

WHY ARE IRISH ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRANTS AMONG THE MOST LIBERAL IN EUROPE?

Testing structural determinants in a comparative context

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ABSTRACT: There has been a dramatic inflow of immigrants into Ireland in recent years. Yet recent European Social Surveys indicate that Irish attitudes towards immigrants are among the most liberal in Europe. We test the association between a number of economic and cultural measures and attitudes to immigrants at the aggregate national level. Although Ireland fits the expected association and in the predicted direction the most notable feature of our results is the lack of a clear pattern between these measures and attitudes to immigrants across the European countries in the sample.

Key words: Irish attitudes; immigrants; structural determinants; European comparison

1. Introduction

The recent upsurge in immigration into Ireland represents a unique case in the European context. In most European countries there was considerable net inward immigration since the Second World War (see Garson and Loizillon 2003). By contrast, for a prolonged period of time from the 1840s to the 1950s, Ireland experienced a constant decline in population due essentially to emigration outflows. Although the population decline peaked in the 1950s, emigration remained for many the only prospect for obtaining employment well into the 1990s. However, the dramatic economic growth and expansion of employment in the late 1990s changed Ireland from a country of emigration to one of net immigration. Since 2000 the Irish economy has been the fastest growing in the European Union. The numbers employed in the labour force increased

from 1.33 million in 1996 to 1.93 million by the middle of 2005 – an increase of 45 percent of the employed labour force in less than 10 years.

According to the 2006 census, 10 percent (420,000) of the resident Irish population were non-Irish nationals (CSO 2007a). Non-Irish nationals make up an even greater proportion of the labour force, accounting for approximately 17 percent by the end of 2006 (CSO 2007b). Overall, the total number of non-Irish nationals is forecast to increase to 20 percent of the total population by 2020 (NCB 2006). Indeed, the OECD has suggested that the percentage of non-Irish national workers in the Irish labour force is higher than in the UK and most other EU countries (OECD 2004). However, it is not just the increasing proportion of immigrants in the labour force and population but also the speed of the changes that are unprecedented. For example, in Britain it took 40 years, from 1951 to 2001, for the proportion of immigrants to increase from 4.2 to 8.3 percent compared to less than 10 years in the Irish case (National Statistics [UK] n.d.). This acceleration in the proportion of immigrants in the labour force in recent years may act to dampen liberal attitudes and it may be that attitudes towards immigrants will become less positive over time. Yet results from two rounds of a European survey indicate that Irish attitudes are among the most positive or liberal¹ towards immigrants in Europe and these positive attitudes are increasing over time. This paper attempts to explain why Irish attitudes are relatively liberal using a number of structural rather than individual factors. Our method of approach is to relate aggregate mean attitudes to economic and sociological measures at the national level and to test the validity of these measures through country comparisons.

2. Attitudes to immigrants in Ireland

Four questions measuring issues of access for immigrants and the perceived impact of immigrants on economy and society are used here to gauge attitudes towards immigrants.² The data comes from the first two

1. Liberal as used here is interpreted as having broad and generous sympathies, a tolerance of the ideas and behaviour of others who are different and a tolerance of change rather than being bound by authoritarianism, orthodoxy, or tradition. In short, liberal attitudes towards the impact of immigrants are associated with greater cultural and economic acceptance of immigrants.
2. Immigrants are defined in the survey as someone born, brought up and living outside (the respondent's country). Thus, a number of the questions on attitudes to immigrants do not clearly distinguish between those coming from inside and outside of Europe as a single group. Since attitudes to western and non-western immigrants could plausibly be significantly different, the responses in the ESS survey may be biased in either direction.

rounds of the European Social Survey. In Table 1 the mean scores of these measures are compared for 13 countries (Italy and Luxemburg are omitted) in the European Union in 2002 and 2004. Ireland is ranked as the second most liberal country in first survey after Sweden in allowing people of a different race from most people in the country to come and live here. There was no change in the 2004 survey and Ireland again ranked as the second most liberal country. In contrast, there was a considerable shift in attitudes towards the economic and cultural impact of immigrants between the two surveys. In 2002 the mean score for Irish perceptions of whether immigration was good for the economy ranked sixth. However, in the later survey Ireland ranked as the most liberal of the European countries regarding the positive impact of immigrants on the economy. Similarly, there was a positive shift in Irish perceptions of the impact of immigrants on the country's culture from ninth to fourth most liberal country between the two surveys and also a positive shift in attitudes towards immigrants

TABLE 1. Attitudes to allowing immigrants access, economic and cultural impact – 13 EU countries (Italy and Luxemburg are the omitted countries)

| Measure | 2002 ESS | | 2004 ESS | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| | Ireland | EU Mean | Ireland | EU Mean |
| 1. Allow different ethnic race in Irish ranking in the EU | 2.70 2nd most liberal country | 2.49 | 2.74 2nd most liberal country | 2.46 |
| 2. Immigration – good for the economy* Irish ranking in the EU | 4.98 6th most positive country | 5.03 | 5.82 1st most positive country | 4.84 |
| 3. Immigrants make it better place to live Irish ranking in the EU | 5.33 3rd most positive country | 4.80 | 5.63 2nd most positive country | 4.78 |
| 4. Immigration – enriches culture Irish ranking in the EU | 5.59 9th most positive country | 5.81 | 5.84 4th most positive country | 5.63 |

Description of measures:

Question 1: To what extent do you think [your country] should allow people of a different race or ethnic group from most people [in your country] to come and live here?

Scored: 4 = Allow many to live here; 3 = Allow some; 2 = Allow a few; 1 = Allow none.

Question 2: Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries. Scored on an 11-point scale from 0 = take away jobs, take more, bad for the economy to 10 = create jobs, put in more and good for economy.

Question 3: Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? Scored on an 11-point scale from 0 = culture undermined to 10 = culture enriched.

Question 4: Is the [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? Scored on an 11-point scale from 0 = makes it a worst place to live to 10 = makes it a better place to live.

Source: European Social Survey 2002/2004.

making the country a better place to live, from third to second in the 2004 survey.

Thus, the cross-sectional survey evidence of two European Social Surveys indicates that the attitudes of the Irish toward immigrants are ranked among the most liberal in Europe.

3. Determinants of attitudes towards immigrants

The formation of attitudes towards immigrants is a complex process influenced by an extensive range of factors. Hernes and Knudsen (1992) provide a useful framework or model of the factors that give rise to a sense of relative deprivation that is likely to influence attitudes towards immigrants. Relative deprivation arises out of a feeling of injustice when others (a reference group) receive more than they should in relation to their efforts and social position irrespective of whether it is based on a real or assumed difference. If an individual or group's interests or values are perceived to be threatened (e.g., by immigrants) this may lead to negative reactions. Thus, one group may feel it is losing out to another when changes in the established order make them look worse off than before – a sense of relative deprivation. Consequently, more negative attitudes towards immigrants are likely to be associated with those groups most likely to experience relative deprivation. Essentially, groups and individuals in vulnerable positions are most likely to develop negative attitudes. Both structural and individual factors are assumed to influence relative deprivation and affect attitudes towards immigrants. In the latter case, attitudes are affected by educational level, income, occupation (measures of vulnerability in the labour market), gender and the individual's basic beliefs and values. Structural factors attempt to measure the impact of shifts in the social and economic structure including the labour market, education, welfare, national cultural values and the proportion of and integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants. Since our focus here is on country comparisons, the individual level factors such as gender, education and occupation are effectively controlled for and structural factors assume a dominant explanatory role. Here we examine the effects on attitudes to immigrants of two structural factors: the economy and labour market, and secondly cultural and ethnic differences between the immigrant and host populations.

The economic consequences of immigration for the native population have received considerable attention as an explanation of hostile attitudes towards immigrants. It is often suggested that native people's attitude to immigrants reflects their narrow economic self-interest (Fetzer 2000); in particular, the threat that natives will be displaced in the labour market and immigrants will be a burden to the welfare state (Borjas *et al.* 1997;

Borjas 1999). It has been argued that the institutions of the Nordic welfare state are incompatible with mass migration experienced during the last two decades and that the financial burden of immigration can be substantial (Editorial 2004; Andersen 2004). Nannestad (2004), for example, observes that the Danish experience would seem to suggest that unchecked immigration and a redistributive welfare state are difficult to reconcile. However, his study focused solely on non-western rather than western immigrants. This is an important distinction as immigrants from non-western countries have been net beneficiaries of the Danish state for a long period due to lower labour market participation rates and high unemployment rates compared to both immigrants from western countries and native Danes (Nannestad 2004).

Economic self-interest predicts that being disproportionately harmed by immigration or the perception that this is the case will increase opposition to immigration (Fetzer 2000: 3). Those most likely to be harmed by immigration and experience a sense of relative deprivation are those at the bottom of the social hierarchy such as the low skilled and unemployed. Increases in numbers of immigrants into a country are often opposed on the basis of fears that significant inflows of foreign workers will increase unemployment, depress wages and lead to a decline in the employment of national workers who are available for low-skilled work (OECD 2001). These native workers fear that employers are likely to substitute immigrant labour for native workers since the former are cheaper (Roy 1997). Foreigner workers tend to occupy blue collar rather than white-collar jobs and tend to be concentrated in particular industries such as construction, catering, health care and services to households (OECD 2001). Moreover, immigrants usually command lower wages than native-born workers when they initially arrive in the host country (Friedberg 2000). However, most studies in Western Europe have indicated that the negative effect of immigration on native wage levels is small and the impact on employment is relatively negligible (see Coppel *et al.* 2001; ILO 2004).

Indeed, migration can be beneficial in generating economic benefits for the host country³ (Borjas 1994). In the EU immigrant workers help address specific labour shortages and the problems associated with aging populations in the EU (OECD 2000). Temporary employment of

3. A rough estimate of the possible annual net direct tax returns (including PRSI) to the Irish state, based on the number of immigrants working in Ireland of 171, 100 (QNHS 2006), ranges from 203 million euro to 455 million euro (single earner assumed). The lower figure is calculated at earnings of 8 euro per hour (national minimum wage rate is 7.65 euro per hour) for a 40-hour week for all non-Irish nationals and the higher figure is based on earnings of 12 euro per hour for a 40-hour week. In addition, employers' PRSI ranges from 306 million to 460 million euro. Aside from direct taxes, immigrants also contribute through indirect taxes on purchased goods and services.

foreigners brings flexibility into a labour market, relieving labour shortages, particularly during economic upswings, and facilitates further economic expansion. In this case immigrants and native workers are 'complementary' inputs in production (Roy 1997). Immigration in itself creates a demand for goods and services thereby increasing the demand for labour, while at the same time providing a flexible labour reserve (Coppel *et al.* 2001; Ben-Gad 2004). Nevertheless, perceptions of relative deprivation are likely to occur in those countries experiencing high unemployment and economic difficulties giving rise to higher levels of hostile attitudes to immigrants.

In the Irish case perceptions of relative deprivation are likely to be relatively weak given the buoyant economic climate. Unemployment remained among the lowest in Europe, fluctuating around 4 percent between 2002 and 2005, and there appears to be no evidence that the wages of Irish nationals have been depressed.⁴ The influx of immigrants has more likely acted to dampen down wage rates for immigrant workers in the low skill service sectors of the economy (see Barrett *et al.* 2006). Nor is there any evidence that immigrants have had a negative impact on the jobs of Irish nationals. Unemployment has averaged around 4 percent in recent years with no discernible upward trend. In a rapidly expanding labour force it is most likely that many Irish workers have experienced upward mobility or at least a greater range of occupational opportunities. Immigrants are predominantly employed in relatively low skill occupations, particularly since the accession of 10 new states into the EU in 2004 with full access to the Irish labour market (Fitzgerald 2006: 19). In the main, rather than displacing Irish nationals, immigrants are more likely filling the latter type of jobs.⁵ Evidence from the US suggests that labour markets are highly segregated, with immigrant labour concentrated in some occupations and native workers in others with immigrants competing with one another far more than they compete with natives (Smith and Edmonston 1997: 218). Given the performance of the Irish economy and

4. There is some evidence of a reversal to the trend of relative increases in unskilled wage rates since 2002 that may be due to the take up of unskilled jobs by immigrants (Barrett *et al.* 2006; Fitzgerald 2006). In the United States, Borjas *et al.* (1997) estimate that immigration in the period between 1980 and 1995 accounted for 44 percent of the 11 percent decline in the relative wages of high-school dropouts.

5. However, a recent report on school leavers indicates an increase in unemployment one year after leaving second level education (of those who chose to seek employment) between 1999 and 2004. Unemployment levels show an increase from 6 percent in 1999 to 8 percent in 2002 and 11 percent in 2004 (Gorby *et al.* 2005). Employment of school leavers is generally in the lower skill occupations. The industrial sector remains the largest employer accounting for over one-third of school leavers in 2004, followed by Distribution (30%) and Personnel Services (21%).

labour market the perception of relative economic deprivation among native individuals and groups is likely to be weaker compared to other European countries.

4. H.1: Ireland's comparatively liberal attitudes towards immigrants are a result of a benign economic and labour market environment

A second major explanation of hostile attitudes to immigrants, unrelated to economic considerations, stresses that opposition to immigrants may be motivated by reasons related to the cultural and ethnic difference of the immigrant population (Dustmann and Preston 2004). Hostility may arise from a fear of loss of national identity or a taste for cultural homogeneity. Anti-immigrant sentiment may arise from strong feelings of national identity and a sense of national superiority in which there are well-understood and accepted social norms (Rourke and Sinnot 2006). As Dustmann and Preston (2004: 3) note, 'there is ample evidence that deeply rooted hostility exists towards immigration groups with largely different cultural and ethnic background'. Indeed, early research on attitudes to immigrants in the United States, Australia and New Zealand revealed a relatively uniform hierarchy of preferences for immigrants of different national backgrounds, with North Western Europeans the most preferred followed by Southern and Eastern Europeans and with non-European groups at the bottom of the hierarchy (Trlin and Johnston 1973). Thus, the most acceptable groups are those which appear to be the most similar to the core culture or the least physically dissimilar to members of the host society (Trlin and Johnson 1973: 184). The closer the cultural similarity of immigrants with the host country culture the more likely social interaction is to occur between immigrants and natives (Ellison and Powers 1994). Social interaction and social exposure through established friendship networks of immigrants has been found to be a consistent predictor of positive attitudes towards immigrants (Hayes and Dowds 2006). More recent evidence from the UK appears to confirm this hierarchy of preference. Dustmann and Preston (2004) found that a negative attitude towards further immigration into the UK is strongly associated with immigrants of an Asian or Indian origin, the two groups that are ethnically more different.

In this vein the Western European origin of the majority of the immigrants coming to Ireland may be a critical factor in the formation of positive attitudes towards immigrants. Given the European or western origin of a majority of immigrants coming to Ireland we expect Irish attitudes to immigrants to be relatively more liberal compared to other European countries. Moreover, it is unlikely that the bulk of these

immigrants will form ethnic enclaves. The development of an enclave requires clear distinctions and differences between host country natives and immigrant experiences sufficient to produce a 'reactionary solidarity' that becomes a resource for members of the group (Schmitter Heisler 2000: 81). A number of factors can be suggested that militate against the emergence of ethnic enclaves among the new immigrants in Ireland. Firstly, new immigrants since 2004 are predominantly from the new accession states of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, are young (Barrett *et al.* 2006: 4) and likely to have a high return rate to the country of origin. Secondly, those who remain for longer periods of time are likely to substantially improve their linguistic and social competence. Also these immigrants have significantly higher levels of education than the native population – over half of immigrants have third level qualifications compared to just over a quarter of the native population (Barrett *et al.* 2006: 6–7). Thus, long-term immigrants are unlikely to be confined to occupations in the low skilled sector of the labour market. Finally, geographical distance and cheap transport costs makes a transition back to the home country an easy option if, for example, there is a recession in the Irish economy.

5. H.2: Irish liberal attitudes result from the relatively small differences in the cultural and ethnic background between immigrants and Irish natives compared to other European countries

Here we examine both the economic and racial/cultural factors to explain Irish attitudes to immigrants relative to other European Union countries. Although not competing explanations, it has been suggested that racial issues are considerably more important than economic reasons in determining attitudes (see Dustmann and Preston 2004; Hayes and Dowds 2006).

6. Data and measures

The dependent measures used here come from the European Social Survey (ESS).⁶ The European Social Survey (the ESS) is a biennial multi-country survey covering over 20 nations. The first round was fielded in 2002 and the second round in 2004. The survey is designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is

6. Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is the data archive and distributor of the ESS data.

funded jointly by the European Commission and the European Science Foundation and directed by a Central Co-ordinating Team.⁷ A target response rate of 70 percent was set for each country. The countries within the European Union used for comparative purposes are the European Union members before the recent accessions. Data for Italy was not yet available and we have omitted Luxemburg because immigrants account for up to 40 percent of its population. The 13 countries used are Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, UK, Greece, Ireland, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, France, Portugal and Sweden. We have excluded the recent new entrants such as Poland and Hungary as these are the source of much of the recent immigration wave into Ireland. A total of 26,352 responses were returned from these 13 countries. The number of responses for Ireland was 2046 in 2002/3 and 2286 in 2004/5, response rates of 64.5 and 60 percent, respectively. The appropriate design and population size sample weights are used in the data analysis below.

The dependent measures are outline in Table 1. A number of indicators are used to measure economic and cultural/ethnic factors.

6.1. Economic measures

Three indicators are assumed to be significant in the formation of the attitudes of natives to immigrants. Respondents' satisfaction with their income as measured in the European Social Survey. Countries with mean higher levels of income satisfaction are predicted to hold more positive attitudes towards immigrants. Conversely, low mean levels of income satisfaction are likely to experience lower levels of relative deprivation. Lower levels of unemployment are predicted to be associated with more positive attitudes and higher levels of unemployment with negative attitudes. Gross Domestic Produce (GDP) per capita is assumed to measure a country's overall economic well-being. Higher levels of GDP per capita are expected to be associated with more positive attitudes to immigrants.

6.2. Cultural/ethnic measures

Two main indicators are used, the size of the foreign born population in the country and the proportion of the immigrant population that are African born. In the case of the former measure it may be the case that the

7. R. Jowell and the Central Co-ordinating Team, *European Social Survey 2002: Technical Report*, London: Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University (2003).

greater the proportion of immigrants in a country the greater the likelihood of negative attitudes developing. This may be more pronounced the greater the differences in cultural and ethnic background as with immigrants of African origin. Consequently, the proportion of Africans in the immigrant population is likely to affect attitudes to immigrants. Another measure of social distance, albeit within the national born population rather than between ethnic groups, is the extent of inequality. In general it appears that sentiment towards immigrants is more positive (particularly among the high-skilled) the more egalitarian the country (Rourke and Sinnott 2006: 857). Increasing levels of inequality may be more likely to give rise to increased perceptions of relative deprivation. Alternatively, immigrants are less likely to pose a threat to the living and working standards in more equal societies.

Finally, the duration of a country's experience of immigration may affect native attitudes. Three distinct waves of immigration into European countries can be identified. From the 1950s immigrants moved from former colonies into the UK, France, Belgium, Portugal and The Netherlands. Guest workers during the 1960s, mainly from southern European countries and Turkey, were invited into a number of countries including Germany and Austria. More recently, countries that formerly were sources of emigration have become destinations for immigrants. These include Ireland, Finland, Spain, Italy and Greece. It may be the case that natives in countries with a long experience of immigrants have developed negative attitudes over time and that attitudes in the 'new' countries of immigration are more liberal. Alternatively, the shock effect of new immigrants may provoke negative attitudes in those countries that until recently had relatively homogeneous native populations.

7. Structural determinants of attitudes

Countries that score highest or are most liberal on each of the attitudinal measures can be predicted to be associated with positive economic indicators and lower cultural/ethnic distance between natives and immigrants. In the following tables countries are ranked in ascending order on the four dependent measures: allow different ethnic race in; immigration is good for the economy; immigrants make it better place to live; and immigration enriches culture. Countries are ranked in descending order from 1 = most positive attitudes to immigrants to 13 = least positive attitudes on all four measures (see appendix for individual mean country scores).

With regard to the economic and cultural independent measures countries are ranked on each separate measure from one to 13. Thus,

countries are ranked from one equals highest income satisfaction to 13 for the country with the lowest level of income satisfaction. Countries are equally ranked on their unemployment rate from one equals the lowest unemployment level to 13 for the highest rate and also on GDP levels. For example, Ireland with the highest GDP per capita in 2004 is ranked one while Portugal has the lowest GDP per capita and is ranked 13. Similarly, the countries with the lowest proportion of foreign born, the lowest proportion of African origin and the lowest level of income inequality are ranked as number one respectively. Conversely, countries with highest proportion of foreign born, highest proportion of African born and highest inequality are ranked 13, respectively. Thus, a country that has the most liberal attitudes towards immigrants can be expected to rank highest (or approximately) on income satisfaction, lowest on unemployment and highest on GDP per capita. Countries with the most liberal attitudes should also have the lowest proportion of immigrants, lowest proportion of African born immigrants and lowest income inequality. In the following tables those countries that fit even approximately with these expectations are ticked (✓) while countries that deviate are marked with an x. For ease of analysis only the top and bottom three to four countries are marked as these are at the outer end of the range and can be most expected to conform as predicted by the structural determinants.

In Table 2 the mean ranking of the scores measuring the extent to which different ethnic race is allowed into the country are compared with the scores on the independent measures. The most notable feature in Table 2 is the lack of any clear pattern between a country's mean scores on attitudes to immigrants and the economic and cultural measures. The high score on economic measures is as expected for the Irish case but is less conclusive for the cultural/ethnic measures. In general the association between both sets of structural measures and the mean country score on the attitudinal measures is relatively inconclusive. The strongest predictor of attitudes to immigrants is the mean income satisfaction level. There appears to be an approximate association between income satisfaction level and the four dependent measures in 17 (68 percent) of the possible 25 cases reported in Table 2. Yet the association between the unemployment rate in a country and the dependent measures only occurs in ten (40 percent) cases out of 25 but is higher for the GDP per capita at 14 (56 percent) out of 25. While there appears to be significant support for our first hypothesis that Irish respondents' comparatively liberal attitudes towards immigrants are a result of a benign economic and labour market environment, this cannot be generalised to other countries. Indeed, there are many instances across the three independent measures that confound any clear association. For example, Finland is ranked 10th on income satisfaction level yet is ranked third on believing that immigration is good

TABLE 2. Attitudes to allowing access– 13 EU countries*

| Country ranking on dependent measure | Economy & labour market | | | Cultural/ethnic | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | Satisfied income ^a ESS 2004 | Unemployment 2004 ^b | GDP per capita 2004 ^c | % Foreign born in pop. 2003 ^{d*} | % African born 2002 ^e | Income inequality 2004 ^f |
| <i>(i) Allow in different race</i> | | | | | | |
| 1. Sweden | 2✓ | 6X | 6X | 11X | 6✓ | 1✓ |
| 2. Ireland | 3✓ | 1✓ | 1✓ | 9x | 3✓ | 9x |
| 3. Spain | 7X | 13X | 11X | 2✓ | 10x | 10x |
| 11. Finland | 10✓ | 9✓ | 8✓ | 1x | 5x | 3x |
| 12. Portugal | 10✓ | 7x | 13✓ | 4x | 13✓ | 13✓ |
| 13. Greece | 11✓ | 12✓ | 12✓ | 6x | 4x | 12✓ |
| <i>(ii) Immigration good for the economy*</i> | | | | | | |
| 1. Ireland | 3✓ | 1✓ | 1✓ | 9x | 3✓ | 9x |
| 2. Spain | 7x | 10x | 11x | 2✓ | 10x | 10x |
| 3. Finland | 10x | 8x | 8x | 1✓ | 5✓ | 3✓ |
| 11. Portugal | 10✓ | 7x | 13✓ | 4x | 13✓ | 13✓ |
| 12. Belgium | 8x | 9✓ | 5x | 10✓ | 11✓ | 6x |
| 13. Greece | 11✓ | 13✓ | 12✓ | 6x | 4x | 12✓ |
| <i>(iii) Immigrants make it better place to live</i> | | | | | | |
| 1. Sweden | 2✓ | 6x | 6x | 11x | 6x | 1✓ |
| 2. Ireland | 3✓ | 1✓ | 1✓ | 9x | 3✓ | 9x |
| 3. Denmark | 1✓ | 4✓ | 4✓ | 3✓ | 7x | 2✓ |
| 11. Austria | 5x | 5x | 3x | 13✓ | 2x | 4x |
| 12. Portugal | 10✓ | 7x | 13✓ | 4x | 13✓ | 13✓ |
| 13. Greece | 11✓ | 13✓ | 12✓ | 6x | 4x | 12✓ |
| <i>(iv) Immigration – enriches culture</i> | | | | | | |
| 1. Finland | 10x | 8x | 8x | 1✓ | 5✓ | 3✓ |
| 2. Sweden | 2✓ | 6x | 6x | 11x | 6✓ | 1✓ |
| 3. Spain | 7x | 10x | 11x | 2✓ | 10x | 10x |
| 4. Ireland | 3✓ | 1✓ | 1✓ | 9 | 3✓ | 9x |
| 11. UK | 6x | 2x | 7x | 5x | 9✓ | 11✓ |
| 12. Portugal | 10✓ | 7x | 13✓ | 4x | 13✓ | 13✓ |
| 13. Greece | 11✓ | 13✓ | 12✓ | 6x | 4x | 12✓ |
| N cases | 25 | | | | | |

Source: Dependent variables from European Social Survey, 2004.

^aSource: Measure of income satisfaction from the European Social Survey, 2004.

^bSource: Eurostat 2006/2007: table 5.4.

^cSource: Eurostat 2006/2007: table 6.1.

^dSource: International Migration Outlook 2007: table A1.4.

^eSource: Table A3 In Dumont and Lemaitre (2002).

^fSource: Eurostat 2004.

*Figures for Spain are from 2001, for France 2002 and for Greece 2001.

Countries are ranked on the various measures as follows:

Sat Income: 1 = most satisfied to 13 = least satisfied.

Unemployment: 1 = lowest unemployment to 13 = highest unemployment.

GDP: 1 = highest to 13 = lowest.

% of foreign born: 1 = lowest % to 13 = highest %.

% African born: 1 = lowest % to 13 = highest %.

Income inequality: 1 = lowest to 13 = highest.

for the economy, and ranked highest in the belief that immigration enriches a country's culture. Although Sweden is ranked sixth on unemployment and GDP per capita, nevertheless it is ranked highest in positive attitudes towards allowing a different ethnic race in, the belief that immigrants make the country a better place to live, and second highest on the belief that immigration enriches the country's culture. Spain also fails to conform to the expected relationship between economic structural factors and attitudes to immigrants. Despite being ranked 13th on the unemployment rate and 11th on GDP per capita, Spain scores second and third on the belief that immigration is good for the economy and agreement with allowing a different ethnic race in.

Turning to the relationship between attitudes to immigrants and cultural/ethnic factors we expect that liberal attitudes to immigrants will be associated with the lowest proportion of foreign born in the country, lowest proportion of African born immigrants and lowest on income inequality. As Table 2 indicates only the percentage of Africans fits as expected in the Irish case. Ireland is ranked ninth on the percentage of foreign born in the population and ninth on income inequality. Thus, there is only partial support for hypothesis 2 that Irish liberal attitudes to immigrants result from the relatively small differences in the cultural and ethnic background between immigrants and Irish native people. However, some caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of the foreign born population as the majority of this population is either of UK or European Union origin (25 countries). Generally the proportion of foreign born in the population is a poor predictor of attitudes to immigrants. Only eight (32 percent) out of 25 cases conform as expected. The percentage of African born in the immigrant population fares better with 14 (56 percent) cases correctly predicted. The measure of income inequality is the best predictor scoring 15 (60 percent) out of 25. Nevertheless, there are numerous instances where a country's ranking on the attitudinal measures is not matched on the ethnic measures.

A further factor that may affect attitudes is the period of time that immigrants have resided in a country. Countries with a long history of immigration may be more negatively disposed to immigrants. Over time there is a greater likelihood of ethnic enclaves forming that emphasise the differences between host country natives and immigrants. Conversely, countries with a more recent experience of immigration like Ireland may be expected to have weaker negative attitudes towards these newcomers compared to countries with a history of immigration. Attitudes take time to form and immigrants may be perceived as transient and short term. Table 3 categorizes countries into those with immigration from former colonies (A), guest worker immigration (B) and new immigration countries (C). As a recent immigrant country Ireland conforms to

expectations with comparatively more liberal attitudes towards immigrants. In Table 3 a total of 17 (61 percent) of the 28 cases across the four dependent measures are correctly predicted. Yet there are conspicuous examples of incongruity. Sweden is high on liberal attitudes but has a history of guest worker immigration, and Greece, despite being a recent immigrant country, displays comparatively negative attitudes towards immigrants.

8. Discussion and conclusion

The principle aim of this paper was to explain the comparatively liberal attitudes of Irish nationals towards immigrants. In addition a significant aspect was to test whether structural factors at the aggregate national level have any association with national attitudes towards immigrants. From the literature we assumed an association between perceptions of relative deprivation and attitudes to immigrants. Both deprivation and attitudes are in turn affected by structural and individual level factors. Given the national level comparative approach adopted in this paper, the focus was on the relationship between structural factors, such as unemployment and the proportion of foreign born in the population, and attitudes to immigrants across 13 EU countries. Two specific hypotheses were tested. First, the comparatively liberal attitudes of the Irish towards immigrants resulted from a benign economic and labour market environment. Secondly, that Irish liberal attitudes to immigrants result from the relatively small differences in the cultural and ethnic background between immigrants and Irish native people compared to other European countries. While there appears to be significant support for the first hypothesis, particularly the association with a benign economic and labour market environment, there is only partial support for the second hypothesis. However, the most notable feature of our results is the lack of any clear pattern between a country's mean scores on attitudes to immigrants and the economic and cultural measures. In general the association between both sets of structural measures and the attitudinal measures is relatively inconclusive. As a recent immigrant country Ireland conforms to expectations with comparatively more liberal attitudes towards immigrants. Yet there are examples of recent immigrant countries that have comparatively more negative attitudes than older immigrant countries. Overall the two independent measures that provide the best degree of fit are levels of income satisfaction and income inequality. Arguably these measures are related to perceptions of relative deprivation. As relative deprivation arises out of a feeling of injustice when others receive more than they should in relation to their efforts and social position, we might

TABLE 3. Immigration flows since 1945

| 1. Allow different ethnic race in | Migrant flows | 2. Immigration good for the economy | Migrant flows | 3. Immigrants make it better place to live | Migrant flows | 4. Immigration – enriches culture | Migrant flows |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Sweden | Bx | 1. Ireland | C ✓ | 1. Sweden | Bx | 1. Finland | C✓ |
| 2. Ireland | C ✓ | 2. Spain | AC✓ | 2. Ireland | C ✓ | 2. Sweden | Bx |
| 3. Spain | AC✓ | 3. Finland | C✓ | 3. Denmark | Bx | 3. Spain | AC✓ |
| 4. Austria | Bx | 4. Sweden | Bx | 4. Finland | C✓ | 4. Ireland | C ✓ |
| 11. Finland | Cx | 11. Portugal | A✓ | 11. Austria | B✓ | 11. UK | A✓ |
| 12. Portugal | A✓ | 12. Belgium | AB✓ | 12. Portugal | A✓ | 12. Portugal | A✓ |
| 13. Greece | Cx | 13. Greece | Cx | 13. Greece | Cx | 13. Greece | Cx |

Source: Kogan (2007: 30).
A = Immigration from former colonies.
B = Guest worker immigration.
C = New immigration countries.

expect that increasing levels of income satisfaction and decreasing levels of income inequality will reduce feelings of relative deprivation. Alternatively, in countries where income satisfaction levels are lower and inequality greater more people are likely to experience a heightened sense of relative deprivation and perceive immigrants as a threat. Nevertheless, the association between both measures and attitudes to immigrants does not occur in all cases. There is no simple deterministic relationship between structural factors and attitudes to immigrants when aggregated to the national level.

However, a plausible reason for the lack of fit between structural factors and attitudes towards immigrants is the critical role of the institutional characteristics of the receiving society. Recent work in this area indicates that institutional characteristics such as the type of immigration policies, labour market structure and, crucially, the welfare state regime affect the labour market performance of immigrants (Kogan 2007). In turn labour market integration of immigrants is central to their social integration and acceptance into the host country. A number of studies show that when immigrants secure employment and start to participate in the work life of the host society, then social integration and community involvement are likely to follow (Putnam 2000). Alternatively, exclusion from work is a source of more general exclusion from society. Where immigrants achieved a relatively high status position within the workplace it appears to have positive spill-over effects in gaining social recognition both inside and external to the workplace (Valenta 2008). Thus, attitudes to immigrants are likely to be more positive where countries use state policy to facilitate immigrants, enabling a transfer of their educational or skill capital to the labour market, thus avoiding a concentration at the bottom of the occupational structure.

Consequently it is suggested here that the effect of structural factors on attitudes to immigrants is mediated through various policies and institutions oriented to integrating immigrants into the society. Where social policy supports the social and economic integration of immigrants enhancing the position and status of immigrants it is likely to have a positive impact on native attitudes. In addition, structural economic and cultural factors that reduce perceptions of relative deprivation such as the extent of inequality act to reinforce positive attitudes towards immigrants. Attitudes to immigrants are then significantly affected by each country's specific historical institutional characteristics as well as the economic and cultural factors examined here. A contribution of this paper is to show that relying on structural factors alone are of limited explanatory value and that an understanding of the formation of attitudes to immigrants must also address the specific institutional context in each country.

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Appendix A

Mean scores for employee attitudes to immigrants–13 EU countries

| | <i>Immigration – good for the economy*</i> | | <i>Immigration – enriches culture</i> | | <i>Immigrants make it better place to live</i> | | <i>Allow different ethnic race in**</i> | |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| | 2002 | 2004/5 | 2002 | 2004/5 | 2002 | 2004/5 | 2002 | 2004/5 |
| Austria | 5.63 | 4.91 | 5.86 | 5.25 | 4.79 | 4.36 | 2.33 | 2.49 |
| Belgium | 4.59 | 4.35 | 5.83 | 5.66 | 4.27 | 4.48 | 2.49 | 2.41 |
| Germany | 5.17 | 4.54 | 6.23 | 5.79 | 4.90 | 4.70 | 2.61 | 2.38 |
| Denmark | 4.80 | 4.75 | 5.79 | 5.84 | 5.46 | 5.47 | 2.51 | 2.39 |
| Spain | 5.40 | 5.57 | 5.86 | 5.93 | 4.79 | 5.13 | 2.61 | 2.64 |
| Finland | 5.25 | 5.08 | 7.32 | 7.04 | 5.28 | 5.40 | 2.35 | 2.29 |
| France | 5.14 | 4.73 | 5.25 | 5.16 | 4.60 | 4.47 | 2.51 | 2.41 |
| UK | 4.39 | 4.60 | 5.15 | 5.02 | 4.57 | 4.65 | 2.42 | 2.47 |
| Greece | 3.65 | 3.88 | 3.59 | 3.75 | 3.41 | 3.44 | 1.93 | 1.96 |
| Ireland | 4.98 | 5.82 | 5.59 | 5.84 | 5.33 | 5.63 | 2.70 | 2.74 |
| Holland | 4.82 | 4.59 | 6.06 | 5.83 | 4.67 | 4.79 | 2.55 | 2.43 |
| Portugal | 4.83 | 4.36 | 5.22 | 4.65 | 3.89 | 3.81 | 2.21 | 2.08 |
| Sweden | 5.46 | 5.02 | 7.10 | 6.97 | 6.16 | 5.96 | 3.08 | 3.05 |
| Mean | 5.03 | 4.84 | 5.81 | 5.63 | 4.80 | 4.78 | 2.49 | 2.46 |
| N | 27,501 | 26,997 | 27,722 | 27,034 | 27,844 | 27,121 | 27,789 | 27,260 |
| Irish ranking in the EU | Ranked 6th most positive country | Ranked 1st most positive country | Ranked 9th most positive country | Ranked 4th most positive country | Ranked 3rd most positive country | Ranked 2nd most positive country | Ranked 2nd most positive | Ranked 2nd most positive |

*Questions scored on an 11-point scale from 0 = extremely bad to 10 = extremely good.

**Scored: 4 = allow many to live here to 1 = allow none.