

Observations on Age at Marriage in Dublin, related to Social Status and Social Mobility

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THE years since the Second World War have been characterised by a general decline in mean age at marriage in the Western world: people are marrying at earlier ages than was usual in the immediate past. Ireland has proved no exception, for although this country has been (and indeed remains) outstanding in the European context for its high mean age at marriage, available statistics show that Ireland is following the general fashion for younger marriages. A comparison with the relevant figures for Denmark and the Netherlands (selected for comparison because of a certain similarity to Ireland in population size and economic character) shows a decrease, during the years 1959-1967, of roughly two years in mean age at marriage in all three countries. The roughly parallel rate of decrease has of course meant that Ireland has maintained her position as the country with the latest marriages in Europe. Yet, as will be seen (Table 1), Irish mean marriage ages in 1967 were approximating fairly closely to the Danish and Netherlands means of nine years earlier. However, it cannot be said that, in Ireland, the decline in mean age at marriage has been accompanied by a marked change in unanimity of choice among the marrying population. While it is true that Irishmen marrying in 1967 were on the average 2.3 years younger

TABLE 1: *Mean Ages at Marriage: Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands, 1959-1967*

Year	Denmark		Netherlands		Ireland	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
1959	28.0	24.2	28.0	25.1	30.7	26.6
1960	27.8	24.1	27.8	24.9	30.4	26.6
1961	27.5	23.9	27.5	24.7	30.1	26.4
1962	27.2	23.7	27.3	24.4	29.8	26.1
1963	26.9	23.4	27.1	24.3	29.7	26.0
1964	26.7	23.3	27.0	24.1	29.3	25.8
1965	26.3	23.2	26.6	23.8	28.9	25.5
1966	26.1	23.2	26.3	23.7	28.5	25.2
1967	*	*	26.0	23.5	28.4	25.3

*Not available.

Source: *UN Demographic Yearbook*, 20th issue, 1968, Table 27, pp. 526, 530-532.

than their counterparts in 1959 (and the women on average 1.3 years younger), there was little change over this period in dispersion about the mean. In other words, although people were marrying earlier, there was by 1967 little indication that it was becoming more fashionable than before to select certain conventional ages for doing so. A conventional age had always existed (though subject to change); but more were not adhering to it. Among the grooms, dispersion, from 1959 to 1964, remained almost unchanged at 8.4 years, only thereafter showing a slight decline. Among brides even this limited change is barely discernible (Table 2). In some other European countries, however, there was visible, by 1967, a tendency towards the concentration of marriage ages nearer the mean. In slightly more than half the marriages contracted that year in the Netherlands, Denmark, France, England and Wales, and Scotland, the age of the groom lay between 20 and 24 years (Table 3). In Ireland no such marked concentration had occurred, age at marriage for grooms being more widely dispersed.¹

TABLE 2: *Mean Age at Marriage: Dispersion, and Differences Between Mean Ages of Bride and Groom (Ireland)*

Year	Mean Age			Difference (years)	
	Groom	σ	Bride	σ	
1959	30.7	8.4	26.6	6.7	4.1
1960	30.4	8.4	26.6	6.7	3.8
1961	30.1	8.3	26.4	6.8	3.7
1962	29.8	8.3	26.1	6.8	3.7
1963	29.7	8.5	26.0	7.0	3.7
1964	29.3	8.3	25.8	6.8	3.5
1965	28.9	8.0	25.5	6.6	3.4
1966	28.5	7.8	25.2	6.5	3.3
1967	28.4	8.0	25.3	6.6	3.1

Source: *UN Demographic Yearbook*, 20th issue, 1968, Table 27, pp. 530-1.

It appears that, while Ireland may be moving towards a modal age at marriage more in line with a general European pattern, she has not yet achieved it, still retaining a notable preference for later marriages. We are not concerned here with tracing the origins of the Irish pattern of late marriage—this has been the

1. Yet Ireland's minimum legal minimum age for marriage (14 years) is the lowest in Europe with the partial exception of Spain. It is equalled elsewhere only by Swaziland, Cuba, Honduras and six or seven Latin American republics. But Scotland, for example, had in 1967 four times the Irish proportion of grooms aged 15-19.

TABLE 3: *Percentage Distribution of Grooms by Age Group, 1967: Ireland Compared with Selected European Countries*

Age Group	Ireland	Netherlands	Denmark†	France	England and Wales†	Scotland
15-19	3.0	3.8	4.4	3.7	8.7*	11.6*
20-24	33.2	50.4	54.7	53.8	50.2	51.6
25-29	32.6	31.2	23.5	23.4	20.5	20.3
30-34	14.5	6.7	6.9	7.5	7.0	6.2
35-39	7.4	2.6	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.0
40 and over	9.3††	5.3	7.0	7.9	9.9	7.3

†1966.

††Including ages not known (0.4 per cent).

*16-19 years.

Source: *UN Demographic Yearbook*, 20th issue, 1968, Table 27.

subject elsewhere of much expert examination.² We shall be merely analysing data relating age at marriage to social status, and to movement (or social mobility) from one status position to another, among the population of Dublin. In so far as these data reveal significant relationships between the several factors they possess their own inherent interest. But we may go further. To the degree that the existing status structure in Ireland is undergoing change, it may be ultimately possible to foresee future trends in age at marriage. We naturally do not suggest that considerations of social status are unique, or perhaps even dominant, in their influence upon the age at which marriages are contracted; nor can status be regarded as in itself a "pure" factor (at any rate, not in the terms by which we have been obliged to define it). Many matters associated with social status, or forming part of the concept, may be equally or more crucial in influencing a decision to marry, among them the level of income or of education—or, more generally, the prospect of an adequate means of livelihood.³ The status categories

2. Notably, of course by K. H. Connell, *The Population of Ireland, 1750-1845*, Oxford, 1950, and *Irish Peasant Society*, Oxford, 1968. References to the problem may be found in the *Report of the Committee on Emigration and other Population Problems*, Dublin, 1955. C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*, New York, 1937, and A. J. Humphreys, *New Dubliners*, London, 1966, both comment upon it. In Europe the phenomenon of late marriage is not confined to Ireland. J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 82-83, gives figures for a Greek peasant community that suggest a mean age at marriage in the early sixties of 29.7 years for grooms and 26.5 years for brides. These values are close to the Irish means for the same period. Williams also notes a pattern of late marriage among the population of Gosforth: *The Sociology of an English Village*, London, 1956, p. 45.

3. "... men marry late because they cannot 'afford' to marry young: they have to wait until they have a livelihood, a farmer until he acquires land, an apprentice until he finishes his apprenticeship and so on. It is tempting to see in this feature a key to the uniqueness of the European marriage pattern..." J. Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective,' in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, (eds.), *Population in History*, London, 1965, p. 133.

we have employed in the analysis go somewhat beyond the simpler economic and occupational considerations, and include a status (or so-called "social class") ingredient—although we cannot claim to have isolated this, if it can be isolated, from the other factors with which it is always so closely associated.

The data themselves are derived from a sample of male adult residents of Dublin.⁴ It is immediately evident that such a source sets limits to the analysis that can be undertaken. The figures cited above are of marriages occurring in single years. Corresponding figures are beyond the means provided by our sample of 2,540 Dubliners. It follows, therefore, that when, in what follows, we find mean ages at marriage varying in relation to some aspect of social status, we cannot accept such variations entirely at their face value. Since status categories of the population vary somewhat in their composition by age, the values of the means can be influenced accordingly. This arises naturally from the likelihood that, the more remote the date of marriage, the older (as we have seen, for marriages in the years from 1959 onwards) the partners will have been. As we shall see, sampling limitations made control by subject's age possible on the basis of only the broadest of age-groupings. Moreover, in drawing our conclusions, we must bear in mind the source of the sample. There is evidence of a marked urban-rural difference in modal age at marriage—late marriage, as we might expect, being particularly common in the rural, especially the farming, population of the country. Our sample data, therefore, reflect a situation applicable to Ireland generally only to the degree that the Dublin population contains a rural-born contingent whose marriage patterns remain of a rural type. We shall have an opportunity to examine more closely the effect of birthplace.

TABLE 4: *Percentage Distribution of Grooms by Age at Marriage: Ireland (1967) Compared with a Sample of Dublin Male Adults*

<i>Age at Marriage</i>	<i>Ireland† (1967)</i>	<i>Dublin Sample</i>
15-19	3.0	2.1
20-24	33.2	28.3
25-29	32.6	37.2
30-34	14.5	18.9
35-39	7.4	7.9
40 and over	8.9	5.4
Not known	0.4	0.2
Mean Age:	28.4 years	28.0 years
N =	17,788	2,010

† Source: *UN Demographic Yearbook*, 1968, Table 27, p. 530.

4. For a description of this sample see, B. Hutchinson, *Social Status and Inter-generational Social Mobility in Dublin*, Dublin: Economic & Social Research Institute, 1969, pp. 2-4.

The operation of various factors may be seen at work in the overall distribution of age at marriage among the sample of Dublin males when we compare this with the corresponding distribution for Ireland as a whole (1967). Somewhat unexpectedly perhaps, we find the two distributions and their means to be fairly similar. The mean age of marriage in Ireland generally during 1967 may have been somewhat higher than the mean calculated from the sample of all Dublin men (though the statistical significance of this difference is somewhat vitiated by sampling error)—presumably because the former figure is influenced by the rural population. On the other hand, the difference, a small one, largely arises from an incidence of very late marriages (at ages 40 and over) that is greater in Ireland generally than in Dublin. Table 4 shows that, with this exception, the components of the Dublin sample had married at somewhat later ages than their Irish counterparts in 1967. Had the figures referred to the same period such a result would have been a matter for surprise. The national figures refer exclusively to marriages contracted during 1967. Dublin marriages, while some took place in that year, cover an indeterminate period going back to 1918 or earlier. In other words, the expected rural, urban difference is masked by differences in date associated with differences in modal marriage age. The Dublin sample contained a larger proportion of later marriages (compared with the national figures for 1967) because they took place in an earlier year.

For this reason the undifferentiated figures of Table 4 tell us little. Thirty per cent of the male adult population of Dublin were born outside the city, however; and these we might expect to have maintained something of the rural tradition of later marriage, irrespective of their age. But they are also older than natives of Dublin—on an average, five years older; while there are (Table 5) far fewer of them in the youngest, and far more of them in the oldest age groups. Other things being equal, therefore, we may expect the migrant population of Dublin

TABLE 5: *Current Age of Dublin Male Adults: Natives Compared with Immigrants to the City*

Age Group	Dublin born	Born elsewhere
	%	%
21-30	26.4	15.9
31-50	42.6	39.5
Over 50	30.8	44.6
Mean Age	42.5 years	46.5 years
N =	1,743	771

to have married more commonly at an earlier date when later marriages were usual—thus manifesting the combined influence of rural tradition and the conventions of a previous period. Their effect is vividly evident in Table 6. Looking at the male adult population of Dublin as a whole, and leaving aside the question

whether or not they were natives of the city, we see that mean age at marriage increases consistently with the number of the groom's rural-born relatives.⁵ The

TABLE 6: *Mean Age at Marriage of Dublin Males, Related to Degree of Rural Origin*

<i>Number of Rural-born Relatives</i>	<i>Mean Age at Marriage (years)</i>	<i>N</i>
None or 1	26.7	1,109
2 or 3	28.8	391
4 or 5	30.9	180
6	31.3	164
All Informants	28.0	2,010*

*The grand total is greater than the sum of the partial totals since the latter exclude subjects for whom information on birthplace, etc., is incomplete.

same phenomenon is viewed from a different angle in Table 7, where marriage age-groups are related to number of rural-born relatives. From this table it is evident, for example, that among men marrying between the ages 16-25, three-quarters had no rural relatives, or only one; but that, in contrast, nearly two-thirds of the men marrying later (at ages 36 and above) had more numerous rural

TABLE 7: *Number of Rural-Born Relatives of Grooms Related to Ages at Marriage*

<i>Number of Rural-Born</i>	<i>Age at Marriage</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>16-25</i>	<i>26-30</i>	<i>31-35</i>	<i>36+</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
None or 1	74.7	57.5	43.8	38.2	60.1
2 or 3	16.6	24.2	24.1	24.5	21.2
4 or 5	5.2	10.1	13.9	19.6	9.8
6	3.6	8.2	18.2	17.6	8.9
N =	730	636	274	204	1,844

5. In ascertaining a subject's "degree of rural origin" we took into account his own birthplace, together with that of his wife, his parents, and his parents-in-law. For the purposes of this study he was regarded as entirely rural in origin if all six were rural-born; and as entirely urban if there were none. "Rural" birthplaces were those described by subjects as a "village", or "the country".

connections: nearly a fifth of these men, rural-born themselves, had relatives all of whom were of rural origin. These are the extreme cases drawn from a tabulation that shows, in its general tendency, that in Dublin the younger a man was when he married, the fewer rural connections he was likely to have.

The matter is not a simple one, however. The blurring of a possibly direct relationship between place of birth and age at marriage that was caused (among the sample survey results we are discussing) by differences in the periods when they occurred, has already been mentioned. Further complications arise when we begin to consider the effect of social status. We have shown elsewhere that, in Dublin, a man's current social status is not independent of his birthplace.⁶ Migrants to Dublin (including those born in other cities) tend to be of a higher average social status than their Dublin-born colleagues. Among the rural-born, when these are separated out, this difference disappears: men born on farms or in villages do not differ significantly in average social status from the Dublin-born mean. Nevertheless, it remains true that four-fifths of the lowest status categories in the city are occupied by Dublin natives; and these are correspondingly under-represented at the higher levels of the status hierarchy. We know from earlier studies based upon national samples (thus partially avoiding the problems arising from an exclusively urban sample) that mean age at marriage bears some relationship to social status—upper status categories, for example, tending to marry later than lower categories.⁷ Something of the same tendency is visible (Table 8) among the men who composed our sample. We have calculated mean ages at marriage according to three sets of status category: the status of the groom's father at the time of his son's marriage; the status of the father, and that of the groom, at the period the latter was interviewed. It is to be expected that, of these, the first would prove the most crucial. That is to say, if mean age at marriage is

TABLE 8: *Mean Age at Marriage of Dublin Males, Related to Social Status of the Groom's Father Now, and at the Time of the Marriage, and to the Groom's Present Social Status*

Status Category	Of Father at Son's Marriage	Of Father Now	Of Groom Now
1	27·8	29·4	29·4
2	28·4	28·7	29·3
3	28·7	30·1	29·2
4	27·8	28·6	28·7
	28·1	29·1	29·0
5	27·4	28·3	27·4
6	26·9	27·1	27·0
7	25·9	26·4	27·7
	26·3	27·5	27·4

6. B. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9.

7. Cf. for example, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, "Social mobility and age at marriage," in D. V. Glass (ed.) *Social Mobility in Britain*, London, 1954, pp. 339-343.

related to social status, it seems more likely to be so associated with a status condition contemporary with the event in question, than with a status at that time veiled in the future. In Ireland, as elsewhere, status is not immutable (only 40 per cent of our subjects had remained of the same status as their fathers), so that inherited status is by no means an infallible guide to the future; equally, therefore, current status is not a dependable guide to the past. Similarly, a young man's social status, his habits, friendships and the like are likely to be heavily influenced by his inherited status rather than by the individual status he is in process of acquiring. Age at marriage, if it is influenced by social status, is therefore likely to be most affected by contemporary paternal status. Table 8 bears out this supposition. However, it does so only marginally. Age at marriage falls with decreasing social status whichever of the three sets we look at; and the analysis by father's contemporary status does little more than point this tendency slightly more sharply. Differences between the means are not large, even when they are persistent and statistically significant; and they do not suggest, for example, that by themselves they can be expected to affect fertility to a notable degree.

There are many people, however, who in the course of their lives change their social status for a higher or a lower one than the status they inherited from their fathers. As we have said, in our sample of Dublin male adults only two-fifths had retained their inherited social status at the time of being interviewed. Much of this social mobility, we may assume, took place subsequently to marriage. Social mobility can therefore only rarely be regarded as a possible "causative" factor determining or influencing age at marriage. On the other hand, if age at marriage cannot be affected by events that still lie in the future, the personal circumstances and the character of the socially ambitious, for example, may nevertheless lead to a postponement of marriage beyond the population average; just as the lack of ambition or social inadequacies of those "downwardly mobile" might encourage earlier marriage. In Table 9 we show mean ages at marriage

TABLE 9: Mean age at marriage of Dublin males, related to paternal social status, and to subject's social mobility history

Status Category of Father	Relative Status of Informant									All Informants		
	Higher			Same			Lower					
	\bar{X}	σ	$\frac{100\sigma}{\bar{X}}$	\bar{X}	σ	$\frac{100\sigma}{\bar{X}}$	\bar{X}	σ	$\frac{100\sigma}{\bar{X}}$	\bar{X}	σ	$\frac{100\sigma}{\bar{X}}$
1 (highest)	—	—	—	28.3	5.4	19.1	30.7	5.9	19.2	29.4	5.7	19.2
2	30.9	5.9	19.2	28.2	3.7	13.2	28.3	4.5	16.0	28.7	4.8	16.5
3	29.7	5.4	18.1	30.2	5.5	18.1	30.4	6.1	20.0	30.1	5.6	18.7
4	28.7	5.5	19.1	29.2	6.0	20.5	27.8	5.8	20.7	28.6	6.0	20.8
5	28.5	5.2	18.2	28.1	6.6	23.5	28.5	6.2	21.6	28.3	6.3	22.3
6	27.1	5.0	18.3	27.3	5.4	19.8	26.7	5.6	21.0	27.1	5.4	19.8
7	25.9	4.5	17.3	27.0	5.9	21.9	—	—	—	26.4	5.2	19.6
All:	27.7	5.3	19.2	28.1	5.9	21.1	28.5	6.3	22.2	28.0	5.5	19.8

by father's social status for three categories of grooms—those whose present status is higher, those whose status is the same, and those whose status is lower than that of their father. The differences across the columns in the means by paternal status category are, as will be seen, neither great nor significant; nor do they appear to form a standard pattern. There is some suggestion that men who subsequently achieved a higher status than they inherited may have tended to marry somewhat younger; but the difference has little statistical significance. There are some interesting differences in dispersion, however; and in combination, therefore, the two factors suggest that the upward-mobile marry earlier, and are more unanimous in their choice of age at marriage, compared with men losing status, who marry later and at ages less influenced by the mode. But as we shall see, the relationships between inherited status, mean age at marriage and dispersion about the mean are in some respects more systematic than this, and considerably more interesting. Employing Spearman's rank difference correlation method, we correlated the three factors for the sample as a whole, and for each of the three social mobility categories. The coefficients are presented as a matrix in Table 10. If we look at the sample as a whole, it is evident that there exists a high degree of positive correlation between male age at marriage and inherited social status: the higher the social status, the higher the age at marriage. There is also a substantial relationship between mean age at marriage and dispersion about the mean—but it will be noted that the correlation is a negative one. In other words, in the sample as a whole, higher marriage ages tend to be associated with greater unanimity of choice; and this phenomenon may have its origin in a popular

TABLE 10: *Spearman rank-difference correlation coefficients*

	Social Status				Dispersion (coefficient of variation)			
	Higher	Same	Lower	All	Higher	Same	Lower	All
Mean Age at marriage	1.00*	0.67	0.71	0.89*	0.79	-0.39	-0.37	-0.57
Dispersion	0.79	-0.71*	-0.89*	-0.57

*Significant at 0.05 level.

belief in a maximum age beyond which marriage is difficult to achieve. Dispersion is also negatively correlated with social status in the sample generally; but this may well be no more than a reflection of the probability of later marriages at the higher status levels.

The classification according to social mobility history reveals that these overall tendencies are not necessarily similar in all the mobility categories, when viewed separately. Thus we find that the direct relationship between age at marriage and inherited social status is more reliable among men with a history of upward mobility ($\rho = 1.00$) than among men who had lost status ($\rho = 0.71$) or had

merely retained the status of their fathers ($\rho = 0.67$). That is, mean age at marriage rises regularly with each step in the hierarchy of inherited status only among grooms who were subsequently to show a history of upward mobility. The relationship is less marked among the remainder. We can only speculate as to the reason for this. It seems likely that the varying demands of education may partially account for it. We have argued elsewhere⁸ that

... it appears that in every status category those who ascend the status hierarchy have more, and those who descend it have less, education than those maintaining their inherited status ... upward mobility from any level tends to be accompanied by an educational attainment superior to that regarded as sufficient in the class to which a man is born. In the same way, those who suffer loss of status tend to be those who have failed to attain their class educational norm.

A man in full-time education has not, until fairly recently, felt free to marry; and even today the tendency to postpone marriage until full-time education is completed remains common. A connection, therefore, between longer full-time education, upward mobility and later marriage seems a not unreasonable assumption.

The upward-mobile are atypical also in the degree of unanimity of choice of age at marriage. In the sample as a whole, as we have seen, dispersion is inversely related to mean age at marriage, and to social status. Among the upward-mobile, this relationship becomes positive: the greater the mean age and the higher the inherited status, the more likely are actual ages at marriage to be dispersed about the mean. A negative relationship persists, however, among those maintaining inherited status, or falling below it. The picture of marriage habits among social ascenders that emerges from our data therefore differs notably from our picture of the habits of other men. In general, the upward-mobile show a tendency towards earlier marriage, and towards less variation in the choice of age at which they contract it. The classification of these ascenders according to their status origin (i.e., their father's social status) showed, on the other hand, that the age at which they married was more subject to influence from their inherited social status. While in the sample as a whole there was a tendency for marriage to be contracted later the higher the status of the groom's father, the relationship was particularly marked among social ascenders; and we have suggested that longer periods of full-time education might offer an explanation for this. Nevertheless, the data give the general impression that social ascenders may be less subject to convention in deciding when to marry; and this impression seems not inconsistent with some of the psychological characteristics of the ascender as described by Hart and O'Sullivan.⁹

8. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

9. Ian Hart and Bernadette O'Sullivan, "Intergenerational social mobility and individual differences among Dubliners," *Economic and Social Review*, Vol. ii, No. 1, October 1970, pp. 1-18.

We now turn to a consideration of relative age at marriage, comparing, that is to say, the age of the groom with that of the bride. In only slightly more than a sixth of the marriages recorded from our sample were the ages of bride and groom the same;¹⁰ and in only one in eight was the bride older than the groom. The majority preference for an age differential in favour of the groom, of course, was only to be expected. But as Table 11 shows, the size of this majority differs according to the husband's age at marriage. Indeed, among men marrying under

TABLE 11: *Age of groom relative to age of bride, by groom's actual age at marriage*

Age of Groom at marriage	Relative Age			N
	Older	Same	Younger	
	%	%	%	
Under 20	40.5	31.0	28.5	42
20-24	56.4	23.0	20.6	566
25-29	69.3	19.8	10.9	733
30-34	84.0	10.4	5.6	375
35 and over	86.4	7.4	6.2	257
All Grooms:	70.0	17.5	12.5	1,973

the age of twenty only a minority (though a large one) were older than their brides. The proportion increases regularly, however, with increasing age, until at marriage ages of 35 and over it becomes rare for grooms to be of the same age as their brides; and even rarer for them to be younger. The percentages show little fluctuation (Table 12) in relation to social status and social mobility history, although it is possible that a connection has been veiled by the necessity to collapse the seven status categories to two, manual and non-manual. The absence of significant fluctuations was borne out by indices of association between age of

TABLE 12: *Percentages of grooms older and younger than, or of the same age as, their brides, by social mobility history*

Mobility History	Groom was:			N
	Older	Same Age	Younger	
	%	%	%	
Father and son both non-manual	71.9	16.6	11.5	487
Father and son both manual	69.6	17.6	12.8	1,089
Father non-manual, son manual	69.7	15.8	14.5	152
Father manual, son non-manual	68.2	20.0	11.8	245
All Grooms:	70.1	17.7	12.2	1,973

10. Ages considered "the same" were those of equal total completed years. Incomplete years were not taken into account.

bride and groom, which showed little significant difference between the four mobility categories. Significant variations become more evident in the data relating to the magnitude of the age differences (Table 13). The most evident feature of these data, of course, is the overall one that, if age of bride and groom differ, the difference is likely to be greater if the groom is older, than if he is younger, than his bride. The mean difference is 4.58 years in the former case; only 2.39 years in the latter. It will be noticed that the social status of the groom's

TABLE 13: Mean difference (years) between age of bride and groom, related to social status of groom and of his father

Groom Older			Groom younger				
Father's Status	Groom's status	All	Father's Status	Groom's Status	All		
	Non- Manual	Manual		Non- Manual	Manual		
Non-manual	5.03	4.69	4.93	Non-manual	2.05	2.64	2.38
Manual	4.66	4.23	4.41	Manual	2.28	2.54	2.41
All Grooms	4.85	4.46	4.58	All Grooms	2.17	2.59	2.39

father is not generally related to mean age difference (whether the groom is older or younger than his bride) if grooms are not further differentiated on the basis of their own status. There is one exception, however. Where a groom coming from a non-manual paternal background marries a woman younger than himself, the difference in this case is greater than the average: it does not happen if his bride is older than himself. The relationship with the groom's achieved social status is more marked. Where the bride is younger, the age difference is greater if the groom is of non-manual status. Where the bride is older, the age difference is greater if the groom is of manual status.

Our view of the influence of social mobility has been somewhat foreshortened by the necessity for working with no more than two status categories, though this disadvantage may be counter-balanced by the probability that a manual/non-manual dichotomy records only the more emphatic changes in social status, which are as a consequence more significant. In any case, the implications of Table 13 are closely similar to those emerging from some other analyses of the influence of social mobility.¹¹ That is to say, the characteristics of the mobile population appear subject to influence from both inherited and acquired social

11. For example, J. Berent, "Fertility and social mobility", *Population Studies*, vol. v, No. 3, 1952. B. Hutchinson, "Fertility, social mobility and urban migration in Brazil," *ibid.*, vol. xiv, No. 3, 1961.

status. It can be shown, for example, that, in the case of fertility, families of social ascenders are at the same time smaller than the mean size of families in the status category they vacate, yet larger than the average family in the higher category they attain. We find matters arranging themselves in similar ways here. Let us look first at grooms older than their brides. Among men of non-manual origin, the age difference is less if he subsequently falls to manual status than it is if he retains his inherited status. Among men of manual origin, the age gap is greater if he rises to non-manual than if he remains of manual status. The age gap is greatest if a man is born to non-manual status and retains it; least if he maintains an inherited manual status. The mobile fall between these extremes. Turning to grooms who were younger than their brides, we find the converse happening. The age gap between man and wife increases if a man falls to manual status; decreases if he rises to non-manual status. In brief, that is to say, the effect of upward mobility has been to increase the age difference between man and wife when the husband is older; to decrease it when he is younger than his wife. The effect of downward mobility has been the reverse. We may therefore inquire what the net effect of social mobility on marriage age differentials is likely to have been. In the male adult population of Dublin in 1968 the upward exceeded the downward mobile by slightly over twelve per cent.¹² We have seen that 70 per cent of grooms were older than their brides. Hence we would expect the net influence of social mobility to have been in the direction of a widening of the age gap between older husbands and younger wives; and hence to have widened it in the majority of marriages. But the net effect is unlikely to have been large, and indeed may well have been compensated by other social influences tending towards a narrowing of the age differential.

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12. B. Hutchinson, *Social status and intergenerational social mobility in Dublin*, Table 20, p. 17.