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[chapter head] 1   Social Structure and Religious Division: Comparing the Form of Religious Distinction in the Two Irish States

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How far and how are religious distinctions affected by their socio-political context? We know that ‘religionized politics’ is coloured by the specific social and political interests that give rise to conflict, and that the same nominal religious distinctions take very different forms in peaceful societies.¹ But the ways in which macro-level social structure and political division impact on the micro-level experience of religious distinction are less well explored.

This article addresses these wider questions through an intra-Irish comparison. It looks at how nominally identical religious divisions with the same historical roots are experienced on each side of the Irish border. It asks how the different social demographic and political structures North and South affect the way Protestant/Catholic symbolic distinctions are understood, negotiated and sometimes challenged. After ninety years of partition, do the distinctions now have radically different resonances? Or are the same oppositions – religious and social – at work in both Irish jurisdictions, albeit managed differently in each?

As Table 1 indicates, the demographic, social and political structure of the Irish state and Northern Ireland differ radically. Partition left a majority Catholic state in the south, and a deeply divided society in Northern Ireland. Politics in the Irish state was formally inclusive while informally dominated by the Catholic majority and Catholic ethos; however, the Protestant minority for long retained a socially and economically favourable position, with strong state interests in maintaining good community relations.² In Northern Ireland, in contrast, the much larger Catholic minority was excluded economically and culturally as well

as politically.³ In both states, strong religiously-informed organizations – from education through to sporting, charity, and women and childrens’ groups – maintained significant social segregation up to the very recent period.⁴ Both societies share a legacy of violence which continued into the early 1920s. Since then, the Irish state has been peaceful and politically stable, while Northern Ireland experienced a violent conflict between 1969 and 1994 that claimed over 3,000 lives, and serious political tensions remain. Socially, Southern society evolved but gradually, while Northern Ireland has been radically restructured economically and institutionally in the past two decades.

TABLE 1: *The contrasting socio-political structure, North and South 2001–2002*

	Northern Ireland	Irish state
Demography Protestant:Catholic	53:44	4:89
Political institutions	Consociational, shared	Majority ethos and dominance
Power resources (informal)	Radical changes towards equality	Stability, minority comfort, schools etc.
Violence	Within memory of most adults	Close to a century ago
Associational life	Contested within populations, still separate but increasing overlap in a new ‘mixed’ realm.	Strong minority associations. Recent opening up so that both minority and high-status majority associations are increasingly mixed.

Do these structural differences affect religious distinction and national identity? Has a distinctive political and religious culture now emerged in each jurisdiction? Despite some arguments to this effect, there has been relatively little research on these questions. I address them through comparative analysis of how religious distinction and its intersection with national, ethnic and class distinction is discussed in 220 open-ended interviews on ‘identity’ conducted on each side of the Irish border between 2003 and 2006 by four interviewers, including the author.⁵ Over 75 of the interviews were in Northern Ireland. Individuals were accessed by snowball sampling, with an eye to even representation on class, gender, generational and religious divisions, and with an over-representation of religious minorities in the Irish state. We interviewed ordinary people, rather than political or religious activists.⁶ All interviews were taped and transcribed, with identifying details removed. In what follows I proceed inductively – who does and who does not volunteer which distinctions and why, tracing the different categories used and the meanings given to them, showing how complex and contested divisions are constructed. I assess the patterns of distinction-making in terms of familial background (‘Catholic’, ‘Protestant’ and ‘mixed/neither’), and state of long-term residence (North or South).⁷ Quotations are chosen to illustrate typical modes of response.

Self-Presentations: Default Categories, Banal Nationalism and the Management of Interaction

About three-quarters of the interviews started with open-ended questions, asking the respondents to introduce themselves.⁸ Self-presentations varied quite dramatically between North and South. Almost all of our respondents volunteered their job, family status and often also locality in their initial self-introductions: fewer than half mentioned religion or nationality. As Figures 1 and 2 show, the large majority population with a Catholic background in the Irish state were least likely to volunteer a religious or national category of identity: only one in five volunteered religious categories and one in eight national categories.

Of these, individuals with direct experience of Northern Ireland and those with unusual life-paths (for example being born elsewhere, or being an ex-nun) were significantly more likely than others to volunteer both religion and nationality. The older generation, who had grown up with pre-Vatican II traditional Catholicism of which some were highly critical, were most likely to volunteer their religion.⁹

FIGURE 1: *Who volunteers religion and nationality in open-ended interviews?*

In stark contrast, over two-thirds of the small Protestant minority in the Irish state volunteered their religion and nationality either in their initial self-introduction or very shortly thereafter.

In Northern Ireland, where the population in 2001 was relatively evenly divided (53% Protestant and 44% Catholic), and where the Protestant/Catholic distinction is socially

extremely important, just over half the respondents volunteered their religion and fewer than half their nationality in the early part of the interview. The likelihood to volunteer religious and national categories was unaffected by religious background or commitment, locality, generation or class.

These contrasts show that the same nominal categories are used differently by different subgroups in the different parts of the island. The interviews allow us to see why. First, they refute the view that volunteering a category is related in any way to its personal importance.¹⁰ Almost all in the Irish state, whether or not they volunteered the categories, said that religion and nationality were important to them. In Northern Ireland, about a quarter of those who volunteered their religious background did so saying that they preferred not to use these categories, while very many of those for whom religion and/or nationality were very important did not volunteer them.

Why then the contrasts? Was it simply a matter of orienting discussion, so that some categories were held as default, while others had to be specified? Was it a matter of sensitivity, status and stigma?¹¹ Did it show a different culture of distinction in North and South – a hotness and strategic use of distinction in the North, and a coolness, unspokenness in the South?¹² In fact, all three factors interlocked and the structural contrasts between North and South had differential effects on those who were satisfied with the conventional categories and those in process of renegotiating them.

It is common that majority groups whose identity categories are embedded in state institutions will treat these categories as ‘default’, and will be much less likely to volunteer them than do minorities whose position is unusual.¹³ Michael Billig has argued that some majority nationalisms are ‘banal’, working with unexamined assumptions reproduced through pervasive state symbolism.¹⁴ In contrast, minority nationalisms tend to highlight the

categories in contention and are ‘hotter’. Muldoon and Stevenson have argued that this describes the South/North contrast where national distinction – and one might argue also religious distinction – is ‘hotter’ in Northern Ireland than in the Irish state.¹⁵

There is certainly a ‘banal’ aspect of identity in the Irish state. One respondent, a Southerner now living in Northern Ireland, explained how she became acutely aware of herself as Catholic and as Irish only when she moved to Northern Ireland: ‘... it was more practical reasons that you had to become aware of what you are [in Northern Ireland]. Whereas in X-town, really, while everybody else is the same as you and is in the same category as you, sure it didn’t matter where you go or who you talk to, you know’.¹⁶

A solid 30 per cent of Southern Catholics – disproportionately working class and women – were unreflective about a national identity that remained important to them. Being Irish (and also, for some, being Catholic) was so embedded in their institutions and social practices that it had become normalized. Typical phrases used include: ‘born into it, never knew anything else’; ‘never thought about it; it was always there’; ‘being Catholic and being Irish were always kind of there’. Others, however, were more reflective, even while remaining ‘default’ nationals and Catholics for whom the categories were the unstated, presumed field in which reflection and discussion took place. When asked, they positioned themselves in a familial-national history commencing with the Irish war of independence and civil war, and qualified their religious identity in terms of their degree of practice, their acceptance of church dogma and moral teachings, their religiosity and spirituality, their perspective on church rituals and on the power of the church. These religious reflections were very similar among Catholics in North and South, whether or not the respondent volunteered their religion.

Within the majority Irish, Catholic population in the Irish state, the default national categories were sometimes called into play for strategic reasons. Being Irish and (to a much lesser extent in the present, but important in the past) being Catholic are signs of status and right to participate in the society: they were emphasized by the oldest generation, and by those stigmatized on other criteria; Irish travellers, objectively the most disadvantaged group in the Irish state, strongly emphasized their Irish and Catholic identity.

For Protestant and English minorities in the South, and for all in Northern Ireland, there were no default categories. Their religious and national identity was always in question, it could never be presumed in public interactions. Individuals balanced different imperatives in their self-presentations: the need to orient discussion, to manage interaction and to negotiate meaning on sensitive issues. On the one hand, there was an interest in volunteering their religious and national background in order to avoid confusion and misrecognition by others. One English-identifying respondent who had moved to Ireland with his family as a young child explained that he had learned to signal his English origins early in an interaction: ‘I had to be very careful when I was growing up to tell people that I was from England, they would spot it in my voice or accent’.¹⁷ As we have seen, most – though not all – Southern Protestants also volunteered their religion and nationality early in the interview, as did around half of Northerners, not necessarily because they saw it as important but because they knew that others did.

Some, however, felt that the crude categorizations might themselves lead to misrecognition. Where the labels were felt to be sensitive or contentious, individuals often introduced themselves in terms of job and familial status, where shared meanings could be presumed, assessing the tone of the discussion before speaking about sensitive issues of religious, national and political distinction. So, for example, a Northern woman who initially defined herself in terms of family, locality and job in response to probes, gave complex and

thoughtful responses which outlined her preferred mode of religious self-definition as primarily Christian and secondarily Protestant, rather than Protestant or Catholic. Equally, some Southern Protestants were guarded in volunteering their religious and national identity because for them it implied highlighting difference and unnecessarily raising contentious questions: ‘I mean we never talk much about religion ... nor about nationality’; ‘You see there is people would think of that and too much’.¹⁸

Occasionally, respondents spoke of the need for self-protective disguise. A few Northern Catholics were unwilling to make clear their religion or nationality until they had assessed the character of their acquaintances: it was ‘a protective thing you put up’.¹⁹ Some Northern Protestants avoided contention by volunteering an identity as ‘Northern Irish ... because it doesn’t give that much away’.²⁰

In summary, social structure influences the mode of self-presentation. A broad North–South, and within the South majority–minority, contrast is visible, but far from complete. The ‘cool’ (unspoken) vs ‘hot’ (assertive) self-categorizations mark but one dimension of contrast between South and North, and one that is always affected and sometimes overturned by cross-cutting strategic considerations and sensitivities in each part of the island.

Self-categorizations: Defining Difference

Religious distinction is presented in different ways by different respondents. The range of self-descriptions does not differ in the two parts of the island. Almost all respondents positioned themselves on a religious spectrum much more complex than the ascribed Protestant–Catholic categories. Churchgoers in the main Protestant denominations mentioned their institutional church membership, rather than the generic category of ‘Protestant’: they are Church of Ireland (or Anglican) or Presbyterian. Almost all qualified the terms further: typical responses (North and South) included: ‘Christian rather than Protestant’; ‘Protestant

background but not very important to me'; 'I would prefer not to be labelled Protestant or Catholic, but from a Protestant background'; 'member of the Church of Ireland and Catholic'; 'Christian and go to the Presbyterian church'; 'Presbyterian'; 'Protestant deep down'; 'Protestant, agnostic with religious feelings, don't go to church'; 'Church of Ireland, it's important to me'. Those who attended tiny churches, or without strong institutional church commitment, tended to say 'Protestant' and/or 'Christian'.

Catholics, both North and South, tended to focus on internal church distinctions: practising or non-practising, traditionalist or liberal, agnostic or atheist: some were 'à la carte Catholics'; some believed in God and got their children baptised, but thought that the church has too much control; some were Irish Catholics not Roman Catholics. Typical descriptions included: 'our religion is Catholic ... hem ... not necessarily as ... strictly Catholic as I was brought up but I would still cast myself as Catholic'; 'practising Catholic but not conservative'; 'Catholic but critical of the church'; 'Catholic, religion is important to me, runs through everything I do'; and 'Catholic but not any more, not a religious person'.

The positioning functioned as a partial re-making of the ascribed 'Protestant/Catholic' distinction. In our interviews, as in the survey material, there was some class and generational variation: the working class were the least likely to practise religion, and the older generations the most likely to hold strong and orthodox beliefs. Yet a distancing from orthodox belief and practice secularization- and a suspicion and sometimes outright rejection of clerical authority was clear in every class, particularly in the South, while several of the older generation were also engaged in revision of once-unquestioned beliefs.

In contrast, nationality and national distinction was discussed very differently in the Irish state and in Northern Ireland. In the Irish state, nationality for the Catholic majority was assumed and lived rather than discussed. The national field was one within which individuals

positioned themselves geographically, historically and politically. Individuals described themselves as from Dundalk, from Louth, Blayney, Galway or Tallaght. The local, as Nathalie Rougier has pointed out, is a way of being Irish and when a respondent volunteers their locality, it indicates their mode of Irishness. Respondents also positioned themselves in the intersection of familial and national history, speaking of the politics of their parents and grandparents, Fianna Fáil or republican or pro-Treaty, thus tracing their history to the foundation of the state in the 1920s and before.

Southern Catholic respondents spoke of Irish nationality as a simple category, to which political, religious and moral qualifications, and sometimes supra-national identifications, might be added: 'Irish, Irish Catholic, but open not boxed'; 'Irish, proud of it, don't think much about it'; 'Irish born and bred, Irish and European'; 'Irish, very much so'; 'an Irish countryman'; 'Irish yes, European definitely, angry at the state of Ireland'; 'Irish and proud to be Irish'; 'Irish in the bones'; 'Irish and anti-English'; 'Irish and anti-British'; 'Irish but not nationalist'; 'born Irish, will die Irish, not a big part of my life'; 'Irish, always was'; 'Irish, don't think about it'; 'Irish and not English' Some Southern Protestants were unproblematically Irish 'because from Ireland', while others, particularly in the border area, were likely to qualify their Irish national self-descriptions, if only to note that they were not always seen as Irish. Some qualified the national category more fully: 'I'm a farmer in Ireland ... I would consider meself, em, maybe not just fully Irish to a point, I would probably consider meself Scotch Irish'; 'Irish but not republican'; 'Irish but don't like the Soldiers Song'²¹ 'Irish with English blood'; 'I suppose I'm Irish but I'm not Irish if you want to put it like that'.²²

In Northern Ireland, where nationality was overtly contested, direct discussion of complex, nested national identifications was common among both Protestants and Catholics:: 'Irish'; 'Irish and British'; 'more Irish than British but the jury is still out'; 'British and

Northern Ireland and close to England'; 'Irish, British passport, we live in Northern Ireland'; 'British as much as Irish'; 'Catholic, Irish from Northern Ireland ... it is not particularly salient to me'; 'British – just something to tick in a box'; 'Northern Irish, definitely not from the South, not Irish, not English'; 'British and Northern Irish'; 'Northern Irish'; 'British-Irish'; 'I'd love there to be a nationality of Northern Irish'; 'Irish and also British.

What is striking here is the range and potential permeability of categories, among both Protestants and Catholics. Most of the respondents spoke explicitly about their national identity and of these, about 45 per cent had a simple identity (British or Irish, and usually Irish) and 55 per cent a complex one.²³ The variation and permeability of categories is independent of strength of feeling. So, for one Catholic, a set of complex layers is brought into identification: 'I could say I'm Northern Irish if you want to be ... if you want to take the association but ... I don't really ... It's not that important to me ... I live on the island of Ireland so ... I'm Irish ... the political side of it is not ... I don't ... actually I have a British passport ... We all have British passport but ... that's for the formality side of things ... if you ask me about how I feel, how I see myself, without thinking too much about it I say Irish'.²⁴

In summary, in both the Irish state and Northern Ireland, nationality is important and related to a sense of belonging, of cultural legacy, political loyalty, local tradition and familial history. But whereas – for Southern Catholics – local belonging, political loyalty, cultural proclivities and familial tradition all feed into a multi-faceted national identity, in Northern Ireland respondents often disaggregate these facets.

subheading Totalizing Distinctions

Distinctions serve as symbolic boundaries.²⁵ Some boundaries are more important to people than others because they serve as entry-tickets to political and social participation and economic advancement. Even when such outright structural discrimination is remedied, as it has been in both parts of Ireland, boundaries can retain intense symbolic importance, taking on moral significance and assumed to be uncrossable. Such totalizing distinctions form the limits of imagined worlds. They are constructed very ~~in~~ differently North and South.

In the Irish state, boundaries converge into an Irish national frame, with religious, class and state distinctions intersecting and constituting different ways of being Irish. Eight distinct factors listed below are mentioned in the interviews as important to nationality, and are given different priorities by different sub-groups:

- 1 Identification with and at-homeness in institutions and practices: often mentioned were examples like language, sport, distinctive names, idioms and accents, occasionally the rituals of birth and death and wider Catholic practices. Some individuals, predominantly Protestants, pointed out their lack of at-homeness in some practices such as Sunday sports, and with some symbolism (for example the national anthem).
- 2 A set of interactional norms, which define the tone of social relations in the Irish state, as distinct from what is often perceived as the bitterness and roughness of the North and the coldness and anonymity of England. This was particularly often mentioned by border dwellers, both Catholic and Protestant.²⁶
- 3 An identification with the history of the state and entwinement of family history with state history (and before), with a sense of ownership of that history. This was frequently mentioned by professional and middle-class (usually Catholic) respondents and qualified by some Protestant respondents.

- 4 Engagement with society and politics: taking a position on the Celtic Tiger economy, urbanization, the efficacy of the state. This was general.
- 5 Identification with the state and its official 26 county boundaries: this was the view of a significant minority of respondents, predominantly Catholic and from towns away from the border, who explicitly excluded the North and Northerners from being Irish.
- 6 Identification with the externally projected image of Ireland, the ‘craic’, the Guinness, the ‘gift of the gab’, holidays and how ‘everyone loves the Irish’. This was a theme emphasized by working-class young adults in Dublin.
- 7 A sense of blood lineage back to ancient Ireland, where the purity of the lineage is measured in the male line. This was particularly frequent in the oldest generation of Catholics,²⁷ although it was also a theme among a significant minority of Protestants in their 30s, 40s and 50s.
- 8 Catholicism, mentioned as an essential part of being Irish only by a small minority of older respondents.

It is significant how few of our respondents explicitly included Catholicism as central to being Irish.²⁸ For most of the population, if it is important, it is so implicitly in the role of religious norms in permitting or prohibiting Sunday sports or gambling, and in everyday rituals – the angelus on state television and radio at 12 noon and at 6pm – rather than as an explicit criterion of national belonging. This list amounts to a toolkit of Irish national repertoires of distinction. People are defined as ‘very Irish’ if they identify on all counts, engage very fully in all the practices, and exclude from full national membership those who do not meet all the criteria. With the possible exception of the lineage criterion, most Southern Catholics easily met the criteria, even those that they did not themselves emphasize.

Southern Protestants met most of the criteria except the lineage and religious ones, while qualifying their identification with institutions and state symbolism. Northerners, at least those in the immediate cross-border area, also met many of the interactional and associational criteria.

The English in the Irish state fell outside on most or all of the criteria. The boundaries of the nation were still drawn against the English, those against whom independence had been achieved and must be upheld culturally. To be English in Ireland was therefore necessarily to be an outsider: there is no documented social or economic discrimination, yet one respondent saw it as ‘worse than being a Nigerian’. There were exceptions, but only if the individuals found ways to engage very fully with the society, (criteria 1 and 4) and to negotiate interactional norms (criterion 2).

In the Irish state, then, the national category provides the implicit frame for most debates, whether it is about the impact of the Celtic Tiger economy, social morality or about the proper attitude towards the North. The categories are used to define position and steer social debate and action: the Southern middle class (from rural teachers to higher professionals) make political points by reframing how Irish history is told; the Southern working class gain inclusion on national grounds while flattening the concept. The implicit national ‘we’ is undefined, but it remains the frame of discussion even among those who heartily despise nationalism. About religion there remains much contention within Catholicism as well as more muted critique between religions. Nationality is normally undefined and inclusive, but exclusion, when it happens, appears as totalizing and absolute.

In Northern Ireland, boundaries are made differently, and national, religious, ‘ethnic’, state and political distinctions intersect in a set of ‘fault-lines’ of which each is contested, none is agreed to be primary, and which only intermittently combine into one big division.²⁹

Those that are emphasized by respondents in their discussions of national and religious identity include

- 1 The Protestant/Catholic religious division in its different interpretations. This is almost always noted, whether to be rejected, accepted or reformulated.
- 2 The divided institutional and associational practices, from education, sport, language, culture to quasi-political organizations like the Orange Order. These associations are typically organized by the church or dependent on school networks, each largely segregated on religious grounds, and individuals differ markedly in their identification with them or attempt to bypass them in the smaller neutral or cross-community sector.
- 3 The national division in its different forms, with considerable nominal permeability but less substantive permeability when it is rooted in associational practices. It is very often noted, often through narratives where recent political history is intertwined with complex and cross-cutting family histories.
- 4 State belonging and boundaries, which give an official and formal British character to Northern Ireland and define a sharp boundary with the Irish state. This is often mentioned as one of many dimensions of belonging, but emphasized only by a section of Protestants, in this sample predominantly working class.

These form a set of dimensions which – in different combinations and with different priorities – define identity. Contention within and between dimensions is overt – whether it is the religious, political or national dimension and how relevant it is in any particular discussion. It is engaged in as much by middle-ground Northern-Irish identifiers as by more conventional unionists and nationalists. Positioning oneself to define the parameters of interaction and debate remains a daily task. Everyone risks disadvantage, if not exclusion, in this negotiation.

There are multiple small ‘we’s – republicans and evangelicals and local communities – but wider ‘we’s are continually redefined except in those moments and for those individuals for whom the sets of distinctions come to cohere into one big totalizing division. When it happens, it is a Catholic vs Protestant distinction that becomes pervasive, incorporating into itself simplified national, political and institutional binaries. The respondents in this study described such moments, but for them it was not an everyday – much less a desirable – event.

In each society, class, gender and generation intersect to create distinctive clusters with strategic interests in emphasizing one or other dimension, and one or other way of understanding it. These vary over time, and in the Irish state with economic boom and bust, in ways that cannot adequately be dealt with here. Yet contestation is far from simply strategic. While relatively few respondents accepted the view that identity was ‘in the blood’, or ‘in the bones’, almost all saw something deeper than strategic interest in their own responses – a matter of institutionally rooted expectations and a practically ingrained sense of appropriateness. In Northern Ireland, where everyday life had changed quickly with the socio-political restructuring that accompanied settlement, more people than in the Irish state emphasized the construction of national identity and religious distinction. But the difference is a matter of degree rather than of kind. Those renegotiating distinction in the North saw the process as one of discovery rather than simply choice, one of articulating and reformulating deep-set intuitions difficult although far from impossible to change. Such renegotiations were described as everyday affairs. Very few of the respondents referred at all to historical myths of origins. Historical reflection, particularly within the Irish state, took the form of a reflective, revisionist narrative, questioning received wisdom through a critical reflection on changing family history: for one young man, it involved ‘knowing where you and your family have come from’. Historico-familial narratives are used to deconstruct myth rather than repeat it, to ‘open up options’ in the present.

Conclusion: Religious, National or Ethnic Distinctions

Religious distinction takes very similar forms in North and South, and so too does the importance of associational life in embedding that distinction. The ways that religion is interrelated with national, state and class divisions differs profoundly. In the Irish state, religious distinction is relativized within an overarching national identity with boundaries in principle (although not always in practice) inclusive with respect to Protestants, fuzzy and negotiable with respect to Northerners while closed against the English/British. Only where Protestants contest that nationality and national history do the older totalizing tensions begin to resurface.³⁰ In Northern Ireland, it is the associational institutions of religious division that become totalizing, when the matrix of distinctions becomes crystallized into 'Protestants' vs 'Catholics' and otherwise permeable concepts become ways of taking sides.

Are these totalizing distinctions properly ethnic rather than religious or national? This is not the place to tease out the meanings of the terms.³¹ It is clear, however, that the distinction in both parts of the island carries with it many of the properties normally thought of as ethnic: it pervades ordinary life, is embedded in associational practices and interactional norms, and is felt to be deeper than purely situational interest or intellectual principle. It is not simply ascribed but also assumed, and not simply or directly a matter of choice. But ethnicity is usually conceived as involving clear boundaries. This is far from the case in either part of Ireland. In the North, where boundaries shift depending on the dimension focused upon and the position taken within it, the ascribed 'Protestant' vs 'Catholic' distinction is only intermittently active, and it achieves clarity only by silencing the now significant numbers 'in between'. In the Irish state, the limits of the nation are defined only towards the east, and it is otherwise open, shifting and negotiable. The Protestant/Catholic distinction retains some elements of the ethnic, for example in the different interpretations of history, although there is significant commonality in interactional norms, and national loyalties and a general

determination to avoid a repolarization of the distinction. In each part of the island, the distinctions are rooted in everyday practices, understood in terms of familial continuities, and negotiable albeit sometimes with considerable difficulty. In short, invoking an ethnic category of analysis does not help in making sense of the intersecting matrix of divisions and distinctions in both parts of the island and between them.

Accepting the limitations of the concept, however, the cases show something of theoretical significance. There is a long debate in the literature as to whether, how far and when ‘ethnicity’ is experienced as rooted and unchangeable, how far, when and by whom ‘ethnic’ categories are used strategically to pursue interests, and where on this spectrum ordinary people lie. Sometimes a continuum of ethnicity is posited between those cases where it is rooted in daily segregation, and those where it is a much more fluid matter of strategic self-definition.³² In each part of Ireland, many respondents are conscious of these twin aspects of their distinction-making. On the one hand, it has both strategic and normative aspects, which guide reflection and new meaning-making in the light of available cultural repertoires. On the other hand, it refers to a structure of feeling and expectation, a sense of habituation and appropriateness that is very variously described by respondents (‘fitting in’, ‘commonality’, ‘innate prejudice’, ‘sectarian baggage’).³³ The two coexist and interplay in ordinary people’s experience. If, sometimes, respondents affirm the categories that fit the structure of experience, sometimes they work on the expectations and habits that make up that structure of experience. The duality is not a matter simply of situation (conflict or peace), or of social position (strategic elites and unreflective followers) but it is built into everyday experience and reflection.

In conclusion, the same elements of religious meaning and practice are common throughout Ireland. Differences are much more evident in the wider resonances of religion and the forms of totalization than in the specific religious understandings. It is here that the

wider institutional context, the forms of politics, and the role of majorities and minorities come into play, differentially encouraging individuals to use religious concepts and repertoires to inform other interests and to understand other divisions.

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¹ For example, M. Juergensmeyer, 'Is Religion the Problem?' *The Hedgehog Review* 6:1 (2004), 21–33.

² Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's Privileged Minority* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983).

³ Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 116–203.

⁴ For a study of West Cork, see D. Butler and J. Ruane, 'Identity, Difference and Community in Southern Irish Protestantism: The Protestants of West Cork', *National Identities* 11 (2009), 73–86; for Northern Ireland, see John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 33–48.

⁵ Drs Theresa O'Keefe, Lorenzo Cañas Bottos and Nathalie Rougier were research fellows on two projects on which the author was respectively co-PI and PI, Identity, Diversity, Citizenship (IDC), funded by the Irish government Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, 3, 2003–6; and Intergenerational Transmission and Ethnonational Identity in the (Irish) Border Area (ITENIBA), funded by the European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation through the Higher Education Authority, North–South programme, strand 2, 2004–6. Most of the interviews in the Southern border area were conducted in 2005, in Northern Ireland in 2005–6, and in other parts of the Irish state between late 2003 and 2005. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, identifying details removed and stored in the University College Dublin Archives. Because of the sensitivity of some of the material, and out of concern for respondents' anonymity, they have not been opened to other researchers.

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⁶ Thus both because of the respondents and the North–South comparison, the research complements the important studies of activists by John Brewer, Gareth Higgins and Francis Teeney, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Claire Mitchell and Gladys Ganiel, *Evangelical Journeys: Choice and Change in a Northern Irish Religious Sub-culture* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011); Lee Smithey, *Unionists, Loyalists and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Peter Shirlow, Jon Tonge and James McAuley, *Abandoning Historical Conflict: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁷ Only two respondents in Northern Ireland were unwilling to give background information.

⁸ The rest were asked a slightly more guiding (but still open) question: ‘If I was to ask you to define yourself in terms of nationality, religion, that sort of thing, how would you define yourself?’ These are not analysed in this section of the chapter.

⁹ Over half of those who volunteered religion were over 65 at the time of the interview, and almost all over 50. Over 65s account for less than 30% of the interviews, and over-50s less than half.

¹⁰ It is sometimes suggested that individuals will highlight those categories that are ‘marked’ in the sense of being particularly important or even sacred in the sense used by Eviatar Zerubavel, ‘The Social Marking of the Past: Toward a Social Semiotics of Memory’ in R. Friedland and J. Mohr, eds, *Matters of Culture: Cultural Sociology in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 184–94.

¹¹ Michèle Lamont and Nissim Mizrachi, ‘Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things: Responses to Stigmatization in Comparative Perspective’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35:3 (2012), 365–81.

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¹² Clifford Stevenson and Orla T. Muldoon, 'Socio-Political Context and Accounts of National Identity in Adolescence', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 49 (2010), 583–99.

¹³ Rogers Brubaker, Margit Fleishschmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 211–16.

¹⁴ M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 6–7, 37–9, 43–7.

¹⁵ Stevenson and Muldoon, 'Socio-Political Context'.

¹⁶ Second-generation Catholic woman interviewed in Belfast by Jennifer Todd.

¹⁷ Second-generation Protestant man interviewed in the Irish state by Jennifer Todd.

¹⁸ First-generation Protestant woman interviewed in an East Coast town in the Irish state by Theresa O'Keefe.

¹⁹ First-generation Catholic woman interviewed in Northern Ireland by Theresa O'Keefe.

²⁰ Second-generation Protestant woman interviewed in Northern Ireland border town by Nathalie Rougier.

²¹ The 'Soldier's Song' is the common name for the Irish national anthem.

²² Quotes from one Protestant first-generation rural man, two Protestant second-generation rural men and one Protestant second-generation rural woman interviewed by Lorenzo Cañas Bottos in the border area of the Irish state, and a second first-generation Protestant woman interviewed by Theresa O'Keefe in an East coast town in the Irish state.

²³ In the Northern Ireland Life and Times surveys of 2007, only 43% of Catholics saw themselves as 'Irish only', and 35% of Protestants as 'British only' (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2007/Identity/IRBRIT.html>) suggesting that the permeability reported here was indeed widespread at the time of the interviews. The 2011 census shows much less permeability: whether this signals a change in self-definitions or simply a tendency for respondents to adopt 'official' meanings in the census cannot be addressed here.

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²⁴ First-generation Catholic woman interviewed in Northern Ireland border town by Nathalie Rougier.

²⁵ Michèle Lamont and Virag Molnar, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002), 167–95.

²⁶ Jennifer Todd, Orla Muldoon, Karen Trew, L. Cañas Bottos, N. Rougier and K. McLaughlin 'The Moral Boundaries of the Nation: Nation, State and Boundaries in the Southern Irish Border Counties', *Ethnopolitics* 5:4 (2006), 365–82.

²⁷ L. Cañas Bottos and N. Rougier, 'Generations on the Border: Changes in Ethno-National Identity in the Irish Border Area', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12:3–4 (2006), 617–42.

²⁸ In the 1999/2000 EVS survey, 28% of Catholics in the Irish state said it was important to be Catholic to be Irish; see Tony Fahey, Bernadette Hayes and Richard Sinnott, *Conflict and Consensus: A Study of Values and Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2005), p. 69. Significantly fewer mentioned it in our interviews five years later. Whether the difference is a function of our sample (in areas where there is a significant minority of Protestants), of understanding of the survey, or of discretion in face-to-face interviews is not clear. It is, however, clear that only a minority in the Irish state explicitly link Catholicism with nationality.

²⁹ These dimensions have been described as 'hairline fractures' by Chris Gilligan, Paul Hainsworth and Aidan McGarry, 'Fractures, Foreigners and Fitting in: Exploring Attitudes towards Immigration and Integration in "Post-Conflict" Northern Ireland', *Ethnopolitics* 10:2 (2011), 253–69 (257).

³⁰ J. Ruane and D. Butler, 'Southern Irish Protestants: An Example of De-ethnicisation?', *Nations and Nationalism* 13:4 (2007), 619–35.

³¹ J. Ruane and J. Todd, 'Ethnicity and Religion: Redefining the Research Agenda', *Ethnopolitics* 9:1 (2010), 1–8.

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³² See for example A. Wimmer, ‘The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory’, *American Journal of Sociology* 113:4 (2008), 970–1022.

³³ This can be theorized in Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus, P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 78–87.