

# **The Changing Nature of Family Formation in Ireland**

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Nuffield College

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## **Abstract**

The past century has seen striking changes in family formation in Ireland. Family dynamics are fundamental aspects of social change, but they have been neglected by social research in Ireland since the 1970s. This thesis draws on already available national data to study movements into marriage and parenthood in detail and thereby improve our understanding of family dynamics. The research focuses, in the main, on the 1926 to 1991 census period; a period characterised by the transition from high rates of non-marriage and large family sizes to more standard European levels.

The study primarily addresses the class dimension of family formation. Social class remains a strong predictor of marriage and fertility patterns. The study first maps the long-standing trend of higher rates of non-marriage and higher rates of marital fertility in the poorer sections of Irish society. The fertility levels of the class categories experiencing economic marginalisation have remained high so that the burden of dependency is heaviest among working class and farming families. Fertility decline was, however, evident in all socio-economic groups.

Secondly, the thesis provides the first serious examination of quantitative evidence to assess the hypothesis that high rates of marital fertility act as a marriage deterrent. Despite the availability of more effective fertility controls, marriage plans continue to be influenced by the size of the prospective family. The results highlight the importance of economic resources as a prerequisite to marriage. Economic rationality is not, however, the only driving force.

Thirdly, the thesis investigates the degree to which changes in family formation were related to changes in the composition of Irish society. A standardisation exercise isolating the effects of population structure revealed that class compositional changes cannot account for changes in male fertility rates over the course of the twentieth century but, were important in understanding declining rates of celibacy.

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## To my Dad

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

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### **List of acronyms and symbols**

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ECHP	European Community Household Panel
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EVS	European Values Survey
P	Probability
p	p-value
<i>r</i>	Correlation
LII	Living in Ireland
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
TFR	Period Total Fertility Rate
TCFR	Total Cohort Fertility Rate
t	year

# 1 Ireland's place within European Models of Family Formation

## 1.1 Introduction

The family is one of the most cherished institutions in Irish society. Like some other European countries<sup>1</sup>, the family has a special recognition within the state constitution:

'The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.'

(Constitution of Ireland 1937, Article 41.1).

Little public debate now takes place in Ireland with regard to the family. This is in striking contrast to the controversies that existed prior to the 1990s with regard to contraception, divorce and abortion. Public attention has moved elsewhere and according to Fahey, we have entered a 'postrevolutionary phase' (Fahey and Layte 2007, p. 156). Although the public debate on sexuality and the family has been more subdued, this does not mean that the family has been in stasis.

One problem, however, is that the level of systematic knowledge about the Irish family is limited. The family has tended to be ignored in Irish sociology and although a few recent major studies of the family have been carried out, there is no comprehensive original study available for recent times.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, the most striking changes to Irish family life have occurred in this last decade. It is in the context of the under-developed state of family research in Ireland that this study was proposed. Its basic objectives are, first, to describe the major trends in family formation in Ireland

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<sup>1</sup> France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal and Spain (Hantrais 2004).

<sup>2</sup> The best-known studies deal with the family in rural Ireland and none of these are recent (Arensberg and Kimball 1940, 1968, McNabb 1964, Hannan and Katsiaouni 1977, Hannan 1979). No general study of the family in urban Ireland has been carried out since Humphrey's study of the late 1940s (Humphreys 1966). For a recent general overview of the family in twentieth century Ireland, see Kennedy (2001).

over the course of the twentieth century based on existing large-scale data sources and focusing particularly on declines in what were seen as the traditional characteristics of Irish demography that is, high rates of non-marriage and large family sizes. Secondly, this study will highlight the diversity in family forms across social groups and investigate the degree to which fertility considerations influence the marital prospects of the different classes. Finally, the research will assess if marriage and fertility decisions are explicable in terms of a cost-benefit calculus. In other words, to what degree can rational objective thinking account for Irish trends in nuptiality and fertility over time and across social classes.

Three key substantive topics are examined in this thesis; fertility decline, the rise in marriage and the relationship between marriage and fertility decisions. The following chapter outlines these objectives in more detail but, first, this chapter describes trends in the Irish family over the course of the twentieth century, locating them within an international comparative perspective and examining cross-sectional variations within Ireland.

## ***1.2 Context***

In most industrial countries, patterns of family formation and dissolution have been changing very rapidly. In general, marriage and child-bearing have become increasingly delayed. Separation and divorce have become much more common and, in many countries, both premarital cohabitation and cohabitation as an alternative to marriage have become the norm. Ireland has long been seen as a demographic outlier within Europe.

Up until 1960, Ireland had the lowest rate of entry into marriage in Europe. In conjunction with this it had a higher than average age of marriage. Despite the

tendency to marry late, the Irish family was largest in Europe. In 1960, for example, the mean age of marriage for an Irish man was 30.8 years, compared to a European average of 26.7.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, there were 5.5 marriages per 1000 of the Irish population compared to the European average of 8.<sup>4</sup> In 1960, Irish women were on average having 2.4 children over the life-course, compared to the European average of 1.8.<sup>5</sup> At that time, Iceland was the only European country to match Ireland's completed fertility rate although Ireland's overall fertility was not especially high by US and other 'new world' standards (see Fahey and Russell 2001).

By the last decade of the twentieth century, Ireland had converged in most respects towards the European norm.<sup>6</sup> The marriage rate, or the number of marriages per 1000 of the population, stood at 4.9 in 1999 compared to a European average of 5.1.<sup>7</sup> The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) halved between 1960 and 1999, in that year the TFR stood at 1.89 compared to a European average of 1.45.<sup>8</sup> A referendum to lift the ban on divorce was passed in 1995 and legalised divorce was endorsed in February 1997.<sup>9</sup> By the 2006 Census, 13 per cent of first marriages had ended in marital breakdown that is separation, divorce or remarriage after divorce compared to only 3.1 per cent in 1986 (Iona Institute 2007).<sup>10</sup> In addition, the proportion of births occurring outside of marriage increased dramatically as Ireland moved from being one of the European countries with the lowest extramarital birth rate in 1980, at 5 per

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<sup>3</sup> See Eurostat 2000, Table F-8. The European average reported here is the average of the 15 members of the European Union that is Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> See Eurostat 2000, Table F-3.

<sup>5</sup> See Eurostat 2000, Table E-6.

<sup>6</sup> The average age of the Irish population is still, however, well below the average for the European Union (see Daly 2006).

<sup>7</sup> See Eurostat 2002, page 28.

<sup>8</sup> See Eurostat 2002, Table E-4. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the average number of births a woman would have during her reproductive life if she were exposed to the fertility rates characteristic of various childbearing age groups in that year.

<sup>9</sup> Divorce in Ireland is restricted as it is only allowed after 4 years of marital breakdown.

<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the number of divorced persons increased from 35,100 to 59,500 between 2002 and 2006 Census, an increase of 69.8 per cent making it the fastest growing marital status category.

cent, to join those with the highest rates by 2000, at 32 per cent (see Hantrais 2004, Table 3.2).<sup>11</sup> As extramarital births have increased, so has the number of lone parents (see Fahey and Russell 2001). Female-headed lone parent families grew by an appreciable 3.1 per cent per annum between the 1981 and 2006 Census of Population (Punch 2007). Irish women who seek an abortion, however, continue to have to do so in Britain. In many regards, therefore, it appears that Irish family life has been radically transformed.

With these issues in mind, this introductory chapter analyses trends in Irish marriage and fertility rates over the course of the twentieth century in order to identify their main components and locate them within a European perspective. Many analysts have noted the rapid and relatively late transformation of Ireland's demography.<sup>12</sup> When compared with 36 industrial countries, demographer David Coleman concluded that 'Irish exceptionalism cannot be matched on any comparable demographic scale by any subdivision of a larger Western European country except Northern Ireland.' (Goldthorpe and Whelan 1992, p. 57). In demography, there is a common tendency to marvel at the Irish family and its pace of change irrespective of how it compares with a wider comparison or indeed previous experiences.<sup>13</sup> The Irish case has thus been regarded as interesting on two main accounts; first because the level of systematic knowledge on the family in Ireland is limited and secondly, as a test case for the validity of general views of the relationship between family change and broader social, economic and cultural changes (see Chapter Two for details). The most influential of these theories is that of the demographic transition.

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<sup>11</sup> Since 2000, the number of births occurring outside of marriage has stabilised at just over 31 per cent. (Central Statistics Office 2004).

<sup>12</sup> For example see Coleman 1992, Mac Éinrí 1997, Fahey 1998, O'Hara 1998, Kennedy 2001, Tovey and Share 2003, Daly 2006.

<sup>13</sup> There now appears to be agreement that the distinctive features of Ireland's demography – e.g. late age of marriage, high marital fertility and high levels of emigration - were established before the Famine, in the early nineteenth century.

Demographic transition theory identifies a number of distinct phases through which societies, or European societies at any rate, pass in their demographic development. It argues that societies progress from a pre-modern regime of high fertility and high mortality to a post-modern regime of low fertility and low mortality. The ‘first demographic transition’ refers to declines in fertility and mortality rates, eventually ending in population decline, which were first observed in the two centuries before 1950. The ‘second demographic transition’ tends to describe Ireland’s position in the 1990s and early 2000s which is characterised by declining fertility levels, voluntary childlessness, a growth in single-parent households and extramarital births (see Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa 1986).

Van de Kaa (1987) gives an outline of the full sequence of changes in family formation that lead to lower fertility, identifying, at the time, four groups of European countries and suggesting (with the exception of the fourth group) a rough geographical pattern. The fourth group, having high birth rates, covered the remaining countries and included Ireland which were all late in completing the first demographic transition.<sup>14</sup> According to Coleman (1992), the peculiarities of Ireland's past demography and its recent rapid changes have provided a challenge to established demographic theory.

The aim of this chapter is to document how Ireland’s first demographic transition compare with that of the rest of Europe. Before engaging in any comparisons, the next section examines models of family formation and discusses Ireland’s position within these typologies. These classifications are social constructions and different countries are put into different categories dependent on the author’s interests (see Douglass 2005). The placement of Ireland within a particular

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<sup>14</sup> The fourth, remaining group of countries were Iceland, Ireland, Albania and Turkey.

group or, comparisons of the Irish experience with that of another country, can highlight its uniqueness or illustrate overall convergence. After discussing such comparisons, the final section of this chapter will return to the issue of Irish exceptionalism.

### **1.3 Models of Family Formation**

The distinctive features of Ireland's population history can be easily exaggerated dependent on one's perspective and comparative base. Focusing on the period from 1841 to the eve of World War I, Guinnane (1997) argued that the basic forces - such as emigration and high celibacy - leading to Irish depopulation were similar to those at work in other European countries. It was the specific combination of elements in Ireland that was unusual. On the other hand, Fahey suggested that the Irish experience had 'a pathological quality' (Fahey 1988, p. 52) and Coleman (1992) argues that Irish demography has been unique since the nineteenth century. Accounts, therefore, run the danger of overstating the peculiarities of the Irish experience. Daly rightly noted that 'it is important not to go to the other extreme of denying what *was* unique' (Daly 1996, p. 5). One problem is the context of comparison that is, with what should we compare Ireland?<sup>15</sup>

Sociologists and demographers typically group countries together corresponding to conventional geographical regions or socio-economic systems. Models of family formation have been developed based on family systems and welfare states, particularly comparison based on family policies.<sup>16</sup> In this section,

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<sup>15</sup> Another problem with a comparative approach is that there are strong regional differences within countries such as Ireland, which can be overlooked, see Chapter 3 and 4.

<sup>16</sup> Other models could be developed based on religious affiliation or the position of each society on the road towards modernity.

Ireland's place within some of the main models of family formation will be discussed. The intention of the first group of models - those based on family systems - is to set apart fundamentally different marriage regimes, demographic structures and family systems. The focus is therefore on the identification of groups of countries with common features in terms of family formation rather than schema based on welfare state typologies. As we will see, the specific boundaries of these different family systems are often unclear and, in particular, Ireland's position within these models is uncertain.

Historically, it has been common to characterise Western Europe into two family systems; the strong family system of the South and the weak system of the North.<sup>17</sup> Hajnal (1982) argued that pre-industrial Ireland displayed characteristics typically found in all Northwest European countries that is, the Scandinavian countries, Britain, the Low Countries, the German speaking countries and northern France. Northwest European households were characterised by a relatively late age of marriage, significant levels of celibacy and high fertility rates. These households were described as traditional peasant economies as many young adults in rural areas left home to work as agricultural servants. Hajnal argued that domestic service had important implications for nuptiality as it influenced the age at which children left home. East of Hajnal's imaginary line connecting Trieste and St Petersburg, marriage was early and universal, and the family was often extended rather than neo-local nuclear that is, one in which nuclear families live by themselves independent from their family of origin. In these countries, servants were generally less numerous and peasant families tended to prefer family labour. Grown unmarried children tended to stay in the family home for long periods of time.

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<sup>17</sup> See Reher (1998) for a comprehensive review.

Ireland does not, however, fit well into Hajnal's Northwest European model of family patterns. In pre-industrial rural Ireland, family labour tended to be preferred to non-family labour and the permanent departure of young adults from the home came only with marriage (see Guinnane 1992). Impartible inheritance that is, the passing of property to one heir meant that familial ties were strong and the elderly tended to be cared for within stem families, as was the case in Mediterranean Europe.<sup>18</sup> In addition, societies, such as Ireland and those of Mediterranean Europe, with strong family ties had greater levels of social cohesion and lower rates of divorce and extramarital births (Reher 2004).

More recent classifications of family systems have built upon Hajnal's system. These studies have tended to group Ireland with the Southern European countries of Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece.<sup>19</sup> This Southern group therefore consists mainly of Catholic countries but the divide is not strictly religious or geographical. Iacovou (1999) found that in the 1990s, the Southern group was characterised by more traditional family structures where people tended to marry later but have children earlier in partnerships. There was also a lower incidence of divorce and cohabitation in the Southern group when compared to the Northern and mainly Protestant group of countries defined here as Denmark, Netherlands, UK, Belgium and France.<sup>20</sup> In the Northern group, births outside of marriage were more common and Iacovou found that it was also more prevalent for people to be married for several years without having children.

Later Iacovou (2001) noted that Ireland's high levels of lone parenthood, especially at early ages, set it apart from the Southern group and she concluded that

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<sup>18</sup> The definition and evidence of stem families within Ireland will be detailed in Chapter 2. The stem family is most often defined as a three generational household.

<sup>19</sup> I am particularly referring to work by Iacovou (see Iacovou 1999, Iacovou and Berthoud 2001, Iacovou 2002) but also Guiliano (2003 and 2006) and Hantrais (2004).

<sup>20</sup> Some studies group Luxembourg, Austria and Germany into the Northern group.

Ireland was among the more ‘Northern’ of the Southern countries. In Southern Europe, most of those living in extended families were living with a partner and children whereas Ireland displayed a higher proportion of solo mothers.<sup>21</sup> In addition, in contrast to the Mediterranean countries, young people in Ireland tended to leave home earlier and share households with friends and colleagues before entering marriage. Yet, in comparison to the Northern countries, formal marriage is still the norm in Ireland and cohabitation as a prelude or alternative to marriage is relatively rare although increasing.<sup>22</sup>

A final example of this type of classification comes from Cavalli and Galland (1995) who developed Mediterranean, Northern European and British models of family formation or more specifically, the transition to adulthood. Their classification has much in common with Iacovou’s scheme except that it distinguished a unique British tendency to delay household and family formation despite early transitions from school to work. In the Mediterranean countries, on the other hand, young people tend to stay with their parents and only leave at marriage. In the Nordic model, young people leave the family home early to either live alone or in couples and, marriage and procreation occur later. Ireland’s position within their scheme is unclear. Iacovou (2001) felt that their British model included Ireland but models that have compared Ireland to Britain have highlighted sharp differences between the Isles and according to Guinnane (1997), such studies have falsely led researchers to claim Irish exceptionalism rather than attempt to understand Irish society.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Fahey and Russell (2001) have noted that this may be a product of the welfare system as they suspected that some mothers claimed to be living alone, when this was not the case, in order to claim welfare benefits.

<sup>22</sup> The 2006 Census of Population of Ireland shows that 11.6 per cent of all family units were cohabiting couples compared to 3.9 per cent in the 1996 Census.

<sup>23</sup> It is common to find ‘except for Ireland’ in demographic works with no attempt provided to understand why the process or issue did not apply to the Irish experience.

Another approach to comparative work is based on welfare state comparisons.<sup>24</sup> Ireland, however, has always been difficult to place in terms of welfare state typologies. Sociologists of the family, for example, have grouped western European countries into several broad categories that share family, political and cultural characteristics. These are the Nordic or Scandinavian countries, associated with socialist or social demographic welfare regimes; Anglo-Saxon countries (including Ireland) associated with liberal welfare regimes where the privacy of the family is a deep-rooted principle; the German-French speaking countries associated with conservative welfare regimes and the Mediterranean countries that are associated with southern European welfare systems. The work of Esping-Andersen (1990) has been particularly influential.<sup>25</sup>

Esping-Andersen (1990) argued that welfare states vary considerably with respect to their principles of rights and stratification. This results in qualitatively different arrangements among state, market and family. These differences notwithstanding, Anderson argued that welfare state variations are not singular, but clustered around three central regime types: 'liberal'; 'social democratic'; and 'corporatist-statist'; the so-called 'three worlds of welfare'.<sup>26</sup> It can be said that Ireland combines some of the features of the 'liberal' and 'corporatist' regions and accords least with the 'social democratic' regime.

The liberal welfare regime assigns primacy to the market and limits the state to a residual welfare role, social benefits are typically means tested. Esping-Anderson (1990) and later Bonoli (1997) assigned Ireland to this category. Cochrane and Clarke (1993), however, described Ireland as Catholic-corporatist. Among one factor of

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<sup>24</sup> There are many other ways to classify countries e.g. Lewis (1992) notes that Ireland and the UK are strong male breadwinner states.

<sup>25</sup> See also Breen and Buchmann (2002).

<sup>26</sup> Later, Esping-Andersen (1999) describes four types of welfare regimes in western Europe; liberal, social democratic, familialistic and conservative.

particular importance here, corporatist regimes are typically shaped by the Church, and, hence, strongly committed to the preservation of the traditional family. Social insurance typically excludes 'non-working' wives and family benefits encourage motherhood. Day care and similar family services are conspicuously underdeveloped and the principle of 'subsidiarity' underscores the fact that the state will only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted. With the odd exception (Lalor 1982), few academics have gone so far as to suggest that post-independence Ireland could be regarded as genuinely corporatist and the extent to which the corporatist framework fits at all has been subject to debate (see Hardiman and Lalor 1984, Roche and Cradden 2003). Mc Cashin and Payne (2006) argue that Ireland has moved decisively into liberal mode.

Of more importance for family research, Hantrais (2004) identified clusters of European countries with similar family policies and factors influencing their development. Her work focused on the generosity of social benefits, the extent of the male breadwinner model and the degree to which people could maintain a socially accepted standard of living without relying unduly on family support. The U.K., Ireland, Austria and the Netherlands fell within the same category where family policy is implicit or indirect, rhetorical, partially coordinated and based on residence. As Daly (2004) also noted, however, the relationship between state and family in Ireland is blurred and changing. The Irish Constitution and the Catholic Church support women as homemakers and set boundaries on the legitimacy of the state as a family policy actor: Article 41.3.1 of the Irish Constitution states that '[t]he State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of marriage, on which the Family is founded'. Under the same article, '[t]he State shall ensure that a mother need not leave her place in the home through economic necessity'. More recent state

developments however encourage mothers, especially lone mothers, to seek employment. Since the mid-1990s Ireland's position in terms of family policy has improved (for a full review see Daly 2004).

In an extensive review of family policy in Ireland, Daly and Clavero (2002) noted that in the past, Ireland was marked by a relatively low provision of financial and other forms of support for families with children, as well as a generally high degree of reliance on the family to take care of the needs of its individual members. In the 1990s, the Irish policy profile changed quite radically though, not just in terms of content but also as regards its strategic orientation.<sup>27</sup> According to Daly, the most striking development was the recent National Children's Strategy (2000) which targets children as agents with certain participatory right (Daly 2004).

Recent welfare state provisions relating directly to family formation concern measures which support the reconciliation between work and family, in particular support the employment of women. Vogel (1997 and 2003) has found a clear clustering of European nations in terms of these institutional configurations. The Southern European cluster of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece was characterised by low employment and social expenditure but strong traditional families, coupled with high poverty rates and high levels of income inequality. According to Vogel (2003), Ireland is close to the Mediterranean countries when it comes to female employment and the role of the family. In addition, Ireland ranked low on an index of social protection expenditure, as a per cent of GDP, but high on an index of traditional family qualities as was the case in the southern European group (see Vogel 2003, Figure 9.3).

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<sup>27</sup> Also see Fahey (1998).

Similarly Esping-Andersen found that Irish family service spending as a percentage of GDP was small at 0.06 per cent and similar to that found in Spain and Italy (Esping-Andersen 1999, Table 4a). In addition Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the U.K. have the lowest provisions of paid maternity leave and parental leave in Europe (Vogel in Glatzer 2002, Figure 9). Ireland also has one of the lowest rates of formal state provision of childcare in the entire European Union. According to Callan and Nolan (1991), the Irish system is best described as a ‘maximum private responsibility’ model. In contrast, the total volume of welfare state provision tends to support female employment, fertility and parenthood best in the Nordic countries (Vogel 2003). In terms of institutional configurations, Ireland’s position is in some regards therefore similar to that of Mediterranean Europe.<sup>28</sup>

As a final example, Pampel (2001) developed useful sociopolitical indexes to account for differences in behavior between eighteen industrialised, democratic, high-income countries that have a population above one million. For the “collective social protection index,” based on measures of corporatism, consensus government, years of leftist rule, universalism, and governability, Ireland ranked eleventh. For the “women-friendly institutions index,” based on measures of child and family support, maternity leave, preschool access, legal equality, and employment support, Sweden ranked second and Ireland was twelfth. Researchers have tended to do comparative work which encompasses the range of variation in regard to policy on the family:

‘Without being too technical, what matters most for comparative research is that the concepts and design of the study are broad enough to include and accommodate developments across countries (rather than biased towards one country’s experience).’

(Daly and Clavero 2002, p.18).

In this regard, Seward and associates (2005) compared changes in the Irish family to those in Sweden and the US, based on Pampel’s analysis. Whereas Daly and Clavero

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<sup>28</sup> It differs from the Mediterranean countries as regard to poverty rates and income inequalities.

(2002) chose France, Germany, the U.K. and Sweden as comparators with regard to family policy.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, Ireland does not fit easily into models of family formation. In terms of family systems, Ireland is an oddity; ‘a decidedly Catholic country in northern Europe whose forms of familial organisation fit quite poorly with our north-south comparisons’ (Reher 1998, p. 214). Few typologies of family systems are perfectly prescriptive; their significance lies in the way that they can generalise about important factors for analysis. In terms of family policy, Ireland has much in common with the Mediterranean countries, for instance, its consistency in terms of the low level of support for families (see Daly and Clavero 2002). The link between welfare states, or specific family policies, and family formation practices is not clear. Pro-natalist government policies, for example, do not readily succeed in propping up flagging birth rates. Therefore it is not always clear how typologies based on policy considerations may influence actual family formation practice.<sup>30</sup>

The following sections of this chapter will highlight Ireland’s position in terms of both marriage and fertility patterns by contrasting it with both Northern and Southern European countries. The issue of convergence with respect to demographic trends in Europe is not explicitly addressed but the analysis does highlight some aspects of this process. Kuijsten (1996), among others, postulated that, even though similar trends have been observed in many countries, differences in family and fertility behaviour will not disappear because of differences in the economic,

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<sup>29</sup> Daly and Clavero (2002) argue that there are three main approaches taken in Europe for the support of families; a universal approach, an approach which ties benefits to father’s employment and a selective approach. Their book reviews the range of approaches taken to classifying countries in terms of family policy.

<sup>30</sup> See Hantrais (2006) for a review of the effects of welfare state regimes or family policy on family formation. The results are mixed.

institutional and cultural context. Van de Kaa (1994), on the other hand, argued that differences between European countries can mainly be attributed to variations in the pace of change but that the basic pattern of change is similar across countries. Therefore, differences between countries will become smaller over time. What will become clear in this chapter is that simple family-based country divides obscure many interesting variations in family formation behaviour within and across countries. The heterogeneity of European family formation will become apparent, both across European societies and over time.

Having profiled the major models of family formation, it is now appropriate to document and compare changes in Irish families to changes in other European countries since the 1920s. The objective of this study is to understand Ireland's position, rather than focus on claims of exceptionalism. The next chapter presents the main theories of demographic change and discusses how these theories can aid our understanding of the Irish experience.

#### ***1.4 Definitional Issues***

Before moving on, it is important to define what is meant by family formation. This research's focus is on traditional patterns of family formation (marriage and births within marriage as well as childless marriage) with some attention given to more recent developments such as, non-marital cohabitation and extramarital births (in this chapter and Chapter Seven). Research on family formation tends to focus solely on fertility patterns and thereby ignore or downplay marital trends. Fertility and nuptiality are, however, closely interwoven since the majority of births occur to married couples. The numbers who marry and the age patterns at marriage are matters of great social significance. This is especially the case in Ireland, which traditionally

displayed relatively high rates of permanent celibacy and a late average age of marriage.

In order to highlight trends in family formation, a number of demographic terms will be employed in the following sections. Most of these statistics are employed because they were available and comparable across the different European countries over the time period of interest. The *crude marriage rate* refers to the number of legal marriages performed and registered per 1,000 persons in a population per annum.<sup>31</sup> This measure was available through-out the 1926 to 1991 period. The *crude birth rate* is the number of births per 1,000 persons in a population in a given year. Both measures are influenced by the age structure of the population and are higher in populations where more women are in the childbearing/marriage years (roughly between ages 14 to 49). The *Total Fertility Rate (TFR)* is the average number of births a women would have during her reproductive life if she were exposed to the fertility rates characteristic of various childbearing age groups in that year. This is calculated by taking the sum of births per 1,000 women for five-year age groups multiplying by five and dividing by 1000. The TFR is considered a more accurate description of fertility trends than the birth rate which is only employed when more accurate data was unavailable. Finally, all discussions and statistics for Ireland generally refer to the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland.<sup>32</sup> Some information that was collected prior to the 1926 Census of Population refers to the whole Island of Ireland, prior to division.

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<sup>31</sup> This is a better measure of nuptiality when compared to the number of marriages per year since it takes account of the population base.

<sup>32</sup> For works that chart family changes in both the Republic and Northern Ireland see Coleman (1992), Guinnane (1997) and Fahey and McLaughlin (1999).

## ***1.5 Ireland in comparative perspective***

### **1.5.1 Marriages**

This section will take a close look at trends in nuptiality in Ireland before comparing marital changes to those of other European countries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the proportion of the population marrying in Ireland was pretty stable and remarkably low (Kennedy 1973, Ó Gráda 1994, Guinnane 1997). Marriage rates had been falling since the Great Famine of 1845 when the Irish potato crop failed, reducing the population from 8.2 million to just fewer than 6 million in five years, as millions of people either starved to death or emigrated (see Ó Gráda 1989). By the 1930s, Irish marriage rates were among the lowest recorded in history (Nolan, O'Connell and Whelan 2000).

Figure 1.1 below plots the trend in marriage rates<sup>33</sup> since 1926 to 2000 and the number of civil marriages. It illustrates that after 1960, marriage rates began a steady increase until they peaked in 1973. This contrasted greatly with the rest of the developed world where the post-war marriage boom was played out earlier (UN 2002). From 1973 on, there was an over 20 year steady decline in the proportion of the Irish population marrying (see Figure 1.1). More recent increases in the propensity to marry have coincided with the economic boom and the introduction of divorce in 1997 (Figure 1.1). The number of marriages rose by 23 per cent between 1997 and the year 2001. The introduction of divorce allowed partners in second unions to end their first marriage and formalise their second relationship. One way to assess the degree to which this practise may have led to a marriage boom is to look at total first marriage rates over this period that is, the mean number of first marriages per women or man in

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<sup>33</sup> The marriage rate is the total number of marriages registered in a given year divided by the population for that year.

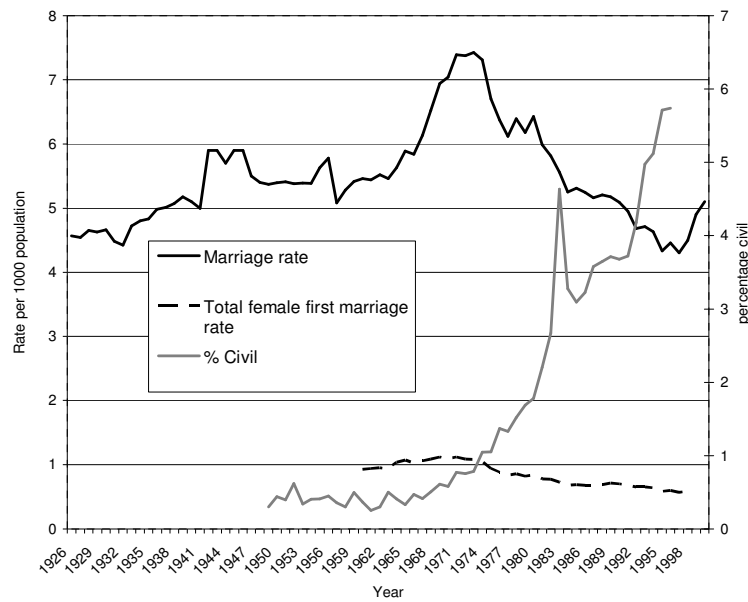
a given year.<sup>34</sup> In 1997, the total female first marriage rate stood at 0.57 and by 1998, the latest available figure at the time of writing, it had increased slightly to 0.59 (see Figure 1.1). Given the lack of information on first marriage rates after 1998, it is not possible to surmise that they continued to increase. After evaluating the number of second marriages over this period, Fahey (2007) however concluded that some, but by no means all, of the upward trend in marriage after 1997 was produced by second marriages.

Figure 1.1 also shows the percentage of all marriages that were civil ceremonies that is, weddings without any religious affiliation. Figure 1.1 shows that the number of civil marriage ceremonies steadily increased in Ireland from the 1970s up to 1996 when data became temporarily unavailable. More recent information confirms the continuance of this trend with 23 per cent of all marriages in 2005 registered as civil ceremonies, compared to almost 18 per cent in 2004. It is interesting to note that the increase in the popularity of civil ceremonies predated the introduction of divorce legislation in 1997. Catholic marriages accounted for 74 per cent of all marriages in 2005 compared to 90 per cent in 1996. Recent evidence shows that civil ceremonies are more popular among older couples (Vital Statistics 2007). Possible contributing factor to this more recent increase in the popularity of civil marriages was the legalisation of divorce in 1997 and inward migration. The number of usual residents born outside the country nearly trebled over the 1991 to 2006 period (see Punch 2007).

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<sup>34</sup> The total first marriage rate is calculated by adding the first marriage rates by age of women (or men) for the year in question (the number of women (or men) at each age is assumed to be the same). It is not the first marriage rate of any specific generation; rather, it is the first marriage rate of a hypothetical generation subjected at each age to the current marriage conditions.

**Figure 1.1: Marriage rates in Ireland, 1926 to 2000**



Source: Central Statistics Office's Vital Statistics, Marriages report for 2002, UN Demographic Yearbook (2001), Council of Europe (2001).

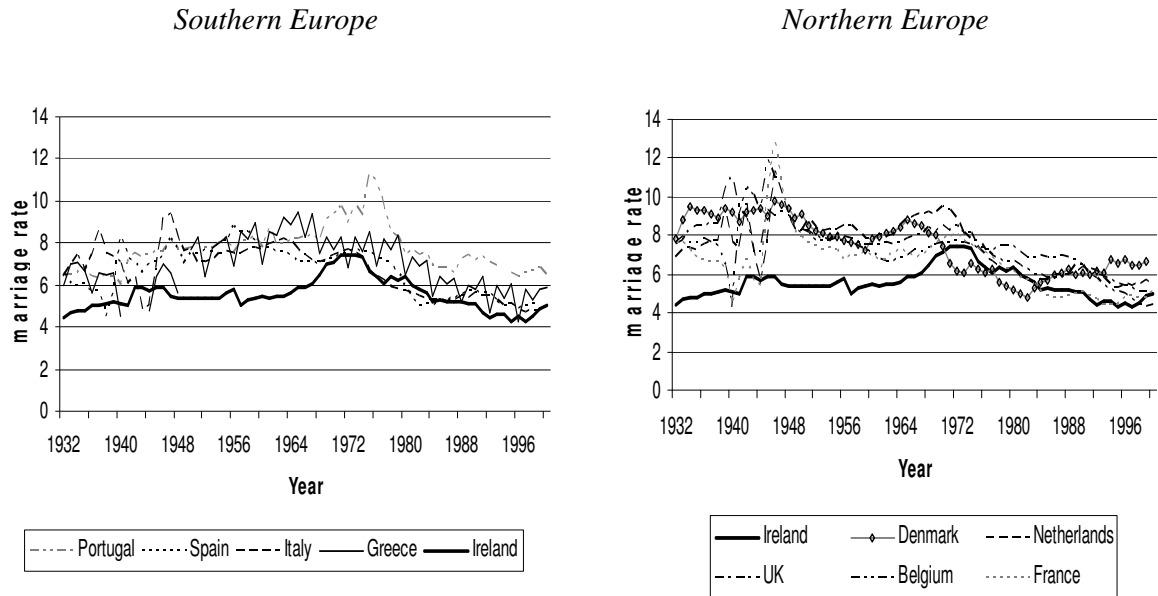
In the latter half of the twentieth century, the distinctive Irish pattern of a low incidence of marriage had evolved towards the more standard pattern for developed countries. Figure 1.2 shows the difference between Northern and Southern European countries in terms of crude marriage rates.<sup>35</sup> As with all demographic rates that are calculated per 1,000 population, the crude marriage rate is influenced by changes in the age structure of the population over time, especially by changes in the proportion of the population in the peak marriageable ages. Figure 1.2 shows that since the 1970s, the crude marriage rate has fallen in every country despite the maturation of the post war baby-boom cohorts. The Northern group of countries - Denmark,

<sup>35</sup> This is the ratio of the number of marriages during the year to the *average* population in that year. The value is expressed per 1000 inhabitants.

Belgium, The Netherlands, France and the U.K. - had a higher average marriage rate when compared to that of the Southern group up until 1970 (Figure 1.2). The difference between the Northern and Southern European group in terms of crude marriage rates declined from then on, as all countries experienced a fall in marriage rates but this decline occurred later in the Southern group. The crude marriage rate in all countries, except for Denmark and Portugal, was below 6 per 1,000 population by 2000 (Figure 1.2).

It is therefore evident that the popularity of marriage has declined in most European countries. The extent of the decline depends on the degree of marriage postponement, the degree of cohabitation and the popularity of single households, among other developments within these countries. The Netherlands witnessed the largest decline with crude marriage rates falling from 9.5 in 1970, to 5.5 in 2000. Marriage rates do fluctuate over time, most dramatically in Greece, but in all countries except surprisingly Denmark, a clear downward trend is evident since about 1970 (Figure 1.2). In Denmark, marriage rates have been on the increase since 1982. Ireland's unique low rates of entry into marriage are apparent up until 1970. After that year, its outlier position is far less pronounced but it does still remain at the lower limit of marriage rates experienced in both the Northern and Southern European countries. By 2000, Ireland's rate was almost back to its 1960s level (Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2:** Crude Marriage Rates for selected European countries, 1932-2000

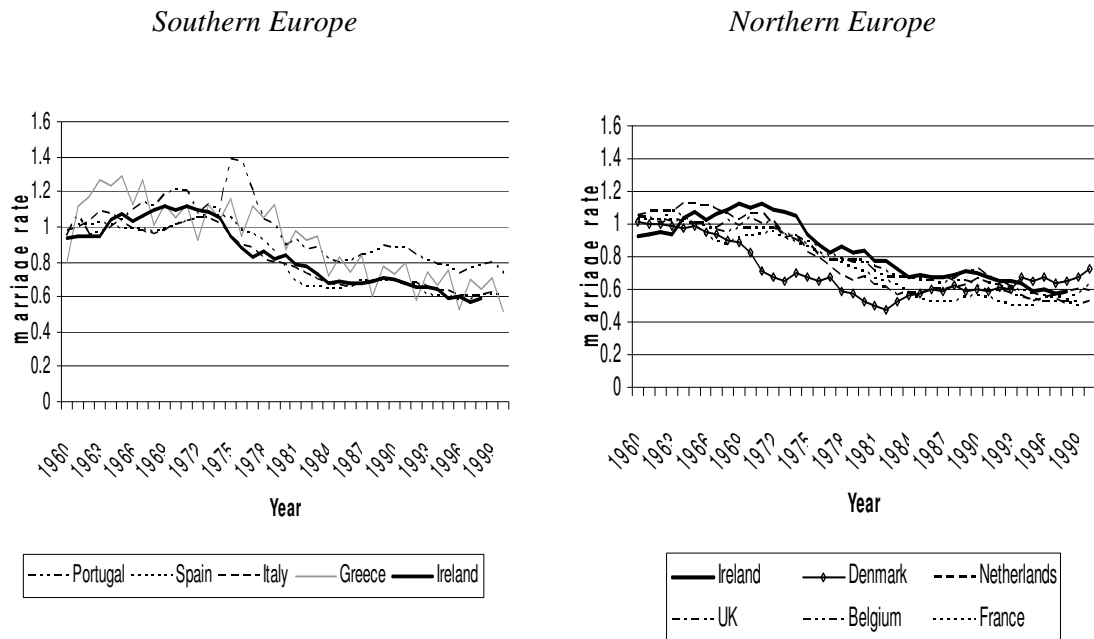


Source: UN Demographic Yearbooks 1949/50, 1960, 1976, 2001.

Comparing crude marriage rates can be misleading since in countries with divorce (traditionally the Northern group), re-marriage can inflate the total marriage rate statistic. Comparable total female first marriage rates became available in 1960 and are shown in Figure 1.3. The trend over the period in the total first marriage rate is similar to that seen in Figure 1.2 for the crude marriage rate. The Southern group of countries tend to have higher female rates of entry into first marriage compared to the North. Compared to Portugal and Greece, Ireland's total female first marriage rate was low through-out the period but tracks a similar path to that in Italy and Spain. In comparison to the Northern group, Ireland's rates appear high except for the 1990s when Denmark had higher rates of entry into first marriage. Again, as North/South differences in first marriage rates became less pronounced, the outlying nature of the Irish experience declined.

In recent decades, the coefficient of variation in first marriage rates has been remarkably low within Europe (see Appendix 1, Figure 2). Other indicators of trends in nuptiality such as the average age of first marriage or the proportion of the population never married, have changed more radically over the course of the century. The most remarkable feature of more recent times is the extent to which couples are marrying at older ages than heretofore.

**Figure 1.3:** Total period first marriage rates, females, selected European countries, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

### 1.5.2 Levels of non-marriage

It can be more insightful to compare the number of people single at different points in time rather than comparing marriage rates. Non-marriage in the 16 to 54 age reduced

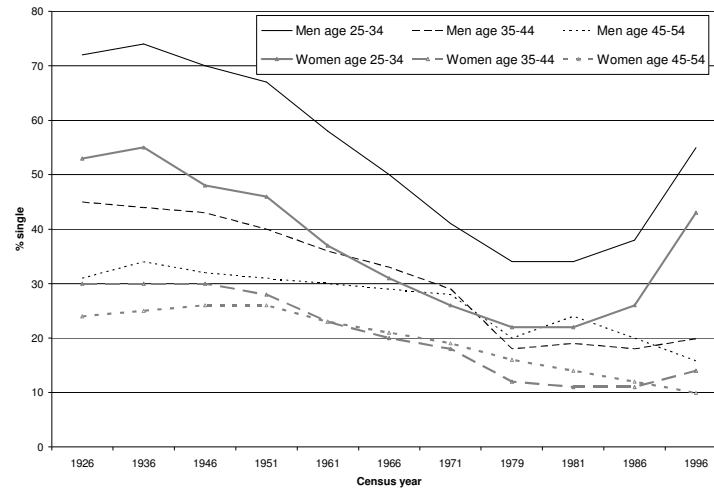
the probability of child-bearing almost to zero in Ireland because illegitimacy was rare. In the 1926 Census of Population of Ireland, a massive 53 per cent of Irish women, aged between 25 and 34, were single, as were 30 per cent of those aged between 35 and 44 (Figure 1.4). The relevant proportions of men who had not married were considerably higher with 72 per cent of men aged 25 to 34, and 45 per cent of those in the 35-44 age group single in the 1926 Census (see Strassman and Clarke 1998, Table 1 for full records). By the 1981 Census, these rates had fallen to 22 and 11 per cent respectively for women and 34 and 19 per cent for men (see Figure 1.4).

The 1936 Census defined a third of men and a quarter of women as ‘permanent celibates’ that is, single people aged between 45 and 54 and therefore assumed to be ‘too old’ to marry.<sup>36</sup> By 1986, these figures had fallen to 20 and 12 per cent respectively. Figure 1.4 shows that from 1936 to 1981, the number of single women at any given age declined. By 1996, the marriage boom in Ireland had well passed and the incidence of non-marriage had risen sharply again (Figure 1.4). Indeed, the proportion of women never-married by age 34 was higher in 1996 than in 1961.

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<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion.

**Figure 1.4:** Percentage single\* by sex and various age groups, Ireland, 1926-1996.



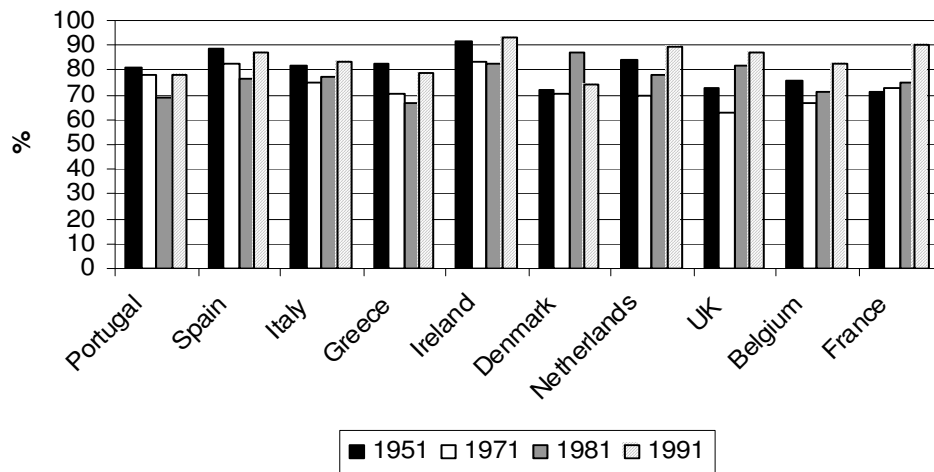
\*'Single' refers to the never-married population but includes never married cohabiters.  
*Source:* Census of Population of Ireland, 1996, 2002.

On a broad level, Ireland has had one of the highest percentages of individuals who never marry of any country in the world (see Walsh 1968, Table 1, Strassman and Clarke 1998, Table 1 and Fahey 2001, Figure 4). Compared to Western Europe, delayed marriage and celibacy in Ireland were an extreme example of a North-west European marriage pattern (Hajnal 1965). Walsh (1962) found that at the end of the nineteenth century (1896-1900), 30 per cent of Irish men and 25 per cent of Irish women remained unmarried by the age of 50. The comparable figure for most of Western Europe at the time was 10 per cent for both sexes (Walsh 1962). By 1966, the percentages of the Irish population single in all the younger age groups were still the highest recorded in any developed country (Walsh 1968). Walsh concluded that the highest levels of celibacy recorded in the world were found in countries with predominantly Catholic populations (Walsh 1968).

Figure 1.5 presents selective European data, between 1951 and 1991, on the number of women who were single in the youngest age group (aged 15-24). In Ireland, the incidence of non-marriage among this group was exceptionally high in

each period (Figure 1.5). Between 1951 to 1981, the rate of non-marriage fell so that by 1981, 83 per cent of Irish women aged 15-24 were never married, representing the lowest rate recorded for Ireland over this time period (Figure 1.5). By 1991, however, this rate had risen to 93 per cent single representing the highest value in both the Northern and Southern European groups. In earlier years, the predominantly Catholic countries of Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland had significantly higher average rates of celibacy in this younger age group when compared to the Northern group. By 1991, the difference between both groups has disappeared. On a broader international level, Fahey noted that in the late 1990s the only real outlier as far as non-marriage among the older age groups was concerned were the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland (Fahey 2002, Figure 4).

**Figure 1.5:** Percentage of women aged 15-24 single in selected European countries, various years



Note: Data for Portugal and Spain relate to 1950 and 1970, Italy 1986, Belgium 1947 and 1970, France 1952, UK 1982.

Source: UN Demographic Yearbooks 1960, 1976, 1990, 1995.

This more recent rise in non-marriage must be interpreted with caution. In the past, marriage was the dominant gateway to family formation but, this is no longer the case, a point which will emerge in the next section in relation to the rise in non-marital childbearing. This is most especially the case in the Scandinavian countries where non-marital cohabitation has become commonplace (Iacovou 1999). In a wide range of countries, it is clear that marriage is less popular than it was in the past but it is more difficult to establish the extent to which cohabitation, solo parenthood and other types of family formation have provided an alternative.

### **1.5.3 Age patterns at marriage**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Irish men and women were among the oldest in Western Europe when tying the knot (Tomka 2002). This pattern was established earlier: At the end of the nineteenth century, Walsh (1962) estimated that the average age of marriage for grooms was 33 years and 29 for brides, nearly six years older than the average for men in most West European countries. In general, early marriage is believed to be conducive to universal marriage, while later marriage is said to result in a higher proportion of the population never-marrying. Ireland was, however, a deviant case (Dixon 1978).

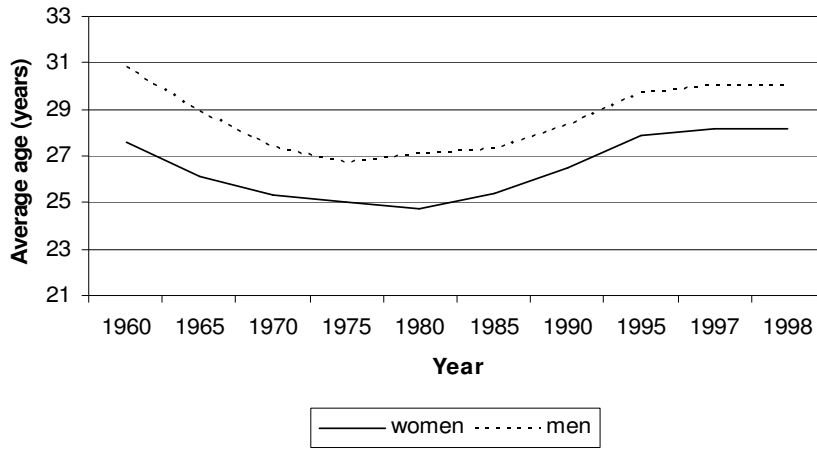
The average age of first marriage of Irish men and women remained relatively constant between 1861 and 1951, but the proportion of permanent bachelors rose and fell sharply (Dixon 1978, Table 3). In addition, over the period, spinsterhood doubled. From a high level in 1946, average age of marriage in Ireland declined substantially so that by 1961, Irish men and women married at about the same age as those in Spain, Greece and (for grooms) Italy (see Walsh 1972 and Dixon 1978). Figure 1.6 plots the mean age at first marriage for men and women from 1960 on. Comparing

this figure to Figure 1.4 reveals that Ireland is no longer a deviant case, as defined by Dixon. From the 1960s on, as age of marriage declined, the number of permanent celibate individuals declined and from the 1980s, as the population began to postpone marriage again, the marriage rate declined (see Figure 1.1).

Irish marital history can be viewed in three distinct periods. Prior to 1960, Ireland generally displayed low rates of entry into marriage and a high average mean age at marriage for both men and women. The prevalence of nuptiality did vary however, despite stability in its timing. The post-war period, especially since 1961, was characterised by rapidly rising marriage rates as well as falling age of marriage (Figure 1.6). Walsh (1972) noted that in this period, there was a significant trend towards greater equality between husbands' and wives' ages at marriage. He postulated that older bachelor's marriage prospects deteriorated over this period as women were able to find younger grooms with greater ease (Walsh 1972). From 1980 to 1997, Ireland evolved towards the more standard pattern for European countries with declining rates of entry into marriage and increasing age of marriage. In that period, the mean age at first marriage increased by almost 3 years for men and 3.5 years for women. At the same time, marriage rates fell by 30 per cent.

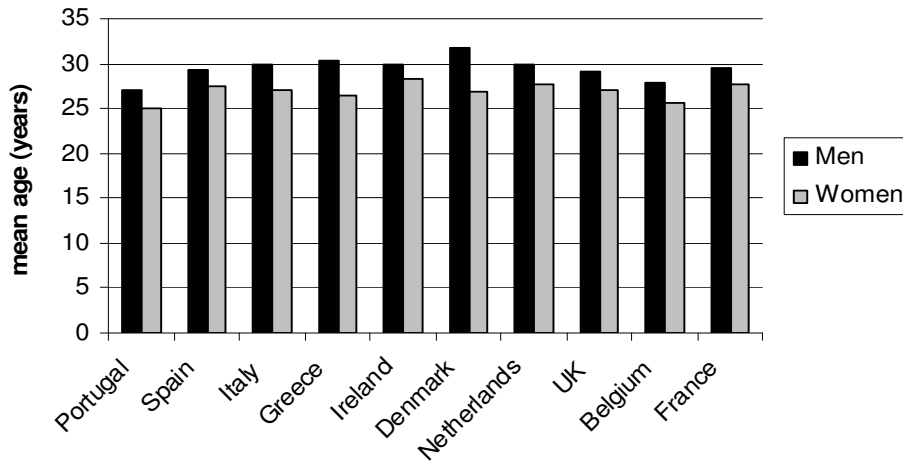
Figure 1.6 illustrates that the age difference between brides and grooms has continued to shrink. Grooms were on average 3.2 years older than brides in 1960 but this had fallen to 1.8 years by 1998. By then, Ireland displayed the smallest age gap between partners in both Northern and Southern Europe (Figure 1.7).

**Figure 1.6:** Mean age at first marriage in Ireland, men and women, 1960-1998



Source: Eurostat European Social Statistics, 2000.

**Figure 1.7:** Mean age of men and women at first marriage in selected European countries in 1998

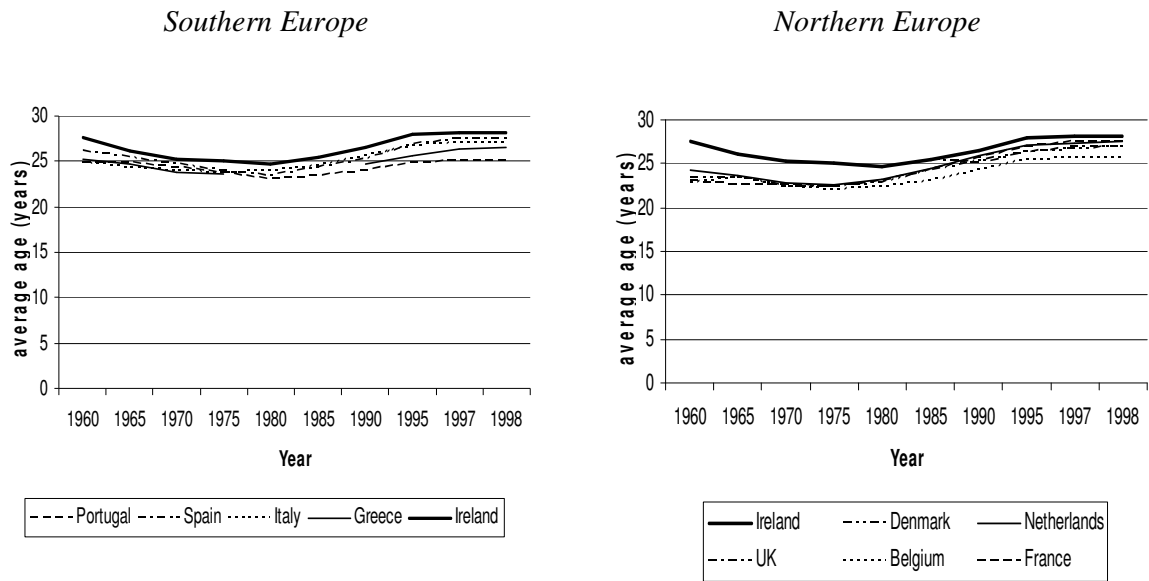


Source: Eurostat European Social Statistics, 2000.

In terms of a European comparison, by 1998 Ireland was still at the upper limit in terms of mean age of brides at first marriage (Figure 1.8). Since the 1980s, the average age at first marriage has increased in both the Southern and Northern group of countries. Not alone does this have an important influence on marriage rates, but such trends have important implications for age at first childbirth and subsequent family size (see the next section). Figure 1.8 shows that in the 1960s, women in the Southern European group married later than those in the Northern group but by the 1990s, all countries had a mean age of women at marriage in the range of 25-28 years. The relationship between age at marriage and the proportions remaining unmarried reveals that Denmark can be considered a deviant case in accordance with Dixon (1978).

Since 1982 marriage rates have been on the increase in Denmark but, the mean age at which Danish women marry has been increasingly since then; with a marriage rate of 6.6 in 1998 and an average age of marriage of 27 for women. In contrast, Portugal displayed the expected relationship with high rates of entry into marriage and a relatively young age of marriage - a marriage rate of 6.7 in 1998 and an average age of 25 for brides. Ireland displayed the reverse trend with traditionally low rates of entry into marriage (marriage rate of 4.5 in 1998) and a relatively high average age at marriage (28 years).

**Figure 1.8:** Mean age at first marriage for selected European countries, females,  
1960-1998

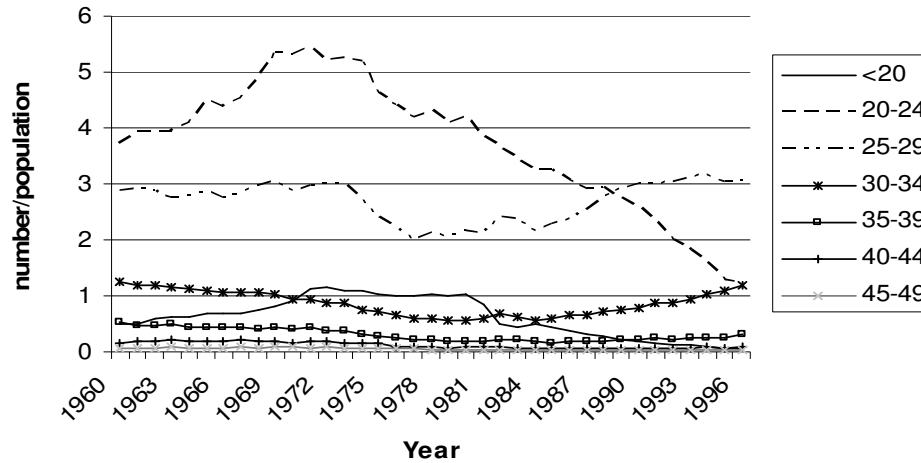


Source: Eurostat European Social Statistics 2000.

Recent trends are strongly indicative of marriage postponement although it is too soon to know how much of this postponement will result in permanent singledom. Figure 1.9 presents female age-specific marriage rates for Ireland and it shows that since 1970, the largest declines in marriage occurred for women aged between 20 and 24. In the period 1970 to 1996, this group's marriage rate declined by almost 70 per cent (Figure 1.9). Up until 1973, rates of entry into marriage for women aged 24 and under had been increasing. The increase in marriages at the time was, therefore, due to larger number of young females marrying. Since the late 1970s, marriage rates have increased for all women aged 25 and over, hence the increasing average age at marriage.

**Figure 1.9:** Age-specific first marriage rates for women aged less than 50, Ireland,

1960-1996

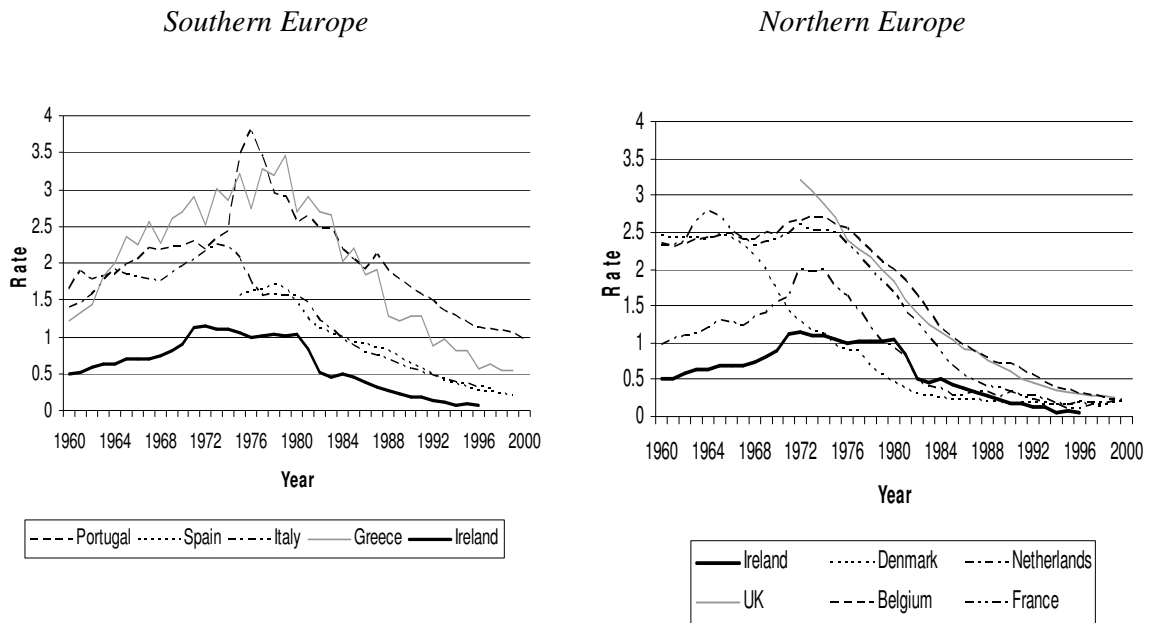


Source – Central Statistic’s Office, Dublin, 2001.

From a European perspective, Ireland has a remarkably low rate of teenage marriage, lower than in all the Southern European countries who now display a higher average rate of teenage marriage than in the North (see Figure 1.10). By 1996, the last date in which Irish data were available, only France displayed as low a rate of teenage marriage as in Ireland. In this regard, Ireland has more in common with the Northern European group. A similar pattern was found for Irish women in their early twenties who also enter marriage less than similarly aged women in both the Northern and Southern countries. But by ages 25 and older, Irish rates of marriage were high by European standard with marriage rates for Irish women aged 25 and older higher than in the other countries analysed here (see Figure 1.11).<sup>37</sup>

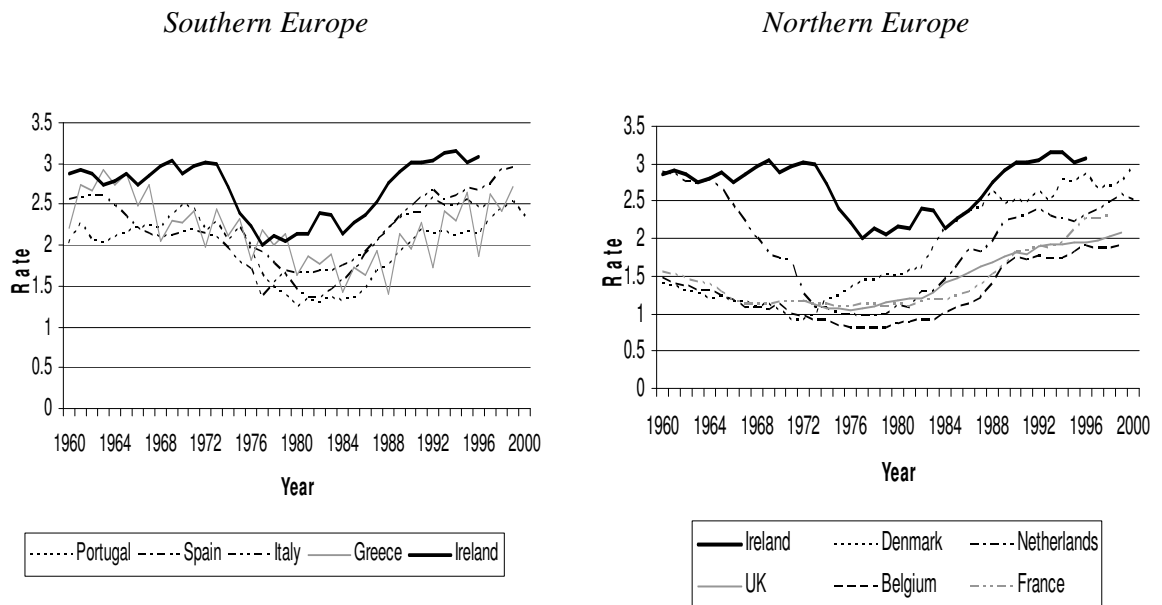
<sup>37</sup> In the 1990s, only Denmark showed higher marriage rates than Ireland in the over 30s age-range.

**Figure 1.10:** First marriage rates for women aged less than 20 in selected European countries, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

**Figure 1.11:** First marriage rates for women aged 25-29 in selected European countries, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

In conclusion, Ireland's unique marital picture disappeared from the 1980s on as the Northern/Southern European divide in marriage rates became less pronounced and all European countries started to look more alike. From about 1985, Ireland's total first marriage rate tracks the average marriage rate for all the European countries analysed here (See Appendix 1, Figure 1). The variance in marriage rates has also been in decline since 1975 highlighting the fact that marriage rates are now more alike across all 10 European countries (see Appendix 1, Figure 2). The Northern group of countries tend to have less variation in marriage rates than the South (including Ireland).<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the rest of the developed world, Ireland experienced a late marriage boom but, by the 1970s, Ireland had caught up with other European countries. The implications of trends in marriage rates and age of marriage on childbearing patterns will now be discussed. Given that Ireland's marital picture now looks more like that in other European countries, we may expect the same of fertility levels.

#### **1.5.4 Fertility Levels**

Data on fertility in Ireland are poor but this section of the chapter will describe as best as possible trends in fertility levels over the course of the last century.<sup>39</sup> The main focus is on fertility rates as measured by the total period fertility rate (see Ní Bhrolcháin 1996 for details and Chapter Five for cohort measures). Figure 1.12 below displays three common measures of fertility levels. The completed fertility rate can only be calculated for women who have finished childbearing and therefore, it lags

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<sup>38</sup> This is still true if you remove Ireland from the Southern group.

<sup>39</sup> Ireland has never carried out a fertility survey and the Census stopped collecting information on the number of children born to married women in 1981. In the 2006 Census, however, this question was asked of all women.

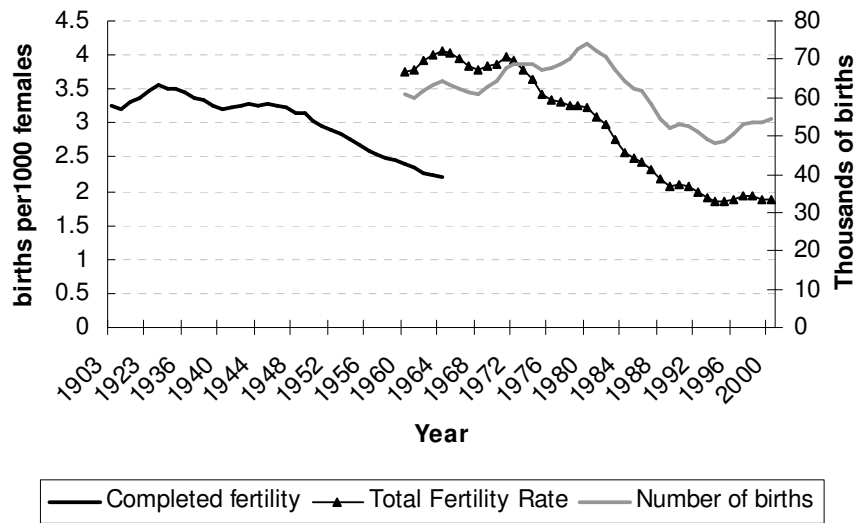
behind current trends. Figure 1.12 shows that from 1926, the completed fertility rate or, the ultimate average number of children born alive to a woman in a particular year, began to decline steadily. In 1926, the completed fertility rate for a woman was 3.56 but by 1964 it had fallen to 2.21 (a fall of 38 per cent).

From 1960, total fertility rates (TFR) were made available through the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The TFR fell by 53 per cent between 1965 and 2000. The number of births in any particular period is a function of the number of women of child-bearing age (14-49 years) and the fertility levels of these women. From the late 1960s to 1980, the number of births increased, but because the female population increased faster, the TFR fell (Figure 1.12). By 1991, for the first time in history, Irish fertility finally crossed the below replacement fertility level of 2.1 children per woman that is, the total fertility rate was slightly below the replacement level required in order to maintain population stability. Although the TFR trend for the late 1990s has been reasonably flat, the number of births increased by 12 per cent between 1994 and 2000. While the TFR has oscillated somewhat since, in recent years it has not exceeded the replacement level since 1991.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed discussion of fertility changes, see McCarthy and Murphy-Lawless 1999, Fahey 2001, Murphy-Lawless 2005, Punch 2007.

**Figure 1.12: Irish fertility statistics, 1903-2000**

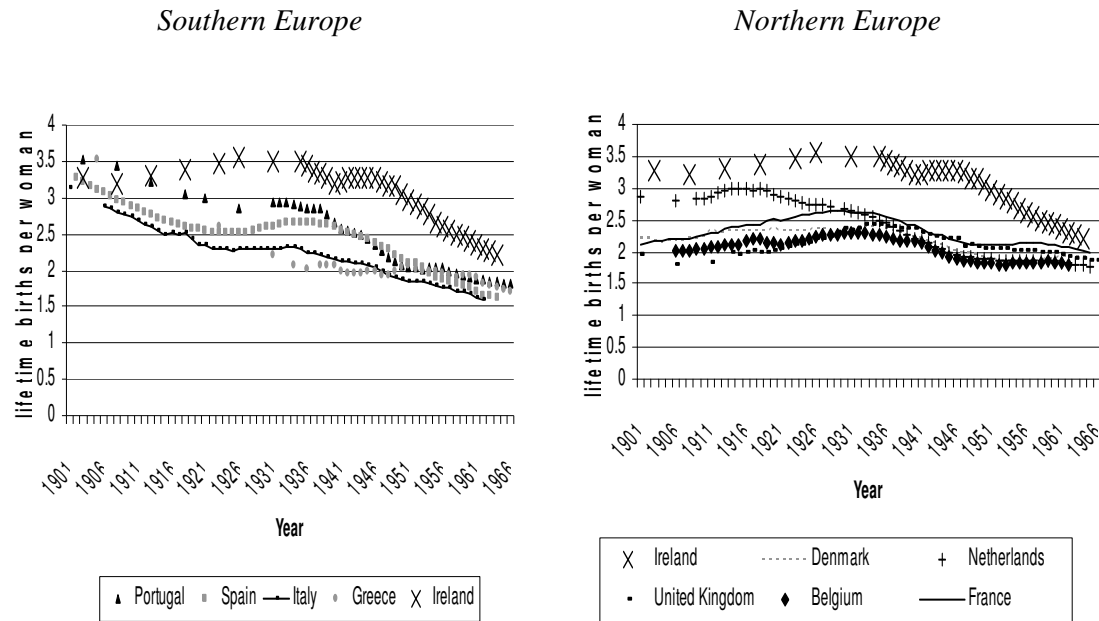


*Source:* UN Demographic Yearbook 2001 and Oxford Population Project, demographic data, 2001.

From a European perspective, Ireland displayed high fertility rates well above replacement level when the rest of Western Europe was experiencing declining fertility levels. Figure 1.13 presents completed fertility rates for Northern and Southern European countries. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Southern and predominantly Catholic group of countries had a higher number of lifetime births per woman when compared to the Northern group, perhaps reflecting traditional Catholic teaching. Ireland's completed fertility rate increased up until 1930, when rates in the Southern countries were declining (Figure 1.13). As the century wore on, the outlying nature of Irish fertility remained evident despite the fact that Ireland's rate declined from 1935 on. In 1926, for instance, Ireland's completed fertility rate was 3.56 compared to 2.86 in Portugal, 2.52 in Spain and 2.28 in Italy. Irish rates were high even in comparison to countries outside of Europe at that time. In 1926, the completed fertility rate in the United States was 2.92, 3.3 in Canada and 2.83 in Australia, compared to 3.56 in Ireland. So, not only was Ireland's completed fertility

rate high from a European perspective, but it ranked high in relation to most other developed countries (for details, see Fahey and Russell 2002).

**Figure 1.13:** Completed fertility for female generations born after 1900, in selected European countries, 1901-1966



Source: Oxford Population Project, demographic data, 2001.

From the 1970s, as European women began to postpone marriage and marriage rates began to decline in most European countries, fertility levels began to drop. Total Fertility Rates declined earlier in the Northern group of countries and by 1975, the rate had stabilised in all Northern countries at low levels, in the range of 1.5 to 1.9 (see Figure 1.14). In contrast, Southern TFRs did not start to fall until 1970 and by the 1990s, they had fallen to levels ranging between 1.2 and 1.5. In terms of Reher's terminology, it was in these strong family systems that modernisation occurred late and was most dramatic. Ireland's Total Fertility Rate showed the largest

decline, falling from 3.8 in 1960 to 1.9 in 2000 (a fall of 50 per cent). By 2000, however, the Irish TFR was still higher than all Southern European total fertility rates and only France in the Northern group matched the Irish TFR (Figure 1.14). In Spain, the TFR fell by 41 per cent over the same period where as in Denmark, the rate increased from 1.5 in 1980, to 1.8 in 2000. Even at its lowest level (1.84 in 1995), the Irish TFR was still 30 per cent higher than the EU average (Fahey and Russell 2002).

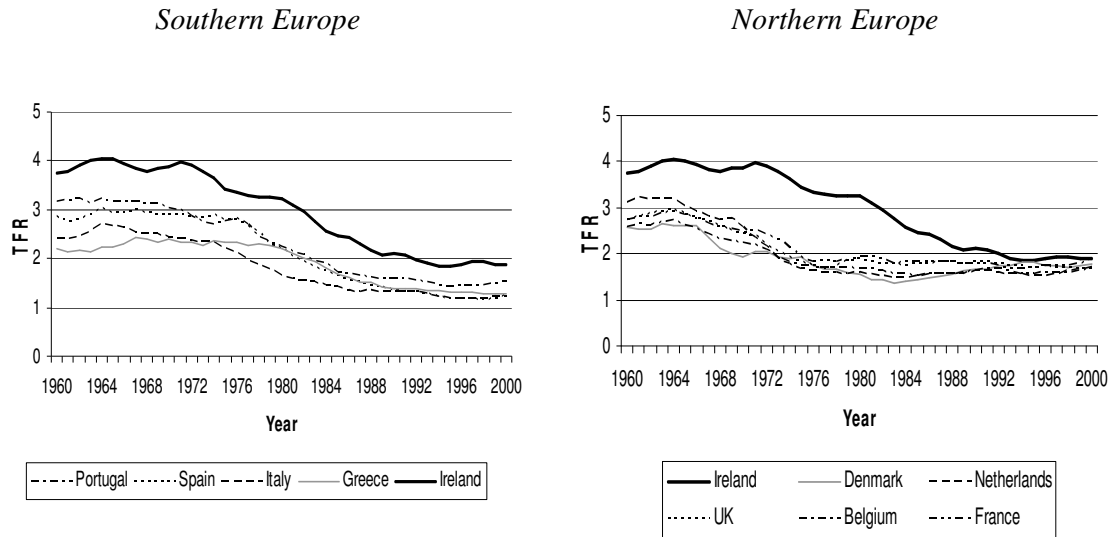
Irish fertility rates have, therefore, been consistently high by European standards and in the 1990s, Ireland displayed rates closer to those in Northern Europe than to the Catholic South. On a broader international level, Irish fertility levels in the 1990s were below those of the US and New Zealand. The Irish fertility picture is thus less exceptional when compared to ‘new world’ countries (see Fahey 2001). Despite the recent fall in the Irish TFR, when inward migration is taken into account, Ireland remains the only country in Europe with fertility rates above replacement level (Eurostat 2002).<sup>41</sup> Low fertility countries such as Italy - which had a TFR of 1.23 in 2000 compared to the replacement level fertility rate of 2.1 - have been warned to expect rapid population ageing and sharp population decline in the next few decades.<sup>42</sup> It seems that Ireland has escaped such problems.

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<sup>41</sup> An interesting avenue for future research relates to the impact of inward migration on Irish marriage and fertility rates. Punch (2007) noted that the share of births in which none of the parents were Irish increased from 2.3 per cent in 1991 to 11.8 per cent in 2006.

<sup>42</sup> See Naldini (2003) for a review of the literature on Mediterranean trends and causal factors, such as late age of leaving home, low levels of cohabitation and extramarital births, and employment factors.

**Figure 1.14:** The Total Fertility Rate in selected European countries, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

### 1.5.5 Birth Order

In the early half of the twentieth century, the patterns of family formation and childbearing that gave rise to Irish fertility levels were distinctive. Marriages were few with many adults remaining unmarried but families were extremely large. The figures below graph the proportion of births by birth order in Ireland since 1935 (Figure 1.15 and 1.16). The first graph, Figure 1.15, shows two important trends; first as completed fertility rates declined, the proportion of childless women by generation increased from 4 per cent in 1935, to 15 per cent in 1960 (see Chapter Five).<sup>43</sup> In parallel with this, there was a 53 per cent decline in the number of higher order births that is, four or more children. Although fertility rates continued to decline until they bottomed out in the early 1990s, the structure of this trend changed. The second graph, Figure 1.16, shows the proportion of births by birth order since 1960.<sup>44</sup> Fifth

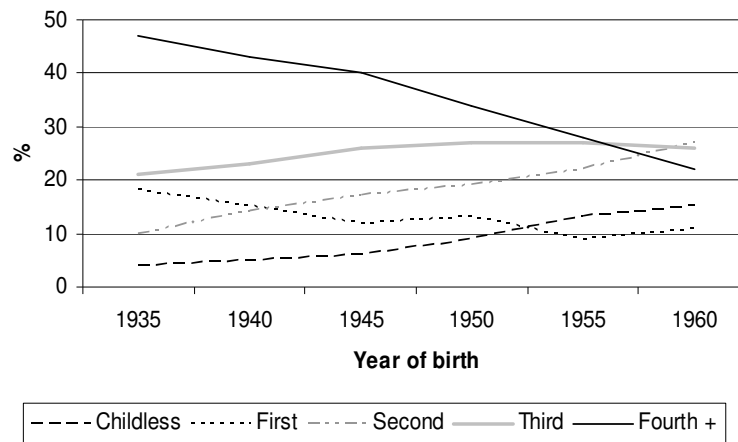
<sup>43</sup> One of the problems discussed in Chapter 5 relates to how representative the survivors are of the totality of women born in these older cohorts (see also Hantrais 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Information on the number of childless marriages was unavailable over this time period.

plus births declined substantially from 1960 to 1999, falling from one-third of all births of fifth order or higher status in 1960, to only 4 per cent in 2000. In addition, the number of first births increased by 19 per cent over this period. This represented the highest level of first births in Ireland over the twentieth century.

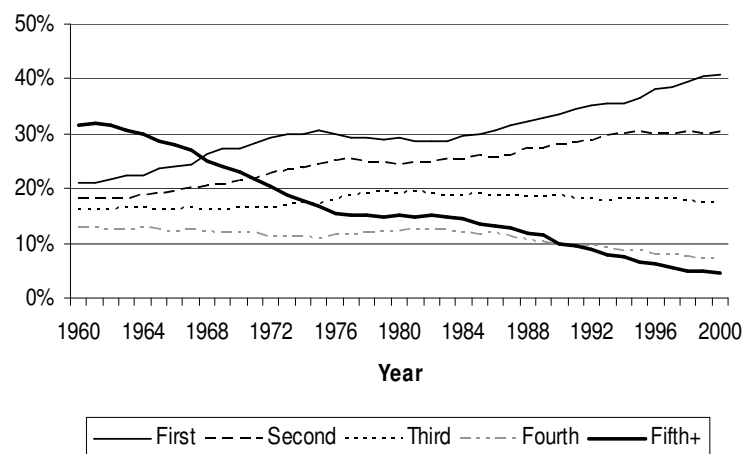
**Figure 1.15:** Proportion of Irish women with 0 to 4+ children by generation, 1935-

1960



Source: Eurostat European Social Statistics 2000.

**Figure 1.16:** Proportion of births by birth order in Ireland, 1960-2000



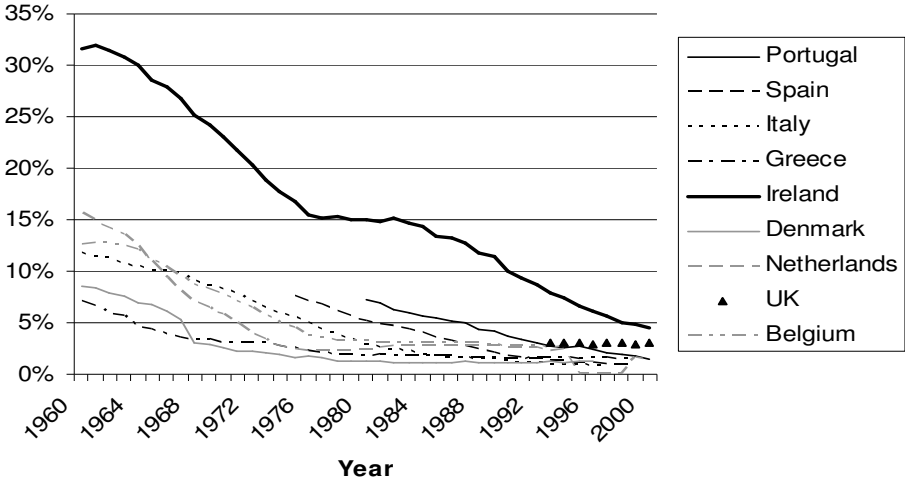
Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

The incidence of large families was extraordinarily high in Ireland (see Figure 1.17). In both Northern and Southern Europe, the typical pattern was that first births outnumbered fifth-plus births. In Ireland, in 1960, there were one-and-half times as many fifth-plus births as first births (Figure 1.17). In the Netherlands, in 1960, for instance, there were twice as many first order births as fifth plus births (compare Figure 1.18 and 1.17). Almost half (47 per cent) of all women born in Ireland in 1935 had 4 or more children over the life-course compared to only 18 per cent who had one child (Eurostat 2000). In Italy, by contrast, only 15 per cent of women born in 1935 had four or more children compared to 17 per cent who had one child.

By 1980, fifth-plus births had fallen to 15 per cent in Ireland but this was still ahead of corresponding proportions for the Northern and Southern European countries (Figure 1.17). According to Fahey and Russell (2002), it was not until later into the 1990s that higher order births dropped to something like normal levels for Europe and indeed all developed countries. From a European perspective, even by 2000 Irish rates represented the upper limit of fifth-plus births (Figure 1.17). Ní Bhrolcháin warns, however, that ‘we cannot fully interpret these data as they are, since absolute numbers of these kind do not tell us about any changes that may have occurred in the propensity of the population at risk to have children of a particular order’ (Ní Bhrolcháin 1996, p. 252).

**Figure 1.17:** Proportion of births fifth order or higher in selected European countries,

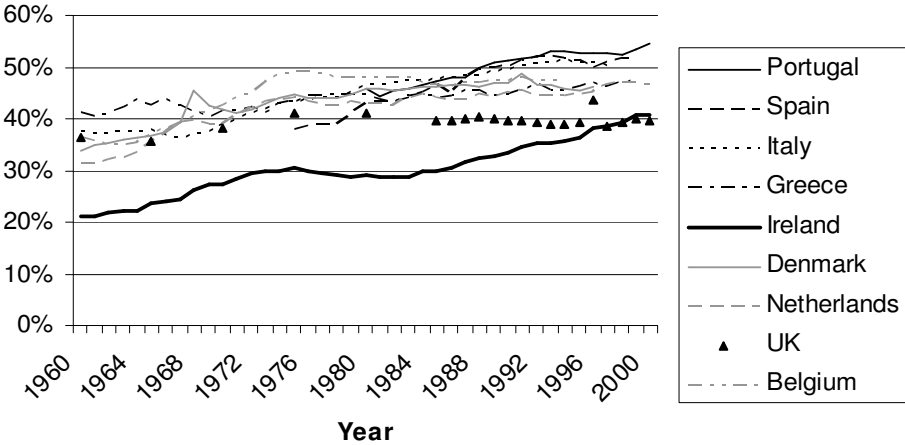
1960-2000



Note: data on birth order were unavailable for France  
 Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

**Figure 1.18:** Proportion of first order births in selected European countries, 1960-

2000



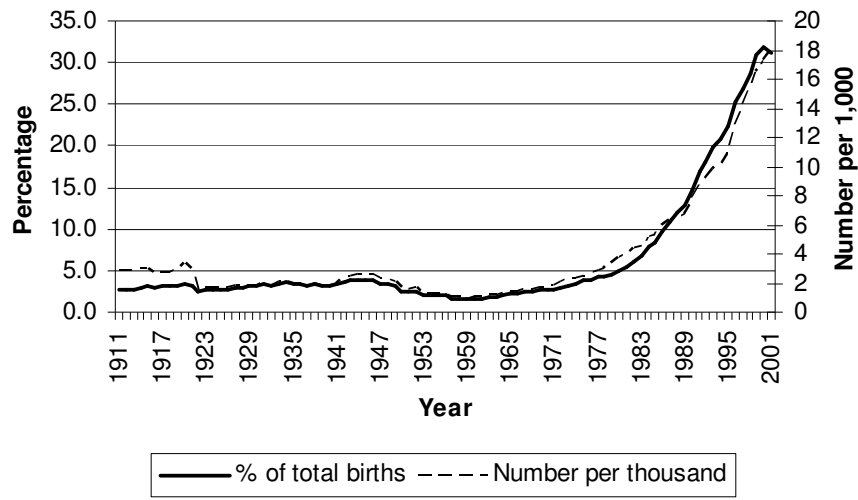
Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

### **1.5.6 Non-Marital Fertility**

Perhaps the most dramatic change in patterns of family formation is in the number of births occurring outside of marriage. In 1970, only 3 per cent of all Irish births were reported to occur outside of marriage but by 2000, almost a third of all births were non-marital. This was slightly above the EU average (see Figure 1.19). It is noteworthy that the increase in non-marital fertility was experienced by Irish women of all reproductive ages (McCarthy and Murphy-Lawless 1997, Table 4). As non-marital births increased in number, the relationship between marriage and fertility changed. By the early 1990s, there were more first births than marriages (Fahey and Russell 2002). As data on cohabitation were unavailable in Ireland for most of this period, it is impossible to know how many of these births occurred to single mothers as opposed to cohabiting couples.

In addition, the reporting of non-marital births may have become more accurate as the stigma associated with non-marital childbearing declined, most especially since the State introduced a lone parent allowance in 1995 (see Chapter 3). Some research suggests that inaccurate reporting was aided by many Irish women leaving the country to give birth or by getting married upon finding they were pregnant (Coleman 1992).

**Figure 1.19:** Non-marital births in Ireland, 1911-2001.



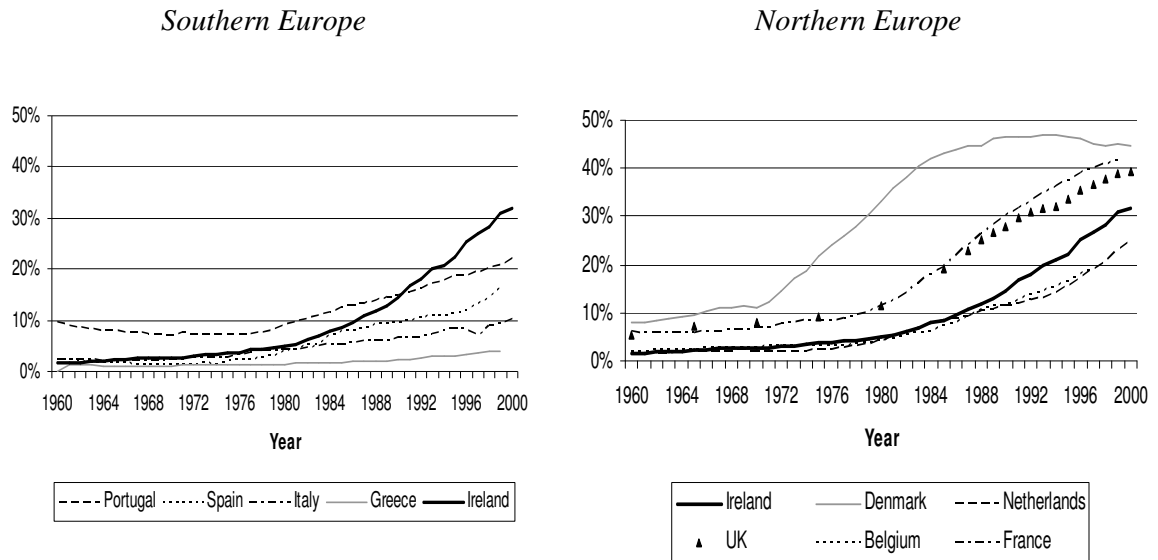
*Source:* Central Statistics Office, Dublin, 2001.

The share of birth occurring outside of marriage has risen sharply in many countries since the 1980s (Figure 1.20). Greece has seen the smallest increase on this front increasing by only 4 percent between 1960 and 1999 (Figure 1.20). In comparison to the Southern group, by the 1990s, the number of non-marital births in Ireland is high with Greece and Italy displaying particularly low levels of non-marital fertility. France, the U.K. and Denmark have all experienced greater increases in this rate than Ireland over the 1990s. Up until the 1980s, Ireland's position on this indicator was low and similar to Spain, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. By 1999, the value for Ireland was three times that of Italy and twice that of Spain. In this regard, by 2001, Irish rates of non-marital births were more similar to the rates experienced in the Northern, rather than the Southern group of countries.

This trend is likely to be related to the rise in cohabitation across Europe. Kiernan (1997), for example, found that many of these European births occur within quasi-marital unions. Punch (2007) provides recent evidence for Ireland; based on

annual birth statistics, he found that by the year 2005, of the 19,528 births that occurred outside of marriage, 44 per cent were to parents who were cohabiting.

**Figure 1.20:** Proportion of non-marital births in selected European countries, 1960-2001



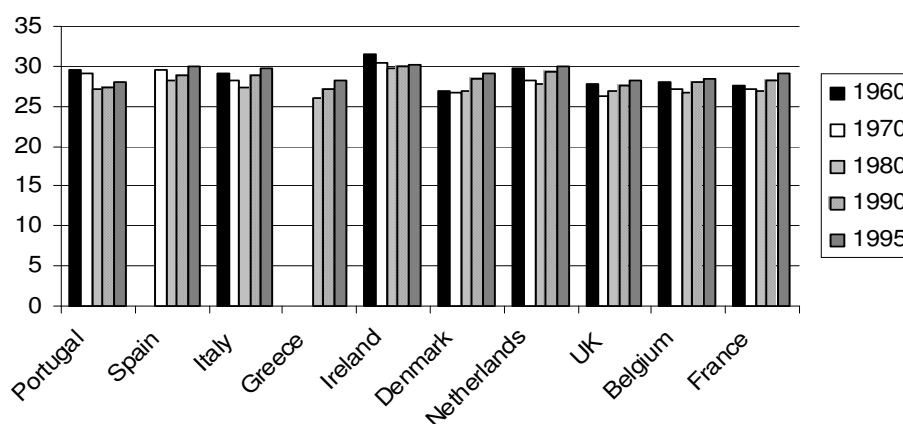
Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001, 2002.

### 1.5.7 Age patterns of fertility

The postponement of marriage and childbearing has significant demographic consequences including falling fertility levels. Increasing age at childbirth is thought to be the major reason for recent declines in fertility in Europe. In 1960, Irish women married late and they therefore had children relative late in life compared to women in both Northern and Southern Europe (Figure 1.21). Despite this late average age of motherhood, total fertility rates in Ireland were comparably high. Since 1960, Ireland stands out as being on the upper range of mean age at childbirth in both Northern and Southern European countries (Figure 1.21). In addition, the mean age of an Irish

woman at childbirth has been increasing; from 29.6 years in 1975, to 30.6 by 2000 (Figure 1.21). A more revealing measure is the mean age of a woman at first birth which increased from 25.5 to 27.8 over the same period (UN 2001). At the same time as fertility has been declining, the mean age of childbearing has been increasing. This was a common trend across Europe, North and South, since 1980 and will be addressed in Chapter Seven (Figure 1.21).

**Figure 1.21:** The mean age of mothers at childbirth in selected European countries, various years

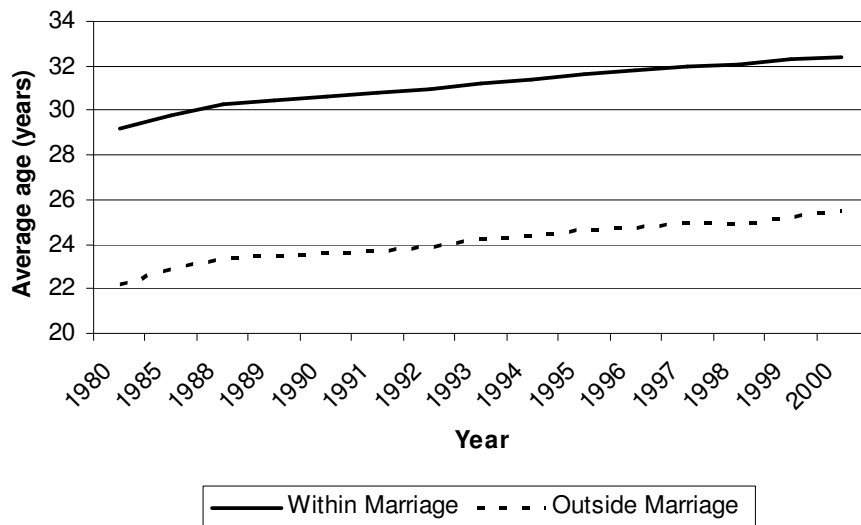


Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

There are important differences between the age at which mothers gave birth inside and outside of marriage. Both the average age of mothers giving birth inside and outside of marriage have increased in Ireland and the relative difference between these mothers has remained the same; younger mothers are more likely to be unmarried (Figure 1.22). In 1980, the average age of an unmarried mother was 22 years compared to 25 in 2000. In 1980, the average age of a married mother was 29 compared to 32 in 2000. Non-marital births are still more prevalent among younger

women despite the overall increasing tendency to delay marriage and childbirth among Irish women (Figure 1.22). This age-pattern signals important shifts in family formation practises among younger generations of Irish women. Among women up to age 21, over 90 percent of births took place outside of marriage in 1997 (Fahey and Russell 2002).<sup>45</sup> Punch (2007) noted that a similar pattern exists if the analysis is restricted to first birth. Since 1980, the average age of mother at first births has increased but, the age gap between mothers who were having their first children within and outside of marriage diverged as more first births occurred outside of marriage. The gap between the age of married and unmarried mothers at first birth widened to 7.2 years during 1998/1999 (Punch 2007).

**Figure 1.22:** Average age of mothers classified by marital status in Ireland, 1980-2000.



Source: Central Statistics Office, Dublin, 2001

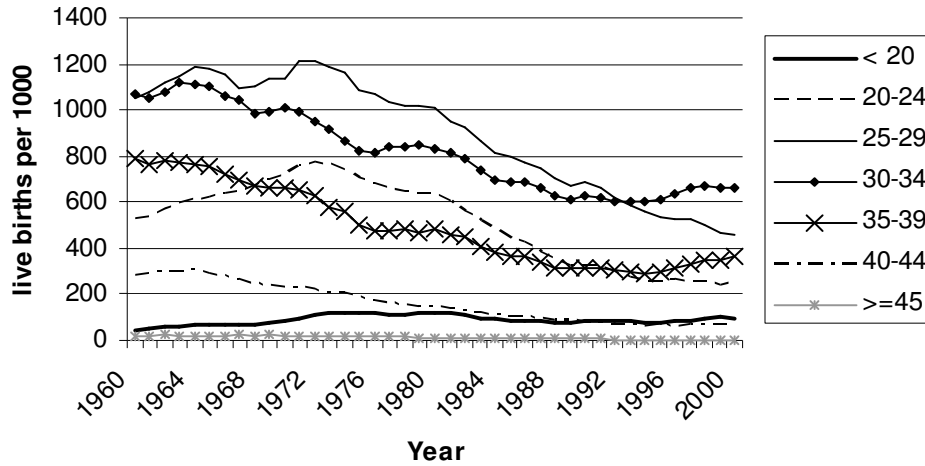
<sup>45</sup> This compares to around 10 per cent of births for women by their early thirties (Fahey and Russell 2002, Figure 2.12).

The more detailed, age-specific fertility data presented in Figure 1.23 shows interesting differences in births over time, especially since 1995.<sup>46</sup> Between 1975 and 1995, fertility declined at all ages. McCarthy and Murphy-lawless found that the shape of the fertility distribution changed, as well as the level (McCarthy and Murphy-lawless 1997, Figure 2). From 1975 to 1995, the peak of the Irish fertility distribution shifted from the 25-29 age group, to the 30-34 age group. Among women at both ends of the reproductive age span, that is those aged 15-19 and 30 or over, fertility declines had started to level off in the early 1990. In contrast, declines among women in their 20s had continued right up to 2000 and since 1995, considerable increases in fertility took place among women in their 30s. For women aged 35-39, for instance, live birth rates increased by a fifth, from 1995 to 2000. Therefore, the more recent increases in overall fertility levels are clearly the result of patterns that differ by age; during the 1990s Irish women in their 20s continued to have substantially fewer children, where older women (in their 30s) have experienced increasing fertility levels (Table 1.23). From 1993 on, women aged 30-34 have overtaken the 25-29 year olds as the principal child-bearing age group in proportionate terms (see Figure 1.23).

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<sup>46</sup> The birth rates reported here are the sum, by five-year age-group, of age-specific fertility rates (age in completed years) as provided by the UN based on vital statistics records

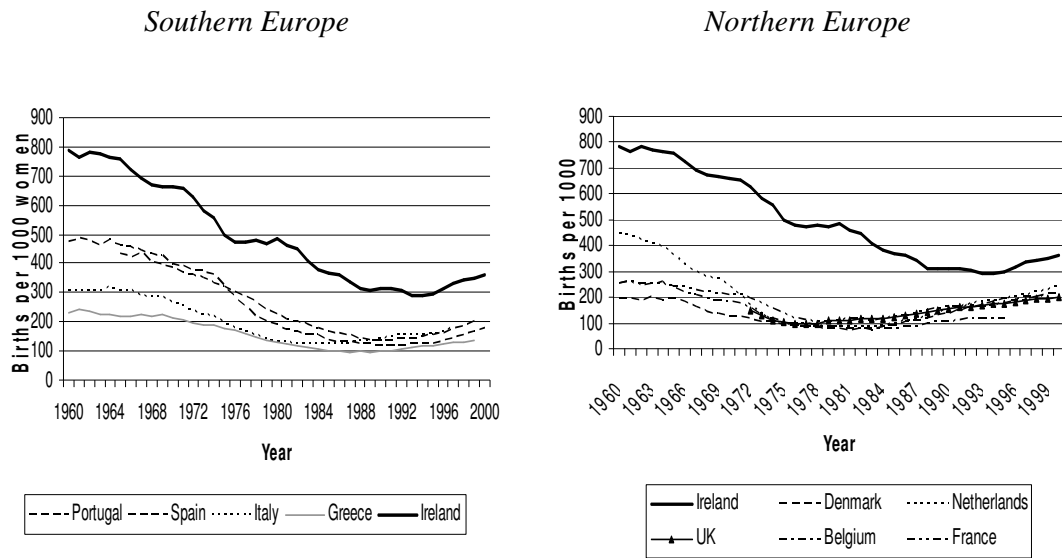
**Figure 1.23:** Age-specific live birth rates in Ireland, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

Fertility amongst women in their 30s is high in Ireland when compared to levels in Southern and Northern European countries. Figure 1.24 illustrates this by comparing age-specific birth rates for women aged 35-39 (but Irish fertility is high for all women over 30). Birth rates for this age-group are quite similar in both the Northern and Southern group although in the 1990s, the Southern group of countries had a lower average rate when compared to the Northern countries. Ireland displayed a similar decline in birth rates between 1960 and 1980 as occurred in all Southern countries but Ireland started at a much higher rate (Figure 1.24). Yet, despite this unusual high starting point and subsequent massive declines, Irish birth rates for this group are still higher than in the Northern and Southern group; in 2000, Irish fertility rates for women aged 35-39 were twice that of Portugal and a third higher than in the Netherlands. Compared to the US in 1995, Fahey and Russell found that age-specific fertility rates for all women over age 30 were higher in Ireland (Fahey and Russell 2002, Figure 2.10).

**Figure 1.24:** Live birth rates for women aged 35-39 in selected European countries, 1960-2000



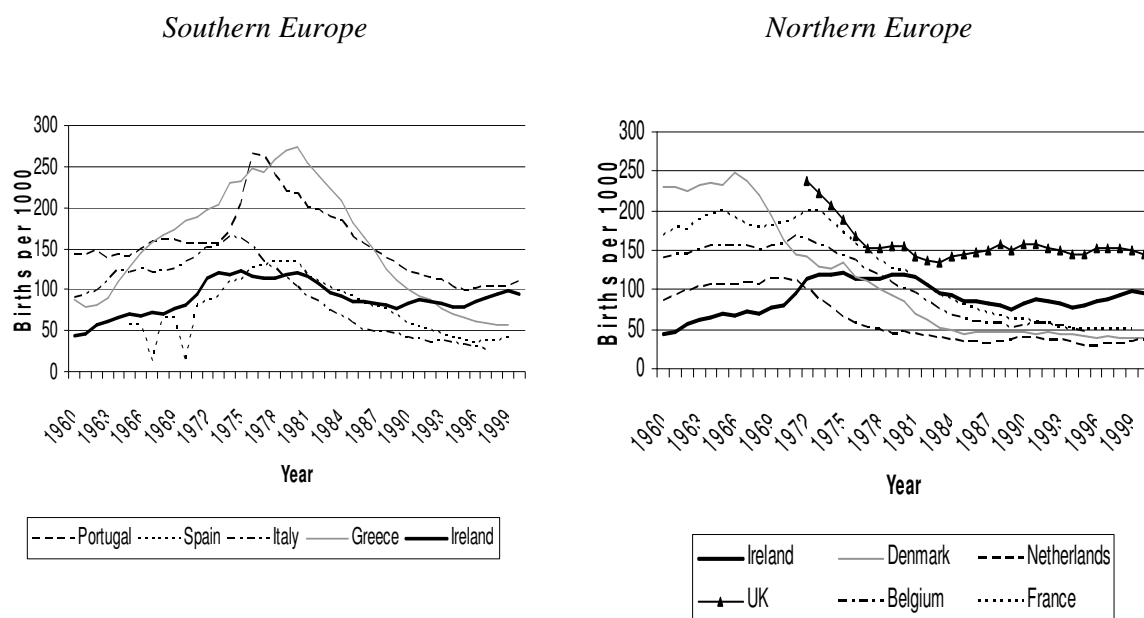
Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

In Ireland, fertility is skewed towards old age-groups and it is therefore no surprise that the teenage fertility rate - the number of live births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19 - is low when compared to other European countries. As was the case in most of Southern Europe, teenage fertility levels increased in Ireland from a low rate in 1960 and reached a late peak in 1980. It then declined through out the 1980's until 1995, when it began a steady increase up to 1999 (Figure 1.25).<sup>47</sup> By 1999, only the U.K. and Portugal had higher teenage birth rates. In the U.K., much of the concern about age-patterns of fertility focuses on the high rates of births to teenage mothers which have been consistently high by Northern European standards (Table 1.25). In 1999, teenage fertility in Ireland was half the U.K. level. By 2002, however, the Irish teenage fertility rate was higher than that the EU average but well below the rates experienced in New Zealand and the USA (Crisis Pregnancy Agency 2006). It is

<sup>47</sup> By 2005, the rate had decreased again.

important to note that teenage fertility rates do not take account of abortions.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the majority of teenage births in Ireland are to unmarried mothers. Micklewright and Stewart (2000) found that in 1995, 93 per cent of Irish teenage births were to unmarried mothers which represented the highest level in all European countries, compared to the European low of 11 per cent in Greece.

**Figure 1.25:** Teenage birth rates in Europe, North and South, 1960-2000



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

In conclusion, Ireland's fertility picture stands out as more unusual from a European perspective than its marital picture. The Irish TFR has always been above the average European total fertility rate and above both the average fertility levels for the Northern and Southern (including Ireland) European groups (see appendix 1, Figure 3). Both Southern and Northern European countries are now much closer to

<sup>48</sup> See Punch 2007 for evidence on recent abortion rates and new trends in destination countries.

the average European fertility rate; that is, the variance in fertility rates has declined substantially from about 1980 (see appendix 1, Figure 4). The Southern group of countries have experienced larger variations around their mean value than the Northern group indicating that as a group, they experience widely differing fertility rates. This is, however, due to the inclusion of Ireland within this group. Once Ireland was removed from the Southern group, the variance resembled that of the North. Not alone does Ireland display a higher than average TFR, we have also seen that it stands out for having a larger than average family size and as the European country with the highest proportion of young unmarried mothers.

Finally, changes in marriage, marital fertility and non-marital fertility all contributed to overall fertility change in Ireland. Employing a standardisation exercise, McCarthy and Murphy-Lawless were able to decompose the influence of each of these three factors on overall fertility from 1975 to 1990 (McCarthy and Murphy-Lawless 1997, Table 5). Changes in marital fertility made the greatest contribution to the overall decline. Changing marriage patterns also contributed to lower fertility, whereas increases in non-marital fertility had a smaller effect, in the opposite direction. Their results suggest that the strongest single factor in shaping recent Irish fertility is the decline in marital fertility rates observed between 1975 and 1990 (see Chapter 5 and 7 for further discussion).

## ***1.6 Summary and Conclusions***

This chapter has assessed how Ireland compares with its European neighbours from a marriage, fertility and family perspective. In some respects, Irish demographic patterns differ from those of most European countries but the differences now are much smaller than they were in the early twentieth century. Ireland's position in

demographic history is peculiar, at least in matters of timing and degree. In contrast to other European countries, Ireland experienced a late decline in fertility and marriage rates which halted in the early 1990s. It leaves Ireland, with a total fertility rate of 1.89 in 2000, at the top of the European fertility table and with relatively low rates of entry into marriage; with a marriage rate of 5.1 in 2000. Irish women in the 1990s still tend to marry later in life and become mothers at an older age compared to women in both Northern and Southern Europe (see Chapter 7). Despite this fact, they have larger families, in terms of the number of fourth or higher order births, and have higher fertility rates among the over 30s age groups. Ireland's demography has changed rapidly particularly in the late 1990s.

First births rose by 25 per cent between 1994 and 1999, but fourth and higher order births continued to decline. The number of first births in 1999 was the highest ever recorded in Ireland. The crude marriage rate has been on the increase since 1997 coinciding with the introduction of divorce and the economic boom. Non-marital childbearing has been on the increase among older as well as younger mothers, though this is more prevalent among younger women. The role of marriage in family formation is less clear cut than it was and by 1999, a third of all births took place outside of marriage. Little is known about the partnership circumstances of these women who give birth outside of marriage. Much remains to be investigated about these changes not only in Ireland but from a European perspective where change has also been dramatic.

One of the aims of this chapter was to look at the similarities and differences between European countries in terms of family formation. Although Northern and Southern European patterns of family formation are now more alike, as witnessed by the decline in variation in the marriage rate and total fertility rate, there is still a large

degree of variation between European countries in the age at which women marry and give birth, and in patterns of non-marital fertility. In other words, there is evidence of convergence between European countries in terms of fertility and nuptiality levels but divergence in terms of patterns of non-marital fertility which confirms a persistent diversity in family patterns, as predicted by Coleman (1996). As regard Ireland's position, in many respects, it is clearly not a member of either the Northern or Southern group. In addition, as Fahey noted:

'Furthermore, when the comparative range is extended beyond Europe to other developed countries, notions of "convergence" in TFRs do not adequately capture how Ireland fits into the international picture, since Irish TFRs in the 1960s were already more similar to those of some non-European developed countries than is often appreciated'

(Fahey 2001, p. 153-154).

Before discussing the factors which are thought to influence marriage and fertility decisions, the next section gives an overview of the different chapters and the links between them. The following chapter argues that any attempt to understand trends in Irish marriage and fertility levels must take account of social class. Family formation patterns have always varied dramatically by social class and the overall demographic rates discussed in this chapter are the sum of class-specific rates of entry into marriage and childbirth.

## ***1.7 Outline of the thesis***

The main topic of this thesis is the changing nature of family formation in Ireland over the course of the twentieth century. It would appear that Ireland is a demographic latecomer in many of the aspects referred to in this chapter. The subsequent chapters focus solely on Ireland given its unusual transition and the fact that remarkably little investigation has been carried out on the details of Irish fertility and nuptiality change. The research is important because of its implication for future

generations and broader ramifications for Irish society as marriage and childbearing are not entered into equally by men and women from different social groups. The study of differential marriage and fertility patterns is important for theoretical and analytical purposes as it is essential for understanding the Irish demographic experience. This chapter has introduced the various issues to be addressed in this study; a summary of the most important findings is provided in the concluding chapter 7.

Chapter Two reviews theories, explanations and findings on the determinants of family formation processes, in particular with regard to marriage and fertility decisions. This chapter sets the stage for the subsequent analytical chapters. It pays attention to the effects of economic factors - male earnings and employment, female educational levels and earnings, sex ratios and the marriage market - and cultural factors - the diffusion of contraceptive technology, the decline of religious affiliation and the importance of norms, preferences and values. The literature specific to Ireland is also discussed; this focuses on the role of the inheritance system, emigration, the peasant economy, the kinship system, Irish sexuality, Catholicism and the role of the Church and State. The chapter aims to highlight the importance of the rational actor perspective, which aptly connects various dimensions of the otherwise fragmented evidence on the Irish family. Furthermore, the perspective also helps to examine norms and attitudes relevant to family formation decisions.

Chapter Three presents some background information on changes in Irish society and economy over the twentieth century. It also introduces the data and discusses some data concerns. Chapter Four constitutes an empirical counterpart to Chapter Two. It provides an analysis of differential patterns of permanent celibacy in Ireland and subsequent declines in these rates beginning at the 1926 Census of

Population. Comparisons are made with the 45-54 age cohort in subsequent census volumes up to 1991. The general mapping of trends and differentials in rates of non-marriage paves the way for the analysis of several related issues, such as the extent of inequality in the life chance of marriage across the classes and within the farming groups. A simulation of changes in rates of non-marriage clearly shows that the relative decline of the farming group was not the cause of the increase in the overall marriage rate.

Employing both old and new data sources and estimates of cohort fertility, Chapter Five explores, in detail, fertility decline in twentieth century Ireland. It provides a brief overview of overall fertility changes across birth cohorts and time periods, taking account of marriage duration and age at marriage. Much of the empirical analysis focuses on examining how pervasive fertility change was across social classes. The study also concentrates on rates of childlessness as surprisingly few commentators have noted the issue of childlessness in Ireland. Finally, two basic simulated scenarios of fertility are presented. The results of the simulation highlight the importance of changing fertility behaviour within social groups.

Although the Census information does not enable a detailed analysis of the changing relationship between marriage and fertility, the *Living in Ireland* panel survey provides a new source of investigation (for details see Chapter 3). Using this data source, Chapter Six provides a thorough empirical test of the role of fertility considerations in marriage decisions. It explores the hypothesis that high rates of marital fertility acted as a marriage deterrent that is, that the groups with the highest fertility levels were also the classes with the lowest levels of nuptiality. The implications of such an approach for future rates of entry into marriage are discussed.

The chapter concludes by decomposing the influence of late marriage and non-marriage on Irish fertility levels.

The concluding chapter discusses the research relevance, summarises the major thesis findings and outlines some limitations of the study. The influence of both socio-cultural and economic factors is re-assessed and speculations are presented on future trends in family formation in Ireland and their wider implications.

## **2 Placing Social Class at the Heart of the Debates on the Family**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Not all sections of Irish society have participated equally in the demographic changes highlighted in the previous chapter. Among some social groups, conventional marriage<sup>1</sup> and a traditional nuclear family<sup>2</sup> remain strong whereas in others, they are becoming less common. The remainder of this thesis will highlight the diversity in family forms by social class. For many years, research on the Irish family tended to focus on peasant communities in rural areas of western Ireland, following in the path of a study by Arensberg and Kimball (See Wilson 1984). Communities were seen as the units of society; that is community, rather than class, was the way in which people viewed society. Class, religion, residence and political affiliation were largely ignored in Irish kinship studies.

In order to marry, however, Irish men needed sufficient resources to provide for a wife and many children, given high rates of marital fertility. Social class provides a useful measure of the command over these resources. The prevalence of a dowry system and the ‘match’ ensured that women’s chances of marriage were also strongly related to their class position.<sup>3</sup> Because not all sections of Irish society have participated equally in

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<sup>1</sup> In the Irish case, it was convention to marry in a Church but civil ceremonies are becoming more common. In 2006, 22 per cent of all marriages were civil ceremonies compared to 6 per cent in 1996 (CSO 2006). In 2007, a new law allowed couples to marry in venues other than churches and registry offices for the first time in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> A nuclear family refers to children living with married biological parents.

<sup>3</sup> The ‘match’ was the parental arrangement of marriage for children. The dowry and ‘match’ will be discussed in detail in section 3.4 of this chapter.

changing patterns of family formation, family diversity has been a potent source of inequality, at times widening the gap between rich and poor (for example, see Corcoran and Russell 2000 study of lone parents).

The segmentation of family forms by social class can be witnessed in two inter-related trends. The first is the differential shift in patterns of permanent celibacy (see Chapter Four). The second concerns the rate and degree of fertility decline (see Chapter Five). The selective weakening of traditional marriage and child rearing has generated important class differences in rates of non-marital births, lone parent families, cohabitation and divorce (see Chapter Seven).

Patterns of family formation vary dramatically by socio-economic status in Ireland. In some cases, these differences are growing. The aim of this chapter is to present the major theoretical explanations of class inequalities in marriage and fertility behaviour. Explanations specific to Ireland can be roughly divided into two categories; those based on the 'stem-family thesis'<sup>4</sup> versus 'the standard-of-living thesis'<sup>5</sup>. The stem family system meant that only one child in each generation inherited the family holding and this pattern had a strong effect on both marital and fertility patterns. In the stem family, the father retained control over property transmission, but only one married child stayed with the parents, inherited and carried on the paternal occupation. What happened to the other children largely depended on receiving a dowry; those who did receive a dowry often set off on their own. The 'standard-of-living thesis' argued that one's standard of living was to some kin more important than marriage. Under this thesis, celibacy in Ireland increased because in order to keep the standard of living they were

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<sup>4</sup> For versions and discussion of this thesis see Arensberg and Kimball (1930, 1948, 1968), Connell (1962), Brody (1973), Gibbon and Curtin (1978), Fitzpatrick (1983) and Varley (1983).

<sup>5</sup> For a version of this thesis, see Kennedy (1973).

accustomed to, those kin who did not inherit land preferred to remain celibate at home rather than marrying and becoming landless labourers (Kennedy 1973).

In general, explanations are based on economic arguments or, on the importance of culture and value systems in explaining group<sup>6</sup> and geographical differences in family formation. First, this chapter discusses models of the family based on rational choice or the economic models, followed by an in-depth discussion of the relevant Irish literature. The third section outlines the cultural approach to family formation, which discusses the role of religion, family values, norms and preferences. References to the importance of 'culture' in the Irish literature are common although historical empirical evidence on this front is limited. The concluding section of this chapter outlines the theoretical approach adopted in this research and introduces some hypotheses. The general aim of these hypotheses is to assess the degree to which economic theories, or objective rational thinking, can account for class differences in Irish marital and reproductive behavior.

Three aspects of Irish demographic behaviour are addressed in the bulk of this research. Chapter Four focuses on high rates of permanent celibacy and subsequent declines in this trend across a series of cohorts of men using information from the 1926 to 1991 Census of Population of Ireland. Chapter Five focuses on trends in fertility and assesses the degree to which fertility controls may have been in operation in pre-industrial Ireland. Chapter Six concentrates on pre-1980s Ireland and assesses the degree to which marriage and fertility patterns were related across social groups. The study primarily addresses the class dimension of family formation. In attempting to understand the demographic trends, it poses three questions: What is the distribution of family structure, including patterns of marriage and childbearing, by social group? Specifically,

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<sup>6</sup> Class, gender and race.

how prevalent was celibacy and large family size across the different socio-economic groups and did it change over time? Secondly, how did these trends relate to economic developments specifically, how important were changes in the Irish social structure, such as the decline of agriculture, in accounting for demographic developments. Finally, this chapter outlines the possible explanations for class patterns of family formation.

## ***2.2 The economic or rational action approach***

The basic idea of “rational choice” is that in making any kind of decision, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action, given a set of external opportunities and constraints. They choose the course that is most beneficial and least costly to them. Gary Becker’s work was most influential in this area as he extended ‘traditional economic thinking into the “emotional” and “irrational” area of the family’ (White 2005, p.2). Guinnane applied a more dynamic rational action approach to family choices in Ireland, in the period between the Great Famine<sup>7</sup> and the First World War (Guinnane 1997). The literature in this area is extensive, complex and growing and what follows is a brief synopsis of the central work before presenting a more detailed discussion of Irish literature and the work of Guinnane.

Economic approaches stress monetary and resource factors as incentives. Traditional economic models identify four principal influences on choices regarding marriage and family; male earnings and employment, female earnings, the sex ratio of

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<sup>7</sup> The Great Famine refers to the dreadful effects of the potato blight that affected the Irish countryside in the late 1840s. Some accounts place great importance on this event in explaining post-famine demographic trends.

marriageable individuals and the availability of public assistance<sup>8</sup>. The basic economic assumptions about the role of these factors are outlined below.

### **2.2.1 Earnings and the standard-of-living thesis**

According to Becker (1974 and 1981), men with higher earnings are more likely to marry and stay married because they are viewed as more desirable mates. Accordingly, an observed retreat from marriage is associated with lower wages and diminished economic prospects for men. Marriages are much more likely to be formed when each partner sees an advantage in marriage over remaining single. In traditional societies, a woman's comparative advantage in the home relative to the market was greater than her husband's and therefore the couple allocated more of her time to the home and his to the market, and both had much to gain from marriage. The gendered division of labour was, therefore considered optimal for ensuring family stability and fertility (Becker 1981).<sup>9</sup>

Under the same rationale, women who work and have high earnings will be less eager to marry because they have less need for male resources. Explanations emphasising women's earnings suggest that work or welfare produce an "independence effect" which destabilises marriage and lowers fertility as women's "opportunity cost"<sup>10</sup> of staying at home with children increases (Becker 1985). The value of a mother's time is an important part of the cost of having children. According to Becker's thesis, the gain to a man and woman from marrying compared to remaining single depends positively on their

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<sup>8</sup> The role of Irish public assistance was briefly outlined in chapter 1 and will not be discussed further in this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> From a more culturally aware perspective (see section 3), Becker's model probably reflected widely accepted social norms that were mainly consistent with social reality in traditional Ireland.

<sup>10</sup> Borrowing the economic concept of opportunity cost which refers to the value of foregone opportunities or alternatives unable to be achieved because of time or money towards some other option

incomes, human capital and the relative difference in wage rates. Families are assumed to seek the highest level of well-being possible that is, they seek to maximise utility subject to two constraints: their financial resources and the amount of time available (see Berk and Berk 1983 for a critical review of this assumption<sup>11</sup>). Becker's theory has important implications for class differentials in marriage since single individuals with higher earnings are expected to gain more from marriage than individuals with lower earnings.

Becker's work built upon Malthusian population theory. Malthus's theory has considerable relevance in understanding economies in earlier times when traditional agriculture was the main sector. Malthus (1798) argued that as a population grows too large, living standards decline and young people defer marriage out of concern for their ability to support a family. The operation of the Malthusian preventative check as it is called, presupposes a society in which young people refrain from marriage until they have adequate income to establish and support a new household. According to this view, deteriorations in living standards will dissuade people from marrying, hence the standard-of-living thesis. Hajnal (1965) noted that the operation of the Malthusian preventative check was especially common in large areas of northern and western Europe. The unique marriage model or "Northwest European marriage pattern" refers to the relatively late age of marriage for both sexes combined with a significant number of people who never married in these regions (see Laslett 1983).

In terms of fertility, when rational choice approaches discuss the costs of marriage, they usually mean the costs of children either measured as the costs of rearing them minus the value of their labour or as the decline in disposable income associated

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<sup>11</sup> Becker's model assumes altruism, full information and that preferences/tastes do not change substantially over time, across social groups or cultures/societies.

with their upbringing. According to the economic approach to understanding fertility decline, in the past children provided important sources of agricultural labour and old age support but as the instrumental value of children declined, parents decided to have less children and invested more in each child that is, the “quantity-quality” tradeoff (Becker 1985). This change was facilitated by a number of developments such as, technological developments like the introduction of the pill. Changes in state and market support were also important, for example the introduction of the old age pension, and changes in laws such as those governing the sale of contraceptives. These developments all contributed towards the desire for higher quality childrearing. In sum, the changing balance between the costs and benefits of childbearing has reduced the demand for children.

The “quality of children”<sup>12</sup> is assumed to be elastic with respect to income, while the quantity of children is not, implying that the desired number of children will fall as incomes increase because the average cost per child may increase even faster. This was an important development since economic research had failed to address why empirical evidence showed that the demand for children did not increase with income. The approach has important implications for class differentials in fertility since, for example, farmers would have a comparative cost advantage in raising children.<sup>13</sup> The net cost of children is reduced when they contribute to family income by working on the farm or in the family business. As the economy develops, farming becomes more mechanised and complex and the cost advantage of raising children on farms is reduced. Over time,

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<sup>12</sup> Recent developments have specified more precisely, what is meant by quality, see Robinson (1997) for a review.

<sup>13</sup> This rationalistic perspective has other implications too. Children may present a higher economic and career “cost” to women in higher occupational positions and it may also be that having a child or additional children is more attractive (or at least less punitive) to working class women because motherhood offers a more attractive role for these women than low waged unskilled paid work.

Becker (1978) anticipated that both rural and urban groups move to higher quality children. Class differentials, according to Becker (1977) therefore, primarily reflect costs and not tastes or preferences, both of which are treated as fixed and exogenous.

### **2.2.2 The marriage market**

Another body of relevant research has focused on the impediments associated with the marriage market, often defined at the quality and quantity of men, or the marriage squeeze which describes a shortage of marriageable men (Oppenheimer 1994, Ní Bhrolcháin 2001). This view assesses the degree to which the availability of mates influences marriage decisions. Year on year fluctuations in births, the relative mortality of the sexes and changes in the relative migration rates of the sexes can mean that some cohorts will experience a shortage of partners. Easterlin (1961 and 1978) noted that relative cohort size had a number of consequences on marriage, fertility and even mental health. Large cohort size reduces the economic opportunities of its members and reduces income relative to smaller parental generations (the relative-income hypothesis). Low relative economic status will therefore lead to lower fertility, higher rates of female labour force participation, later marriage, higher divorce and illegitimacy. However, there is little empirical support for the Easterlin hypothesis (see Wright 1989, Ní Bhrolcháin 1992, Pampel 1993, Pampel and Peters 1995).

More specifically, sociological studies have found that marriage is endogamous by class, education, religion and other traits (Mare 1991, Kalmijn 1998, Chan and Halpin 2001) so that the number of people who are in the “right” category can be very small. This can lead to marriage delays and an increase in the frequency of non-marriage

(Oppenheimer 1988). Oppenheimer argued that the chances of marrying are related to the availability of members of the opposite sex, their suitability and accurate availability of knowledge about their future suitability. Wilson (1987) provided a class based approach which argued that the shift in the industrial structure away from manufacturing towards service jobs harmed the employment prospects of young, relatively uneducated black men in the US. This decreased the pool of eligible young men and as a result, marriage rates for African American men and women declined. More generally, however, considerations of status homogamy will affect the marriage chances of both men and women throughout society.

### **2.2.3 Beyond Economics: the land, agriculture and the stem family**

None of these accounts has gone unchallenged but before addressing their limitations, it is worth noting that fields other than economics have placed equal importance on economic factors in explaining demographic trends. Theories on the role of the land, agriculture and the peasant family economy are of particular importance here. In familistic societies, those that analysts often term “tribal” and “peasant” or having a “domestic mode of production”, the central feature is that production and consumption are inextricably bound to the unit of reproduction or family. The farm and family are bound together as the place where both wealth and children are produced. Sociological studies of the family were preoccupied for most of the nineteenth century by the disruptive effects of capitalism on such traditional family forms that is, the stem family (Le Play 1882, Engel 1884 and later Parsons 1955). For Le Play, the decline of the family holding was the central negative influence of industrialisation. Parsons viewed the

nuclear family as a viable functional response to the needs of the new industrial order. However, the association of household types with different stages of economic development proved to be more diverse than these theories suggested (see Laslett 1974).<sup>14</sup>

More recently, J. Caldwell's theory of intergenerational flows of wealth attempted to explain the fertility decline associated with the demographic transition from a traditional to developed society (Caldwell, 1982). Caldwell asserted that the relative advantage or disadvantage of high fertility was determined according to the direction in which wealth flowed between generations; where wealth is measured not strictly in monetary terms, but as the combination of resources, services and guarantees that one generation is able to provide another. In traditional rural societies where the family constituted the basic unit of production, wealth flowed from bottom to top or from young to old at later stages of the family cycle. This meant that a large family was an advantage for production and family consumption. In other words, in the eyes of the older members of a family, high fertility represented an investment in the future; parents would eventually receive more from their offspring than they gave.

In this stage of the model, a "family ethic" prevailed which placed the good of the group above that of the individual. When, however, this model of family production began to falter in the face of a new production system that relied on market-related division of labor, as occurred in the developed western world, the intergenerational exchange reversed direction and a high birth rate ceased to be an advantage for the family. A family ethic was replaced by an individual one insofar as the key to economic

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<sup>14</sup> LePlay (1871) viewed the stem household as the norm in pre-industrial European societies whereas Laslett argued that households at this time were small and relatively simple and, therefore, the stem family was more or less fictional (Laslett 1974).

success became the capacity of the individual to sell his own labor outside of the family entity. The spread of schooling and changing consumption standards raised the costs of children and, at the same time, curtailed their contribution to the family economy. Caldwell (1982) therefore united the concept of an economic demand for children with the cultural transmission of western ideas and values which undermine demand.<sup>15</sup>

Classic versions of demographic transition theory, as were outlined in the previous chapter, solely focus on social and economic forces for change rather than cultural ones. In contrast to Caldwell, these “theories” propose that economic development or modernisation, rather than westernisation, leads to a convergence of household systems toward universal nuclear structure and that different household structures are associated with different demographic settings (for example Davis 1945). Most of these theories assumed that the stem family was a transitional phase in the evolution from the extended family to the nuclear type and that the stem family and impartible inheritance were two sides of the one coin (see Verdon 1979). As early as the nineteenth century, many historians and sociologists began to emphasise the importance of the link between the societal control of nuptiality and legitimate fertility and the inheritance systems of European rural societies (Goody 1973, Bourdieu 1972).

In a patrilineal system, farmers had to produce a male heir but they did not want to provide for too many offspring and so either overly fragment the family estate, or incur too great an economic burden. According to Wrigley (1978), in pre-industrial Europe, rational behavior led to limiting fertility because the birth of a third or fourth son did not significantly increase the chances of having an heir but rather added to the danger of

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<sup>15</sup> Caldwell’s theory is basically Malthusian. It has not been adequately tested given a number of problems operationalising the theory.

having two or more children to provide for.<sup>16</sup> Instead, in areas where partible inheritance systems prevailed, there was a greater division of land and higher nuptiality: each son received a share of the family estate and was able to form a new family. It is easy to see that the system based on impartible inheritance coincides well with the "European marriage pattern" while the second fits a different demographic regime in which marriage is generally universal, population growth faster and the risk of reaching a Malthusian limit of population in relation to resources is high. Implicit in both cases is that access to land was mainly, if not exclusively, regulated by the laws of inheritance, and so these laws were ultimately responsible for determining the family structures and demographic systems of European rural population (see Chapter 5, Rudolph 1995 for a review).

#### **2.2.4 Limitations and new developments**

A consensus has developed that economic factors, although perhaps exerting some influence, fail consistently to explain patterns and trends in family structure.<sup>17</sup> The European Fertility Project was designed to test demographic transition theory with historical data from roughly 700 provincial-level units throughout Europe. It found no consistent relationship between the timing of the onset of fertility decline and measures of social and economic developments. Later versions of transition theory highlight that the forces underlying a demographic transition not only involve changes in material conditions and in the social division of labour and resources but also changes in the

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<sup>16</sup> In fact, families were "over-insured" against the risk of leaving no male heirs (for a review see De Santis, Doveri and Bacci 2006).

<sup>17</sup> This assertion is based on empirical evidence from the Princeton European Fertility Project and the World Fertility Survey.

socio-cultural meaning of children and reproductive behaviour (see section 3 of this chapter).

The neoclassical economic approach to family formation that was outlined here has been heavily criticised for its lack of institutional and social context, a neglect of cultural factors, the requirement of “rationality” as well as on a number of other grounds. In direct opposition to Becker’s thesis, Oppenheimer (1997) found that in the U.S. full-time employment and earnings increase the likelihood of marriage for women, although not to the same extent as they do for men. She argued that women’s employment is increasingly desirable for family economic stability in modern economies (Oppenheimer 1982, 1994).

In addition, the body of research on assortative mating shows that men and women with equal earning power are more likely to marry each other.<sup>18</sup> This is more consistent with a bargaining model that stresses gains from mutuality, cooperation and consumption rather than a strict gendered division of labor as outlined by Becker. The rational actor model is individualistic and discussions tend to leap directly to household or family preferences without acknowledging the possibility that husbands and wives might have, for example, conflicting fertility preferences. Researchers from different fields have therefore employed game theoretical approaches to the analysis of family life (such as those by Lundberg and Pollak 1996, Ermisch 2004 and Breen and Cooke 2005).

Recent work by Becker (1992) and others has recognised the importance of preference formation. Pollak and Watkins (1993), for example, developed game theory models that show how patterns of marriage and fertility can reflect both changes in

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<sup>18</sup> People with the same or similar amounts of schooling tend to marry each other (Kalmijn 1997, Chan and Halpin 2000, 2001). Even controlling for education and age, the partial correlations of spouses’ wages are typically positive (see Zhang and Liu 2003 for a recent appraisal).

preferences and changes in the set of alternatives or opportunities available. More advanced models permit agents/actors to have imperfect information and these models have shown that the ways in which economic rationality manifests itself is highly sensitive to informational fields and varies enormously across social groups. Simon (1982) coined the phrase "bounded rationality" to describe this more realistic specification of individual decision-making. Rational-choice sociology uses broader notions of "rational" choice than economists typically do and concern is with how individual orientations to action are influenced by the social environment in which they are embedded (for example Granovetter 1985, Boudon 1988, Coleman 1990, Burt 1992, Goldthorpe 2000. Hedström and Stern 2008).

Easterlin and Crimmins (1985) made another important development by presenting a more complete model for fertility analysis that was based on more than Becker's 'demand for children' argument or, as they defined it, the number of surviving children parents would want if fertility regulation was costless. This demand depended on tastes as well as income and child cost consideration including non-economic returns to having children. The model also depended on the supply of children that is, the number of surviving children a couple would have if there was no deliberate attempt to limit fertility. Age of marriage and cultural conditions (such as extended breastfeeding) will alter the supply side. Finally, the cost of fertility regulation was taken into account and this included attitudes towards and access to fertility control. This approach allows for endogenous preferences that is, differences in tastes were part of their model. The motivation to limit fertility only occurs if the supply of children exceeds demand, and the greater the excess of supply over demand, the greater this motivation.

According to Greenhalgh (1995), the problem remains that this theory focuses on economic factors, neglecting contextual and historical influences. More generally, Robinson (1997) summarised the range of weaknesses associated with the economic theory of fertility. Firstly, he argued that it is still possible to debate whether couples do or do not plan their family size precisely; and if they do what costs and benefits enter into the calculation, or how they can be measured. This is despite a growing volume of data on fertility and contraceptive practices and even more sophisticated statistical methods. A second concern related to the lack of information on the supply-side. What sort of 'supply of children' curve exists; does cost decline with the number of children? He also noted that the approach would benefit from a discussion of the demand for sexual pleasure, as apposed to the focus on the demand for children. Robinson felt that there was little evidence on a shift towards better quality children and that the approach would benefit from a discussion of childlessness, child adoption and fostering. Finally, he noted that further research was required on the demand/price of fertility control and how this influences fertility decisions (Robinson 1997).<sup>19</sup>

The economic approach has responded to some of these criticisms, for example by developing models of altruism and family preferences but the main assumptions about how decisions are made remain defended (see Coleman 1990, Becker 1996, White 2005, Goldthorpe 2000 or Hedström and Hernes 2008 for a review of the sociological literature). The next section discusses the economic literature as it relates to Ireland and section 2.2.6 presents a further discussion on the importance of this strand of research.

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<sup>19</sup> For a broad range evaluation, see Scotford, Archer and Tritter (2000).

## **2.2.5 The Irish literature**

Guinnane (1997) argued that none of the dominant explanations of marriage and fertility could account for historical change in Irish marital and fertility patterns. These theories included those based around the importance of wealth (including Connell 1957, Walsh 1970 and Kennedy 1973), the role of matchmaking and the inheritance system, the marriage market, Catholicism, sex and the role of a distinct Irish culture. The problem was, according to Guinnane, that all these theories assumed a relatively weak desire to marry and his work focused instead on understanding the motivations to marry and reproduce. According to Guinnane, if people want to marry badly enough (for whatever reason), they will adjust their expectations or they will search for mates over a wider geographical area.<sup>20</sup> Guinnane aimed for what he saw (quoting Hammel) as ‘culturally smart microeconomics’. Before discussing Guinnane’s approach, the next section outlines the other dominant explanations advanced to explain Ireland’s demographic position. The third and final section focuses solely on the role of emigration.

### **2.2.5.1 Malthusian and institutional accounts**

The Irish case provided a challenge to Malthusian arguments since the incomes of average Irish people more than doubled but rates of permanent celibacy increased in the period between 1850 and 1914 (see Guinnane 1997, Chapter Two). Kennedy (1973) attempted to defend Malthusian interpretations of the Irish experience by arguing that Irish people viewed themselves as increasingly poor over this period. They became more

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<sup>20</sup> Recent work has substantiated this claim where Ní Bhrolcháin (2001) finds that age-preferences are more flexible than commonly supposed in her analysis of a UK marriage market.

willing to give up marriage because material consumption meant more to them although he did not provide any evidence to substantiate this standard-of-living thesis. In contrast, Guinnane (1997) argued that Irish people were more willing to give up marriage because what it had to offer meant less to them, that is the economic significance of marriage declined (more on this in the next section).

Stem-family accounts of Ireland at the time implied that the people who did not marry were simply those denied land or dowry. Connell's approach to marriage primarily focused on the role of institutional impediments such as the dowry and the 'match' (the parental arrangement of marriage for children) which were common in Ireland up until the 1950s.<sup>21</sup> The inheriting son was matched to a woman with an appropriate dowry and many parents enlisted the help of a matchmaker. The dowry was usually a cash payment made by the woman's parents to the proposed groom's family that is, the dowry moved along generations rather than flowing between generations. This money did not go to the marrying couple but it was commonly used to marry off the groom's siblings or to pay off farm debts as well as other "functions".<sup>22</sup> The dowry was paid among farm families and those who had businesses, like shops or pubs, in rural areas. It was always computed on the basis of the value of the farm/business owned by the groom's family. For marriage in any of these social groups, it was necessary that a woman have a dowry. Non-heirs and women without dowries usually remained unmarried or emigrated.

In contrast to Malthusian models, Connell's account integrated specific institutional and historical features of Irish society into an explanation of demographic change. The main argument was that if there were no dowries, then the appointed heir

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<sup>21</sup> See Breen (1984) for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>22</sup> See Connell (1957) for a review of dowry use.

could search for a wife without having to consider his obligations to those who were giving up their claims to the farm (see Strassman and Clarke 1988). The dowry had two main functions; one was as a system for compensating siblings without dividing the farm and the other was to ensure marital endogamy by class (see Connell 1968, Breen 1984). Strassman and Clarke (1988) argued that celibacy among the wealthy could be explained by socioeconomic restrictions on mate choice. Hired labourers, however, could marry early because they did not have to wait to inherit land nor were there any restrictions on their marital choice (see Arensberg and Kimball 1940, Guinnane 1991).

Other accounts (for instance, Arensberg 1968) have attempted to explain high levels of non-marriage in Ireland due to the difficulty of transferring property. In post-famine Ireland depicted famously by Arensberg and Kimball (1940), impartible inheritance was a key feature of Irish society, as land became an increasingly scarce resource. The Irish kinship system was markedly patrilineal and family based. In most cases a son, in many cases the eldest, inherited the family farm (Kennedy 1991 shows that birth order did not rigidly influence the parents' choice). Many men never married because their fathers, or more often their widowed mothers, refused to turn over the family farm until the son was "too old" to marry. Central to this and Connell's (1958) approach was the land and the post-famine demographic development of the stem family system (more on this in section 2.3).

### **2.2.5.2 Guinnane's preference-based approach**

Both Malthusian and institutional approaches attempt to explain Irish celibacy in terms of constraints, rather than preferences. Many male farmers who controlled a farm, often

relatively valuable, were celibate (see Guinnane 1997, Table 7.4). Accordingly, it was not just the poor who did not marry and Guinnane (1997) found that increasing wealth did not increase the chance that a household head married. Instead, Guinnane argued that many men were willing to postpone marriage and risk a life of bachelorhood in order to inherit the farm. Crucially, this was because of the availability of ‘marriage substitute’ or alternatives in which the functions performed by marriage were available (Guinnane 1997, p. 225). What made a man “too old” to marry was not age itself but that marriage became less attractive to these heirs and to potential spouses the longer they lived their lives without a partner and/or children.

In a manuscript census sample, about a third of all never-married male household heads (that is those aged over 45) had at least one resident never-married sister.<sup>23</sup> These sibling households reproduced many features of a conjugal household and therefore acted as a ‘marriage substitute’ (Guinnane 1997). These households benefited from the economies of scale typical in marriage but without being burdened with the cost of children. Given this situation, Guinnane argued that it is hard to imagine why unmarried sisters or brothers of the heir would marry since to do so brought little extra benefits to their lives and it meant abandoning their kin. The alternative of living alone, rather than with kin, was less appealing so each sibling would be committed not to accept a marriage offer unless their sibling also received an offer or was cared for by other means. Unmarried sisters would have had many potential suitors but unmarried brothers who were non-heirs would have had very few. Therefore, marriage was a more complicated business for these siblings.

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<sup>23</sup> See Guinnane (1997) pages 230-231.

Guinnane (1997) went on to argue that as emigration declined, non-marriage increased because unmarried surplus siblings stayed in Ireland and their presence reduced the incentive to marry for heir brothers. These sibling households made life in Ireland more attractive to life elsewhere because of this implicit insurance agreement between the parties. The fate of excess siblings therefore became crucial in explaining changes in marriage patterns over time.

A second substitute for marriage was to hire someone to do the various tasks that a spouse or child would fulfill. Of course, such substitution and hiring-in of help was only available to wealthier individuals, at that time individuals with large farms. For small landholders, marriage would have a stronger economic rationale because they needed the household labour to run their holdings. Although marriage and children are expensive, Guinnane, following Becker, argued that some of the costs of marriage would be offset by the labour performed by the spouse or children in household operations, especially on small farms. Indeed, there is ethnographic evidence to show that wives carried out important functions on the farm, such as poultry rearing and provided extra help at peak times, such as haymaking and harvesting turf.<sup>24</sup> Employment opportunities for women outside of agriculture were poor but, when available, wives' income could increase and diversify the household's total income (O'Hara 1998). This gave women a stronger bargaining power within farming households (see O'Hara 1998, Chapter Five).

Again, following the general economic approach, Guinnane (1997) argued that for poor Irish people at that time, children also provided an important form of security. Firstly, they may gain employment in Ireland or in another country and share their wealth with their family (see the literature on the value of children as sources of remittances: Ó

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<sup>24</sup> Turf is a form of fuel made from dried bog-land. See O'Hara (1998) for a review of these studies.

Gráda 1993). They were also providers of insurance, in case a spouse fell ill which was common at that time and for care in old age. Guinnane showed that many farmers used the land to secure old-age support through the inheritance system. This was either in the form of a written agreement<sup>25</sup> or through the norms of strong family ties that the stem-family system entailed (see section 1.3). Of course, Guinnane acknowledged that children were a risky investment and wealthier individuals would prefer safer investments and insurance policies. For well off social groups children and a spouse were not essential to provide security as their farms or wealth provided a secure guarantee of their future. In this case, the function of 'heir substitutes' became important; that is where unmarried older farmers took on (or accepted) a young male relative, who demonstrated an aptitude for farming, as a potential heir.

Finally, Guinnane (1993) maintained that the Poor Law and later the Old Age Pension reduced the desire to provide for old age through reproduction for some individuals and social groups. Even the poorhouses<sup>26</sup> could be viewed as a source of security for the very poor. Whereas, marrying and having children could mean a life of poverty and hardship, marriage for many of the poor would be a sacrifice and so some would avoid it and he argued, prefer to fall on the 'dubious mercies' of the Poor Law (Guinnane 1997, p. 233). After the famine, the poor-relief system expanded and became more generous. The Old Age Pension (1908) made old-age support available to all, regardless of family status. Guinnane argued that institutional differences in the provision

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<sup>25</sup> See Guinnane (1997) page 149 to 151 for a review.

<sup>26</sup> The workhouse system was imposed in Ireland under The Poor Law of 1838 with the aim of providing accommodation for the absolutely destitute, though during the famine years thousands died within the workhouses (see O'Connor 1995)

of support for the poor and aged helped explain changes in the attraction of emigrating to American (where there was no Poor Law) and Britain (see Guinnane 1993).

In contrast, Gibbon and Curtin (1978) argued that the introduction of the pension had little effect. They quoted earlier work that showed that the introduction of the old-age pension had different effects on the household structures of different social classes in Preston (Anderson 1971). Among the working class, it led to a decline in the co-residence of parents and married children. Gibbon and Curtin (1978) argued that in poorer parts of Ireland, such as Mayo on the west coast, the main contribution of the pension was to maintain the lower living standard of the household, that is the introduction of the pension served to strengthen an existing disposition for poorer families to live together. For the better off, it would have had little effect.

In terms of fertility issues, this general economic approach to the “problem” of Irish high fertility focused more on preferences rather than constraints such as a lack of control over fertility. The Irish at this time desired large families for a number of social and economic reasons. Guinnane (1997) argued that each successive child is cheaper as family size increases since the fixed costs (for instance clothing) have been met and older children cared for younger ones. He concluded that the Irish case of low levels of marriage and high fertility could be explained by the fact that there was a high fixed cost to marriage that is, obtaining a farm or dowry, locating a mate and clearing the holding of excess relatives, but rapidly declining marginal costs for each child.<sup>27</sup>

There were also social incentives encouraging couples to have large families. Farming families had to ensure that the name stayed on the land and maintaining a patriline was easier the larger the family, especially since couples had to take account of

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<sup>27</sup> See Figure 8.1 in Guinnane (1997).

high levels of child mortality in rural areas. The desire to have a male heir, according to Guinnane (1997) and following Wrigley (1978), helps explain part of the reason why many rural Irish couples continued to have 5 or 6 children long after average family sizes declined below that level elsewhere in Europe. Other reasons, as already discussed, included the value of children as investments or long-term security.

### **2.2.5.3 Emigration**

The demographic consequences of emigration have featured prominently in the Irish literature. In accounting for Irish rates of non-marriage, the impact of emigration on the Irish marriage market has been examined, although most historians have focused on sex ratios in rural Ireland. Guinnane (1992) found that in the first decade of the twentieth century, farm daughters were more likely to leave home and to do so earlier than sons. Research on urban areas found unusually high numbers of single women (Humphrey 1966, Daly 1981). It seemed that women migrated even if it this lessened their possibility of finding a mate since single women outnumbered men in urban areas. According to Guinnane, the 'match' made marriage less attractive to women as they were often forced into loveless marriages, where they were expected to work hard and rear a large family (Guinnane 1997). Women assumed many of the most onerous burdens of marriage and a family and this resulted in Irish women having unusually poor mortality (see Guinnane 1997, p120, Kennedy 1973, Table 12 and O'Hara 1992). Men who inherited a farm were tied to the land but a potential dowry did not tie one down in the same way. Thus, rising emigration rates for Irish women reflected their ability to reject what rural Irish life held for them.

Travers (1995) noted that although there were some variations, over the period between 1871 and 1971 net female emigration exceeded that of males. O'Hara (1998) noted that the better educated were more likely to migrate. In the poorer western regions of Ireland, migration was strongly associated with educational attainment so that the women who remained in the area and married farmers were generally those with lower educational levels (O'Hara 1998). Educational levels were high among the women who migrated but their marriage rates were lower. Many Irish men and women preferred to emigrate rather than stay in Ireland, poor and unmarried (Brody 1973, p 129, Kennedy 1973, p170). This level of emigration had profound effects on local marriage markets, as Breen, Hannan, Rottman and Whelan (1990) noted:

'Such low levels of marriage are not due to the unwillingness of the 'favoured' inheriting son to marry, but rather to the almost universal propensity of their sisters to escape as early as possible from these economically deprived backgrounds. Even by the mid-1960s, there were more than three single younger male farmers for every single farmwoman in rural communities'

(Breen et al. 1990, p. 113).

In terms of fertility, Kennedy (1973) argued that high rates of emigration and fertility are strongly correlated:

'The Irish were able to persist in their high rates of marital fertility because they did not have to face the problems of rapid population growth usually associated with such reproductive behaviour'

(Kennedy 1973, p. 173).

Goldthorpe (1992) reinforced the point by arguing that change in Irish society must be seen as reflecting functional alternatives allowed by the fact that large-scale emigration was a possibility. Guinnane (1997) argued that emigration altered the costs and benefits of rearing children. In Ireland, it reduced the disincentives to have large families. A child's cost of travel to another country was a small price to pay for many Irish families to see their children settled in more robust economies with large Irish communities.

Another economic interpretation, presented by Ó Gráda (1994), argued that emigrant remittances induced parents to “save” for old age through large families.

Emigration had another important consequence. Walsh (1972) postulated that emigration had selective effects on cohorts so that, for instance, those who stayed behind were those most likely to marry. Guinnane (1997) argued that women unwilling to have large families would leave and have a smaller family elsewhere, or remain and not have any family at all. Therefore, the women least willing to have large families would be most likely to leave the countryside. The greater emigration of single persons and of married persons with small families could alone account for a residual population with high levels of fertility. Indeed Kennedy argued that ‘it is reasonable to conclude that the massive increase in emigration among single persons, especially between 1951 and 1961, was responsible for the decline in the proportions of the population who remained single’ (Kennedy 1973, p. 165).

Unfortunately, few formal tests of the effects of emigration on marriage and fertility trends have been carried out.<sup>28</sup> Fahey (2001) rightly noted that Irish family size continued to be large by western standards long after the peaks of emigration had passed in the 1950s. In addition, little is known about who left Ireland (see Chapter Three for data on emigration trends). Guinnane (1992) tested to see if the number of same sex siblings influenced the probability of leaving home. He expected that a man, with many brothers to compete with for the farm, and a woman, with many sisters to compete with for a dowry, would be mostly likely to leave home. In a multivariate analysis, he found that the number of same sex siblings had a significant influence on exit rates whereas the

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<sup>28</sup> Studies of the fertility and marriage levels of those who migrated to the cities or abroad as compared to those who stayed in Ireland do not control for other factors, which may explain why those who left had, for example, lower fertility levels.

number of opposite sex siblings had no effect. More generally most, although not all, of those who emigrated after the famine came from the less developed rural parts of the country and most, although not all were themselves from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Mac Éinrí 2001). Emigration, however, came to permeate the entire social system (Corcoran 2002).

### **2.2.6 Discussion and general overview of the economic approach**

Ó Gráda (1994) was critical of both Connell's and Guinnane's interpretations of post-Famine marriage patterns and their 'undue focus on male strategies, as if there existed a limitless supply of women willing to marry the men if required' (p. 218). He also noted that according to Connell's view sibling households, as described by Guinnane, were a transitional phenomenon, a result of rising aspirations rather than a chosen marriage substitute. However, these households were common in rural Ireland for most of the twentieth century. More generally, Guinnane's preference-based approach can be criticised as an *ad hoc* rationalisation of choices already made. Indeed, O'Hara notes that his interpretations ran the danger of 'bending over backwards to rationalise arrangements', such as marriage substitutes, that may have been regarded as unsatisfactory compromises (O'Hara 1996, p. 22). This raises the question as to what degree was Irish marriage and fertility behaviour a result of conscious choice. According to the economic approach, men in rural areas despite the lack of women had a choice that is to either remain there unmarried or emigrate.

Guinnane (1997) discussed three main non-economic incentives to marry; sex, lineage (passing the family name on) and companionship. He argued, however, that such

motivations alone could not explain the Irish case since they did not matter to people to different degrees or at a different rate over time. As regard lineage, transferring a farm within the family was sufficient to satisfy the desire for family continuity. Marriage was therefore not necessary to keep the name on the land or to ensure companionship as the availability of marriage substitutes could fulfill that desire. Finally, Guinnane (1997) argued that sex was not a strong motivation to marry; for this argument to work, one would have to argue that the desire for sex declined during the nineteenth century and that those in the agricultural classes (or western parts of Ireland) were more sexually vigorous than the other classes (or people in the East of Ireland).

Guinnane's approach suffers from some of the general limitations of the economic interpretation of family formation; for example, the dominance of technical rationality as described by Weber, a strong assertion that the marginal cost of each child was small and probably declining, and the neglect of more general normative considerations. As regard the first limitation, the distinctive feature of technical rationality is its systematic consideration of means, in which case the ends are treated as given (Weber 1968). For rational choice theorists, this means-ends rationality is generally seen as a useful starting point;

'economics alone is not enough, this is why I am a reluctant economist...Economics is a valuable starting point'

(Easterlin 2004, p. 20).

In other words, technical rationality is a good place to start but it can only explain part of the decision-making process; actions can also be guided by values, social norms or prompted by emotions. For Weber, 'substantive rationality' involves a commitment to values in which the ends of actions are guided by ethical standards.

The importance of norms and values has therefore, taken central stage in recent developments in this area. In Game theory, prisoner's dilemma and chicken experiments have shown that people do not *always* act rationally that is, players do not always respond to incentives (Sprey 1979). Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky (1982) have shown that people intending to act rationally have systematic biases that lead their actions to be less than rational. Some economists and behavioral scientists suggest that the deviations of actual behavior from the rational actor model are too systematic to be dismissed as random error, too widespread to be ignored and too fundamental to be accommodated by relaxing the normative system.<sup>29</sup>

Sociologists such as Coleman (1990), Goldthorpe (2000) and White (2005) recognise the explanatory limits of the rational action approach. Goldthorpe, for example, argues that sociologists should opt for a weaker version of rational choice theory<sup>30</sup> which refers to action that can be treated as subjectively rational, or as Coleman (1990) put it, 'rationality is in the eye of the beholder' (p. 18).<sup>31</sup> Therefore, certain modes of action are seen as lying outside of the scope of the rational action approach (Goldthorpe 1998). This is in sharp contrast to Becker who sees the approach as a general theory of social action and explanations based on culture as *ad hoc* and often contradictory.<sup>32</sup> Sociologists therefore make a strong case for the need of some idea of rationality in action as setting a

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Akerlof and Yellen (1985), Kahneman and Tversky (1979), (1992), and (2004), Russell and Thaler (1985), Shafir et al. (1997), Slovic et al. (1988) and Thaler et al. (1997).

<sup>30</sup> Sociologists tend to refer to the rational action approach as rational choice theory (RCT) but it is still more of an empirical approach rather than a theory.

<sup>31</sup> Also Bordon 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Goldthorpe defines Becker's approach as a strong variant of rational action theory (RAT).

pattern that may, or may not be, followed before talking about other types of action.<sup>33</sup> As Elster (1989) noted, rational action models of human behaviour are ideal types.

Goldthorpe (1998) argues that the sociological approach needs to be clear when action is subjectively rational and when it is not; that is, the sociologist's job is to make clear the conditions under which non-rational action is most likely to occur. In some cases, for example, adhering to a norm is rational. In other cases, where agents hold onto a norm even when it is no longer sanctioned then the limits of rational action are reached. Sociological, rather than economic, approaches to rational action should therefore focus on situational rather than procedural rationality (Goldthorpe 1998). The situation of action is most important and this approach highlights the social structuring of knowledge as well as material resources (see section 2.3.4.1 for an example of such an approach).

Others argue that a rational action approach need not claim that all actors at all times act in a rational way; only that the tendency to act rationally is the most common factor at work. Individuals, they argue, act *as if* they were fully rational and, therefore, rationality can be taken as an unproblematic starting point (see Abell 1996). Both weak and strong versions of the theory believe that all social phenomena are explicable in terms of the rational choices of individuals rather than in terms of norms, values and structures (Coleman 1990). Elster (1990) warned that strong versions of rational choice theory believe that actors should act rationally and they therefore have an irrational belief in the power of reason (he called this 'hyperrational' p. 20).

Elster's work attempts to integrate cultural factors into rational choice theory by addressing the ways in which norms can influence behaviour. Contrary to Coleman's

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<sup>33</sup> This argument stems from Weber's sociology (1922) which saw instrumental rational action as the dominant type of action and as methodologically primary.

view that norms are an outcome of individuals' rational actions, Elster suggested that cultural norms could transform individuals' interests. He argued that norms could be understood as emotional and behavioural propensities of individuals. According to Elster (1991), the importance of considering the effects of social norms does not necessarily come into conflict with principles of rationality. This assertion and the more general reliance of rational choice theory on methodological individualism<sup>34</sup> remain controversial. The importance and contribution of the rational action approach is still questioned but as Becker noted such 'work may have assumed too much rationality, but I believe it has been an antidote to the extensive research that does not credit people with enough rationality' (Becker 1996, p.155-156). The next section of this chapter now turns to the cultural approach which emphasises the ways in which values, norms and preferences influence behaviour.

### ***2.3 The cultural approach***

The cultural perspective to family formation highlights the role of cultural rather than material or economic factors. What is meant by 'culture' is, however, at times vague, confusing and contradictory. Demographers normally make use of what Salazar calls a 'residual culture concept' to account for what is left unexplained in their models (Salazar 2006, p.273). It is then either dismissed in favour of more empirically testable factors or as an explanatory last resort when all else fails, for example:

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<sup>34</sup> "The elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals" (Elster 1989, p. 13)

‘Thus, an analyst might introduce a term for "Quechua-speaking" or "Muslim" into a fertility regression, and, if it survives the introduction of controls for standard socioeconomic indicators such as education, the analyst concludes that "culture matters"’

(Pollak and Watkins 1993 p. 473).

When demographers talk about culture, Salazar argued that they are generally referring to a mixture of religious beliefs and sexual mores. The term ‘culture’ became popular in demography after the European Fertility Project failed to correlate socio-economic variables with the decline of fertility in Europe. The Project found that fertility was significantly associated with culture defined operationally as language, ethnicity or geographical region (see Knodel and van de Walle 1979, Coale and Watkins 1986). Following this, two main cultural approaches to fertility decline were developed which are outlined in the sections below. The third sub-section returns to the issue of defining culture (2.3.3) before presenting the Irish literature in this area.

### **2.3.1 Innovation and Diffusion**

The first cultural, rather than economic, interpretation of fertility decline argued that it occurs mainly through a process of innovation and diffusion (Cleland and Wilson 1988, Watkins 1987, 1991).<sup>35</sup> In particular, birth control (and later cohabitation) was seen as an innovation that spreads from person to person, group to group or region to region. Initially, a few individuals will adopt the new practice but once it is seen as advantageous, diffusion will occur rapidly.<sup>36</sup> A fertility transition therefore reflects a

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<sup>35</sup> Like RCT, variants of this theory exist.

<sup>36</sup> Sociologists have applied a similar interpretation to the spread of cohabitation across Europe (e.g. Nazio and Blossfeld 2002).

change in attitudes toward using contraception and limiting family size.<sup>37</sup> Many empirical studies found, for example, that fertility control was evident first among urban dwellers, among the literate or educated, and among professionals. It later spread to all social groups, even to those who had significantly higher fertility rates thus, gradually reducing socio-economic differentials in fertility (Cleland and Wilson 1988, Watkins 1987). Other studies have tracked the geographical spread of fertility decline (Caldwell and Caldwell 2003).

This cultural interpretation of fertility decline however falls short of a theory as it provides more of a description of the trend without notable theoretical content. In an attempt to broaden its explanatory power, Pollak and Watkins (1993) argued that diffusion could apply to more than just techniques. They provided ethnographic accounts of what they saw as the diffusion of preferences, such as the notion that smaller families are better. They accommodate this diffusion process within an economic model that recognised that social factors influence preferences. Another problem with the diffusions approach is its lack of interest in the dynamic of change, in particular the ideational changes associated with changes in the means of contraception and the methods of fertility control.

### **2.3.2 Ideational change**

Coale (1973) pointed to the importance of ideational change when he concluded that there were three preconditions for a fertility transition: that reduced fertility was advantageous, that effective techniques were available and that the control of fertility

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<sup>37</sup> See Mary Daly (1999) for details on Irish legislation, censorship and the political aspect of this fertility decline.

within marriage was ‘within the calculus of conscious choice’ (Coale 1973, p.65). More recent demographic work focuses on attitudes towards fertility control rather than social and economic conditions, and hence represents an important shift away from classic demographic transition theory. These approaches argue that declining fertility and marriage are associated with increased individualisation, secularisation and the acceptance of different forms of behaviour. Recent increases in cohabitation, in the number of births occurring outside-of-marriage and divorce rates signal a shift to post-materialism<sup>38</sup>, where decisions about cohabitation, divorce, abortion and voluntary childlessness are largely left to the discretion of the individuals involved. This ideational change distinguishes the second demographic transition from the first transition (the onset of fertility and mortality decline).<sup>39</sup> According to Van de Kaa (1997), the introduction of an effective contraceptive (innovation) was the main cause of the chain of events that he and Lesthaeghe had earlier identified as the second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa, 1986). This transition involved three major shifts in fertility and family behaviour: changes in contraceptive behaviour, changes in the level and pattern of fertility and changes in the timing, frequency, type and stability of unions.

Within Sociology, modernisation theory argued that economic development brings with it pervasive cultural change such as changes in gender roles, in attitudes towards authority and sexual norms, and a growing emphasis on self-expression. The rise of the industrial society is linked with coherent cultural shifts away from traditional value systems. This shift from reliance on tradition to decision and responsibility is frequently

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<sup>38</sup> Post-materialism refers to non-material needs such as personal development, individual autonomy, self-fulfillment and recognition (Inglehart 1990).

<sup>39</sup> The Irish case has been described as a ‘compressed demographic transition’ since there are signs that it had begun the second demographic transition before the first had even finished (Kennedy 1989).

referred to as individualisation (see Giddens 1991, Beck 1994). Individual interests are more important than family-centered orientations so that marriage and divorce tend to become more optional as they lose their normative force (see Manting 1996). In contrast to modernisation theory, Lesthaeghe found that broad ideological development is not necessarily concurrent with economic modernisation (Lesthaeghe and Wilson, 1996).

The problems with modernisation theories and with most versions of demographic transition theory are well known. Both assume that societies move from traditional to modern, that this move involved some form of Westernisation (e.g. low fertility), that the change is irreversible and that it is ultimately good. Anthropologist Greenhalgh (1995) systematically criticised these assumptions, which were long ago challenged in sociological versions of these theories.

### **2.3.3 Defining Culture**

One of the main problems with cultural explanations of demographic change is the variety of ways in which the term 'culture' has been used. Anthropologists, sociologists and historians are as guilty of this as demographers are:

'Noneconomists, and even economists in mufti, distinguish among "preferences," "tastes," "desires," "wants," "needs," "attitudes," "aspirations," "goals," "values," "interests," and "ideologies". Economists typically treat all of these terms as synonymous with "preferences".'

(Pollak and Watkins 1993, p. 481).

The concept is therefore used to refer to an ensemble of economic, technical, social, political, legal, religious and moral factors and sometimes, it is used to denote the 'irrational'. Carter (in Greenhalgh 1995) draws an important distinction between two uses of the term 'culture' that have dominated in fertility research. The passive notion of

culture envisions people as mindlessly adhering to cultural rules. Culturalist models are passive as they see people as fatalistic. The active concept portrays people as conscious decision makers who deliberately choose their fertility levels through abstract rationality (e.g. the demand for children models). Carter shows that both models prove unsatisfactory before ethnographic evidence and that the solution involves interpreting human agency not as a sequence of discrete acts of choice but as a 'reflexive monitoring and rationalisation of a continuous flow of conduct' (Carter 1995, p. 61). Reproductive decisions are distributed along the reproductive whole lifecycle and they are constituted in the dialectic relation between people acting and the setting of those actions. The question of what kind or degree of rationality that applies in such situations has become a hot topic of debate in this field. As we have seen, recent developments have attempted to integrate both cultural (passive) and economic (active) approaches (see section 2.2.6).

The first problem to tackle is to provide a clear definition of culture for the purposes of this research. The second issue relates to its measurement and use in research on family formation. Sociologists use the word "culture" to mean many things, some cognitive (ideas or schemata), some behavioral (e.g., rituals, speech), and some physical (art works, sermons, the periodic table).<sup>40</sup> For the purposes of this research, culture is conceived of as norms, preferences and values; all of which tend to be poorly defined in the literature. Friedman, Hechter and Kanazawa (in Leete 1999) draw important distinctions between values (which are relatively general and durable, internal criteria for evaluation<sup>41</sup>), preferences (which are also internal states but they are labile and particular) and norms (which are evaluative, general and durable but they are external to

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<sup>40</sup> See DiMaggio (1997).

<sup>41</sup> Hechter argues that values exist in two forms. Instrumental values provide means to a wide variety of ends and immanent values are ends that are desired purely for their own sake (Hechter 1992).

actors and require sanctions for their efficacy<sup>42</sup>). Fertility, for example, may be socially controlled through cultural norms such as the shared cultural norm of high marital fertility and low non-marital fertility that prevailed throughout Catholic Ireland, North and South (Compton 1982). Different groups may have inherited or developed a different set of values as regard family size (for example see Ó Gráda and Walsh 1995). Lesthaeghe and Surkyn's work (1988) is especially relevant because they explicitly address the issue of changing values or preferences in the context of fertility.

In demographic writings, norms and values are exogenous and socio-demographic explanations based on culture tend to be *post hoc*. Friedman et al. (1999) argued that any explanation should specify both external constraints and values *ex ante*. The problem is that values are unobservable so they must either be imputed from observed behaviour or assumed, as is the case in most economic models.<sup>43</sup> Friedman et al. (1999) continued that the influence of values is best detected through the effects of other, observable, variables such as schooling rather than focusing on attitudinal survey type responses. Ethnicity, religion, language, dress code etc. all act as proxies or indicators for cultural values in empirical models. Others have advocated the use of attitudinal items in survey questionnaires but both approaches avoid what Casterline (1999) warns is a common trap, that of using behaviour as an indicator of values. This is especially common in the Irish literature when researchers conclude that high fertility indicates pro-natalist values and norms.

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<sup>42</sup> However, many informal norms in society are not sanctioned (See White 2005). Coleman (1990) discusses how norms emerge and how they are maintained among a set of rational actors.

<sup>43</sup> Friedman et al. criticise both the use of attitudinal items in survey data and revealed preferences approaches.

In contrast to demography, sociology has a long history of providing evidence on the role of norms, values and preferences, much of it based on qualitative research methods.<sup>44</sup> Large-scale empirical work has also found that culture matters. Inglehard and Baker (2000) found, for instance, that a history of Protestant or Catholic traditions gives rise to cultural zones with distinctive value systems that persist after controlling for the effects of economic change. Even though few people attend church in Protestant Europe today, historically Protestant societies remain distinctive across a wide range of values and attitudes. As regard preferences, Hakim (2003) argues that, in the post-modern world, individuals' preferences have increasing influence over fertility and women's own mobility. This is because for the first time in history women control their own fertility choices. Hakim's (2003) latest British survey found that if one's own "pure" preferences drive fertility choices, a relevant proportion (10-20 per cent) of women now living in the Western world would follow career goals, renouncing motherhood, whereas a similar proportion would be happy to have more children, renouncing their jobs. In her work, preferences were used to predict not only women's employment patterns but also their marital and fertility rates (Hakim 2003).

For the purpose of this study, it is expected that differences in the cultural values of social groups influence family formation. In addition, it is likely that the erosion of traditional norms and weakening of traditional gender roles will proceed at a different pace across social groups, countries and regions. The diffusion approach illustrates how exposure to new information and new ideas varies across social groups. The 'rational

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<sup>44</sup> Influential examples include Douglas and Isherwood (1979), Douglas (1985), Bourdieu (1984) and Preston (1986).

actor' model in this respect may be less appropriate for some groups than others given that groups vary in the awareness of their choices available to them.<sup>45</sup>

It is important to note that the cultural model should not be seen as an alternative to the rational action approach. Rational choice theory conceives of behaviour as the product of the interaction of constraints with values. Values determine the ends or goals that individuals seek while constraints set limits on individual's capacity to achieve those ends (Casterline 1999). Pollak and Watkins (1993) show that the 'rational actor' model can incorporate culture as operating through opportunities or as operating through preferences and that in some cases, cultural explanations and rational actor approaches are equivalent. Even economists are now beginning to accept the deficiencies in their traditional models:

'We have learned enough for me to recommend that economists should abandon their antipathy to measurement of expectations. The unattractive alternative to measurement is to make unsubstantiated assumptions.'

(Manski 2004, p. 27).

### **2.3.4 Cultural accounts of Irish life**

Very little is known about how Irish norms, preferences and values differ across the social groups and if/how they have changed over time. However, even if there was detailed evidence on this front, surprisingly little is known about whether and how such cultural factors translate into conduct relating to sexual behavior or marital success.<sup>46</sup>

Class disparities in these aspects of behavior are elusive and difficult to investigate.

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<sup>45</sup> Individuals with a sense of control over their own lives, who perceives choices and act on them are considered empowered (see Pollak and Watkins 1993 for a review).

<sup>46</sup> While rational considerations may explain why particular individuals introduce and enforce social norms, they cannot explain how these norms come to be internalised (Elster 1989). To explain how norms are internalised or how values change requires additional psychological mechanisms, which will not be discussed here (See Friedman and Hechter 1990).

According to Becker, cultural factors have lost their power, even in Ireland: ‘Rational family responses to powerful economic and social changes have outweighed Church teaching and the Constitution. The growing importance to the economy of well-trained workers has persuaded parents to substitute fewer, better-educated children for the traditional large family.’ (Becker 1991, p. 17). Such assertions, which are common, require evidence on the assumption of increasing rationality over time. This section will examine the degree to which economic and social change has atomised Irish society into, what Becker appears to be assuming, a mass of rational individuals, devoid of setting and the influence of culture.

As well as discussing the role of the Church and Catholicism, this section discusses Irish family values and preferences and how they translate into fertility behaviour. In addition, the general literature on Irish sexuality and the debate about the culture of the stem family system will be examined in detail. The effects of the Irish Constitution and family policy will not, however, be discussed here (see O’Hara 1988, Chapter One on the role of the Irish Constitution, see Finola Kennedy (2001) for more political point of view and, see Mary Daly (2007) and Tony Fahey (1998) for a review of family policy). The next chapter will present a brief social history of Ireland, including a review of family policies.

#### **2.3.4.1 Irish Sexuality**

Social research on sexuality in Ireland has been sparse (for an isolated study see Inglis 1998 and see Fahey 1999 for a more general overview). Salazar (2005) provides the only research to address solely the notion of a distinct sexual ideology in Ireland.

Anthropologists first introduced the idea that the Irish were sexually repressed; Arensberg and Kimball are probably the most renowned, but John C. Messenger, Alexander Humphries and Nancy Scheper-Hughes have all left their mark.<sup>47</sup> Although their arguments and evidence varied, they generally agreed that the Irish were quite repressed when it came to sex. Economists such as Walsh (1985), Kennedy (1973) and Guinnane (1997) have also debated the idea. Kennedy (1973), for instance, believed that Irish sexual repression stemmed from the Catholic Church and Guinnane (1997) argued that a culture of sexual control and inhibition was a functional requirement of the stem family system.

The standard structural-functional explanation was that this culture developed as a response to the social and economic conditions that emerged after the famine (more on this later in this section). Salazar (2005) set out to pull this argument to pieces. The reason ‘bachelors’ and ‘spinsters’ did not have sex and married people did not use contraceptives was not explained in structural-functional terms but was cultural according to Salazar (2005). They were devoted to being Catholic. They lived in a culture with an idiosyncratic logic when it came to sex but instead of anthropologists recognising and accepting this, they read Catholic Irish beliefs and practices as repressed sexuality. The cultural approach taken by Salazar, however, would have benefited greatly from an analysis of how this cultural interest related to economic concerns. He failed to provide a reason as to why the Irish became so devoted to being Catholic or why cultural beliefs and values changed so dramatically in recent decades.

For the general theory of sexual repression to work as an explanation of Irish marriage and fertility patterns, sexual attitudes would have had to vary by social class

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<sup>47</sup> See Wilson and Donnan (2006) for a review of the anthropological literature.

and over time, and across countries. Evidence would be required to show that the Irish were, and some groups maybe still are, sexually repressed more so than in other European countries. Indeed Guinnane (1997) rejected this hypothesis on the ground that there is no historical evidence to show that the Irish were, at any point in time, sexually repressed. It is only recently that an in-depth study of sexual attitudes has taken place in Ireland (*The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships*). It found that just 6 per cent of people in 2004/05 thought that premarital sex was always wrong, compared to 71 per cent in 1973 (Layte, Fullerton and McGee et al. 2006). Most participants had used contraception in the last year (80 per cent) and the non-use of contraception was more common in older respondents, those with lower educational levels and from poorer social classes. Those from 'lower' social groups were found to be more at risk of an unwanted pregnancy (Chapter Seven will discuss this further). The study, however, found no significant differences across social groups in relation to recent attitudes towards contraception.

The study did provide evidence of social class differentials in the use of contraception among adults, and argued that these may be due, in part, to higher levels of ambivalence about pregnancy among working class women (Layte et al. 2006). Although the research findings were inconclusive, the theoretical approach is highly relevant here. According to their approach, the greater ambivalence of working class groups towards conception is actually the result of their higher level of fatalism towards the future rather than a rational calculation of the opportunity costs of pregnancy. The focus of the study was on class differences in self-efficacy, with self-efficacy defined as an overall sense of control taking account of both personal resources and perceived barriers. The autonomy

and control enjoyed by different occupations is a defining characteristic of different social class positions. From this perspective, lack of planning and increased risk-taking are consequences of a type of, what Elster (1979) called, 'voluntary irrationality' where individuals exercise restricted rationality because of learnt differences in self-efficacy. This research approach provides a nice example of a model that allows testing of rational versus other types of behaviour, as advocated by Goldthorpe (see section 2.2.6).

Comparing information from the European Values Survey, current Irish sexual attitudes are still considerably more conservative than those in other western European countries. This is especially the case in relation to abortion (Fahey, Hayes and Sinnott 2005, Fahey and Layte 2007). Fahey (1999) showed a consistent trend towards a more liberal stance since the 1970s and, he argued, that the main process behind these developments is the continuing decline of the influence of the Catholic Church in Irish life. Eurobarometer data collected in Ireland in 1999-2000 suggests that less than half of Catholics who attended church regularly thought that homosexuality was never justified and only one third thought the same of divorce. Fahey, Hayes and Sinnott (2005) argued that this indicated a high level of rejection of orthodox Catholic teaching even among those who attended church regularly.

Others argue that Catholic doctrine and mores promoted an image of an idyllic Ireland awash with large families, and free from out of wedlock births and premarital sex (Kurzer 2001, Inglis 1998 1999 2005). For early twentieth century Ireland, Kurzer even went so far to propose:

'Generally married couples aimed for large families, which was at odds with the new patterns of inheritance rights, the desire for larger farms, and modern agricultural techniques. The Church, therefore, paired a high fertility rate with late marriage, a high rate of celibacy, and emigration'

(Kurzer 2001, p.149).

How did the Church control such behaviour? Kurzer argued it extolled service to God and scorned romantic love in order to produce the unusual combination of late marriage and high celibacy, which were characteristics of early to mid-twentieth century Ireland. Such accounts of culturally driven behaviour leave no room for human agency and nurture an image of asexual Ireland.

According to Inglis (1997), the power of the Church has only recently been challenged. For a long time, the Church was the sole arbiter of rights and wrongs, defining what it meant to be a good and decent person and monopolising moral authority in every walk of life, both public and private (Inglis 1997). He linked the decline of the power of the Church (religious capital) to the demise of Ireland's status as a mainly rural society dominated by farming and agriculture (Inglis 2005). For Inglis (1998) modern Ireland is now witnessing a conflict between traditional Catholicism and liberal individualism.

This general argument proposes that the Church played a fundamental role in shaping Irish life. How can these cultural based explanations explain the significant class differences in rates of celibacy and fertility, subsequent declines in fertility and celibacy, and what empirical evidence is there to suggest that Catholicism played a role? The next section addresses these points.

#### **2.3.4.2 A Catholic Explanation**

It is argued that Roman Catholicism has demographic consequences. In particular, the canon law prohibition on divorce and the banning of the practice of contraception,

implies that devout Catholics have to anticipate marrying only once and having large families. The argument goes that because a regretted marriage cannot be remedied through divorce, people will be less likely to marry in the first place and more likely to take their time in doing so. In addition, because the Catholic Church discourages contraception and disapproves of sex outside of marriage, marital fertility will be high and extra-marital sexual relations low or non-existent. This, in turn, will influence the popularity of marriage.

Kennedy (1973) further argued that the selective processes of emigration and marriage in Ireland reinforced “the selection” on religious grounds. Marital fertility has remained high in Ireland because those who agreed most consistently with Catholic teachings on family life, and those who cared less about their own personal standard of living, made up a disproportionately large share of the married population of Ireland. The selectivity of emigration and Irish marriage patterns also resulted in the most conservative Catholics being found in greater proportions among the early married persons remaining in Ireland than among the permanently celibate, the late married or emigrants from Ireland (Kennedy 1973).

We have already seen that predominately Catholic countries like Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy currently differ greatly in terms of family formation patterns (see Chapter One). Italy and Spain, despite having large Catholic majorities, have among the lowest births rates in the world. Even prior to the 1960s, Irish fertility rates were higher than in other Catholic countries (see Figure 1.13). The ‘Catholic effect’ may operate at the individual level. We may expect, for instance, that individuals coming from Catholic families would be more likely to marry later in life but have larger families when

compared to other religious groups within Ireland controlling for social group. Research in Ireland however has found a high proportion of single persons among Irish non-Catholics as well as Catholics. In the first published Irish Census to cross-tabulate marital status by religion, Kennedy (1973, Table 52) found that there were only small differences in marital status by religion. Contrary to what would be expected, in 1946 women in the Republic of Ireland's small Protestant minority were less likely to have married by ages 45 to 54 when compared to Catholic women. In 1961, 30 per cent of Catholic and 25 per cent of Protestant males, aged 45-54, had never-married and 23 per cent of Catholic and 23 per cent of Protestant females had never-married (Strassmann and Clarke 1998). By 1970, however, the earlier trend had reversed so that Catholic women were less likely to marry when compared to Protestant women (Guinnane 1997, p. 278).

Therefore, delayed marriage and celibacy were also characteristics of Irish Protestants with the differences between both religious groups rather small. A more meaningful comparison would have controlled for social group but the small number of Non-Catholics in older Irish census records hindered this.<sup>48</sup> Occupational data by religion revealed that non-Catholics were overrepresented in higher status occupations (Kennedy 1973, Chapter VI). Differences in wealth and occupation are, therefore, entangled with religious differences in marital status.

As regard fertility, the notion that Irish Catholics were particularly stringent in the non-use of contraception and shunned abortion, implying high marital fertility levels, is contradicted by evidence. David and Sanderson (1988)<sup>49</sup>, for example, found that half of all urban women who had married later in life were controlling their fertility in the 1911

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<sup>48</sup> In more recent census records, the comparisons are hindered because of a growing number of 'unstated' religions.

<sup>49</sup> Using Cohort Parity Analysis, see chapter 5 for details.

Census. Ó Gráda (1991) found that in rural Ireland as a whole some 20-25 per cent of young couples were controlling their fertility by 1911. Ó Gráda and Duffy (1995) found evidence of family limitation early in marriage, that is, the deliberate spacing of children in 2 out of 3 sample regions they looked at in the 1911 census. The leaders in family limitation appear to have been larger farmers, those from non-agricultural backgrounds and Protestant couples (Ó Gráda and Duffy 1995). These results contradict those of the European Fertility Project which found that effective fertility control hardly existed in Ireland prior to the 1920s (see Chapter Five). Ó Gráda's work has found that as early as 1881 there was significant variation across counties in marital fertility with the highest levels in Connacht and Munster and lowest in the northeast (see Ó Gráda's 1994 for a review). According to these economic studies, fertility patterns in Ireland reflect choices about contraception and family size rather than a strict adherence to religious laws (Guinnane 1997).

In addition, the evidence on fertility differentials by religion suffers from a lack of aggregate data on this subject. The first census to provide details on fertility by religion was in 1946. Kennedy (1973, Table 64) found that in that year, Irish Catholics, regardless of social group, had significantly larger families. By 1961, the difference had increased but by 1981, the gap had narrowed considerably due to more rapidly falling fertility rates among Catholic couples as compared to Protestant ones (Walsh 1970). The reasons behind this association are far from clear. Ó Gráda (1985) found that religious affiliation had much less effect on fertility behaviour once others factors, such as social and economic status and region, were taken into account. Religious affiliation alone "explained" less than a third of the variation in cross-county fertility (Ó Gráda 1985).

However, the evidence shows that the Catholic influence on fertility was strong in the 1960s and although it subsequently weakened, it continued to be detectable even by the early 1990s (Ó Gráda and Walsh, 1995).

Day (1968) argued that the Roman Catholic influence, independent of socio-economic status, has only an effect on fertility when Catholics are a disadvantaged minority in a large population. Compton (1982) found that the smaller Roman Catholic population in Northern Ireland was characterised by the traditional high-fertility/low nuptiality pattern that existed in the Republic. In the Protestant population, he found a low-fertility/high-nuptiality regime existed in the 1961-1971 inter-census period. High income, high status Catholic families in the North were having larger families than their Republic counterparts. He concluded that it was the 'shared cultural norms' of the Catholic population that holds the key to understand fertility patterns on the whole island of Ireland (Compton 1982, p. 211). Ó Gráda came to a similar conclusion arguing that the Catholic population had 'a different set of values as regard fertility and family size' in early twentieth century Ireland (Ó Gráda 1985, p. 80). Both authors invoked cultural explanations for what was left unexplained in their empirical models. Neither however, provided any evidence of religious differences in norms or values, inferring value differences from behaviour. Section 2.3.4.4 will discuss recent survey information on individual preferences and values.

Finally, the strong trend toward convergence in fertility behaviour that is, between both religious groups in Ireland from the 1960s on, provides some support for Becker's claim of growing rationality. It seems that Irish demographic decision-making is becoming free from cultural constraints.

### 2.3.4.3 'Peasant' Culture and the Stem Family System

Ireland, seen as a sort of cultural oddity in Western Europe, was the subject of significant cultural research up to the 1960s. A group of anthropological studies conducted by Conrad Arensberg, Solon Kimball and Alexander Humphries provided the evidence on this front. The major interest of these studies was on the stem family system and the rationality of such a model as regards the small farm economy. The studies focused on a number of characteristics of rural Irish family life such as its patriarchal structures, the stem-family inheritance system, the practices surrounding arranged marriages and dowries, and the role of cooperative kin and neighbour networks. Arensberg and Kimball's fieldwork was carried out in the early 1930s in County Clare, on Ireland's western seaboard, described by them as a 'small farm region.'<sup>50</sup> Humphries work simply restates their position by claiming to verify it by fieldwork in Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry and Mayo in 1949-51.<sup>51</sup>

According to Connell (1968), the stem family emerged in Ireland as a result of 'post-Famine adjustments' in the second half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the Famine, the mode of production that prevailed was characterised by a dual agrarian economy of big absentee landlords and small cottiers. It allowed for high nuptiality and early marriage since land was subdivided among sons, and the nuclear family prevailed (Connell 1950). Until the passage of the Land Acts (1885–1909), most land was owned by Protestant landlords, but was worked by Catholic tenant farmers and landless laborers. A major factor that promoted the subdivision of holdings in Ireland, and thereby increased marriage rates, was the introduction of the potato (Connell 1950).

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<sup>50</sup> Small farms were broadly defined; see Gibbon and Curtin (1978).

<sup>51</sup> See Humphreys 1998, Arensberg and Kimball 1930, 1940, 1968.

The 'post-Famine adjustment' refers to the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture, from tillage to livestock, from subdivision of holdings to the single-successor inheritance system, from marriage without property constraints to marriage conditional upon securing a holding and from irregular to institutionalised seasonal and permanent migration.<sup>52</sup> Taking these changes into account Connell (1968) related late marriage to farmers putting off their retirement in order to retain an unpaid adult labour force. In the process, the stem family emerged. To prevent the fragmentation of holdings, only one child in each generation inherited ownership or the right to become the next tenant farmer (Arensberg and Kimball 1940). Salazar (2006) argued that it is no wonder that, at the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century, Ireland had the highest rates of permanent celibacy in Europe given the predominance of the stem family. For Connell, the Church's doctrine concerning sexuality mainly reflected the dominant economic values of post-famine rural society (see Connell 1957 and 1962).

A classic Le-Play definition of the stem family refers to a household comprising of three generations and two marital pairs, *at a particular moment in the life cycle* (see Hedican 2006 for a review). The generational overlap only lasted for 1 to 2 decades and much of the controversy surrounding the Irish debate stems from this conceptual misunderstanding. As an intergenerational process, most rural farm households went through a stem family stage. At any particular point in time however, like the 1911 census, only 10-20 per cent of households would have been in that stage.

Following Arensberg and Kimball's work, later ethnographic studies of different regions found that three generational households were rare (Syrnes 1972, Mogeey 1947,

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<sup>52</sup> See Guinnane 1997, chp. 5 for an in-depth critical review.

McNabb 1964, Messenger 1969, Brody 1973, Smyth 2000). Fieldwork indicated that multiple, rather than common, norms of family structure existed in Ireland as a whole. Gibbon and Curtin (1978) argued, based on the 1911 census the stem family households in Ireland were rare. Guinnane (1992) disputed their result using a different sample of households from the same census. He found that rural Irish households included many kin who would not ordinarily be in a nuclear family household but that the co-residence of two married couples of different generation at that particular point in time was rare. Irish households differed from a classic stem family system only in that the heir's marriage did not always take place before the death of either of his parents. Guinnane (1997), therefore, concluded that Irish household in the early twentieth century did not conform easily to either the stem family or nuclear family household.

Most recently, Seward et al. (2005) argued that the reign of the stem-extended family was primarily ideological and based on evidence from a small unrepresentative segment of the Irish population.<sup>53</sup> According to Wilson (1984), Clare of the 1930s was not representative of a traditional and stable rural order nor did its ethnographers intend it to be representative of all of Irish rural society. Wilson argued that, for a generation after the publishing of Arensberg and Kimball's work, the ethnography of Ireland seemed, at times, obsessed with kinship systems. Indeed some argued that the family was the real basis of society and rejected accounts based on social class. In her study of Ballyduff, Birdwell-Pheasant (1993) showed how the establishment of stem-extended families varied by occupation and social status. She found that multigenerational households were most evident among 'strong farmers' but also occurred on 'modest farms' and in non-

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<sup>53</sup> See also Breen (1982), Gibbon (1973), Fitzpatrick (1983) and Varley (1983) for further criticisms.

agricultural households (35, 28 and 16 per cent respectively) (see Birdwell-Pheasant 1993).

Damian Hannan made a major contribution to the cultural element of this debate (Hannan 1970, 1972 and 1979). Tovey (2003) suggested that Hannan came closest to understanding contemporary family farming in Ireland by recognising how it was profoundly shaped by kinship and family factors. Hannan's work focused on the decision-making processes within farm families in transition and showed how traditional patriarchal structures within Irish farm families were being replaced by more modern negotiated roles, as rural families increasingly converged with urban ones. The analysis of census data, ethnographic studies and an intense survey of farm families indicated that Arensberg and Kimball's portrayal was valid primarily for western rural Ireland before the 1950s. The stem family system or peasant model remained stronger and more resilient for longer on small farms in the poorer western regions of Ireland. Demographic changes occurred earlier in the richer, larger farms of the east and midlands and these changes were significantly associated with social class differences (Hannan 1979).

In the West of Ireland, in the post-war period, Hannan characterised a unique 'peasant' culture with a distinct set of values, similar to those described by Arensberg and Kimball. The western peasant system, with its own internal logic, was transformed, rather than made extinct, by incorporation into the capitalist world market:

'Different value standards were being employed in the east and west in the 1920s and 1930s. Now the same reference standards seem to be universally shared.'

(Hannan 1979, p. 65).

Importantly, the stem family system was preserved for longer in the West because the peasant economy was closed, that is a very small proportion of total product was going to the market (Hannan 1979, O'Connor 1974 and Ó Gráda 2005 for more recent evidence

on this front). For those who married, marriages were arranged and those who did not, they were free to leave so that non-inheriting siblings dispersed leaving the stem family system intact. Subsequent falls in marriage rates in the West were then related to the disintegration of the peasant farming economy, with its own distinctive culture (Hannan 1979). Hannan argued that in the East, farmers were producing for the market and not the family so a different form of rationality applied. Although Hannan's work can be criticised for being based on modernisation theory, it provides a nice example of how culture and choice interact. It highlights the importance of situating decision-making processes within the local culture and how different cultures can lead to different definitions of rational behaviour (see Chapter Four for further discussions).

#### **2.3.4.4 Family values, norms and preferences**

The purpose of this section is to outline the empirical evidence on Irish values, norms and preferences and how they may have differed across time, place and social group. According to Coleman (1992), Irish fertility levels are higher than the level that would be expected from economic and social developments. One of the reasons this may be the case is that the Irish display more traditional values, attitudes and preferences towards family size than other Europeans. Some empirical evidence on the cultural valuation of family size is available for Ireland and a number of other countries from the European Values Study (EVS) and Eurobarometer.<sup>54</sup> In the 1981 EVS, Irish women, and especially older Irish women, espoused a substantially larger ideal family size compared to women

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<sup>54</sup> These international survey projects included a question on what respondents would consider as the ideal number of children in a family that is, a normative question. In 2006, the EVS also asked about personal ideal family size that is, a more preference based approach.

in any other developed country in the data set (Fahey 2001). By the 1990 EVS, Irish women's ideal family size had fallen sharply while it had changed little in the other countries (Fahey 2001). Nevertheless, in the 2001 and 2006 Eurobarometer, Ireland still had one of the highest ideal family size in the EU (Goldstein, Lutz, Testa 2003, Testa 2007).

The interesting component of this research is that it allows for comparisons between ideal/preferred family size and the actual number of children born to women with completed fertility. It, therefore, appears to provide a unique opportunity to see how preferences and behaviour interact. Girard and Roussel (1982), however, warn that such actual-ideal comparisons link fertility outcomes to what might be regarded as general norms about ideal family size, rather than personal preferences.

In 1981, Ireland had the largest of both actual and ideal family size; but the proportion of women whose actual family size fell short of their ideal was greater than in any country bar Japan, while the proportion whose actual family size was more than their ideal was quite low (Fahey 2001). By 1990, that pattern had reversed: both actual and ideal family size had fallen a good deal but the net effect was that the proportion whose actual families were "too small" (i.e. below the ideal) had halved since 1981, while the proportion whose families were "too big" had grown by over a half. These results indicate that a large family was no longer the accepted social standard or norm within Ireland.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence on Irish class differentials in ideal family size and the gap between ideal and completed fertility by religious group. Fahey (2004), however, found that below-ideal fertility is most common among the highly educated and

least common among those with low educational attainment, while above-ideal fertility is most common among those with low educational levels:<sup>55</sup>

‘Taking education as a proxy indicator for general command over resources, then a lack of resources tends not so much to restrict the number of children that women can have as weaken their capacity to limit their fertility to the level set by their own ideals.’

(Fahey and Spéder 2004, p.3).

Little is known about how education shapes family size preferences or norms. Indeed, there is little known about what shapes family size preferences at all. Heiland and Sanderson (2005) recently called for more research on this issue as they expressed concern about the constraints facing higher educated couples in terms of fertility. They rejected the idea that the more educated prefer smaller families, based on German and EU data on family size preferences.

The fertility preferences of the less-educated and poorer social groups also deserve attention, especially as regard the effectiveness of fertility control. The above-ideal fertility of these groups may be related to more conservative attitudes towards contraception or less awareness of available fertility controls within these groups. Information from the EVS reveals that the less educated in Ireland are more conservative across a range of questions (Fahey et al. 2005). Of course, these differences may not translate into behaviour and rational action approaches have specified other explanations for this pattern (see Chapter Seven).

As regard religious differentials, Wilson (1980) analysed family size preferences among married Catholic women, less than 44 years of age, in a national fertility and family planning survey conducted in Ireland in 1973. The mean ideal family size among these women was 4.3 children; considerably higher than the mean ideal family size of 3.8 reported among Catholic women in the U.S., and of 2.4 reported for Catholic women in

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<sup>55</sup> There is a strong correlation between education and social class (for example, see Andersen and Taylor 2006, Callan and Harmon 2000).

Britain. Modal ideal family size in Ireland was also higher. The proportion of Irish Catholic women who preferred families with five or more children was much higher than in other European countries.

Moving beyond fertility considerations, there are considerable social class differences in the rate of adoption of new forms of family formation. Irish farmers, for example, are disproportionately unlikely to cohabit (Halpin and O'Donoghue 2004). In terms of contraceptive use, Layte et al. (2007) found that the consistency of contraceptive use in the last year was higher among women compared to men, with lower use in the unskilled manual classes for both sexes. *The Durex Report - Ireland*<sup>56</sup> (1993) found that fourteen per cent of respondents reported using no contraception and 12 per cent reported not being sexually active. The condom was particularly popular among 25 to 29 year-olds, the upper-social-class groups and those living in urban areas. By contrast, natural methods were practiced almost exclusively by married couples over age 30 and amongst those in rural areas.

More generally, Whelan and Fahey (1994) examined Irish values and attitudes regarding the family, marriage and sex roles and found that in comparison to the rest of Europe, Irish values on sex roles were not, at that time, significantly more traditional than European views. The Irish were however consistently conservative on abortion and sexuality. They found, however, that people in Ireland did not depart from the average European in their attitudes towards married women's paid employment and unmarried parenthood. An earlier national survey carried out by Fine-Davis (1986) found evidence of a shift in Irish women's attitude. In 1975, 70 per cent of the women sampled agreed

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<sup>56</sup> The study was designed to be statistically representative of the adult population aged 17 to 49 years living in the Republic of Ireland.

with the statement 'Being a wife and mother are the most fulfilling roles any woman could want'. By 1986, only 39 per cent did so (Fine-Davis 1986). Whelan and Fahey, however, concluded from their study that cultural patterns follow a 'lurching, unpredictable and changing course' (op.cit. p. 81).

### **2.3.5 Discussion and overview of the cultural approach**

Cultural explanations of demographic change need to link changing attitudes to behaviour. This has proved problematic and, in the Irish case, severely limited by the lack of historical evidence. Since Weber's time, many scholars have accepted the idealist argument that attitudes and values drive behavior, especially attitudes and values derived from religion. Lesthaeghe and colleagues have shown, however, that family formation is conditioned not only by also by ideational changes but also by economic factors and more particularly, opportunity structures.

In terms of cultural influences, Lesthaegle and Meekers (1986), for example, found that Ireland had high scores on an index of familism, low scores for tolerance of non-conformist patterns of family formation, the highest scores on religiosity and the lowest on leftism in the EVS of 1981. Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988) found that church attendance was a far better proxy for religiosity than the Catholic/Protestant dichotomy. Church attendance in Ireland was high in both the 1981 and 1991 surveys, with 85 per cent of Irish Catholics claiming to attend religious services at least once a week.<sup>57</sup> Even by 1998, belief in God, life after death, heaven, and miracles were high in Ireland by

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<sup>57</sup> Eighty-two per cent of Catholics attended Church weekly in Hornsby-Smyth and Whelan's 1994 study and 82 per cent in Mac Greil's 1991 study.

European standards (International Social Survey Programme, Greeley 2003).<sup>58</sup> Church attendance and endorsement of religious beliefs was highest among women (especially those at home full-time), those over 40 years old, in rural areas and amongst the less educated (Hornsby-Smith 1992).

Given this, Greeley and others have questioned the degree to which socio-economic developments and secularisation go hand in hand (for a review see Fahey et al. 2005). Inglehart (1997) described Ireland as a ‘hyper-Catholic’ country and Widmer, Treas and Newcomb (1998) labeled it ‘sexually conservative’. Inglehart provides evidence from the World Values Survey that values do change with economic development but that they continue to reflect a society’s cultural heritage, with cultural change being path dependent (Inglehart and Baker 2000). In that respect, Becker’s (1996) assertion of increasing rationality in Ireland can be linked to evidence on ideational change, but what differs is that Ireland started from a higher level of religiosity, however measured, than in other European countries. In other words, the effects of religiosity are still evident.

The cultural approach presented here has highlighted important ideational changes in Irish society. The problem is that data in this area do not allow us to link changes in norms and values to individual family formation decisions. Some of these values may be interpreted as “rational” for example, and others may argue that the continuance of a large family ideal is a non-rational leftover from the past. In Weberian terms, it may be that current levels of high fertility are a function of value-rational action among some groups. In other words, regardless of possible costs, individuals act to put

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<sup>58</sup> For more information of the persistence of religious beliefs in Ireland see Inglis (1987), Nic Ghiolla Phadraig (1987) and (1988), Kelley and De Graaf (1997), Nic Ghiolla Phadraig and Parfey (1976), Hornsby-Smith (1990), MacGreil (1974) and Weafer (1986).

into practice their convictions (see Chapters Five and Six). Technical rational thinking is not the only form of human action.

In addition, in sharp contrast to Becker's hypothesis, modern nuptiality and fertility decisions in Ireland may have more to do with cultural and emotional considerations rather than economic ones. In the past, the dowry, arranged marriages and the importance of agriculture ensured that economic factors predominated. With their demise and the growth in the economy, it can be argued that values and preferences - as components of culture - are now more, not less, important. This is especially the case for women where increased levels of education, labour market involvement and increased control over fertility decisions have allowed them to realise their preferences with less constraints.

## ***2.4 Summary and hypotheses***

The principal idea put forth in this chapter is as follows: It is possible to categorise the many interpretive frameworks employed by population scholars to explain fertility and marriage decline in modern societies into two groups. The first group contains those explanations pointing to the desire on the part of parents or potential parents to improve their life conditions, as it is based on the important influence of economic factors. In strictest form, the rational action approach assumes that individuals chose actions that satisfy their preferences to the greatest extent, taking into account constraints such as income. These preferences are assumed to be egoistic and individuals are assumed to maximise their own utility, taking constraints and opportunities into consideration. The

approach, therefore, analyses how constraints, opportunities and/or preferences influence behaviour.

More recent approaches do not solely focus on egoistic preferences, or tangible objective constraints, with subjects varying in the degree to which they are well informed (see Opp 1999). Recent sociological work has focused on the relationship between situated action, preference and norm formation, and rational choice. All variants of the rational action/choice approach encounter problems, with criticisms ranging from accusations of being tautological and *ad hoc*.

The second approach highlights cultural factors, such as religion and ethnicity, and ideational change such as, secularisation and its associated changes in values (stressing individuality rather than collectivity), attitudes, preferences and norms. The cultural approach stresses that individuals are essentially social beings, not merely rational economic beings. Elster (1989) proposed that norm-guided behaviour is not outcome oriented and, therefore, it falls outside the domain of rational choice theory.

In the Irish case, social and economic conditions proved insufficient to explain demographic behaviour so demographers called on cultural explanations. According to Cleland (2004), the decline in fertility in the developing world is related to the diffusion of birth control. Lesthaeghe (1997), however, pointed out that the innovation-diffusion models have their basis in rational decision-making on the part of the individual but they also incorporate information on the essential role of context or culture. Compared to rational action approaches, these models of decision-making processes are significantly less advanced.

This bold distinction between economic and cultural factors is unwarranted. Lesthaeghe and colleague's work on changes in European values shows that, in many respects, economy and culture are inseparable. As emphasised several times in this chapter, both types of explanation are not always easily distinguishable one from the other. They can easily coexist for the same person or even the same social group. The distinction has less merit today and numerous authors have attempted to include cultural based theories into their rational economic models. More recent advances in mixed models of action believe that all human action is unified but complex, integrating both rational and "non-rational" elements. Zafirovski (2003) proposes that human behaviour can be rational not only on economic grounds but also on non-economic ones. Rather than abandoning rational choice theory, however, such new approaches to the theory wish to modify it to account for other types of action.<sup>59</sup>

Both cultural and economic explanations have pointed to the importance of a class-based analysis of marriage and fertility trends. From the rational actor perspective, social class differences can account for varying economic and social resources. For a long time, this aspect of variation in family formation was ignored in Irish family studies. In addition, different social groups vary in family values, tastes and preferences, and have different normative expectations about fertility and marriage.

Demographic patterns in Ireland during most of the twentieth century were considered exceptional and a challenge to classic demographic transition theory (Coleman 1992). Guinnane (1997) argued that what was unusual about early twentieth century Ireland was the combination of late age at marriage, low nuptiality, high fertility

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<sup>59</sup> Goldthorpe (1998) provides a general argument against mixed models and Archer et al. (2000) provide specific critical comments on Zafirovski's model.

and extensive emigration. Economic explanations refer to Ireland's late industrialisation, the dominance of agricultural occupations and high levels of emigration. Cultural accounts point to the importance of conservative family values and preferences with special attention focusing on the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Taken together these accounts have highlighted how differences in economic constraints and opportunities, in cultural values and, the social and political institutions of different social groups and countries affect the formation of families.

The remainder of this thesis will estimate the extent to which basic economic change, class compositional changes (at the aggregate level) and rational decision-making (at the personal level) can account for changes in Irish marriage and fertility rates over the course of the twentieth century. The approach will help explain the nature of Irish exceptionalism as well as how and why demographic change occurred. As discussed, this literature review connects changes in family formation patterns to the transformation of the economy away from its agrarian base.

From Becker's microeconomic perspective, traditional agricultural societies had a high demand for children. Since a high proportions of the Irish labour force were involved in agriculture for a large part of the twentieth century (for details see Chapter Four), high levels of marital fertility can be viewed as rational economic behaviour; the benefits derived from children being high and resource costs low in agrarian Ireland. From the 1960s onwards, however, Ireland's 'late and rapid industrialisation'<sup>60</sup> was likely to have brought about notable demographic change. However, even before this, significant demographic changes had occurred in Irish family patterns (see Chapters Four and Five).

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<sup>60</sup> Breen et al. 1990, p. 535.

The relative price of marriage as well as children differs across the social classes. We have seen that when inheritance was impartible and family estates left to a single heir, marriages were limited and, celibacy and migration encouraged other kin. From this perspective, high rates of celibacy were related to the inheritance structure. Under the stem family system, there was only one heir, almost always a son, and this son was typically married off to a daughter of a family with similar status. As a consequence of this system, in most cases, only one son and one daughter within each family married. The economic basis of marriage was strong given the predominance of the dowry and the 'match'. Late marriage and high rates of celibacy were thus a result of what Hajnal (1965) maintained was an extreme example of a western European marriage pattern founded on the stem family and an agrarian structure of small landholders.

The effect of changes within each social group on the overall marriage and fertility rate in Ireland depends in part on the relative size of the social groups; in particular, the importance of the agricultural, rural, sector. The approach stresses the relationship between the social structure and patterns of family formation. A number of theoretical hypotheses can be derived from this argument based on the role of compositional change. These hypotheses empirically test the relationship between demographic changes and changes in the Irish social structure or, in other words, changes in the class composition of Irish society.

In terms of celibacy, the "composition hypothesis" states that Ireland's high rate of celibacy was a consequence of the large proportion of the population who derived their income from property. Subsequent declines in the rate of celibacy should therefore, be related to the decline in the relative size of the farming population. This hypothesis is

explained and tested in detail in Chapter Four. Chapter Five focuses on the relationship between high rates of marital fertility and the dominance of small-scale family farming. In terms of fertility decline, the “compositional hypothesis” predicts that rates of marital fertility will decline due to the declining importance in the total population of high fertility social groups such as, farmers and agricultural workers.

Chapter Six focuses on the inter-relationship of marriage and fertility decisions. Walsh (1970<sup>a</sup>) proposed that high marital fertility acted to deter marriage. He noted that the high fertility counties of Ireland, those in the West, were those with the lowest marriage levels. Walsh (1970<sup>b</sup>) also found that this relationship existed across social groups. The constancy of this relationship across half a century, from 1880 on, provided him with additional support for an interpretation that stresses the role of high marital fertility as a deterrent to marriage within Ireland. Walsh argued that the regional patterns were produced by a desire on the part of farmers in the West to secure higher living standards by reducing the population pressures on the land. With fertility within marriage remaining high in the West, Walsh argued that restraining from marriage was an acceptable - and therefore rational - means of controlling the population (Walsh 1985). This “deterrent hypothesis” will test the degree to which such objective rational thinking influenced Irish marriage decisions.

Guinnane (1997) provided another rational micro-level argument for the relationship between high fertility and high celibacy. He took the position that those women who did not marry were those women who did not wish to have large families. They therefore had a choice to either remain in the West unmarried or emigrate. Guinnane then argued that those men and women who did marry desired large families

for a number of social and economic reasons (Guinnane 1997 and Salazar 2006). Guinnane did not provide any evidence to support this post-factual hypothesis. The implications of this approach stress the selective effects of both celibacy and emigration in maintaining the large family ideal.

Chapter Six fully elaborates the mechanisms through which the deterrent effect may operate. It assesses the degree to which it was and still is in operation. One of the major limits of the hypothesis is that high marital fertility can only act as a deterrent for those men and women without economic resources, in particular, non-inheriting sons. In the period studied by Walsh, 1880 to 1950, farm owners almost universally married *and* had large families while those denied land did not. The “effect” therefore may have only applied to those men and women from farming backgrounds. With the “diffusion” of artificial fertility controls, we can predict that fertility decisions are no longer related to marriage decisions.

Before proceeding to the empirical evidence, the next chapter provides a brief social history of twentieth century Ireland. The purpose of the chapter is to provide some background information for those who are not familiar with Ireland’s history. The chapter also provides information on data requirements and introduces the data sources.

## **3 Background information**

### ***3.1 A Brief Social History***

To understand the trends in family formation which will be discussed in the following chapters concomitant influences and changes taking place throughout twentieth century Irish society must be considered. The purpose of this section is to provide some background information for those who are not familiar with Ireland's history. The influential factors to be discussed vary by time period. The major influences supporting family stability in the past - such as emigration, dominance of rural livelihoods and private-property relations, low incomes, the Constitution of 1937, and the Roman Catholic Church - are less powerful today. In their place are factors including urbanisation, industrialisation, feminism, higher levels of education, a perception of children as economic liabilities, and married women entering the workforce. The following sub-sections outline the major social and economic changes that occurred in Ireland since Famine times, discussing both the role of the State and Catholic Church. The second section of this chapter discusses the data requirements and the final section introduces the main data source and the purposes to which it will be employed.

#### **3.1.1 Agrarian Ireland**

The history lesson begins with the Great Irish Famine (1845-1849). While historians do not agree about the precise figures, Mokyr and Ó Gráda (2002) suggest that more than a million people died and a million emigrated as a result of the potato blight (see figure

3.1). In most countries, famines tend to be followed, albeit after some delay, by an upsurge in marriages and births, but in Ireland this did not happen. Between 1820 and 1920 nearly five million Irish people migrated to America, by far the most popular destination for emigrants at that time (Mac Éinrí 2001). As we saw in Chapter Two in early twentieth century Ireland, the general practice was:

*One son would usually get the farm. A daughter might get a dowry.  
The rest often had to get the boat.*

(Mac Éinrí 2001, p.2).

By 1921 approximately one in four people who had been born in Ireland lived abroad (Delaney 2007). Most, although not all, of those who emigrated came from the less developed rural parts of the country and most, although not all, were themselves from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The post-famine migrants left as individuals, not families and a high proportion were single women (see Friedland 1989, Baines 1985, Nugent 1992, Drudy 1995).

In 1919, the Irish Republican Army, commonly referred to as the old IRA<sup>1</sup>, was recognised by Dáil Éireann (its elected assembly) as the legitimate army of the unilaterally declared Irish Republic, the Irish state proclaimed in the Easter Rising of 1916. The Rising was an attempt by militant Irish republicans to win independence from Britain. The Irish war of independence (1919-1921) and the Irish civil war (1922-1923) followed. In 1922 Ireland was partitioned. The civil war lasted until May 1923 and was based on the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State under British dominion and without the six counties of Northern Ireland that is the industrial north-east. Industrialisation was therefore limited to the North. After partition, the main

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<sup>1</sup> To distinguish between the army of the Irish Republic, and later claimants to the name, the original army recognised by the Dáil is sometimes called the Old IRA

industries left in Ireland were all agriculture-based but to ‘be agricultural is not the same as to be traditional in the sense of ‘backward’’ (Tovey and Share 2003, p.52). Irish agriculture has a long history of commercialisation and of integration into international markets (see Tovey and Share 2003).

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1922, following the coming into legal existence of the Irish Free State, Liam Cosgrave became the first internationally recognised head of an independent Irish government. During the ten years that Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedhael were in power, they adopted a conservative economic policy which was to be expected from a newly independent country experiencing high levels of poverty. Marriage rates were low but fertility within marriage was high which, as was argued in the preceding chapter, was related to a large share of the population involved in agriculture:

‘The society that gained political independence in 1922 was highly specialised in agriculture. Some 58 per cent of the male labour force at that time worked in agriculture.’

(Tovey and Share 2003, p. 52).

From 1932 Éamon de Valera<sup>2</sup> abandoned the policy of free trade, pursued a protectionist policy and sought self-sufficiency, but it did not succeed. During the 1920s and 1930s unemployment remained high in Ireland and emigration continued (see Figure 3.2). The state remained neutral throughout World War II, although tens of thousands of Irish men volunteered to serve in the British forces. The state declared an official state of emergency on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1939. In this period, Ireland was hit badly by the rationing of food and coal. In 1937, a new Constitution of Ireland re-established the state as Ireland (Éire). In 1949, the state was formally declared the Republic of Ireland and it left the

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<sup>2</sup> De Valera became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and Minister for External Affairs from 1937 - 48. He was Taoiseach again from 1951 - 54, 1957 - 59.

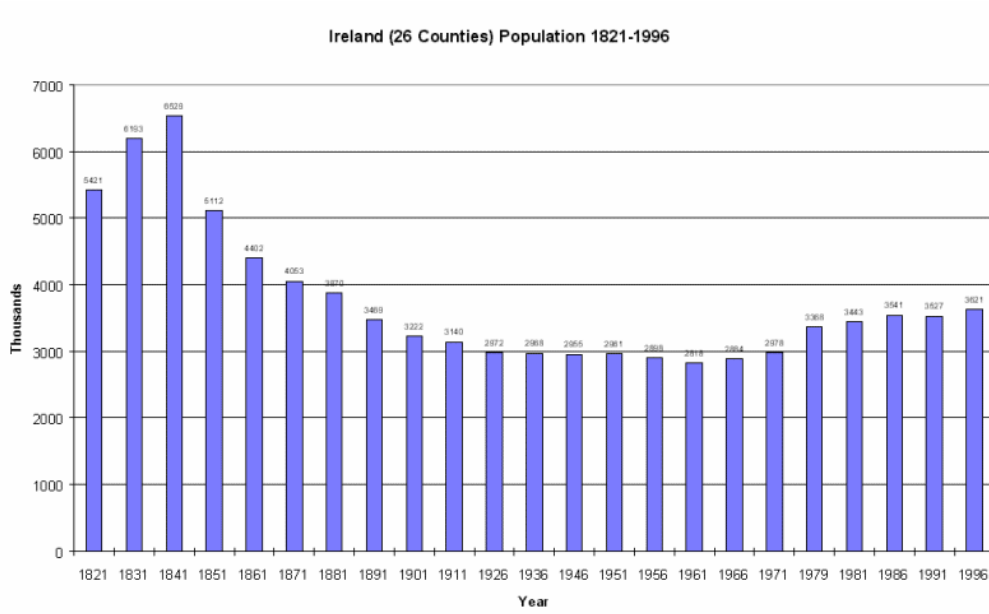
British Commonwealth. After the effects of the Great Depression and the Second World War had passed, emigration continued (see Figure 3.2). More than half of those who had left school in the early 1950s had emigrated by 1961 (Guinnane 1997). Tovey and Share suggest that for some, continuing emigration was positively desirable as it removed the dangers of social unrest and guaranteed that the Irish middle classes could continue to live in the state to which they had become accustomed:

‘Emigration was seen as a way of removing the ‘weaker’ elements of the population (ideally far away to America) and thereby strengthening the stronger and more ‘manly’ indigenous population.’

(Tovey and Share 2003, p. 153).

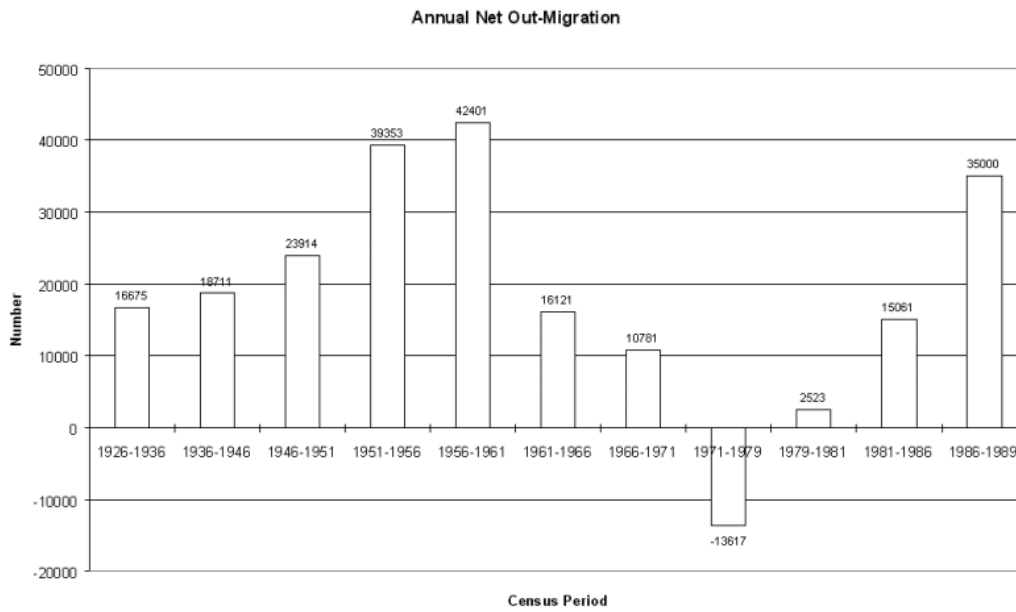
Opportunities for upward mobility were extremely limited in Ireland prior to the 1960s. Mass emigration was a key factor in maintaining stability across the rigid class structure since the working and lower-middle classes were most likely to leave (Breen et al. 1990, Whelan et al. 1992). From the mid 1930s, Britain became the main destination of emigrants (Ryan 1990).

**Figure 3.1:** The population of Ireland 1821-1996.



Source: Irish Centre for Migration Studies, University College Cork.

**Figure 3.2:** Annual Net Out-Migration 1926-1989.



Source: Irish Centre for Migration Studies, University College Cork.

### 3.1.2 Industrial Developments

The publication in 1958 of T.K. Whitaker's (First) *Programme for Economic Expansion* was a watershed. It called for the ending of Ireland's policy of economic isolationism in favour of an export-driven policy, for the modernisation and industrialisation of the economy and for the attraction of foreign investment. A policy of free trade replaced the previous protectionist policy.<sup>3</sup> Substantial employment creation and a rapid growth in exports soon followed.

'The changes in the class composition of the Irish work-force emerged from industrial development that was more rapid, occurred later, and was more state-inspired than in most Western societies.'

(Breen et al. 1990, p. 59).<sup>4</sup>

Marriage became a feasible option for substantially greater numbers of young people, but fertility rates within marriage did not (at least at first) decline (see Chapter Five). Accordingly 'economic change seems to have preceded social change by at least a decade' (Mac Éinrí 2001, p.4). This progress was not uniformly positive with the impoverished West of Ireland continuing to suffer; seasonal migrants left in large numbers from Donegal and Mayo.<sup>5</sup> During the 1960s, living standards rose and emigration fell sharply, marriage rates rose and age of marriage fell but all forms of artificial birth control remained legally banned.

One major shift occurred when the Supreme Court decided (the McGee case) in 1973 to strike down, on constitutional grounds, legislation forbidding the importation and sale of artificial contraceptives to married couples. In 1985, further legislation made non-medical contraception of all kinds available to anyone over 18 without prescription (Hug

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Breen et al (1990), chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 4 discusses changes in the class composition of Irish society in detail.

<sup>5</sup> See Delaney 2000.

1999). In practice, this was not always the case.<sup>6</sup> It was only in 1993 that a fully liberalised regime of artificial contraception was finalised. According to Breen et al. (1990), up until the 1970s the content of state policy in the area of the family was mainly defined by the Catholic Church, not the state.

Education was also reformed to a large extent; the state developed and expanded technical education and university education was reformed. Free second-level education was introduced in 1968. First-level and most of second-level education was under direct Church control. The expansion in education provision led to a greater proportion of each youth cohort successfully completing second-level education and to a decline in the proportion of the teaching force belonging to religious orders (Breen et al. 1990). In 1972, the ‘special position’ of the Catholic Church in Article 44 of the Irish constitution was removed.<sup>7</sup> By the 1970s, women’s secondary qualifications had overtaken men’s in that more women were completing the Leaving Certificate. By the 1990s, Irish women’s participation in higher education had also overtaken men’s (Smyth and Hannan in Nolan et al. 2000). In the late 1960s, graduate emigration began to attract public interest; better known internationally as the “brain drain”. The great majority of migrants were unskilled workers with agricultural backgrounds but a constant, numerically small proportion of the outflow came from skilled and professional occupations (Delaney 2001).

The 1970s were a period, for the first time since before the Famine, of net-immigration (see Figure 3.2). More people migrated to Ireland than left through most of the 1970s and again in the 1990s (Figure 3.2). Changes in the occupational structure, related to economic development, contributed to further shifts in the population (see

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<sup>6</sup> In 1991, the Irish Family Planning Association was fined 500 pounds for selling condoms in a Virgin Megastore in Dublin.

<sup>7</sup> Article 44 affirmed the church as the ‘guardian of the faith of the great majority of the citizens’.

Chapter Four). More rural Irish were moving to the cities where white-collar and professional occupations were located and job opportunities were expanding. Delaney points out that between 1921 and 1971, Irish people traveled from rural Ireland to British cities so that there was a low level of migration within Ireland (Sharpe 2001). The picture changed in the 1970s. A number of factors were seen as crucial in explaining inward migration, for example, Ireland's membership of the then EEC (1973), skill shortages, expansionist economic policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

These economic changes were soon to run into difficulties as the 1980s arrived: A massive increase in public debt coincided with a period of re-structuring within Irish industry and at a time when CAP reform was becoming a dominant EU theme. The male unemployment rate rose from about 6 per cent, in the early 1970s, to a peak of 19 per cent in the mid 1980's, falling during the 1990s. Unemployment had 'in part been concentrated amongst young workers (15-24) who had in the period an unemployment rate of about 50% higher than the average.' (O'Donoghue, Meredith and O'Shea 2003, p. 2-3). The upward trend in unemployment coincided with the start of the postponement of maternity in the early 1980s.

Emigration rose very sharply and the majority of emigrants went to the U.K. (NESC 1991). The baby-boomers of the sixties were entering an already over-crowded labour market in the 1980s. In earlier years it was the landless of rural Ireland and the urban poor who mainly emigrated but, in the 1980s, highly skilled workers, particularly university graduates, began to leave in greater numbers (Mac Laughlin 1994). In most periods, disproportionate numbers of women, compared to any other emigrant societies, left. In these times, Ireland was referred to as the "sick man of Europe" (Garvin 2004).

### 3.1.3 The Celtic Tiger

The 1990s saw the emergence of a very different Ireland.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of a largely successful policy of peaceful industrial relations and joint wage bargaining through a mechanism involving all of the social partners was a key feature (Fahey, Russell and Whelan 2007). Major investments in education which the State had made in the 1970s and 80s began to pay off in ever-greater numbers of well-educated workers. Fiscal and other investment incentives (in particular, zero, and later very low, export taxes and low corporate income tax) made Ireland a very attractive location within the European Union, especially for sectors as IT and pharmaceuticals, and led to a major increase in foreign direct investment. Tight government fiscal and monetary policy kept inflation low. The “Celtic Tiger” emerged: Real growth rates in the late 1990s, at more than 8 per cent of GDP, were the highest in the OECD area. The National Development Plan reported that<sup>9</sup>:

‘Positive demographic factors, increased labour force participation - particularly by women - and net immigration have enabled the labour force to grow rapidly.’  
(NDP 2000-2006, p. 27).

By 2000, unemployment was at 4 per cent and employment had increased by 55 per cent between 1993 and 2004 (Fahey, Russell and Whelan 2007).

As outlined in Chapter Two, the increased labour force participation rate of women has demographic consequences. Ireland traditionally had a low level of female participation in the paid labour force (for a full review see O’Connor 1998). In 1971, only 7.5 per cent of married women were in the workforce compared with over 40 per cent in other western countries (Coleman 1992). As the predominance of farming and farming economies declined so did the active, and often hidden, productive role of

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Nolan, O’Connell, Whelan (2000).

<sup>9</sup> Government of Ireland (1999) *National Development Plan 2000-2006*.

married women in the commercial economy (Hannan and Katsiouni 1977). The increase in the labour force participation rate of married women was sudden; in 1961, one in twenty was in the work force but by 1987, one out of every five married women was a labour force participant (Breen et al. 1990). A low level of female labour force participation was reinforced by official policy until the relatively recent past. Up until the 1970s, women in the civil service and many white collar jobs in the private sector were obliged to leave these jobs if they married. Some clauses of the Irish constitution emphasised the importance of women's role within the home which Daly (1995) notes reflected society at that time.<sup>10</sup> The traditional family was seen as the core institution of society and the establishment of the marriage bar in 1932 followed from this logic. In addition, until 1957, women could not own property or make contracts.

One change occurred with membership of the then EEC which forced Ireland to adjust its social policies to correspond with European equal opportunities legislation (see Larson Pyle 1990).<sup>11</sup> The marriage bar<sup>12</sup> in the public service was lifted in 1973, pay discrimination was banned in 1974, and the right to maternity leave for women was introduced in 1981. In the early 1970s, children's allowance was made payable to mothers and not fathers as was previously the case. Due to a recognition of feminists' concerns, the government established commissions on the status of women in 1970 and 1990 that challenged some of the Constitution's protections. In 1973, the key recommendation of the 1970s commission that unmarried mothers rearing their children

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<sup>10</sup> Article 41.2 reads "The state shall therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home".

<sup>11</sup> See The 1974 Equal Pay Act and the 1977 Employment Equality Act.

<sup>12</sup> The marriage bar against employing married teachers in national schools was introduced in 1933 and remained in force until 1958. The civil service marriage bar was not removed until 1973 after entry into the EEC

should receive an allowance was implemented. For the first time in Ireland, this provided governmental and financial recognition for mothers who had given birth outside marriage and provided economic support for lone parents.

As we saw in the previous chapter, it is argued that the increase of women in the paid labour force has contributed to reducing the imperative to marry:

‘Eliminating marriage bars, growing job opportunities, and the individualization of taxation policy in 2000 contributed to dramatic accretions in the employment of wives. Their employment contributed to delays in childbearing and related declines in fertility and family size.’

(Seward et al. 2005, p. 424).

High marginal rates of income taxation for married Irish women had long discouraged women from labour market (re)entry (Fahey, Smyth and Russell 2000). Since 2000, the proportion of employed Irish women has been virtually identical to the EU averages (Seward et al. 2005, Table 1). In 2002, the participation rate of married women was almost the same as that of all women at 48 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

In this period, there were other important changes occurring in Irish society which influenced Ireland’s demography. Since 1997, the long-standing tradition of emigration has reversed with positive net migration that is, the difference between inward migration and outward migration. The composition of these two flows differs significantly with young educated people mainly leaving and older persons, often with families, generally returning. In 2001, in-migration was highest among the 25-44 age group that is, the group most likely to marry and have children. In addition, the ‘ethnic minority’ population of the Republic was also on the increase. Fieldwork carried out in the south-west of Ireland found that the number of continental immigrants in rural Ireland had reached high levels of up to 10 per cent (Mac Einri 2003). Little research has been carried out on the new

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<sup>13</sup> Fine-Davis 2004

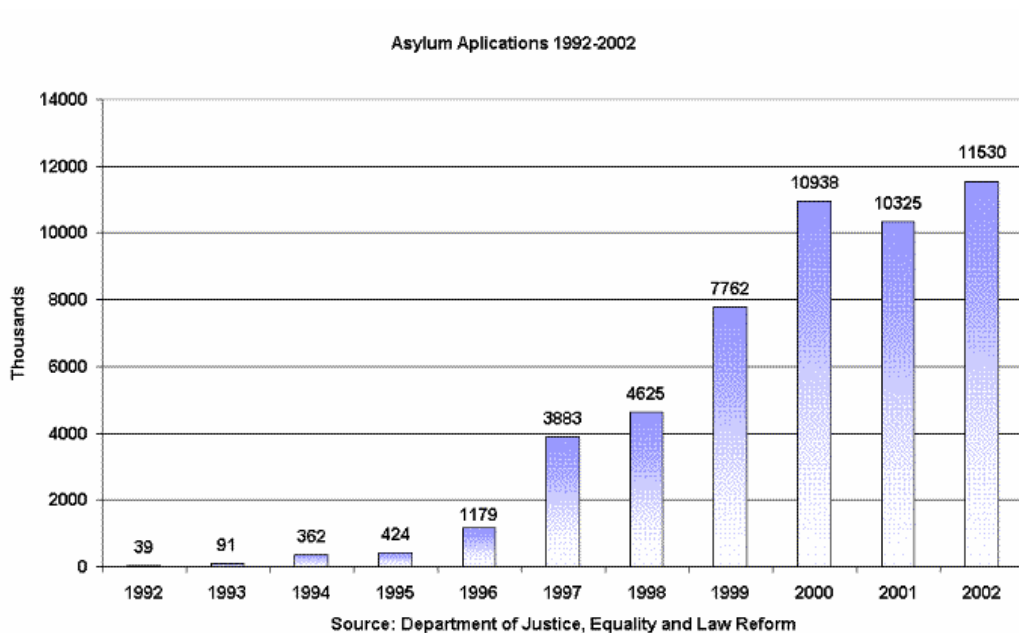
ideas, attitudes and family structures associated with this inflow and how it has impacted on Ireland's demography.

In the period 1995-2000, approximately a quarter of a million persons migrated to Ireland, of whom about half were returning Irish (Mac Éinrí 2001). By 2005, returning Irish migrants accounted for one quarter of the gross inflow (Fahey et al. 2007). The economic impact of immigration has been favorable with migrants making a positive contribution to GNP (Fahey et al. 2007). The 1990s also saw an increase in the number seeking asylum in Ireland (see Figure 3.3). The main countries of origin of asylum seekers were Nigeria, Romania, Moldova and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Coulter and Coleman 2003). Asylum seekers in Ireland are not allowed to work and do not receive social welfare. In 1992, Ireland had only 389 applications from people claiming refugee status. By 2002, there were 11530 applications received (Douglass 2005). In 2000, permission was granted to 1413 asylum seekers to remain in Ireland on the basis that they were now parents of an Irish-born child (Martin 2000).

To respond to this new and rapidly growing phenomenon, immigration policies had to be developed in a very short period of time (Ruhs 2004). First, a Supreme Court judgment in January 2003 removed the automatic right to permanent residence for non-national parents of Irish-born children. More recently, the government proposed a national "citizenship referendum" to eliminate an Irish-born child's automatic right to citizenship when the parents are not Irish nationals. The public overwhelmingly passed this referendum in June 2004. Secondly, with regard to labour immigration, Ireland has maintained policies that are among the most liberal in Europe. In the absence of quotas, the number of work permits issued to non-Irish migrant workers exploded from less than

6,000 in 1999 to about 50,000 in 2003 (Ruhs 2004). Finally, as another reflection of Ireland's relative openness to economic immigration, Ireland granted citizens of the 10 new EU member states free access to the Irish labour market immediately upon EU enlargement on May 1, 2004.

**Figure 3.3:** Asylum Applications in Ireland, 1992-2002.



Irish society adopted other relatively liberal social policies during this period (see Daly and Clavero 2002). Divorce was legalised, homosexuality decriminalised, while abortion in limited cases was allowed by the Irish Supreme Court in the X Case legal judgment (1992). A series of tribunals set up from the 1990s investigated alleged malpractices by politicians, the Catholic clergy, judges, hospitals and the Gardaí (police).

To conclude, Irish society changed rapidly in this period of economic growth. Yet little research has taken place as regard trends in family formation over recent time

periods.<sup>14</sup> The family, a key area within Sociology, has been neglected. Yet the family, in its different forms, is an issue for a number of areas of public policy. A part of the reason for the lack of research is the very limited empirical evidence on recent changes in the family.

This section of the study has outlined some of the major social and economic changes occurring in Irish society over the last century. A number of major issues of particular importance for the study of family formation were highlighted such as, the role of migration, the impact of the women's movement and the development of state inspired policies. As we will see, despite the lack of an industrial economy, demographic change was already occurring in Ireland prior to the 1960s. The next section discusses the data requirements, in particular the lack of Irish data in this area, and introduces the large-scale data sources to be employed in the following chapters.

### ***3.2 Data requirements***

To pursue these issues further it would be ideal to have national detailed micro-level data on migration flows, individual employment histories, and marital status information across a long time span. One of the most important areas to address is the selective nature of migration which requires detailed information on those who stayed, left and returned to Ireland over the last century, allowing for a comparison of the different populations.

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<sup>14</sup> Small-scale projects have tended to focus on lone parents and unmarried mothers rather than issues such as cohabitation, separation and divorce, as well as more traditional subjects such as recent changes in marriage, fertility rates and contraceptive use (Flanagan and Richardson 1992, O Grady 1992, McCashin 1996, Mahon, Conlon and Dillon 1998).

The impact of migration and other important factors on overall fertility and marital changes has been limited due to a serious lack of appropriate data in these areas.

### **3.2.1 Migration**

Data on migration are poor in most countries but this is particularly the case in Ireland. The only sources of data easily available are from the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Immigration-related data from immigration and police authorities, social welfare or other sources are not easily available and Irish monitoring of immigrant residents is relaxed. Historians have noted that official counts of emigration are badly flawed and the only means available to assess the effect of emigration is to focus on those who left Ireland over census periods by calculating cohort-depletion rates (for example, see Figure 3.2). Details of migrants can, therefore, be calculated by age, sex, region and marital status. However, cohort-depletion estimates will inflate the effects of migration as they assume that people who have not filled in a census report left their home, either to travel within Ireland or abroad, that is deaths are not usually taken into account.

In recent years, the CSO have compiled more information on migration. The principal source of information is the *Quarterly National Household Survey* (QNHS - formerly annual Labour Force Survey), which provides the basis for the classification of migration flows by sex, age group, origin/destination and nationality (immigrants only). The QNHS is a large-sample survey, covering about 39,000 randomly selected households every three months and it provides for the periodic inclusion of modules focused on particular topics. Unfortunately, to date, none of these modules have collected information on nuptiality or fertility.

### 3.2.2 Fertility

Data on fertility in Ireland are also poor. Ireland has never had a comprehensive fertility survey and so lacks detailed data on individual fertility behaviour. Up to 1981, the Census of Population periodically included questions on numbers of children born to married women - single women and widows were not included. These questions were not included in the Census since 1981 but in 2006, the Census added a new question which collected information on the number of children born alive to all women. Once published, this new information will provide a more adequate picture of cohort fertility.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence of the gap in data collection between 1981 and 2006, basic matters such as, completed family size, levels and patterns of childlessness, and social differentials in fertility, have not been adequately tracked in census volumes. For this time period, birth registration data have provided the only source of information on fertility patterns.

The *Quarterly Household Budget Survey* collects some information on family and household structure but it does not include information on family size or marital history. In consequence, the level of information and understanding about this highly important aspect of social change in Ireland has been low. Analysis of the causes, consequences and trajectories of family formation, in particular, are restricted by a lack of longitudinal information.

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<sup>15</sup> This data was published on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007.

### 3.2.3 Family formation

From 1994 to 2001 Ireland took part in the *European Community Household Panel* (ECHP) survey which was collected by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in Dublin. The ECHP is a harmonised cross-national longitudinal survey focusing on household income and living conditions. It also includes items on health, education, housing, migration, demographic and employment characteristics. The ESRI commissioned another panel survey to be collected at the same time to supplement the ECHP data. The *Living in Ireland* (LII) panel is a representative longitudinal survey of over 4000 households and their adult members. It contained the core set of ECHP questions and various additional modules and questions specific to Ireland. The LII data, therefore, provide information on a wide range of topics including some retrospective education and labour market information collected in the first wave (1994). To date, there has not been a study of trends in family formation in Ireland using this information.

The *Living in Ireland* survey is the best source of data available as the *Labour Force Survey's* (1994-1997), *Quarterly National Household Survey* (1998-2002) and *Household Budget Survey* did not ask date of marriage or, children's date of birth, and only provides rough categories for household and family circumstance.<sup>16</sup> These data cannot, therefore, be used to assess the impact of measures on the timing of marriage and births, and spacing of births. For the latter types of analysis, information is needed on individual family and fertility histories. The *Living in Ireland* data too falls short as information on children who had left the household was only collected in the first wave. In order to provide a fuller picture of these issues, serious consideration should have been

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<sup>16</sup> Random samples of the 1996 and 2002 census were available but the released data were extremely limited in terms of information on class background and details of marriage and fertility behaviour.

given to collecting retrospective life and work histories from a large sample of the respondents.

At the time of writing, preparations were underway for a *National Longitudinal Study of Children* in Ireland. This study heralds a new era in data collection relating to many aspects of family life. It could provide the vehicle for a baseline study of paths to family formation and dissolution among a large sample of parents. While the longitudinal data on children in such a study would take a long time to accumulate, the utilisation of the initial rounds to collect retrospective data on parents could furnish immediate results and fill important gaps in our knowledge about family formation (the first round of data on 9 year olds is due for release the end of 2008).

### **3.3 Methodological note**

The *Living in Ireland* data will be used for the analysis of social differentials in fertility levels and marriage chances across a series of birth cohorts, ranging from respondents born at the beginning of the century (1910-1914) to the youngest cohort born, 1980-1982. For younger respondents, those less than 45 years of age, the analysis is restricted (see Chapter Seven). Levels and patterns of childlessness across these fourteen, five-year birth cohorts are examined, controlling for age and other factors. These results are then compared to those published in Census data to estimate the degree to which the LII patterns match the overall trends (the census sample is introduced in the next chapter).

The Census of Population provides demographic, social, economic and administrative data at a given time relating to all persons and households in Ireland. It therefore provides information on the population structure in terms of age, sex, place of

birth, marital status, fertility, occupation, religion, household composition, migration and education. More detailed small area population statistics and 5 per cent random samples of the most recent census data were available.

The cohort approach is by definition concerned with longer-term developments, as cohort trends and differences are accumulated during relatively long periods of time. In the case of fertility analysis, for example, completed cohort fertility and parity distribution may be reasonably assessed only after some 20-25 years following the start of reproductive age among women born in a given year. Period data are readily available for analytical purposes (see Chapter One), whereas cohort data frequently remain incomplete and difficult to reconstruct.<sup>17</sup> From a longer-term perspective, the cohort rather than period approach constitutes the only reliable way to analyse which portion of presumably 'delayed' fertility was really 'postponed' and which portion was 'foregone,' that is, never realised. The cohort approach is also often crucial for assessing the importance of period changes, such as those highlighted in Chapter One. For some, for example, delayed marriage may lead to never-marrying and for others, it signals marriage postponement. The next chapter addresses the issue of non-marriage.

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<sup>17</sup> The superior period measures that Ní Bhrolcháin (1996) called for are not yet developed from the Irish data and if they are, they will only be available from 1984.

## 4 Marriage Inequalities and Occupational Change

‘One for the farm, the rest for the road’  
(Whelan 1986, p. 160).

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on those men considered “too old” to marry in twentieth century Ireland. One of the most noted features of rural Irish life was the proportion never married. Permanent celibacy was a legitimate life option:

‘Historically, singlehood has been, and to a lesser extent remains, an honourable state in Ireland.’  
(Ikels 1988, p. 102).

Ireland was seen as an example of a pattern identified by John Hajnal (1965) where late marriage and a high prevalence of celibacy go hand-in-hand (see Chapter Two). However, the sociological literature has rarely addressed singledom from a theoretical perspective, and its manifestation in Ireland even less so.<sup>1</sup> Yet, single elderly men and women are particularly prone to poverty, isolation and loneliness (Daly 1989). Most research on the family in Ireland has been within the Economic History tradition, and focuses on the post-famine rise in celibacy (such as Connell 1950, Cosgrove 1985 and Guinnane 1997). By contrast, subsequent declines in the proportion of the population remaining unmarried have been comparatively unexamined, and that is the focus of this chapter.

The objectives of this chapter are threefold. First, the socio-economic circumstances of never married males are investigated. Secondly, the degree to which the rise in popularity of marriage permeated all sections of Irish society is assessed. Thirdly, the impact of structural changes on Ireland’s traditionally high rate of non-

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘singledom’ and ‘singlehood’ are relatively recent, but for the purposes of this chapter, celibacy is used as the demographic term for bachelorhood.

marriage is evaluated. The compositional hypothesis states that demographic change is linked to changes in the Irish social structure (see Chapter Two). In this case, celibacy is expected to decline simply as a result of declines in the relative size of the farming population. Accordingly, the aim is to test the economic basis of demographic change.

The chapter is divided into eleven further sections. First, the compositional hypothesis is presented. Section 4.3 describes changes in rates of non-marriage and emigration using information from the Census of Population, Ireland. This is followed by a description of the data source and a discussion of those men who never married in sections 4.4 and 4.5. Sections 4.6 to 4.8 highlight compositional changes, and assess the degree to which class position dictated marital chances. Finally, section 4.9 discusses the agricultural sector and the factors which have inhibited farmers' marriage rates. A more detailed analysis of changes within the farming population will be presented given that decline in the relative size of the farming population is a major component of social change over the 1926-1991 time period. Section 4.10 provides an interpretation of the findings, with a discussion of the comparative importance in twentieth century Ireland of occupation and social class for the determination of marital trends. Section 4.12 summarises.

## ***4.2 The compositional hypothesis***

According to the economic approach discussed in chapter two, the relative price of marriage differs across social classes. Early twentieth century Ireland had a large agrarian population. Inheritance was impartible, and family estates were left to a single heir, so that marriage opportunities were limited for younger sons and bachelorhood or migration accordingly encouraged. From this economic perspective,

high rates of celibacy were related to the inheritance structure and the difficulty of finding an appropriate mate. At this time, marriage had a largely economic basis, given the predominance of the dowry and the 'match' (see Chapters Two and Three). Late marriage and high rates of celibacy have therefore been explained as arising from this particular social structure (Hajnal 1965). In particular, the development of the stem family and an agrarian structure of small landholders were seen as crucial.

The impact on the overall marriage rate of change within each social group depends in part on the relative size of the social groups. In particular, the economic approach stresses the importance of the agricultural sector. According to the compositional hypothesis, celibacy is related to the social structure, in particular to the size of the farming population. Subsequent changes in the propensity to marry are then related to changes in the class composition of Irish society. In Ireland, the main dynamic driving class change up to the 1960s was mass exodus from the land. Between the 1926 and 1961 Census of Population, the percentage of the male labour force in agriculture fell from 58 to 43 per cent. The basic pattern of structural change showed that there was no opportunity to compensate for the losses in traditional forms of work, such as small farming, agricultural labour and unskilled manual work (Breen, Hannan, Rottman and Whelan 1990). The scale of this structural change was such that opportunities to diversify into other economic activity in rural areas were highly limited, and required mass rural exodus. This chapter assesses the impact of this structural shift on male marriage chances across the social groups in Ireland.

Concurrent with the decline in the proportion of the population working in agriculture, there was a decline in the total of gainfully occupied males, from 950,000 in 1926 to 820,000 in 1961. In other words, mass emigration had reduced the male labour force by one-seventh. This introduces a selection bias into the analysis of Irish

marriage patterns, as it is restricted to those men who remained and survived in Ireland (see Chapter Three for details on those who left). In the 1951-1981 period, which was characterised by significant economic and social change, class differences in the ability to marry widened (Breen et al. 1990). Poorer social groups experienced decreasing likelihood of marriage. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, Kennedy argued that the desire to maintain a certain minimum standard of living and social status was crucial in explaining this pattern; it became harder for individuals from poorer social groups to “afford” marriage (Kennedy 1973). Breen et al. have noted that the Irish state, by re-enforcing orthodox Catholic morality rather than the provision of material support, ensured that class factors continued to operate sharply in differentiating both marriage chances and fertility rates (Breen et al., 1990).

In Ireland, the propensity to delay or avoid marriage has long been strongly differentiated by social class, particularly for men since they were the main breadwinners. In order to marry, men needed sufficient resources to support a wife and many children, given high rates of marital fertility as described in Chapter One. Social class position is a useful measure of command over such resources. Through the dowry system, social class also influenced women’s chances of marriage, at least in rural areas. In addition, status homogamy more generally influenced marriage chances throughout Irish society. Strassman and Clarke (1998) showed that there was a low tolerance of hypogamy in Ireland. This chapter, however, focuses solely on men. First, this is because there is a lack of detailed information on women’s class position, although O’Hara provides a useful review of women’s marital chances (O’Hara 1998).<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the marriage decision at this time was largely a male

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the percentage of females single in a social group is not an accurate measure of celibacy in that social group since, females were classified by social group according to their occupation if they were gainfully occupied but many were not gainfully occupied over this time period.

decision - that is, the existing literature has found that marriage for females was largely a function of male initiative (Walsh 1970, McKenna 1978).

### **4.3 Rates of Permanent Celibacy**

For the purposes of this analysis, the proportion of never married males aged 45-54 is taken as the dependent variable. Census data on men born between 1872 and 1946 are used – namely, those who were ‘at risk’ of marriage from 1888, to capture those who married at the very earliest opportunity, up to 1991 for the few who married for the first time at a relatively old age. Given the specific age patterns of marriage examined here, the analyses will not however contribute to understanding the demographic changes which have occurred after 1960. In other words, most of the sample would have married prior to urbanisation, late industrialisation, educational expansion and the entry of large numbers of married women into the paid work force – i.e. prior to the onset of those factors thought to promote the first demographic transition.<sup>3</sup> Delay or curtailment of marriage was characteristic of this pre-industrial state (Coale 1973).

Change in the percentages of successive male generations who never married are plotted in Figure 4.1 below. Men aged between 45 and 54 at the time of the census were selected for two reasons. First, this group captures the subsection of the population at low risk of first marriage; and secondly, this age group was less likely to be a select group, due to increasing mortality rates in men aged 54 and above.<sup>4</sup> A disadvantage of this longitudinal perspective, however, is that it can only be

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In that case they were classified according to the occupation of the person on whom they were dependent. In addition, single females tended to migrate in search of marriage.

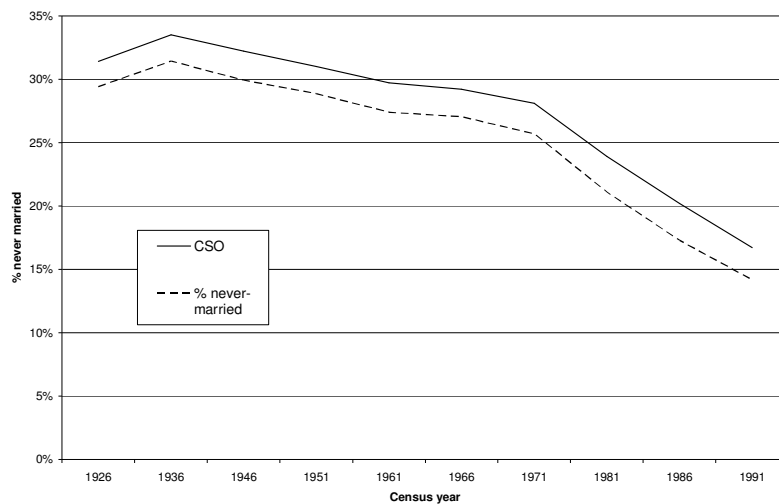
<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2 and 3 for details.

<sup>4</sup> This approach is common in the literature, since in most other countries the incidence of men and women marrying for the first time after the age of 45 was almost nil.

completed when men reach the age of 45, and will thus lag behind current trends (see Chapter Seven).

The graph below shows that there has been a steady decline in rates of permanent celibacy (labelled 'percentage never married') from 1936 to 1991, with a particularly steep decline from 1971 on (Figure 4.1).<sup>5</sup> This measure is only an approximate indicator of celibacy and caution must be exercised in its use. Most clearly, the resulting decline in non-marriage refers only to those men who remained unmarried in Ireland over the time period. As discussed in Chapter 2, an increase in the emigration of single persons can lead to a decline in the proportion of the population who remained single (Kennedy 1973).

**Figure 4.1:** The percentage of men, aged 45-54, who never married, 1926-91.



Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1996, volume II, Table 1B.

Kennedy argued that emigration and celibacy were alternative choices, and that this was especially the case in the 1950s when emigration of single persons was

<sup>5</sup> The starting point for this analysis represents an extreme level of widespread celibacy which had been high since the Famine.

particularly heavy. Table 4.1 provides details of estimated net migration rates - the difference between inward and outward migration - but it does not take account of the age and social class structure of the migration flows. According to Kennedy's theory, we would expect that as emigration rates increase among single men, male celibacy would decline, *ceteris paribus*.<sup>6</sup> Table 4.1 shows that overall male emigration increased in the 1950s and 1960s and that this coincides with a decline in the male celibacy rate. No correlation was found, however, between rates of male emigration and male celibacy. According to the marriage market approach, we would expect that as female emigration increased, male celibacy would have increased due to the increased difficulty of finding a partner. Female emigration increased at the same time as male emigration was increasing (see Table 4.1) and a crude test of the relationship between female emigration and male celibacy reveals negligible results.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that rates of non-marriage declined across all male and female age groups over this time period.<sup>8</sup> The same cannot be said of migration trends. In the 1960s, young single women were an increasing proportion of those leaving Ireland and in the 1970s women were a much lower proportion of those returning (see Delaney 2002, Table 4.1). In the 1971-79 period, despite overall net in-migration, there was substantial net out-migration of young males and females (Pyle 1990). Although compelling, the emigration selection effect therefore does not constitute a sufficient explanation for why rates of non-marriage fell across all age-

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<sup>6</sup> From 1890 at the latest, Kennedy (1973) found that the rate of emigration correlated inversely with the incidence of delayed marriage and non-marriage; as emigration fell, proportions single in rural areas grew.

<sup>7</sup> The Pearson's *r* was close to 0 when female emigration rates were correlated to male celibacy between 1936 and 1971.

<sup>8</sup> The percentage of single men aged 25-34 fell from 74 per cent in 1936 to 34 per cent in 1981, the corresponding figures for women fell from 55 to 22 per cent single. The percentage of single women aged 34-44 declined from 30 per cent in 1926 to 11 per cent by 1986, and from 45 per cent to 18 per cent for men in the same age group.

groups over this period. As Delaney noted; ‘the relationship between migration and marriage is not nearly so cut and dried.’ (Sharpe 2001, p. 219).

**Table 4.1:** Average annual net migration, Ireland, 1926-1981.

Intercensal period	Estimated average annual net migration (inward outward)		Female as percent of total
	Male	Female	
	1926-1936	-7255	
1936-1946	-11258	-7453	40
1946-1951	-10309	-14075	58
1951-1956	-21657	-17696	45
1956-1961	-21915	-20486	48
1961-1966	-7523	-8598	53
1966-1971	-4950	-5831	54
1971-1981	+5703	+4435	44*

\* refers to net in-migration

Source: Census of Population, 1971 and 1981, Ireland. Preliminary reports.

Another issue to address is the relationship between the timing and quantity of nuptiality; although both tend to be related, each is an analytically distinct component of the marriage pattern, contributing independently to changes in Irish fertility levels. Dixon (1978) found that between 1850 and 1950 the timing of male nuptiality varied little, yet the proportion of permanent bachelors rose and then fell dramatically, as discussed in Chapter Two. It was only from 1946 that age at marriage began to

decline: the median age of grooms fell from 32 in 1946, to 26 in 1969 (Walsh 1972). Prior to the 1950s, Dixon (1978) concluded that economic and social factors seemed to influence the propensity to marry rather than its timing. It is therefore important for this chapter to focus on trends in non-marriage rather than on marriage timing, which showed less variation over the time period.

#### ***4.4 Occupational Data***

The data employed in this chapter are drawn from occupational records from various Census of Population volumes from 1926 to 1991, when the Census Office stopped publishing detailed lists of occupations. Over 600 different occupations were recorded in these census tables. As the tables were not available electronically, they were photocopied and scanned into Excel spreadsheet format for this research, producing a new and comprehensive historical dataset including occupational and marital status information.

Occupation is the single most significant and convenient indicator of an individual's location in the social structure. Occupational groups were defined quite narrowly by the Census Office, differentiating between employees, the self-employed and employers, although it was unfortunately not possible to obtain marriage rates for these groups. It is possible, however, to distinguish marriage rates for farmers according to the size of their farm, which will be analysed below in section 4.9. As late as 1971, nearly one-third of all gainfully-occupied males were either self-employed or in family employment, and most of these were involved in agricultural occupations. This later analysis therefore applies to a reasonably large share of the total population.

For presentational and empirical purposes, the occupational data were coded into 11 socio-economic categories, with a more detailed analysis of changes in specific occupations available in Appendix 2. One limitation of the data is that occupation was recorded at the time of the census and not at the time of marriage, or when these men would have been on the marriage market. However, this is a problem for research on nuptiality and fertility trends more generally, since occupation is not usually recorded at the time of marriage or childbirth, except in some panel surveys.<sup>9</sup> The focus of this chapter is, however, on those who never married, and although these men may have changed occupation prior to the census, their marital status (that of ‘never-married’) did not change. In addition, it is known that there was little intergenerational class mobility in Ireland prior to the 1960s, and that this was particularly the case for men after the age of 35 (see Whelan, Breen, Whelan 1979). The use of social class rather than occupation will alleviate some of these measurement problems, as discussed in more detail in section 4.11 below.

The socio-economic groupings employed here differ from those published in census records. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) first published social class and socioeconomic group tables in 1951, but changed the classifications employed in 1961, 1971, and again in 1986.<sup>10</sup> The intention was to move certain occupations into more appropriate groups as the nature of the work involved in these occupations changed. For example, turf workers were grouped with unskilled manual workers in the 1961 Census, but with skilled manual occupations in the 1986 Census. However, even though the nature of work involved in certain occupations changed over time, for the purposes of this analysis, their placement in a social group does not. It was therefore necessary to recode all the occupational statistics into one uniform

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<sup>9</sup> Blossfeld (1995) for example, reported a number of marriage models using father’s class as the occupational measure.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2 for a detailed list of all occupations and the class schema used.

classification. The 1971 socio-economic group classification was used for two reasons. First, earlier researchers had applied the coding to pre-1961 census volumes (see Rottman, Hannan, Hardiman and Wiley 1982). Secondly, after collecting additional information from the CSO, it was possible to recode all other volumes into this scheme (see Appendix 2). In this way, changes in rates of non-marriage within a social class will not arise due to differences in the coding scheme chosen.

Figure 4.1 illustrates that the same overall trend in celibacy was found using Ireland's CSO reports of the overall percentage never-marrying, as opposed to the recoded data employed in this chapter. The trend produced using the census data sample employed in this research displays a lower level of non-marriage for two reasons (see Figure 4.1). First, all men who were gainfully occupied but whose occupation was not known were excluded.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, all religious occupations were removed from the denominator as the inclusion of priests, monks and all other clergy in the higher professional group provides a misleadingly higher estimate of celibacy rates for that group.

Finally, it is important to note that the lists of occupations were imperfect. What follows provides an indication rather than a precise matrix of social group composition over a 64-year period. The principal difficulty lies in deciding upon the comparability of occupations on the basis of their census tables. This was particularly a problem in the 1926 to 1951 Censuses when the coding of occupations was somewhat rough. Class models of the social structure have not been applied to this period with the exception of one piece of research (Rottman et al. 1982). Historians have battled with these problems and some have developed a continuous measure of

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<sup>11</sup> The numbers in the unknown category varied in each census volume with all occupations classified in the 1926, 1936 and 1946 Censuses and a maximum of 2 per cent of the population in this unknown category in the 1991 Census. This category tended to have lower levels of marriage on the whole ranging from 27 to 52 per cent single in this age group.

social position based on occupational hierarchy for the pre-1920s period (see Prandy and Bottero 1998 and 2000, Bottero and Prandy, 2001). It is beyond the scope of the research presented here to engage in such an exercise. Caution is however advised when interpreting detailed results for data prior to the 1961 Census (available in Appendix 2).

#### ***4.5 Class Differences in Celibacy***

The discussion in Chapter 2 highlighted that increases in women's educational and labour market participation can lead to marriage postponement, especially for women from higher professional classes. More generally we can expect age differences at marriage to be related to class differences in rates of permanent celibacy. Walsh, however, found that the occupations in which men married early were not necessarily those with the lowest rates of non-marriage. Despite their early age at marriage, the urban manual working groups had much lower proportions married than the professional and managerial classes (Walsh 1972). Occupations with low or insecure incomes restricted marriage. For example, farmers had a late median age of marriage while a high proportion remained unmarried, with a median age at marriage of 36 in 1946, falling to 32 by 1969. Despite their extended education, professional men married earlier than farmers but many did not marry at all - over a quarter of professional men did not marry in the 1969 Census. Employers and managers, salaried employees, and manual workers married earliest and in the greatest proportions (Walsh 1972). Unsurprisingly, men classified as unoccupied were considerably more likely to be single than those with jobs.

Changes in rates of permanent celibacy for each of the social groups are presented in Table 4.2. Each rate refers to the percentage of males who were never

married and who were aged between 45 and 54 at the time of the census. The changes in celibacy by social group among males aged 45-54 are probably affected by the changes in the sex and age composition of these groups, whether caused by emigration or other factors.<sup>12</sup> An overall measure of the extent to which one's social group predicts the likelihood of non-marriage is provided at the bottom of each column - that is, the coefficient of variation in Table 4.2. It shows that class differences in rates of celibacy continued to widen up to 1986. Between the 1926 and 1986 Census of Population, this overall measure of marriage inequality more than doubled.

In the first case, this was attributable to the deteriorating marriage chances of unskilled manual workers, farmers, farmers' other relatives, farm managers and other agricultural workers (including fishermen). In other words, the poorest socio-economic groups experienced the highest rates of non-marriage and this situation worsened up to about 1971. The rate of permanent celibacy for farmers, farmers' relatives and farm managers experienced a dramatic rise, increasing from almost a third of the group being never married in 1926, to 41 per cent by 1971 (Table 4.2). Rates of non-marriage for other agricultural occupations and fishermen also increased by 14 per cent up to 1971 and unskilled manual workers experienced a 31 per cent increase in the rate of non-marriage up to 1981 (Table 4.2). The likelihood of marriage within those occupations that traditionally experienced the most difficulty in forming a family declined further due to high levels of long-term unemployment, especially within the urban working class (Breen et al. 1990).

At the same time, there was a persistent improvement in marriage chances of all the other social groups. Higher professional occupations benefited most: in 1926, a

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<sup>12</sup> A cohort of 1,000 males was followed from 1861 (when they were age 5 to 9 years) to 1901 (when they were age 45 to 49 years) (Guinnane 1991). Over this 40-year interval, only 75 had remained celibate in Ireland; 240 had married, and 685 had either died or emigrated.

fifth of older men in higher professional occupations were not married, but by 1986, the rate of non-marriage had dropped to only 5.5 per cent (Table 4.2). Those occupying middle-class positions also saw an improvement in their marriage chances. By 1991, only 4 per cent of employers, managers, and salaried employees were not married by age 45. The situation for non-manual, skilled manual and semi-skilled manual workers also improved, although to a lesser extent.

By 1991, the coefficient of 'between group' variation in celibacy had begun a decline. Figure 4.2 shows this trend more clearly by plotting the distance from the average marriage rate by social group. Judged by international standards, Ireland experienced a late marriage boom, and Figure 4.2 shows that all social groups exhibited this late boom. Agricultural occupations were particularly affected as rates of non-marriage for farmers, farmers' relatives, farm managers, and other agricultural occupations (including fishermen) declined by over a third by 1991, relative to their 1971 values. Celibacy rates for unskilled manual workers also declined from 1981 on. It appears that marriage rates for those occupations which had exhibited increasing inequalities in the first period up to 1971 were on their way to catching up with the other groups.

Increases in marriage chances for all other groups continued and reached saturation point for middle class groups. This marriage boom evened out some of the class inequalities in marital chances, although the boom did not change the fact that marital chances were class-specific. Despite the overall fall in rates of permanent celibacy, it is apparent that there is a substantial stability in the position of the social groups regarding their chances of marriage over the decades: The coefficient of rank correlation between a group's rank in 1926 and its rank in 1991 is strong and highly statistically significant (Spearman's  $r = 0.80$  with  $p = 0.003$ ).

**Table 4.2:** Percentage of males, aged 45-54, never married by social group, 1926-1991.

<i>Socio-economic group</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>1991</i>
Farmers/farmers' relatives/farm managers	32.16	37.35	38.59	39.38	39.47	40.08	40.59	37.23	33.44	27.85
Other agricultural occupations/fishermen	41.12	46.12	44.29	45.05	43.00	46.15	47.06	43.00	37.53	32.16
Higher professionals <sup>13</sup>	21.61	18.09	17.61	15.55	9.64	8.45	7.27	6.31	5.51	6.33
Lower professionals	19.00	15.21	16.45	15.73	12.79	11.96	11.47	9.52	8.92	10.26
Employers and managers	14.53	15.89	15.52	14.50	11.23	10.61	8.50	6.14	4.73	4.30
Salaried employees	16.94	14.15	14.76	12.72	10.18	9.30	7.14	6.25	5.23	4.98
Intermediate non-manual workers	28.86	27.89	19.83	18.12	18.81	18.33	17.79	16.03	13.86	13.05
Other non-manual workers	21.40	21.39	18.35	18.81	16.58	15.78	15.81	14.57	12.96	10.85
Skilled manual workers	24.29	24.26	21.71	19.71	16.38	14.77	14.34	12.78	10.70	9.44
Semi-skilled manual workers	19.97	22.67	17.88	17.72	16.09	16.59	17.86	17.52	16.81	14.32
Unskilled manual workers	24.78	23.98	21.82	21.34	23.06	25.09	27.41	32.52	30.70	25.40
Total % never-married <sup>14</sup>	29.40	31.41	29.94	28.79	27.38	26.98	25.69	20.71	17.28	14.19
% as reported by the CSO	31.40	33.50	32.20	31.00	29.70	29.20	28.10	23.90	20.20	16.70
Coefficient of variation between groups <sup>15</sup>	0.32	0.40	0.43	0.48	0.57	0.63	0.69	0.72	0.73	0.67

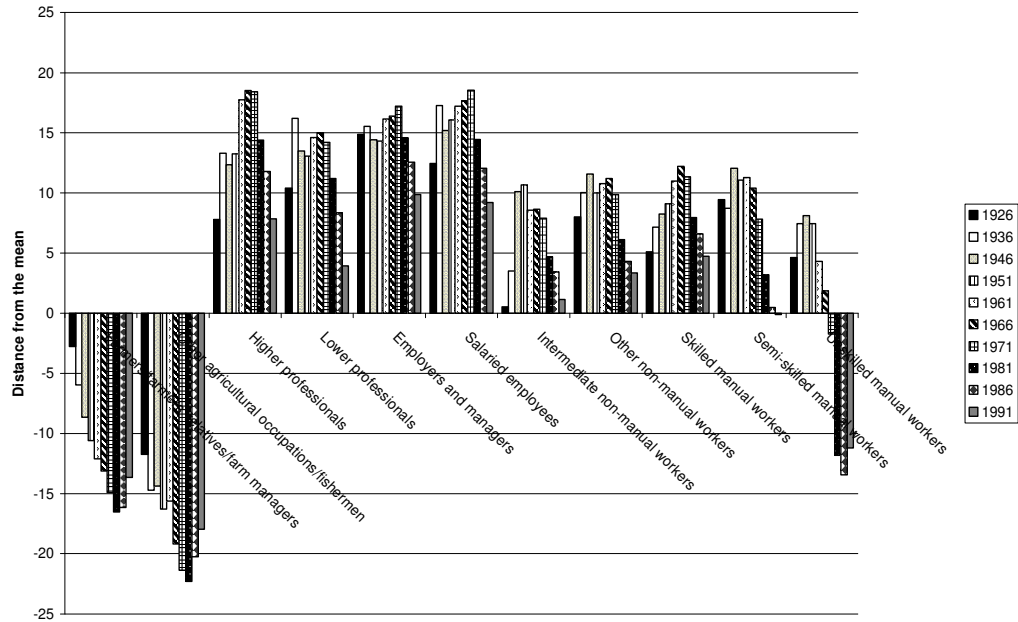
Source: Census of Population of Ireland, Census of Population of Ireland 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1981, 1986 and 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Excluding celibate clergymen.

<sup>14</sup> This figure will differ from that reported by the CSO since all gainfully occupied males who did not report an occupation were excluded from this table.

<sup>15</sup> The coefficient of variation is the standard deviation divided by the mean; a unit less quantity indicating the variability around the mean in relation to the size of the mean.

**Figure 4.2:** Distance from the average marriage rate for each social group, 1926-91.



Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1981, 1986, 1991.

#### 4.6 Compositional Effects

This section links changes in marital behaviour to changes in the position of the social groups, and examines why the marital fate of the less well-off groups deteriorated up to the 1971 Census. The class composition of Irish society changed radically over the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, the Irish economy was predominantly agricultural, producing beef, dairy cows, and pigs as the principal livestock and potatoes as the primary crop. By 1922 ‘what the new state inherited was a *dualistic* agrarian economy, characterised by wide gaps in wealth, income and political power between large and small farmers and between different farming regions’ (Tovey and Share 2005, p. 53). By the 1990s, Ireland’s class structure had shifted from one based on family property to one based on educational credentials and

wage bargaining (Nolan, O'Connell and Whelan 2000). White-collar work in industry, services, and the professions has expanded, as has skilled and semi-skilled manual work, while agricultural employment has contracted (Tovey and Share 2005).

Table 4.3 summarises class structural change for the older male labour force of interest in this Chapter by reporting the percentage of males in each socioeconomic group aged between 45 and 54 at the time of the Census. These data differ from other sources because of some differences in the classification system employed. As it was not possible to gain separate information on marriage rates for the self-employed, all self-employed individuals were coded with employers and managers, rather than the intermediate non-manual group as classified in the 1971 Census. Therefore, the percentage of workers in intermediate non-manual occupations will be smaller than previously reported (see Breen et al. 1990, chapter 3 for comparisons).<sup>16</sup>

Between the 1926 and 1991 Censuses, the proportion of this older male labour force involved in farming declined from 44.2 per cent to 15.6 per cent.<sup>17</sup> The declines were most pronounced among small holders (see Appendix 2, Table 4). Many of these were members of small peasant farming communities which traditionally displayed high rates of non-marriage due to the factors discussed in Chapter Two, such as late inheritance, the 'match' and high levels of emigration. As the twentieth century progressed, the relative size of the agricultural sector and the nature of agricultural work changed significantly.

Table 4.3 summarises the distribution of males across socioeconomic groups by main occupation only; Hannan (1979) noted that many men retained a link to farming as a subsidiary occupation, thereby improving their income and marriage

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<sup>16</sup> As already discussed the percentage of workers in professional occupations will also be smaller since religious clergy men were not included in the sample data.

<sup>17</sup> Comparable figures for the total male labour force reveal that 56 per cent were in agriculture in 1926 census.

potential. In addition, those who shifted occupation from farming often retained their land so that by 1979, although only 14 per cent of the entire male labour force listed farming as their main occupation, 25 per cent owned land (Hannan 1979). Even by the late 1980s few land sales and little consolidation had taken place so that, despite appearances in Table 4.3, the land-holding class had survived (Hannan and Commins 1992).

During the relevant period of high celibacy under consideration here [prior to 1971], a substantial proportion of the population also worked as farm servants and agricultural labourers.<sup>18</sup> In Census records, agricultural labourers were often classified as ‘relatives assisting’, usually sons and brothers of farmers labouring on the family farm in exchange for room and board - and, in some cases, awaiting their inheritance. In the 1926 Census, this category represented 8.2 per cent of the older male labour force; by 1991 the number of ‘relatives assisting’ had fallen to a mere 0.005 per cent of this work-force.<sup>19</sup>

This signals the demise of traditional family farming. As Hannan and Commins (1992) noted, by the late 1960s, many non-inheriting sons and landless farm labourers had left the countryside as their situation worsened. This was a product of two factors; these men were pushed out of Ireland as industry was incapable of expanding to provide the opportunity of employment within Ireland. In addition there was a strong pull factor: The wage of agricultural labourers and servants changed very little over the early part of the century (Breen 1983). From the 1930s on, incomes rose in Britain while they were static in Ireland so that fewer men chose to work on farms as a life-long occupation (Hatton and Williamson 1993). The decline in the numbers

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<sup>18</sup> Male servants were generally employed when family labour was lacking (see Breen 1983). In 1901, one third of all paid agricultural workers were farm servants but by 1966 this had fallen to 8.9 per cent.

<sup>19</sup> Tovey and Share (2005) argue that this data is unreliable since farm wives are more likely to report themselves as ‘engaged in home duties’ rather than as farm workers (also see O’Hara 1998 for the role of farming wives). This does not relate to the data reported here which refer to men only.

working in these farming occupations was therefore almost entirely caused by emigration as it provided them with better economic and therefore, marriage opportunities.

At the same time as the number of older male generations involved in full-time farming was declining, the numbers involved in professional and managerial positions tripled, increasing from 7.6 in 1926 to 22.5 per cent in 1991, while the proportion in skilled manual employment doubled, from 9.8 to 20.1 per cent of the older male work-force. The class structure was, however, relatively stable prior to 1961 (see Table 4.4), which was largely attributable to emigration (see Breen et al. 1990). Professional workers formed over 10 per cent of the 1991 older male work-force, almost triple their representation in 1961. Skilled manual workers grew markedly over the later period, from 13 to over 20 per cent of the work force. The biggest decline was in the numbers involved in farming occupations, with a particular sharp decline in the number of self-employed farmers from 1961 on. The 1991 older workforce, 156,610 strong, was over one-third (34 per cent) middle-class and one-fifth skilled-manual compared to the 1926 population, which was about one-sixth (17 per cent) middle-class and a tenth skilled-manual (Table 4.4).

Prior to the 1960s there had been little industrial development in Ireland (see Nolan, O'Connell and Whelan 2000). Life chances centred on the prospect of inheriting the family farm or small business, and only a small minority could secure a livelihood through education and training. The opportunities for upward mobility within Ireland were extremely limited, as discussed in Chapter 3. Census records do not allow for the analysis of intergenerational class mobility, but Whelan et al. (1990), using survey data, found that in 1971 the percentage of males aged 20- 64 remaining immobile in their class of origin stood at 42 per cent. By 1987, it had fallen to 37 per

cent (Whelan Breen and Whelan 1990). New positions were not available to all men - men from working class origins became doubly-disadvantaged, as they faced higher levels of unemployment and lower rates of upward mobility, even compared to men from farming backgrounds (Whelan et al. 1990). Hannan and Commins found, for instance, that compared to their urban, working-class counterparts, 30 per cent more children of small farmers did the Leaving Cert and 50 per cent more went on to third level education in the 1960s. O'Hara (1998) notes that farm families, especially farm wives, made exceptional efforts to educate their daughters.

Breen et al. (1990) point out that emigration reflected an extension of mobility differentials whereby those men and women with educational qualifications, but unable to find work at home, left Ireland. Those without qualifications and who could not find work remained unemployed in Ireland. It was this marginalised working class who suffered high and increasing rates of permanent celibacy. In contrast, the improving marriage rates for the better-educated and more liberal middle classes reflected, at times, greater economic opportunities, and as we will see in Chapter 6, an increased ability to control fertility.

The next section assesses the degree to which these class transformations can be linked to the decline in the rate of permanent celibacy. In particular, the large-scale decline in agriculture, which had begun prior to the 1950s, may have in itself led to an increase in the marriage rate.

**Table 4.3:** Percentage distribution of gainfully occupied males, aged 45-54, by socio-economic group: 1926-91.

<i>Socio-economic group</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>1991</i>
Farmers/farmers' relatives/farm managers	44.21	40.82	39.54	36.38	34.97	33.84	29.68	23.27	18.98	15.59
Other agricultural occupations/fishermen	14.92	12.78	11.84	10.3	9.72	8.43	7.37	3.84	3.51	2.86
Higher professionals	0.83	1.02	1.33	1.35	1.52	1.89	2.37	3.57	4.08	4.69
Lower professionals	0.96	1.11	1.38	1.25	2.06	1.91	1.96	3.02	3.89	5.15
Employers and managers	5.84	6.07	5.95	6.44	6.84	7.68	8.17	11.74	12.18	12.68
Salaried employees	1.6	2.1	2.17	2.16	1.93	2.15	2.35	2.79	3.1	3.43
Intermediate non-manual workers	3.53	4.89	8.61	8.34	5.66	5.7	6.16	5.97	6.58	8.07
Other non-manual workers	6.37	7.05	6.06	7.4	8.53	8.64	10.2	12.12	13.29	14.3
Skilled manual workers	9.82	10.87	9.72	10.8	13.03	14.14	15.97	19.87	21.03	20.14
Semi-skilled manual workers	3.19	3.24	3.19	3.99	3.23	3.49	4.22	5.16	4.9	4.02
Unskilled manual workers	8.73	10.05	10.21	11.59	12.51	12.13	11.55	8.65	8.46	9.07
Total at work (1000s)	163.3	150.5	149.0	155.3	162.2	159.9	151.7	137.3	141.5	155.6

Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1926 1936 1946 1951 (vol. 2, Part 2), vol. 5 1961, vol. 5 1971, vol. 7 1981 and vol. 5 1991.

**Table 4.4:** Percentage changes in employment opportunity by social class for men, aged 45-54: 1926-1991.

<i>Socio-economic group</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>	
		<i>1926-61</i>	<i>1961-91</i>
Farmers/farmers' relatives/farm managers	44.21	-9.24	-19.38
Other agricultural occupations/fishermen	14.92	-5.20	-6.86
Higher professionals	0.83	0.68	3.18
Lower professionals	0.96	1.10	3.09
Employers and managers	5.84	1.00	5.84
Salaried employees	1.6	0.33	1.50
Intermediate non-manual workers	3.53	2.13	2.41
Other non-manual workers	6.37	2.16	5.77
Skilled manual workers	9.82	3.21	7.11
Semi-skilled manual workers	3.19	0.04	0.79
Unskilled manual workers	8.73	3.78	-3.44
Total at work (1000s)	163.3	-1.1	-6.6

Source: Table 4.3.

#### **4.7 The effect of changes in the social structure**

The hypothesis of interest in this section is that the declining rate of celibacy witnessed in Ireland from 1936 was related to occupational change; in particular, the shift from agriculture into production and service industries, as summarised in Table

4.4. The breakdown of strong kinship ties (Hannan 1979), improvements in living standards (O'Brien 1985), mobility aspirations and migration trends (Kennedy 1973) were associated crucial factors. Family farming was, however, the defining feature of traditional Irish society. Smallholders and farmers' sons were commonly identified as the largest category of late-marrying males and permanent bachelors. Ireland's overall marriage rate may have increased simply due to the decline in the proportion of the population involved in these farming occupations which traditionally displayed high levels of celibacy.

In the 1926 Census, over a third (35.6 per cent) of the older male labour force classified themselves as farmers (see Appendix 2, Table 2). By 1991, only 15 per cent of the older population listing farming as their main occupation. A relatively large percentage of males also worked as labourers and 'relatives assisting' (sons and brothers of farmers) who were not in a position to marry. The number of older male farmers' other relatives assisting on the home farm also fell (see Appendix 2, Table 2). To assess the importance of changes in the social structure, particularly the decline in all farming occupations, a standardisation exercise was carried out, the results of which are plotted in Figure 4.3 (see Appendix 2 for technical details). Because farmers, particularly smallholders in the earlier periods, represented the main occupation in the farming class, marriage chances within this social class were strongly influenced by their rate of entry into marriage.

The black unbroken line plotted in Figure 4.3 presents the percentage of the older male population never married, in each census volume, for the period 1926-1991 (as in Figure 4.1). Over this time, there was a decline of 60 per cent in the national rate of non-marriage. In the first standardisation, the possible impact of compositional change in this period is isolated (as in Table 4.3). Results of this

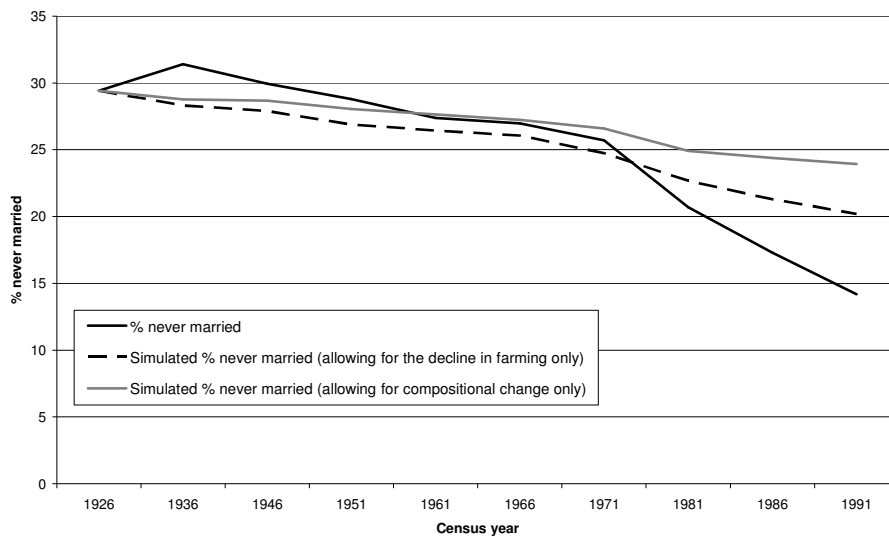
standardisation (plotted in the grey line) suggest that by holding class-specific marriage rates constant at the levels that were observed in the 1926 Census, Ireland would have experienced a celibacy rate similar to that which was observed up until 1971 and this was most especially the case between 1946 and 1971 (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 also plots the predicted percentage of men, aged between 45 and 54, who would have married if the number of individuals in each social group and their chance of marriage remained constant at 1926 levels, but the proportion of the population involved in the farming class declined, as given by the broken black line. The distance between the actual and predicted trend helps assess the impact of the decline in farming employment on the overall rate of permanent celibacy. If the decline in the numbers involved in farming occupations was the prime cause of the declining rate of celibacy, the broken black line (simulated data) would track the actual rate of non-marriage perfectly (black line). This was indeed the case, to a large degree, prior to 1971 but the simulated line radically differs from the actual pattern of change after 1971 (Figure 4.3). Therefore, if the only change to occur was the decline in the numbers working in farming occupation, and marriage rates within this socioeconomic group as a whole remained relatively high (see Table 4.2), Ireland's overall rate of non-marriage would have been higher than observed after 1971. Prior to then, much of the decline in celibacy, but not all of it, was driven by a fall in the number of men in those farming occupations who were most at risk of celibacy.

In effect, the observed decline in celibacy that was recorded for these men can largely be attributed to structural change up to 1971 - namely to changes in the distribution of the population involved in different occupations, particularly farming occupations, rather than to changes in propensity to marry. Table 4.4 (page 162) confirms this results as prior to 1961, there was little structural change within Irish

society, other than a significant decline in the proportion of the population involved in agriculture. This structural stability was largely enabled by high rates of emigration (Breen et al. 1990).

**Figure 4.3:** The influence of compositional change and the decline of farming occupations on the national rate of permanent celibacy.



In conclusion, the decline in non-marriage was not solely produced by changes in the social structure, although the role of composition change appears to have been the most influential factor between 1951 and 1971, where the simulated trend follows the actual pattern of change very closely in Figure 4.3 above. The decline in the sub-population most noted for high rates of celibacy, namely the farming group, was not influential post-1971 according to this simulation: the distance between the actual and predicted pattern of change is large. This result points to the importance of increased marriage rates within the middle and upper classes. From the 1960s on, marriage rates within these groups increased significantly, due to increases in their standards of

living and more importantly to an increased ability to control marital fertility (see Chapter 6). The next section assesses the importance of class differences in marriage behaviour in more detail.

#### **4.8 Class Position**

In order to assess the importance of class position in determining rates of non-marriage, a blocked logit model was estimated, predicting the log odds of non-marriage for men aged 45-54, with results reported in Tables 4.5a and 4.5b. Model 3 in Table 4.5a is a saturated model and the null model reports the total variation in rates of permanent celibacy within this census data sample. The difference in chi-square values between models 3 and 1 (the null model in Table 4.5a), therefore, estimates the amount of variation in rates of non-marriage that can be “explained” by social group membership. In other words, it assesses the importance of the compositional effect in understanding rates of celibacy.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the difference in chi-square values between models 3 and 2 reported in Table 4.5a indicates how much of the variation was explained by the trend over time and by time-constant social class differences in the ability to marry.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the variation in rates of permanent celibacy was explained by time-constant compositional effects (88.3 per cent). Regardless of time period, class position was a powerful predictor of whether a man would marry or not. The model does not, of course, introduce other covariates to explain this effect, such as educational level or salary, nor does it try to explain why rates of permanent celibacy declined over time. Model 1, Table 4.5a focuses on class differences in permanent

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<sup>20</sup> That is:  $-2 (\text{Log Likelihood (model 3)} - \text{Log Likelihood (model 1)})$ .

<sup>21</sup> In this 92.3 per cent of the variation was explained in model 2, Table 4.4a.

celibacy; model 2 displays the trend in permanent celibacy across Census volumes; while model 3 allows class differences in non-marriage to vary across time - that is, across the census years (see Table 4.5b).

Model 1 highlights that there were strong social group-based differences in the log odds of non-marriage - that is, compositional effects were statistically significant (model 1, Table 4.5a). In these tables, log-odds ratios highlight negative and positive associations within the data and benefit from the fact that they are asymmetric. When compared to the skilled manual group, for example, farmers, other agricultural workers and unskilled manual workers experienced a high risk of celibacy that is, they had a positive log odds ratio of non-marriage.

The next model introduces census year variables, and although class differences in the propensity to remain single were reduced, all the class effects remained significantly different from zero (model 2, Table 4.5a). This confirms that in all census volumes, class differences in the risk of non-marriage persisted. In addition, all the time effects were statistically significant, implying that by simply controlling for class differences in the ability to marry, the model does little to explain changes in rates of non-marriage over time.<sup>22</sup> In other words, declines in celibacy cannot be explained away by class variables. Some log odds ratios were, however, close to zero in model 2 - see, for example, the coefficients on the 1961- 1981 Census dummy variables. This highlights, that in the 1961-1981 period, some of the time differences in the log odds of non-marriage were related to class differences in the propensity to

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<sup>22</sup> Not much emphasis will be placed on statistical significance of dummy variables in these models since the t-test results for dummy variables including interaction effects are dependent on the reference/omitted category (see Firth 2003).

marry.<sup>23</sup> This confirms the previous finding, depicted in Figure 4.3, that compositional effects were especially strong in this time period.

Model 3, reported in Table 4.5b, tests for interaction effects - that is, it allowed the effects of social class membership on celibacy to vary across census years. There was a significant improvement in the model fit, as measured by the likelihood ratio test, when interactions effects were included in the model. It is possible therefore to conclude that the social classes did not follow a common trend. In Table 4.5b, the experience of farmers and other agricultural workers stands out: they have no reduction in the log odds of permanent celibacy until recent years, compared with skilled manual workers. Both groups' odds of non-marriage increased up until 1971. The marital prospects of unskilled manual workers also significantly deteriorated in recent census volumes, compared to the fate of skilled manual workers (see Table 4.5b).

In summary, the results of the blocked logit models show that regardless of census year, or how class changed over time, social group was a powerful predictor of marital chances (Table 4.5a). Farmers, agricultural workers and unskilled manual workers experienced a relatively high risk of celibacy whereas all professional workers were more likely to marry (Table 4.2). The estimates for the coefficient of marital variation (Table 4.5) illustrated how class differences in the ability to marry widened over time, meaning that the marital fate of the poorer social groups deteriorated up to 1986, while the position of all other social groups improved. The 1991 evidence points to reductions in class-based inequalities in rates of entry into marriage. More recent developments, such as the arrival of the 'Celtic Tiger', may

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, if the models were run in reverse order with time entered into model 1 and time plus occupational dummies in model 2, the log odds on all the time dummies reduced when occupation was entered in model 2.

have helped equalise marriage chances (see Chapter 7). The next section considers further the role of farming and the process of social change within this occupation.

**Table 4.5a:** Logit model predicting the log odds of permanent celibacy for men, aged 45-54: 1926-1991.

<i>Log odds ratios are reported</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
constant	-1.69*	-1.65*	-1.14*
<i>Socio-economic group: (ref. skilled manual)</i>			
Farmers/farmers' relatives/farm managers	1.16*	1.09*	0.39*
Other agricultural occupations/fishermen	1.43*	1.35*	0.78*
Higher professionals	-0.61*	-0.57*	-0.15**
Lower professionals	-0.32*	-0.27*	-0.31*
Employers and managers	-0.57*	-0.56*	-0.63*
Salaried employees	-0.56*	-0.57*	-0.45*
Intermediate non-manual workers	0.21*	0.18*	0.23*
Other non-manual workers	0.02**	0.02*	-0.16*
Semi-skilled manual workers	0.15*	0.13*	-0.25*
Unskilled manual workers	0.60*	0.56*	0.03
<i>Year: (reference year 1926)</i>			
1936		0.16*	-0.00
1946		0.11*	-0.14*
1951		0.10*	-0.27*
1961		0.05*	-0.49*
1966		0.07*	-0.61*
1971		0.07*	-0.65*
1981		-0.06*	-0.78*
1986		-0.23*	-0.98*
1991		-0.41*	-1.12*
+ <i>Interactions</i>			See Table 4.4b
Chi-square (incremental) <sup>24</sup>	114387	5907	9232
P value (incremental)	0.000	0.000	0.000

**Note:** \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>24</sup> This refers to the likelihood ratio (LR) test where  $LR = -2 * (\ln L1 - \ln L2)$ .

**Table 4.5b:** Logit model predicting the log odds of permanent celibacy for men, aged 45-54: 1926-1991

(Full model with adjusted interaction effects)

<i>Log odds ratios are reported</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Reference: skilled manual										
Farmers/farmers' relatives etc	0.39*	0.62*	0.82*	0.97*	1.19*	1.35*	1.41*	1.40*	1.43*	1.31*
Other agricultural/fishermen	0.78*	0.98*	1.05*	1.21*	1.35*	1.59*	1.67*	1.64*	1.61*	1.51*
Higher professionals	-0.15**	-0.37*	-0.26*	-0.29*	-0.61*	-0.63*	-0.76*	-0.78*	-0.72*	-0.43*
Lower professionals	-0.31*	-0.58*	-0.34*	-0.27*	-0.29*	-0.24*	-0.26*	-0.33*	-0.20*	0.09**
Employers and managers	-0.63*	-0.53*	-0.41*	-0.37*	-0.42*	-0.38*	-0.59*	-0.80*	-0.88*	-0.84*
Salaried employees	-0.45*	-0.66*	-0.47*	-0.52*	-0.55*	-0.52*	-0.77*	-0.79*	-0.78*	-0.69*
Intermediate non-manual workers	0.23*	0.19*	-0.11*	-0.10*	0.17*	0.26*	0.26*	0.26*	0.29*	0.36*
Other non-manual workers	-0.16*	-0.16*	-0.21*	-0.05	0.01	0.08*	0.11*	0.15*	0.22*	0.15*
Semi-skilled manual workers	-0.25*	-0.09**	-0.24*	-0.12*	-0.02	0.14*	0.26*	0.27*	0.52*	0.47*
Unskilled manual workers	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.10*	0.42*	0.66*	0.81*	1.19*	1.31*	1.18*
Model Log-likelihood	-798503									
Chi-square (from null)	129526									

**Note:** \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

#### **4.9 A closer look at farmer's marriage chances**

This section is devoted to a more detailed discussion of what happened within farming, as an example of the complexity of occupational rather than social class change. The nature of change within farming was not as straightforward as it appeared above and it did not follow the path as predicted by modernisation theory (see Chapter 2). Despite significant structural change, family farming did not evolve into a class of capitalist farmers. Hannan and Commins (1992) provide convincing evidence of the survival of small-scale family farms even after industrialisation, through smallholders' reliance on off-farm employment, state and EU support, while increasing educational attainment of non-inheriting children allowed upward mobility. The marital prospects of those who continued to rely mainly on farming worsened: while one in five of older male farmers were never married in 1926, by 1981 of the older men who listed farming as their main occupation, one in three were single.

Economists have struggled to explain marriage rates within the farming population. Conventional models would predict that marriage and fertility rates would increase with farm wealth, crudely measured by farm size; or taxable value of the land (see Chapter 2). More prosperous landholders might be thought to be able to marry earlier and have more children, but this result was not found in samples drawn from the 1901 and 1911 Censuses. Connell (1962) and later Guinnane (1997) suggest that marriage was an inferior good; marriage and children offered a major source of comfort for the Irish peasantry. In later census records, however, heirs to larger farms tended to have greater marital success. In Table 4.6, there was a significant negative correlation between the size of farms and average rates of celibacy in all years except for the 1926 Census, with Spearman's  $r$  ranging from -0.6 to -1. In earlier census

years, particularly 1901- 1926, there was a substantial proportion of celibate males on large farms, as noted by Guinnane (1997). Over time, the nuptiality-farm size relationship strengthened - that is, the coefficient of variation increased, as reported in Table 4.6. This increasing inequality was the result of a steady deterioration in the marriage prospects of smallholders, combined with an improvement in marital chances of large farm holders, defined as farmers with over 100 acres in Table 4.6. By 1991, 91 per cent of farmers with 200 acres or more of land were married, compared to only 47 per cent of farmers with less than 10 acres of land (Table 4.5).<sup>25</sup> A model assuming that marriage was an inferior good does not, therefore, fit national data from 1926 onwards.<sup>26</sup>

The results of a similar standardisation exercise as carried out in Figure 4.3 above reveal that it was the declining marital position of small-scale farmers which was driving the overall change in the farmer's marriage rate, at least up to 1966. This is depicted in Figure 4.4 below. This result was found across all regions of Ireland. If rates of non-marriage amongst smallholders, defined as farmers with less than 50 acres, were allowed to change holding all else constant, then the predicted non-marriage rate almost perfectly tracks the actual rate. This predicted line isolates the role of changes in smallholders' marital chances by only allowing it to change over time and holding all other farmers' non-marriage rates constant, as well as holding the number of farmers constant at the 1926 level. It can be concluded that changes in farmers' propensity to marry were strongly influenced by changes in the marital behaviour of smallholders. This was not a surprise given the "unusual" behaviour of these farmers as revealed in earlier Census years. As their marital behaviour became

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<sup>25</sup> Daly (2006) confirms these findings.

<sup>26</sup> Non-linear models were also fitted to the data but the model presented in Table 4.6 was the best-fit.

more in line with ‘rational’/economic expectations - that is, as small/poorer farmers became less likely to marry when compared to larger/richer landholders - the marriage rate for the farming group as a whole declined.

**Figure 4.4:** The influence of changes in the marital behaviour of small holders on the rate of permanent celibacy among farmers (excludes area undefined).



Despite the historical interest in the relationship between farm size and nuptiality, farm size as a proxy for wealth does little to explain variations in farmers’ celibacy rates compared with the role of class in the previous model (see Table 4.5). To test this, a blocked logit model was estimated, predicting the log odds of non-marriage amongst farmers (Table 4.7). Just over a third of the variance in farmers’ celibacy rates (36.4 per cent) was explained by farm size. Over time, however, farm size became a more powerful predictor of marriage, as the positive association between marriage and farm size became more pronounced (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.6:** The percentage of male farmers, aged 45-54, who never married by size of farm: 1926-1991.

<i>Size of Farm</i> (acres)	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
< 10	35.2	39.8	44.2	44.3	47.3	52.5	56.1	57.2	56.7	53.4
10-14	21.7	28.1	32.4	35.2	37.2	41.8	47.1	50.3	48.6	41.6
15-29	19.9	26	30.6	31.7	35.1	38.8	42.7	47	45.4	40.7
30-49	18.5	24.1	26.7	28.1	30.6	32.9	36.3	41.6	39.1	34.4
50-99	17.8	22.4	24.8	24.6	25.3	26.8	28.5	29.7	27.3	24.1
100-199	18.8	22.6	23.7	22.7	21	23.2	22.5	19.7	16.3	15.1
200 and above	19.7	21.3	19.2	18.5	18.8	18.4	19.5	14.9	11.5	9.1
Area undefined	47.7	56.8	49.3	57.3	49.1	62.6	58.4	29.2	24.5	22.9
Spearman <i>r</i>	-0.68	-0.96	-1.00	-0.96	-1.00	-1.00	-0.96	-0.96	-0.96	-1.00
p-value	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Variation <sup>27</sup>	0.28	0.24	0.28	0.30	0.33	0.35	0.37	0.43	0.49	0.51
Total % celibate	30.5	35.5	38.3	38.8	40.2	42.6	44.5	44.5	40.9	36.1

Note: \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Source: Census of Population of Ireland, 1926-1991.

<sup>27</sup> The coefficient of variation and correlation coefficient did not include the 'area undefined' figures.

**Table 4.7:** Logit models predicting the log odds of non-marriage for farmers, aged 45-54, by size of farm (in acres): 1926-1991.

<i>Log odds are reported</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Farm size:										
(reference size 200 and above)										
< 10 acres	0.32*	0.45*	0.78*	0.83*	0.94*	1.18*	1.26*	1.63*	1.91*	2.03*
10-14	0.12	0.36*	0.70*	0.87*	0.93*	1.15*	1.30*	1.75*	1.98*	1.95*
15-29	0.02	0.26*	0.61*	0.71*	0.84*	1.03*	1.12*	1.61*	1.86*	1.92*
30-49	-0.07	-0.16**	0.43*	0.54*	0.64*	0.77*	0.85*	1.40*	1.59*	1.65*
50-99	-0.11	0.06	0.33*	0.36*	0.38*	0.48*	0.49*	0.88*	1.06*	1.15*
100-199	-0.05	0.07	0.27*	0.26*	0.13	0.10	0.18**	0.34*	0.40*	0.57*
constant	-1.41*	-1.31*	-1.44*	-1.48*	-1.46*	-1.49*	-1.42*	-1.74*	-2.04*	-2.29*
Log-Likelihood	-28597	-27339	-28246	-27109	-28456	-28650	-24940	-18537	-14706	-12236
Chi-square	172*	149*	295*	405*	670*	1053*	1089*	1410*	1388*	1078*

Note: \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$

Source: Census of Population of Ireland, 1926-1991.

The influence of wealth on nuptiality within the farming community is further complicated by regional differences. A characteristic feature of the 'peasant system' that existed among smallholders in the remote, economically less-developed and culturally more isolated West of Ireland (as described by Hannan 1979) was that marriage rates were much higher than those found among the prosperous farms in the eastern part of Ireland. As outlined in Chapter Two, subsequent falls in marriage rates in the West were associated with the disintegration of the peasant farming economy (Hannan 1979).

Information on regional variations in farm size and marital status were only published in the censuses between 1926 and 1966. In the eastern regions of Leinster and Munster, in all census years, there was as expected from economic theory a highly significant, strong negative correlation between farm size and rates of celibacy. In other words, the larger the farm the lower the level of non-marriage (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 confirms that the West of Ireland displayed a unique marriage pattern. In the 1926 and 1936 census samples, there were more farmers with 100 acres or more of land not married in Connaught compared to all other farmers. In fact, in these two census samples there was a positive correlation between farm size and rates of non-marriage - that is, the more land a farmer owned in the West of Ireland, the greater his chance of remaining single. This atypical relationship was particularly strong in 1926, although not statistically significant, given the small number of observations available. In the 1961 and 1966 samples, all regions experienced a clear and significant linear relationship between farm size and marriage (Table 4.8). A drawback of this approach is that it has not taken account of the fact that the value of an acre varied by region, so that acreage as a measure of wealth is an imperfect

measure. Guinnane (1997, Table 7.3) finds similar results using farm value as a measure of wealth, as do Strassman and Clarke (1998, Table 5).<sup>28</sup>

Various cultural and economic explanations have been employed to explain this trend.<sup>29</sup> Kennedy (1973) argued that the minimum farm size required for a man to marry increased over time. The post World War II transition from horsepower to mechanical power meant that small farms were not competitive, so that the poorest counties with the smallest farms exhibited the highest rates of celibacy. In 1926, according to Kennedy, smallholders could still afford marriage and children, but this was not the case in later years. Rising standards of living were apparently responsible for the decreasing rates of marriage among all farmers (as seen in Table 4.9). Kennedy's theory, however, does little to explain why many farmers with more than enough land failed to marry.

Others have highlighted the role of socioeconomic restrictions on mate choice, which were formalised through the system of arranged marriages and the payment of a dowry (Strassmann and Clarke 1998, Breen 1984). Plenty of mates would have been available if farm heirs could have married a woman without a dowry, which became more likely after 1940 as the dowry system declined. Strassman and Clarke (1997) argued that in the case of wealthy farmers who remained unmarried, status consciousness impeded their marital success. Preservation and enhancement of social and economic status was a central concern in Irish marriages (Kennedy 1975, Breen 1984). Hired labourers, in contrast, had higher marriage rates as they had no need to

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<sup>28</sup> A perfect measure of wealth would take account of region, farm size, value of the land, farm debts, mode of production and other factors such as off-farm employment and the number of relatives assisting.

<sup>29</sup> The role of high marital fertility will be discussed in Chapter 6, where the importance of the Malthusian preventative check in the West will be considered.

delay marriage while awaiting an inheritance or dowry. Neither did they have any chance of marrying up into a higher social class (Guinnane 1991).

How can this argument explain why men on small farms in the West of Ireland found it easier to find wives than men on larger farms? These farms had the lowest incomes and standards of living, and according to McKenna (1978), the 'match' fell into disuse in the prosperous east (Leinster and Ulster) before its use declined in the poor west (Munster and Connaught).<sup>30</sup> Due to migration trends, particularly from the 1940s onwards, the paucity of women in the West should have made it particularly hard for heirs to find and marry a woman in the 'right category'. For rural women, these small farmers represented a poor marriage choice (see O'Hara 1998). Yet Table 4.8 shows that small farmers in the West were more likely to marry in all census years, compared to smallholders in the other regions. In addition, in the 1926 and 1936 Censuses, smallholders in Connaught had higher rates of entry into marriage than farmers with more land. It therefore seems that smallholders had few problems attracting and finding a marriage partner, whereas the relatively few farmers with more than 50 acres of land suffered from lower rates of entry into marriage. This is in direct opposition to the expectations derived from economic theory.

The stem family system remained stronger for longer on small farms in western Ireland, where it enabled unmarried brothers and sisters to stay on the family farm as 'farmers' relatives assisting', as defined by census records, rather than migrate (Kennedy 1973). Arensberg and Kimball's depiction of life in 1930s County Clare provided evidence on this front. For those men waiting to inherit the family farm or business, the 'match' ensured that marriage occurred at mostly older ages -

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<sup>30</sup> Walsh (1970) suggested that the 'match' was losing some of its strength in the eastern regions of Ireland as early as 1871. The diffusion and decline of 'the 'match'' arrangement is an important consideration, for 'the 'match'' did not develop evenly in all regions of Ireland.

and for some, not at all. Hannan (1979) argued that the same sort of rationality - in Weberian terms 'zweckrational' or technical rationality - did not apply equally to small farmers in all regions of Ireland, given the predominance of the peasant family economy in the West in early twentieth century Ireland.

As noted by Hannan, in the West up to about 1940 'it was quite apparent that, if anything else, the objectively poorer the situation, the subjectively more 'optimistic' was the response' (Hannan 1979, p. 65). The value systems in the western peasant economy provided an incentive to family formation that was relatively independent of economic factors (see chapter 2 for a review). But over time, the small-scale farming system operating in the West experienced increasing strain, mostly due to income difficulties. Hannan and Katsiaouni (1977) found that smallholders were no longer protected by strong and supportive local kinship, neighbourhood groups and cultural autonomy. They began to depend less and less on farm production for their sole livelihood. For those who remained in full-time farming, more remained single and therefore, heirless.<sup>31</sup> According to Hannan (1979), a particular form of peasant economy, culture and social structure developed and prevailed in Connaught and west Munster up to at least the 1940s.

Therefore, three empirical issues have preoccupied the literature in this area. First, to what extent and why did farmers with more land, marry more often and have larger families? Secondly, to what extent and why did smallholders in the West have higher rates of marriage than all other small scale farmers and cottiers? Thirdly, why in some years and regions did smallholders have greater marital success than wealthier farmers?

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<sup>31</sup> Although they were without direct heirs, many sources point to the fact that heirs appeared from wider kin (Hannan 1979).

The extant literature provides some of the answers. Regarding the first issue, Kennedy has found that farmers with more land had fewer problems securing both heirs and wives. In addition, owners of more valuable farms generally had more potential heirs, given that completed family size increased with size of farm (Kennedy 1975, chapter 6). Kennedy (1991) argued that the household head on a large farm had stronger bargaining power and was often reluctant to relinquish control of the farm, so that marriage for inheriting sons occurred later. The possibility and timing of marriage were dependent on inheritance. In extreme cases, delayed inheritance would lead to celibacy, because the chance of finding a suitable partner declined for rural men with age, and according to Guinnane (1997) marriage became less desirable for these men. The pattern of late inheritance found by Kennedy, using data from 1945-46, explains why some farmers with more than enough land to marry nonetheless remained celibate. In contrast, on smaller farms the stock of assets and earning prospects were low. As a result, small farmers in general were likely to have had greater difficulty in recruiting heirs. Labour needs were fewer on small farms and therefore family members often sought alternative employment. According to Kennedy (1991), small farmers therefore had a great need to enhance the value of the inheritance package he was offering. This he did by simply reducing the time a son had to wait before inheriting (see table 7, Kennedy 1991). This may explain why some smallholders had greater marital success than farmers with more land.

This pattern of early inheritance may have prevailed longer in the West of Ireland. Kennedy argued that smallholders lacked the resources to retain and maintain the eldest son, so that primogeniture was not the dominant practice on very smallholdings and in the western region of Ireland covered in his 1900 study. Kennedy's study was too small to provide information on age of inheritance by region

and therefore does not allow wider generalisation to be made. However, he found that in Glencolumbkille, a region in the North West of Ireland dominated by poor land and small farms, only 11 per cent of all heads of household were celibate around 1900 (Kennedy 1991, Table 5). Celibacy was also slightly more evident on larger farms. Regressing age of marriage on farm size across his 4 study regions, Kennedy revealed that smallholders in Glencolumbkille were marrying earlier than farmers with more land in that region (Kennedy 1991, Table 6). In addition, as evident in Table 4.9, farm size did little to explain differences in age at marriage in the poorer rural regions of early twentieth century Ireland. By mid century, this pattern had changed.

In early twentieth century Ireland, it is likely that marriage was a more complicated business for the few farmers with more land in Connaught. A prospective bride had to have a dowry that was commensurate with the value of the groom's farm. This 'fortune' or dowry helped provide for the groom's siblings who did not inherit the farm. The heir's father was therefore obliged to find a wife with an appropriate dowry and of acceptable status. It is likely that these heirs found it harder to find a wife of appropriate status given that better-educated women in the West were more likely to migrate (see O'Hara 1998). In addition, in the 1926 and 1936 Censuses, smallholders in Connaught had a much larger number of resident sons who were potential heirs, due to higher fertility rates there, than comparable farms in Munster and Leinster. This made survival of the farm more likely but also implied late inheritance for the heir, who was not necessarily the eldest son (Kennedy 1991). The major problem for these heirs was one of attracting a helpmate to share a life of poverty. This became particularly difficult from the mid-century when rural women left the countryside in greater numbers. From a purely economic perspective, smallholders in the West may have married earlier and more often than all other

smallholders throughout the 1926 – 1966 period because they inherited earlier, although we cannot test this here. However, such an interpretation illustrates that there maybe other economic approaches beyond the usual model which can explain the atypical patterns evident in early twentieth century western Ireland.

The deterioration in farmers' marriage chances was a national phenomenon, as summarised in Table 4.8 and 4.9 below. Rather than present a logit model with a large number of interaction terms, Table 4.9 models the relationship between farm size and non-marriage separately for each of the regions of Ireland between 1926 and 1966. The time trend was similar across all four provinces, with clear increases in the log odds of celibacy amongst farmers, despite controlling for farm size differences in the risk of non-marriage. Over this period, the non-replacement rate of farming households increased. As we would expect from Hannan's analysis, farm size was not a particularly useful covariate when it came to understanding rates of celibacy in the western regions of Ireland. Time-constant farm size measures alone explained only 2 per cent of the variance in celibacy rates in Connaught (as seen in Table 4.9). In sharp contrast, accounting for farm size differences in the rate of celibacy explained a massive 75 per cent of the variance in celibacy rates in Leinster; 27 per cent in Munster; and 16 per cent in Ulster. In other words, in the prosperous East, class or wealth difference (as reflected in the size of a farm) was a primary determinant of farmers' ability to attract a marriage partner. In the western regions of Ireland, all farm heirs, even those on small farms, who may have had serious problems in attracting a partner, married in greater numbers up until the 1940s and 1950s.

Both regional and farm size measures significantly improved the overall model fit, emphasising that these factors had a significant influence on rates of non-marriage among farmers. After 1966, data on farm size, region and marital status

became unavailable, but regional differences in the risk of celibacy persisted so that by the 1991 Census, Connaught and Ulster had the highest rates of non-marriage amongst farmers in Ireland with over a third of male farmers aged 45-64 never married. This was a reversal of the earlier demographic viability of the West relative to the East. Their worsening marital prospects were related to the lack of industrialisation in the West, fewer opportunities for off-farm employment and the prevalence of small- to medium-scale farming in these areas (O'Hara 1998, Siddle 2000, Tovey and Share 2003, and see Appendix 2, Table 5). In contrast, in the East, a high proportion of farms held out a better opportunity of material well-being.

**Table 4.8:** The percentage of male farmers, aged 45-64, single by size of farm and region: 1926-1966.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966
<u>Leinster</u>						
<15 acres	32.99	35.12	37.47	40.58	42.02	46.49
15-29	27.37	29.48	32.56	32.89	36.96	38.94
30-49	24.99	28.47	31.21	31.62	30.96	32.53
50-99	24.00	26.32	27.52	27.28	25.99	26.20
100 and more	22.73	22.87	23.19	24.54	19.77	20.06
Spearman <i>r</i>	-1**	-1*	-1*	-1*	-1*	-1*
Variation	0.15	0.16	0.18	0.19	0.28	0.32
<u>Munster</u>						
<15 acres	20.56	22.75	29.66	33.44	38.63	42.54
15-29	15.33	20.17	25.57	27.34	32.48	36.12
30-49	12.57	17.48	21.68	23.62	27.88	29.84
50-99	11.26	15.61	19.49	20.13	22.45	23.72
100 and more	11.69	14.74	18.40	19.22	19.54	20.47
Spearman <i>r</i>	-0.9**	-1*	-1*	-1*	-1*	-1*
Variation	0.27	0.18	0.20	0.23	0.27	0.29
<u>Connaught</u>						
<15 acres	14.95	19.57	25.51	26.71	31.15	34.36
15-29	13.59	18.08	24.70	25.72	30.76	33.90
30-49	12.96	17.21	21.55	22.33	26.25	28.39
50-99	15.43	18.33	20.74	21.00	22.55	24.00
100 and more	18.55	23.19	21.01	23.52	21.72	22.81
Spearman <i>r</i>	0.6	0.3	-0.9**	-0.7	-1*	-1*
Variation	0.14	0.12	0.10	0.10	0.17	0.19
<u>Ulster</u>						
<15 acres	25.76	29.35	35.56	36.98	40.02	43.05
15-29	23.90	26.75	31.44	33.17	37.85	41.10
30-49	24.52	26.13	27.96	29.59	33.01	36.38
50-99	23.82	25.46	27.55	25.93	29.28	28.71
100 and more	23.16	28.70	30.14	29.18	26.20	26.53
Spearman <i>r</i>	-0.9**	-0.4	-0.7	-0.9**	-1*	-1*
Variation	0.04	0.06	0.11	0.14	0.17	0.21

Note: \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966.

**Table 4.9:** Logit models predicting the log odds of non-marriage for farmers, aged 45-64, by region and farm size: 1926-1966.

<i>Log odds ratios are reported</i>	Connaught	Munster	Ulster	Leinster
Constant	1.72*	1.41*	0.99*	0.66*
Year: (reference year 1926)				
1936	0.33*	0.32*	0.15*	0.11*
1946	0.65*	0.61*	0.36*	0.22*
1951	0.71*	0.70*	0.41*	0.25*
1961	0.91*	0.87*	0.56*	0.22*
1966	1.03*	0.97*	0.66*	0.27*
Farm size: (reference size < 15 acres)				
15-29	-0.05*	-0.24*	-0.12*	-0.24*
30-49	-0.22*	-0.46*	-0.24*	-0.36*
50-99	-0.31*	-0.67*	-0.39*	-0.66*
> 99	-0.20*	-0.77*	-0.36*	-0.78*
Model Log Likelihood	-96206	-91508	-50977	-71439
Chi-square (difference from null)	3775*	4307*	1106*	1423*

Note: \* coefficients were significant at  $p < 0.01$  and \*\* were significant at  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966.

This section has described the decline of farming in Ireland prior to industrialisation, and according change in the marital behaviour of farmers. By 1991, although the numbers in farming had fallen to 14 per cent of the labour force, 25 per cent of the labour force still owned land (Hannan and Commins 1992). Kennedy (1991) found that four out of every five land transfers involved inheritance, and only 15 per cent were market transactions. The marital prospects of those who remained in full-time farming worsened, particularly for smallholders in the poorer West of Ireland, which reflected their declining labour market position. Those who remained in small scale farming were those unqualified, or those living too distant from off-farm employment opportunities. Callan (1989) found them to be the most prone to poverty and celibacy. In contrast, the marriage chances of farmers with 200 acres or more improved so that by 1991, 91 per cent of these older farmers were married.

Overall farm size, as a measure of wealth, explains a third of the variance in farmers' marital chances, but this varied radically across the regions (Table 4.9). In Connaught, farm size does little to explain farmers' ability to marry. Hannan (1979) showed that a different form of decision-making applied in the different economic and socio-cultural conditions of western Ireland. The goals and values associated with marriage differed in these small peasant communities as opposed to eastern capitalist farm models where most of the product was destined for the market. From the 1930s onwards, the micro and macro-cultural and economic conditions which sustained the western peasant form disappeared. In recent years, farm size inequalities in overall rates of celibacy have increased, and farm size has become a more powerful predictor of whether a farmer marries or not.

#### ***4.10 Accounting for the overall decline in celibacy***

The social history of the post famine period was defined by the dominance of rural livelihoods, low incomes, high levels of emigration, the ‘match’, the Constitution of 1937 and the over-arching influence of the Roman Catholic Church. These factors were seen to influence the popularity of marriage, but their effects were mediated by class membership, as well as regional differences in marriage patterns which were strongly related to class differences. As discussed in Chapter Two, Guinnane (1997) proposed that the availability of marriage substitutes reduced the incentive to marry for those from farming backgrounds. Therefore, early and universal marriage should be more desirable in a social class that lacks many social and economic alternatives to marriage – in other words, migration or substitute household stem structures (Dixon 1978). For many Irish men and women, however, migration was a viable option.<sup>32</sup> Strassmann and Clarke (1997) argue that by leaving Ireland emigrants did not necessarily improve their standards of living, but they seemed to improve their chances of marriage. Breen (1984) noted that it was possible for a woman to accumulate her own dowry by emigrating.

For those who remained, migration influenced local marriage markets resulting in imbalances in the sex ratio of the unmarried population, with relatively more women in urban areas and more men in rural areas, particularly in the western counties of Ireland where relatively high levels of male celibacy were evident up to recent times.<sup>33</sup> In rural areas, in 1961, there were 125 single men, aged 25-29, for

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<sup>32</sup> About 80 per cent of the net emigration from Ireland between 1946 and 1966 was from the 15-39 age group, and the available evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of these emigrants were unmarried (Walsh 1980).

<sup>33</sup> In the 1991 Census of Population, 17 per cent of all men aged 45-54 in County Dublin were never married compared to 25 per cent in County Mayo, on the west coast.

every 100 single women aged 20-24 years (Kennedy 1973).<sup>34</sup> Given these sex ratios, even if every man had been able to marry a younger woman, there would have been a 20 per cent celibacy rate 35 years on in 1996 when these men would have been aged 60-64. In the 1996 Census, 26.5 per cent of men aged 60-64 in rural areas were never married.

There is some evidence to suggest that a simplistic view of how marriage markets operate does not apply. Walsh (1970<sup>a</sup>), for example, found that in the 1960s some 25 per cent of Irish marriages occurred to men and women from different counties. For the U.K., Ní Bhrolcháin (2001) found that age-preferences were more flexible than commonly supposed. Any analysis of sex ratios needs to take account of the method of mate selection in different regions and classes, with free choice of those where the 'match' did not apply; the degree of marital endogamy among the sub-groups; and the geographical mobility of the population.<sup>35</sup> It does seem, however, that high rates of celibacy among rural males, particularly from the 1960s on, were related to sex ratio imbalances.

Employing regression analysis, Walsh (1970<sup>b</sup>) found that the sex ratio played a crucial role in accounting for inter-county differences in both male and female marriage rates: The higher the ratio of males to females in the unmarried population, the lower the male and the higher the female marriage rate. The counties in Ireland with the greatest apparent surplus of unmarried men were also, however, those with the lowest income per person and the highest concentration in agricultural occupations - factors which reduced the marriage eligibility of the unmarried men. Thus, extreme

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<sup>34</sup> The age cohorts differ since men generally married women younger than themselves (see Chapter 1).

<sup>35</sup> Dixon (1971) found that the availability of mates made little difference in determining the proportion of men and women who never married in her dataset of 57 countries around 1960. Later she argued that shortages of partners undoubtedly set some limits, but the primary factor inhibiting marriage in Ireland was economic (Dixon 1978).

care has to be taken to isolate the net influence of the sex ratio. Female migration was probably one factor influencing marital prospects among Irish men, particularly men from agricultural occupations. Some of the rise in marriage rates observed from 1936 onwards may have been produced by falling female migration rates, but as outlined in section 4.3, the picture is more complex.<sup>36</sup> In addition, other factors were also changing over this time period - factors that are harder to quantify such as attitudes, preferences and values.

In this regard, O'Brien (1954) contended that high levels of rural celibacy were due to the sexual Puritanism disseminated by the Catholic Church. Although Catholicism encouraged early marriage and high fertility among the laity, Connell (1968) argues that it did give some legitimacy to non-marriage through the omnipresent example of its own celibate clergy. Dixon (1978) argues that the Church saw non-marriage as an acceptable if unfortunate alternative, causing no shame to parents whose children remained single. According to Guinnane (1997), celibacy, far from being a stigma, was to be valued. As the number of single men increased, the social stigma and isolation associated with bachelorhood probably declined. According to Dixon (1971), the smaller the group of bachelors, the more isolated members would be from one another, and from the larger society, and the greater would be the pressure to marry.

In addition, Catholicism may have affected social classes differently (see chapter 6). The poorer, more conservative social groups, such as farmers in western Ireland, may have been more influenced by Catholicism and its teachings and therefore, the Malthusian preventative check was particularly strong in that group

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<sup>36</sup> From 1936, the rate of female emigration did not correlate with the incidence of male non-marriage but the test did not control for the age composition of female emigrants or take account of internal migration.

(Walsh 1970<sup>a</sup>). From a purely economic perspective, only those who inherited land married and had large families; those denied ownership did not. The more optimistic marriage decisions of the better-educated and more liberal middle classes involved an ability to control fertility, despite Church teaching (Breen et al. 1990).

To conclude, Dixon (1978) argued that there were three main constraints affecting marriage in Ireland up to the 1960s: low income, the high proportion of men working in agriculture, and high marital fertility.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the first Malthusian-based constraint, Guinnane (1997) found that the incomes of average Irish people more than doubled but that rates of permanent celibacy increased in the period between 1850 and 1914.<sup>38</sup> Ó Gráda (1994) noted that the rise in celibacy amongst farmers between the 1920s and 1930s does not support the Malthusian model either, since this was a period of downward pressure on rural living standards. In addition, as outlined in this chapter, in early twentieth century Ireland, smallholders in the West of Ireland had marriage rates that were much higher than those found among the prosperous farms in the eastern part of Ireland (Hannan 1979).

According to Ó Gráda (1994), however, income effects still operated; within each social group, marriage was a normal good so that a decline in income reduced the group's marriage rate, but the effect on the overall marriage age was more complicated as it depended on the relative size of the groups, trends in income distribution and in average incomes. Recent evidence suggests that income effects do apply, for example, rates of marriage among farm owners increase significantly with

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<sup>37</sup> Dixon (1978) did not believe that sex-ratios were a prime concern.

<sup>38</sup> As we saw in chapter 2, Kennedy (1973) argued that the intangible cultural factor of growing conservatism was responsible for this effect.

farm size.<sup>39</sup> Table 4.2 showed that the initial decline in Ireland's rate of celibacy was driven by increasing rates of entry into marriage among the more affluent sections of society.

Testing the compositional hypothesis helps assess Dixon's second constraint - that is, the degree to which high rates of celibacy were related to the high proportion of men working in farming occupations. Bachelorhood was far more common in the countryside, especially among farmers, than in the towns. From 1926 to 1966, when the percentage of men in gainful employment who were bachelors remained fairly stable, bachelorhood increased enormously among farmers holding fewer than 50 acres. The larger the plot, the less likely the farmer was to be single at any age. The declining marital chances of smallholders is important for understanding rates of marriage within the farming group (Figure 4.4), and the decline in the numbers of men involved in farming occupations accounts for much of the overall decline in the rate of non-marriage prior to 1971 (Figure 4.3). Compositional change was not a particularly strong predictor of trends in the overall celibacy rate, but class together with farm size, as a measure of social position, continues to exert a strong influence on the ability to marry (Table 4.5).

Regarding other compositional effects, the decline in the number of men in religious orders did not contribute to Ireland's increasing marriage rate, but this group remains important when considering changes within the higher professional class (see Appendix 2, Table 8 and 9). As the majority of religious clergy men in Ireland were Catholic, it might have been thought that the decline in the numbers of Irish men entering the priesthood contributed to the overall increase in the marriage rate. In fact,

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<sup>39</sup> See McKenna (1978) for an earlier test of the importance of living standards on regional variations in marriage. He found that for the younger age groups, in the east, higher living standards increased the rate of marriage as early as 1911.

this is far from the case. The numbers of professed clergymen (Catholics, Protestant Episcopalians and others) and other religious occupations (Christian Brothers and other monks, religious lay-brothers and church officials) have been stable at about 1 per cent of the total population over the 1926 to 1991 period. When these religious groups are included in the higher professional class, they represent a large proportion of the group, ranging from 54 per cent in 1926 but falling to 13 per cent by 1991. Within the religious group, the proportion of never married men ranged from a low of 78 per cent in 1926 to 94 per cent in 1981.<sup>40</sup> Given the high degree of enforced celibacy, most of these religious occupations were excluded from the analysis presented in this chapter. Where it was possible, Church Officials were included however as these men did not belong to any religious order, although the numbers involved were very small (see Appendix 2, Table 8).

Finally, we address Dixon's third constraint - that of high marital fertility, which will be considered in its own right in Chapter 6. Given that 'marriage meant stretching one generally low salary to cover the support of six to eight dependants, it is not surprising that even in the cities many men were reluctant to marry' (Dixon 1978, p. 462). Class differences in nuptiality not only depended on the balance between economic conditions and expectations concerning standards of comfort, but also included norms, for example, norms relating to the number of anticipated children. In those classes, or those regions where large family sizes were the norm, marriage rates tended to be low (Walsh 1970<sup>a</sup>, 1970<sup>b</sup>). Over time, it is expected that marriage would become more popular as the ability to control fertility diffused to all regions and social groups. High marital fertility, as an economic constraint, operated

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<sup>40</sup> Note that by 1991 it had fallen back to 89 per cent.

to depress marriage rates in certain counties and classes at certain times. It is this deterrent effect which is the major empirical question addressed in Chapter 6.

In summary, the increased propensity to marry within Ireland cannot be solely accounted for by declines in the relative size of the farming group, nor can it be solely accounted for by increasing affluence among the non-farming population. Over the course of the twentieth century, the distributions of income did not evolve to leave the middle- and upper-classes progressively more well-off (for a detailed review of incomes over the century see Kennedy, Giblin and McHugh 1988, and Ó Gráda 1997). It was not until the 1950s that living standards increased noticeably. Most historians agree that the Irish economy performed poorly between the 1920s and the late 1950s:

‘stop-go fiscal policy, massive emigration and a sluggish private sector left little room for economic optimism before the late 1950s’

(Ó Gráda 1997, p. 1).

From the 1970s onwards, all groups benefited from a marriage boom which was related to declines in marital fertility (see Chapters 5 and 6).

#### ***4.11 A note on Occupational change***

The findings in this chapter were based on an analysis of social class rather than occupation, in order to alleviate any potential problems with the measure of occupation collected when men had reached 45 years of age or older. A smaller unit of analysis would have been preferable, but more problematic. The social groups encompassed a large amount of variation at the occupational level. Certain groups experienced more change, with a large degree of occupational change occurring within the farming, other agricultural, professional and skilled manual groups. A

number of logistic models were run in order to assess the degree of occupational-based change in marriage rates. These models pointed to the varying importance of occupation in understanding differences in the chance of marriage within social groups. Table 4.10 provides a summary of the amount of group variation in marriage rates explained by occupation.

**Table 4.10:** Summary of the importance of occupation in understanding within-group rates of non-marriage<sup>41</sup>

Social Group	% marriage variation explained
Farmers/farmers' relatives/farm managers	96
Other agricultural occupations/fishermen	81
Higher professionals	36
Lower professionals	44
Employers and managers	61
Salaried employees	22.5
Non-manual workers	71
Skilled manual workers	56
Semi-skilled manual workers	61
Unskilled manual workers	-
Overall % variation explained	88

Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1981, 1986, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> The results are derived from a series of occupational based logit models not presented here where the odds of non-marriage were related to occupational rather than social group membership for men between the 1926-1991 censuses.

Within the farming group, occupational membership was found to be most important as it explained 96 per cent of the variation in this groups' marriage chances (Table 4.10). This is not surprising since it was very unlikely that many men moved into farming from a non-farming background, given inheritance patterns at the time. The group therefore reflected a strong selection process. In contrast, time-constant occupational effects explained less of the variation in the professional groups' odds of marriage: only 36 per cent was explained for the higher professional group as summarised in Table 4.10. Whelan et al. (1992) noted that Ireland was distinctive among western European nations for having a high inflow to the service class of men from agricultural classes. In this case, occupation, as measured at the time of the census, may refer to a disparate group of men. In all the socioeconomic groups, beyond potential measurement issues, occupational membership was found to have a significant effect on the risk of celibacy, even after controlling for the marital trend. Occupation, as measured at the time of the census, remains an important factor when it comes to predicting marital chances. Occupation was, however, a better predictor of marriage in those social groups where mobility was limited.

Certain social groups exhibited a large degree of variation in marital behaviour at the occupational level. The farming group had the highest levels of inequalities in marriage chances in all time periods (Table 4.11 presents the coefficients of *within* group variation). This was related to the diverse range of occupations within this group, ranging from farm managers and farm owners who generally had significantly higher rates of marriage, compared to non-heirs, farm servants and 'relatives assisting' (see Appendix 2, Table 3). In general, inequalities in the ability to marry have reduced within every social group over time. After taking into account occupational differences in the log odds of marriage, most groups experienced

increased odds of marriage in the 1986 and 1991 Censuses, compared to the odds of marriage in 1926. Even the farming and other agricultural groups experienced a decline in the risk of celibacy, although by 1991, both groups still exhibited a negative log odds of marriage. The professional groups experienced a slight decline in their odds of marriage between 1986 and 1991, whereas all the other groups continued to benefit from increasing odds of marriage up to that point (see Appendix 2, Tables 2 to 25).

**Table 4.11:** Coefficient of marital variation within and between social groups, 1926-91.

<i>Coefficient of variation</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
<i>Within-group:</i>										
Farmers	0.76	0.79	0.82	0.82	0.68	0.70	0.75	0.73	0.78	0.73
Other agricultural	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.15	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.21	0.16
Higher professionals	0.67	0.50	0.82	0.46	0.21	0.20	0.29	0.22	0.23	0.33
Lower professionals	0.13	0.79	0.84	0.91	0.71	0.73	0.90	0.38	0.34	0.32
Employers and managers	0.39	0.15	0.30	0.37	0.63	0.74	0.34	0.16	0.17	0.14
Salaried employees	0.62	0.52	0.51	0.52	0.47	0.45	0.34	0.33	0.24	0.24
Intermediate non-manual	0.25	0.22	0.19	0.18	0.93	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.98	0.95
Other non-manual	0.11	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.11
Skilled manual	0.76	0.78	0.85	0.66	0.49	0.55	0.49	0.65	0.59	0.49
Semi-skilled	0.58	0.82	0.67	0.60	0.48	0.66	0.58	0.79	0.11	0.64
Unskilled <sup>42</sup>	0.11	0.11	0.40	0.15	0.36	0.93	-	-	-	-
<i>Between-groups</i>	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.14	0.11

<sup>42</sup> A breakdown of the unskilled group by occupation was not published in later census records (see Appendix 2, Table 24).

In general terms, occupation was a much better predictor of marriage rates compared with social group. Table 4.12 uses the chi-square goodness of fit test as a yardstick to assess the relative importance of class versus occupation in understanding the propensity to marry in the entire data sample. The first model presented is the saturated model. Compared to the saturated model, including information on occupation alone explains almost 94 per cent of the variance in marriage rates among these older males (see model 2, Table 4.12). Model 3, Table 4.12, includes information on men's class position and compared to the first model, class only explained 47 per cent of the sample variation in marriage. Occupation is a much more detailed indicator of a man's marriage potential compared to social group position. Including information on census year - that is, controlling for time effects - significantly improved the model's fit, for example moving from model 3 to model 5, model 4 to model 6 in Table 4.12, but the increase in variation explained was small. Finally, comparing model 1 and 6 reveals that about 5 per cent of the variance in marriage rates can be explained by changes in the marital behaviour exhibited by different occupations over time due to inclusion of an interaction term. In other words, men in all occupations did not experience the same trend in marriage rates over time.

Comparing model 7 to model 1 reveals that controlling for class effects is just as powerful as controlling for occupational differences over time. Despite significant and at times large changes in the marital behaviour of occupations, social group captures most of these diverse changes over time. This result confirms that it is appropriate to use class position in this chapter.

**Table 4.12:** Measures of fit for occupation versus class based models of marriage.

Model	Model specification	Chi-square	% variance explained
1 (saturated)	I + K + (I*K)	244754	100
2	K	25799	10.5
3	J	114387	46.7
4	I	229130	93.6
5	J + K	120337	49.2
6	I + K	232021	94.8
7	I + K + (J*K)	242024	98.9

*Note:* variables labelled I = Occupation, J = Social class, K = Census year. Interaction terms labelled I\*K and J\*K.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

From the mid-1800s, Ireland had one of the highest percentages of individuals who postponed marriage or who never married of any country in the world. From the 1930s onwards, rates of permanent celibacy declined substantially. To a large extent, this was initially a result of the declining importance of the rural agrarian population, but after 1971, a much more important factor was the increase in marriage rates among the more affluent sections of the population.

Prior to the industrial developments which occurred in the 1960s, there were small yet significant changes in the class structure of Irish society, most notably the decline in the numbers of men listing farming as their main occupation. In this period, marriage inequalities grew as the poorer agricultural and unskilled groups suffered from worsening marital chances, while the ability to marry increased among all other social groups. The propensity to marry, however, reflected widespread emigration. By

the 1926 Census - the starting point for this analysis - only half of the original cohort of Irish people aged 45 to 64 remained in the country. For those who stayed, the constraints on marriage were considerable, especially for those who did not inherit land or receive a dowry. The life chance of marriage was strongly differentiated by social class; sixty years on, this empirical fact had not changed.

Indeed, some agricultural transformations exacerbated the impact of class position. This is clear when we compare farmers' marriage chances by region and farm size. The celibacy rate among the poorer small-scale farmers increased. In addition, the unskilled manual classes fared particularly poorly, as they became more prone to high levels of long-term unemployment and lifelong celibacy. At the same time, the marriage rates for all other social groups improved noticeably. The life chance of marriage was and still is strongly related to an individual's class position. By 1991, however, it looked as if marriage inequalities were reducing, with all social classes having experienced increases in the propensity to marry.

The next chapter presents a class-based analysis of changes in fertility behaviour across a series of birth cohorts, using the *Living in Ireland* panel survey. It was not possible to use census data for this question, due to lack of detailed information on fertility patterns. Chapter 6 will then focus on the inter-relationship between fertility and marital behaviour using more detailed panel data information. These chapters highlight that over this time period, but especially from the 1960s onwards, the increased ability to control fertility made marriage more of an attractive option for certain social groups.

## **5 Differential Fertility of the Social Classes**

### ***5.1 Introduction***

Despite the prevalence of late marriage and celibacy, Ireland had a high rate of marital fertility which persisted throughout the twentieth century. This pattern has challenged demographic theory. Irish fertility, whether measured by the total period fertility rate (TFR) or by completed cohort fertility, was the highest of any developed country as late as 1987, with the exception of Russia and Albania (Coleman 1992). Lack of industrialisation and urbanisation, and the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church are usually evoked to explain the high levels of marital fertility. This chapter engages in analyses and debate over the nature and implications of socio-economic change on Irish marital fertility levels.

It is important to investigate fertility patterns in post-independent Ireland since it was a period characterised by significant changes in marriage and fertility rates, particularly from the 1960s on. A decline in completed family size, however, has occurred in Ireland since 1911. As outlined in Chapter Two, as the knowledge and motivation that facilitate family planning become more widespread, the pattern of differential fertility is expected to change. In the Irish case, it is expected that all segments of the population will achieve smaller than average families in an effort to raise the 'quality' of their children (Becker's 'quantity-quality' trade off). Therefore, the analysis of differential fertility patterns provides an indication of the onset of a fertility decline.

A second hypothesis derived in Chapter Two led to the prediction that aggregate fertility would decline simply because of the declining importance in the total population of the high fertility agricultural social groups. As we saw in the

previous chapter, testing the compositional hypothesis partitions fertility change into its compositional component that is, changes in the social structure, and behavioural component that is, changes in the fertility behaviour of the social groups. Since relatively little attention has been devoted to trends in marital fertility since the 1960s, this chapter represents an important contribution in this area.<sup>1</sup> More recent and emerging changes in marital fertility will be outlined in the final chapter of the thesis.

Although the availability and use of artificial fertility control aids fertility decline, Irish men and women have always had a choice when it comes to fertility decisions, even if that choice was to remain single or migrate. In other words, emigration and celibacy have had a selective effect upon marital fertility (see Chapter 6). By remaining single or by leaving the countryside/country, many Irish men and women avoided the large families and high fertility levels that were common in the past (Guinnane 1997). The widespread availability and acceptability of artificial fertility controls has, of course, allowed women in particular to control their fertility options more easily.<sup>2</sup> As outlined in Chapter two, this ‘innovation’ is expected to have led to significant declines in fertility levels and increases in the propensity to marry. The intention of this chapter is to assess how pervasive this fertility change was across social groups.

The chapter objectives are first, to document the degree to which marital fertility varies across social classes. Secondly, to assess the degree to which economic and social change influence class differentials in fertility behaviour, both in terms of rates of childlessness and overall fertility levels. The chapter is divided into 9 sections. The introduction is followed by a brief review of the literature in this area. Section 5.3

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of work by Fahey and Russell (2001), Coleman (1992) and more recently, Daly (2006) who provides a comprehensive review of fertility trends between 1922 and 1973.

<sup>2</sup> In 1985, legislation made non-medical contraceptives available to all over 18 years (see Chapter 3 for a social history of Ireland).

discusses the methods used to detect fertility control within marriage and section 5.4 explains why Catholic marriages were selected. Section 5.5 introduces the data to be used and the first empirical section of the chapter, section 5.6, describes the general nature of fertility change in Ireland, using both census records and information from the *Living in Ireland* survey. The second empirical task is to analyse the nature of differential fertility, focusing on Catholic marriages only (section 5.7). Finally, the compositional hypothesis will be tested in section 5.8. This hypothesis suggests that changes in Ireland's completed fertility rate were strongly influenced by the decline in the share of high fertility groups, such as agricultural workers. The concluding section introduces a number of questions which will be addressed in the following chapter, highlighting the inter-relationship between marriage and fertility patterns and changes in the Irish social structure.

## **5.2 Class Differentials**

In terms of social group differentials, the 'standard-of-living' thesis proposed by Kennedy (1973) argued that although the higher professional and middle classes could afford more children when compared to the unskilled and farming groups, they would choose not to have large families in order to maintain a higher standard of living. As Walsh (1968) points out smaller family size improves the chances of children attaining a better job as more resources can be devoted to each child, when there are fewer of them.<sup>3</sup> As noted by Becker (1985), parents are now deciding to

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<sup>3</sup> The same idea is common in Sociology where the 'resource dilution' hypothesis argues that the more children in the family, the fewer the economic resources that can accrue to any given child (studies have found a negative relationship between the number of siblings and educational performance as outlined in Chapter 7).

have fewer children and invested more in each child that is, the “quantity-quality” trade off outlined in Chapter Two.

The historical research points to a greater acceptance and use of contraception in the professional classes as apposed to the poorer working classes and farmers, who displayed more traditional, Catholic-driven values (Breen, Hannan, Rottman and Whelan 1990, Kennedy 1973, Guinnane 1997). Kennedy (1973) argued that fertility differentials were a product of differences in the desired number of children that is, the classes who displayed more traditional Catholic values wanted larger families. In other words, attitudes towards children or desired family size as well as the wish to control fertility were more important than access to contraceptive devices in bringing about a significant fall in fertility. Kennedy did not, however, provide any direct evidence on family size preferences.

In addition, it has been proposed that the professional classes may have been more open to the idea of marrying with the intention of remaining permanently childless, although Kennedy and Guinnane have argued against such thinking on the grounds of the virtual absence of, what they felt were voluntarily childless couples among Irish Catholics. Rates of childlessness have received little attention in this area which is surprising given their repercussions, especially within farming communities. The agreed economic reasoning argues that farmers would have more children in order to provide cheap labour on the farm (Guinnane 1997) but as Kennedy (1973) noted, there was no need for a large unpaid labour force given that farm sizes were generally small.<sup>4</sup> As outlined in Chapter Two, Connell (1968) believed that large families were necessary to ensure at least 2 surviving sons under the logic of the stem family system. The need to retain hold over the family farm can explain, to some

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<sup>4</sup> Evidence on this front will be presented in Table 6.5.

degree, high marital fertility amongst some farmers and their reduced levels of childlessness. Yet, not all farmers displayed high levels of fertility and in the 1961 Census, 8 per cent of farmers' wives were childless, a point which will be discussed later.

Industrialisation was initiated by the Irish state in the 1930s but as we saw in the last chapter, the steady decline of the agrarian population had begun long before. It can be expected that the decline of this highly fertile group had implications on the aggregate fertility level. The intention of the compositional hypothesis is to assess how changes in the social structure are related to the decline of the traditional family and the transition from high fertility levels, as described in the Demographic Transition Model outlined in Chapter Two. The counter-hypothesis emphasises the role of behavioural change where fertility behaviour changes in response to changing economic and social conditions.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, urbanisation, increases in wages, secularisation, modernisation, rising educational levels and employment opportunities for women, all brought about significant cultural shifts (Lesthaeghe 1983). From the 1960s, artificial methods of fertility control became more easily available to Irish couples, especially to women.

The literature in this area highlights a controversy concerning whether the process of fertility decline consisted principally of the diffusion of an innovation, that is, the spread of a new behaviour of fertility control, or an adaptation of existing knowledge to a new social and economic climate, for example, see Guinnane, Okun and Trussell (1994) and Cleland and Wilson (1987). The innovation/diffusion hypothesis states that adoption of fertility control within a population results from new knowledge about contraception, or changes in social and cultural conditions that

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<sup>5</sup> Both processes are intrinsically bond together as outlined in chapter 2.

make fertility control acceptable on moral grounds for the first time. Ignorance of, or moral objections to, contraception are major obstacles to lower fertility in pre-transition populations, even when couples desire smaller families. New information about fertility control which may diffuse through social networks, the mass media, or family planning programmes help to overcome these obstacles.

On the other hand, the adaptation hypothesis emphasises that fertility declines can occur even without access to modern contraceptives, by using withdrawal or abstinence, which are available to everyone. The critical factor is the desire to reduce family size, which emerges in response to changes in the economic, social, or demographic environment that affect the costs and benefits of children. Most economic models, as reviewed in Chapter Two, see reduced 'demand for children' as the driving force behind fertility transitions. Classical demographic transition theory can be considered a variant of the adaptation hypothesis as it emphasises the importance of changes in social and economic structures. Essentially, this approach highlights the role of economic developments. Similarly, the compositional hypothesis focuses on economic change, in particular, movements away from rural smallholdings which usually bring small family size (Coleman 1992). As pointed out in Chapter Two, both the adaptation and diffusion explanations, however defined, refer to different aspects of a single phenomenon (see Guinnane et al. 1994). In addition, the compositional hypothesis simply differentiates between the effects of changes in the social structure and changes in fertility behaviour associated with it, although both refer to one process.

### **5.3 Methods for detecting fertility control**

Since no direct survey information was available on the adoption of contraception, most of the literature<sup>6</sup> has focused on imperfect ways to infer fertility control such as, the Coale and Trussell index of parity-dependent fertility control or, cohort parity analysis (CPA) or, the European Fertility Project's  $I_g$ .<sup>7</sup> These techniques and their detailed results are spelt out in Ó Gráda (1991). In brief, the analysis of the 1911 population census by Coale and others convinced them that effective fertility control hardly existed in Ireland. Teitelbaum's study (1984) also indicated little change in Irish fertility before the First World War. Ireland, prior to the 1920s, has therefore been employed as a benchmark for natural fertility because of the presumed absence of birth control. These findings, however, were based on indices of fertility control generally used to detect 'stopping' only that is, the early termination of childbearing.<sup>8</sup>

In a population where contraception is widespread, couples can and do choose both the numbers of children they have and the timing of their births. A key aspect of CPA is the extent to which married couples resort to contraception in order to 'space' births. CPA infers the extent and timing of birth-control within marriage from distributions of married women by number of children born. Previous measures had focused on periods free from birth control, followed by 'stopping'. Ó Gráda (1991) found that as early as 1900, there was evidence to suggest that Irish couples engaged in 'spacing', even in parts of rural Ireland.<sup>9</sup> As early as 1881, Ó Gráda found that

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<sup>6</sup> With the exception of Wilson-Davis (1983) and Greene et al. (1989).

<sup>7</sup> See Coale and Treadway (1985), David and Sanderson (1988), Wolfgang and Sanderson (2004), Ó Gráda (1985), (1991), Ó Gráda and Duffy (1995a) (1995b) and Guinnane (1997), Coleman (1992) for a review.  $I_g$  measures marital fertility against a maximum age-specific schedule based on the fertility of married women of the Hutterite religion in the 1920s.

<sup>8</sup> Another problem with these findings related to their reliance on uncorrected birth registration data.

<sup>9</sup> One model of the demographic transition to low fertility emphasises the early termination of childbearing (Knodel 1974). In the Irish case, what prevented couples from having their desired number of children was the difficulty of practicing abstinence, given a lack of other fertility controls

there was significant variation across counties in marital fertility with the lowest levels in the north east and the highest in Connaught and north Munster (see Ó Gráda 1994 for a review).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, some method of fertility control was always available to Irish couples but they may have been less willing to employ these methods due to religious beliefs and/or because the incentives were not there to limit family size.

#### ***5.4 A note on Religious Differentials***

In terms of cultural explanations, religious affiliation did little to explain country-level differences in fertility as described in Chapter One, or in explaining differences within Ireland as reviewed in Chapter Two. Ó Gráda (1991), for example, found that religious affiliation had little explanatory power when compared to other factors such as socio-economic status or even region when it came to models of fertility. Using the 1911 Census for the Dublin suburb of Pembroke, Guinnane, Moehling and Ó Gráda (2001) investigated the impacts of religion, class, migration, and neighbors in the Irish fertility transition. Their most consistent finding was that religious differences were considerable but are not the entire story.<sup>11</sup> Across all social groups, Kennedy found that Catholics displayed higher levels of fertility when compared to non-Catholics in the Republic (Kennedy 1973, Table 65, p. 188). More recently, Catholic behaviour North and South of the border has been compared and Catholic fertility in Northern Ireland was found to be significantly higher than Catholic fertility in the Republic of Ireland (Ó Gráda and Walsh 1994, Coleman 1999).

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(Kennedy 1973). The second approach highlights the deliberate spacing of births within marriage (Lachiver 1973).

<sup>10</sup> These estimates were based on the standard Princeton measure of marital fertility which measures marital fertility against the fertility of the Hutterites. The accuracy of CPA also relies on the assumption that a correct natural fertility model can be found with which the target cohort can be compared (Okun 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Religious affiliation alone “explained” less than a third of the variation in cross-county fertility

Guinnane (1997) argued that the Church teaching on contraception had two main implications; forcing those who did not want large families to either remain celibate or emigrate. Therefore, those who stayed in Ireland and married were a select sub-section of the population who desired large families. This hypothesis will be assessed in Chapter Six. The other implication of this view is the belief that all those who married wanted to have children; a view that Kennedy (1973) shared but believed on the grounds that it was a function of Catholicism. Kennedy also argued that the most disaffected Catholics would have left Ireland (or moved to the cities). In other words, the most likely people to be potential birth controllers left rural Ireland (Guinnane 1997).

In fact, rates of childlessness were higher among Non-Catholics in both the 1946 and 1961 Censuses. This finding was most likely related to social group differences between the religious groups since there was a larger proportion of the non-Catholic population in the upper and middle classes. In other words, more non-Catholics were in the classes that traditionally had higher rates of childlessness, and religion is therefore probably a proxy for education and class. The religious differential is not of main concern here, however, since 95 per cent of the country reported to being Catholic in the 1961 Census and by the 1981 Census, the proportion remained high at 93 per cent.<sup>12</sup> The fertility of Catholic marriages will therefore dominate the aggregate trend in fertility up to 1981.

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<sup>12</sup> Between 1911 and 1961 the population of the 26 counties who declared themselves Roman Catholic in the census fell by five per cent, but over the following 30 years it increased by 21 per cent.

## 5.5 The Data

This chapter exploits a new source of data, the *Living in Ireland* panel survey, for the purpose of analysing social class differentials in fertility and marital chances across a series of birth cohorts, ranging from respondents born at the beginning of the century (1910-1914) to the youngest cohort born (1980-1982).<sup>13</sup> For the most part, men older than 45 years of age are selected for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>14</sup> Whenever possible, wife's age at marriage is taken into account.

One problem with the panel survey is that there were no direct questions asked on fertility. Parents were therefore identified by reference to children living inside and outside of the home. A rough estimate of family size was constructed from this information but this estimate will undercount family size since respondents were asked only about surviving children. In addition, the date of birth for all children living in the household was recorded in every year but information on children living outside of the household was collected in the first year only.<sup>15</sup> Combining this information revealed that 2.5 per cent of men in the data sample reported having twins or children born in the same year. Of course this could be because the respondent misreported the date of birth of children especially since they were asked about children living inside and outside of the household at different points. If the cases of twins were dropped from the data, cohort fertility rates remained remarkably similar since the reporting of twins was evenly distributed across all birth cohorts.

In terms of marriage patterns, respondents were asked their current marital status and the date since they held this status. Information was, therefore, missing on the date of marriage for those respondents, mostly older individuals, who were

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 3 provides some background information on this data source.

<sup>14</sup> Occupational data for women are mostly unreliable.

<sup>15</sup> This information refers to the year, not exact date, of birth for non-resident children

widowed and, for a small number of divorced and separated individuals.<sup>16</sup> In subsequent interviews, about 10 per cent of respondents reported a different date of marriage.<sup>17</sup> For these cases, the most consistent date was taken as correct. Finally, social group was measured at the time of the survey. For men who had no current occupation- mostly the retired sample of interest here- information was used on their last known occupation.

Trends in cohort fertility and nuptiality matched those expected from census information. Over a fifth of the respondents born between 1910 and 1914 had never married compared to only 7 per cent of the 1940-1944 birth cohort.<sup>18</sup> For those respondents born after 1944, rates of entry into marriage declined but this finding is related to their younger age. As marriage became more popular, age at marriage and the mean age of a woman at first birth fell across the birth cohorts. In terms of fertility, the proportion of childless married women by age 45 fell from 19 to 8 per cent of a birth cohort. In addition, the number of higher-order births that is, four plus births, increased slightly with 55 per cent of the eldest cohort of women having four or more children, compared to 59 per cent of the 1940-44 cohort. By 1994, 43 per cent of women, born between 1950 and 1954, were having four or more children.<sup>19</sup> For younger cohorts, family size fell as did age at first birth but because of the young age of most of these respondents, information on completed family size is incomplete. Chapter Seven will present information on fertility change among this younger sample of married couples.

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<sup>16</sup> In the pooled panel (combining information from the 1994 to 1991 surveys) 40 percent of the entire sample were never married, 2.1 per cent ( $n=243$ ) were separated, 0.4 per cent ( $n=48$ ) were divorced and 7 per cent were widowed.

<sup>17</sup> In addition, 1.4 per cent of cases were missing date of marriage.

<sup>18</sup> This was calculated based on the pooled 1994-1999 panel.

<sup>19</sup> Information on completed family size was only collected in 1994.

## **5.6 Evidence of a fertility decline**

### **5.6.1 Completed Fertility Rates**

Completed fertility rates count the actual number of children born to individuals over their lifetime and as such they can only be calculated for those who have finished reproducing. The total fertility rates (TFR or TPR) presented in Chapter One are a poorer estimate of completed family size when compared to the total cohort fertility rate (TCFR) which will be presented here.<sup>20</sup> Figure 1.14 showed that completed fertility rates for women began to decline steadily from 1926. The fertility rate (TCFR) presented here will differ from those shown in Chapter 1 since it is the sum of the age-specific fertility rates that actually applied to each cohort as they aged through time. It is, therefore, an index of the average completed family size for different birth cohorts rather than a period measure of completed fertility. A drawback of using completed fertility rates is that they can not describe current trends but these trends are outlined in Chapter 7.

Total cohort fertility rates for men, 45 years of age and older, are shown in Table 5.1 (Living in Ireland data, 1994 only). Men older than 75 years of age at the time of the survey would have been 'at risk' of marriage and, therefore, childbirth from ages 16 on, roughly from the 1920s/30s on. Compared to later cohorts of men, this pre-1918 birth cohort had smaller families on average. As reported in Table 5.1, completed fertility rates increased up to the cohort of men born between 1929 and 1933. After that cohort, completed fertility rates declined providing some very preliminary evidence of the onset of a fertility decline (see Table 5.1).

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<sup>20</sup> Period measures tend to be more volatile than cohort indices (see Ní Bhrolcháin 2007 for a critical comparison of period versus cohort measures of fertility).

Fertility levels within these birth cohorts were, however, related to the proportions of a cohort marrying, presented in the last column of Table 5.1, and wife's age at marriage which is presented in Table 5.2. Although there were 38 unmarried fathers in the survey, only two of them belonged to this older sample of men. Within the pre-1918 birth cohort, most men married that is, 81 per cent, but the median age of marriage was high, at 35 years of age, which matches the overall findings discussed in Chapter 1 and also those of Walsh (1972). The proportion of a birth cohort marrying steadily increased up to the 1934-39 cohort, with almost 91 per cent of all men in this cohort married by 1994, which coincides with the increase in cohort fertility rates (see Table 5.1). In other words, marital fertility increased because marriage became more popular and age at marriage declined.

The results for younger men will be relatively unaffected by the likelihood that they marry at some time in the future. Most men that is, 97 per cent of men aged between 45 and 59 had married by age 45 therefore, it is expected that only a small number of men who were born after 1939 married after 1994 that is, the date when the data was collected. The corresponding figure for men older than 75 years of age was only 86 per cent given the later age of marriage in older birth cohorts. Despite higher rates of entry into marriage in more recent birth cohorts, fertility levels were not as high as would be expected from previous cohort behaviour. Up to the 1934-39 birth cohort, there was a steady increase in fertility rates as the proportions marrying and the median age of marriage and, therefore, childbirth declined across these birth cohorts (see Table 5.2).

The data showed no evidence of changes in the timing of births that is, although these birth cohorts married earlier, they did not significantly delay having

children (see Appendix 3, Tables 1 and 2 for information on parity).<sup>21</sup> After the 1934-39 birth cohort, however, the reported pattern of change as presented in Table 5.1 was related to the younger age of these men. This table shows that just over 89 per cent of the 1945-49 cohort had married by 1994; their median age of marriage had dropped to 25 years and, that of their wife to 23 years but the completed fertility rate had also fallen.

A certain amount of caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the results of the fertility question. In the case of younger men, the results will be affected by the likelihood that they may have further children some time in the future. At the other end of the scale, because of the effects of mortality in diminishing the relevant birth cohorts, it is questionable whether the results reported for men older than 54 are representative of all men born around the same time. This is most especially the case for men born before 1919. Recent research at the University of Utah found that the more children a couple had, the higher the risk of early death (Penn and Smith 2006). This implies that the TCFR undercounts the average family sizes for all older men.

To investigate the first point, it was possible to follow these men up to the point at which they left the panel survey. By 2001, the last year of the LII survey, a third of this subset of men that is, men older than 44 years of age were still being interviewed. Most respondents were present for, at least, one additional wave of the panel survey. When information was added on any births post-1994 or wave one, completed fertility rates remained remarkably stable. Table 5.3 provides information from this 'pooled' panel. The increase in TCFRs for the older birth cohorts was related to the fact that information was added on a small number of children accidentally omitted in wave one. Although there were 368 births within the panel

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<sup>21</sup> It is widely accepted that stopping, rather than spacing, played a dominant role in the European Fertility transition but, when the contraceptive technology available to couples is unreliable, greater recourse to spacing as a precautionary measure was expected by Ó Gráda (1994).

period, only a small proportion (21 births) were to men older than 45 years of age in 1994. This would suggest a trend towards lower fertility levels in more recent birth cohorts as seen in Table 5.2. The selective nature of attrition, however, makes it difficult to draw any substantive conclusion from this finding.

**Table 5.1:** Total cohort fertility rates for men 45 years of age and older (LII 1994).

<i>Birth cohort</i>	<i>Age at interview</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TCFR</i>	<i>% ever married</i>
1896-1918	>=75	221	2.89	81.4
1919-1923	70-74	193	3.10	82.9
1924-1928	65-69	224	3.29	86.2
1929-1933	60-64	296	3.65	86.1
1934-1939	55-59	393	3.54	90.6
1940-1944	50-54	375	3.37	88.5
1945-1949	45-49	413	3.01	89.3

Source: Living in Ireland Panel Survey, 1994.

Another concern relates to the fact that information was missing on deceased children. Infant mortality rates would have been particularly high prior to the 1960s (chapter 4, vital statistics 2001 annual).<sup>22</sup> Given these concerns, this chapter will also present census information on fertility levels which records the number of live births and, thereby, allow comparisons to be made across both sources. Census data refer to the number of live births of men/women still married and living in Ireland at the census date, therefore also excluding those in a cohort who died, emigrated or were widowed. Walsh (1968) found that in the 1960s Census data on average family size

<sup>22</sup> According to Lyon (1948), in the county of Dublin in 1945, the number of still-born births represented 3.2 per cent of all births.

refers to fewer than 40 from any initial birth cohort of 100 Irish females. According to Walsh;

‘[the] effects of mortality and widowhood operate with roughly equal force in Ireland and other European countries, but the effects of emigration and celibacy operate with unique force in Ireland.’

(Walsh 1968, p. 7).

These omissions introduce concerns about serious selection bias especially as regards differential patterns of migration. One consequence of this selective effect is that urban fertility would fall earlier than rural fertility because the women least likely to have large families migrate. Indeed, migrants to the cities tended to have smaller families (David and Sanderson 1988). The low fertility of Irish-born women in the US has also been taken as evidence for this selectivity hypothesis (Guinnane 1997) but other factors were at play. Without taking into account, for example, the different costs of children in cities or in the US, and controlling for detailed characteristics of the women who migrated, the hypothesis cannot be adequately tested.

Finally, Table 5.2 illustrates that fertility levels amongst older men in the *Living in Ireland* data were strongly related to wife’s age at marriage. Information on age at marriage was only available for those respondents who were still married at the time of interview which represented 93 per cent of the sample, and missing for 40 per cent of the oldest cohort, since they were most likely to be widowed. The findings follow the same pattern as for men’s age of marriage that is, both the median age of men and women at marriage declined across birth cohorts but the age differential between wives and husbands declined, which follows the national trend noted in Chapter One, Table 1.6. For the remainder of this chapter, the *Living in Ireland* data discussed will refer to the 1994 survey data only.

To conclude, there was little evidence of fertility decline across these older birth cohorts. Increases in fertility among the cohorts were attributed to younger age

at marriage. Walsh (1968) found a similar pattern and noted that there appeared to be no reduction in marital fertility as nuptiality rose, when comparing information from the 1946 and 1961 Censuses, a trend also evident in Table 5.1. In fact, across the birth cohorts analysed here, a positive relationship was found between completed cohort fertility rates and the proportion of a cohort marrying.<sup>23</sup> In other words, there is a positive relationship between cohort fertility and nuptiality. We will return to this issue in the next chapter but, for now, we note that a small degree of fertility decline was evident in the behaviour of the 1945-49 cohort. This cohort had a relatively high rate of entry into marriage yet displayed a lower completed fertility level when compared to the previous birth cohort. Important changes in fertility behaviour across these cohorts were, however, evident in other areas.

**Table 5.2:** Tempo and quantum of fertility across birth cohorts (men only).

<i>Birth cohort</i>	<i>Median age at marriage<sup>24</sup></i>	<i>Median age at first birth<sup>25</sup></i>	<i>Median age at last birth</i>	<i>Median age of wife at marriage</i>
1896-1918	35.5	35	44	28.5
1919-1923	32	35	42	27
1924-1928	31	33	42	27
1929-1933	29	31	40	26
1934-1939	28	29	39	25
1940-1944	26	28	37	24
1945-1949	25	27	36	23

Source: Living in Ireland Panel Survey, 1994.

<sup>23</sup>  $r = 0.527$ ,  $p = 0.225$ : Where the P value is related to the small sample size.

<sup>24</sup> Age of marriage was only available for men still married at the date of interview.

<sup>25</sup> O'Donoghue, Meredith and O'Shea (2003) using the same data source, noted that there was a decline in mean age at first birth to a low of below 25 for the cohort born 1945-55 before rising for later cohorts.

**Table 5.3:** Total cohort fertility rate, all men 45 years of age and older (pooled panel).

<i>Birth cohort</i>	<i>Age in 2001</i>	<i>N (2001)</i>	<i>Last known TCFR</i>
1896-1918	>=82	32	2.91
1919-1923	77-81	53	3.11
1924-1928	72-76	93	3.29
1929-1933	67-71	101	3.66
1934-1939	62-66	150	3.56
1940-1944	57-61	136	3.38
1945-1949	52-56	141	3.04

Source: Living in Ireland Panel Survey, 1994 to 2001.

### 5.6.2 The decline of large families

Using census data, changes in Irish fertility patterns can be analysed in terms of the age of wife at marriage and the duration of marriage (for example see Breen et al. 1990 and Kennedy 1973). Comparisons across birth cohorts or other countries must be made for the same age of marriage and duration of marriage groups. Without controlling for these factors, married couples would have been married for different periods of time and, therefore, have a different probability of having a live birth in a period of time.<sup>26</sup> The variation in family size by wife's age of marriage and duration of marriage is therefore some indication of the extent of family planning exercised.

Table 5.4 presents information on the fertility behaviour of persons married from five to nine years at the time of the census that is, for recently married couples. Between the 1946 and 1981 Census, fertility of younger brides that is, brides aged 20

<sup>26</sup> Marriage duration is assumed to be a reliable proxy measure of the number of live births that have already occurred in a marriage (the probability of an additional birth diminishes as the existing family size increases).

to 24 at marriage, declined by 19 per cent (see Table 5.4). For those aged 25-29 at marriage, fertility declined by 11 per cent, and for older brides, those 30-34 at marriage, it declined by 4 per cent (Table 5.4). The decline was more dramatic if the 1981 figures were compared to the 1961 or the 1911 figures. The 1911 numbers were, however, for all 32 counties of Ireland, prior to division, and are therefore not comparable. Table 5.4 demonstrates that younger brides were likely to limit their fertility early in marriage particularly from the 1961 Census on.

**Table 5.4:** Average number of children born to women married for 5-9 years and of various ages at marriage.

Census year	Age of wife at marriage		
	20-24	25-29	30-34
1911*	3.12	3.01	2.58
1946	2.91	2.66	2.28
1961	3.03	2.81	2.42
1971	2.82	2.75	2.46
1981	2.35	2.36	2.19
1981 figure as proportion of 1946 figure	0.81	0.89	0.96

\* The 1911 Census data refer to all 32 counties of Ireland.

Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1911, 1946, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

**Table 5.5:** Percentage distribution of completed families by number of children ever born to women in selected marriage cohorts and married for 25-29 years.

Percentage distribution of women aged 20-24 years at marriage and married from 25 to 29 years by number of children ever born					
<i>Census year</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1-3</i>	<i>4-6</i>	<i>7-9</i>	<i>10-over</i>
1946	6	20	33	26	15
1961	4	25	37	23	12
1971	3	26	39	21	10
1981	3	26	43	20	7

Percentage distribution of women aged 25-29 years at marriage and married from 25 to 29 years by number of children ever born					
	<i>0</i>	<i>1-3</i>	<i>4-6</i>	<i>7-9</i>	<i>10-over</i>
1946	9	27	38	21	5
1961	8	34	40	15	3
1971	7	34	41	15	3
1981	7	33	44	14	2

Percentage distribution of women aged 30-34 years at marriage and married from 25 to 29 years by number of children ever born					
	<i>0</i>	<i>1-3</i>	<i>4-6</i>	<i>7-9</i>	<i>10-over</i>
1946	16	37	36	9	1
1961	15	44	34	6	0
1971	13	46	35	6	0
1981	13	44	36	6	0

Source: Census of Population of Ireland 1946, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

Focusing now on completed fertility, Table 5.5 examines the percentage distribution of women over 45 years of age, who were in the same age groups at marriage, and with marriages of the same duration at the time of the census. Regardless of age at marriage, the proportion of women with seven or more children declined (Table 5.5). Among women married for 25 to 29 years in 1946, 41 per cent who married in their early twenties had seven or more children that is, for women marrying between 1917 and 1921. While for women who married in their early thirties, only 10 per cent had large families (see Table 5.5). By 1981, the number of younger brides having large families had decline by a third, to 27 per cent that is, for women who married between 1951 and 1956. Fertility of older brides had declined by 40 per cent; with 6 per cent of these brides having seven or more children. As expected, younger brides had much larger families, regardless of census year, and smaller family sizes that is, 3 to 6 children, became more popular amongst younger brides. For brides who married after age thirty, the small family (1 to 3 children) became more common (see Table 5.5).

Kennedy (1973) noted that by 1961, Irish women, especially those who postponed marriage until their thirties, were less tolerant of having very large families or of continuing childbearing into their forties (although his comparison was with the 1911 Census). Table 5.5 shows that this pattern of change continued and became even more dramatic after the 1961 Census. Turning to the *Living in Ireland* data, a similar pattern was apparent across birth cohorts (see Table 5.6). If we focus on men only, older men tended to have more children with 11 per cent of the 1945-49 birth cohort having six or more children, compared to 27 per cent of men born between 1929 and 1933 (Table 5.6). There was a significant weak positive correlation between family size and husband's birth cohort ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) and, despite controlling for wife's

age at marriage, older cohorts had significantly larger families.<sup>27</sup> Both data sources, therefore, revealed a similar pattern of change.

In conclusion, census data have revealed the stability of Irish marriage fertility over the period 1946-1961 which was followed by reductions in fertility; fertility fell sharply for marriages of short durations and had also fallen for marriages of longer duration, controlling for age at marriage (see Table 5.4 and 5.5). Even prior to 1961, however, there was a tendency for the number of large families from a cohort of marriages to fall (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.6:** Information on family size for men older than 44 years of age.

<i>Birth cohort</i>	<i>Age at interview</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% with 6 or more children</i>	<i>% Childless</i>
1896-1918	>=75	180	20.0	16.1
1919-1923	70-74	160	26.9	12.5
1924-1928	65-69	193	21.8	11.4
1929-1933	60-64	255	27.1	4.3
1934-1939	55-59	356	17.7	5.6
1940-1944	50-54	332	15.7	3.3
1945-1949	45-49	369	10.8	5.7

Source: Living in Ireland 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Information was included on all husbands older than 44 years and the number children born which ranged from 1 to 6 or greater children that is, childless marriage were excluded. The Poisson model estimates are presented in the next chapter.

### 5.6.3 Childless marriages

Relatively little attention has been paid to rates of childlessness in Ireland when compared to the attention focused on large family size. Childlessness is important, first, because completed fertility rates are influenced by the number of unmarried and childless persons in a population. Secondly, and more importantly, late age of marriage implies a high risk of a childless marriage. In addition to determining the completed fertility of specific birth cohorts, the census question on the number of children born alive also provides a measure of childlessness. In Table 5.5, the proportion of childless marriages declined over time, regardless of wife's age at marriage. Among women married for 25-29 years in 1946, a relatively small number (6 per cent) of women married in their early twenties were childless, compared to 9 per cent of women who married in their late twenties, and 16 per cent of women who married in their early thirties (see Table 5.5). By 1981, the proportion of younger brides who were childless had dropped by 50 per cent and, by 22 per cent, for older brides.

In the *Living in Ireland* data presented in Table 5.6, a weak positive relationship was found between birth cohort and rates of childlessness ( $r=0.11$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). Older birth cohorts suffered from significantly higher odds of being childless, even controlling for the positive and highly significant relationship between wife's age at marriage and risk of childlessness.<sup>28</sup> As previously mentioned, the *Living in Ireland* survey did not collect information on children who died in the interim years, which may have increased the level of childlessness for these older husbands.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, the census data collected information on the number of live births, thereby

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<sup>28</sup> Logit model is not reported here.

<sup>29</sup> If the analysis was restricted to husbands aged between 45 and 65, older cohorts were not significantly more likely to be childless once differences in age at marriage were taken into account.

excluding still-births, miscarriages and abortions. In census records, women who were married at the same age, and were married for the same amount of time, had higher rates of childlessness (see Table 5.5). Since 1957, information has been available on the number of foetal deaths and it shows a clear decline in the number of still-births over that time. It is unlikely that the number of late foetal deaths explains the higher levels of childlessness found in the 1946 and 1911 Census records since the proportion of foetal deaths grows for later pregnancies (Barrett 1971, Smith 1994).

Although age at marriage strongly influences rates of childlessness, it cannot explain why Irish couples became less likely to be childless between the 1946 and 1981 censuses. If we assume that everyone who married wanted to have children, then one reason may be improved nutrition resulting in better health, higher levels of fecundity, and less risk of infant mortality. Another less plausible reason is that childlessness was voluntary given a presumed lack of artificial fertility control couples chose to abstain from sex in order to limit family size. As Kennedy noted, there is no more effective fertility control than total abstinence; 'the problem concerns the willingness to practise it' (Kennedy 1973, p. 183). The more obvious reason for the decline in rates of childlessness was, therefore, a change in the biological constraints affecting fertility over this time period.

Data for more recent birth cohorts reveal that women are postponing marriage and childbearing until their thirties and that many are, therefore, childless (see Table 1.15). Hantrais (2004) argues that this postponement has contributed to more recent declines in family size and growing rates of involuntary, as well as voluntary, childlessness.

To conclude, the 1946 to 1981 intercensal period was characterised by a reduction in childless marriages, coupled with a decline in family sizes especially a

fall in the number of very large families (Table 5.5). The modal completed family size for women aged 25 to 29, and married 25-29 years, was seven to nine children in 1911 (Clancy 1991). By 1981, it was four to six children. As outlined in Chapter Two, Ireland was seen as an unenthusiastic participant in the European fertility transition that is, when an increasing proportion of married couples throughout Europe began to limit family size. Both economic and cultural factors were evoked to explain Irish levels of high fertility such as, low levels of industrialisation and urbanisation, low female labour force participation, and the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. According to Courtney (1995), neither the stem family system nor 'standard of living' thesis outlined in Chapter 2 can fully explain Ireland's traditionally high level of marital fertility.

No examination of the motivation that was involved in the numerous individual fertility decisions has been provided here. Without information on attitudes towards family sizes<sup>30</sup>, attitudes towards contraception and motivations, the causal nexus will always be disputed. Information on fertility rates across social groups does, however, provide more evidence on this front which will be discussed in the next section. According to Ó Gráda (1991), the non-Catholic population and the Irish middle classes were more likely to participate in the fertility transition.

### ***5.7 Class differences in fertility***

The ability or, as described by Kennedy 'willingness', to limit fertility is better documented by examining fertility levels across social groups. It was argued in Chapter Two that the comfortably well-off are most likely to pioneer conscious

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<sup>30</sup> In the 2001 Eurobarometer survey, Irish women reported the highest desired average family size in Europe and the older the women, the higher their ideal family size preferences (see Chapter 2).

family limitation. Fertility levels have been found to be highest among the urban working class, farm labourers and farmers whereas voluntary fertility control within marriage was a consistent characteristic of middle class families, regardless of census year (Walsh 1968, Breen et al. 1990, Guinnane 1997). This pattern of differential fertility appears to be a common feature of the early stages of fertility decline in other societies.

The Irish findings come from census volumes where females were classified by social group according to their occupation if they were gainfully occupied, or the occupation of the person on whom they were dependent if they were not gainfully occupied. Fertility information by social group was only available up to the 1981 Census but relatively few married women would have been working up to that point (see Chapter 3). For this reason, the fertility rates of females in a social group cannot be seen as an accurate measure of change across social groups. It was only in 1971, however, that information was available on male fertility rates by socioeconomic class thereby not allowing comparisons to be made over time (see Table 5.13). Since census figures refer only to ‘surviving’ women and, to a large degree, relate to their husband’s social class, they are not completely satisfactory for estimating differential fertility patterns, but they nevertheless afford a good measure of the relative fertility in the various social classes.

Table 5.7 presents the census information on average family size, by social group, for young Catholic women only.<sup>31</sup> Younger wives were chosen as they provide an indication of more recent trends. Table 5.7 shows that rates of fertility declined across all social groups over the 1946 to 1981 period. The results indicate a growth in ‘spacing’ since the couples were married for less than 10 years. Average family size

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<sup>31</sup> Catholic women were chosen in order to remove any possible religious effect. Unfortunately information on religious affiliation was not available in the *Living in Ireland* data.

increased among most social groups from 1946 to 1961 but the increase was most significant among the upper classes (Table 5.7). Since 1961, the urban middle-classes experiencing the greatest decline in fertility levels, while farm holders and lower-working class families changed the least (Table 5.7). By 1981, class inequalities in fertility behaviour were at their largest among these young couples (Table 5.7). It seems that the 1960s and 70s brought with them changes in fertility behaviour which resulted in larger variations in family size across social classes. This increasing fertility differential was likely due to the replacing of older forms of fertility control with more modern ones, a process that did not spread as fast among the rural agricultural populations. The poorer social groups were more likely to employ older forms of fertility control such as, postponed marriage or permanent celibacy, up to 1981 (see Table 4.3 and Walsh 1968). It is hoped that information from the 2006 Census will allow for a more recent appraisal of differential fertility. As the overall level of fertility declines, we can expect that the size of the differentials between social groups will diminish.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Walsh (1968) expected the fertility differential to reverse with the professional classes having larger families, allowed for by their greater means.

**Table 5.7:** The average number of children born to Catholic women married at ages 20-24 and who were married for 5-9 years in 1946, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

<i>Social Group</i> <sup>33</sup>	1946	1961	1971	1981
Farmers	3.24	3.39	3.31	2.94
Other agricultural	3.18	3.27	3.03	2.71
Professionals	2.52	2.96	2.80	2.31
Semi-professionals	2.66	3.04	2.82	2.19
Employers and managers	2.74	2.98	2.76	2.35
Salaried employees	2.85	2.82	2.64	2.30
Skilled manual workers	2.85	3.00	2.81	2.45
Semi skilled manual	3.16	3.00	2.71	2.27
Unskilled	3.00	3.19	3.08	2.65
<hr/>				
Coefficient of between group variation <sup>34</sup>	8.48	5.64	7.15	11.09

Source: Census of Population of Ireland, fertility volumes (1946, 1961, 1971, 1981).

Breen et al. (1990) concluded that the changes seen in Table 5.7 indicated a trend among young couples towards contraception and fertility control, especially amongst those in lower white collar positions. It seems likely, however, that these class based differences in fertility were influenced by differences in those who married, in this case, at a relatively young age. As Kennedy (1973) noted those who

<sup>33</sup> Different class schema were employed by the census in 1946, 1961 (1971 remained the same as 1961) and 1981, as outlined in the previous chapter (see Appendix 2 for details).

<sup>34</sup> Comparable information on non-manual workers was not available in the 1946 Census and it is therefore not presented in the table. This information was used, however, in the calculation of the coefficient of variation.

married at a young age were a small sub-section of the population who may have displayed very different attitudes and preferences.

Table 5.8 presents information on average family size, by social group for older Catholic women that is, women who married at ages 25 to 29. A very similar pattern is evident; fertility levels increased from 1946 to 1961 across most social groups with the exception of couples from the semi-skilled group, and inequalities in terms of fertility behaviour declined (see the coefficient of variation in Table 5.8). Comparing average family size in the 1981 Census to 1961, fertility declined across all social classes and the coefficient of between-group variation increased in Table 5.8. The overall degree of fertility decline was, however, not as striking as in Table 5.7 and, for some groups, fertility remained remarkably similar that is, fertility levels remained high in the farming and working classes through out the 1946-1981 period.

Clearly families of marriages of less than 10 years duration could not normally consist of a large number of births. Table 5.9 reports the figures on completed fertility levels of the younger women. It must be remembered that the figures relate to marriages which took place in or after 1917 and, therefore, they will lag behind more recent history. When the figures for shorter durations of marriage are studied, the disparity in terms of the size of the average family is not as large as in Table 5.9. In terms of completed fertility, Table 5.9 also shows a general decline in completed average family size over the 1946-1981 period. Between the 1961 and the 1981 Census, however, the professional and upper middle classes experienced an increase in their completed fertility levels, while fertility declined among the working and farming groups. This led to a reduction in class-based inequalities in terms of fertility behaviour as measured by the coefficient of variation listed in Table 5.9.

**Table 5.8:** The average number of children born to Catholic women married at ages 25-29 and who were married for 5-9 years in 1946, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

<i>Social Group</i> <sup>35</sup>	1946	1961	1971	1981
Farmers	3.06	3.19	3.21	2.86
Other agricultural	2.75	2.92	2.8	2.61
Professionals	2.37	2.74	2.74	2.46
Semi-professionals	2.53	2.78	2.78	2.26
Employers and managers	2.62	2.81	2.71	2.39
Salaried employees	2.52	2.56	2.7	2.43
Skilled manual workers	2.62	2.76	2.67	2.44
Semi skilled manual	2.81	2.67	2.46	2.19
Unskilled	2.75	2.93	2.86	2.65
<hr/>				
Coefficient of between group variation <sup>36</sup>	7.70	6.41	7.13	9.85

Source: Census of Population of Ireland, fertility volumes (1946, 1961, 1971, 1981).

Despite this declining inequality, by 1981, farmers and unskilled workers had, on average, the largest families. In other words, the same patterns of class differences in family size were evident in Table 5.9 as in Tables 5.8 and 5.7. We can conclude that higher fertility in the rural classes and among the poorer social groups was evident in terms of completed fertility and in terms of fertility of marriages of shorter duration.

<sup>35</sup> Different class schema were employed by the census in 1946, 1961 (1971 remained the same as 1961) and 1981, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Information on unknown occupations was not included in the calculations of Tables 5.7 to 5.9.

<sup>36</sup> Comparable information on non-manual workers was not available in each census volume and is therefore not presented in the table. This information was used, however, in the calculation of the coefficient of variation.

**Table 5.9:** The average number of children born to Catholic women married at ages 20-24 and who were married for 25-29 years in 1946\*, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

<i>Social Group</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>
Farmers	6.04	6.18	6.12	5.87
Other agricultural	6.15	5.75	5.84	5.7
Professionals	4.5	3.84	4.61	4.75
Semi-professionals	5.27	4.6	5.17	5.04
Employers and managers	4.83	4.39	4.76	4.7
Salaried employees	5.34	4.08	4.49	4.73
Skilled manual workers	5.89	5.62	5.38	5.18
Semi skilled manual	6.3	5.98	5.45	5.26
Unskilled	6.32	6.36	6.12	5.72
Coefficient of variation	10.88	16.84	10.62	8.58

Note: \* In the 1946 census, information was not available for those married 25-29 years so marriages of duration 20 to 24 years were used.

Source: Census of Population of Ireland, fertility volumes (1946, 1961, 1971, 1981).

Information on the actual, rather than the average, number of children born alive by social group was only available in the 1946 and 1961 Censuses (see Kennedy 1973, Table 63, p. 185). Focusing again on completed fertility, a clear pattern was evident with larger families more popular among the farming and manual classes who were less likely to experience a childless marriage. In 1946, for example, 28 per cent of women from the farming class, aged 25 to 29 years at marriage, and married for 20 to 24 years, had families with seven or more children compared to only 10 per cent of higher professionals couples (Kennedy 1973). The relevant figures for childless marriages stood at 8 per cent in the farming group compared to 11 per cent of higher

professional couples (see Table 5.10). By 1961, the proportion of completed large families had declined across all social groups with farmers and all agricultural workers experiencing the least change. In addition, with the exception of older brides, the risk of childlessness had significantly reduced across social groups.<sup>37</sup> The proportion of childless marriages amongst skilled workers, for instance, declined from 9.5 to 7.1 percent and from 8.5 to 6.9 per cent for farming couples (Table 5.10)

In terms of age, rates of childlessness increased across all social groups the older the bride, but over time there was not a consistent decline in childless marriages across all classes (the italics in Table 5.10 refer to these cases). This was most evident for older brides, although not restricted to them; by 1961, rates of childlessness had increased for most middle-class women, who married at ages 30 to 34, and were married for 20-24 years (see Table 5.10). This meant that for this marriage cohort there was less variation in patterns of childlessness by social class in 1961 when compared to 1946 (see the coefficient of variation in Table 5.10). For younger couples, Table 5.10 shows that inequalities in childlessness increased. Regardless of wife's age of marriage, however, social class differences in the risk of a childless marriage remained evident with the poorer social groups- farmers, agricultural and unskilled workers- generally least likely to experience a childless marriage (see Table 5.10).

It seems unlikely that social class differences in rates of childlessness were physiological. If rates of infant and child mortality were driving this relationship, then the highest rates of childlessness would have been amongst the poorer sections of society. It also seems unlikely that the pattern reflects more recent preferences towards voluntary childlessness (Hantrais 2002). It may be that higher levels of

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<sup>37</sup> Based on pair t-tests results for the data in Table 5.10 (for women aged 20-24 mean =1.511 t=3.625, p=0.007, women aged 25-29 mean 1.511 t=3.275, p=0.011, women 30-34 mean=0.722 t=0.386, p=0.702).

childlessness among the “higher” socio-economic groups reflects conscious family limitation although, without information on parity, it is hard to assess if these groups waited longer before trying for a child. Higher rates of childlessness amongst the more affluent groups, however, help explain their lower overall fertility levels when compared to the farming and unskilled groups. This may be related to a greater use of ‘spacing’ in these classes. More recent information on class differentials in childlessness was unavailable. It was, therefore, not possible to relate changes in class-specific fertility levels to changes in rates of childlessness from 1961 on.

**Table 5.10:** Percentage Distribution of Childless Families by Social Group to Irish Women in selected Age Groups at Marriage, and married for 20 to 24 years.

<i>Age at marriage</i>	<i>20-24</i>		<i>25-29</i>		<i>30-34</i>	
	<i>1946</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1961</i>
Farmers	6.2	4.0	8.5	6.9	15.1	13.3
Agricultural workers	4.7	2.3	8.8	8.3	16.5	16.7
Higher professionals	8.1	6.6	11.4	11.4	30.6	16.1
Lower Professionals	5.3	6.8	11.3	7.5	11.3	15.3
Employers and managers	9.2	7.2	12.6	10.9	20.9	20.4
Salaried employees	6.4	4.0	10.6	8.8	17.7	18.3
Skilled manual workers	4.3	3.3	9.5	7.1	16.0	16.3
Semi Skilled manual	4.6	3.4	6.4	7.1	13.9	16.9
Unskilled	4.6	2.2	8.4	5.9	11.7	13.9
Coefficient of Variation	0.29	0.44	0.19	0.23	0.34	0.13

Note: Italics figures highlight cases where rates of childlessness did not decline.  
Source: Census of Population of Ireland, 1946 and 1961.

We can conclude that differences in the proportion of childless marriages by social group were not related to age-group at marriage or marriage duration. This is because both factors were taken into account in Table 5.10. A t-test was carried out to assess whether the mean rate of childlessness differed in the lowest fertility groups- middle and professional classes- as apposed to the highest fertility social groups- that of the farming and working classes (Table 5.10). The results confirmed that the poorer social groups experienced less childless marriages.<sup>38</sup> Kennedy (1973) believed that these differences were a product of desired family size with those classes who displayed more traditional Catholic values wanting larger families. The prevalence or effectiveness of family planning helps explains differences in the levels of higher order births and it may also explain differences in rates of childlessness.

Further evidence as regard family planning was provided by Walsh (1968) who analysed the effect of age of marriage on average family size within each social group. Among groups who practise effective family limitation, the wife's age of marriage should have less influence on completed fertility rates. In the 1961 Census, age of marriage made less difference for the average family size for those in the professional classes when compared to the working class (Walsh 1968, Table 8). Low fertility was, therefore, associated with relatively small variations in family size by wife's age of marriage as well as higher rates of childlessness, at least up to 1961.

Regarding fertility control, a small study carried out by Wilson-Davies in 1975 provides further evidence. Use of contraception was strongly associated with the upper-social classes, higher educational levels, and younger age in a sample of 600 married couples (Wilson-Davies 1982). Two thirds of the sample reported using some form of birth control. Lyon (1948) provides a rare insight into registered live and still-

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<sup>38</sup> For example, the difference in the means for these groups was -2.37 for women married at ages 20-24 and married 20-24 years in 1946 ( $t = -2.8$   $p = 0.027$ ).

births in the county of Dublin between 1943 and 1945. In this urban region, in the case of approximately 45 per cent of all first births, the interval between marriage and first maternity was less than one year. About 18 per cent of all first births taking place in the Dublin public hospitals occurred less than 9 months after the date of marriage. Ex-nuptials births stood at 3.9 per cent of the total births in each year which matches the low numbers of non-marital births reported in Chapter One. Evidence of the differential pace of fertility change was also available with 5.9 per cent of births to upper-middle class women recorded as seventh-parity or higher, compared to 22.6 per cent for wives of unskilled workers. This study did not, however, take account of differences in age at marriage across social classes.

This chapter has argued that class differences in fertility behaviour must be accepted as evidence of differences in the desire and ability to control fertility. According to Kennedy (1973), the selectivity of emigration and Irish marriage patterns resulted in the most conservative Catholics being found in greater proportions among the early married persons remaining in Ireland than among the permanently celibate, the late married or emigrants from Ireland. Tables 5.7 and 5.8 have shown that regardless of age at marriage, since 1961 fertility levels have declined among young couples.

In addition, class-based inequalities between early married persons in terms of completed family size halved over the 1961 to 1981 period (see Table 5.9). Yet, by the 1981 Census, the highest fertility levels remained within the less well-off social groups. It is apparent that there was a substantial stability in the position of the social groups as regard their fertility levels over the decades: The coefficient of rank correlation between a group's rank in 1946 and its rank in 1981 was strong and statistically significant (Spearman's  $r = 0.85$  with  $p = 0.001$ ). Chapter 4 found a

similar pattern in terms of marriage chances. Following Becker, Walsh (1968) expected this trend to be reversed with the diffusion of artificial fertility controls. Table 5.9 presented some evidence in this regard as the wealthiest and better educated sections of the population- the higher professional class- saw an increase in completed average family size, while the less well-off segments were achieving smaller than average families, in a presumed effort to raise the quality, in particular the educational attainment<sup>39</sup>, of their children. Although class differentials in average family size were diminishing, the inverse relationship remained evident in the 1981 Census data.

### ***5.8 The changing social structure***

The remainder of this chapter returns to the issue of testing the compositional hypothesis. Despite changes in fertility behaviour across social groups, class differentials have remained unchanged with the farming population, on average, having larger families. The compositional hypothesis suggested that aggregate fertility would decline simply due to the declining importance in the total population of high fertility social groups, particularly farmers and agricultural workers, rather than due to changes in fertility behaviour influenced by factors outlined in Chapter 2 such as, the spread of fertility control, the changing economic value of children, and secularisation. The argument advanced by many authors is that in Ireland, fertility decline was delayed because of the dominance of family farming and small family businesses (for example, see Daly 1997).

The standardisation exercise, as outlined in the previous chapter, is one way of isolating the effects of population structure, such as in the above argument (see

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<sup>39</sup> The educational attainment of men from farming backgrounds did improve significantly over the period (see Chapter 4).

Stinchcombe 1987). By taking the group-specific fertility rates within the population and applying them to create a fictional fertility rate of what would happen if the populations had the same structure, we eliminate the differences in structure (as in Figure 5.1). The main limitation of this procedure is that it can not take account of ‘interaction’ effects that is; social class cannot have more effect on fertility in one year than another.

The *Living in Ireland* data will be employed for the purposes of this exercise since information on fertility and the social structure is not available in any other data source.<sup>40</sup> Before proceeding it is important to assess the quality of the *Living in Ireland* class and fertility data. As regard the social structure, the expected transformation of the class structure was evident across successive birth cohorts (see Table 5.11). The change follows that described in the previous chapter using census information (see section 4.6). Table 5.11 shows that in this data there was also a large reduction in the number of men working in agricultural occupations, falling from 50 to 19 per cent of a birth cohort. In addition, there was an increase in the number of men working in professional occupations, increasing almost three fold across birth cohorts (Table 5.11). A seven category class schema was employed here to ensure that the numbers in each group would be sufficiently large across birth cohorts.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For the purposes of the exercise, information is required on the number of men/women in each social group and their fertility rates over a significant period of time.

<sup>41</sup> This scheme is commonly employed by the CSO (see Nolan and Callan 1994 for a review).

**Table 5.11:** Percentage distribution of males, greater than 44 years of age, by socio-economic group.

	1896- 1918	1919- 1923	1924- 1928	1929- 1933	1934- 1939	1940- 1944	1945- 1949
Social class							
Service	7.4	10.4	9.1	15.4	19.5	22.2	19.1
Non-manual	8.3	7.3	11.0	9.9	11.6	10.0	9.6
Self-employed/supervisory	6.9	11.9	15.1	14.4	15.9	17.0	19.9
Skilled manual	10.1	11.9	14.2	12.3	13.9	15.1	16.4
Semi-skilled manual	5.5	6.7	7.8	8.6	7.7	8.1	8.6
Unskilled manual	12.0	13.0	9.1	9.6	8.5	8.4	7.8
Farmers and agricultural	49.8	38.9	33.8	29.8	22.9	19.2	18.6
<i>Unknown (N = 27)</i>							

Source: Living in Ireland, 1994.

In terms of completed cohort fertility rates, we have already seen in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 that there was a general increase in fertility levels across the birth cohorts, as nuptiality rose. Table 5.12 presents information on class-specific fertility rates. It is difficult to distinguish any definitive trend across the classes due to the smaller number of cases in each social class in each birth cohort in this new data (see Table 5.12). In addition, Table 5.12 does not take account of age differences at marriage but the table nonetheless shows that inequalities in terms of class-specific fertility behaviour declined from the 1924-28 birth cohort on, as total cohort fertility rates declined from the 1929-33 cohort on. The coefficient of variation declined across birth cohorts as the fertility behaviour of the farming group remained relatively static while that of the other groups declined (see Table 5.12). The next chapter presents a

more detailed analysis of this data, controlling for wife's age at marriage which helps explains some of the patterns found in Table 5.12.

**Table 5.12:** Completed cohort fertility rates for males, greater than 44 years of age, by socio-economic group.

	Birth Cohort						
	1896-1918	1919-1923	1924-1928	1929-1933	1934-1939	1940-1944	1945-1949
Social class							
Service	3.06	3.30	3.25	3.80	3.50	3.43	3.15
Non-manual	4.22	3.28	3.75	2.96	3.47	3.00	2.95
Self-employed/supervisory	2.93	3.22	3.61	3.90	3.89	3.32	3.00
Skilled manual	3.09	3.74	4.35	3.78	3.42	3.46	3.42
Semi-skilled manual	1.33	3.00	3.18	4.00	4.17	3.53	2.83
Unskilled manual	1.81	3.28	3.45	4.28	3.00	4.06	2.72
Farmers and agricultural	3.11	2.73	2.59	3.33	3.54	3.34	2.87
Coefficient of variation	34.03	9.56	15.76	11.81	10.35	9.30	7.79
TCFR	2.89	3.10	3.29	3.65	3.54	3.37	3.01

Source: Living in Ireland 1994.

In general, class-based inequalities in cohort fertility levels were large in the *Living in Ireland* data, especially amongst the oldest cohort; however these birth cohorts were defined (see the coefficients of variation in Table 5.12). In Table 5.13, the older cohorts of men are selected that is, men older than 53 years of age ( $n = 1423$ ) and they are compared to the only available information on male class-specific

fertility levels that of the 1971 Census. The 1971 rates have been standardised for age of wife at marriage thus, the socio-economic groups are compared as if the structure by age of wife at marriage had been identical for each social group. The last column of Table 5.13 presents the same age-standardised estimates for the *Living in Ireland* data.

Inequalities in terms of fertility behaviour are somewhat similar in both the 1971 Census sample and 1994 LII sample (Table 5.13). Assuming that the 1994 sample of men is representative of the national picture; the results point to increases in the average family size of most social groups and, a fairly stable pattern of differential fertility. In both the 1971 Census sample and the 1994 sample, for example, those men in farming occupation had relatively large families. In addition, the coefficient of rank correlation between a group's rank in the 1971 Census sample and its rank in the 1994 sample was weak but in the expected direction (Spearman's  $r = 0.23$  with  $p = 0.47$ ). Discrepancies are, however, obvious in relation to employers and salaried employees as both groups display unusually large family size in 1994.

Comparing the standardised results in Table 5.13 across social classes shows that completed fertility slightly declined among the poorest sections of the population, that of agricultural workers and unskilled workers, while all the other social groups had, on average, more children. There is no evidence that the previously identified inverse relationship between family size and social group was a transitional phenomenon that is, once age of wife at marriage is taken into account.<sup>42</sup> There is,

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<sup>42</sup> If age of wife at marriage is not taken into account the coefficient of rank correlation between a group's rank in the 1971 Census and its rank by 1994 was strong and negative (Spearman's  $r = -0.74$  with  $p = 0.009$ ).

therefore, no evidence of Becker's hypothesis that positive income elasticities of demand for children are in operation as outlined in Chapter 2.<sup>43</sup>

The problem is, however, that the *Living in Ireland* sample may be unique especially given the smaller number of cases in each social class and age group when compared to the larger census sample. This is obvious in Table 5.12 where the numbers surviving in the older cohorts are small compared to other birth cohorts. In Table 5.13, the 1994 age-standardised estimates are particularly influenced by small sample size. Therefore, caution is advised in making comparison across Census and Living in Ireland data samples and in making generalisation based on Living in Ireland data samples. The 1994 data, however, provide the only means available for testing the more general role of compositional change in understanding changing patterns of fertility.

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<sup>43</sup> Becker (2007) noted that in some developed countries, children now appear to be a 'superior' good among the richer population.

**Table 5.13:** The average number of children born to older men by social class, Living in Ireland (1994) data and 1971 Census of Population compared.

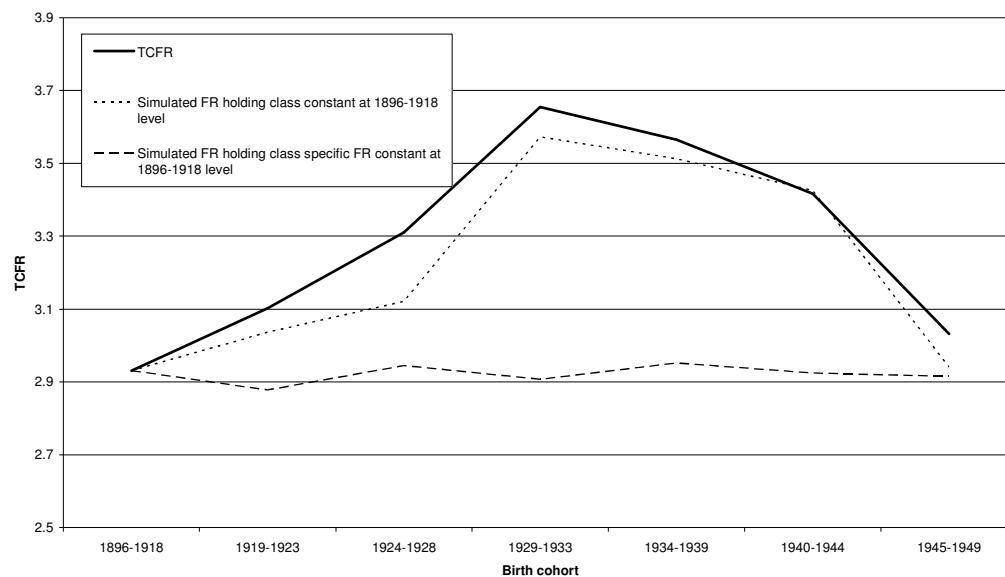
	Census	LII	LII age-
Social class (men $\geq 54$ )	1971	crude	standardised <sup>44</sup>
Farmers	3.87	3.33	4.10
Other agricultural	3.67	1.79	3.54
Higher professionals	2.99	3.63	3.69
Lower professionals	3.23	3.29	3.47
Employers	3.04	3.74	4.20
Salaried employees	3.05	3.66	4.46
Intermediate non-manual workers	3.15	3.42	3.54
Other non-manual workers	3.39	3.40	3.72
Skilled manual workers	3.47	3.59	3.83
Semi-skilled manual workers	3.4	3.42	3.69
Unskilled	3.8	3.21	3.73
Unknown	2.88	1.95	3.07
Coefficient of between-group variation	9.84	20.09	9.75
(excluding unknown)	(9.19)	(16.06)	(8.13)

Running the same standardisation procedure as in the previous chapter but, this time, holding fertility rates rather than marriage rates constant reveals a clear pattern (Figure 5.1). The black unbroken line plotted in Figure 5.1 plots the total cohort fertility rates for each of the birth cohorts. The figure shows what would have

<sup>44</sup> For a particular age and social group, the standardised rate was obtained by multiplying the rate for each (age of wife at marriage) group by the number of wives in each group in the sample, the resultant products are summed and divided by the total number of wives in the sample.

happened to cohort fertility if class-specific fertility behaviour remained stable over the cohorts, thereby isolating the role of compositional change in the black broken line (Figure 5.1). If compositional change were the prime cause of changing patterns of fertility, the broken black line- simulated data- would track the actual cohort fertility rates perfectly that is, the black line in Figure 5.1. In fact, the simulated line radically differs from the actual pattern of change (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1:** Simulated cohort fertility rates across older male birth cohorts.



*Source:* Living in Ireland, 1994.

The second standardisation isolates the impact of behavioural change across the birth cohorts. As was expected, changes in the completed fertility rates across these birth cohorts were strongly influenced by changes in the fertility behaviour of the social groups. In other words, the line predicting the overall fertility change, had class composition being held constant at the rates experienced by the eldest cohort,

tracks the actual trend very closely that is, the grey broken line in Figure 5.1. The results were the same regardless of which birth cohort was held constant and regardless of restricting the analysis to men aged 50 to 65.

This result points to the importance of behavioural rather than structural change in understanding why Ireland's marriage and fertility picture changed over time or across birth cohorts. The next chapter focuses on this changing behaviour and the relationship between class-specific fertility behaviour and marriage chances. The results from the standardisation exercises showed that, despite the attention devoted to the role of a large agrarian celibate, yet highly fertile, subculture their decline- in terms of their share of the population- did not strongly influence the pattern of demographic change witnessed across these older birth cohorts. The census data have provided a clearer picture of the persistence of differential fertility patterns, within the same age at marriage and marriage duration group. Unfortunately, it was not possible to go into detail on the fertility behaviour of the birth cohorts by social group due to the small number of cases or, to confirm the standardisation results using another data source.

It seems likely that other sources will find evidence against the compositional hypothesis on the grounds of timing, given that evidence of a fertility transition among young couples only appeared in the 1961 Census but declines in subsistence agriculture had begun long before then (see Table 4.1). In other countries, movements away from rural smallholdings have usually brought small family size and declines in celibacy (Coleman 1999). So, a classical fall in fertility would have been expected in the Irish case. Instead, fertility remained higher than social and economic developments would have led one to expect.

## **5.9 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter has pointed to the importance of understanding the motivation to limit fertility rather than focusing on the availability of artificial fertility controls. The argument that Ireland's fertility rate was high because of Catholic Church teaching on contraception is not helpful since it was obvious from the analysis of census data that a refusal to practise fertility control was not evident in all socio-economic groups. The largest fertility decline was evident within the middle-classes as they adopted newer forms of fertility control. The more conservative, marginal groups retained high levels of marital fertility and low rates of childlessness as they continued to prefer older methods of limiting fertility. This practise had implications for marriage patterns within these groups which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The period between 1946 and 1981 was characterised by a reduction in childless marriages, coupled with a decline in large family sizes across all social groups which resulted in larger variations in family size among young couples. This increasing fertility differential was likely due to the replacing of older forms of fertility control with more modern ones, a process that did not spread as fast among the newly weds in rural agricultural populations. The poorer social groups were still more likely to employ older form of fertility control such as, postponed marriage or lifelong celibacy. Higher fertility in rural classes and among the less well-off classes was not transitional, however, as the size of the differential between social groups had not diminished, as overall levels of fertility declined up to the 1981 Census.

By 1981 class differentials in fertility were still considerable, for example, the average family size of farmers was 1.26 times that of higher professional (see Table 5.7). Farmers and all agricultural workers experiencing the least change in fertility behaviour which may point to a lack of diffusion of contraception and fertility control

or, a refusal to limit family size given strong preferences towards a large number of children. The effect of this pattern of fertility differentials on social mobility and income inequalities are substantial as the costs of family formation are largest amongst the poorer sections of Irish society. Research has shown that large families are a serious barrier to mobility and educational attainment and child mortality increases with family size or maternal age (see Daly 1989 for a review). In addition, large families tie women to the home (Leete 1999).

No evidence was found in support of the compositional hypothesis with its emphasis on the changing social structure. One of the biggest changes in Irish society over the period was the decline of the agrarian population. As this decline was well under way prior to the industrial developments of the 1960s and prior to the onset of fertility decline, it cannot be found causal. The next chapter focuses on micro-data analysis to help understand the changing position of the social groups with regard to their fertility and marriage behaviour.

## 6 The Relation between Nuptiality and Marital Fertility

### 6.1 Introduction

One of the earliest and most important contributions to the debate on the relation between nuptiality and fertility was Malthus (1803). He argued that population, when unchecked, doubles every generation. There were only two ways to check population growth: A positive check is achieved through ‘misery’ due to increasing mortality as a result of famines, disease, war and excesses. Preventive checks bring about decreasing fertility and are achieved by ‘moral restraint’ through late marriage without any extra-marital sex or, by ‘vice’ resulting in birth control.

Of particular importance for the analysis of class differentials in marriage, Malthus proposed that the preventive check of ‘moral restraint’ would operate strongest for the working and poor classes:

‘The sons of tradesmen and farmers are exhorted not to marry, and generally find it necessary to pursue this advice till they are settled in some business or farm that may enable them to support a family.’

(Malthus 2004, p. 22).

In pre-industrial societies, people would marry and set up a household when they inherited a particular trade position or piece of land. In this way, economic resources were allocated to couples who could then support a family with them.

In the Irish case, it can thus be argued that low nuptiality offset high marriage fertility and, thereby, kept the rate of natural increase in check. In other words, when economic resources were scarce, individuals exercised ‘moral restraint’ by postponing and abstaining from marriage in great numbers. Birth control also operates with “varied” force among the different classes of society. In societies or classes where children are assets, the individual cost-benefit analysis as outlined in Chapter 2 is

likely to favour high birth rates for poorer parents. Thus, making birth control generally available will not have a significant impact on the birth rate if it is not in the interests of the parents. Secondly, the foresight, opportunity and discipline to use contraception or, to delay marriage, are likely in the more educated and wealthier classes.

Malthus' work was therefore a study of human agents making conscious, rational decisions calculated to maximise their own self-interest and the interest of their potential offspring. It was the examination of how individuals check their own behaviour for their own benefit *and* the benefit of society. In the Irish case, it was Roy Geary (1936) who suggested that 'the fundamental reason for the low marriage rate may well be the high fertility rate' (quoted in Daly 2006, p. 127). Geary believed that the Famine had taught Irish people the dangers of overpopulation. According to Geary, large numbers of men and women refused to marry so as to check rapid population increase and because they desired to maintain a high standard of living. Later Walsh (1968) argued that marriages were postponed and avoided due to the difficulties encountered by the mostly agrarian population in raising large families.

In Chapter One it was clear that from the 1960s on, Irish nuptiality rose to more normal levels but this was not associated with a reduction of the birth rate anticipated by the spread of contraceptive practices, at least not immediately. By contrast, more urban countries such as, the U.K., experienced accelerated declines in marital fertility because children cost more, and they had fewer economic returns in cities, and secularisation facilitated the spread of contraceptive behaviour. In terms of the Demographic Transition Model presented in Chapter 2, this combination of high marriage rates and high fertility of marriage was seen as an intermediate phase in Ireland's development towards a modern urban industrial state.

There are a number of issues raised in these debates about the relationship between marriage and fertility rates at a given point in time, and about how and why this relationship may change over time, especially across social groups. A number of factors come into play in the individual decisions to marry and have children. As highlighted above, an individual may not have married given the expectation of a large family either from family, or friends, or general societal pressure. In early twentieth century Ireland, the decision to marry and the decision to have children were interlinked where we can assume most people who married, intended on having children. In other words, two separate causal processes were not in operation. An individual chose to marry and to have children at the one moment in time, and the expectation of high fertility therefore was a real concern. As outlined in Chapter Four, remaining single was also influenced by factors such as, the lack of a suitable partner especially in times of high migration, the lack of a dowry, as well as other financial limitations, and increased educational participation.

Postponement of the marital decision not only reduces the probability of marriage but, a late age of marriage has a large effect on marital fertility. This later age of marriage may account for some of the reduction in fertility seen within the age-groups in census tables documented in the previous chapter. As outlined in Chapter 4, both celibacy and postponed marriage were common methods of family limitation amongst the poorer socio-economic groups. However, the hypothesis that changes in marital fertility were strongly influenced by the declining importance in the total population of these highly fertile agricultural groups was rejected in Chapter 5. The selective effects of celibacy upon marriage fertility will now be addressed.

In the previous chapter, evidence of a modest fertility decline was presented with a special focus on persisting socio-economic differences in fertility behaviour.

Chapter four concentrated on changing marriage patterns and highlighted social class differences in the propensity to marry. The chance of marriage is still related to ones class and it is clear that the farming groups suffered from a relatively low chance of marriage. This chapter now addresses the relation between marriage and fertility decisions, and how this relationship may have changed over the course of the twentieth century. The goals of the chapter are; first, to investigate the degree to which high fertility levels deterred some social groups from marrying. Secondly, to explore the ways in which fertility trends may have been produced by marital patterns. Fertility differentials and more recent rates of childlessness could simply be a product of differences in the age at which the groups married. Rather than controlling for age-group at marriage, the *living in Ireland* data provides information on exact date of marriage. Finally, this chapter will discuss the degree to which trends in non-marriage influenced patterns of fertility by illustrating what fertility patterns would have looked like if the never-married, married.

The analysis will be based on both the census and LII data. The chapter is divided into five sections. This introduction is followed by an analysis of the basic relationship between marriage and fertility in both census data and the *Living in Ireland* data. Section 6.3 presents a detailed analysis of nuptiality and fertility differentials in the panel survey. Section 6.4 discusses the role of non-marriage and late marriage in influencing fertility rates. The subsequent section concludes the chapter.

## **6.2 The basic relationship between nuptiality and marital fertility**

The deterrent hypothesis states that high marriage fertility acted as a deterrent to marriage in Ireland. This section discusses and tests this hypothesis which was introduced in Chapter Two. In the *Living in Ireland* data, it is possible to analyse the relationship between the proportion of a birth cohort who married and the fertility rate of that cohort. If high fertility rates deterred the older, mostly agrarian workers from marrying, then a significant negative correlation would be evident between a cohort's marriage rate and their fertility rate, and thus a positive correlation between their celibacy rate and fertility rate. We can, therefore, anticipate an inverse relationship between marriage and fertility rates in non-industrial, rural, Ireland.

First, Table 6.1 reports some marriage and fertility measures by birth cohort for men 44 years of age or older - that is, for men normally considered at low 'risk' of marriage. Column 3, Table 6.1 reports the percentage of each birth cohort who never married; it shows that older birth cohorts had higher rates of celibacy. Of course, given Ireland's late age at marriage, some of the younger birth cohort may yet marry but this would make the trend more striking. Column 4, Table 6.1 reports the percentage of each birth cohort who married but did not have any children - it is labelled <sup>b</sup>. As documented in the previous chapter, the older birth cohorts show much higher levels of childlessness.

The Total Cohort Fertility Rate (TCFR) - an index of the average completed family size for these cohorts of men- is reported in column 5 Table 6.1. Since it can only be calculated for men who have finished child-bearing, it cannot be measured for the currently fertile population. In the last row of Table 6.1, the Pearson's Correlation

is reported which reflects the degree of linear relationship between the cohort celibacy rate and cohort childlessness - labelled <sup>ab</sup> - and the association between cohort celibacy and the total cohort fertility rate, labelled <sup>ac</sup>.

Contrary to the deterrent hypothesis, this correlation measure reveals a negative relationship between cohort celibacy rates and fertility rates. In other words, those birth cohorts who had higher levels of celibacy tended to have lower fertility levels ( $r = -0.53$ ). This relationship was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.225$ ).<sup>1</sup> The possibility exists, however, that the older birth cohorts in the LII data are a selective surviving subset of a larger cohort and they may be displaying an unusual trend. If the analysis was restricted to the 4 younger cohort, 45-65 year olds, the expected positive, although insignificant, relationship was revealed ( $r = 0.39$ ,  $p = 0.61$ ). The *Living in Ireland* data do not, therefore, provide any convincing evidence to falsify the hypothesis, at least in terms of this basic relationship.

Support for the deterrent hypothesis was presented by Geary (1936) and Leser (1961). Both studies found a significant negative correlation between the marriage rate and an approximate measure of the fertility rate in the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland. Hajnal argued that nuptiality tended to be lowest in those areas of nineteenth-century Europe where marriage fertility was highest that is, Brittany, Belgium and Ireland. Walsh (1968) confirmed that high levels of celibacy were still associated with high levels of fertility in 1960s Europe. More recent time series analysis has found that this to be no longer the case, with cross-country level marriage positively correlated with fertility, although the trend indicates that this correlation is declining over time (Prskawetz, Engelhardt and Mamolo, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Significance levels were, however, influenced by the small number of cases in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1:** The correlation between the percentage of a cohort never married and measures of fertility, older men only.

<i>Birth cohort</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% never married<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>% childless marriages<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>TCFR<sup>c</sup></i>
1896-1918	221	18.6	13.1	2.89
1919-1923	193	17.1	10.4	3.10
1924-1928	224	13.8	9.8	3.29
1929-1933	296	13.9	3.7	3.65
1934-1939	393	9.4	5.1	3.54
1940-1944	375	11.5	2.9	3.37
1945-1949	413	10.7	5.1	3.01
Pearson's <i>R</i>			0.81 <sup>ab</sup> **	-0.53 <sup>ac</sup>

Note: \*\*  $P < 0.05$ . Correlation <sup>ab</sup> is the correlation between the percentage of a cohort never married and the percentage of childless marriages in a cohort. Correlation <sup>ac</sup> is the correlation between the percentage of a cohort never married and the Total Cohort Fertility Rate (TCFR).

Source: Living in Ireland, 1994.

A more appropriate test of the deterrent hypothesis would consider the relationship between nuptiality and fertility across social classes, rather than birth cohorts. In the absence of information on completed fertility rates, Walsh (1968) analysed the relationship between celibacy rates and the average number of live births born to marriages, controlling for marriage duration and age of marriage. The 1961 Census revealed a highly significant correlation between celibacy and fertility rates across social groups (Walsh 1968, Table 11). Table 6.2 below replicates this analysis and extends it for more census volumes. The last row of Table 6.2 reports the correlation between the class-based celibacy rate and a measure of fertility in each census dating from 1946 to 1981.

In each census year, those social groups who experienced a higher number of live births also had lower rates of entry into marriage that is, the Pearson's  $r$  was always positive.<sup>2</sup> The number of children per year of marriage duration was found to be highest in the agricultural groups and the poorest segments of the non-agricultural population. In addition, permanent celibacy was more common in these two groups than among those in the low fertility classes. In contrast, the professional and managerial groups, excluding Catholic clergy, had smaller families on average, and relatively lower rates of celibacy. As Walsh noted;

‘the burdens of large family size and permanent celibacy appear to fall most heavily on those who are least adequately equipped to deal with the resultant economic and psychological stresses.’

(Walsh 1968, p. 13).

Unfortunately, although the 2006 Census does provide information on fertility, no information was provided by socio-economic groups. It is expected, however, that the deterrent hypothesis no longer applies: As more effective ways to control fertility become available and accepted, it is anticipated that marriage plans would not be as influenced by the size of the prospective family. Ní Bhrolcháin summarises the point as follows:

‘Decisions about marriage and the formation of a family can be and are taken one by one, and decisions about each succeeding stage of family formation can be made independently of decisions about previous stages, particularly because of the availability of artificial birth control. This means that fertility, and especially marital fertility, is no longer all of a piece, so to speak, but has separately articulated phases.’

(Ní Bhrolcháin 1996, p. 248).

Indeed, the correlation between the numbers single in a class and the fertility rates of that class declined somewhat in the 1981 Census; the Pearson's  $r$  increased steadily up to 1971, displaying a strong significant positive relationship but, by 1981,

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<sup>2</sup> It was not, however, significantly different from zero at the 95 per cent confidence level in the 1941 Census data.

it had fallen slightly from 0.76 to 0.73. This could indicate a trend where high levels of fertility stopped being expected within marriage. In addition, the large proportion of births now occurring outside of marriage highlight the fact that the decision to have children is no longer exclusively associated with the decision to marry.

The *Living in Ireland* (1994) data allow for a more recent test of the deterrent hypothesis. In this data, it was possible to construct a more detailed measure of class position which includes information on the average size of farm, and a more accurate measure of life time births that is, the Total Cohort Fertility Rate (see Table 6.3). The correlation measure revealed a strong negative relationship between levels of celibacy and completed fertility across social groups ( $r = -0.82$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). In this more recent data source, the more men who married within a class, the higher the class-specific fertility rate. This result remained evident regardless of what class schema was employed or age-group of men. It appears to provide evidence of the demise of the deterrent hypothesis. This basic correlation does not, however, control for important factors such as, age of wife at marriage, or duration of marriage so caution is advised in interpreting these crude findings.

**Table 6.2:** The relationship between fertility and celibacy by social group.

	1946		1961		1971		1981	
<i>Social Group</i>	<i>Celibacy</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Fertility</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Celibacy</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Fertility</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Celibacy</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Fertility</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Celibacy</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Fertility</i> <sup>2</sup>
Farmers	38.59	4.9	39.47	4.84	40.59	5.02	37.23	4.88
Other agricultural	44.29	4.43	43	4.23	47.06	4.41	43	4.54
Professionals <sup>3</sup>	17.61	3.89	9.64	3.41	7.27	4.1	6.31	4.27
Semi-professionals	16.45	4.24	12.79	4.05	11.47	4.25	9.52	4.32
Employers and managers	15.52	4.1	11.23	3.48	8.5	4.05	6.14	4.17
Salaried employees	14.76	4.13	10.18	3.53	7.14	3.73	6.25	4.1
Skilled manual workers	21.71	4.29	16.38	4.4	14.34	4.13	12.78	4.17
Semi skilled manual	17.88	4.99	16.09	4.43	17.86	4.11	17.52	4.23
Unskilled	21.82	4.78	23.06	4.77	27.41	4.4	32.52	4.4
Pearson's <i>R</i>		0.43		0.631*		0.764**		0.728*

*Note:* Celibacy<sup>1</sup> =percentage of males aged 45-54 single (see Chapter 4). Fertility<sup>2</sup> = Average number of live births per 100 Catholic marriages of 25-29 years' duration, wife aged 25-29 at marriage. In 1946, marriage duration refers to 20 to under 25 years and, because comparable information was not available on non-manual workers in 1946, they are not included in the above table but were included in the calculations of the correlation coefficients.

\* = significant at the 95% level. \*\* = significant at the 99% level

*Source:* Census of Population of Ireland; 1946, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Excluding Catholic clergy.

The small  $n$  problem meant that it was impossible to compare the class-specific correlation between celibacy and fertility across birth cohorts. This result cannot be compared to those found in the census data as Table 6.3 and Table 6.2 employed different population samples and different definitions of social class and fertility. The possible inclusion of clergy in the *Living in Ireland* data could be problematic as they would inflate levels of celibacy within the professional groups. Due to data confidentiality, however, it was not possible to isolate individual occupations.

Tables 6.1 and 6.3 also provide information on the relationship between the proportions who never married and the proportions experiencing a childless marriage (Living in Ireland data). The birth cohorts ( $r = 0.81$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and social groups ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ) who had higher than average levels of celibacy were also the groups who had higher levels of childlessness within marriage. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the older cohorts and poorer social groups tended to marry later in life so that once differences in age of marriage were taken into account, class differences in rates of childlessness were no longer evident (see Appendix 4, Table 1). This points to the importance of controlling for other factors when analysing the relationship between marriage and fertility trends. A more complete analysis follows in the next section.

**Table 6.3:** The correlation between the proportion of a class never married and completed fertility, all men older than 44.

<i>Social class</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% never married</i>	<i>% childless marriage</i>	<i>TCFR</i>
Service - Higher	187	2.14	4.28	3.50
Service - Lower	150	6.00	4.67	3.26
Routine Non-Man - Higher	98	3.06	10.20	3.20
Routine Non-Man - Lower	108	11.11	0.00	3.39
S/Emp - With Emps	81	3.70	6.17	3.65
S/Emp - Without Emps	113	7.08	3.54	3.27
Technical/Supervisory	125	4.80	7.20	3.43
Skilled Manual	289	7.27	7.61	3.57
Semi-Skilled Manual	162	12.35	6.17	3.33
Unskilled Manual	195	19.49	9.23	3.23
Agricultural Farmers <50 acres	82	40.24	13.41	2.04
Farmers 50-99 acres	155	25.81	8.39	2.70
Farmers 100+ acres	192	21.35	4.69	3.31
	151	12.58	3.31	3.78
Pearson's <i>R</i>			0.50	-0.82*

Note: \* = significant at the 99% level.  
Source: Living in Ireland, 1994.

To conclude, an examination of the basic relationship between marriage and fertility patterns found convincing evidence to suggest that the fear of a large family deterred many from marriage altogether, in particular it operated to suppress marriage rates within the farming and poorer social groups. The census evidence strongly suggests a selection effect was in operation that is, only those men who were willing to support a large family married in these classes. The census data revealed a strong inverse relationship between marriage and fertility rates which suggests that high marriage fertility acted as a deterrent to marriage, at least up until 1981.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the greater propensity to marry in the middle and upper classes reflected an increased willingness and ability to control fertility. Up until the 1981 Census, the vast majority of Irish men and women were practising Catholics but it is clear that not all couples were limiting their fertility.

Unfortunately, no recent census data allow for a comparable test of the deterrent hypothesis. In modern day Ireland, this deterrent effect is probably less powerful given the widespread availability and use of fertility controls and the declining proportion of practising Catholics as documented in Chapter Two. The implication is that the less-well off sections of society can now limit their fertility to suit their limited economic means. The *Living in Ireland* data allow for a more recent and comprehensive test of the hypothesis which follows.

Before moving on, it is important to note that the Irish regional and class-based research found that the West of Ireland and the farming class exhibited the lowest rates of entry into marriage and the highest rates of marital fertility (Walsh 1968). In Chapter 4 it was clear that in early twentieth century Ireland, farm owners married and had large families, those denied ownership did not. In other words, the

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, it is possible to interpret the correlation differently but it is harder to understand how a low marriage rate would 'cause' a high fertility rate.

Malthusian preventative check of ‘moral restraint’ is highlighting the constraining role of inheritance practises and it, therefore, only applies to the farming community. The census results, however, show that a strong relationship exists between celibacy, or nuptiality, and fertility and this correlation remained strong even when the farming group were removed from the analysis ( $r = -0.643$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ). Throughout the 1946 to 1981 intercensal period, the lowest rates of entry into marriage occurred among the farming, agricultural and unskilled classes who also displayed the highest rates of marital fertility (Table 6.2). The deterrent effect is therefore not restricted to farmers but operates throughout the less-well off sections of Irish society.

### **6.3 A closer look at class differentials in completed fertility**

The approach adopted so far has tended to look at macro-level data derived from Censuses of Population. Philipov (2006) has drawn attention to the shortcomings of using such an approach:

‘A drawback of the use of macro-level data is that they describe the net effect of all relevant demographic trends, and therefore findings should be interpreted with care.’

(Hantrais, Philipov and Billari 2006, p. 56).

It is unsatisfactory to try to establish the sort of relationship between fertility and nuptiality discussed here solely on the basis of aggregate census data. The *Living in Ireland* data allow for the tracking of cohabitation, marriage, union dissolution and family formation. In this and the final chapter, more analysis of this micro-data set will be presented. First, a more in-depth analysis of class differences in completed fertility will be presented with a special focus on how they may have been related to age differences at marriage. In the second half of this section, we will return to the relationship between marriage and fertility trends but controlling for the effects of age.

The previous analysis of census tables is unsatisfactory as it took account of age-group at marriage which may disguise importantly age differences within these groups.

### 6.3.1 Completed cohort fertility

In this and the previous chapter, it has become clear that there are strong socio-economic group differences in completed family size. Table 6.4 presents a Poisson Regression Model (PRM) predicting the number of children born to older men in the *Living in Ireland* data.<sup>5</sup> The reported coefficients are interpreted in the same way as in the previous chapter's logistic regression models that is, 0 marks the boundary between a negative and positive relationship.<sup>6</sup>

Class differences in family size remained evident even after controlling for wife's age at marriage (see Table 6.4, Model 3). In the *Living in Ireland* data, there seemed to be significant differences in completed family size between the non-manual, self-employed and supervisory workers, when compared to farmers (that is Model 2, Table 6.4). When compared to the farming population, the mean number of children was significantly lower for these groups as the reported parameter estimates were negative. The direction of this relationship and its significance are related to the omitted class category and, therefore, it is advisable to focus instead on the improvement in model fit; measured here as a reduction in log-likelihood between the null model and a model including information on social class. Including information on class membership did not significantly explain any of the variation in completed

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<sup>5</sup> The Poisson regression model was found to be most appropriate since the mean number children and its variance were almost the same.

<sup>6</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, the coefficients are always reported rather than exponential coefficients such as odds ratios, risk ratios, incidence rate ratios etc.

family size that is; the reduction in log likelihood between model 2 and model 1 was not statistically significant.<sup>7</sup> In other words, class alone did nothing to help us understand variations in completed family size within the data sample.

It is to be expected, however, that the later in life that marriages occurred, the smaller the estimated completed family size. Model 3, Table 6.4 controls for age of wife at marriage and reveals that the model fit improves significantly once age was taken into account. Once age of wife at marriage was controlled for, class differences in fertility behaviour became more evident (Model 3, Table 6.4). In other words, comparing wives of similar age at marriage revealed that the mean number of children born was lower for all social groups, when compared to the agricultural population. Not alone did wives age at marriage explain a significant amount of the variation in family size, but it revealed significant class differences in completed family size (see Model 3, Table 6.4).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, a significant additional amount of the variation in fertility behaviour was “explained” by birth cohort membership (Model 4, Table 6.4). When compared to the 1945-49 birth cohort<sup>9</sup>, all other cohorts had significantly larger average families which is to be expected given the historical trends, and the fact that some of the 1945-49 cohort may yet have more children (see Chapter 5). Taking any historical factors into account, captured by the birth cohort variables, slightly reduced the parameter estimates on the class dummy variables emphasising that some class differences in fertility were related to birth cohort effects. Regardless of wife’s age at marriage or historical context, however, class differences in fertility behaviour remained evident (see Model 4, Table 6.4). In this final model, the average number of children born to

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<sup>7</sup> Performing a Wald test yields the same results.

<sup>8</sup> If age at marriage is entered initially and then class membership, the model fit improved significantly with the addition of class dummies that is, class is now an important factor.

<sup>9</sup> The same results were found if the analysis was restricted to men aged 45-64.

all other socio-economic groups was significantly smaller than the average family size in the farming and agricultural population, controlling for age of wife at marriage and birth cohort. This result follows that found in census data presented in the last chapter.

Finally, changes in class composition across birth cohorts did not improve the explanatory power of the model. In other words, no interaction effects were included in the model. Within this sample, the effects of class membership on fertility behaviour did not change across birth cohorts. In particular, there was no evidence that inequalities in terms of completed family size were reversing, once age at marriage was taken into account. The analysis shows that social group differentials in completed family size were not related to birth cohort or age at marriage differences in fertility. The analysis draws particular attention to relatively high completed fertility rates in the farming and agricultural population, regardless of wife's age at marriage or historical influences.

**Table 6.4:** Poisson regression model predicting the number of children<sup>1</sup> by social group for married men older than 44 years.

<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
constant	1.26*	1.31*	2.38*	2.29*
<i>Socio-economic group:</i>				
(ref. farmers and agricultural workers)				
Service		-0.07	-0.12*	-0.10**
Non-manual		-0.10**	-0.17*	-0.16*
Self-employed and supervisory		-0.08**	-0.18*	-0.15*
Skilled manual		-0.03	-0.16*	-0.13*
Semi-skilled		-0.05	-0.15*	-0.14*
Unskilled		-0.08	-0.13**	-0.13**
<i>Age of wife at marriage</i>			-0.04*	-0.04*
<i>Birth Cohort: (Ref 1945-49)</i>				
1940-44				0.10**
1934-39				0.17*
1929-33				0.23*
1924-28				0.16**
1919-23				0.13*
1897 -1918				0.19*
Chi-square (incremental) <sup>10</sup>		8.60	215.88	32.94
P value		0.19	0.00	0.00

NOTE: <sup>1</sup> Number of children refers to a variable coded from 0 to 6 or greater live births.

\* = significant at the 95% level. \*\* = significant at the 99% level

Source: Living in Ireland (1994).

<sup>10</sup> The figures report the results of an incremental log-likelihood ratio test, that is the improvement in model fit over the previous model, rather than compared to the null model (as in Chapter 4).

### 6.3.2 The interrelationship between nuptiality and fertility

Let us now return to the issue of how differential fertility patterns may be related to differences in nuptiality. Following an example by Petersen (1988), it is possible to compare the effects of these basic covariates across a number of relevant models. Petersen showed that the likelihood for a continuous state space failure time process can be written in two simple steps; first, the specification of the hazard rate or, the instantaneous probability of a change in  $Y$  regardless of the direction and size of the change. The density of the new value of  $Y$  is, therefore, specified given that a change occurred. The destination-specific rate of transition can be decomposed into the overall rate of transition times the probability density of the destination state given a transition.

Applied here, this approach will address two questions: What determines the amount of time that elapses before marriage occurs and, given that marriage has occurred, what determines family size? The answer to the first question follows from an ordinary hazard rate analysis and, the answer to the second question, follows from two probability models; one to estimate the number of children born given that a marriage occurred and the second to examine the probability of a childless marriage. All three models, employing the LII data, are presented in Table 6.5<sup>11</sup>. Basic covariates were introduced into the models; they were the person's age<sup>12</sup>, socioeconomic status and a birth cohort membership variable (see Tuma and Hannan, 1984 for further details of this procedure).

As mentioned in previous chapters, socioeconomic status was measured at the time of interview and it was coded based on the respondent's present job or previous

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<sup>11</sup> Both probability models were estimated to illustrate the different factors influencing rates of childlessness.

<sup>12</sup> In the exponential model, age is time varying and refers to the man's age. In the Poisson and Logit models, age refers to age of wife at marriage.

occupation for those men who had retired. There were a small number of missing cases where the respondent was employed but his occupation was unknown ( $n=14$ , less than 1 per cent). It was not possible to calculate social group at the time of marriage, or childbirth, but as was discussed in Chapter Four it is expected that there was little social mobility amongst these older men. In addition, men older than 64 years of age were dropped due to the selective nature of mortality and potential recall bias. Widowers ( $n=25$ ), divorcees ( $n=3$ ) and separated men ( $n=15$ ) were also dropped as information on their date of marriage was missing.

The first column in Table 6.5 reports the estimates of the exponential<sup>13</sup> rate of transition into marriage or, the hazard rate model (maximum likelihood estimates are reported). Such models are common in the analysis of the instantaneous rate of entry into marriage where the rate of entry into marriage commonly depends on age at marriage, birth cohort, class position and educational attainment (for example, see Blossfeld 1995). It was only possible to treat age as time dependent and the influence of educational attainment will not be addressed here but in the next and final chapter. In the first column of Table 6.5 we see that the poorer social groups that is, the unskilled manual workers, farmers and agricultural workers, had significantly lower rates of entry into marriage when compared to skilled manual workers, controlling for age and any historical factors. In other words, on the average these classes waited longer to marry, net of the other variables. From the discussion of the historical literature on marriage presented in Chapter 2 and 4, it was evident that these social groups had little incentive to marry early given greater financial constraints as well as other issues such as waiting to inherit the farm or family business.

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<sup>13</sup> A number of models - cox, piece-wise constant and log-logistics - were compared but the exponential model provided the best fit.

The second step of the process involved the estimation of a Generalised Poisson Regression Model estimating the number of children born to these men, once they were married (columns 3 and 4 of Table 6.5 report the Poisson model coefficients and their standard errors). This Poisson models shows that the farming populations, on average, had the largest completed families, once married, when compared to skilled manual workers, net of the other variables. From the analysis of completed family size alone, as in Table 6.4 and here, we can conclude that the farming population were the least constrained in the opportunity to have children. Considering the hazard rate model and the Poisson model together reveals a more complete story showing sharp differences in the marriage and fertility behaviour of the farming population when compared to skilled manual workers, or in fact compared to any other workers (columns 1 and 3 of Table 6.5).

Taken together, these 2 models show that farmers waited significantly longer before they married that is, they were the most constrained in the opportunity to marry, but once married, they had significantly more children on average, indicating that they were least constrained in the opportunity to have children. The farming group had, therefore, significantly more children on average, when compared to skilled manual workers but this farming group had significantly low rates of entry into marriage in accordance with the logic of the deterrent hypothesis. This more nuanced analysis provides convincing evidence in favour of the hypothesis that high marital fertility deterred the farming population from marriage. From Chapter Two's review of the literature, we know that the farming groups encountered many constraints restricting them from marriage especially early marriage.

Not alone would economics have constrained the timing and prevalence of nuptiality but this would have been especially the case in those groups, like farmers,

where high levels of fertility were to be expected. In other words, the norm in these groups was the large family. There seems to be little desire to limit fertility within the farming class so that the Malthusian preventative check of 'moral restraint' remained strong: Farmers' sons often had to delay marriage and family formation until they had inherited the land. For those who did not inherit, alternatives were available such as, staying at home as a 'relative assisting', or, migrating (Guinnane 1997). In early twentieth century Ireland and up to about 1950, large numbers of spinsters and bachelors were recorded in Irish census data.

Those farmers and agricultural workers who did marry, a select few in the case of non-inheriting sons, tended to have relatively more children. There are two main arguments set forth to explain this trend. The first is that for the very poor, children were their only social and economic assets as evident in the adage 'Children are the poor man's wealth'. For farmers, Guinnane (1997) argued that children provided cheap labour and therefore, even the poorest farmers would have relatively large families because of the declining marginal cost of an additional child. As documented in Chapter Two, the economic model also viewed children as vehicles for ensuring security in old age. On the other hand, a cultural approach would explain the trend by a refusal among these less well-off groups to practise family limitation due to either stronger religious beliefs or, a lack of information about methods to control fertility. According to Fahey, among 'less well-off women who might be expected to face more severe economic constraints, the real problem seems to be not that they are unable to have as many children as they want but that they are less able to avoid having too many.' (Fahey 2004, p. 4).

**Table 6.5:** Estimates of the effects of social class membership on rates of entry into marriage and various measures of completed fertility, given that marriage has occurred (men, aged 45-64 only).

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Exp. model<sup>14</sup></i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Poisson model<sup>15</sup></i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Logit model</i>	<i>SE</i>
Constant	-4.61*	0.13	2.14*	0.08	-7.60*	0.83
Age <sup>1</sup>	0.41*	0.02	-0.04*	0.00	0.19*	0.03
Age squared	-0.01*	0.00				
<i>Birth Cohort</i>						
(ref. 1945-49)						
1940-44	0.01	0.08	0.10*	0.03	-0.61	0.44
1934-39	-0.16**	0.07	0.17*	0.03	-0.24	0.37
1929-33	-0.38*	0.08	0.23*	0.04	-0.72	0.45
<i>Socio-economic group:</i>						
(ref. skilled manual)						
Unknown	-1.52*	0.38	-0.01	0.17	-	-
Service	0.10	0.09	0.03	0.05	-0.72	0.64
Non manual	0.07	0.11	-0.04	0.06	-1.31	0.88
Self employed	0.08	0.11	-0.01	0.05	-0.66	0.69
<i>Technical and</i>						
supervisory	0.23	0.13	-0.05	0.06	0.34	0.69
Semi-skilled	0.02	0.12	0.00	0.05	0.15	0.61
Unskilled	-0.32**	0.13	0.02	0.06	0.43	0.64
Agricultural	-1.09*	0.25	0.21	0.11	0.35	1.09
Farmers	(-0.62)*	(0.09)	(0.16)*	(0.05)	-0.42	0.61
Small Farms	-0.95*	0.16	0.01	0.07	-	-
Medium Farms	-0.65*	0.13	0.13*	0.06	-	-
Large Farms	-0.30**	0.13	0.24**	0.06	-	-
Log Likelihood	-1317		-2388		-184	
<i>N</i>	1426		1262		1255	

NOTE: <sup>1</sup> Age is time variant in the continuous time model, but refers to age of wife at marriage in the Poisson and Logistic models. \* = significant at the 95% level. \*\* = significant at the 99% level.

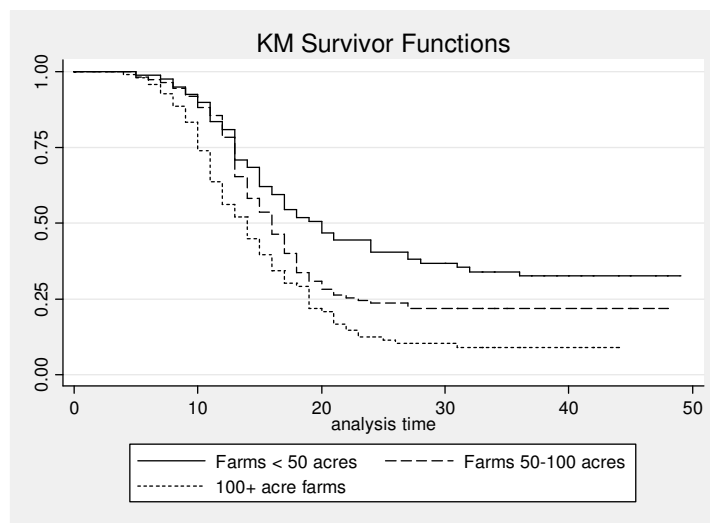
Source: Living in Ireland (1994).

<sup>14</sup> Coefficients, not hazard ratios, are reported.

<sup>15</sup> A Generalized Poisson Regression Model was fitted here since the variance was smaller than the mean in this sample of men.

The analysis presented in Table 6.5 allows us to further investigate these points as it reveals an interesting relationship between marriage and fertility trends within the farming class alone, controlling for average farm size. The hazard rate model clearly illustrates that a farmer's chance of marriage was highly influenced by the size of his farm-hold as in column one, Table 6.5. Controlling for other factors, small farm holders, in particular, suffered from significantly poor rates of entry into marriage, when compared to skilled manual workers. The census data, presented in Chapter Four, has illustrated that this was not always the case but more recent census data confirm the results found here. In order to illustrate this further, the Figure 6.1 plots the Kaplan-Meier survival function based on the exponential model listed in Table 6.5, column one.

**Figure 6.1:** Life table estimates of the survival function by farm size.



Source: Table 6.5.

Analysis started at age 16, the legal age at which marriage can occur, and ended at the date of first marriage or for right censored cases, the date of interview.

Figure 6.1 shows how the proportion of single men declined over time within the farming population alone. At each point in time, corresponding from age 16 on, there was a larger proportion of small farm holders single that is, the unbroken line in Figure 6.1. Even by age 64, the end of analysis time, this group experienced the highest rate of celibacy compared to the other farmers. As outlined in Chapter 4, this pattern may be related to later age of inheritance among farmers with less land (Kennedy 1991), or to the refusal of rural women to settle for married life on a small farm (O'Hara 1998).

This contrasts with the experience of farmers with more than 100 acres of land; they married at younger ages that is, the thin broken line in Figure 6.1.<sup>16</sup> The addition of information on farm size to the exponential model presented in Table 6.5 significantly improved the model fit when compared to a model with social class alone. This indicates the farm size, as an imperfect proxy for wealth, does much to explain differences in rates of entry into marriage within the farming population. Survivor functions for the other social groups were not so clearly differentiated according to class position that is, when compared to the clear effect of farm size differentials.

The Poisson model also revealed farm size differences in completed family size as in see column 3, Table 6.5. Positive coefficient parameters in this model imply that the mean number of children was higher for that group, when compared to the reference category. Those men involved in farming and agricultural occupation had, on average, more children, when compared to skilled manual workers, controlling for age of wife at marriage and birth cohort (although the result for agricultural workers was borderline significant at the 95 per cent confidence level). The farming

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<sup>16</sup> In Chapter 4, we saw that this relationship between farm size and marriage was regional and time specific.

population effect was again clearly differentiated by farm size. Converting these coefficients into incidence rate ratios revealed that farmers, with 50 to 100 acres of land, had, on average, 13 per cent more children, when compared to skilled manual workers. Whereas, large farm holders had, on average, 26 per cent more children than skilled manual workers, controlling for age of wife at marriage and birth cohort. In addition, the model fit improved notably when farm size differences were taken into account, implying that farm size does much to explain differences in completed family size. The larger the farm, the larger the family and, if we assume that farm size acts as a proxy for wealth, we can assume that there were less economic constraints restricting farmers with 100 acres or more of land from having children, and therefore from marriage.

Considering both models simultaneously - column 1 and 3 in Table 6.5 - reveals that, in general, farmers married later in life, but the larger their farm holding, the 'less late' they married that is, when compared to skilled manual workers.<sup>17</sup> In addition, farmers tended to have, on average, more children and the more land they owned, the larger the average family size, when compared to skilled manual workers. According to the deterrent hypothesis, however, higher fertility levels within the large farm holder group should have acted as a deterrent to marriage thereby, predicting low marriage rates for this group. The importance of economic resources is revealed when the focus shifts to those men who inherited land.

The tendency for farmers with more land to have significantly more children, on average, does not seem surprising given their marital prospects. In general, farmers had more children but, farmers with more land started this process earlier, since they married earlier, when compared to other farmers, and therefore their completed

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<sup>17</sup> In other words, the farm-size coefficients parameters are negative but were closer to 0 for larger farm holders in Table 6.5.

fertility levels would be larger as a consequence. Figure 6.1 highlights this marital process. However, the Poisson model in Table 6.5 controls for age of wife at marriage; so comparing farm wives of similar age at marriage, large farm holders still had, on average, more children. The resulting larger family size is, therefore, not a product of age differences at marriage.

The finding points to the important role of economic constraints on fertility, as these large farmers married more often, and had more children, even when compared to farmers with less than 50 acres of land, because they were more prosperous and therefore, less deterred by high marital fertility.<sup>18</sup> Strassmann and Clarke found the same pattern employing the 1946 Census information on the value of farms, as assessed for tax purposes, and mean completed family size among Catholics farmers (Strassmann and Clarke 1988, Table 5).<sup>19</sup> The smaller families evident among smallholders was not, however, related to use of fertility control, but Strassmann and Clarke argued that the trend reflected under-nourishment among the smallholders as wealthier families ate better than poorer ones, and children, especially females, on larger farms probably suffered lower mortality rates.

Table 6.5 also tells us about the age dependency of marriage and fertility behaviour as well as the effects of any historical influences, captured by the birth cohort variable. Estimates of the age-dependent hazard rate for entry into first marriage reveal a non-monotonic bell shaped pattern for different nations, cohorts (see Figure 6.2) and socio-economic groups (see Diekmann 1989 for a review). Taking into account the age and class differences in the sample, the older birth cohort were significantly less likely to marry, when compared to the 1945-49 birth cohort

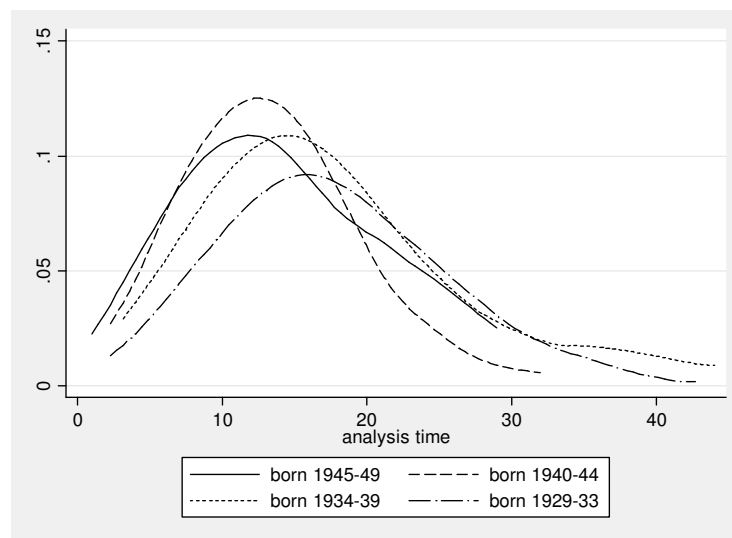
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<sup>18</sup> If the Poisson model was re-run with small farmers used as the reference category, land-owners with more than 100 acres of land had, on average, significantly more children compared to small farm-owners.

<sup>19</sup> The relationship was not found in the non-Catholic population which, they argued, reflected that Protestants took more measures to limit their fertility (Strassmann and Clarke 1988).

(Table 6.5, column 1). In other words, the older cohort tended to wait longer before marriage and this is evident in Figure 6.2, where at earlier ages the hazard for entry into marriage was lower for this cohort, when compared to all other birth cohorts. Yet, once married, this cohort had, on average, more children (column 3, Table 6.5), despite controlling for class position and age of wife at marriage.

**Figure 6.2:** Life table estimate of the (smoothed) hazard rate of entry into marriage by birth cohort.



Source: Table 6.5.

The preceding chapter argued that this could be seen as evidence of the spread of contraceptive practises amongst younger couples. Compared to the 1945-49 birth cohort, the 1929-33 birth cohort married later in life and less often, yet, they had, on average, more children. Since the other cohorts are likely to have more children, since they are younger, this fertility differential may eventually be reduced. In the last chapter, Table 5.3 provided evidence that this pattern did not change among those men who stayed in the panel survey. This provided evidence to confirm that the

results indicate the spread of fertility control.<sup>20</sup> The final section of this chapter will discuss this point further.

The most striking finding of Table 6.5 is, however, the persistence of differentials in marriage and fertility behaviour among farmers when compared to skilled manual workers, despite controlling for age and birth cohort effects. In contrast, the logit model, which focused on the risk of having a childless marriage showed no class, or birth cohort differences, in the chance of childlessness once age at marriage was taken into account (column 5, Table 6.5).<sup>21</sup> The older the wife was at marriage, the higher the chance of having a childless marriage. In terms of odds ratios, for every increasing year of age, the chance of a childless marriage increases by 20 per cent, regardless of class position or birth cohort.<sup>22</sup>

The differences in marriage and fertility processes have been more accurately characterised by Petersen's approach compared to the simple correlation statistics revealed in Section 1 of this chapter. The correlation coefficients were, however, based on the entire population of older Irish men whereas Table 6.5 is based on a small sample of that population. Table 6.5 also provides convincing evidence in favour of the Deterrent hypothesis at the social group level. It illustrates clearly that those social groups who had, on average, more children tended to have lower rates of entry into marriage, controlling for age and historical factors. The contrast was greatest when the remaining social classes were compared to the farming group but significant differences between the social classes in terms of rates of entry into marriage still existed when the farming group were removed from the analysis. The same was not, however, the case for the Poisson model. When the farming population

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<sup>20</sup> As outlined in the last chapter, there was no evidence of 'spacing' in this sample.

<sup>21</sup> Table 5.10 presented Census information on childlessness by social group for earlier time periods. Social group differences were evident in this table.

<sup>22</sup> Odds ratios can take values between 0 to infinity, which can be problematic and this is one reason why they are not generally reported in this thesis.

were removed from the *Living in Ireland* sample, class differences in completed family size were no longer evident.

Table 6.5 has also shown that wealth, if measured by farm size, had notable effects on marriage prospects as well as on fertility behaviour. In fact, a linear effect in terms of acreage seemed to operate that is, the larger the farm, the lower the age at marriage and the larger the farm, the greater the average family size, when compared to skilled manual workers and net of other factors (Table 6.5). The use of these models, as advocated by Petersen, has therefore illustrated a number of micro-level processes that produced the inverse relationship between marriage and fertility rates that was previously noted in census records. In particular, it has shown that the inverse relationship between marriage and fertility rates at the social group level was largely a function of contrasts with the farming population. Both data sources have shown that the poorer segments of society that is, unskilled workers and labourers, agricultural workers and farmers were least likely to marry. Once married, these groups had, on average, more children but this was especially the case for farmers in the LII sample. In contrast, the professional classes entered marriage more often but had smaller families, once married.

The deterrent hypothesis relies on some implicit assumptions about fertility control. The previous chapter has shown that fertility differed within marriage, even controlling for wife's age that is, in the census data with class differences in marital fertility. This implies that people were practising some form of fertility control in marriage. The expectation of high marital fertility could only reduce the likelihood of marrying in those classes who could not, or would not, control their marital fertility.

For farmers, the expectation of high marital fertility was long-established. In Chapter 2, the economic approach saw it as a rational response to labour shortages, as

a security for old age, and as a response to the desire to main a patriline. From a cultural perspective, it can be seen as reflecting more traditional and conservative attitudes towards the family as documented in Chapter 2. The norm of high marital fertility was not universal. Although the richer classes could afford more children, the opportunities costs were larger within these groups. As outlined by Becker, within these groups, quality was of more importance than quantity. These classes are, therefore, the first to pioneer artificial fertility controls. The cost of children is greater in urban classes, the economic returns from children fewer, and the more liberal views of these educated groups facilitate the spread of contraceptive knowledge.

In Malthus' time, as well as our own, the deterrent effect of high marital fertility operates because some groups, such as farmers and the less-well off classes, still have large families, be this behaviour driven by a rational cost/benefit analysis, or by religious values, or by norms, or a lack of knowledge about fertility controls. Even with the availability of contraceptives, the desire has to be there to limit fertility.<sup>23</sup> The original specification of the hypothesis argued that the indissolubility of marriage and the absence of contraception meant that the fear of large families deterred many from marriage altogether and others until a relatively advanced age (Geary 1936). The reformulated hypothesis follows the findings of the previous chapter by arguing that people in twentieth century Ireland practised some form of fertility control within Ireland but despite this, the fear of being unable to support the families that ensue from marriage keeps many people from marrying in the poorer segments of society.

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<sup>23</sup> As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.4, the analysis of the preferred number and the actual number of children indicates that the less-educated display higher levels of actual and ideal fertility but that above-ideal fertility is greater in the less educated groups.

## 6.4 The role of late marriage versus non-marriage

This chapter has investigated the relationships between four main demographic factors; celibacy rates, age at marriage, childlessness within marriage and completed fertility rates. This final section focuses on the ways in which late age at marriage and patterns of non-marriage have influenced fertility rates. To assess the relative importance of the prevalence and timing of nuptiality, a standardisation exercise was carried out the results of which are reported in Table 6.6.

Fertility within marriage can be seen as a product of two processes; the probability of marriage at any given age and the probability of childbirth at any given age (see equation 6.1). In the *Living in Ireland* data, it is possible to calculate the probability of marriage by dividing the number of men who married at each age by the total number of men in the sample (equation 6.1a). Once married, the probability of having a child is calculated by dividing the total number of births in the sample at every given age by the cumulative total of men who were married at each age (equation 6.1b). It should now be clear that it is possible to increase or decrease the probability of marriage and then re-calculate the fertility rate. It is also possible to change the age structure of marriage for example, by seeing what the effect of each man marrying a year earlier would be on total births.

$$\text{Total Fertility} = \sum_{\text{age}} p(\text{marriage}) \times p(\text{childbirth}) \quad \text{EQN 6.1}$$

Where age runs from 16 to 44 and

$$P(\text{marriage}) = \text{number who married at age } x / \text{total number in cohort} \quad \text{EQN 6.1a}$$

$$P(\text{childbirth}) = \text{total births at age } x / \text{cumulative total married at age } x \quad \text{EQN 6.1b}$$

By running a number of simple simulations like those described above, the exercise addresses two questions; what was the effect at non-marriage on overall fertility and what was the effect of age of marriage on overall fertility. Table 6.6 provides some actual and stimulated fertility rates for men aged between 45 and 65 (*Living in Ireland* data, 1994). This age-group was selected since there were few cases of missing information by age. By 1994, most of these men had married that is, 88 per cent, which led to a completed fertility rate of 3.38 or, 4839 births over their life course, which is presented in row 1, Table 6.6. This figure is taken as the baseline fertility rate which a number of stimulated fertility rates will be compared to.

In the first standardisation, the possible impact of changes in the marital status composition of the population is considered (see rows 2-4, Table 6.6). In the first standardisation, it is assumed that all men in the sample married. The results of this exercise, presented in line 2, suggest that the completed fertility rate would have jumped to a high of 3.83 or 5470 births (see row 2, Table 6.6).<sup>24</sup> This represents an increase of 13 per cent on the actual fertility level, the baseline category. In reality, this situation does not commonly occur and in the Irish case, it was much more common to have lower rates of entry into marriage, particularly in early twentieth century Ireland where around 70 per cent of men in this age group married.

To assess the effects of a 70 per cent marriage rate in this population, another standardisation exercise was carried out, reported in the third line of Table 6.6. In this case, there would have been a 20 per cent drop in total births<sup>25</sup> resulting in a total cohort fertility rate of 2.68, rather than the observed 3.38. It is now possible to compare these effects to the stimulated effects of a change in the age structure of the married population (rows 5 -7, Table 6.6). The average age of marriage in the sample

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<sup>24</sup> This is done by increasing the age-specific fertility rates by a factor of 1/0.88 or 1.13.

<sup>25</sup> That is, 0.70/0.88.

was 28. If all the men in the sample had married a year earlier, then the probability of marriage for a 17 year old man would be that of a 16 year old and so on. In effect, the men in the sample would have one extra year of married reproductive life.

These final simulations hold the age-specific fertility levels and the overall percentage of men married constant at 88 per cent in order to decompose the effects of the prevalence of nuptiality from its timing. In the first of these simulations, reported in line 4, one extra year of a married reproductive life would have resulted in a small that is, 1.5 per cent, increase in overall fertility levels (Table 6.6). If everyone had married 2 years earlier, reported in line 5, then the completed fertility rate would have increased by 2.7 per cent to a TCFR of 3.47. Compared to the effects of a change in the marriage rate, these simulated effects appear small.

In early twentieth century Ireland, however, the average age of marriage for men was about 32 (Walsh 1972). If we assume that everyone in this sample had married 4 years later, resulting in an average age of marriage of 36, then 16 year olds would have married at age 20 and, had the fertility rates that applied to 20 years olds, and so on. Holding the percentage of the population who married constant reveals that the overall fertility level would have dropped by a small amount, to 3.37 or, 4829 births (line 7, Table 6.6). This was due to the nature of age-specific fertility in the sample, given that very few births occurred to men under 21 years of age. These simulated fertility rates have assumed that age-specific fertility levels remained unchanged, thereby illustrating the impact of men marrying earlier rather than marrying more often. Of course, both processes are related: If everyone in the sample had married a year earlier, for example, the marriage rate would have increased from 88 to 90 per cent. If everyone in the sample had married 4 years later, the marriage rate would have dropped slightly to 87 per cent.

**Table 6.6:** Actual and simulated fertility rates for men aged 45 to 65.

	<i>Births (n)</i>	<i>TCFR</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Actual marriage rate	4839	3.38	100
<i>P(marriage)</i>			
100% marry	5470	3.83	113
80% marry	4376	3.06	90.5
70% marry	3829	2.68	79.1
<i>P(childbirth)</i>			
Everyone married			
1 year earlier	4910	3.43	101.5
Married 2 years earlier	4963	3.47	102.7
Married 4 years later	4829	3.37	99.8
No one married after			
age 44	4583	3.21	95

Source: Living in Ireland, 1994.

This information refers to the age-specific fertility and marriage patterns of men. Very few men married after age 43; 3 per cent of those men who married and only 1 per cent of women married this late in life. If we had assumed, like many authors do, that men were no longer at risk of marriage after age 44, then a smaller proportion of the sample - 86.6 per cent - would have married. A substantial number of births, however, occurred to older men, a point which was alluded to in the last section. In the final standardisation, it is assumed that no births occurred to men after age 44. In this case, there would have been almost 5 per cent drop in overall fertility

levels, resulting in 4583 births rather than 4839 (see the last row in Table 6.6).<sup>26</sup> In other words, almost 5 per cent of all births occurred to men older than 44 years of age, whereas very few women give birth after this age (see Figure 1.25). In the first chapter, it was clear that age-specific fertility patterns are skewed towards women in older age-groups, so we can anticipate a similar patterns of results to those found here if the analysis was repeated for women (see the next chapter).

In conclusion, this final analysis has found that the prevalence of nuptiality, rather than its timing, had a larger and substantial effect on overall cohort fertility levels. A small change in the proportion of men marrying had a larger impact on completed fertility rates, when compared to the effect of a small change in the age at marriage (Table 6.6). As Dixon (1978) noted, Ireland represented a good case study on how non-marriage acts as a demographic response. It seems that the tendency not to marry largely shaped Ireland's fertility picture, not alone from the analysis presented in Table 6.6 but from the relationship found in Table 6.5 which showed that those social group and birth cohorts who had lower rates of entry into marriage were also the groups who had, on average, more children, even controlling for the influence of age or, age of wife at marriage. As we will see in the next chapter, however, changes in the age of marriage have had a significant impact on the timing of first order births among younger couples in the *Living in Ireland* survey.

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<sup>26</sup> This result refers to the age-specific fertility rate for those less than 44 years of age only.

## **6.5 Discussion and conclusions**

This chapter has tied together the evidence previously presented on class differences in marriage and fertility patterns. The analyses focused attention on the farming groups who stood out in terms of low rates of entry into marriage and high fertility levels. The large average family size prevalent in the farming population meant that marriage entailed unusually heavy economic burdens. Marriage levels were lowest in these agricultural groups which implies that only those who were willing and able to have a large family, married. This hypothesis that high levels of marital fertility deterred some people from marrying was not disproved. Census data revealed that those social groups who experienced relatively high levels of fertility were also the groups with relatively high levels of celibacy (Table 6.2). This pattern remained even when the farming group was removed from the analysis. More sophisticated analysis of the *Living in Ireland* data confirmed this relationship and highlighted sharp differences in the behaviour of social groups, in terms of the ways in which they were constrained in the opportunity to marry and in the opportunity to have children (Table 6.5).

In general, the poorer socio-economic groups were less likely to marry but once married, these groups had, on average, more children. The general picture across social groups confirmed that a deterrent effect was in operation where the expectation of high marital fertility deterred some people, especially those in poorer social groups such as farmers, from marriage. Once farm-size differences were taken into account, the expected correlation was not evident as higher fertility levels correlated with high rates of marriage among large farm holders. Farmers with more than 100 acres of land had, on average, more children and this result highlighted the important role of economic resources for family formation. Farmers with more land could afford to

marry and have more children and would, therefore, be less deterred by the expectation of high fertility which was common in this group. A strong selection effect was in operation since few farmers did marry, especially amongst farmers with less land, and those who did marry tended to have large families that is, when compared to skilled manual workers and regardless of the age of their wife.

Under the same logic, professional workers could afford to marry more often and have more children but advocates of Becker and the 'standard of living' thesis have argued that this does not occur because professionals tend to spend longer in the educational system and, therefore, postpone marital decisions. In addition, children would hold such couples back, particularly women, from educational and career advancements. Lower fertility within the professional groups, and better economic condition, imply higher rates of entry into marriage. In the previous chapter, diffusion models of fertility control were presented which found that the more liberal professional classes would have been first to adopt fertility controls, before the practise diffuses throughout the population.

The case for farmers was different since children provided cheap labour and the cost of an additional child probably declines with the more children born. In Chapter Two, historical evidence was presented where older children reared younger ones and where children and wives worked on family farms and in small businesses. It was, therefore, the most economically marginal men who were most vulnerable to real poverty and, who married late and less often. The death of the agrarian population with a stem family structure, industrialisation and a decline in Catholicism have meant that marriage is no longer seen as the gateway to childbirth. Both the incentives and constraints on marriage have changed with a new alternative, cohabitation, becoming more and more common. As the percentage share of the

population involved in agricultural fell, smallholding became less and less common, and their marriage chances deteriorated dramatically as documented in Chapter 4. Gainful employment for women became less limited and has led many women to delay or forego marriage and, the availability and acceptability of artificial fertility controls has promoted new fertility behaviour which will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

Some evidence of a weakening in the deterrent hypothesis was found in the 1981 Census as the correlation between class-specific celibacy rates and fertility levels had slightly declined, when compared to the 1971 result (see Table 6.2). Marriage plans will, however continue to be influenced by the size of the prospective family where family limitation is not practiced and/or where family size remains large, for whatever reason. Census information has revealed that farmers and the less well-off groups continue to have large families. This means that a significant number of children are born with no corresponding increase in sustenance.

## 7 Conclusions

'Oh, here is life  
Without a wife  
[A] half-potato. Eat it!'

(Patrick Kavanagh 1943)

A common theme in twentieth century Irish poetry is the importance of class background in relation to love, marriage and a family. Another one of Kavanagh's poems, "The Great Hunger" (1942), tells the story of Patrick Maguire, a peasant who, in the cautious way of many Irish peasants after the devastating famines of the mid-nineteenth century, postpones marriage and children while improving his small farm and increasing his inadequate wealth. Gradually Maguire realises that his own virtuous self-denial - his industriousness, devotion to his aging mother and adherence to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church - has led him to emotional misery. Too old and too tied to his land, he will remain unmarried and isolated, a common fate in early twentieth century Ireland, as outlined in this thesis.

This study has utilised census information and more detailed micro-level data to map the progression of class differentials in marriage and fertility patterns in Ireland and to link both processes. Given the relatively broad scope of this research - addressing the most pertinent features of historical marriage and fertility trends in Ireland - many issues discussed here deserve further attention and would benefit from a detailed cross-country comparative study. Despite this, the study is an important contribution to a scarce sociological literature on Irish family formation patterns.

Micro-level life history data is now becoming available and this will allow for a more contemporary analysis of class-specific emerging trends such as, rises in non-

marital births, never-married one-parent families as apposed to one-parent families comprising of a widowed spouse, and cohabitation.<sup>1</sup> Class is an important factor when it comes to both traditional and contemporary family formation practises. By 2008, some features of Irish demography remain exceptional, for example, divorce rates remain remarkably low despite the legalisation of divorce in 1997 (Fahey and Field 2008).

Little research and public debate now takes place in Ireland with regard to the family. The level of knowledge about changes in family formation is, therefore, limited. Yet this is an important area for research for a number of reasons which are outlined in the section below. Section Two of this concluding chapter highlights why Ireland is an interesting and important case to study. The third section summarises the central findings of this study, addressing the contributions of both the economic and cultural approaches to understanding Irish trends in family formation. The fourth section provides suggestions for progress and further research. The last section concludes the thesis.

## ***7.1 The Research Importance***

There are important social and economic consequences of class-specific trends in family formation. Large families, for example, face a significantly higher risk of poverty given that large family size is more prominent among the less well-off classes (see Chapter 5, Nolan and Callan 1994). One-parent families also face higher rates of poverty as social assistance forms their primary source of income (Menton 2007, O'Connell 2007). The employment participation rate of women with higher than average numbers of children

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<sup>1</sup> Data samples from the 2006 Census, Living in Ireland panel data and due for 2008 release, the national child cohort study will all provide new sources of investigation.

and solo parents is traditionally low (CPA 2006). Contributing factors include the inflexibility of traditional Irish working arrangements such as, the lack of availability of part-time and flexible employment which would provide sufficient income to offset high childcare costs (Daly 1989, NESC 2001).

In addition, family size or, birth order, has been found to have a significant negative effect of children's educational attainment. Goux and Maurin (2005), for instance, show that children living in larger families perform worse in school than children in smaller families in France. De Haan (2005) found that birth order had a significantly negative effect on the educational attainment of children in the U.S. and the Netherlands; later born children have, on average, a significantly lower educational attainment than earlier born children, but there was no significant effect of family size once birth order was taken into account. For Ireland, Nicaise (2000) found that family size, through its relationship to poverty, had significant negative effects on children's educational attainment.

In terms of more recent patterns of family formation, research in the U.S. has found that children from single-father families and stepfamilies have consistently had lower educational and employment attainments than children from both two-biological-parent and single-mother families (for a review see Biblarz and Raftery 1999). The most noted adverse consequence of recent fertility declines is an aging population, with the associated declines in the working age population, and increases in pensions and health care costs. In Ireland, the economically active population is expected to expand into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Johnson and Zimmermann 1993). Similar to Portugal

and Spain, this issue will become of concern in Ireland after 2025 (Connell and Pringle 2004).

In terms of trends in nuptiality, Daly (1989) found that single elderly women were more vulnerable to poverty, isolation and loneliness than elderly men. Indeed, the groups identified as most “at risk” of poverty in 1990s Ireland included all single adult households, lone parents and larger families (Callan et al. 1999). Finally, as outlined in Chapter 5, to delay marriage and consequently childbearing, has significant negative consequences on rates of childlessness and child mortality. The most recent evidence points to increasing levels of childlessness among professional couples (Hantrais 2004, Hakim 2004):

‘Women in the lower social classes hold marriage and childbearing as their principal life objectives, and reach these goals earlier in life than women in the higher social classes, who are more likely to plan employment as well as marriage: social class thus remains the strongest and most enduring predictor of fertility patterns.’

(Hakim 2004, p. 25).

Irish demographic transformations have therefore, important implication for the future, not alone in terms of the levels of population decline, rates of poverty and social mobility but also in relation to migration trends. Walsh (1968) pointed out that full employment in Ireland was conditional on emigration given the large youthful population and labour surplus issues. The recent economic boom has led to improved marriage and employment prospects and this has attracted many young people into Ireland whereas, in the past, high rates of unemployment and celibacy forced many young men and women to migrate.

## **7.2 Ireland's Changing Demography**

Ireland has long been seen as a demographic outlier within Europe; up to the 1960s, extreme levels of late age at marriage, high rates of non-marriage, combined with high fertility within marriage set it apart from most other European countries (Hajnal 1965). Like all other European countries, however, Ireland has undergone unprecedented rapid changes in family formation during the last four decades. The rise in marriage rates, which was the focus of attention in Chapter 4, ended and marriage rates declined from the 1970s to late 1990s (see Figure 1.1). At the same time, age at first marriage rose (see Figure 1.6). In addition, Ireland was faced with a declining fertility rate and an increasing age of entry into motherhood (see Figures 1.12 and 1.22). Previously rare family types such as, single parent families and de facto unions, have become more common (Fahey and Russell 2002, Halpin and O'Donoghue 2004). These changes in family formation have not occurred in isolation from other changes such as, changes in the educational system and the labour market. In particular, the occupational structure of the labour force has been transformed and the number of women pursuing higher education has risen (see Chapter 3).

In terms of marital fertility, Ireland has traditionally been categorised as a high fertility country but, in recent decades, there has been a large decline in the Irish fertility rate. Part of the explanation for the birth decline has been a delay in maternity. Figure 1.22 illustrated that the mean age of mothers has increased, for example, the mean age at first birth has risen from 25.2, in 1975, to 27.8 in 2000. Comparing period with cohort effects showed that the median age at first birth declined across birth cohorts in the Living in Ireland panel (Table 5.2). The rise highlighted by the period effect has been

recent and, so, it has not been captured in the cohort effect yet. While delaying first births, families have also been reducing their total number of births: In 1960, one third of all births were fifth order or higher, while by 2000, this accounted only for about 4 per cent of births (see Figure 1.16). The postponement of maternity has seen the fertility rate of older age groups overtake the fertility rate of younger groups (see Figure 1.23). By the mid-1990s, the 30-34 age group had taken over from the 25-29 age group as the group with the highest fertility rate. The fertility rate of the 35-39 age group had also surpassed that of 20 to 24 year olds (see Figure 1.23).

The postponement of maternity in the 1980s coincided with increases in unemployment and rises in educational levels. Age at first birth rose for all educational levels but those with high educational levels had the biggest average postponement in maternity between the 1970s and 1990s (see O'Donoghue, Meredith and O'Shea 2003). Although the pattern of delayed marriage is similar in Ireland to other countries, the level of delayed marriage is higher (O'Donoghue et al. 2003).

Given evidence on Ireland's exceptional demography and, late but rapid demographic transition, this research provides an important contribution to an international literature which has tended to ignore or briefly focus on the nature of the Irish experience. The following section outlines the major study findings and explores the relationships between the international literature and the details of the Irish experience.

### ***7.3 Summary of central findings***

This thesis cannot account for Ireland's demography, past or present. That would have required substantial empirical comparative work. The aims of the thesis were modest.

The introductory chapter compared Irish trends in marriage and fertility with its European neighbours. The empirical chapters considered some hypotheses that might have explained the observed trends. These hypotheses were founded on the importance of social class and the relative size of the different social classes in explaining changing marriage and fertility patterns within Ireland. This section will summarise the central findings of the thesis and make some substantial leaps about explanations.

### **7.3.1 Determinants of celibacy and its decline in Ireland.**

A lack of economic resources appears to be the most important force fuelling non-marriage in Ireland. In early twentieth century Ireland, the highest rates of celibacy were found among those men denied land. Whereas, farm inheritors almost universally married; Kennedy (1991) found that 80-100 per cent of farm inheritors had married by 1911 in his study of 4 localities. From the mid-nineteenth century on, as partible inheritance declined, non-inheriting sons no longer had access to land and most, therefore, never married. Marriage rates among inheritors remained high until the 1940s. From 1926 to 1981, however, rates of entry into marriage fell among all farmers, especially among those on small farms (see Table 4.6). By the 1950s, a clear relationship between economic status and marriage had emerged; celibacy being strongly associated with the lower reaches of the rural social classes. Older unmarried farmers were concentrated disproportionately on smaller farms, the share declining systematically with increasing farm size (see Table 4.8). Viewed regionally, the West of Ireland suffered from the highest rates of non-marriage.

The positive correlation between farm size and marriage only became manifest in the post-war period as small-farm agriculture began to decline. This was due to increased agricultural commercialisation in the decades after 1945, increased visible gaps in the living standards between farming and non-farming occupations, and increased emigration particularly in the 1950s (Kennedy 1991). Emigration became a viable option for many young men, but more especially young single women from rural Ireland. The British labour market offered a viable alternative to a life on the land; in the process, devaluing the benefits of land inheritance for some sons, especially those from smaller farms and, thereby, squeezing the supply of heirs (Kennedy 1991). In addition, mass emigration provided Irish women with an alternative to the hardships of married life on a rural farm with the expectation of a large number of children (O'Hara 1998). For those who did not wish, or were unable, to marry, from the late 1930s onwards, migration became more and more the chosen option (Rottman et al. 1982). In the process, young farm owners found it increasingly hard to find a partner, even those on large farms. Up until the late 1980s, however, little land sale or consolidation had taken place (Hannan and Commins 1992).

Theoretical insights and various empirical studies point out that celibacy has multiple roots and cannot be explained by a single factor. Besides the effects of economic resources such as land, which applied to relatively large share of the population of Ireland in the early twentieth century, Chapter Two reviewed other factors commonly identified as the main determinants of celibacy; marriage postponement, the availability of marriage substitutes such as living with kin or migration, Catholicism and sexual repression, emigration resulting in a lack of marriage partners, the restrictions imposed

by the dowry and the 'match', a high proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, as well as the norms relating to marriage and family size expectations.

In Chapter Two, it was argued that Catholicism, by itself, provides an insufficient explanation for Irish marriage practices. Marriage postponement cannot account for nuptiality changes in the first half of the twentieth century since the timing of marriage varied little before 1950. The restrictions imposed in those classes and regions where the 'match' and dowry remained strong ensured that the economic basis of marriage was primary. This was not the case for farmers living the West of Ireland prior to the 1940s. In the early-twentieth century, smallholders in the West entered marriage in greater numbers than prosperous farmers in the East. This regional result, documented in Chapter 4, is inconsistent with the importance of economic decision-making or, technical rationality, among smallholders in Connaught.

From 1930s on, the overall rate of celibacy began to decline, driven by a fall in the average age at marriage. The increasing marriage rate was due to increasing rates of entry into marriage among the more affluent sections of Irish society. In other words, not all social groups participated in the initial rise in marriage. Unskilled manual workers and men in farming and agricultural occupations continued to suffer from deteriorations in their ability to marry. It was not until the 1980s that rates of permanent celibacy dropped across all socio-economic groups (see Table 4.2). Over this time, however, the effects of class membership remained strong resulting in a high degree of inequality in the life chance of marriage. The empirical evidence presented in Chapter 4 maps the long-standing trend of higher rates of non-marriage in the poorer social classes. In sum, marriages were postponed or permanently avoided due to the difficulties encountered by

the less well-off sections of Irish society. By 1991, permanent celibacy was still more common in those groups who were least adequately equipped to deal with the economic demands of marriage. This highlights the fact that economic resources remain an important prerequisite to marriage and reproduction. In addition, Ireland's late marriage boom led to increased stratification between social groups in the chance of marriage (Table 4.2).

While the causes of the late nineteenth century rise in permanent celibacy may be found in economic circumstance (see, for example, Guinnane 1997 and Gray 2004), the sources of the decline in celibacy from the 1930s on remain controversial. Three main factors were discussed in Chapter 4; the role of low incomes, a large agrarian population and high marital fertility. The initial rise in nuptiality does not appear to be a response to improving economic conditions.<sup>2</sup> The limited evidence suggests that outputs, incomes and living standards, both agricultural and non-agricultural, grew very little in Ireland prior to the 1950s (Ó Gráda 1994). In addition, at this time, the relationship between economic conditions and marriage was unclear given the high marriage rate among smallholders in the West. Finally, in 1922, the standard of living in Ireland was higher than that of many other countries in Western Europe (Kennedy, Giblin and McHugh 1988). Yet, Irish marriage rates were remarkably low.

Chapter 4 examined the relationship between celibacy and the proportion of the population involved in low income agricultural occupations. Daly (2006) argued that the Irish low marriage rate could not be explained by a large proportion of men in agricultural occupations given that, for every single occupation in the 1926 Census, the

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<sup>2</sup> George O'Brien, however, claimed that living standards were rising in Ireland in the 1930s (see Daly 2006).

proportion of single men was higher in Ireland than in England and Wales. Nevertheless, Chapter 4 illustrated that a substantial percentage of males in rural areas classified themselves as ‘relatives assisting’, who were not in a position to marry that is, about 8 per cent of the older male labour force in the 1926 Census.

In Chapter 4, Section 4.7, the compositional hypothesis stated that celibacy would decline simply as a result of declines in the relative size of the farming population. From 1936, increases in the Irish annual marriage rate were not fully accounted for by declines in the number of men working in farming and agricultural occupations (see Figure 4.3), although the decline in the number of men working in farming occupations was important in explaining Ireland’s declining rate of celibacy prior to 1971. Prior to 1971, declines in agriculture did not represent a population shift from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations but, rather, reflected trends in emigration. Landless farm labourers, non-inheriting sons and unskilled manual workers emigrated; to a large degree this represented an exodus of those individuals who had the least opportunity to acquire sufficient resources for marriage.

There was little industrial development in the Republic of Ireland prior to the 1960s with the industrial regions restricted to Northern Ireland. Structural changes within the Republic did not lead to the demise of farming. The evidence reviewed in Chapter 4 highlighted the survival of small-scale family farms, at least up to the 1991 Census. Industrialisation within Ireland was therefore a complicated business and its impact on the Republic of Ireland’s demography was skewed by the removal of the more industrial counties to Northern Ireland.

Finally, the initial rise in the popularity of marriage does not appear to be related to a significant increase in the ability of the middle/upper-classes to control fertility. Chapter 5 illustrated that as nuptiality initially rose, there was little or no reduction in marital fertility. The pace of both economic developments and the use of fertility control in Ireland were uneven. Information from the Census and an analysis of cohort behaviour using the *Living in Ireland* data revealed that as nuptiality initially rose, marital fertility increased even among the professional classes. The relationship between economic developments, marriage and fertility control is further complicated in Ireland due to high rates of migration.

According to Guinnane (1997) and Kennedy (1973), rates of emigration and celibacy are directly related. Those who left Ireland may well have been forced to remain permanently single if they had stayed in rural Ireland. Both emigration and celibacy are, however, a function of the same process; marriage rates rose sharply in the 1960s and 70s among all sections of Irish society and emigration fell rapidly (Hatton and Williamson 1993). From the 1960s on, therefore, both rising living standards and increased access to effective contraception implied earlier and more frequent marriage.

### **7.3.2 Accounting for high marital fertility and its decline in Ireland**

The most obvious and simple explanation for the persistence of high marital fertility within Ireland is the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church (for a critical review see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.2). By the 1990s, Irish religiosity was still higher than almost anywhere else in Europe (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5). Moreover, as documented in Chapter 1, marital fertility in Ireland, up to the 1960s, was substantially greater than in

other European countries, even in comparisons to countries like Spain and Portugal who were similar in religion and level of economic development. The argument implies that devout Catholics have to anticipate marrying only once and having large families because the Catholic Church discourages contraception and divorce, and disapproves of sex outside of marriage. It was, however, obvious from the analysis of census data presented in Chapter 5 that a refusal to practice fertility control was not evident in all social groups. Since the 1961 Census, younger brides have achieved a reduction in fertility for all marriage durations and completed fertility has been in decline throughout the twentieth century.

Even among the more conservative and marginal classes, that of farmers and unskilled labourers, fertility declined from the 1961 to 1981 Census, both in terms of completed fertility and fertility among younger couples (Tables 5.7 to 5.9). Fertility levels had, however, changed the least among smallholders and the lower-working class. At the country and class-level of comparison a simple Catholic explanation cannot go unchallenged (see Chapter 1). Rather than focusing on access to contraceptive devices, the focus needs to shift to attitudes towards children, family size preferences, as well as the desire to control fertility among different social groups. In terms of completed fertility rates, at the same time as fertility levels were declining among the rural classes, fertility levels rose among the professional groups and middle classes.

Among the middle classes, voluntary fertility control within marriage has been a consistent characteristic since the beginning of the century (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3). Both Chapters 4 and 5 showed that economic and class forces have mainly governed the life chance of marrying and forming a family. According to Breen et al. (1990), three

factors were crucial in explaining high rates of marital fertility; first, the strength of Irish Catholicism. This was most likely to be the case in the early twentieth century when the Catholic Church was a focus for national identity under British rule (see, for example, Day 1968). At the class-level, as highlighted in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.4, the less-educated display more traditional/Catholic driven attitudes, values and preferences across a range of issues. These groups are, therefore, more likely to be influenced by Catholic teaching. The second related crucial factor was the alliance between Church and State which implied that from the 1920s to 1960s, the traditional family was well supported (see Chapter 3 for a review of policy initiatives).

A central concern in Chapter 5 was the final determinant highlighted by Breen et al. that of the familial element of the economy up to the 1950s. The results of a standardisation exercise were definitive: Changes in the Irish fertility rate cannot be accounted for by occupational changes away from small scale agriculture into production and service industry. The ‘stem family thesis’ linked high rates of marital fertility among the pre-1950s population to the desire to have a male heir and the need for family labour to work on the farm or small town shop. However, the decline in the proportion of a birth cohort in small farming communities was not related to subsequent changes in cohort fertility levels in the *Living in Ireland* data. Figure 5.1 illustrated that changes in cohort fertility behaviour were crucial in explaining both increases and decreases in completed cohort fertility. Increases in marriage tended to increase the cohort fertility rate, all else equal.

Since the 1960s, industrial transformations and agricultural modernisation have exacerbated class differences in family formation processes among young couples. In

other words, it seems that class differences in fertility levels are now more closely associated with differences in the source, amount, and security of income. The fertility levels of the class categories experiencing economic marginalisation have remained high so that the burden of dependency is heaviest among working class and farming families.

Other important factors influencing fertility levels were varying patterns of nuptiality and migration. Within the farming group, for instance, inheriting sons married and had large families while non-inheriting kin normally dispersed or remained in the family home unmarried. For women, the selective effect of migration implies that those least willing to have large families left the countryside. According to Kennedy (1973), marital fertility, therefore, remained high in Ireland because those who agreed most consistently with Catholic teachings on family life, and those who cared less about their own personal standard of living, made up a disproportionately large share of the married population of Ireland (Kennedy 1973). In other words, many rural Irish men and women seemed to care more about marriage and children than their own standard of living. As outlined in Chapter 5, direct evidence to support this ‘selection effect’ is lacking and the assertion has been based on the evidence that rural people, who moved abroad or, to the cities, married earlier and had smaller families. Generally, however, high levels of emigration have retarded the “modernisation” of fertility behaviour or, the onset of a fertility transition.

Finally, as the predominance of farming and family economies declined so did the active productive role of married women in the commercial economy. In the second half of the twentieth century, the labour force participation rate of married women in the non-farm population increased from a low base, particularly from the 1980s on. Increases

have also been rapid in the women's educational attainment. Distributions of educational attainment for women from successive birth cohorts in the Living in Ireland data are shown in Table 7.1. Comparing the educational attainments of the cohort of women born 1950-54, with those of the 1965-69 and 1970-74 cohorts, the increase in educational attainment for women is clear. Women have profited from educational expansion at all levels of higher qualification. The percentage of women with no education stood at 9 per cent of the oldest cohort but fell to less than 1 per cent of the younger cohorts of women (see Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1:** Educational Attainment of Women from Selected Cohorts (Percentages).

	<i>Birth Cohort</i>				
	1950- 1954	1955- 1959	1960- 1964	1965- 1969	1970- 1974
None	9.31	6.66	2.31	0.99	0.80
Primary school	1.40	0.09	0.35	0.00	0.00
Lower secondary	41.24	38.47	40.55	31.33	28.56
Upper secondary	34.79	42.24	42.29	47.23	45.66
Third Level or PLC	13.26	12.54	14.49	20.57	24.98

*Source:* Living in Ireland, 1994-2001.

This increased educational and labour market participation of women is seen as crucial in explaining more recent delays in marriage and declines in marital fertility.

Clearly, however, the main influence on declining fertility levels among married couples since the 1961 Census is the deliberate limitation of fertility through more general use of fertility control. The reasons why fewer children are desired across the class system is an important area for future work.

### **7.3.3 Trends in final childlessness**

The issue of childlessness have not received adequate attention in Ireland. The evidence presented in Chapter 5 showed that lower levels of completed fertility among professional couples were related to their increased levels of lifetime childlessness (1946-1961 census data only). The trend may be related to increased use of ‘spacing’ among these classes or represent voluntary childlessness. In practise, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary childlessness is not clear but the argument states the women, particularly those pursuing a career, are increasingly voluntarily childless.

The position of women within society changes with industrialisation and modernisation. Van de Kaa (2004) argued that the decision to have a child has become more a matter of preference. Delaying parenting allows women and, to a lesser degree, their partners to pursue higher education, to establish themselves in the labour market, to accumulate material resources, and to deal with unstable life conditions and adverse circumstances. More recent work has looked at trends in childlessness among all women, regardless of their marital status. Given increased rates of cohabitation and substantial increases in the non-marital birth rate, research in Ireland needs to focus on less traditional family formation processes.

### 7.3.4 The importance of Malthusian marriage

Malthus (1803) was the first to provide a consistent theory of population change. He argued that ‘moral restraint’ that is, delayed marriage and sexual abstinence, acted as a check on population growth. In Western Europe, the Malthusian transition or, what Hajnal described as the western European pattern of late age at marriage and high rates of celibacy, occurred after the sixteenth century. The decline in marital fertility occurred later. In Ireland, migration provided a ‘safety valve’ relieving population pressure and delaying fertility decline.

Post-famine Ireland is seen as a prime example of Malthus’ demographic thesis that population growth could be curbed if few people married. For those who did marry, fertility rates were high. As outlined in Chapter 6, the assumption that a Malthusian preventive check was in operation relied on the fact that there was limited or no effective fertility control. At the individual-level, men and women therefore decided not to marry for fear of the large families that ensued that is, the deterrent hypothesis. This decision was founded on economic considerations which implied that those who could not afford to maintain a large family, were those who did or, in Malthus’ view, should not marry:

‘Given no effective control on fertility within marriage, expectations of large numbers of children acted as a brake on a decision to marry, particularly in poor economic circumstances.’

(Breen et al 1990, p. 104).

Walsh showed that the social groups and counties in Ireland with the lowest marriage rates were also those with the highest fertility levels. Therefore, those born in the lower portions of the class structure had quite rational expectations of poverty from the high fertility that would result from marriage under Irish conditions that is, Catholicism and the absence of artificial birth control. In general, the West of Ireland and

the farming class exhibited the lowest rates of entry into marriage and the highest rates of marital fertility. It is likely that the relationship was driven by the fact that in early twentieth century Ireland, farm owners married and had large families, those denied ownership did not. In other words, the Malthusian preventive check was simply highlighting the constraining role of economic circumstances/inheritance patterns, particularly for farmers in western regions of Ireland.

Malthus believed that to marry or, not to marry at all, was a matter for decision by the individual concerned. In other words, celibacy was voluntary. In many ways, it has been argued that this was not the case given the restrictions imposed by the 'match' and dowry, late inheritance and the difficulties of finding an appropriate partner. By contrast, Guinnane argued that the availability of marriage substitutes such as, living with kin, made the celibate life attractive, rather than an unsatisfactory life choice (Guinnane 1997).

Chapter 6 set out to test the Malthusian preventive check of 'moral restraint' by focusing on class differentials in marriage and completed fertility throughout twentieth century Ireland. Two important developments to the deterrent hypothesis were made: First, and most importantly, the relationship between marriage and fertility at the social group level was not driven by contrasts with the farming class. Throughout the 1926 to 1991 intercensal period, the lowest rates of entry into marriage occurred among the farming, agricultural *and* unskilled classes who also displayed the highest rates of marital fertility. The operation of the Malthusian preventive check was not solely associated with landholders but with the poorer social groups in census records.

Secondly, Chapter 5 has shown that fertility differed within marriage, even controlling for wife's age of marriage, implying that couples, including farming couples, were practising some form of fertility control within marriage. The increasing availability and use of artificial contraception implies that voluntary fertility control should allow poorer families to adjust their fertility levels to suit their economic resources. In other words, high rates of fertility can no longer act as a deterrent to marriage in modern day Ireland.

However, the impact of religious norms on family life has clear class differences. Beliefs, values and expectations regarding procreation are based on religious tenets. In other words:

‘More than mere income differences separate social classes in Ireland.’  
(Breen et al. 1990, p. 116).

According to Breen et al., the moral entente of the Church and the desire to have a large family consolidated a normative environment in which marriage was entered into with an expectation of high fertility within the more conservative and marginal class categories. Lower educational levels and a morality that was more legalistic in context reinforced their economic class disadvantage. Late age at marriage and higher rates of celibacy reflected the realities of a cultural context in which high levels of fertility were and still, it seems, are expected within marriage. The application of Catholic moral principles to marriage and to fertility control closely follows class differences. The results of Chapter 6 highlight, that celibacy and delayed marriage were still of substantial importance to working class and farming families as late as the 1981 Census and in the more recent *Living in Ireland* data (1994).

Research is required on differences in sexual behaviour, including contraceptive knowledge, which may account for the persistence of the deterrent effect of high marital fertility. Recent research has found that farmers are least likely to cohabit and to have children outside of marriage (Halpin and O'Donoghue 2004). For this group, the decision to have children is still exclusively associated with the decision to marry. For others, there may be higher levels of ambivalence about pregnancy outside of marriage, particularly among working class women (Layte et al. 2006). Children, rather than been seen as an economic drain, may represent a source of happiness for the less well-off groups, as predicted by Connell (1968).

At the more detailed occupation rather than class-level, the role of economic resources was found to be crucial. Among farmers, the deterrent hypothesis led one to expect that those farmers with more land would be more likely to marry, but have less children, whereas, smallholders would display lower rates of entry into marriage but higher levels of marital fertility. In general, the opposite was the case; the more land a farmer possessed, the greater his chance of marriage and the more children he had as dictated by farm wealth. Within farming couples, therefore, the Malthusian preventative check does not appear to be in operation. Marriage within other occupations, such as the professional group taking into account income effects, represents an area for future work.

The operation of the Malthusian preventive check is probably far more complex than is implied in the standard Malthusian argument presented here. Chapter 6 presented the first serious examination of quantitative evidence to assess the deterrent hypothesis. A few observations on this procedure are in order. First, it is important to note that such tests do not confirm the operation of a Malthusian effect but rather they have failed to

falsify the initial hypothesis. There may be other more plausible explanations for the trends which have not been addressed here.

In this regard, it would be useful to carry out separate computation for females, as well as males. Economic factors may have influenced the female propensity to marry and have children in quite different ways. In addition, other factors that influence marital fertility need to be taken into account such as, nutrition, income, religion, region and the percentage of urban population, and housing conditions. Since these variables were not held constant, the findings are difficult to interpret. In some cases, average size of farm was taken into consideration as it was not possible to assess land quality empirically. As social class and occupational data are, however, correlated with income, the results contain 'income effects'.

### **7.3.5 Rational Action Theory reappraised**

The findings of this thesis can be rationalised in various ways probably without recourse to normative or value-rational arguments. Much of Chapter 2 attempted to defend rational sociological discourse. According to Weber and others, such as Becker, everyday life is now dominated by an instrumental rationality in which religious values play little direct role. This instrumental approach to action takes values as given and focuses instead on the efficient choice of means to reach such goals. For Parsons (1937), however, action is guided by social norms and values, and Coleman (1990) attempts to elaborate why and how social norms emerge. In the Irish case, it was Hannan (1979) who highlighted the relationship between marriage levels and value systems.

Future work is required on why different classes seem to have different normative expectations about marriage and fertility. In other words, how the action of others in ones social class is taken into account in family formation processes. In addition, it is important to develop research agendas which can differentiate between instrumental and value-rational action, such as in the case of large family size among the farming and working classes. The models exhorted by Rational Action Theory are, therefore, too simple and future work is needed in this area to link macro-outcomes to individual actions. The main advantage of the rational actor perspective is that it provides a clear-cut model for developing hypotheses about the role of rational economic action.

An application of this was seen in Chapter 4 where marriage rates were expected to increase with farm size, taken as an imperfect measure of wealth. The negative coefficient on farm size in the West of Ireland was rationalised in various ways in Chapter 4, but whatever the reason for the findings, it is inconsistent with the economic model or, technical rationality, where marriage rates increase with wealth. The economic model, however, cannot be considered to have been 'refuted' by this finding. For one thing, the possibility that more sophisticated econometric techniques and improved data will reverse the finding cannot be ruled out.

Decision couples take about family formation are frequently determined by economic security but economic rationality is not the only driving force. A comparative study of family formation practises focusing on both economic and cultural factors is an area for future work. Such a study would help draw out cultural and economic differences across countries in terms of both traditional and new forms of family formation, based upon the family system typologies discussed in Chapter One.

## **7.4 *Suggestions for progress and further research***

The relationship between occupation or social class, and nuptiality or family size, is of immense sociological interest. It is hoped that more sociological studies will be inspired by this research especially in relation to the new data sources which come available from 2008. This section briefly outlines four areas which deserve further attention.

Before addressing these areas, it is important to note that a typical demographic study would include other important characteristics such as, a detailed breakdown of the population by region and religion, as well as social class. It was beyond the scope of this research to engage in such an exercise which would have involved collecting cohort and period measures on migration, incomes, religion and residential information. The research has noted that differential patterns of nuptiality and fertility are interwoven with mortality and migration trends, and differences in age structures and sex-ratios. A possible future research agenda involves a detailed econometric analysis of Ireland's fertility decline in relation to a series of socio-economic variables, assessing the relative effects of class position, religious background, and migration trends.

### **7.4.1 Determinants of family formation decisions throughout the life course**

Innovative studies analysing family formation decisions throughout the life course may shed some light on the issues highlighted in this thesis. It is hoped that panel data will become available which allow for an investigation of how different types of economic circumstances, and values and preferences, influence the marriage and fertility decisions

of both men and women from different social groups. In particular, more research is called for on sexual behaviour and attitudes to shed light on some of the processes discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, the effects of the increased prevalence of cohabitation and extramarital births on marriage and fertility decisions are not well understood. It is hoped that the child cohort study will record and categorise increasingly diverse and non-standard partnership histories (see Chapter 3).

How does a period of cohabitation effect the marriage and fertility decisions of men and women from different social groups? These are issues particularly difficult to address as their analysis implies controlling not only for the usual factors of education, employment status, and family background, but also accounting for cultural factors such as, religiosity and value orientation in young adulthood. In particular, the influence of values and preferences on marriage and fertility decisions remains largely unexplored.

#### **7.4.2 Research on women, class and family formation**

The traditional focus of marriage and fertility differentials of men usually leaves the fertility behaviour and attitudes of women out of the picture. Given the increase in single mother families, a better understanding of fertility decisions among women would in turn contribute to our understanding of more recent trends. Are women from certain groups more eager and motivated to start a family than others? Household surveys such as, the *Living in Ireland* panel, can to be exploited to focus on couple decision making, taking account of men's and women's attitudes to the family. This data source but more especially, the new child cohort study, provides information on the living arrangements

of unmarried mothers, some information on their partners, and on fertility in any new relationships.

### **7.4.3 Explaining family diversity in Ireland**

Compared to other European countries, there are no detailed and well-defined studies of family change in modern Ireland. Considering the intensity of changes in the last decade, such studies would contribute to theoretical debates on fertility and family changes in the industrialised world, and potentially provide challenging evidence to the established concepts on fertility change. What was the impact of the economic boom and increased inward migration on Ireland's demography? Comparative studies of Ireland with other countries would be extremely interesting. These studies could compare regions in terms of class composition, religious denominations, stage of economic development, ethnic differences, and other long-standing cultural differences. Finally, the study of fertility changes in Ireland is important in the light of its continued above-replacement level fertility. Such a study could investigate the process involved in forming new family size goals including an assessment of factors such as, the breakdown in kinship dominance, improvements in living standards and mobility aspirations (Goldscheider 1971).

### **7.4.4 Availability of data on order-specific fertility**

Information is available in the 2006 Census, *Living in Ireland* panel period, and the new child cohort study on class differences in order-specific fertility, inside and outside of marriage. The census office, for example, is to publish fertility by birth order, marital

status, and age of mother. As outlined by Ní Bhrolcháin (1996), two key items of information collected under the current registration arrangements, and unusual in an international context, are the question on the date of the previous birth and the inclusion in the recorded number of previous live births of extra-marital births, and any children not born to the present marriage. These data make it possible to generate a fascinating and detailed picture of Irish fertility trends since 1984, in parity-, age- and duration-specific terms.

### ***7.5 Concluding remark***

In conclusion, population structure and change provide the basis for understanding social needs and, therefore, establishing and prioritising policies to meet those needs. The serious lack of detailed information and research on the family and its needs in Ireland must be addressed. This thesis has gone some way towards improving our understanding of family dynamics. Research is now required on new sources of family diversity as marriage and childbearing are not entered into equally by men and women from different social groups. Social class remains a strong and powerful predictor of marriage and fertility patterns.

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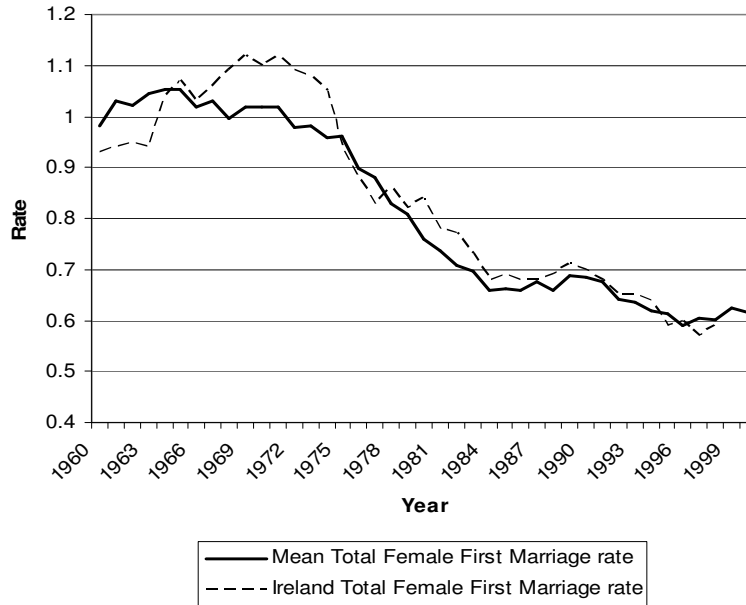
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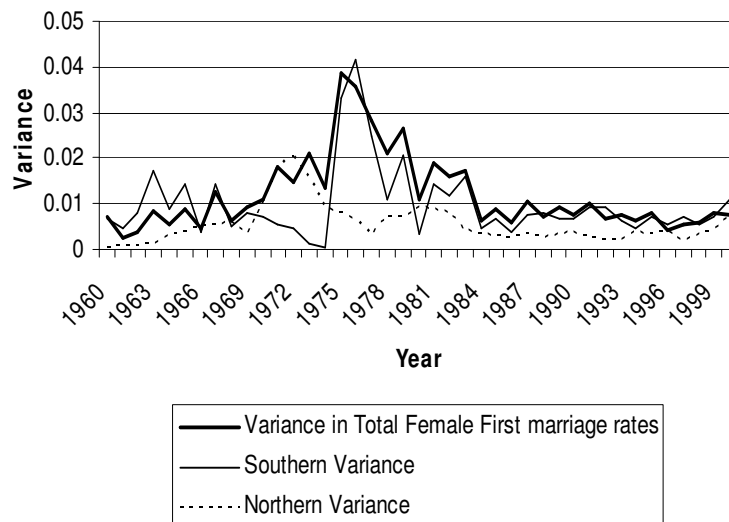
## Appendix 1 (Appendix to Chapter 1)

**Figure 1:** Ireland's female first marriage rate compared to the average first marriage rates in Europe (10), 1980-2000.

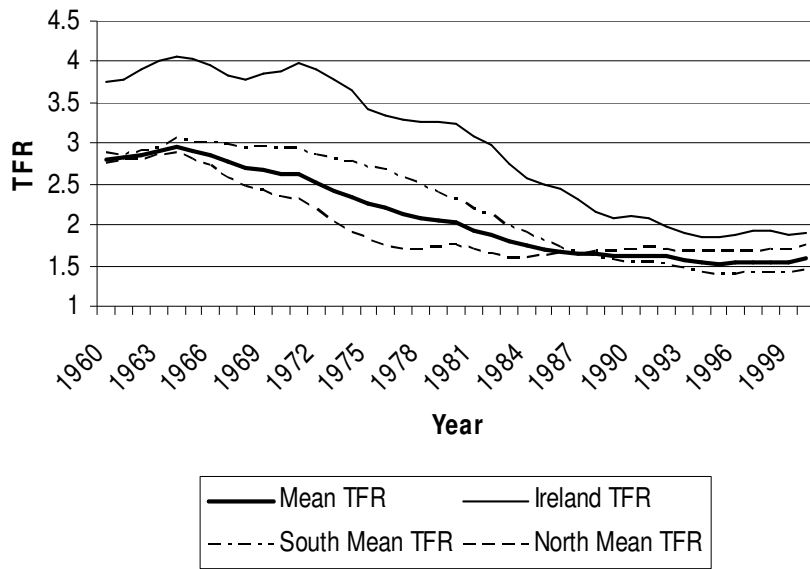


Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001.

**Figure 2:** The variance in total female first marriage rates across all 10 European countries, 1980-2000.

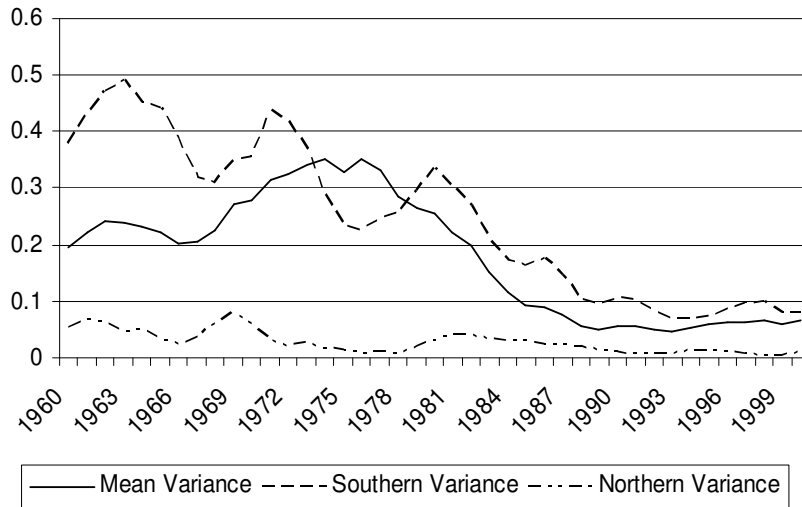


**Figure 3:** Average Total Fertility Rates across Europe, 1960 to 2000.



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

**Figure 4:** Variance in the mean Total Fertility Rate across Europe, 1960 to 2000.



Source: UN Demographic Yearbook 2001

## *Appendix 2 (Appendix to Chapter 4)*

### **Testing the compositional hypothesis- standardisation**

In order to test the proposition that compositional change was important, let us assume that class-specific marriage and fertility rates are constant across time. If, for example, we then calculate marriage rates by social class using the 1926 Census and apply these rates to the class structure as found in later census tables, we can assess the degree to which change in marriage patterns are simply a product of transformations in the class structure. The same approach was adopted using the *Living in Ireland* data to plot transformations in marriage and fertility levels across a series of birth cohorts, controlling for factors other than social class, such as age of marriage.

A formal test of the compositional hypothesis, employing the *Living in Ireland* information, can be written as follows. Let  $M_1$  denote the marriage rate for men born between 1910 and 1914.<sup>1</sup> Then,

$$(1) \quad M_1 = \sum_i P_{1i} M_{1i}$$

Where,  $P_{1i}$  is the proportion of men in each occupation in this birth cohort and  $M_{1i}$  is the class-specific marriage rates for these men controlling, for instance, age of marriage. Then,  $M_2$  refers to the marriage rate for men born 1915-1919 and so forth, up until  $M_{14}$  which refers to the youngest cohort of respondents interviewed, those born after 1980. Following the same logic,

$$(2) \quad M_{14} = \sum_i P_{14i} M_{14i}$$

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<sup>1</sup> The same approach can be used employing census data; for example,  $M_1$  would refer to the marriage rate of men aged 45-54 in the 1926 Census,

By substitution we can construct equation 3 which allows the class structure to change across birth cohorts but holds class-specific marriage rates constant. In this way, we can address the question of what would have happened to marriage chances had class differentials in marriage rates not changed over the period while allowing the relative numbers within social classes to change. Such substitution can be done across all cohorts in order to construct a more precise measure of the role of composition change over time.

$$(3) \quad \bar{M}_{14} = \sum_i P_{i14} M_{i1}$$

Similarly, equation 4 allows us to assess what would have happened to men's marriage chances assuming there was no change in the class structure but allowing class-specific marriage rates to change over time. It computes the marriage rate for the youngest birth cohort holding the class structure constant but allowing marriage rates to change across birth cohorts.

$$(4) \quad \bar{M}_{14} = \sum_j P_{1j} M_{j14}$$

The same sort of analysis can be run for fertility levels where  $F_t$  refers to the number of children born to men in the oldest birth cohort. However, because younger cohorts are increasingly likely to give birth outside of marriage, we can construct a general measure of fertility at time  $t$ ,  $F_t$  as follows;

$$(5) \quad F_t = \sum pop_t [(Pr(m) \times M_f) + (1-Pr(m) \times NM_f)]$$

Where,

$pop_t$  refers to the population of childbearing years

$Pr(m)$  refers to the probability of marriage and  $1-Pr(m)$  is the probability of never marrying.

$M_f$  refers to the proportion of births occurring within marriage and

$NM_f$  refers to the number of births occurring outside of marriage.

Table 1: List of socio-economic groups and the occupations assigned to them in 1971.

Code no.	Socio-economic group and occupation	Code no.	Socio-economic group and occupation
	FARMERS, FARMERS' RELATIVES AND FARM MANAGERS		EMPLOYERS AND MANAGERS
000-201 202 203 205 206	Farmers Farmers' sons and daughters (assisting on farm) Farmers' other relatives (assisting on farm) Farm managers Market gardeners and nurserymen (landholders)	295 pt. 296 pt. 304 pt. 317 318	Proprietors (employers only) and managers in wholesale or retail trade Garage proprietors (employers only) and managers "Proprietors t employers only) and managers - service workers" Senior officials - civil service and local authority Directors. managers and company secretaries
	"OTHER AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS AND FISHERMEN"		SALARIED EMPLOYEEES
204 207 208 209 210	Agricultural labourers Jobbing gardeners, grounds men and gardeners' labourers Other agricultural workers Foresters and forestry labourers Fishermen	274 275 279 298 301 302 303 342	Inspectors and supervisors - transport and communication Aircraft pilots, navigators and flight engineers Ships' officers Commercial travellers and manufacturers' agents Insurance agents Insurance brokers and financial agents Auctioneers, values and other salesmen Armed forces - commissioned officers
	HIGHER PROFESSIONAL		INTERMEDIATE NON-MANUAL WORKERS
319 320 321 323 324 328 329 330 331 332 333 339	Professed clergymen and nuns Other religious occupations University professors and lecturers Medical practitioners Dental practitioners Engineers Surveyors and architects Chemists and other scientists Accountants Judges, barristers and solicitors Veterinary surgeons Professional workers (n.e.s.)	293 294 295 pt. 296 pt. 297 304 pt. 305 340 343	Clerks Typists "Proprietors (on own account only) in wholesale or retail trade" Garage proprietors (on own account only) Shop assistants and barmen Proprietors (on own account only) - service workers Garda sergeants and lower ranks Draughtsmen Armed forces - other ranks

		<b>Table 1 continued.</b>	
<b>LOWER PROFESSIONAL</b>		<b>OTHER NON-MANUAL WORKERS</b>	
322	Teachers	277	Signalmen and level crossing keepers
325	Nurses	278	Porters and ticket collectors
326	Pharmacists and dispensers	282	Drivers of buses
327	Other medical workers	283	Drivers of other road passenger vehicles
334	Authors, journalists and editors	284	Drivers of road goods vehicles
335	Actors, entertainers and musicians	285	Bus conductors
336	Painters, sculptors and commercial artists	287	Postmen and post office sorters
338	Social workers	289	Telephone, telegraph and radio operators
341	Technical and related workers (n.e.s.)	290	Other transport and communication workers
		291	Warehousemen and storekeepers
		299	Roundsmen
		300	Street vendors, hawkers and newspaper sellers
		306	Housekeepers and matrons of schools, etc.
		307	Chefs and cooks
		308	Waiters and waitresses
		309	Maids and related workers
		311	Barbers and hairdressers
		313	Caretakers
		314	Watchmen and related workers
		315	Hospital and ward orderlies, hospital porters and attendants
		316	Other service workers
		317	Sportsmen and related workers
<b>SKILLED MANUAL WORKERS</b>		<b>SEMI SKILLED MANUAL WORKERS</b>	
211	Mine and quarry workers	217	Other electrical and electronic workers
212	Turf workers		
213	Telephone installers and repairers	227	Other engineering and related trades workers
214	Linesmen and cable jointers	234	Spinners, doublers, winders and reelers
215	Electricians and electrical fitters		
216	Radio and television mechanic	237	Knitters and knitting and hosiery machine operatives
218	Fitters and mechanics	240	Sewers, embroiderers and machinists
219	Vehicle builders and assemblers		
220	Plumbers and gas fitters	242	Other textile and clothing workers
221	Sheet metal workers	245	"Makers of sugar and chocolate confectionery, jams and jellies"
222	Structural metal and metal plate workers	246	Milk processors and makers of dairy products
223	Welders and cutters	247	Meat corers, canners and preservers
224	Machine tool setters and operators	248	Other makers of food
225		248	Makers of tobacco products
226	Precision instrument and watch and clock makers	250	Makers of paper and paper products
228	Goldsmiths, silversmiths and jewellery makers		
229	Carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers	251	Gas and chemical workers
230	Sawyers and woodworking machinists		Workers in plastics
231	Other woodworkers		
232	Boot and shoe makers (factory)	256	"Other workers in other products stokers"
233			
235			
236			
238			

239	Boot and shoe makers and repairers (not	260	<b>Table 1 continued</b>
241	factory)		Stationary engine operators, boiler
243	Other leather and leather substitute	262	firemen and
244	workers	271	Dock labourers
249	Weavers and related workers	281	Lorry drivers' helpers
252	Bleachers, dyers and finishers	286	Messengers
253	Tailors and dressmakers	288	Packers and bottlers
254	Cutters	292	Charwomen and office cleaners
255	Upholsterers and coach trimmers	310	Laundry workers, dry cleaners and
257	Millers		pressers
258	Bakers, pastrycooks and biscuit makers	312	<b>UNSKILLED MANUAL WORKERS</b>
259	Makers of beverages		Labourers and unskilled workers
261	Compositors, monotype and linotype		(n.e.s.)
	operators		<b>UNKNOWN</b>
263	Printers (so described)		Gainfully occupied but occupation not
264	Printing press operators		stated
265	Other paper and printing work		
266	Glass and ceramics workers		
267	Workers in metal manufacturing		
268	Workers in rubber and rubber products		
269	Craftsmen (n.e.s.)		
270	Builders, contractors and clerks of		
273	works		
276	Bricklayers		
280	Masons and stone cutters		
	Plasterers		
	Other tradesmen		
	Painters and decorators		
	Crane and hoist operators		
	Earth moving and other construction		
	machinery		
	operators		
	Foremen and supervisors of manual		
	workers		
	Railway engine drivers		
	Sailors		

Note: n.e.s. not elsewhere specified  
Source: Census of Population, 1971.

**Table 2:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 employed in farming occupations, 1926-1991.

Occupational code	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Farmers <sup>2</sup>	35.57	32.68	32.50	29.70	29.11	29.15	26.28	21.94	17.93	14.95
Farmers' sons assisting on home farm <sup>3</sup>	3.42	2.95	2.56	2.41	2.03	1.43	0.75	0.15	0.10	0.09
Farmers' other relatives assisting on farm	4.75	4.87	4.16	4.05	3.59	3.04	2.42	0.99	0.76	0.38
Farm managers and foremen <sup>4</sup>	0.47	0.32	0.33	0.22	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.11	0.10	0.10
Market gardeners and nurserymen <sup>5</sup>					0.08	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.08
Per cent of total employment	44.21	40.82	39.54	36.38	34.97	33.84	29.68	23.27	18.98	15.59

**Table 3:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 who were ever-married in farming occupations, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Farmers	79.54	74.46	71.69	71.16	69.84	67.39	65.51	65.54	69.15	73.91
Farmers' sons assisting on the farm	29.29	23.50	19.32	20.70	20.67	21.32	16.84	18.48	11.27	15.28
Farmers' other relatives assisting on the farm	6.60	6.03	6.05	5.95	6.47	4.89	4.28	4.39	6.60	8.18
Farm managers and foremen	81.37	77.23	73.47	79.59	83.86	84.84	90.05	87.50	95.77	94.59
Market gardeners and nurserymen					68.42	79.00	68.57	79.25	85.07	86.32
Total % ever-married	67.84	62.65	61.41	60.62	60.53	59.92	59.41	62.77	66.56	72.15
Coefficient of 'within-group' variation	75.75	79.45	82.12	82.28	68.28	70.05	74.73	73.13	78.15	73.39
COV (minus gardeners)					82.80	84.45	91.48	88.81	95.98	89.21

<sup>2</sup> In the 1986 and 1991, this group combines two census categories that is, 'horse pig and poultry farmers' and 'other farmers'.

<sup>3</sup> In the 1951 Census, farmers' sons-in-law, daughters and daughters-in-law were coded with this category. In the 1961 and 1966 Census, sons and sons-in-law were included in this group. In 1971 and 1981, only sons were coded but from 1986, sons-in-laws were included in this category. As inheritors had higher rates of marriage, it is important to try and distinguish between these groups. Unfortunately, due to the way the Census coded occupations, this was not always possible.

<sup>4</sup> In 1951, the census coded land agents and managers, farm managers, bailiffs and foremen in this group. From 1966, only farm managers were coded.

<sup>5</sup> In 1961, the census began coding this occupation.

**Table 4:** The percentage of male farmers<sup>6</sup> aged 45-54 by size of farm, 1926-1991.

<i>Size of Farm (acres)</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
< 10	12.3	10.2	7.5	7.2	5.8	5.3	4.2	2.6	1.9	1.4
10-14	12.4	10.0	8.5	7.9	7.0	6.5	5.2	3.4	2.7	2.4
15-29	28.9	28.2	27.9	26.7	25.1	23.1	20.6	14.6	12.9	10.6
30-49	20.3	22.4	24.4	24.5	26.2	27.0	27.3	25.8	23.7	21.2
50-99	16.1	18.2	19.8	21.1	23.6	25.6	28.1	34.5	36.1	35.2
100-199	6.4	7.4	8.3	8.8	9.4	9.5	11.2	14.7	16.8	19.8
200 and above	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.8	3.6	4.1	4.9
Area undefined	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.8	4.5
<i>N</i>	58069	49205	48424	46125	47224	46613	39862	30121	25367	23266*

\*Information on farm size was only available for 23224 cases as horse, pig and poultry farmers were not broken down by size.

<sup>6</sup> Farm managers, farmer's relatives and labourers are not included.

**Table 5:** The percentage of male farmers, aged 45-64, by size of farm and region: 1926-1966.

<i>Size of Farm</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1966</i>
<u>Leinster</u>						
<15 acres	19.00	13.71	10.75	9.55	6.51	5.85
15-29	24.19	22.00	23.47	23.24	18.54	16.63
30-49	20.37	20.64	23.94	24.10	25.38	25.57
50-99	20.87	20.37	23.95	26.48	28.00	30.50
100 and above	15.57	23.28	17.88	16.64	21.56	21.46
<u>Munster</u>						
<15 acres	12.98	12.16	9.10	7.93	6.37	5.90
15-29	21.09	20.23	19.32	18.29	16.44	15.52
30-49	24.64	24.81	25.72	25.76	25.62	25.77
50-99	27.07	28.54	29.83	31.21	33.69	35.42
100 and above	14.22	14.25	16.04	16.82	17.87	17.40
<u>Connaght</u>						
<15 acres	35.03	30.32	24.19	23.49	19.47	19.03
15-29	38.69	38.66	39.23	37.96	36.46	34.90
30-49	17.31	20.71	24.38	25.29	27.78	28.82
50-99	6.68	7.84	9.40	10.19	13.07	14.18
100 and above	2.29	2.48	2.80	3.06	3.22	3.07
<u>Ulster</u>						
<15	37.59	35.69	30.34	28.52	25.65	26.55
15-29	33.10	33.07	32.05	31.50	29.75	28.64
30-49	17.41	17.62	20.47	22.00	23.72	24.29
50-99	8.73	10.07	12.88	13.34	15.38	15.75
100 and above	3.16	3.55	4.26	4.64	5.50	4.76

**Table 6:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in socio-economic group 2, 1926-91.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Agricultural labourers <sup>7</sup>	13.00	11.11	9.66	8.46	7.55	6.23	5.05	2.14	1.59	1.26
Jobbing gardeners, grounds men and gardeners' labourers <sup>8</sup>	1.09	1.00	0.87	0.89	0.74	0.67	0.65	0.47	0.48	0.49
Foresters and forestry labourers (woodmen <sup>9</sup> )	0.07	0.15	0.24	0.41	0.85	0.88	0.59	0.41	0.55 <sup>10</sup>	0.41
Other agricultural occupations	0.06	0.08	0.68 <sup>11</sup>	0.22 <sup>12</sup>	0.28	0.38	0.78	0.57	0.43	0.24
Livestock workers (not on farm)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.15	0.13
Fishermen etc	0.70	0.44	0.38	0.32	0.31	0.27	0.30	0.27	0.30 <sup>13</sup>	0.34
Per cent of total employment	14.92	12.78	11.84	10.30	9.72	8.43	7.37	3.85	3.51	2.86

<sup>7</sup> In earlier census volumes (1926-66), labourers living-in were distinguished from those not living-in. Those living-in were a smaller group and had significantly lower marriage rates compared to those not living-in. In 1926, for example, 62 per cent of those not living-in were married compared to only 8% of those living-in and, although marriage rates for both groups declined up to 1966, the differences between these two groups remained.

<sup>8</sup> This group comprised of gardeners, nurserymen and gardeners labourers up to 1961. From 1961 to 1981, these groups were coded as jobbing gardeners and gardeners' labourers. In the final two census volumes, the CSO distinguished between skilled gardeners and unskilled gardeners, grounds men and gardeners labourers. Both were included in this category.

<sup>9</sup> In 1926, only woodmen were coded.

<sup>10</sup> In 1986 and 1991, skilled forestry workers were included in this group.

<sup>11</sup> The CSO included turf-cutters in this category in 1946. Prior to this census, they were coded separately.

<sup>12</sup> In 1951, the CSO included agricultural students with other agricultural occupations.

<sup>13</sup> In 1986 and 1991, fishery board agents and inspectors were included in this category.

**Table 7:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 who were ever-married in socio-economic group 2, 1926-91.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Agricultural labourers	56.95	51.65	53.32	51.55	52.52	47.34	44.81	46.49	46.69	53.12
Jobbing gardeners, grounds men and gardeners' labourers	74.55	72.25	70.69	70.09	68.51	64.53	65.51	62.38	63.94	73.45
Foresters and forestry labourers (woodmen)	76.58	76.75	76.06	74.40	75.53	76.10	76.31	73.69	74.64	80.94
Other agricultural occupations	57.58	64.00	61.61	75.15	78.90	80.03	73.60	73.04	83.14	81.15
Livestock workers (not on farm)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89.95	88.12
Fishermen etc	68.61	58.89	58.67	64.47	68.45	68.54	63.05	71.85	77.78	81.64
Coefficient of 'within-group' variation	13.89	15.41	14.42	14.08	14.60	19.02	19.01	18.14	21.05	16.23
Cov (minus livestock workers)									20.65	16.61
Total ever-married	58.88	53.88	55.71	54.95	57.00	53.85	52.94	57.00	62.47	67.84
As reported by the CSO	-	-	-	55.1	56.9	52.9	52.9	57.6	61.3	66.7

**Table 8:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in higher professional occupations, 1926-91.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Church and Cemetery Officials <sup>14</sup>	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.08	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doctors, dentists and vets <sup>15</sup>	0.24	0.38	0.37	0.48	0.43	0.58	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.84
Judges, barristers and solicitors	0.21	0.19	0.13 <sup>16</sup>	0.17	0.33	0.29	0.22	0.26	0.27	0.34
Engineers, surveyors and architects	0.12	0.15	0.21	0.25	0.38	0.51	0.75	1.08	0.98	1.19
Chartered accountants	0.04	0.07	0.17	0.16	0.23	0.23	0.27	0.69	0.80	0.60
Analytical chemists and other scientists <sup>17</sup>	0.02	0.01	-	0.03	0.09	0.18	0.21	0.30	0.41	0.50
University professors and lecturers	-	-	-	-	-	0.06	0.11	0.38	0.57	0.86
Mathematicians, actuaries, consultants <sup>18</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.19	0.22
Other professional occupations <sup>19</sup>	0.11	0.14	0.37	0.19	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.12	0.12	0.15
Per cent of total employment	0.83	1.02	1.33	1.35	1.51	1.90	2.36	3.57	4.08	4.69

<sup>14</sup> Church and cemetery officials were coded separately up to 1951 but after that year, it was not possible to separate them from religious occupations.

<sup>15</sup> In 1946, information was only provided for doctors (dental and veterinary surgeons were not coded).

<sup>16</sup> In 1946, information on solicitors was only available.

<sup>17</sup> In 1946 census this group was not coded. In the 1986 and 1991 census', the category was composed of a number of coded groups that is, physical scientists, bacteriologist, pharmacologists, pathologists, physiologist and other life scientists.

<sup>18</sup> More detailed occupational coding became available post the 1986 census. Mathematician, statistician, actuaries, business economic and marketing consultants, advisors and researchers were added as coded occupations.

<sup>19</sup> This group refers to the census category of other professional workers, not elsewhere specified (in 1961 librarians were included in this category).

**Table 9:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 who were ever-married in the higher professional group, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Church and Cemetery Officials	70.94	78.26	68.75	78.51	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doctors, dentists and vets	85.18	82.99	86.38	87.74	89.40	92.03	93.51	95.00	95.65	95.51
Judges, barristers and solicitors	72.93	81.03	79.19	81.72	90.56	88.89	88.38	91.41	92.53	92.97
Engineers, surveyors and architects	74.88	85.02	86.77	86.46	92.10	92.39	93.95	93.96	95.75	95.66
Chartered accountants	82.61	79.61	78.17	84.71	87.74	90.30	91.07	92.62	93.61	94.52
Analytical chemists and other scientists	78.95	90.48		86.05	92.81	94.14	94.64	94.90	96.55	93.14
University professors and lecturers	-	-	-	-	-	91.84	89.16	91.95	91.82	89.05
Mathematicians statisticians actuaries consultants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	95.91	97.04
Other professional occupations	81.14	79.05	81.72	78.04	91.67	88.89	90.72	96.88	90.70	88.98
<b><i>Total ever-married</i></b>	78.39	81.91	82.39	84.45	90.36	91.55	92.73	93.69	94.49	93.67
Coefficient of 'within-group' variation	6.75	5.05	8.18	4.58	2.14	2.05	2.93	2.17	2.33	3.33
<i>CSO figures including clergy</i>	-	-	-	53.9	53.2	58.1	63.7	72.0	76.1	82.6

**Table 10:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in lower professional occupations, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Nurses and midwives <sup>20</sup>	0.15	0.17	0.25	0.23	0.24	0.28	0.32	0.44	0.42	0.38
Teachers	0.68	0.79	0.79	0.83	1.15	0.93	0.69	1.41	2.05	2.76
Authors, journalists and editors	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.13	0.17	0.21	0.27	0.32
Actors and musicians	0.06	0.07	0.26 <sup>21</sup>	0.09	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.17	0.16	0.23
Pharmacists, dispensers and other medical workers <sup>22</sup>					0.25	0.25	0.28	0.23	0.15	0.15
Painters, sculptors and commercial artists					0.05	0.06	0.05	0.09	0.12	0.17
Social welfare workers					0.06	0.06	0.09	0.20	0.19	0.23
Technical and related workers <sup>23</sup>					0.08	0.13	0.26	0.29	0.53	0.91
Per cent of total employment	0.96	1.11	1.38	1.24	2.06	1.91	1.95	3.03	3.89	5.15

<sup>20</sup> Nurses, probationary nurses, mental attendants and midwives are included in this group.

<sup>21</sup> In 1946, managers, actors and musicians were coded as one (coded as other entertainment occupations). In all other years, these occupations were coded separately.

<sup>22</sup> In the 1986 and 1991, other medical worker refers to cardiographers, nutritionists, opticians, therapists, chiropodists and medical x-ray personnel.

<sup>23</sup> This category includes information on technical and related workers (not elsewhere specified) up to 1986. In 1986 and 1991, due to more detailed occupational coding, it includes physical science technicians, estimators, work study officers and quality control technicians, life science technicians, systems analysts and computer programmers and other technical inspectors.

**Table 11:** The percentage of lower professional males ever-married, aged 45-54, 1926-1991.

	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1971</i>	1981	1986	1991
Nurses and midwives	89.56	90.73	88.52	87.43	89.39	91.03	92.89	92.28	92.35	92.58
Teachers	81.21	84.69	85.39	85.57	87.84	88.65	86.80	89.73	90.78	88.38
Authors, journalists and editors	69.07	75.41	75.00	73.13	83.81	85.37	85.77	91.58	90.23	89.23
Actors, entertainers, musicians	69.52	82.18	75.97	75.17	75.95	76.07	78.67	85.71	89.18	90.65
Pharmacists, dispensers, other medical workers					90.49	89.28	92.14	95.61	92.96	92.98
Painters, sculptors and commercial artists					79.49	78.89	70.89	84.55	84.05	84.87
Social welfare workers					93.27	95.05	90.44	90.07	90.23	89.86
Technical and related workers					79.67	84.83	92.54	91.37	93.58	92.99
Coefficient of 'within-group' variation	12.84	7.99	8.43	9.06	7.14	7.28	9.01	3.87	3.39	3.18
Total ever-married	81.00	84.79	83.55	84.27	87.21	88.04	88.53	90.48	91.08	89.74
CSO reported				79.1	86.7	87.6	88.3	90.6	90.7	89.6

**Table 12:** The percentage distribution of male managers and proprietors aged 45-54, 1926-1991.

Managers and proprietors of-	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Filling stations and garages	0.13	0.20	0.31	0.17	0.20	0.31	0.31	0.87	0.65	0.58
Bars, public houses, hotels, restaurants etc <sup>24</sup>	1.17	1.09	0.98	0.99	0.79	0.93	0.54	0.39	1.56	1.71
In wholesale or retail trades	3.05	3.34	3.35	3.69	3.52	3.80	4.57	5.52	4.35	3.59
Other employers, managers, proprietors <sup>25</sup>	1.49	1.44	1.32	1.58	0.21	0.38				
Senior officials in the civil service <sup>26</sup>					0.41	0.57	0.68	0.89	0.87	0.71
Directors, managers and company secretaries <sup>27</sup>					1.72	1.69	2.07	4.05	4.74	6.09
Per cent of total employment	5.84	6.07	5.95	6.44	6.84	7.68	8.17	11.74	12.18	12.68

<sup>24</sup> This category combines managers and proprietors of bars, public houses, wine merchants, off-licences, hotels and all catering and lodging services. In 1971 and 1981, these were coded as one category; proprietors and managers in service industries.

<sup>25</sup> This group refers to employers, managers and sometime foremen in other industries such food, textiles, metal manufacturing, wood, painting and decorating, the building industry. It was not possible to remove foreman from some of these groupings.

<sup>26</sup> This category refers to senior officials in the civil service and local authority. In 1986 and 1991, senior rank gardai, legislative officials and government administrators were included here.

<sup>27</sup> In 1986 and 1991, personnel officers were included in this category.

**Table 13:** The percentage of male manager and proprietors aged 45-54 who were ever-married, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Managers and proprietors of-										
Of Filling stations and garages	92.02	83.33	88.13	90.07	90.54	89.75	93.97	93.66	95.22	96.12
Bar, public houses, restaurants, hotels etc	86.10	83.53	82.45	83.67	85.96	88.06	89.94	93.98	92.59	94.13
In wholesale or retail trades	84.41	83.71	84.20	84.45	86.83	87.71	89.00	91.73	94.23	94.39
Other employers or managers	86.59	85.58	85.87	88.59	79.01	76.92				
Senior officials in civil service					93.66	94.84	95.27	95.37	95.94	95.13
Directors, managers and company secretaries					93.29	94.82	95.82	96.45	96.98	96.94
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	3.90	1.49	3.04	3.69	6.31	7.45	3.36	1.57	1.66	1.37
Total ever-married	85.47	84.11	84.48	85.50	88.62	89.39	91.50	93.86	95.27	95.70
CSO figures				87.8	91.3	92.8	94.2	95.0	95.8	96.1

**Table 14:** The percentage distribution of male salaried employees aged 45-54, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Water transport officers <sup>28</sup>	0.18	0.18	0.08	0.16	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.12	0.12	0.09
Railway officers <sup>29</sup>	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.26	0.15	0.16	0.33	0.36	0.30	0.31
Air transport officers <sup>30</sup>			0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.09
Commercial travellers, manufacturing agents	0.60	0.67	0.69	0.70	0.90	0.93	0.92	1.19	1.40	1.80
Insurance brokers, agents and financial agents	0.51	0.95	1.02	0.81	0.55	0.56	0.58	0.63	0.71	0.66
Auctioneers and other salesmen	0.11	0.08		0.08	0.14	0.15	0.19	0.31	0.36	0.39
Commissioned officers in the army <sup>31</sup>	0.02	0.04	0.20	0.12	0.10	0.22	0.22	0.12	0.13	0.10
Per cent of total employment	1.60	2.10	2.17	2.16	1.93	2.15	2.35	2.79	3.10	3.43

<sup>28</sup> This categories contains information on navigating and engineering officers

<sup>29</sup> This category includes station masters, goods agents, railway officials, inspectors and supervisors. From 1971-86, the group was coded as other transport and communication inspectors and supervisors.

<sup>30</sup> Pilots, navigators and flight engineers are coded together here

<sup>31</sup> This group also contained information on civic guards up to 1951

**Table 15:** The percentage of male salaried employees aged 45-54 who were ever-married, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Water transport officers	91.81	87.55	90.35	85.19	90.55	93.38	92.05	90.06	92.81	91.85
Railway officers	91.94	94.43	91.29	93.60	93.47	92.58	93.91	93.59	93.35	94.55
Air transport officers	-	-	84.21	94.00	100.00	98.00	97.94	98.91	100.00	96.99
Commercial travellers, manufacturing agents	79.67	83.27	82.07	83.33	89.20	90.21	92.83	95.04	95.49	95.15
Insurance brokers, agents and financial agents	81.15	84.85	84.28	87.74	87.84	88.28	90.96	91.40	94.54	96.98
Auctioneers and other salesmen	80.81	91.15	-	86.05	90.67	86.89	89.44	92.64	92.62	91.17
Commissioned officers in the army	82.35	94.55	93.92	95.16	97.59	98.04	97.93	97.50	96.30	96.93
Coefficient of 'within-group' variation	6.22	5.17	5.15	5.24	4.66	4.48	3.38	3.29	2.45	2.42
Total ever-married	83.06	85.85	85.24	87.28	89.82	90.70	92.86	93.75	94.77	95.02
As reported by the CSO				88.6	89.5	90.4	92.6	95.6	94.6	94.8

**Table 16:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in intermediate non-manual occupations, 1951-91.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Clerical workers <sup>32</sup>	2.51	3.30	4.00	3.76	3.29	3.48	3.57	3.27	3.21	4.06
Garda sergeant, army, other ranks <sup>33</sup>	0.14	0.40	3.53	3.25	0.82	0.74	1.02	1.29	1.91	2.04
Barmen, shop assistants <sup>34</sup>	0.88	1.19	1.08	1.32	1.55	1.48	1.57	1.40	1.45	1.97
Per cent of total employment	3.53	4.89	8.61	8.33	5.66	5.70	6.16	5.97	6.58	8.07

<sup>32</sup> This group comprises of typists and clerks. Up to 1951, it was not possible to distinguish between clerical workers and civil service/local authority officials so both are included in this group.

<sup>33</sup> Gardai, army (other ranks), civic guard and other defence workers are included in this group.

<sup>34</sup> Shop assistants, salesmen and barmen are combined in this category.

**Table 17:** The percentage of male intermediate non-manual workers aged 45-54 who were ever-married, 1951-1991.

	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1971</i>	1981	1986	1991
Clerks and typists	76.93	76.89	79.75	81.19	83.28	83.81	82.87	85.26	85.64	87.30
Garda sergeant, army, other ranks	86.84	84.86	86.85	90.57	88.01	91.23	92.21	92.94	93.87	94.68
Barmen, shop assistants	52.19	54.54	59.78	62.38	73.18	71.86	74.14	72.72	77.07	78.25
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	24.80	21.81	18.60	18.39	9.29	11.88	10.88	12.21	9.82	9.49
Total ever-married	71.14	72.11	80.17	81.88	81.19	81.67	82.21	83.97	86.14	86.95

**Table 18:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in other non-manual occupations, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Railway <sup>35</sup>	0.56	0.73	0.82	0.50	0.33	0.37	0.47	0.32	0.25	0.22
Drivers and bus conductors <sup>36</sup>	3.30	3.08	2.34	2.73	3.71	3.84	4.52	5.55	6.27	6.91
Telephone, radio operators, postmen <sup>37</sup>	0.68	0.95	0.96	1.13	1.14	1.20	1.08	0.90	1.11	1.20
Newspapers and hawkers <sup>38</sup>	0.28	0.43	0.25	0.56	0.19	0.12	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.18
Domestic servants <sup>39</sup>	0.20	0.19	0.13	0.18					0.12	0.11
Barbers <sup>40</sup>	0.14	0.17	0.20	0.19	0.25	0.22	0.16	0.11	0.12	0.14
Caretakers <sup>41</sup>	0.23	0.27	0.22	0.29	0.26	0.24	0.27	0.35	0.50	0.68
Others in personal service	0.22	0.30	0.43	0.34						
Hospital orderlies <sup>42</sup>				0.08	0.15	0.18	0.25	0.27	0.27	0.34
Waiters	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.13	0.12
Entertainment and sports <sup>43</sup>	0.20	0.15	0.08	0.28	0.24	0.22	0.03	0.03	0.13	0.17
Storekeepers and warehousemen	0.21	0.29	0.40	0.65	0.94	1.03	1.34	1.56	1.50	1.47
Gatekeepers <sup>44</sup> , timekeepers, watchmen	0.16	0.19		0.27	0.37	0.47	0.61	1.15	1.41	1.39
Rounds men					0.38	0.39	0.48	0.42	0.46	0.45
Housekeepers <sup>45</sup>					0.08	0.09	0.14	0.18	0.03	0.02
Cooks, chefs and kitchen hands					0.13	0.14	0.12	0.14	0.19	0.29
Others <sup>46</sup>	0.14	0.21	0.17	0.11	0.30	0.07	0.49	0.85	0.64	0.63
Per cent of total employment	6.37	7.05	6.06	7.40	8.53	8.64	10.20	12.12	13.29	14.30

<sup>35</sup> This category refers to pointiers, signal men, level crossing keepers and ticket collectors, rail guards and porters, and other railway workers not elsewhere specified.

<sup>36</sup> Drivers of buses, other road passenger vehicles, horse drawn goods vehicles, self-propelled road goods vehicles and bus conductors are included in this category.

<sup>37</sup> Telephone, telegraph and radio operators, postmen and post sorters are combined in this category.

<sup>38</sup> Street vendors, hawkers and newspaper sellers are combined in this category. In 1951, the CSO included roundsmen with newspaper sellers.

<sup>39</sup> In the first 4 census volumes a distinction was made between domestic servants living in and living out.

<sup>40</sup> In 1986 and 1991, The Census included beauty consultants in this category with hairdressers.

<sup>41</sup> Games keepers and game watchers are included with caretakers up to 1951, after that year gamekeepers were no longer coded.

<sup>42</sup> The CSO included hospital and ward orderlies, hospital porters and attendants in this group.

<sup>43</sup> This category combines information on racehorse and greyhound trainers and jockeys, stable hands and other men in entertainment and sport (i.e. sportsmen).

<sup>44</sup> This does not refer to level crossing gatekeepers.

<sup>45</sup> The CSO called this category housekeeping etc which refers to the fact that it also contains information on superintendents and supervisors in schools.

<sup>46</sup> Other workers in water, rail and air transport not elsewhere specified.

**Table 19:** The percentage of male other non-manual workers, aged 45-54, who were ever-married, 1926-1991.

	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Railway	83.77	85.35	86.54	84.34	80.71	81.32	82.82	79.73	81.53	84.46
Drivers and bus conductors	80.53	80.86	85.02	84.76	87.25	88.08	88.39	89.49	90.88	91.73
Telephone, radio operators, postmen	74.82	72.14	76.52	77.12	79.51	78.44	76.78	78.88	79.92	83.99
Newspapers and hawkers	72.20	81.02	86.56	83.37	77.92	79.06	80.17	85.02	87.24	88.42
Domestic servants <sup>47</sup>	52.73	45.70	47.69	53.17					44.51	54.65
Barbers	83.78	81.61	82.82	86.05	84.41	83.33	80.93	87.67	86.90	87.50
Caretakers	83.06	79.42	80.30	82.96	77.18	79.16	74.63	76.94	79.10	84.36
Others in personal service	73.26	75.50	76.45	77.50						
Hospital orderlies				82.05	73.00	71.89	76.68	76.34	78.39	83.71
Waiters	79.52	75.49	73.74	72.41	77.87	69.77	77.08	78.92	83.15	76.17
Entertainment and sports	71.90	71.86	69.67	75.74	82.29	79.94	86.36	89.19	84.38	85.07
Storekeepers and warehousemen	79.65	82.61	80.71	80.65	83.26	85.21	84.47	83.26	84.94	87.07
Gatekeepers, timekeepers, watchmen	78.21	77.16		76.14	82.59	83.91	83.96	85.55	88.80	91.56
Rounds men					89.34	91.53	91.29	91.90	92.13	93.94
Housekeepers					40.74	46.32	47.12	51.42	85.71	89.66
Cooks, chefs and kitchen hands					70.62	72.65	75.54	79.37	79.70	86.16
Others	85.15	79.50	84.34	88.57	80.86	92.52	81.03	84.00	84.11	87.85
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	11.14	13.08	13.91	11.03	14.60	14.19	12.78	11.78	13.18	10.65
Total % ever-married	78.60	78.61	81.65	81.19	83.42	84.22	84.19	85.43	87.04	89.15

<sup>47</sup> As with labourers, domestic servants who lived in were far less likely to be married.

**Table 20:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in skilled manual employment, 1926 to 1991.

<i>Skilled-manual workers in:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Mining, quarrying and turf	0.317	0.298	0.258	0.44	0.697	0.659	0.746	0.673	0.572	0.427
Brick and earthenware	0.028	0.038	0.032	0.050						
Glass and ceramic <sup>48</sup>	0.029	0.016	0.017	0.026	0.066	0.053	0.119	0.234	0.281	0.243
Metal manufacturing <sup>49</sup>	0.830	0.846	0.625	1.01	0.689	0.535	0.734	0.874	0.962	0.945
Electrical and electronic <sup>50</sup>	0.223	0.316	0.477	0.551	0.771	0.915	1.106	1.82	2.156	2.447
Mechanics <sup>51</sup>	0.266	0.455	0.609	0.58	1.560	1.762	2.074	2.68	3.339	3.664
Machine tool workers	0.059	0.053	0.031		0.041	0.039	0.065	0.241	0.259	0.276
Plumbers and gas fitters <sup>52</sup>	0.390	0.530	0.601	0.73	0.309	0.328	0.326	0.459	0.516	0.551
<i>Table 39 continued</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Chemical processes <sup>53</sup>	0.033	0.068	0.062	0.092						
Watch, clock and jewellery	0.075	0.065	0.071	0.075	0.091	0.102	0.127	0.224	0.224	0.144
Carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers	1.664	1.799	1.302	1.48	1.805	1.942	1.678	1.823	1.915	1.915
Other Wood <sup>54</sup>	0.132	0.134	0.156	0.19	0.332	0.305	0.315	0.336	0.316	0.280
Coopers and basket makers	0.159	0.149	0.097	0.08						
Cartwright's and wheelwrights	0.146	0.171	0.125	0.13						
Boat/barge builders, shipwrights	0.078	0.113	0.105							
Leathers <sup>55</sup>	0.845	0.773	0.705	0.680	0.592	0.737	0.643	0.360	0.266	0.168

<sup>48</sup> This category refers to glass formers, finishers, decorators and ceramic farmers, skilled ceramic workers.

<sup>49</sup> This group comprised of blacksmiths, metal casters, moulders, setters, drawers, furnace and smelter workers, metal coaters, platers and benders, and other skilled workers as defined by the census office in metal manufacturing categories.

<sup>50</sup> This group combines information on electricians and electrical fitter, electrical and electronic engineering technicians, linesmen, cable jointers, telecommunication technicians, radio and television mechanics.

<sup>51</sup> This refers to information on motor and cycle mechanics.

<sup>52</sup> Up to 1951, all types of fitters were included in this category. In 1951, they were listed as precision fitters, machine tool fitters, fitters and fitter assemblers not elsewhere specified.

<sup>53</sup> This group referred to skilled makers of fertiliser, soap, paint etc.

<sup>54</sup> Wood preparation workers, joiners, woodworking machinists, wood carvers, finishes and assemblers are included here.

<sup>55</sup> Boot and shoe makers and repairers, runners, fellmongers and pelt dressers and other leather workers are combined in this group.

**Table 20 continued**

Textile goods and other textile products <sup>56</sup>	0.808	0.767	0.673	0.668	0.606	0.555	0.526	0.367	0.372	0.399
Food and drink <sup>57</sup>	0.568	0.600	0.53	0.529	0.697	0.639	0.901	0.969	0.703	0.671
Paper and other product <sup>58</sup>	0.406	0.366	0.67	0.274	0.370	0.367	0.372	0.605	0.669	0.679
Building and construction <sup>59</sup>	1.334	1.525	0.805	1.687	1.794	1.986	2.026	2.84	3.099	2.999
Painters and decorators <sup>60</sup>	0.530	0.645	0.467	0.646	0.803	0.815	0.885	1.081	1.136	1.108
Operators of machines <sup>61</sup>					0.245	0.337	0.543	1.075	1.237	1.294
Foremen and Supervisors of manual	0.316	0.452	0.498	0.265	1.362	1.803	2.390	2.86	2.717	1.639
Sailors <sup>62</sup>	0.184	0.180	0.161	0.138	0.146	0.185	0.214	0.230	0.211	0.219
Drivers <sup>63</sup>	0.200	0.224	0.359	0.444	0.058	0.076	0.189	0.165	0.081	0.070
Other skilled workers (nes)	0.205	0.288	0.279							
Per cent of total employment	9.82	10.87	9.72	10.80	13.03	14.14	15.97	19.87	21.03	20.14

<sup>56</sup> This category includes weavers, bleachers, dyers, finishes, upholsterers, tailors, dressmakers and cutters.

<sup>57</sup> All types of mill workers, bakers, pastry cooks and biscuit makers, and makers of beverages (including skilled workers in malting, brewing and distilling) are included here.

<sup>58</sup> This refers to all paper and printing workers; compositors, monotype and linotype operators, printing press operators, printers, printing machine minders, settlers and assistants, bookbinders and photographers.

<sup>59</sup> Builders, contractors, bricklayers, masons, stone setters, plasterers and other tradesmen are coded together here.

<sup>60</sup> Information on painters, decorators and interior designers was combined to form this group.

<sup>61</sup> This category contains crane and hoist operators, operators of earth moving and other construction machinery operators.

<sup>62</sup> This category refers to petty officers, seamen, desk hands and sailors.

<sup>63</sup> This category refers to locomotive engine drivers except for 1951 when it included crane drivers and drivers of civil engineering plant

**Table 21:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 who were ever-married in skilled manual employment, 1926-1991.

<i>Skilled-manual workers in:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Mining, quarrying and turf	74.90	71.65	72.21	76.73	78.32	79.39	77.72	74.38	78.24	83.01
Brick and earthenware	71.11	77.19	81.25	78.21						
Glass and ceramic	79.17	91.67	88.00	80.49	90.65	90.59	81.22	82.81	83.67	91.80
Metal manufacturing	75.06	72.03	71.43	80.18	79.61	85.16	80.97	83.78	87.80	91.64
Electrical and electronic	85.99	85.26	87.62	87.08	87.53	88.59	87.24	89.78	91.15	91.94
Mechanics	77.47	78.98	81.70	79.98	85.38	86.69	88.24	89.96	91.70	92.13
Machine tool workers	82.47	80.00	89.13		83.58	93.55	83.67	85.15	88.80	90.68
Plumbers and gas fitters	81.63	82.21	82.57	84.23	86.03	84.38	88.06	92.68	92.47	90.09
Makers of fertiliser and paint etc	77.78	85.29	86.02	90.21						
Watch, clock and jewellery	72.36	72.45	68.87	76.92	81.08	79.14	76.56	89.22	91.48	89.73
Carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers	74.69	74.67	75.36	76.54	81.18	83.29	83.38	86.37	88.41	91.28
Other Wood	80.93	83.58	79.83	84.56	84.57	84.60	82.81	77.17	80.09	84.63
Coopers and basket makers	75.68	76.89	81.38	87.29						
Cartwright's and wheelwrights	71.01	77.04	74.87	81.22						
Boat/barge builders, shipwrights	88.19	74.71	79.62							
Leathers	65.80	64.78	68.29	69.62	75.52	80.15	80.10	74.80	76.02	85.62
Textile goods and other textile products	68.31	68.40	66.00	73.03	78.33	77.79	80.33	83.86	87.07	88.08
Food and drink	75.11	75.22	80.45	81.21	80.97	83.25	84.35	82.72	82.81	79.60
Paper and other product	76.62	78.58	85.09	84.31	88.02	89.44	86.88	89.96	91.54	92.61
Building and construction	76.91	75.91	76.58	81.95	85.26	86.02	85.97	88.56	89.65	91.64
Painters and decorators	76.99	77.14	79.17	80.26	83.19	81.20	81.07	82.01	85.82	87.76
Operators of machines					88.69	89.98	88.47	86.00	87.04	88.38
Foremen and Supervisors	87.60	82.94	85.85	87.92	89.50	91.19	92.77	93.11	94.77	94.59
Sailors	81.33	85.24	82.92	78.70	83.12	80.07	83.33	78.34	80.94	78.59
Drivers	88.34	84.87	90.65	91.05	87.23	90.16	88.11	86.28	90.35	88.07
Other skilled workers (nes)	80.60	80.18	83.65							
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	7.63	7.76	8.48	6.59	4.94	5.49	4.90	6.49	5.93	4.90
Total ever-married	75.71	75.74	78.29	80.29	83.62	85.23	85.66	87.22	89.30	90.56
CSO statistics					83.5	84.5	85.5	87.2	88.8	90.1

**Table 22:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in semi-skilled manual employment, 1926-1991.

<i>Semi-skilled workers in:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Food and drink <sup>64</sup>	0.21	0.28	0.37	0.36	0.34	0.45	0.55	0.96	0.93	0.71
Creamery workers <sup>65</sup>	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.22	0.27	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.32
Makers of Tobacco products	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.05
Makers of paper and paper products	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.11	0.12	0.13	0.15	0.08
Gas works	0.14	0.06	-	0.05	0.10	0.19	0.19	0.41	0.43	0.29
Other products	0.51	0.40	0.35	0.12	0.07	0.08	0.21	0.19	0.18	0.16
Textile industry <sup>66</sup>	0.18	0.17	0.22	0.26	0.25	0.34	0.47	0.53	0.50	0.37
Cleaners	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.11	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.19	0.22	0.30
Laundry workers	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.13	0.12
Road transport <sup>67</sup>	0.06	0.05	0.03	0.20	0.21	0.23	0.31	0.22	0.15	0.09
Dock labourers <sup>68</sup>	0.96	0.85	0.60	0.73	0.57	0.51	0.46	0.44	0.31	0.26
Porters and messengers <sup>69</sup>	0.28	0.50	0.50	0.64	0.35	0.19	0.22	0.33	0.32	0.33
Warehouse workers <sup>70</sup>	0.26	0.22	0.22	0.27	0.24	0.20	0.23	0.18	0.19	0.12
Drivers <sup>71</sup>	0.19	0.18	0.49	0.54	0.41	0.37	0.42	0.34	0.24	0.17
Assemblers <sup>72</sup>					0.01	0.22	0.33	0.35	0.39	0.35

<sup>64</sup> This category combines information on makers of sugar and chocolate confectionary, jams and jellies, meat curers, canners and preservers, slaughterhouse workers, and other skilled workers in drinks and food.

<sup>65</sup> This category refers to milk processors and makers of dairy products.

<sup>66</sup> This group contains spinners, doublers, winders and reelers, knitters and knitting machine operatives, fibre preparers, examiners and menders, sewers, embroiders and machinists, rope, twine and net makers, sock and canvas goods makers and other clothing workers, not elsewhere specified.

<sup>67</sup> This category combines information on two groups, lorry drivers' helpers and mates, and other road transport workers not elsewhere specified.

<sup>68</sup> The census included information here on bargemen, boatmen, tug men and lighter men.

<sup>69</sup> Information on porters not elsewhere specified was included with messengers in the first 4 census volumes.

<sup>70</sup> That is packers and bottlers.

<sup>71</sup> The Census only coded stationary engine drivers in creameries in 1926 and 1936, after that they included all stationary engine drivers in this group. From 1961, information on refuellers, oilers, stokers and greasers was also included here. In addition, up to 1961 information on firemen and donkey men was coded separately to this group but from 1961, boiler firemen were included with stationary engine drivers. In the first 4 census volumes, the respective numbers working as firemen was 0.13, 0.12, 0.07 and 0.16 percent of the total population.

<sup>72</sup> This category refers to assemblers of electrical, radio and television, metal products as well as testers of these products.

<b>Table 22 continued</b>											
Workers in plastics						0.01	0.02	0.05	0.15	0.20	0.18
Makers of concrete products						0.04	0.04				
Workers in rubber and runner products				0.03		0.07	0.10	0.12	0.22	0.17	0.13
Foundry workers	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.11		0.07					
Brush makers	0.02	0.02	0.01								
Grooms	0.19	0.25	0.09	0.04							
Other skilled, not elsewhere classified <sup>73</sup>				0.28							
Per cent of total employment	3.19	3.24	3.19	3.99	3.23	3.49	4.22	5.16	4.90	4.02	

<sup>73</sup> This category only appeared in 1951 and it refers to other skilled workers in the metal and electrical industry.

**Table 23:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 who were ever-married in semi-skilled manual employment, 1961-1991.

<i>Semi-skilled workers in:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Food and drink	80.12	81.04	81.25	82.41	85.27	85.31	83.79	80.29	83.43	84.32
Creamery workers	77.67	78.76	76.12	81.08	80.17	76.31	77.63	75.83	79.96	85.83
Makers of Tobacco products	80.49	79.55	90.00	87.50	87.10	88.24	79.49	91.67	93.94	88.89
Makers of paper and paper products	70.83	76.74	87.93	85.71	85.82	90.34	90.96	91.26	72.99	88.89
Gas works	84.89	94.32		86.25	93.83	85.62	86.10	90.88	89.88	92.49
Other products	84.38	84.79	85.14	82.01	93.04	82.64	78.46	80.45	85.20	87.50
Textile industry	72.85	72.29	73.52	79.56	85.36	84.94	80.73	82.04	83.15	85.74
Cleaners	85.42	73.91	80.52	84.75	85.56	83.82	76.98	79.47	80.07	82.23
Laundry workers	80.00	65.63	87.50	78.95	87.23	80.00	82.76	91.33	91.98	93.19
Road transport	82.80	78.26	78.95	79.03	82.90	75.88	77.28	71.29	60.29	71.85
Dock labourers	78.31	76.52	81.96	82.82	80.71	79.63	79.65	79.11	75.96	80.35
Porters and messengers	77.90	70.38	78.23	80.42	80.91	75.17	76.26	77.09	79.52	86.89
Warehouse workers	78.76	74.85	83.18	79.38	80.99	83.39	78.67	77.18	73.21	76.80
Drivers	81.94	80.15	89.22	87.65	87.11	89.60	88.38	91.49	93.62	91.51
Assemblers						77.78	88.51	88.05	86.19	88.95
Workers in plastics						81.82	92.86	83.33	85.22	87.19
Makers of concrete products						83.08	88.41			
Workers in rubber and runner products				98.00	86.24	93.33	89.07	88.67	90.98	85.13
Foundry workers	83.85	79.86	77.88	80.11	86.24					
Brush makers	89.29	72.41	71.43							
Grooms	75.97	75.61	80.77	75.81						
Other skilled, not elsewhere classified				79.63						
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	5.82	8.16	6.73	6.05	4.85	6.61	5.82	7.86	10.75	6.38
Total ever-married	80.03	77.33	82.12	82.28	83.91	83.41	82.14	82.48	83.19	85.68
CSO statistics					81.4	81.3	81.9	83.2	83.4	86.0

**Table 24:** The percentage of males aged 45-54 in unskilled employment, 1926-1991.

<i>Semi-skilled workers:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Builders' labourers	1.25	1.90	1.49	2.66	2.22	2.42				
Contractors' labourers, navvies	3.23	3.23	3.40	4.38	4.32					
Fitters' labourers	0.06	0.06	0.06		0.13	0.14				
Plumbers' and mechanics' labourers	0.06	0.08	0.06	0.13						
Drovers	0.06	0.08		0.09						
Other unskilled workers and labourers.	4.07	4.69	5.20	4.34	5.83	9.57	11.55	8.68	8.46	9.07
Per cent of total employment	8.73	10.05	10.21	11.59	12.51	12.13	11.55	8.68	8.46	9.07

**Table 25:** The percentage of unskilled male workers aged 45-54 who were ever-married, 1961-1991.

<i>Semi-skilled workers:</i>	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986	1991
Builders' labourers	78.02	78.09	80.11	83.57	80.16	80.72				
Contractors' labourers, navvies	78.87	77.93	78.31	76.26	75.97					
Fitters' labourers	85.00	89.36	84.62		81.60	88.24				
Plumbers' and mechanics' labourers	81.63	78.74	83.87	87.86						
Drovers	62.11	62.90		58.21						
Other unskilled workers and labourers.	71.40	73.87	77.40	78.18	76.32	73.26	72.59	67.48	69.30	74.60
Coefficient of 'within group' variation	10.81	11.14	4.02	14.79	3.57	9.28				
Total ever-married	75.22	76.02	78.18	78.66	76.94	74.91	72.59	67.48	69.30	74.60

### *Appendix 3 (Appendix to Chapter 5)*

**Table 1:** The relationship between age of marriage and age at first birth.

Birth Cohort	% births non-marital	% births same year	Time marriage to first birth (yrs)
1970-77	8.6	4.3	-0.04
1965-69	11.2	11.2	0.8
1960-64	6	10.6	1.7
1955-59	3.7	10.2	1.9
1950-54	2.3	10.3	1.7
1945-49	2.1	7.7	1.6
1940-44	1.4	6.3	1.5
1935-39	2.5	7.4	1.6
1930-34	1.7	4.5	2.1
1925-29	1.6	4.7	1.7
1920-24	1.7	2.8	1.3
<1920	1.7	1.7	0.6
	4.2	7.4	1.6

Source: Living in Ireland 1994

**Table 2:** Births by parity (time in years).

Birth Cohort	Time 1-2	Time 2-3	Time 3-4	Time 4-5	Time 5-6	Time 6-7
1970-77	2.6	2	-	-	-	-
1965-69	2.9	3	2.1	2	-	-
1960-64	2.8	3	2.8	3	4.8	2
1955-59	2.8	3.3	3.1	3.4	4.2	2.1
1950-54	2.6	3.5	3.5	3	5.5	3.2
1945-49	2.5	3.4	3.5	3.5	5.8	3.3
1940-44	2.3	2.9	3.2	3	5.4	2.8
1935-39	2.3	2.6	3.1	3.1	5.2	3.1
1930-34	2.4	2.8	2.7	2.8	5.2	2.6
1925-29	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.7	5.2	2.8
1920-24	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.5	5.3	2.5
1897-19	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.8	4.7	2.4
	2.6	2.9	3.1	3.0	5.2	2.8

Source: Living in Ireland 1994

## *Appendix 4 (Appendix to Chapter 6)*

**Table 1:** Logit model predicting the proportion of childless marriages by social group for husbands aged 45 and older<sup>1</sup>.

<i>Log odds are reported</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
constant	-2.55*	-2.38*	-7.12*	-6.94
<i>Socio-economic group: (ref. farmers and agricultural workers)</i>				
Service		-0.65**	-0.29	-0.17
Non-manual		-0.52	-0.23	-0.08
Self-employed and supervisory		-0.38	0.14	0.27
Skilled manual		-0.04	0.57	0.71**
Semi-skilled		-0.20	0.12	0.22
Unskilled		0.33	0.49	0.56
<i>Age of wife at marriage</i>			0.15	0.15
<i>Birth Cohort (Ref. 1945-49)</i>				
1940-44				-0.63
1934-39				-0.19
1929-33				-0.58
1924-28				0.16
1919-23				0.69
1896-1918				0.35
-2 (Log-likelihood)		8.96	102.58	14.94
P value (incremental)		0.17	0.00	0.02

Note: \* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05  
Source: Living in Ireland, 1994.

<sup>1</sup> 163 cases were dropped due to missing information, mostly widowed men.