiable in the separate organization along communal lines of much of the social life of the Irish Protestants and the Swedish-speakers in Finland. A key part of this is own-group schooling.

In Ireland, both the Protestant and Catholic churches own and manage primary and second-level schools, with state support, which most of their members attend. There are small Protestant-managed teacher training and nursing colleges in Dublin. One university, Trinity College, Dublin, has traditionally attracted Protestant third-level students. Protestants were a majority of the students there in the 1950s and early 1960s (Bowen, 1983). The Swedish-speaking minority also have their own schools, with all teaching given in Swedish, from elementary schools up to university level. In Åbo Akademi University all education is given in Swedish, and the University of Helsinki has 25 chairs with Swedish as the language of instruction. There is also a number of specialist Swedish vocational training institutions.

The central communal organization of the Protestant community in Ireland is the parish church. About half of adult Protestants are thought to still attend church regularly. Some social activities are attached to the Protestant churches and schools at local level. The socializing of Protestants through their participation in certain sports is especially noteworthy. Protestant schools specialize in those sports that were traditionally associated with Britain – rugby union, hockey and cricket. Many adult Protestants continue this connection. While at adult level the great majority of participants in the above sports and sports clubs are now Catholic, the Protestant over-representation continues. Communal activities are especially strong in Dublin given the relatively large numbers of Protestants, the presence of many schools and the ease of transport in an urban environment.

The institutional support of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland has also traditionally been strong (Liebkind et al. 1995). In addition to the school system there is also a diocese for all the Swedish-language parishes in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, to which about 85 percent of the Swedish-speaking population belong. One brigade of the Finnish Army is

Swedish-speaking. There also exist a number of Swedish organizations and societies for politics, culture, sports, agriculture, science, etc., and they constitute an important element of the Swedish-speaking community.

To some extent the demographic experiences of the Irish Protestants and the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland are similar. These minorities have declined both in absolute and relative size, attributed to emigration, low birth rates and intermarriage (Liebkind et al., 1995; Sexton and O’Leary, 1996). Nevertheless, it is inappropriate to make comparisons of marriage formation in Ireland and Finland, at the national level. Within each state there is regional diversity in terms of the socio-economic and demographic situation of the minorities. Furthermore, research on marriage has shown a strong tendency for persons to marry others who live in close proximity to them (Blau and Schwartz, 1984; Finnäs, 2000). The focus on a metropolitan area is appropriate given that it is more meaningful to consider marriage formation in the context of smaller geographical units than the whole country.

In Ireland, we can distinguish between the Protestants of Dublin and its hinterland (urban, predominantly middle class, numerous in terms of absolute numbers), the northern border Protestants of Ulster (rural, farming, a relatively large local minority in percentage terms) and the scattered Protestant communities in the rest of the country (rural, farming, small in absolute and percentage terms). In Finland, we can distinguish between different regions with great variations with respect to both the language composition, urbanization and occupational character. The most appropriate comparison of the minorities seems to be between marriage formation in Dublin and the metropolitan area around the capital of Helsinki.

Our Dublin region refers to the Dublin county area and is essentially made up of the city of Dublin and its suburbs. The Protestant population in Dublin in 1991 was 32,937 (down from about 64,000 in 1926) amounting to a 3 percent minority. Dublin county can be seen as a marriage market given that statistics on area of residence of brides and grooms prior to the marriage ceremony show that a large majority of brides resident in Dublin got married to grooms who were also resident there (Report on Vital Statistics, 1990). As regards intermarriage, by the 1980s, about half the married native-born Dublin Protestants were intermarrying with Catholics.

In the metropolitan area of Helsinki (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen) the number of Swedish speakers in 1998 was 65,778 (down from 87,700 in 1950). The total population in the metropolitan area was almost 1 million, which means that the Swedish speakers were only 7 percent in that area. To illustrate that this area can be considered as a local marriage market we can mention that of all the persons from this region who entered a new union in 1993–95 more than 90 percent had a partner from the same region and also settled there. About two-thirds of the Swedish-speakers entered intermarriages or consensual unions with Finnish-speakers (Finnäs, 2000).

Giles et al. (1977: 308) sum up that there are at least three kinds of variables supporting the overall vitality of a group – demographic variables such as

the age profile, status variables such as class and variables of institutional support. In terms of each of these three kinds of variables we think that the Dublin Protestants and the Swedish-speaking minority in Helsinki are remarkably similar.

Data

The data used to test our hypothesis are from the censuses of population. In Ireland the census was held in 1991 and in Finland in 1990. One big advantage with census data is that they provide information on the whole population, which is essential when studying relatively small minorities. These data have the important advantage that they identify the defining characteristics of interest to us, of each person in a household, and in this way intermarriages can be identified. In the Irish census, the question on religion is an open question, but 98 percent of the population choose to complete it. Christians distinguish among themselves according to denomination and we have aggregated the Protestant denominations into a single Protestant category.² In the Finnish census the information about language was taken from the central population register kept by the Population Register Centre. In this register all individuals must declare a unique mother tongue, that is, either Swedish-speaking or Finnish-speaking (Finnäs, 1994).

In both cases we have confined our examination to younger couples, that is, where the wives are aged 25–34. Published details of age of couples at marriage in Ireland show that on average brides are two years younger than their husbands (Report on Vital Statistics, 1990). Given an average female age at marriage of 27 years, the Irish couples typically married in the late 1970s and 1980s. According to the published statistics, the situation was very similar in Finland in this respect.³ In the Irish case only first marriages are included but not consensual unions. Self-identifying consensual unions are less common in Ireland than in Finland.⁴ For Finland all unions are studied. In the ages studied about one-third of the unions were unmarried couples.

One potential disadvantage of the census data is the hidden prior switching between group of origin and current classification. For religion this can arise due to religious conversion. For language it refers to changing what one declares as one's mother tongue. In the Irish case denominational switching appears to be very low among the population generally and according to comparable survey data is estimated to affect no more than one in seven of recent intermarriages (O'Leary, 1999). In the case of Finland, the number of language shifts are very few. Intermarrying persons of course belong to a 'risk group' but there is no evidence that movement between mother tongue categories has occurred in any more than 1–2 percent of couples.

Immigration is an issue when studying the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland. Adult immigrants from Britain are much more likely to be only nominally 'Protestant' and it has been argued that they should be distin-

guished from the native-born Irish Protestants (O’Leary, 1999, 2000). Therefore, in the Irish case we have confined our study to what we call native-born persons, that is, persons born in the Republic of Ireland. In Finland, the number of immigrants from Sweden, whose mother tongue is Swedish, is very small and so our study is essentially of persons born in Finland.

Our analysis for education will be based on a three-level classification. These levels are lower second level or less, upper second level and third (i.e. higher) level. The lowest category is what is normally used in educational research to represent persons with no more than the compulsory level of education. In Ireland, school attendance is compulsory until age 15 and corresponds to about 11 years or less of schooling (by which time students obtain a Junior Certificate). In Finland, the equivalent category to the lower second level education is the compulsory education which is 9 years, i.e. until age 16. The middle category, which we call upper second level, is the level at which most young people leave second level education, (typically at age 17 or 18 in Ireland, 18 to 19 in Finland). This corresponds to about one to three years of education beyond the compulsory level in Finland (two to three in the Irish system and students obtain a Leaving Certificate). The third category refers to people who have attended third level education and includes both degrees and sub-degree diplomas. This represents about four or more years of education beyond the compulsory level.

Findings on the Rates of Intermarriage by Level of Education

There are a number of different methods to analyse intermarriage behaviour. For our purposes the most straightforward method is to present the simple rates of intermarriage in different groups. The findings are presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

We see in Table 1.1 that on average in Dublin, 48.7 percent of males of the Protestant minority are in intermarriages. For Protestant men with no more than lower second level education, the rate of intermarriage is 61.4 percent. This rate falls to 48 percent for those with upper second level education and to 41.6 percent for those with third level education. A similar pattern prevails for females, although the average percentage in intermarriages is slightly lower at 44.9 percent (Table 1.2).

In Helsinki the rates of intermarriage are somewhat higher (Table 2.1) – 61.7 percent of the Swedish mother tongue males were married to a Finnish mother tongue partner. The differences between the different levels of education are very similar to those in Dublin. For men with no more than lower second level education, the rate of intermarriage is 82 percent and the rate falls to 66.9 percent for those with upper second level education and to 46.3 percent for those with third level education. A similar pattern prevails for females, while the average percentage in intermarriages is slightly lower at 55.5 percent (Table

Table 1.1 Unions in Dublin (1991) by Religion and Level of Education of the Husband (females aged 25–34)

Education	Husband's Religion	Wife's Religion			mixed %
		Catholic	Protestant	total	
Lower second	Catholic	17786	101	17887	0.6
	Protestant	113	71	184	61.4
Upper second	Catholic	8748	102	8850	1.2
	Protestant	117	127	244	48.0
Third	Catholic	6514	104	6618	1.6
	Protestant	127	178	305	41.6
All	Catholic	33048	307	33355	0.9
	Protestant	357	376	733	48.7

Source: Calculated from special tabulations from the Census of Population, 1991
 Note: All other religious categories excluded; both partners born in the Republic of Ireland

Table 1.2 Unions in Dublin (1991) by Religion and Level of Education of the Wife (females aged 25–34)

Education	Wife's Religion	Husband's Religion			mixed %
		Catholic	Protestant	total	
Lower second	Catholic	16304	101	16405	0.6
	Protestant	85	44	129	65.9
Upper second	Catholic	12048	163	12211	1.3
	Protestant	143	176	319	44.8
Third	Catholic	4696	93	4789	1.9
	Protestant	79	156	235	33.6
All	Catholic	33048	357	33405	1.1
	Protestant	307	376	683	44.9

Source: Calculated from special tabulations from the Census of Population, 1991
 Note: All other religious categories excluded; both partners born in the Republic of Ireland

2.2). Based on these simple rates we make the definite conclusion that for these minority groups the tendency to intermarry (with respect to religion and language) decreases with an increasing level of education.

With the exception of Protestant females with the lowest level of education, intermarriages are more common among the males than the females in both

Table 2.1 Unions in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (1990) by Language and Level of Education of the Husband (females aged 25–34)

Education	Husband's language	Wife's language			mixed %
		Finnish	Swedish	total	
Lower second	Finnish	8685	322	9007	3.6
	Swedish	442	97	539	82.0
Upper second	Finnish	21406	688	22094	3.1
	Swedish	747	369	1116	66.9
Third	Finnish	10572	298	10870	2.7
	Swedish	502	582	1084	46.3
All	Finnish	40663	1308	41971	3.1
	Swedish	1691	1048	2739	61.7

Note: All 'other' languages excluded

Table 2.2 Unions in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (1990) by Language and Level of Education of the Wife (females aged 25–34)

Education	Wife's language	Husband's language			mixed %
		Finnish	Swedish	total	
Lower second	Finnish	7915	338	8253	4.1
	Swedish	281	83	364	77.2
Upper second	Finnish	23239	960	24199	4.0
	Swedish	678	434	1112	61.0
Third	Finnish	9509	393	9902	4.0
	Swedish	349	531	880	39.7
All	Finnish	40663	1691	42354	4.0
	Swedish	1308	1048	2356	55.5

Note: All 'other' languages excluded

minority groups. In this connection it is also interesting to note that in Dublin the rate of intermarriage for the Catholics clearly increases with an increasing level of education. In Helsinki the corresponding pattern cannot be seen for the Finnish-speakers. Among males the trend is even in the opposite direction.

As regards the gender differences in intermarriage among our two minority groups, while this is not our main interest or one which our data are designed to test, a brief comment is appropriate. As regards religion, males

compared to females have been found to have lower attendance at their church which may impact on intermarriage. Higher rates of intermarriage for males have in part also been attributed by other commentators to gender differences in autonomy (Goldscheider, 1986). For example, males may have greater freedom from social control by their families than that traditionally allowed to females. This may be of relevance in our situation given that traditionally there has been some resistance to intermarriage especially among these small minority groups who feel numerically threatened.

The Social Context of Mate Selection

To understand the pattern whereby the higher educated members of the minority groups are less likely to be in intermarriages, we propose to look at the social context of mate selection. Most studies on mate selection measure the effect of the marriage market only by comparing the outcome with a theoretical situation where the selection takes place by random. To some extent we might also ascribe some of the differences we found to the composition of the marriage market. From Tables 1 and 2 we can also see that among the married the minority groups have considerably higher proportions of highly educated persons. Among females in Dublin more than one-third of the Protestants have a third level education whereas the corresponding figure for the Catholics is less than 15 percent. Thus, in a strict mathematical sense, the probability for marriage with someone of one's own group is higher among Protestants if the partners have a high level of education. However, the contribution of this must remain very moderate.

We think that in order to understand our results on the variation by education, we must go more deeply into the marriage market and discuss differing opportunities. When discussing the consequences of education on couple formation one must realize that the effect is twofold. On one hand, there may be a direct effect, since for those who participate in third level education, a substantial part of the mate selection takes place in direct connection with their studies. On the other hand, there may also be a more indirect effect through the consequences of the education in terms of work and leisure activities.

We can refer to a few studies that, to some extent, illustrate where the mate selection takes place. In a survey of the Swedish-speaking population in the Helsinki area in 1977, all married respondents were asked where they met their spouses (Table 3). The most common answer was through family friends or in the neighbourhood (30 percent), but the contribution of meeting in an educational setting (school/studies) was 9 percent, and of work was 15 percent.⁵ It is important to realize that since these figures relate to the whole population they in a way underestimate the effect of educational settings, because the level of education of younger people has risen dramatically in recent decades. To illustrate this we can mention that in the 50–60-year-old age category the proportion with a high level of education in Helsinki hardly exceeded one-fifth

whereas it was over one-third for the 30-year-olds. Therefore, the impact of educational settings has probably increased. Furthermore, the category of meeting through school/college may be underestimated as it may only pick up on those mate selections which were directly made in an educational setting. Some of the mate selections reported as having being made at dances or organizations may also be connected with attendance at school/college.

A small survey in 1995 in Dublin also gives some indications of the milieu of mate selection. Of 86 recently married couples in religious intermarriages in Dublin, about 15 percent had met through school/college (mostly college) and about one in five had met explicitly through work. However a good half of the couples reported the category ‘other’, which refers to sports, through friends, dance, etc.⁶

Table 3 Mate Selection Milieu of Married Swedish-speaking Persons in Helsinki (All Ages)

<i>Situations where partners met</i>	%
In school or when studying	9
On or through the job	15
At a dance, coffee house or other public place	23
In an organization, student union or public meeting	11
Through family, friends, or in the neighbourhood	30
Another place	11
No answer	1
(N)	(706)

Source: Survey in Helsinki (1977), personal information by Starck

Note: Based on question ‘Where did you meet your wife or husband for the first time?’

Table 4 Mate Selection Milieu of Religiously Intermarried Couples in Dublin, Recently Married^a

<i>Situations where partners met</i>	%
Through school/college	15
Through work	19
Through church	1
We were neighbours	7
Other ^b	58
Total	100
(N)	(86)

Source: Survey of the InterChurch Marriage Preparation Group, 1995

Note: ^athe wives were typically aged 20–39

^bsee Note 6

Table 5 Linguistic Conditions of Mate Selection Milieu for Married Swedish-speaking Persons in Helsinki

<i>Linguistic conditions of mate selection</i>	<i>Helsinki %</i>
Only Swedish	53
Mostly Swedish but also Finnish	13
As much Swedish as Finnish	8
Mostly Finnish but also Swedish	8
Only Finnish	17
No answer, other language	1
(N)	(706)

Note: Based on question 'What languages were mainly spoken in the environment in which you met your wife or husband?'

The Helsinki study also provided some information about the linguistic milieu at the place of mate selection. From these figures it is quite evident that for persons of the Swedish-speaking minority the selection takes place in situations where marriages with someone of one's own group are promoted as compared to the entire marriage market. In Helsinki 53 percent of the married Swedish-speaking respondents had found their spouses in milieus where Swedish only was spoken, and another 13 percent in Swedish-dominated conditions.

We think that in all main categories of mate selection milieu the conditions favour marriages with someone of one's own minority group accordingly as the level of education increases. Minority group persons in Dublin and Helsinki, who do not remain in school beyond the compulsory school leaving age may miss out on opportunities of making own group social contacts which could continue into adult life. In Dublin, the Protestants are underrepresented in manual and non-professional occupations, which rarely require a higher level of education. Therefore, Protestants with a low level of education are less likely to have contact with other Protestants in their work. Furthermore, in Helsinki those who leave education at an early stage, and belong to the working class, are more often occupied in workplaces dominated by Finnish-speakers. Allardt and Starck (1981) reported that of the Swedish-speakers in the workers category and under the age of 30, as much as half spoke Finnish only with their co-workers. In contrast, for Swedish-speakers who belong to the upper class a much lower proportion of one out of six spoke Finnish only with their co-workers.

The experiences of minority group members after leaving education may depend on the level of retention of childhood and school friends, and on continued participation in leisure time activities where minority group members are over-represented (especially sports for Irish Protestants, cultural activities for

the Swedish-speaking minority). In the city environment unless a minority group individual is organizationally attached to his/her community it may be easy to lose contact with other persons of the minority. This is more likely to be the case than say in the rural or small town environments, where individuals who leave school early may continue to know and be known to other individuals of the minority.

Participation by minority group individuals in third level education in Dublin and Helsinki (even having third level education and being in the cities probably gives access to the social networks) is favourable for meeting other minority group individuals and therefore increases the chances of marrying homogamously. These greater opportunities in Dublin and Helsinki are due to the over-representation of persons of the minority group in third level education and to the existence of minority associated clubs and societies at colleges. In Helsinki the Swedish-speaking population has, in fact, its own educational institutions in most areas of study and at different levels. The existence of minority linked sports clubs and societies at college might provide a mechanism for these minority group individuals actually to meet, thereby increasing the opportunities for marrying within their own group. Even given a growing influx of majority group students into institutions where the minority traditionally predominated, the college environment can still be more conducive to own minority group marriage than the non-college environment such as the workplace.

For persons of the minority group in Dublin and Helsinki, attendance at third level education may also mean that they are less likely to be living away from the family home than their peers who have already entered the workplace. Kalmijn describes how when young people live with their parents, their neighbourhood is to some extent their marriage market and these neighbourhoods are socially segregated (1991). As a result, there is a high probability of their meeting people with similar social backgrounds (Eckland, 1968). For minority group persons in Dublin and Helsinki, going to college and living at home can to some extent prolong parental social control, which may act to inhibit intermarriage. Overall, for minority group members in Dublin and Helsinki, attendance at third level education is likely to be less disruptive of their own group social networks than not going to college.

It is not just in terms of their college and working environments that members of the minority with higher education enjoy an advantage. There also appears to be variation in the provision of, and participation in, leisure activities by level of education. In Dublin, the Protestant churches organize church-related activities, for example musical evenings. However, these are typically highbrow concerts which appeal to the better educated. As regards sports, the Protestant educational institutions and sports clubs have specialized in traditional middle-class British sports such as rugby union, hockey and cricket. These may attract higher educated and middle-class Protestants, but the weaker provision in sports, such as football, with greater appeal to the working-class may mean that working-class Protestants are less likely to remain integrated into the Protestant community.

Liebkind et al. (1995) state that many organizations contribute to the integration and ingroup feeling of the Swedish speaking minority. This includes the Swedish language media. However, aside from the popular media, the institutional entertainment provision may be biased in favour of the tastes of the higher educated. For example, there are four Swedish-speaking theatres but little popular Swedish music. This may have implications for the opportunities of higher, relative to lower educated members of the Swedish-speaking minority, to meet other members of their group. Overall, the Swedish-speaking communal organizations and institutions, with their greater appeal to the higher educated, may favour the integration of higher educated more than lower educated members of the Swedish-speaking minority.

Class

The discussion above raises the wider question of whether there is an implicit class bias in the provision of facilities for members of the minority groups. In Ireland, the school provision is best suited to the demands of the middle classes. Fulton (1982)⁷ in a study in the 1970s noted that Protestant managed schools tend to be 'academic' and that some Protestant parents, especially those of the small town working class, appeared to deliberately choose state vocational (that is, technical, non-academic) schools for their sons although these schools invariably have a large Catholic majority of pupils. In Finland, the urban middle class, with a strong concentration in the Helsinki region, has formed the core of the Swedish People's Party. It has been claimed that it never made any particular efforts to appeal to or specifically to defend the interests of the Swedish-speaking working class (Allardt and Miemois, 1982). This middle-class orientation also appears to be reflected in the provision of communal institutions and leisure activities.

This leads us to the wider issue of the process whereby after national independence the high socio-economic status of formerly politically dominant minorities is maintained. According to Allardt and Miemois (1982) the language division of the 19th century in Finland was strongly related to the class structure of the society. They propose that the defence of Swedish was in fact, though not always in intent, a device by which the boundaries of the upper classes could be maintained and privileges defended. Similarly, in Ireland, Protestantism (in its Anglican form) was the established religion of the state until the late 19th century and served to maintain privileges for its minority. Merton (1941) proposed that endogamy can serve to maintain social prerogatives within a group helping to prevent the diffusion of preferred status and supporting the social structure by helping to fix social distances between groups. This interpretation can be applied to the pattern of intermarriage in Dublin and in Helsinki. Because it is the lesser-educated and lower-social-class members of the minority group who are more likely to intermarry, their assimilation into the majority group could over time serve to maintain the high

socio-economic profile of the remaining members of the minority group. Furthermore, when looking at the language of the children of intermarried parents, we see that the higher the level of education of the Swedish parent, the higher the proportion of children registered as having a Swedish mother tongue (Finnäs, 2000).

Conclusion

For most minorities, the level of education seems to have a ‘liberalizing’ effect on the mating preferences with respect to the characteristics of the partner. At least, the rate of intermarriage increases with an increasing level of education. However, we have found that for the Protestant minority in Dublin and the Swedish-speaking minority in Helsinki the pattern is contrary to this. To explain the pattern we turned our attention to the social context of mate selection, delving more deeply into the marriage market and discussing differing opportunities. Drawing on some survey data on the mate selection milieu we highlight how participation in higher education facilitates contact and marriages with one’s own group, both directly at the institutions of education and indirectly through careers and leisure activities where higher educated members of the minority are over-represented. Indeed we suggested that there may be an implicit class bias in the provision of leisure and educational facilities for members of the minority groups. The experiences of the Irish Protestant and Swedish-speaking populations in the large cities suggest that for these minorities with well-developed education institutions and an over-representation in the professional occupations, having higher level education is a bulwark against intermarriage. This pattern may also help to maintain the relatively high socio-economic status of these formerly politically dominant minorities in the aftermath of national independence.

Notes

- 1 The data is only available for the Church of Ireland, the largest Protestant denomination, and not for all Protestants. The data is only available on a national basis.
- 2 Historically, the divide between the Catholic and Protestant populations in Ireland overshadowed any intra-Protestant differences. In contemporary Irish life Protestants from the three largest denominations – The Church of Ireland, Presbyterians and Methodists – do not refer to marriage between their denominations as intermarriages. They reserve that term for their marriages with Catholics.
- 3 Divorce was not yet available in Ireland in 1991. The Census did not have a category to explicitly identify consensual unions.

- 4 In 1997 figures on the number of cohabiting couples were made available for the first time based on a question included in the 1996 Census of Population. They counted 31,000 cohabiting couples, of which most of the partners were over 30 years of age (*The Irish Times*, 26 July 1997). Given that over half a million couples were counted in the census it appears that self identifying cohabiting couples are still a very small group – about 6 percent of all couples.
- 5 There is no indication that dating agencies were a means of meeting partners. However, by the 1990s the number of dating agencies in many western industrial societies was increasing (Jagger, 1999).
- 6 The ‘other’ category invited the respondent to mention other meeting situations. About half the respondents ticked the ‘other’ category. Unfortunately most provided minimal elaboration, the most typical responses being that they met through a sport (10 per cent), through friends, at a dance or pub, or on holidays.
- 7 Unpublished paper made available by kind permission of the author.

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