

# 'Demographic Modernity' in Ireland: A Cultural Analysis of Citizenship, Migration, and Fertility

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## Abstract

In June 2004 citizens in Ireland voted on a constitutional referendum which proposed "to change the rules about the constitutional entitlement to citizenship by birth." The proposed change and subsequent vote in favor of the referendum generated a variety of commentary and scholarship. While factors of political economy and a racialized discourse regarding immigration are central to understanding contemporary change in Ireland, this article examines the changing demographic and related cultural conditions corresponding with the referendum through three interrelated yet analytically distinguishable strands: a) population change, specifically patterns of migration and fertility; b) changing notions of Irish and European modernity and identity; and c) Ireland's historical experience of colonialism and diaspora. 'Demographic modernity' in Ireland is a cultural complex that interprets social demographic factors such as (low) fertility, high life expectancy, timing of first births and of marriage, low infant/child mortality, and variable standards of migration and mobility in relation to political and historical discourses about nation and person.

**Keywords:** Ireland; demography; citizenship; migration; fertility; kinship; diaspora

On June 11, 2004 citizens in Ireland voted on a constitutional referendum which proposed "to change the rules about the constitutional entitlement to citizenship by birth [in the territory of Ireland]" (Referendum Commission), and the proposed change and subsequent vote in favor of the referendum generated a variety of commentary and scholarship (Fanning and Mutwarasibo 2007; Harrington 2005; Lentin 2007; Lentin and McVeigh 2006). Related to this has been the ongoing debate within Ireland concerning the nature and extent of its 'European character.' In 2000 the politically conservative then-Tánaiste<sup>1</sup> Mary Harney remarked that Ireland was "[g]eographically... closer to Berlin than Boston. Spiritually we are probably a lot closer to Boston than Berlin" (Harney 2000). This may have been true (to her), but in this article I argue that with respect to such demographic measures as fertility, and with respect to changes in the reckoning of citizenship, Ireland is much closer to a European standard. And within

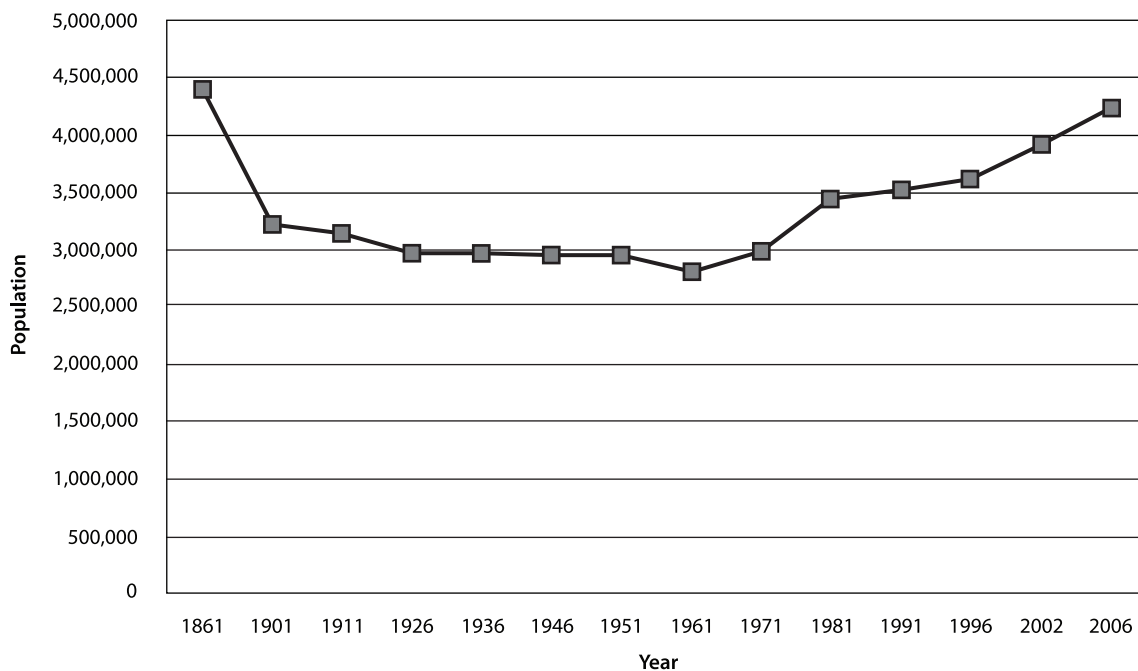
this European context, Ireland stands alone with respect to its particular colonial and postcolonial position, and with respect to its historical and most recent patterns of migration.

In recent social science scholarship there is a sharp focus on the cultural changes in Ireland corresponding with new patterns of migration, specifically with in-migration (Loyal 2003; Mac Éinrí 2001; Maguire 2004; Maguire and Saris 2007; Wilson and Donnan 2006). There is an older tradition and interest in the anthropology of Ireland regarding migration, but this is concerned primarily with emigration (Arensberg and Kimball 1968; Scheper-Hughes 1979) in a different historical moment, without explicit reference to colonial and post-colonial cultural conditions. Arensberg and Kimball, in their classic work *Family and Community in Ireland* (1968[1940]) (and Arensberg prior to that in *The Irish Countryman* 1937), discussed timing of marriage, celibacy and sexuality, and patterns of emigration in County Clare in 1930s. They noted then that fertility was quite high, but that later age at marriage (in part a consequence of emigration) kept population in Ireland low (1968[1940]:103).

Writing about rural County Kerry in western Ireland in the 1970s, Scheper-Hughes considers demographic issues such as household composition and fertility in relation to Catholic beliefs regarding celibacy and sexuality (1979:138–139). She notes that even in the late 1970s "Traditional Catholic values...[are] under siege in the urban centers of the Republic today" (1979:139). The general diminishment of traditional Catholic values in Ireland is complex (Inglis 1998; O'Toole 1997), and the Catholic Church's historic influence in matters of fertility has been equally complex (Inglis 1987:177). However, current lower fertility rates in Ireland might not necessarily correspond with renewed interest in sexual celibacy as a religious practice or as a rejection of what might be interpreted as a Catholic interest in high fertility. Rather this may represent a new interest in protecting capital, increasing social mobility, and asserting alignment with European modernity, a not altogether new condition.

While factors of political economy (specifically the 'Celtic Tiger' economy of Ireland) and a racialized discourse regarding immigration are central to understand-

Figure 1. Population Change in Ireland: 1861–2006



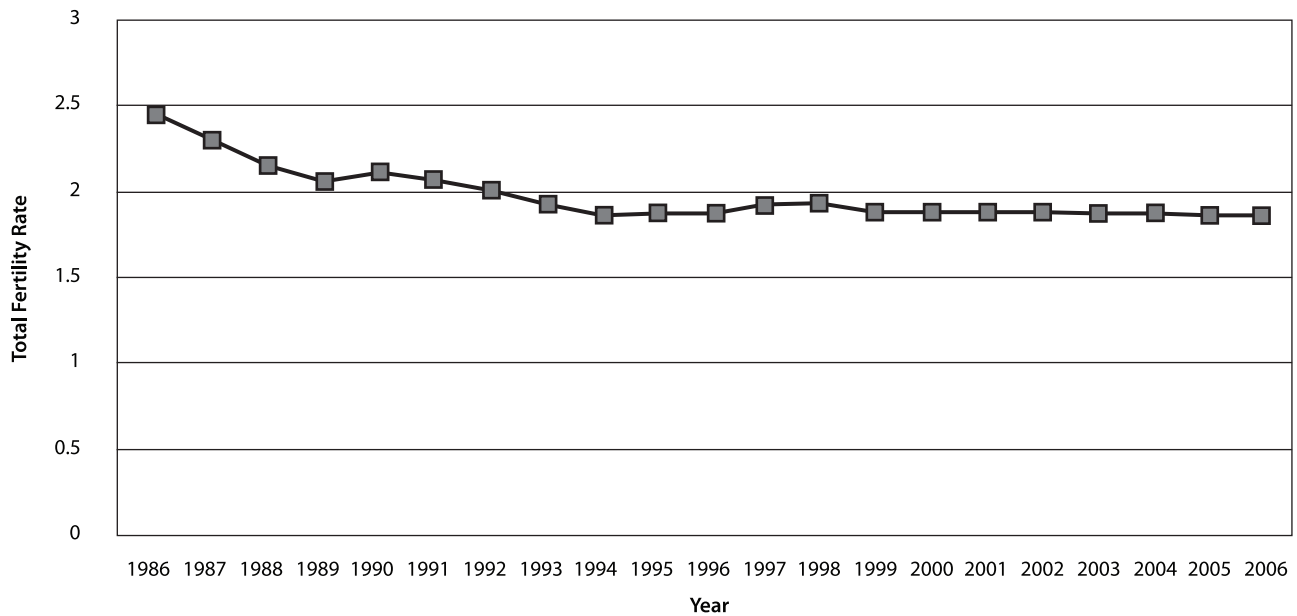
Source: Central Statistics Office: [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)

ing contemporary social change in Ireland (Coulter and Coleman 2003; Garner 2004; Lentin and McVeigh 2006), this article examines the changing demographic and related cultural conditions corresponding with the Referendum. Sewell has observed that “[t]here is...almost no epistemological overlap between the views of symbolic interactionists and demographers within sociology” (2005:13). While this may be true of some forms of social research, a cultural, anthropological analysis offers the possibility of interpreting both demographic processes and changing citizenship laws within a complex sociocultural (symbolic) volume. The Citizenship Referendum is interpretable in relation to sociocultural conditions in Ireland that can be analyzed through three interrelated yet analytically distinguishable strands: a) population change, specifically patterns of migration and fertility; b) changing notions of Irish and European modernity and identity; and c) Ireland’s historical experience of colonialism and diaspora. And while there may be no specific set of ‘agents’ animating these changes, there are powerful discursive social forces at work in contemporary Ireland (and in Europe). I argue that a concept of ‘demographic modernity’<sup>2</sup> in Ireland—a complex of various demographic behaviors (including migration and fertility) and meanings—captures the cultural *habitus* within which the new laws regulating citizenship and political participation must be understood. And I argue that Irish modernity is a particular refraction of common European demographic practices, refracted

by Ireland’s unique historical experience within Europe and the dramatic changes in population dynamics that have occurred most recently. In what follows, I begin with a discussion of the historical demography of Ireland over the past 150 years, followed by a discussion of the contemporary demographic profile of Ireland including immigration. A discussion and analysis of the 2004 Referendum concludes with some thoughts about the anthropology of diaspora, territory, kinship and the nation.

The current population of Ireland is 4,239,848 (CSOa), the highest population in Ireland since the 4.4 million in 1861 and an 8.1 percent increase from the 3.9 million in 2002 (CSOa). Figure 1 shows that there was a steady decline in population from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. The mid-19th century to late-20th century in Ireland saw general out-migration, an effect of famine, of the pull of industrial capitalism in Britain and in North America, and of Ireland’s colonial and post-colonial position relative to the United Kingdom and the United States (Foster 1989; cf. Kenny 2003; Kilbride and Farley 2005). 1961 was the nadir with 2.8 million, when the population slowly began to increase, as it has done for the past fifty years. There is significant scholarship on this historical pattern of emigration (Kenny 2003; Miller 1985) and on the political, economic, and more broadly ‘cultural’ effects of the resultant Irish diaspora (Diner 1983; Kenny 2003; Miller 1985). And with regard to population change as a cultural event, emigration had been a primary fact.

Figure 2. Total Fertility Rate: Ireland 1986-2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base.

Though there was still general out-migration, by the mid-20th century population began slowly to increase.

The demographic forces leading to the more recent population increase are complex. Life expectancy at birth in Ireland has increased throughout the 20th century, from 57.9 years for women and 57.4 years for men in 1926 to 80 years for women and 75 years for men in 2002 (CSOb). This is a pattern we see in much of Europe and in wealthier countries, and Ireland's current rate is similar to that of other European Union countries. At the same time, while fertility was relatively high even as recently as 1980 (with a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 3.2) (CSO), more recently fertility in Ireland has gone down, to 1.9 in 2006, just below replacement level (Figure 2). This is also something we see in most of Europe, where the overall average fertility rate is 1.4 (PRB 2006). Infant and child mortality have also declined in Ireland throughout the 20th century, as it has throughout most of Europe, and in 2006 the infant mortality rate was 4.7/1000, slightly below the Northern European average of 5/1000 (PRB 2006). One of the immediate demographic effects of lower infant/child mortality is that life expectancy at birth increases. More people in Ireland are living longer, another demographic trend common to Europe. People in Ireland are also delaying timing of marriage (CSOe; Gartland 2007), something that corresponds with lower fertility, another European trend. And while such demographic choices would seem to depress population growth, the population has grown over the past fifty years, with the quickest growth in the past ten years.

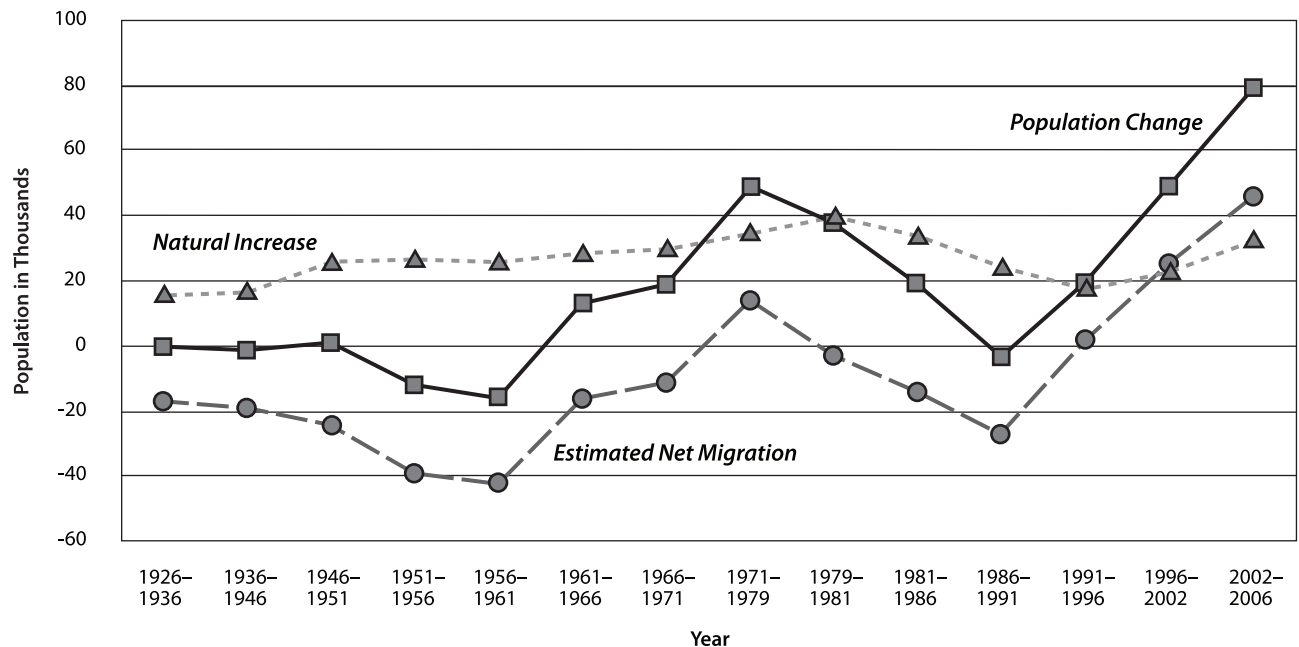
Figure 3 represents some of the factors for population change and population growth more specifically.

### Migration

While natural increase—births minus deaths—has not varied too dramatically over the last half century in Ireland, over the past century population change in Ireland is nearly isomorphic with migration. This demographic feature, along with lower fertility rates, frames current discussions about citizenship, identity, and demographic social practices. Migration, whether return migration or new immigration, is an important aspect of the Citizenship Referendum: migration is the human practice that manifests physical space as cultural (as well as political, economic, etc.) spaces and borders. And fertility is indexically and subsequently symbolically tied to the cultural forms and practices of kinship and genealogy. These two practices—migration and fertility—tap deep roots in the cultural memory of Ireland and in Irish historical social experience.

The years 1995–1996 signaled a turning point in migration patterns. It was as though a one-way valve had switched its direction of flow, and Ireland has seen net in-migration every year since. Some of this immigration is due to 'return migration' of people who had left Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s who were returning, some with young children. From 1996 to 2002, Returned Irish Migrants comprised 50% (123,100) of all immigrants into Ireland

Figure 3. Population Change: Natural Increase and Net Migration



Source: Central Statistics Office: [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)

in those years (Mac Éinrí 2001), with the peak year 1999, with well over half the immigrants that year being returning Irish (25,900 of 47,500 immigrants) (Mac Éinrí 2007).

Ireland has in general experienced a very high rate of immigration relative to the rest of Europe. The net immigration per 1,000 people in 2006 was 13.0, the highest in Europe. Sweden, Norway, and the United Kingdom each had 4.0/1000, the United States had 3.4/1000, and France 2.0/1000. The overall Europe average was 2.0/1000 (PRB 2006). This article does not address 'internal migration'<sup>3</sup> (something that has great significance in countries such as China and India as their populations become more urban) because population increase has occurred throughout the Republic: we know from county-level data that there was an all-Ireland increase in population, that is, every one of the twenty-six counties has experienced population growth (CSOc).

The projected estimate of non-Irish nationals in Ireland in 2006 is 400,000, just under 10% of the population (Gilmartin 2006 (see for methodology)), and about half this group have arrived in the past five years. The largest group of foreign nationals in Ireland is from Poland with 150,000, followed by China with 60,000, Lithuania with 45,000, and Latvia with 30,000. Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia joined the EU in 2004, and scholars noted the consequent flow of people from Eastern to Western Europe, particularly to Ireland. This corresponds with the EU rules on the 'Free Movement of Person,' which since 1993 has

allowed all EU nationals to "move and reside freely within the European Union...as this right is inherent in European citizenship" (European Commission 2005). This migration and the rules allowing it have bearing on the 2004 Citizenship Referendum.

### 2004 Citizenship Referendum

Up until the June 2004 Citizenship Referendum, anyone born in the 'island of Ireland' was entitled to be an Irish citizen, regardless of their parents' citizenship or legal status.<sup>4</sup> It had become a constitutional right in 1999 following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which outlined power-sharing between Catholic and Protestant constituencies in Northern Ireland. The constitutional change in 1999 was meant to reconcile any discrepancies as to what constituted 'the island of Ireland' so that following the 1999 change, the 'island of Ireland' included Northern Ireland.<sup>5</sup> It was also the case that those who were children of Irish citizens, regardless of where they were born, were entitled to be an Irish citizen through what the state calls citizenship 'by descent.' Both predominant forms of citizenship—by birth in the territory and by descent—obtained in Ireland prior to the 2004 Referendum.

The 2004 Referendum proposed to rescind this constitutional right of citizenship by virtue of birth in the territory, but to preserve citizenship by descent for people who have at least one Irish citizen parent. The 'granny clause,' allow-

Table 1. Births, Deaths, Migration in Ireland 1926–2006 (thousands per annum)

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase	Change in Population	Net Migration
1926–1936	58	42	16	0	-17
1936–1946	60	43	17	-1	-19
1946–1951	66	40	26	1	-24
1951–1956	63	36	27	-12	-39
1956–1961	61	34	26	-16	-42
1961–1966	63	33	29	13	-16
1966–1971	63	33	30	19	-11
1971–1979	69	33	35	49	14
1979–1981	73	33	40	38	-3
1981–1986	67	33	34	19	-14
1986–1991	56	32	24	-3	-27
1991–1996	50	31	18	20	2
1996–2002	54	313	23	49	26
2002–2006	61	28	33	79	46

Source: Central Statistics Office, 2006 Census, www.cso.ie

ing grandchildren of an Irish citizen to claim an Irish/EU passport was also to remain intact. The referendum was opposed by the Labour Party, the Green Party, the Irish Refugee Council, and the Human Rights Commission, and it was supported by the Governmental parties Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats, as well as by Fine Gael. It passed overwhelmingly in every county, with an overall rate of 80% in favor of the proposed change (*Irish Times* 2004).<sup>6</sup>

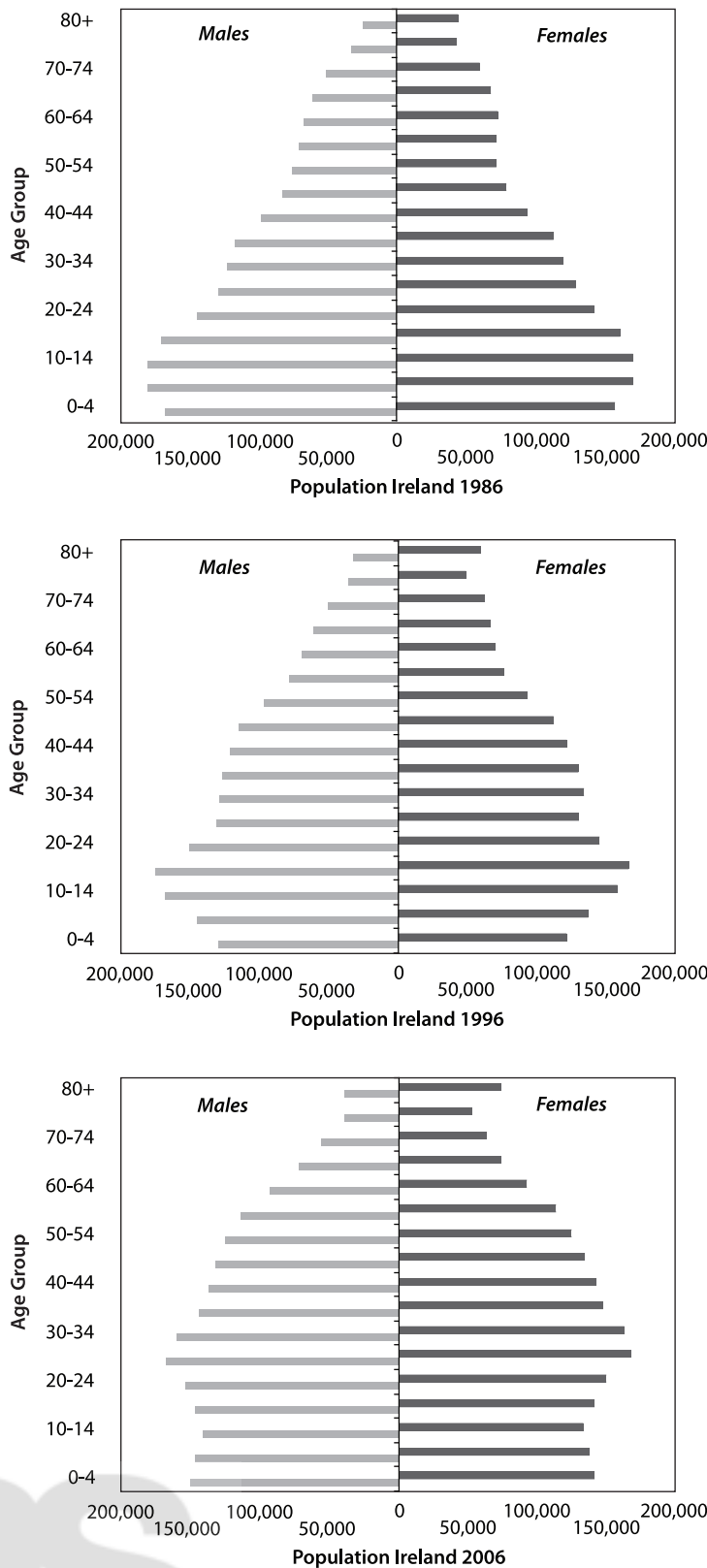
Among the arguments for the referendum were claims that some recent immigrants were non-EU asylum seekers and migrant workers who were essentially practicing "citizenship tourism," in the words of the Government (Coulter 2004). Some argued that some immigrants were looking for 'back door' entry into the European Union through Ireland's more liberal policy of citizenship, and that some were women coming to Ireland to give birth to babies who would then be Irish/EU citizens. Another argument was that the maternity hospitals in Dublin were feeling taxed by the numbers of women giving birth and in particular by the numbers of late-term deliveries.<sup>7</sup> I will first examine the latter argument.

There were approximately 61,000 births per year from 2002–2006 (Table 1), an amount greater than the three preceding intercensal periods. But prior to 1986, one would have to go back to 1961 to find that *few* numbers of births in Ireland. That is, in the fifteen years prior to this 2002–2006 period, there were fewer births per year; but prior to 1986 there were *more* births per year (not as a percentage of population). During the same fifteen-year period of lower births per year immigration began increasing and life expectancy increased. So population increased from Irish people living longer (more elderly) and from

return migration/immigration, and not from higher fertility. Prior to 1986 there were more births but also more out-migration. So while there are more births and more people in Ireland now, this is due to a confluence of demographic factors (e.g., 'population momentum,' greater life expectancy at birth and at age 75, lower infant/child mortality, increased immigration) and the 2002–2006 births must be read within this context, where they 'feel' as though they are contributing more to the population than they had in the past and where they might otherwise seem disproportionately large. The consequent counting of bodies and of babies in the most recent period occurs within a new framework of net in-migration so that the babies are weighed against adult Irish who are no longer leaving Ireland, as well as those people who are coming or returning to Ireland. The 'population momentum' can be understood in this way (Figure 4): in the 1980s there were fewer women of 'child-bearing age.' Younger women were still emigrating from Ireland, so while the average number of babies per woman (fertility rate) was higher (3.2 in 1980), the total number of babies born per year was lower (e.g., 1986–1991) than it would be later. In the early-to-mid 1990s this began to change, and the migration pattern changed to net in-migration: there are now more women of child-bearing age in Ireland, both arriving and 'remaining.' The average age of women at first birth increased to 28.6 (CSOd), and there were a greater number at that age in 2006 compared with 1986 and more babies born per year in the 2002–2006 period, though the average number of babies per woman (fertility rate) *decreased* (see Figure 2).

But as it also turns out, only about 1%, or 600 babies per year were born to foreign national women from outside

Figure 4. Age-Sex Distribution of Ireland 1986, 1996, and 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

the EU during this period (Irish Refugee Council). Indeed, Lentin and McVeigh (2006:100) argue that the debates about the ‘baby boom’ in Ireland as precipitants of the Citizenship Referendum are belied by lower overall fertility rates. One might wonder whether there is a discourse in operation here of lower fertility rates common to all of Europe (and now to Ireland as well) as one of the cultural practices around which “Modern Peoples” are organized in contrast to what is perceived as the fecund and abundant fertility of non-Modern/non-European peoples (cf. Garner 2004; Harrington 2005; Loyal 2003). There is a related, yet perhaps more disturbing discourse in operation here as well. Lentin and McVeigh (2006:103–104) identify a racialized discourse where non-national (and non-EU) women were argued to be instrumentally using birth to secure citizenship for their children, and residency for themselves.<sup>8</sup> State ministers ultimately conceded that such migration/fertility practices were a “symptom” rather than a “root cause” of this migration (Lentin and McVeigh 2006:103). Whether a ‘symptom’ or whether a ‘root cause,’ such interpretations of migration correspond with concepts of ‘biopower’ to be discussed below.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that the recent increase in births is an increase only relative to the immediate previous 15 years, during a time of chronic emigration, and the more recent increase in births also stands in relation to lower overall fertility. Part of my argument is that the discussions surrounding population growth were due to a number of forces: lower total fertility rate, return migration, slight increase in births, lower infant/child mortality, higher life expectancy, inflow of foreign (US) capital, immigration from new EU countries as well as from countries not part of the EU, and other effects of EU membership. In short, lower fertility and higher immigration serve as sensitive cultural indices of European modernity and the 2004 Citizenship Referendum is its overt political symbol.

The larger social issues that the Referendum represents continue to shape contemporary social and cultural conditions in Ireland. First, the Referendum puts Ireland in line with other EU member states that do not allow for automatic citizenship ‘at birth’ in the territory. This was one of the primary arguments in support of the referendum, that is, it was meant to bring Ireland into more consistency with the EU overall. While the

laws are somewhat varied and complex, and while there are some complicated variances for different countries,<sup>10</sup> the general pattern, particularly of Western, Central, and Northern European countries, is that citizenship is not automatic by birth in the territory, but rather by descent. According to the European Commission (the political/institutional body of the EU), citizenship in the EU is an effect of citizenship in any of its member states. And for most of the member states, citizenship is a function of the citizenship of one's parents.

Second, as I have argued above, Ireland's particular experience with recent population change is the context within which new notions of citizenship must be read: in relation to both new patterns of migration and new (lower) rates of fertility.

And third, Ireland is unique among EU countries because of its history as a colony and its experience of social diaspora (see Kenny 2003:137), as evidenced by its demographic history during the 19th and much of the 20th centuries previously described. Though other countries in the EU no longer have *jus soli* citizenship (citizenship as a function of birth within the political territory), Ireland's historical experience distinguishes it within Europe. This in turn complicates Irish understandings of diaspora and the political value of genealogy and kinship.

### Diaspora

At its most basic, diaspora is a demographic event. There is a great deal of recent scholarship on both historical and contemporary diasporic communities, including those specific to Ireland (Appadurai 1996; Garner 2004; Kenny 2003; Maguire 2004; Maguire and Saris 2007; Miller 1985; Ong 1999; Raj 2003). Certainly in the Irish historical experience, the emigration of millions over the course of nearly two centuries shaped the conditions 'within' Ireland, and the experience of population loss continues to resonate (Foster 1988; Robinson 1995).

In a sense, the Act (passed by Government on December 15, 2004) that restricted citizenship to those born to an Irish citizen parent following the Referendum not only changed citizenship reckoning from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis* (cf. Harrington 2005:443), it revalued the purpose of political borders and territory. For recent Irish emigrants this change legally formalizes Irish emigrants as a political community that can claim certain political privileges and rights: certain peoples' recent emigrant experiences are now structurally encoded and will reproduce certain political privileges and prerogatives (cf. Garner 2004:240 on two-tier system in the U.K.; Loyal 2003). At the same time, it also aligns Ireland within a common European post-colonial realm, where immigration is seen as a 'prob-

lem' (Silverstein 2005; cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997:33 on the stable territory of the diaspora; cf. Harrington 2005).

There used to be a very strong 'diasporic' sense that one is Irish no matter where one is—something that had been inscribed in the Constitution where the text read: "the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage" (Article 2). It is one of the effects of having been an agricultural and labor source colony of Great Britain (and of the U.S. to an extent). President Mary Robinson echoed this in 1995 in her famous "Cherish the Diaspora" speech given to the joint houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament). She said she

was acutely aware of how broad that term "the people of Ireland" is and how it resisted any fixed or narrow definition. One of my purposes here today is to suggest that, far from seeking to categorise or define it, we widen it still further to make it as broad and inclusive as possible. At my inauguration I spoke of the 70 million people worldwide who can claim Irish descent. I also committed my Presidency to cherishing them—even though at the time I was thinking of doing so in a purely symbolic way. ... To cherish also means that we are ready to accept new dimensions of the diaspora... But if cherishing the diaspora is to be more than a sentimental regard for those who leave our shores, we should not only listen to their voice and their viewpoint. We have a responsibility to respond warmly to their expressed desire for appropriate fora for dialogue and interaction with us by examining in an open and generous way the possible linkages. We should accept that such a challenge is an education in diversity which can only benefit our society. (Robinson 1995)

Robinson made this speech just as migration patterns in Ireland were changing, and her speech affirms the polyvalent and polyvocal aspects of not only the Irish diasporic community, but by extension, of Ireland. That is, she was expressing her hope that Ireland in its diasporic 'absent presence' (see Kunreuther 2006) *throughout the world* could accommodate and recognize the heterogeneity of territorial Ireland. In other words, Robinson seemed to be suggesting that the Irish diaspora included people living in a wide range of historical and cultural contexts, and that this diverse diasporic experience has complicated the notion of 'Ireland' as a stable referent. Furthermore, this variety of experiences may be important as a cultural resource for an increasingly heterogeneous contemporary Ireland. One of the conceptual effects of the Citizenship Referendum is that citizenship is now managed and manifest in new ways in relation to the political management of territorial boundaries. Political identity (and agency) is not necessarily 'detached' from physical territory, but rather kinship status is assessed at borders. And one consequence

of this might be that because of the differential degrees of political agency (cf. Ong 1999) that result from shifting citizenship away from an autochthonic relationship with territory, the territory itself is no longer a 'homogeneous political space' (Biolsi 2005) but is rather newly textured and warped by social differences. Citizenship now resides within one's genealogy to be reckoned at the border (the 'dialectical zone,' Balibar 2002). Increasingly a European norm, this has potentially significant consequences, among them being that Europe and the EU will be increasingly understood as socially heritable qualities and capacities rather than as places (see Balibar 2002; Silverstein 2005).<sup>11</sup> Europe then (in the form of the European Union) might be understood as being constituted by a collective set of demographic and genealogical practices including political borders. Thus the reality is that there are new challenges for states controlling their physical borders, and the neo-liberal worldview might argue that they should not necessarily be restricted at all.

There may be a new kind of ambivalence regarding migration in general in Ireland. Mobility and migration are not in opposition to Irish experience obviously, in either its historical diaspora or its contemporary manifestation of mobile urban elites,<sup>12</sup> but they have been interpreted and practiced differentially in relation to such things as access to various forms of social capital (see Helleiner 2000 on Traveller experience in Ireland). This ambivalence corresponds with the events of human migration as a part of Ireland's contemporary context for citizenship and identity.

### Genealogy/Kinship

This new ambivalence about migration and mobility relates to the shift to genealogy as the ground of citizenship and of social difference. I also argue that the interpretation of fertility relates to this discourse of kinship as well. These are old concepts of the 'ethnos'—the 'territory' and the 'gens'—terms used by Lewis Henry Morgan (1985[1878]) to describe axes around which groups identified. But the axes, territory and kinship, that once stood perpendicular to one another, have changed so that it is now kinship (and by extension fertility and a 'moral demography') alone that grounds citizenship. Aihwa Ong has argued that there is a newly-emergent sense of 'flexible citizenship' operating in some parts of the world (in her research focus, East Asia) in response to increased and more intensive global interrelations (Ong 1999). In Europe, I am unsure if there is this sense of 'flexible citizenship,' but European nation states and the European Union more generally have recognized the inability to 'control' physical borders. Ireland has acknowledged and capitulated to the EU's post-colonial vision on this

point (an argument similar to that in Harrington 2005), and with respect to economic growth and the appetite of capitalism, it is not necessarily in their interest to stop migration from within or without the EU. The physical *cordon sanitaire* might not be possible, but social distinctions might perform the same function, as surveillance of people through new technologies of naming and identity management and of social control correspond with rules governing the legitimacy of descent. Rather than solely police physical borders of the nation, the focus extends to other social borders, with new attention to kinship and other intimate social relations. While some of this discourse may simply be about accumulating and protecting capital, I argue it is also in part because of Ireland's complex history with colonialism and diaspora.

Social theorists (and practitioners) from William Petty to Malthus to Foucault have long been interested in the relationships between population dynamics and political identities and social control (Buck 1977; Foucault 1991). In his famous essay on 'Governmentality,' Foucault argues that in the 'modern period' the 'family' unit shifted from being a model for government (cf. Locke 1952 [1690]) to being a (privileged) instrument for government (Foucault 1991:99–100). Furthermore, he argues that governing takes greater interest in demographic practices such as mortality and marriage (1991:100). These are instantiations of a more general form of 'biopower,' concordant with modern epistemologies of 'life,' where human agency is now subservient and instrumental for governance, as opposed to the other way around (see Foucault 1980:143). Lentin and McVeigh have argued that specific forms of biopower are expressed in contemporary Ireland around issues of migration, heredity, and fertility, and even more they argue that such forms have become racialized (Lentin and McVeigh 2006:99–101; cf. Stoler 1995). In this way, they argue, demographic practices are naturalized through racist and racialized discourses.

The Referendum change also naturalizes/biologizes citizenship in another way. Territory had done that too, but through earth, clay, soil metaphors, and Gupta and Ferguson have argued that epistemologies such as 'area studies' naturalize cultural differences through geographic categories (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:8). Kinship does this through biological and moral discourses (a point made by others, see Harrington 2005). As Friedrich Nietzsche argued in *On the Genealogy of Morality* about 'responsible agents' in general (1994[1887]) and as David Schneider argued years later (in Carsten 2004) one is not really *born* anything. The sociocultural and political concept of "Irishness" (of the parents) *anticipates* and precedes the birth of the child, so that the child being born is simply the fulfillment of this cultural logic. The 'born' part is an 'after-effect' (Nietzsche 1994[1887]:28): *the agentive part*

in 'born Irish' is the social and legal conception of 'Irish,' and not the verb 'born.' In other words, being born does not make the child Irish; the social discourse does, by organizing this practice of birth into a legal identity. Birth has perhaps always had political implications, but the biosocial processes of social production now bring (low) fertility rates in relation to kinship in newly-foregrounded ways. Even under *jus soli* citizenship, it was birth that was organized by an autochthonic discourse (i.e., being 'born in/from the territory'). And lower fertility may serve to safeguard political agency as well as other forms of capital, while providing a new way of 'contracting' the boundaries of the state. The formation of new conceptions of "Irish" involves the cultural complex of what I am calling demographic modernity.

### Conclusions

In this article I have argued that people in Ireland, principally those who are 'Irish people,' participate in collective European political and demographic practices, and that while the political and the demographic are tied together in modern Europe, in Ireland the cultural meanings of both are shaped by its particular demographic and socio-political history. Furthermore, I suggest that contemporary Irish diasporic identity has been changed by the reevaluation of kinship, genealogy, and citizenship reckoning.

'Demographic Modernity' then, is a cultural complex that brings into meaningful relations with political and social practices such traditional demographic measures as (low) fertility, high life expectancy, (higher) average age of first-time mothers (28.6 years of age in 2005) and (higher) age of first marriage for women (30.2 years in 2005) (CSO; CSOe; Gartland 2007), low infant/child mortality, and variable standards of migration and mobility.<sup>13</sup> Demographic modernity in Ireland is also a sociopolitical complex that combines both social demographic as well as cultural and historical discourses about nation and person. Political citizenship is only one form of social identity, and demographic practices are only one set of practices (and certainly not the only set of practices) around which political agency is arranged and social difference negotiated. But demographic practices are often 'moral' practices, that is, they occur within and are often tied to historically-specific volumes of moral discourse. And moral discourses and management of 'moral selves' are often central to the production and maintenance of nation-states (Borneman 1992).

Does the change in citizenship reckoning call the nation-state into question? Not exactly: it may call into question the nation as a physically bound entity, but it continues to exist socially and genealogically (in its more common, non-Nietzschean sense). Part of the tension of modernity is that the transgression of one set of boundar-

ies (politico-physical) now demands and reifies another (ethnos/kin). These boundaries too are a composite, a complex which in Ireland includes new demographic practices of modernity. This composite now stands in interesting relationships with such things as linguistic, religious, and racial/ethnic variability. As social and political debates about migration and national identity continue in Ireland, wider discussions of other aspects of population change will invariably enter, as will discussions about demographic measures as indices of European modernity.

### Acknowledgments

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### Endnotes

1 *An Tánaiste* is the Deputy Prime Minister of Government. Mary Harney was a founding member of the Progressive Democrats political party and is currently Minister for Health and Children. [http://www.dohc.ie/about\\_us/ministers](http://www.dohc.ie/about_us/ministers) (accessed March 3, 2008).

2 'Demographic Modernity' is a term used by other social scientists, such as those at the World Bank. But in their use, they restrict it mainly to low fertility. (Philippe Fargues, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4050, November 2006)

3 While internal migration is certainly significant within Ireland, this article is more directly concerned with the concept of the 'national boundary': citizenship, as played out and practiced may very well be variable within Ireland, as the State 'sub-contracts' its responsibilities to local county-level agencies (see Biolsi 2005).

4 The text of the Constitution of Ireland prior to the Referendum and the language of the Referendum follow:

*Constitution of Ireland* (prior to referendum): Article 2: "It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born

in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.”

Article 9: “On the coming into operation of this Constitution any person who was a citizen of Saorstát Éireann immediately before the coming into operation of this Constitution shall become and be a citizen of Ireland; The future acquisition and loss of Irish nationality and citizenship shall be determined in accordance with law; No person shall be excluded from Irish nationality and citizenship by reason of the sex of such person.”

*Proposed Referendum* (amends Article 9 of Constitution): “Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, a person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, who does not have, at the time of the birth of that person, at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen is not entitled to Irish citizenship or nationality, unless provided by law. This section shall not apply to persons born before the date of the enactment of this section.”

5 The changes to the Constitution in 1999 following the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 were meant to, in essence, extend the possibility of citizenship to people in Northern Ireland through this change in political/national geography.

6 Subsequent to this, bills were proposed that allowed children of parents living in Ireland ‘without restriction’ with the status of recognized refugees to be entitled to citizenship, and bills were proposed to allow a pathway towards citizenship for foreign nationals, all of which modified the effect of the December 15 2004 legislation.

7 The Masters of Dublin’s maternity hospitals did distance themselves from this claim for support for the Referendum (Irish Refugee Council May 1 2004 Report) and in the end did not officially support the Citizenship Referendum.

8 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this argument.

9 My argument is related to yet distinct from the ‘biopolitics’ arguments of Harrington (2005), Lentin and McVeigh (2006) and others: while demographic features such as fertility do reside within a discourse of ‘family’ designed in part, as some argue, to further the interests of and reproduce the power of the state, my argument here is that fertility and migration signal a different register of cultural modernity that is shaped by Ireland’s particular demographic history and present.

10 E.g., in France, a child born to ‘foreign parents’ can become a citizen on her/his majority if living in France, providing that child has lived in France for five years. For

Latvia, “children born to non-citizen parents in Latvia after the restoration of Latvia’s independence in 1991 are automatically entitled to Latvian citizenship.”(www.am.gov.lv)

For the United States under the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution: “*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.*” This Civil War legislation was tied to the issue of emancipation and to the enslavement of human beings in the US.

11 One interesting and potentially important exception to this in Ireland is the *Gaeltacht*—the state recognized areas (and by extension, the community of speakers in those areas) where Irish is the primary community language. (See Coleman 2004)

12 Or for example with state military personnel, who are ‘of’ the state, regardless of where they reside.

13 As an aside, there are other aspects of ‘demographic modernity’ affecting migration and population change in Ireland, including legal forms (adoption of foreign babies/children, see O’Brien 2007) and illegal (human trafficking; see <http://www.rte.ie/news/2006/0505/trafficking.html>), both of which are increasing.

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