

# Measuring acceptance?

## - Intermarriage levels as an indicator of tolerance in the Finnish context of integration

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### Abstract

*Beyond surveys on racist prejudices there are always underlying assumptions about what are the worsening factors of rejection. The influence of these presuppositions on interpreting the results only comes up when an alternative approach is introduced. It would seem that national traditions do have a role to play in this: the Anglo-Saxon approach of the Chicago School is marked by pragmatic interests on the mechanisms of rejection by racist motives. Especially the negative image of a Black person occupies a central methodological role. Elsewhere, within the Durkheimian tradition of French sociology, neither "race" nor "ethnicity" has been accepted as the basic constructive unit of society. In other words, the ultimate source of social cohesion – and exclusion – cannot be reduced to an issue of "ethnic relations". Therefore it is not enough to fix one's interest on measuring negative "ethnic attitudes" and rejection without paying attention to the coexisting mechanisms of inclusion.*

*The approach briefly introduced in this article stems from the Durkheimian tradition of sociology and anthropology of viewing the integration of immigrants as a gradual process towards assimilation or isolation, eventually segregation. The Durkheimian preference on assimilation is not understood within the Anglo-Saxon tradition of research which gives priority to respecting ethnic differences. As a new recipient country of immigrants from the Third World, Finland provides an example where the prospects of integration of immigrants at times show contradictory tendencies depending on what is examined: integration to the labour market may be difficult but there seems to exist no equivalent obstacle in Finnish attitudes towards intermarriage. The prospects of integration of stigmatised minorities is therefore also a matter of an ideological perspective.*

**Keywords:** Mixed marriage, Finland, racism, Durkheimian vs. Anglo-Saxon method

## Introduction

The paradigms used most often to measure racism usually rely on an underlying assumption that especially visible differences increase any kind of discrimination. Dark complexion acts as a perceptible symbol of otherness especially in the United States; through the influence of the empirically oriented *Chicago School* in the social sciences, 'race' has also attained a methodologically central position in Europe, although it is generally admitted that the historical and perceptual contexts are not similar (Castles & Kosack 1973; Taïeb 1998; Waddington 1992).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, faced with evidence, it would be audacious to claim that the visibility factor has no bearing on the discrimination of immigrants (Lemaine & Ben Brika 1997).

The issue reveals its complexity if we turn our attention to the ultimate reasons for an institutional rejection, as there exists, in parallel, an almost endless continuum of potentially stigmatising differences: age, sex, low social origin, physical handicap, under- or overweight, etc. These factors are equally contextual with history, time and, place. Therefore, if the emphasis is laid on the fact that the concept of difference is prevailing in any human society, and that some differences presumably are more stigmatising and fatal than others, it appears merely simplistic to assume that a sudden arrival of a new different-looking population would generate an invariable and universal form of rejection called "racism".<sup>2</sup> Although the issue of contextuality is often faithfully mentioned, it still does not truly change this basic assumption.

The justified concern about discrimination which accompanies immigration has led to a certain methodological bias where the absence of racism is a remarkable observation that requires explanation, whereas the presence of prejudices is naturally what is expected and what is being constantly measured by surveys (see Thompson 1989). Rejection and aggression are understood as spontaneous, instinctive and institutional reactions whereas acceptance and tolerance are supposed to be something one needs to be educated to possess. The question then arises, how could *spontaneous and institutional acceptance* be measured in quantitative terms?

Our aim in this article is to introduce an alternative perspective in a contemporary Finnish context: the integrative aspects of matrimonial ties, in other words the statistical frequency of mixed marriages, which can be observed as a domain that reflects the tendencies of acceptance in the host country (see E. Todd 1994; M. Tribalat et al. 1996).

<sup>1</sup> The image of the Other in Western societies is entangled with deep-seated mythologies which do share some universal features. Especially the African origin has inspired world-wide mythologies. Both the Arab and Judeo-Christian mythologies carry along long tradition of ambivalent inferiorisation of the Blacks (Dorès 1992, de Negroni 1992); in its modern form, "racism" goes back to the eighteenth century (Poliakov 1982; see also Tiainen-Anttila 1994.) In modern times, there exists another institutional and historically based form of prejudice connected with Islam (Said 1981; Rodinson 1987).

<sup>2</sup> The claimed universality of the prior importance of 'race' has been challenged in the study of history, especially the early colonial history (e.g. Ferro 1994); or in classical antiquity (Thompson 1989; Snowden 1983).

## Determinants of integration as a matter of perspective

The dominant orientation in Finnish research on immigration relies on Anglo-Saxon tradition which stresses the importance of integration to the labour market and the right to cultural identity. The empirically distinguished and widespread approach of the *Chicago School* actually presumes that there exists a distinct racial problem concerning Blacks (Taïeb 1998, 202; Beaud & Noiriel 1991; Semprini 1997).<sup>3</sup> Another remarkable school that has been less considered in the Finnish context is the “*Durkheimian*” or “*French republican*” model, which ignores the concept of ‘race’ as a universal determinant of integration. The focus of attention is on the success or failure of an institution (in the final analysis, the State, with all its juridical apparatus) to “socialise” the newcomers, especially the second generation. Therefore mixed social relations, and eventually mixed marriages, are regarded as important indicators of ‘success’ (see Beaud & Noiriel 1991; Taïeb 1998, 267-272). From the majority’s side, they reflect a level of acceptance. From the minority’s side, they suggest a level of autonomous decisions which override the traditional endogamous matrimonial tendencies, or customs that are against human rights (such as marriages decided by parents) or that are against the *ordre public* (such as polygamy). Perceived from the point of view of social mobility, the promotion of an ethnic basis of social relations is regarded as a dubious way towards the segregation of the poorest groups (see M. Tribalat 1996, 254-255).

In this regard, the Anglo-Saxon tradition in social sciences treats mixed marriages rather from the point of view of individual motivations, and more seldom as a mass phenomenon (e.g. Beigel 1975; Spickard 1989). This is intelligible, taken that the Anglo-Saxon multiculturalist approach values close community ties, as they are supposed to guarantee the internal solidarity of the ethnic groups (e.g. Modood & al 1997; Spickard 1989; Semprini 1997).

Whatever the approach, there are several determinants of integration that are critical, such as the accessibility of the labour market, housing conditions, and access to high education. Among these, access to employment, which often is the scope of general interest, is undeniably a key factor for the new arrivals in a modern wage-earner society. Nonetheless, it could be argued that the so-called ‘matrimonial market’ is less cyclically sensitive than the labour market. Furthermore, the evolution of the levels of intermarriage probably reflects more genuine attitudes on the part of the recipient society than do attitudes garnered through surveys; in this sense it provides a method for reaching beyond the “politically correct”.

<sup>3</sup> Still, using a survey method related to that tradition naturally does not require adopting that assumption (see e.g. Lemaïne & Ben Brika 1997).

## Contribution of anthropology

The introduced perspective to our object of study pays attention to the immigrants' and host country's tendencies to allow or to deny marrying out, known as the dichotomy of exogamy/endogamy in anthropology. Western societies, however, tend to be exclusively exogamous through the influence of Christianity (Goody 1994; Héritier 1994, 109-144). A closer observation of customary limits on marriageability takes us back to the past.

Towards the end of the 17th century, **Frédéric Le Play** discovered and introduced the importance of family structures to explain the differential social and economic development on the scale of Western Europe. Le Play claimed that a certain European type of a household (stem family), with its integral mode of transmitting the paternal estate was the most favourable type to promote regional economy and social stability (Le Play 1989; Clark 1973, 104-109). Le Play's central argument on the connection between family structure, value patterns and socio-economic outcome has contributed to the theory of **Emmanuel Todd** on the determining role of traditional family structures in economic and social development (Todd 1987; 1990; 1994). It is not possible to introduce this theory in its totality here, but we shall introduce the basic idea in as much as it is relevant here.

The basic implication of this approach is that ideologies stem from family structures. As the prevalence of a particular type of family was geographically defined, the ideological value pattern areas are correspondingly regional. The transmission of the ideological values, since it takes place within a family, is more vertical than horizontal (diffusing); that is why local and national ideologies are marked by their persistent nature. Therefore, ideological influences of the traditional anthropological systems still prevail in the modern world despite the disappearance of the traditional family structures (e.g. Todd 1987, 1994; see also Mendras 1997, 148-157; 179-180).

Finally, this theory suggests that matrimonial tendencies, as they represent a central dimension of an anthropological structure, are also to be regarded as manifestations of specific value patterns. Hence, the explicit prohibition to marry a person from a lower caste (as in Southern India) or a non-Muslim man (as in Maghreb countries) is not only a matter of a 'custom'. Neither is it only to be handled as an economically rational arrangement, taken the institutions of bridewealth and dowry: it is equally based on a particular value pattern which differentiates between the marriageable and non-marriageable, the equal and the inferior. Likewise, the rarity of Black-White mixed marriages in the United States is not only a matter of an institutional or personal 'prejudice'. It is based on a certain collectively internalised ideological way of drawing limits on marriageability.

The question of *what* the difference consists of then becomes secondary: 'race', and religion appear only as labels for difference, the importance of which is anthropologically determined. This kind of *non-racial approach to racism* is most faithful to the often repeated notion that human "races" do not exist in any scientific sense (e.g. Boisson 1983; Cavalli-Sforza 1994). "Race" is but a socially constructed concept; therefore the exact meaning of "race" is perhaps not important, but rather the purpose it is used for (Rodriguez & Godero-Guzman 1992). Anyhow, when compared to "race" with all possible reservations, the anthropological factors, such as endo- and exogamy, and matri-, patri- or bilinearity,<sup>4</sup> represent far less ambivalent concepts.

### From global to local dynamics of ethnic mixing

In present times, the global migrations, although they are primarily driven by economic factors and political crisis, offer an ever widening perspective to a "global matrimonial market". A rough overview suggests some distinct tendencies, such as for example the massive emigration of women from the Philippines. In this sense, the Philippines, in as much as its emigration provides female labour for services<sup>5</sup>, can also be characterised as a 'donor country' of female spouses. On the other hand, the immigration of men from the Maghreb and some North African Muslim countries towards Northern Europe and Scandinavia is characterised by motivations to marry a local woman (Wagner & Yamba 1986; Juntunen 1999). Partly this is a result of European mass tourism to those regions. Still, the furthest structural push-factor beyond the phenomenon lies in the crisis of the local economic development which has led to an excess of men of marrying age who cannot fulfil the culturally defined economic norms required to contract a marriage with a local spouse (*ibid.*).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, it is known that immigrants with the same origins integrate or assimilate in different ways in different countries: for instance in Britain, the "Black Caribbeans" from Jamaica are especially disadvantaged as to housing, unemployment and the explosive growth of the number of single-parent families (Modood et al. 1997; 89, 223, 35). In France, the socio-economic parameters of immigrants from the Antilles have not

<sup>4</sup> Explanations of the key concepts as they are defined by E. Todd (1987): *Matrilinearity*: the characteristic of a family system that exalts kinship via women, transmission of property through women, transmission of property through women and the mother's role in the procreation of a child. *Patrilinearity*: the characteristic of a family system that exalts kinship via men, transmission via property through men and the father's role in the procreation of a child. *Bilaterality*: the characteristic of a family system that considers kinship through males and kinship through females as equally important, that transmits property through both men and women, and where the father and mother are considered to have equally important roles in the procreation of a child.

<sup>5</sup> Emigration from the Philippines consists almost exclusively of women moving to Hongkong (90 %) and to Japan (80 %); and the female bias is still remarkable in Australia (65 %). In general, emigration from the Philippines is much more voluminous than from the neighbouring countries, due to massive unemployment concerning also the qualified manpower and the political and military ties to the United States (Rallu & Pictet 1997:294-5).

<sup>6</sup> Juntunen (1999) treats the subject of the immigration of Moroccan men to Finland as a field of culturally defined masculine competition for respect and honour.

shown degrading tendencies, although little can be confirmed at the present stage<sup>7</sup> (Todd 1994, 346-347). As to the effect of skin colour in matrimonial ties in France, the average rate of intermarriage with locals among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa is the same as the average of all first-generation immigrants, 20 % – 30 % (Kuagbénou 1997, 33; see also Taïeb 1998, 267-277).

According to Todd's theory, in the long run the tendencies of matrimonial exchange reflect more the ideological qualities of the dominant group or of the recipient country than the cultural qualities of the immigrants. If, in the long run and across several generations, intermarriages with a certain minority only occur very rarely, it no more reflects a perseverance of the endogamous preferences of that community but a rejection on the part of the dominant society. Admittedly, this approach contains an inner discrepancy because it suggests that a certain prevalence of racist opinions does not necessarily correspond with rates of intermarriages. A classic example of the coexistence of racial hierarchies and remarkable indifference towards ethnic blending has been the case of Brazil (Wade 1999).

## The Finnish context

As a Nordic country, Finland is characterised by a high standard of living, modest income differences and social security (Kangas & Ritakallio 1998), even though the welfare state model has been in a crisis since Finland experienced a severe economic recession in the beginning of the 1990s, leading to mass unemployment. The shift of the last decade was also the period when the first spontaneous asylum seekers arrived in Finland and the number of immigrants began to rise alongside a diversification of their origins. Now, the national economy has recovered, but the Finnish labour market is still unfavourably disposed towards unskilled or semi-skilled immigrants (Paananen 1999).<sup>8</sup>

### Recent increase in immigration

At present, the number of foreign citizens living in Finland permanently is almost 85,000. Despite recent growth, the percentage of the foreign population is only 2 %, a propor-

<sup>7</sup> The massive immigration from the Caribbean to France and to Québec is more recent (about thirty years) than that to the U.K.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the middle of the 1980s foreigners in the Finnish labour market were actually more often employed as upper white-collar workers than Finns and less seldom as blue-collar workers. At the end of the 1990s, the situation of foreign labour in the Finnish labour market resembles more the prevailing circumstances in Western Europe, where immigrants tend to be concentrated in low-paid jobs (Jaakkola 1991). This change is a result of two main factors: first, the growth of immigration itself, in particular of the groups that do not have special education (unlike in the past), and second, to the long-term effects of the mass unemployment at the beginning of the 1990s which reached record figures.



tion which ranks among the lowest in Europe (Statistics Finland 1998). The number of immigrants becomes naturally more important when it is calculated by birthplace – more than 120,000 persons – including those who have acquired Finnish citizenship, but also foreign citizens who have Finnish roots (*ibid.*).

The foreign population living in Finland can roughly be divided in the following manner, depending on their primary reason of arrival and by the country of origin (see Korkiasaari & Söderling 1998; figures updated by the Population Register Dec. 31, 1998).

Until the 1990s the growth in immigration was mostly a result of *return migration*, especially from Sweden, the neighbouring country which attracted Finnish labour in the 1960s and 1970s. After 1990, another conceptually and legally more complicated group of “return migrants”, namely the Ingrian Finns from Russia and Estonia, increased the number of foreigners by over 17,000 persons within a couple of years (see e.g. Kytäjä 1997; Ylänkö 1999). In statistics sampled by nationality, the return migrants form an essential part of the biggest groups, Russians (17,000) Estonians (11,000) and Swedes (7,800).

Since there has not been any systematic recruitment of immigrant labour in Finland, the number of immigrants *who have come to Finland to work* is very modest. Usually they are experts working for multinational companies, language teachers, musicians, or other white-collar workers who also have Finnish spouses. They are mostly of European or North American origin. As such, *marriage* has also been a common primary motive for coming to Finland, especially in the past when there was very little immigration. However, a marriage may eventually overlap with other reasons of arrival, such as studying or working. Finally, in recent years, Finland has received a *growing number of foreign students* from Europe and from Third World countries. The estimated figure of this group of “non-returnees and non-refugees” is around 45,000, including family members.

The first *refugees* following the Second World War came in the 1970s and 1980s, but at that time the groups were very small, a few hundred people from Chile and Vietnam. Since 1986, Finland has had an annual quota of 500–1000 refugees. The number of refugees rose sharply in 1990–93 because of the arrival of the first spontaneous asylum seekers from Somalia. Since then Finland has received a growing number of refugees from Africa (especially Somalia, but also from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia), the Near-East (especially Iraq and Iran), and the former Yugoslavia. Altogether, the number of refugees who have a residence permit is about 16,500, including family members.

## Rise of racist discrimination

Throughout the last ten years, attitudes towards the reception of refugees have been rather negative. The general prejudice is that non-European immigrants are a socio-economic threat, and there is a general fear about eventual misuse of the welfare system (Jaakkola 1999, 67). According to the findings of several surveys carried out among Finns, especially Russians, Arabs, Turks and the Somalians are the target of the most negative attitudes (Jaakkola 1995; 1996).

Studying the labour market is a field of its own; therefore we shall only quote some elementary data concerning the employment prospects of the immigrants in the current situation.<sup>9</sup> As to general trends, according to the data of the Ministry of Labour from September 30, 1999, the estimated unemployment rate of foreigners (by citizenship) from Western Europe is remarkably lower (10–20 %) than that of Estonians (35 %) and Russians/immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union (54 %). The rate of unemployment is highest among immigrants from Iraq (97 %), Iran (85 %), and Somalia (77 %). As for the least accepted nationalities to Finland, according to surveys, the percentage of unemployment is quite high also among Moroccans (57 %) and Turks (38 %).

When it comes to the smaller nationality groups, the statistics of the Employment Exchange bureau, the figures of unemployment of the labour force from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean are well above average. When calculated simply from the number of registered jobseekers (N=1,906), the average rate of unemployment of the 'Black'<sup>10</sup> labour force was 77 % in August 1999.

Even if the data used here is elementary, it seems to be a fact that darkish complexion as a visible sign of foreign origin hinders integration to Finnish society. Moreover, the unemployment figures of immigrants coming from predominantly Muslim countries are above the average (39 %), except in the case of Turkey – the figure is slightly lower. Already in 1991, before the mass unemployment, Jaakkola found indicators of an ethnic hierarchy in the Finnish labour market where different nationalities tend towards occupations that varied in both prestige and nature (Jaakkola 1991). Ever since, the employment prospects of immigrants have not been encouraging. In her latest study, Jaakkola (1999, 100) confirmed that the ethnic hierarchies in Finland follow international trends in that attitudes are most negative towards different-looking, culturally and distantly remote immigrants. A recent study by Paananen suggested that the discrimina-

<sup>9</sup> Estimating the unemployment rate in Finland is complicated for several reasons, some of which are purely technical and shared by many other European countries. These difficulties become even more significant when it comes to measuring the unemployment of the foreign labour force.

<sup>10</sup> Note: The Anglo-American way to define "Blacks" which we are following here is truly ill-placed in the Finnish context: This figure includes Somalians who are also - or rather - associated to rigid interpretations of Islam. Finnish population registers use no ethnic distinctions, which means that the ethnic origin must be deduced from native language and birthplace. Therefore we can only assume that the individuals gathered by this sampling method are "non-whites". It must be emphasised that this information is gathered by foreign citizenship: it is likely that those who have Finnish citizenship are also better employed.



tion of the foreign labour force in the labour market is largely explained by the critical weight that is put on "Finnishness". Therefore, the labour market would not seem to be a particularly favourable arena for social integration (Paananen 1999, 130).

### Prospects of integration through matrimonial ties

As an indicator of integration, the proportion of mixed marriages shares some features in common with the rates of employment in the labour market: different rates of intermarriage between foreigners and the local population also reflect tendencies of rejection or acceptance and are likely to reveal something essential about the predominant ethnic hierarchies. Like an esteemed and well-paid post, marriage to a local person may also mean access to social ascension for descendants.

Mixed marriage is understood here as a statistical indicator of absence of prejudices; the general levels of intermarriage are supposed to reflect ongoing processes of assimilation and the degrees of acceptance on the part of the recipient country, but solely *at a mass level*, with the expectation that the existence of a mass phenomenon that is directly related to moral issues presupposes a certain tolerance on a collective level. This means that individual cases or motivations do not explain a mass phenomenon: indeed, Durkheim (1973 (1895), 2) insisted that collective consciousness and behaviour obey a logic of their own, and are by nature different from the individual psyche.

There are naturally many intervening factors such as class and wealth that must be taken into account. For instance, if certain mixed marriages tend to correlate with unemployment and low education of the local spouses, it can hardly be regarded as a sign of integration, at least in terms of equality. Nonetheless, as the structures of Finnish society are still relatively homogenous (Kangas & Ritakallio 1998), the level of intermarriage as pure data may give us some hints on acceptance and possible determinants. In this sense, even divorce is a secondary phenomenon as we are aiming to measure the rate of a certain aptitude, a "capacity of assimilation", in the first place.

Observed in the Finnish population, Table 1 (page 188) shows that the number of mixed marriages has risen gradually keeping pace with the number of foreigners.<sup>11</sup> At present, Finnish men are slightly more likely than Finnish women to contract mixed marriages.

In this overview, we will observe the effect of two possibly stigmatising factors, first, Islam in regard to women, and second, dark skin complexion, all the more as both are seemingly disadvantageous factors according to opinion surveys and in terms of obtaining employment. In doing this, we are fully aware that statistically, the sample is modest and that the duration of residency in Finland is short, on average far less than 15 years.

<sup>11</sup> Note: all the data in this paper concern only mixed marriages in which both spouses live permanently in Finland.

Table 1. Mixed marriages contracted by Finns in Finland 1987-1997

Year	Frequency of mixed marriages contracted by Finnish men	Proportion of all marriages %	Frequency of mixed marriages contracted by Finnish women	Proportion of all marriages %
1987	515	2.0	875	3.3
1988	574	2.2	873	3.4
1989	773	3.2	933	3.8
1990	917	3.7	1305	5.2
1991	1,018	4.2	1516	6.1
1992	1,083	4.5	944	4.0
1993	991	4.0	1309	5.3
1994	986	4.0	1199	4.8
1995	1,041	4.3	1036	4.4
1996	1,194	4.8	1142	4.7
1997	1,304	5.4	1140	4.9

Source: Statistics Finland

Besides, many foreigners, especially refugees, are already married when they come to Finland. These factors would be fatal if our aim were to forecast the rate of intermarriage in numerical terms or if we were to claim that the reason for coming to Finland did not regulate the marrying behaviour. In this context, we are simply interested in comparing the percentages of intermarriage of the foreigner groups in order to possibly identify some consistent trends.

Thus, Table 2 presents the frequencies of mixed marriage from the perspective of the foreigners by birthplace. Of all the marriages in this population, the average level of intermarriage to a Finn is 47 %, which in practise means that half of the married foreigners (calculated by country of origin) have Finnish spouses.<sup>12</sup> The age structure of the population of foreign origin differs from the general age structure in Finland, as the proportion of persons of working age is larger. Consequently, the marriage rate by citizenship is higher among the foreign population, 47.6 %, than among Finns, where it is 39.2 % (Statistics Finland 1997).

Table 2. Level of intermarriage among the foreign-born in Finland Dec. 31, 1997

Foreign population by country of origin	Total N	Men %	Women %	Married %	Spouse Finnish total, %	Men %	Women %
	117,995	49.9	50.1	42.1	47.4	46.2	48.7

Source: Statistics Finland

<sup>12</sup> The age factor is missing, but keeping in the recentness of immigration and the absence of the second generation of immigrants it is not necessary. As the level of intermarriage is calculated from all present marriages among foreigners, it automatically works as a selective factor of the underaged.

The average level, however, does not reveal the interesting fact that the spouses of Finnish men and women tend to come from different countries and different parts of the world. The importance of geographical distance is clearly demonstrated here as the neighbouring countries, Russia and Sweden, score high in the number of intermarriages.

To investigate the trends in mixed marriages among the foreign-born population in Finland, Table 3, which was commissioned from *Statistics Finland* shows the intermarriages of the most important foreigner groups by country or origin.

Table 3. Proportion of persons born abroad (whose number by country of origin is over 1,000) married to a Finnish spouse as observed by country of origin, Dec. 31, 1997

Country of origin	Total	Men %	Women %	Married %	Total level of intermarriages where spouse Finnish, by birthplace, %	Level of intermarriage among men, %	Level of intermarriage among women, %
Ex-Soviet Union	27,542	37	63	54	34	17	45
Sweden	27,426	51	49	44	87	89	88
Estonia	6,467	44	56	44	19	4	29
Yugoslavia	3,620	56	44	50	8	14	2
Somalia	3,838	55	45	43	2 (1.5)	2 (2.3)	1 (0.6)
Germany	2,894	61	39	40	79	81	75
USA	2,769	51	49	41	76	79	71
Gt. Britain	2,376	68	32	44	79	80	73
Vietnam	2,582	49	51	51	5	3	8
Iraq	2,322	59	41	42	4	6	2
Turkey	1,799	79	21	57	49	60	8
China	1,679	50	50	65	10	5	15
Iran	1,592	62	38	47	15	23	2.3
Thailand	1,304	26	76	47	58	33	99
Russia	1,282	39	61	54	32	11	42
Poland	1,153	46	54	58	57	50	64
Canada	1,114	49	51	42.1	79	76	83

\*The high percentage of Sweden is largely due to return migration of the descendants of the Finnish emigrants.

Source: Statistics Finland

As to general trends, it seems that women from the East and men from the South are most likely to marry a Finn; the former case being more frequent than the latter. This bias might be illusory because Finnish women who contract a mixed marriage are perhaps more likely to emigrate: the data used here concerns only mixed marriages in Finland. It is noteworthy that the countries of Europe show quite equal tendencies in intermarriages. The irregularities between the sexes are especially important in the cases of Thailand and Estonia: it is much more likely that a Thai or Estonian woman marries

a Finnish man than vice versa. On the other hand, the case of Turkey presents a contrary example in which there is a strong masculine dominance in mixed marriages. Unlike what one would expect with common sense, the statistics on tourism (to Finland or voyages out of Finland) do not explain these differences.<sup>13</sup> Yet it is unknown to what degree the mixed marriages of Finnish men to Thai women are organised by marriage agencies. Nonetheless, the initial question concerning the reason for the gender-specific matrimonial preferences remains open even if there are clear distinctions between male and female tourism. In other words, they would only suggest that the geographical or ethnic preferences of the future spouse already exist prior to the first meeting.

Another intelligible explanation for the disparities between the origin and sex of the foreign spouse are of course cultural differences. In many traditional cultures women stay close to the kin and family to an extent where they simply are not accessible to alien men. This feature is often attributed to religious factors, especially to Islam which formally prohibits women from marrying a non-Muslim.<sup>14</sup> Islam would then be a negative determinant of integration for women in the matrimonial market.

In order to test that assumption, Table 4 shows the frequency of intermarriage between a Finnish man and woman from a Muslim country. The faith of an individual is not crucial here as we are more interested in the ideological and religious background. The

Table 4. Mixed marriages of women born in countries where Islam is the predominant religion, Dec. 31, 1997

Country	Total	Women	Women who are married	Married to a Finnish man	Level of intermarriage, %
Somalia	3,838	1,713	801	5	0.6
Iraq	2,322	951	424	7	1.7
Iran	1,598	603	306	7	2.3
Morocco	915	119	82	19	23.2
Turkey	1,799	375	205	17	8.3
Algeria	400	43	23	5	21.7
Egypt	379	46	25	7	28
Tunisia	255	25	15	1	6.7
Bangladesh	357	96	64	1	1.6
Pakistan	312	89	44	1	2.3
Lebanon	264	77	49	11	22.4
Jordan	118	24	12	1	8.3
Syria	154	54	30	9	30
Malaysia	202	85	39	20	51.3
Indonesia	97	52	27	18	66.7

Source: Statistics Finland

<sup>13</sup> As to Thailand, in 1997, there were an estimated 7,334 voyages made by Finnish men versus 14,611 made by Finnish women. In the case of Turkey, there were an estimated 27,412 men and 56,065 women (Statistics Finland).

<sup>14</sup> The interdiction to marry a non-Muslim is traditionally based on the Koran, surah 2:220 and 60:10.

numbers of married women are of course very small but as an idea, the negative correlation of Muslim women and frequency of intermarriage seems quite logical in most of the cases, though not all: as opposed to this trend, the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia present a very sharp contrast with levels of intermarriage of 51 % and 67 %. This irregularity becomes even more interesting when considering that Indonesia is one of the most Muslim countries in the world. The explanation is then most likely in the nature of Islam, which in the Indonesian case allows female exogamy because of the underlying local matrilineal structure.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the disparities in the matrimonial market are rather due to anthropological determinants than to Islam itself, the extension of which usually overlaps with patrilineal zones.

Finally, as for studying the colour prejudice, Table 5 shows the levels of intermarriage among the population originally from sub-Saharan Africa who would be classified as "Black" within the Anglo-American tradition of Ethnic Studies. Even though it is not possible to contrast these figures with the rates of unemployment, it is still interesting that the result, which shows very high frequencies, opens up a totally different perspective: if dark skin<sup>16</sup> is a stigmatising factor on the labour market, it seems that when it comes to measuring acceptance by matrimonial ties, dark skin complexion would no more be a disadvantage when it comes to men – with the exception of Somalians,

Table 5. Impact of skin colour. Mixed marriages of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Jamaica, Dec. 31, 1997

Country of origin	Total	Men %	Women %	Married %	Total level of intermarriages where spouse Finnish, by birthplace %	Level of intermarriage among men %	Level of intermarriage among women %
Somalia	3,838	55	45	43	2 (1.5)	2 (2.3)	1 (0.6)
Ethiopia	628	58	42	37	28	30	23
ex-Zaire	274	65	35	51	25	65	0
Ghana	259	76	23	60	51	58	21
Nigeria	230	87	13	61	64	69	14
Gambia	197	92	8	64	73	75	38
Other Sub-Saharan Africa	1,043	61	39	47	46	54	43
Jamaica	31	71	29	52	75	85	33

Source: Statistics Finland

<sup>15</sup> The tolerance of exogamy is by far not the only exceptional feature of Islam in Indonesia but is accompanied by a number of other indicators favorable to women, such as the decline of fertility, equal juvenile mortality and high level of education among women (see Gourbage 1997).

<sup>16</sup> As in Finland there exist no official institutional terms for somatic differences referring to ethnic origin, we use the term "dark skinned" which in Finnish (*tummaihoinen*) is a neutral but vague qualification; the meaning of "skin colour" in this article refers to a contrast to pale skin, which is extreme in the case of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. We consciously avoid the English terms "coloured" or "Black" as they refer philologically to "a one-drop-rule principle" of classifying races in a fixed manner in which descriptive intermediate categories are missing (see Saada 1996).



whose family structures are subordinated by endogamous practises. Measuring African women's rates of intermarriage introduces problems because the overwhelming majority are already married at the time of arrival.

## Discussion

The discovery, then, of our general comparison of the labour and matrimonial market is the paradox that *there are groups, i.e. immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, who are rejected by the labour market but who are accepted in the matrimonial market. Could there be any coherent logic behind that?*

Perhaps not. Nevertheless, a cross-generational approach to the problem might unlock the immediate contradiction. To better understand this dimension, we suggest re-examining the results of Magdalena Jaakkola (1999) with Table 6 which reflects attitudes towards certain racist arguments<sup>17</sup>:

Table 6. (M. Jaakkola 1999, 222) Attitudes towards certain racist arguments in 1993 and 1998 (%). (Columns selected and translated from Finnish to English by the present author.)

	Totally agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Totally disagree	No opinion	N
<i>"People of some races are simply not equipped to live in a modern society."</i>						
1993	20	31	22	22	5	100 (1,035)
1998	12	30	19	33	6	100 (1,020)
<i>"It is better for society if people from different cultures live separated and do not mix together."</i>						
1998	5	14	30	46	4	100 (1,020)
<i>"It is against the laws of nature for people of different races to have children together."</i>						
1998	3	10	19	66	3	100 (1,020)

As to the first statement, we see that in 1998 altogether 42 % were favourable to the idea that *"people of certain races are simply not equipped to live in a modern society"*. However, the level of racist opinions is mitigated when it comes to the question of offspring. Only 19 % sympathised with the idea that *"It is better for society if people from different cultures live separated and do not mix together"*. When the question is put in concrete terms, *"It is against the laws of nature for people of different races to have children together"*, the proportion of those who fully or partly approved drops to 13 %.

<sup>17</sup> In her survey M. Jaakkola also studied *attitudes* towards mixed marriages. After standardising the respondents' background, age, education and occupation did not explain positive attitudes towards mixed marriages with Russians, Estonians, Germans, the Sámi and Romany; and Muslims. Education explained positive attitudes towards Jews. Religiosity explained positive attitudes towards Romanys and Jews (Jaakkola 1999, 95-99).

Our aim is not to challenge the interpretations of Jaakkola on the existence of ethnic hierarchies but to continue with the analyses in a new direction: On one hand, it is a fact that a different physical appearance and Islamic religion are perceived with disfavour. On the other, the question of descentance is yet a different one. In other words, prejudice against certain immigrants and even mixed parentage does not determine the prejudice towards the offspring. At the present early stage of immigration in Finland, we do not know the extent to which somatic or religious differences will become socially significant categories in a future generation. In conclusion, a methodological understanding which associates a fixed difference (religious, cultural or somatic distance, the latter being popularly called 'race') with rejection may not be able to identify opposite tendencies where personal value becomes dissociated from a stigmatising origin or ascendance.

At present, the findings on attitudes (see above) and the relatively high rates of intermarriage in Finland reveal assimilationist tendencies, although from the point of view of sheer visibility, it would make sense since the majority of Finns are 'pale Nordic people'. There is not much systematic effort to go beyond the differentiating labels of "ethnicity", "race" or "culture". An analysis on the anthropological value-pattern determinants in the Finnish case may offer an interesting perspective in the future.

There are still several serious problems with the method we introduced. Marriage is losing its ground as a factor directly related to other demographic indicators such as birth rate, especially in the Nordic countries.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, rates of mixed cohabitation pose technical problems and raises again questions about the reasons why the couple is not willing to legalise the relation: are the reasons similar to those among the local population or is it because of the stigmatising nature of the relation? In the Finnish case, a very important question that cannot be answered at the present stage is whether intermarrying will become a slow and constant phenomenon in the future or not. The mixed marriages contracted by the first generation of foreigners are problematic indicators in a sense that a marriage may take place before and without any other milestones of integration, such as learning the local language and getting employment.

Marriage that is contracted for the sake of obtaining a residence permit represents a distinct problem because in such a case the motives are not commensurate with 'ordinary' marriages that take place among the residents of the host country. Finally, this method is by no means free of ideological misuse. If governments have been accused of dissimulating racist discrimination in the labour market, it is equally true that over

<sup>18</sup> The rising divorce rate and cohabitation have contributed to the decrease in the number of wedded couples. In 1997, married couples accounted for 69 % of all families, but cohabitation is the lifestyle among young couples. As many as 50 % of the first-born children are born out of wedlock today, but the parents often get married later on, the respective percentage of the third-born being only 25 %. See Statistics Finland 1998.

history some have intentionally glorified and exaggerated the magnitude of matrimonial mixity and ethnic blending (Ferro 1994). In Europe, the latest and very dramatic case was revealed by the war in Bosnia (Bougarel 1996, 87).<sup>19</sup>

For a social scientist who is familiar with Anglo-Saxon literature, the notion of a "matrimonial market" as a field to measure integration may appear very strange, if not ironic. Nevertheless, it is no more an abstraction than the labour market. In modern times, only the latter is regarded as a public political matter.<sup>20</sup> In today's post-industrial welfare society, the choice of a companion undoubtedly comes within the private sphere of life (Mendras 1997, 189). Nonetheless, according to the vision of Durkheim, in any society there are lots of rules concerning behaviour that are collectively internalised to an extent that an individual person cannot be conscious of the all the determining factors beyond his/her choices, although they may appear to the individual as independent decisions (Durkheim 1973 (1897)). That is why ultimately nothing but the ideological atmosphere, stemming from anthropological factors with their particular value patterns, can explain why in the long run, in certain regions, certain countries, mixed marriages occur more often than in others.

<sup>19</sup> During the conflict in 1992-1995, several surprised voices recalled the high frequencies of intermarrying which were oftentimes evoked as evidence of the 'traditional tolerance' of the Bosnian society. The studies of Bougarel revealed that mixed marriages occurred frequently only in urban and elitist areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whereas the rural areas were characterised by an important ethnic diversity to an extent that the general level of intermarriages, 12 %, on the contrary attested to the permanence of communitarian ethnic borders. On the contrary, on the level of the entire Former Yugoslavia, the average level of 12 % was undeniably important.

<sup>20</sup> In the past, intermarrying has been understood as a state affair, as is known, there has been laws that prohibit intermarriages between "races". On the other hand, within the Portuguese empire the glorification of intermixing reached a level of conscious building of a myth in the 1930s (Ferro 1994, 185).

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