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'National Identity' and 'Religious Profession': The Census in Northern Ireland 2011

ABSTRACT: In the new millennium a key issue being addressed in the construction of censuses is: *Is it appropriate for censuses to include questions which go beyond matters of fact to involve memory or opinion?* Questions which clearly involve opinion are usually either the subject of elections and referendums or are contained in opinion research – perhaps conducted by academics or by a commercial market research organisation. Two inquiries on the boundary between 'fact' and 'matter of opinion' are those concerning religious profession and national identity. In Ireland religious profession was first introduced into the Census in 1861, national identity was introduced for the first time in 2011. This paper focuses on how far census data can be used to examine whether claimed religion and religion 'brought up in' are linked to national identity and what part (if any) residential location, age and socio-economic position play in any such link.

KEYWORDS: Census, Population, National Identity, Religion, Northern Ireland, Opinion

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Introduction

Two inquiries on the boundary between 'fact' and 'matter of opinion' are those concerning religious profession and national identity. In Ireland religious profession was first introduced into the Census in 1861, national identity was introduced for the first time in 2011. Religion – or 'religious profession' as it was known for the first hundred years – has been included in the censuses of population every ten years since 1861. From time to time over the last 150 years there has been some public debate about the nature of the question to be asked and the benefits of asking it.

National identity was introduced to the Census of 2011 after debates which involved academics arguing over the benefits of sample surveys, but the decision was ultimately a political one. There was a need to include in the Census something approaching a constitutional question and the introduction of a national identity question was seen to be a suitable compromise.

Historical Background

In 1860 the issue appears to have been clear for those who opposed the inclusion of an inquiry into 'religious profession' in the Census. In the Westminster Parliament[1] it was argued that the state 'had no right to intrude into the domain of conscience' and that 'an authoritative demand on the part of the government which … was beyond the legitimate scope of civil interference' should be resisted.

Conscience – perhaps now better described as 'matter of opinion' – was not an issue for the Census of Population. The Home Secretary claimed that since there was to be no penalty for refusing to answer an inquiry into 'religious profession', this was not an 'authoritative demand' in any sense other than that it was made by persons 'authorised by the government.'

Whether or not the response of the Home Secretary in 1860 would have been adequate in the twenty-first century, the inquiry into religious profession was included for the 1861 Census for Ireland.[2] The inquiry was not included for England, Wales and Scotland – because (as was claimed later) in Ireland "an inquiry into religion was not resented; it was voluntarily given and was therefore accurate and valuable." A person's

[1] For further details see my paper Macourt M. P. A. (1978) 'The Religious Inquiry in the Irish Census of 1861', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (82) pp. 168-187, in which the parliamentary quotations herein are referenced.

[2] A question on religion was included in the Censuses held decennially in 1861-1911 and 1961-2011 throughout the island; additionally in those held in 1926, 1936, 1946, 1996, 2006 in the Republic of Ireland and in 1926, 1937 & 1951 in Northern Ireland.

religion was a fact, an identity, a matter which all – or almost all – of the population could address with ease. It was regarded neither as a memory nor as a matter of opinion.

The issue of the union of Ireland and Great Britain dominated the political landscape until the early 1920s. For much of the period since then the national identity of those living in what became Northern Ireland has been an overwhelming concern. With significant individual exceptions in both directions, opinions in Northern Ireland on this 'constitutional' issue have been linked to 'religion' – Roman Catholics supporting a united Ireland, Protestants supporting continuing union with Great Britain. In this context what constitutes (or has constituted) 'religion' is a matter of ongoing academic debate.[3]

The 'Religious Profession' question

After the political turmoil of the 1910s and early 1920s, an inquiry into religion continued to be included in the Censuses held in Ireland, north and south, as it had been from 1861 to 1911. In Northern Ireland – the jurisdiction with which this paper is primarily concerned – the inquiry appears not have been resented, indeed in 1937 only 0.2% of the people did not respond to the religion inquiry with a 'religious' answer and in 1961, 100 years after the first inclusion of the question, this non-response had increased – but only to 2.0%.

The response to the inquiry has reduced census by census but, given the proportion who did not participate in formal religious worship, this non-response was still not held to constitute a lack of willingness to respond to a factual question.[4]

The Censuses held in 1971 and 1981 suffered from problems related to civil unrest in Northern Ireland: indeed following the 1981 Census the Registrar General had to make and then revise significant adjustments to the population totals to take account of that civil unrest.[5] However, unlike

[3] Two recent contributions, from rather different theoretical perspectives, are Claire Mitchell's study *Religion, Politics and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Ashgate, 2006) and my own study Malcolm Macourt *Counting the People of God?* (Church of Ireland Publishing, 2009).

[4] Thirty years later, in 1991, 11.0% of the population did not give a 'religious' answer; in 2001 the percentage had increased to 13.9% and in 2011 to 16.9%. 1937: 2,374; 1961: 28,418; 1991: 174,061; 2001: 233,853; 2011: 305,416.

[5] Details of the revisions are contained in Eversley D. and Herr V. (1985) *The Roman Catholic Population of Northern Ireland in 1981: a revised estimate* (Northern Ireland Fair Employment Agency, Belfast) and Compton P.A. and Power J.P. (1986) 'Estimates of the Religious Composition of Northern Ireland Local Government Districts in 1981 and Change in the

its two predecessors, the 1991 Census was supported by political leaders across the political spectrum and so there was no significant controversy – let alone any controversy over the question on religion.

The inquiry into religion appeared on the census schedule in 1991 in the same form that it had in previous censuses: 'Please state the religion, religious denomination or body to which the person belongs'. Even in 1991 this question allowed for open-ended self-definition and appears to have been considered to be in the realm of fact rather than remembered culture - memory. As Paul Weller (2004) has it

> in Northern Ireland ..."belonging *without* believing" can be of considerable public significance. Here, it is not only a person's current religious *self*-identification or even their religious origins that have social and political significance. Rather, the central issue is the way in which individuals are identified *by others*.

A 'Community Background' question

The approach of government to the religion question changed for the 2001 Census, as an indirect consequence the Good Friday agreement. There was no longer interest in the 'factual' element of 'religious profession'; rather 'religion' had become a form of division within society and government found that it had a need for 'base-line' data to monitor the impact of equality legislation. Governmental interest in the issue was focussed on establishing the extent to which the population identified with each 'community': 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' (or neither).

In both the 2001 and 2011 censuses this led to replacing a single inquiry into religion with a group of three questions designed to identify what the Northern Ireland census office (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, NISRA) described as 'community background'. Perhaps almost incidentally, one of those questions would also establish the numbers of those who identified with each religion or religious denomination.

The first of this group of questions was 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?' Respondents were directed to the next questions: those who answered 'yes' were directed to the question: 'What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?' [6]; those who answered 'no', indicating that they did not regard themselves as

Geographical Pattern of Religious Composition between 1971 and 1981' *The Economic and Social Review* 17 (2) pp 87-105.

[6] Five boxes were presented with this question, one each for the 4 major denominations: Roman Catholic, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland and Methodist Church in Ireland. The fifth box 'Other' carried with it a rubric 'please write in'.

belonging to any particular religion, were directed to: 'What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?'

This last inquiry, which permitted a 'none' response, yields data on what is described in NISRA literature as 'community background'. Whether this 'community background' inquiry strayed from factual material into opinion is open to debate; certainly the boundary between the two became rather more fluid.

Matters of fact may have determined how the first question was answered but for many the 'brought up in' question was an exercise in memory, remembering to which religion their parents, or even their grandparents, belonged.

For the censuses of 2001 and 2011 the answers to the religion questions can be grouped into three types:
- Those who gave a 'religion' answer
- Those who (only) gave a 'background' answer
- Those who gave neither (those who acknowledged neither a religion nor a religious background).

That over 83% of the population did give a 'religion' answer to the inquiry in 2011[7] seems to indicate that, for very many, 'religion' was a part of current practice, however for sizeable numbers of people their 'religion' was merely a feature which they – or their forebears – remembered.

A 'National Identity' question

In what follows *'Roman Catholic'* refers to those who gave that religion as an answer, usually by ticking the appropriate box on the census form; *'Catholic'* refers to those who gave that religion as an answer added to those who gave a community background answer of 'Catholic'. *'Protestant'* refers to those who gave as an answer Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland or one of the other denominations which NISRA deemed to be 'Other Christian' or 'Christian related'; *'Protestant'* (lower case) refers to those who gave one of those religion answers added to those who gave a community background answer deemed by NISRA to be a 'Protestant' one. The descriptor *'lapsed Catholic'* refers to those who gave a community background answer of 'Catholic' (only); *'lapsed Protestant'* refers to those who gave a community background answer deemed by NISRA to be a 'Protestant' one (only).

[7] NISRA reported 'It is estimated that, in the 2011 Census, responses were received from 94% of households and these contained 92% of the usually resident population.'

Since it was first introduced into the Social Attitudes Survey in 1989, major academic sample surveys carried out in Northern Ireland have included 'national identity' as a feature. The annual Life and Times Survey, which followed after the Social Attitudes Survey from 1998, and still continues, has included this as a regular feature (Mitchell 2006).

Respondents to these personal interview studies of around 1,000 people each year have been shown a card with – typically – four explicit responses: *British 1, Irish 2, Ulster 3, Northern Irish 4, Other 5* and were asked: 'Which of these best describes the way you think of yourself?' The uses which may be made of data from these surveys carried out on 'national identity' up to 2011 are demonstrated fully by Bernadette Hayes and Ian McAllister (2013).

New questions are added to the Census only after a very great deal of consultation, discussion, and debate. Part of the material for that debate comprises significant academic studies carried out in the period before the Census: one of these by Máiréad Nic Craith (2002) raised a number of issues to which data from this question may have proved particularly useful.

Debates in the Northern Ireland Assembly concerning the introduction of questions new to the Census into the 2011 Census[8] appear only peripherally to have addressed the issue of the boundary between fact and opinion. Perhaps the most interesting notion used was that by Dr Norman Caven (Chief Executive Officer of NISRA) at a briefing meeting of the relevant Assembly committee:[9] 'There is a ***predilection*** for censuses to avoid attitudinal questions and to record matters of fact.' (my emphasis).

Nonetheless ultimately, the decision about adding any new question to a Census is a political one (Weller 2004). In response to a request for a constitutional question in the Census – essentially whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom or become part of the Republic of Ireland – Dr Caven reminded members of the committee that

> Much of the information gleaned from surveys, such as the [Northern Ireland] Life and Times Survey … is focused on attitudes. That is probably a better context in which to ask such questions, rather than including an attitudinal question... in the census.

[8] 'The confidentiality of personal Census information is paramount, and disclosure protection measures are used to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information about identifiable individuals. All 2011 Census outputs have been derived from a database within which the records have been subjected to statistical techniques to minimise the risk of inadvertent disclosure. 'Record swapping' is the main statistical disclosure control method that has been applied. In addition, broad limitations are placed on details in tables to be produced for small populations. There were minimum thresholds of numbers of person and households for the release of sets of output. For Key Statistics these are 40 households and 100 persons.' Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

[9] Department for Finance and Personnel Committee, Northern Ireland Assembly, 14th April 2010.

However, this reminder was insufficient. NISRA later argued that the question on national identity was introduced not as a response to requests for a constitutional question but as an extension of the question on ethnicity, first introduced into the 2001 Census. The head of the Census at NISRA, Robert Beatty, asserted that the question would 'enable people to articulate more broadly their sense of identity.'

The wording of the national identity question was: 'How would you describe your national identity?' NISRA dealt with the boundary between fact and opinion by introducing in its explanatory notes the notion of 'feeling':

> A person's national identity is a self-determined assessment of their own identity with respect to the country or countries with which they ***feel*** an affiliation. (my emphasis)

This offering of some assurance to the public: 'This assessment of identity is not dependent on legal nationality or ethnic group' was however over-ridden by the wording of the question, and the need for respondents to refer to a separate sheet of notes to find the NISRA explanation. There appears to have been no specific training on this question provided to those who distributed Census forms.

Using data from the new question on 'national identity' in the Census of 2011 it is possible to compare national identity with particular responses to the religion question and to socio-economic classification.

Data from the 'National Identity' and 'Religion' questions, 2011

Some 95% of the population gave one of seven responses to the identity question.[10] These seven responses can be grouped into ***three*** types: one response was (only) Northern Irish, two more responses included Irish but not British[11] and the other four responses included British.[12] These three types form the core of the identity data used in this paper.

Tentative conclusions which may be drawn about national identities adopted by those holding particular religious views (and none) may be related to how 'communities and cultures remember, re-construct or indeed forget the past.'[13] Whether what people are remembering is 'religion' or

[10] The remaining 5% includes about 1/3rd who responded with English, Scottish or Welsh and 2/3rd with national identity outside Great Britain and Ireland.

[11] Irish; Irish + Northern Irish.

[12] British; British + Northern Irish; British + Northern Irish + Irish; British + Irish.

[13] The introductory material for the 2013 ISASR conference, to which an early draft of this paper was read, invited papers which addressed 'communities and cultures remember, re-construct or indeed forget the past'.

'politics' or 'national identity' is a matter for debate – indeed how far each of these can be distinguished from the other is also a matter for debate.

If it were possible to analyse responses to the national identity question by types of response to the religion questions then we would be able to make a considerable contribution to the debate about religion and identity. If we could analyse all of this by age of respondent and by socio-economic position then our contribution to the debate would also be worthwhile. However, the extent of the data made available on each question was restricted and so the contribution which can be made is limited.

Using the three types of response noted: 50.25% gave a response which included 'British' (Nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4 in table) – a response which is the key indicator used later; the response Northern Irish (only) was given by 22.05% (No. 7 in table); and a response which included Irish, but did not include British, was given by 27.7% (Nos. 5 & 6 in table).

The difference between responses from Roman Catholics and responses from Protestants of all denominations is dramatic. A response which included British was given by 13.37% of Roman Catholics compared with 82.84% of those responding with a Protestant denomination.

Only 2.33% of Protestants identified as 'Irish but not British' compared with 57.74% of Roman Catholics. The response 'Northern Irish' (only) was given 28.12% of Roman Catholics, 14.83% of Protestants and 26.58% of those who declared neither a religion nor a community background.

Some 10.85% of Roman Catholics gave their 'national identity' as British (only); and a further 2.51% identified as British along with Northern Irish, Irish or both. For Protestants 70.00% identified as British (only) and a further 12.84% identified as British along with Northern Irish, Irish or both. In giving a response which included British the responses of three major Protestant denominations are very similar: Presbyterian Church 83.8%, Church of Ireland 81.8%, and Methodist Church 83.1%.

While the responses of those who only gave a 'community background' largely reflected the responses of those who gave the religion concerned, there were some consistent differences.[14] Lapsed Catholics gave a response which included British over 40% more often than Roman Catholics (18.8% and 13.4%). Lapsed Protestants failed to give a response which included British over 55% more often than Protestants 26.7% and 17.2%).

[14] 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' refer (here) only to those who gave a community background response, not to those who gave a denominational response.

Types of RESPONSE to IDENTITY by RELIGION

IDENTITY	TOTAL	Roman Catholic	lapsed Catholic	lapsed Protestant	Protestant
All residents	1,810,863	738,033	79,352	123,162	752,555
1 British	722,379	75,868	10,893	68,889	513,806
2 British+Northern Irish	111,748	6,284	1,165	13,607	83,299
3 British+Irish+N. Irish	18,406	5,704	1,048	2,558	7,323
4 British+Irish	11,877	5,591	720	1,141	3,620
5 Irish	457,482	392,323	37,263	4,256	15,692
6 Irish+Northern Irish	19,132	14,810	1,692	552	1,424
7 Northern Irish	379,267	198,605	20,645	26,575	108,865
THESE seven responses	1,720,291	699,185	73,426	117,578	734,029
3 types:					
Including British (1, 2, 3 & 4)	864,410	93,447	13,826	86,195	608,048
Including British	50.25%	13.37%	18.83%	73.31%	82.84%
Irish but not British (5 & 6)	476,614	407,133	38,955	4,808	17,116
Irish not British	27.71%	58.23%	53.05%	4.09%	2.33%
Only Northern Irish (7)	379,267	198,605	20,645	26,575	108,865
Only Northern Irish	22.05%	28.41%	28.12%	22.60%	14.83%

Using survey material, primarily from the annual Life and Times Survey, Hayes and McAllister conclude that:

> Protestants … remain strongly committed to a British identity, and their support for that identity is greater than Catholic support for identifying themselves as Irish (Hayes & McAllister 2013).

While the surveys upon which this conclusion is based do not distinguish between having a religion and identifying a religion 'brought up in' as clearly as does the Census data herein interpreted, this contribution to the debate confirms their conclusion.

National Identity, Age and Religion/Community Background

The extent of data provided by NISRA does not permit the direct analysis of age and national identity by religious background. However, for Northern Ireland as a whole it is possible to identify those whose responses, say, included British by the religion of respondents by age in broad bands. These can be set alongside the percentage of those who gave a Catholic or Protestant answer[15] who responded Protestant.

[15] Either a 'religion' response or a 'community background' response.

NI[16]	Born in NI	Prot-estant	%p/ (c+p)	seven identities	Incl. British	% incl. British	Predicted	% diff
0-24	584,000	242,674	46.0	579,235	268,046	46.3	238,296	12.5
25-34	217,686	96,801	47.4	218,920	97,000	44.3	93,002	4.3
35-44	237,531	117,697	52.0	237,485	118,063	49.7	110,784	6.6
45-54	239,483	125,933	54.4	238,407	124,633	52.3	116,310	7.2
55-64	189,832	107,389	58.1	187,901	104,116	55.4	97,927	6.3
65-74	144,231	89,678	63.3	142,563	82,995	58.2	80,980	2.5
75+	116,647	77,081	67.0	115,780	69,557	60.1	69,557	0
Total	1,729,410	857,253	52.55	1,720,291	864,410	50.25	806,856	

If the number of those who gave a response which included British had remained parallel to the Protestant totals for those aged 75+ the numbers of those aged less than 25 who gave that answer would have been 238,296 rather than 268,046: the actual total being 12.5% more than that predicted. For those aged 35-44 it would have been 110,784, the actual total of 118,063 being 6.6% more than predicted – and for those aged 65-74 80,980, the actual total of 82,995 being 2.5% more than predicted.

By comparing data for Northern Ireland of religion by age bands and national identity by the same age bands it is clear that, compared with the base of people aged over 75, those under 25 years of age 12.5% more people chose a response which included 'British', those aged 35-44 6.6% more and those aged 65-74 2.5% more. So it appears that – irrespective of religious background – the younger the respondent the more likely that they will have given a response which includes 'British'.

Identity and Religion by Local Government Districts

Data has been made available for each of the 26 Local Government Districts (LGDs)[17] which linked responses to the national identity question with responses to the religion and community background questions.

Perhaps the most striking indicator is that those with a Protestant background who gave a response which included 'British' constituted a remarkably consistent percentage in each LGD (ranging only from 78% to 85%); whereas, in contrast, the response of those with a Catholic background which included 'British' varied markedly (from 6% to 45%).

A clear pattern emerges: those Local Government Districts with a **high** percentage of Catholics have an even **lower** than expected percentage of them who gave a response which included 'British'; those LGDs with a

[16] %p(c+p) is the percentage of those who gave a Protestant or Catholic religion or community background, who gave a Protestant answer.
[17] At the time of the 2011 Census there were 26 Local Government Districts.

low percentage of Catholics background have an even **higher** percentage of them who gave a response which included 'British'.

LGDs (2011) by an IDENTITY which includes 'BRITISH'

% Cath[18]	Local Government District	% incl British	% Catholic incl British	% Protestant inc British
43.96	ANTRIM	57.77	24.43	82.12
13.64	ARDS	75.21	35.63	81.88
49.17	**ARMAGH**	46.29	7.46	82.89
22.39	BALLYMENA	71.98	27.10	84.97
32.60	BALLYMONEY	62.50	19.56	82.25
33.49	BANBRIDGE	62.57	23.29	82.17
52.94	BELFAST	45.36	12.06	80.24
9.95	CARRICKFERGUS	78.63	44.89	83.18
23.91	CASTLEREAGH	68.10	22.91	82.30
28.75	COLERAINE	64.93	26.78	80.36
60.29	COOKSTOWN	38.83	8.47	83.67
46.79	CRAIGAVON	51.65	13.43	84.01
77.17	DERRY	24.16	7.34	78.51
66.24	**DOWN**	41.16	20.41	79.18
63.51	DUNGANNON	34.12	6.34	81.43
60.60	FERMANAGH	38.60	11.74	78.78
26.62	**LARNE**	71.21	39.44	82.86
61.32	LIMAVADY	43.04	18.36	81.13
39.19	LISBURN	57.05	16.88	81.59
67.37	MAGHERAFELT	32.27	6.62	83.60
61.77	MOYLE	39.46	14.73	77.86
81.33	NEWRY & MOURNE	21.12	7.28	78.58
24.22	NEWTOWNABBEY	68.37	25.76	81.74
14.73	NORTH DOWN	73.68	39.81	80.31
71.55	OMAGH	29.62	9.00	79.96
65.69	STRABANE	33.59	8.94	80.28
47.57	**TOTAL**	50.25	13.88	82.84

This pattern appears to suggest that the micro-social environment plays an important part in deciding which identity individuals should record, which '*communities and cultures [to] remember [or] re-construct*' or indeed whether to *'forget the past'*, to quote the title of the 2013 ISASR Conference.

So it appears that Catholics who live in minority situations may have been influenced by their Protestant neighbours, whereas Protestants appear not to be influenced by their Catholic neighbours when living in minority

[18] **% Catholic** is calculated by taking all who gave a Protestant or Catholic religion or community background and establishing what percentage those who gave a Catholic religion or community background.

situations. Does this suggest that, in minority situations, Protestants have remembered their heritage, whereas Catholics have forgotten theirs?

However, there are some exceptions to this pattern of Local Government Districts. As may be seen from the table, two LGDs appear to have even more Catholics identifying as British than would be expected from the identified pattern; and one LGD appears to have rather fewer Catholics identifying as British than expected.

Selected LGDs by RELIGION and NATIONAL IDENTITY

Larne LGD	Total	Roman Catholic	lapsed Catholic	No CB	lapsed Protestant	Protestant
Usual residents	32,180	7,009	994	2,059	2,728	19,206
Seven identities	31,125	6,805	956	1,824	2,606	18,786
Including British	22,165	2,712	349	1,273	1,963	15,763
N. Irish only	6,367	2,212	299	481	559	2,786
Irish not British	2,593	1,881	308	70	84	237
% Inc. British	71.21	39.85	36.51	69.79	75.33	83.91
% N. Irish only	20.46	32.51	31.28	26.37	21.45	14.83
% Irish not British	8.33	27.64	32.22	3.84	3.22	1.26

Down LGD	Total	Roman Catholic	lapsed Catholic	No CB	lapsed Protestant	Protestant
Usual residents	69,731	40,068	3,523	3,359	3,462	18,910
Seven identities	67,051	38,971	3,364	2,807	3,265	18,309
Including British	27,600	7,884	755	1,686	2,301	14,782
N. Irish only	18,814	13,035	1,131	793	762	3,000
Irish not British	20,637	18,052	1,478	328	202	527
% Inc. British	41.16	20.23	22.44	60.06	70.47	80.74
% N. Irish only	28.06	33.45	33.62	28.25	23.34	16.39
% Irish not British	30.78	46.32	43.94	11.69	6.19	2.88

Larne and Down are the two LGDs with rather more Catholics with an identity which included British than expected by the pattern. In Larne, where 26.62% of the resident population had a Catholic background, 39.44% of Catholics identified as British; in Down, where 66.24% of the resident population had a Catholic background, as many as 20.41% of those with a Catholic background identified as British.

Of those LGDs where fewer Catholics identified as British than would be expected from the general pattern identified, Armagh stands out: only 7.46% of Catholics identified themselves as British despite only 49.17% of that LGD having a Catholic background. A feature of Armagh LGD is that it contains a particularly high proportion of 'Small Areas' which have either a high percentage of Catholics, or a high percentage of Protestants.

Armagh LGD	Total	Roman Catholic	lapsed Catholic	No CB	lapsed Protestant	Protestant
Usual residents	59,340	26,563	2,135	1,800	2,958	25,528
Seven identities	56,348	24,956	1,956	1,324	2,820	25,001
Including British	26,085	1,773	235	814	2,105	20,955
N. Irish only	11,962	6,902	534	369	609	3,497
Irish not British	18,301	16,281	1,187	141	106	549
% Inc. British	46.29	7.10	12.01	61.48	74.65	83.82
% N. Irish only	21.23	27.66	27.30	27.87	21.60	13.99
% Irish not British	32.48	65.24	60.69	10.65	3.76	2.20

Local Levels and Relevant Data

The amount of data which NISRA has made available from the 2011 is extensive; the mechanisms for viewing that data are impressive; the links to maps are very useful.

Data is provided on a large number of features for each of the 4537 'Small Areas' into which NISRA has divided Northern Ireland. However, NISRA does not provide sufficient cross-matched data to enable comparisons to be made which would permit investigation of the relationships between one feature and another. A means of relating these features has had to be devised which is less than perfect but which provides some measure of relationship between features.

(a) Community background

A feature of residential segregation in Northern Ireland is that there are, and have been, significant areas where less than, say, 5% of the 'other community' reside – these areas are particularly in greater Belfast, Derry and Craigavon though they are to be found throughout the province.

It is simple to create an index which can be applied to all 4537 Small Areas[19] by identifying Catholics and Protestants (as defined earlier) and establishing the ratio of Catholic to Catholic+Protestant. This index can be compared with other features of individual Small Areas.

Studies of particular areas may be undertaken: for example a detailed study of greater Belfast (Macourt 1995), using an index created in a similar way from data in the 1991 census – with its more limited religion inquiry – established that:

1. Those resident in **mixed** Small Areas, at all levels of social and economic well-being, were less likely to answer the religion question at all, when compared with those resident in **exclusive** Small Areas.

[19] Taken from Table KS212

2. Middle class people of 'Catholic' community background were very much more likely to answer 'none' to the religion question if they resided in mixed Small Areas than if they resided in exclusively 'Catholic' ones.

(b) Socio-economic position
The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) provides an indicator of socio-economic position based on responses to questions on occupation. It is simple to create an index by using 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations', SEC%1, so that Small Areas can be categorised by the percentage of such persons in each area.[20] In 2011 97,470 persons, of whom 78,155 held at least a level 4 qualification,[21] fell inside this category, being 7.4% of those aged 16 to 74.

(c) National Identity
For each of the Small Areas data on responses to the national identity question and data on religion and community background are provided separately. The proportion responding with 'British' in their response may be identified, as may the proportion responding with Irish and not British. Those who responded Northern Irish only may also be identified as a proportion of each Small Area.

From these it is possible to compare those Small Areas with a particular range of levels of socio-economic position and of a particular range of levels of community background so as to establish the range of proportions of those giving a particular response to the National Identity question.

NISRA's 'Small Areas', National Identity and Religion

Of those 68 Small Areas[22] which were exclusively[23] Catholic, those responding with an identity which included British constituted 6.4%; whereas of those 46 Small Areas[24] which were exclusively Protestant the percentage was 84.1%. For these exclusively Catholic Small Areas 69.5% gave an 'Irish and not British' response, whereas in exclusively Protestant Small Areas the percentage was 1.6%.

[20] Alternative indices could be created by using, for example, 'routine occupations'.
[21] Level 4+: Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Dip, BTEC Higher level, Foundation degree.
[22] Including British: range 2.64% to 11.63%, interquartile range: 4.07% to 8.50%; Irish and not British: range 54.81% to 87.17%, interquartile range: 65.26% to 73.92%
[23] Exclusively in this paragraph is used in the sense of having more than 98% of the category concerned: 'Catholic' or 'Protestant'.
[24] Including British: range 77.73% to 92.42%, interquartile range: 81.53% to 86.90%; Irish and not British: range 0.00% to 3.90%, interquartile range: 0.82% to 2.37%

The marked pattern identified earlier of a high percentage of Catholics in a LGD who gave a response which included British being linked to a low percentage of Catholics in that LGD (and, of course, vice versa) produces some anomalies. Three of these anomalies deserve further examination.

Larne LGD comprises 93 Small Areas. In every one of them the number identifying as 'British' exceeded the expected number: in 63 of these the actual number exceeded the expected number by more than 10%. In 48 of the 93 Small Areas Catholics constituted at least 25% of the population: in 40 of these 48 those identifying as 'British' exceeded by more than 10% the expected number; this included four of the five Small Areas where 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations' exceeded 15%.

Of the 1104 Small Areas in Northern Ireland which contained at least 80% Catholics, in only 104 did the number of those responding 'British' exceed by more than 10% the expected number [on the basis of 13.88% Catholic + 81.52% Protestant]. Of these 104 Small Areas a substantial number – 37 – were in **Down** LGD.[25]

By contrast in **Armagh** LGD of the 138 Small Areas in only 6 did those responding 'British' exceed by more than 10% the expected number: 5 of these 6 were mixed Small Areas, having between 40% and 60% Catholics. In 49 of the Small Areas, the number responding 'British' was at least 10% lower than that expected. As noted earlier a feature of Armagh LGD is that it contains significant Catholic areas and significant Protestant areas, with comparatively few small areas which could be regarded as 'mixed'.

Socioeconomic Position, National Identity and Religion

It is possible to identify the range of proportions of those whose response included 'British' in those of the 4537 Small Areas with, for example, **both** greater than 20% 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations' **and** greater than 90% Catholics.

These particular criteria are met by 15 of the 4537 Small Areas: nine of the 15 are in suburban parts of Derry City; three are on the southern edge of Belfast, one in Lurgan, one in Newry and one on Carlingford Lough. In ten of these 15 Small Areas between 6% and 12% gave a response which included 'British': the lowest was 3.7% and the highest, in the southern edge of Belfast, was 21.6%.

[25] Down LGD consists of 160 Small Areas out of the total of 4537 in all of the 26 LGDs.

Small Areas by RELIGION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION and an IDENTITY which includes 'British'

%c/c+p	Total	Total	Total
SEC%1	all	<5%	>30%
Total	4537	1326	**150**
British: E-A >10%[26]	1112	417	33
British: A-E >10%	796	277	14

%c/c+p	75+	75+	75+	25-75	25-75	25-75	<25	<25	<25
SEC%1	all	<5%	>30	all	<5%	>30%	all	<5%	>30
Total	1226	504	14	1387	286	89	1924	536	47
British: E-A >10%	913	372	5	177	39	25	22	6	3
British: A-E >10%	123	55	1	420	136	12	253	86	1

The table identifies the 4537 Small Areas divided into three groups: those with more than 75% Catholic; those largely Protestant – that is those with less than 25% Catholic; and those Small Areas where no community appears to dominate – that is those with between 25% and 75% Catholic.

Within each of these three groups, Small Areas in two categories are identified: those with a significantly large percentage of 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations' (defined as more than 30%), and those areas with very few persons identified in this way (less than 5%).

The number of people whose response included 'British' in each Small Area ('A' in table) has been compared with the number who would be expected to provide such a response ('E' in table) on the basis of Northern Ireland-wide proportions. Where A and E differ by more than 10% a Small Area has been flagged up, creating two types of area: (i) those Small Areas where the actual number of those with British in their response exceeded the expected number by at least 10% and (ii) those Small Areas where the expected number exceeded the actual number by at least 10%.
It can be seen that the balance between areas of type (i) and areas of type (ii) differs markedly in different sections of the table:

- In those areas with a **large** proportion of persons of higher socio-economic position (SEC%1**>30**%), the balance does **not** shift markedly between different sections of the table. This group of Small Areas is only 150 in total, 91 of them in Belfast LGD and 26 in North Down LGD (none in the three identified LGDs of Armagh, Down or Larne). A sizeable majority of these

[26] British: E-A >10: that number of small areas where the expected number of those with British in their response exceeded the actual number by more than 10%;
British: A-E >10: that number of small areas where the actual number of those with British in their response exceeded the expected number by more than 10%.

– 103 – are in between types (i) and (ii): this includes 8 of 14 Catholic areas, 43 of 47 Protestant areas and 52 of 89 mixed areas.

- In those areas with very **few** persons of higher socio-economic position (SEC%1**<5%),** the balance between type (i) and type (ii) areas depends on religious background. In Catholic majority areas, of 504 Small Areas, areas of type (ii), 372, exceed areas of type (i), 55 with only 75 in between. In mixed religion areas, of 286 Small Areas, the pattern is reversed: areas of type (i), 136, exceed areas of type (ii), 39 – but with rather more (111) in between. In Protestant majority areas the pattern is different again, of 536 Small Areas the vast majority (444) are in between, of the remainder areas of type (i), 86, exceed areas of type (ii), 6.

So in Small Areas with **low** numbers of people of 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations': in those areas with a Catholic majority those whose response included 'British' were **even fewer** than predicted; this was not true of Protestant majority areas; in **mixed** areas those whose response included 'British' was rather **more** than predicted. In Small Areas with high numbers of people in this category no such imbalance of responses was evident.

National Identity and Absence of Religious Background

The number of usual residents who responded with a specific 'community background' response, but with no religion response – an identifiable number from the 2001 and the 2011 censuses – increased between those two censuses but only from 186,391 to 202,680.[27] However, the number who responded with **no** 'community background' more than doubled between 2001 and 2011, from 45,909 to 101,169.

Of the 101,169 who responded with no community background, only 84,822 (83.84%) gave one of the seven relevant national identities. This compares with 94.52% of those of a Catholic background and 97.25% of those of a Protestant background. Of these seven relevant identities only 8.5% with no community background gave a national identity which included Irish but did not include British, whereas 64.93% gave a response which included 'British' and 26.58% gave Northern Irish (only).

[27] Taken with 101,169 who responded with no community background, these 303,849 persons constituted one in six of the total population of usual residents (16.8%).

NO COMMUNITY BACKGROUND and IDENTITY

IDENTITY	No CB	Catholic	Protestant
All usual residents	101,169	817,385	875,717
1. British	45,955	86,761	582,695
2. British+Northern Irish	6,843	7,449	96,906
3. British+Irish+Northern Irish	1,593	6,752	9,881
4. British+Irish	681	6,311	4,761
5. Irish	6,625	429,586	19,948
6. Irish+Northern Irish	583	16,502	1,976
7. Northern Irish	22,542	219,250	135,440
These seven identities	84,822	772,611	851,607
3 types of response:			
Including British (Nos 1, 2, 3 & 4)	55,072	107,273	694,243
Including British	64.93%	13.88%	81.52%
Irish but not British (Nos 5 & 6)	7,208	446,088	21,924
Irish but not British	8.50%	57.74%	2.57%
Only Northern Irish (No 7)	22,542	219,250	135,440
Only Northern Irish	26.58%	28.38%	15.90%

In order to estimate the percentages of those who had lapsed from a Catholic background and those who had lapsed from a Protestant background it is possible to allocate those who responded with **no** community background either to 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' in each of the 4537 Small Areas by referring to the numbers of Catholics and Protestants in each small area.

While there are problems in using this method, it suggests that 31.6% had lapsed[28] from a Catholic community background and 68.4% from a Protestant community background. On the same proportionality approach the national identity data suggests that only 26.3% of those with no community background had lapsed from a Catholic community background – less than 31.6%. This would suggest that removing oneself from a Catholic community background also involves – to some extent at least – removing oneself from an 'Irish and not British' response to national identity.

It would appear that the further away from a Roman Catholic religion response in the census that a person from that origin is the more likely are they to have given a national identity which included British.

[28] My use of 'lapsed' indicates that those persons had some involvement in Roman Catholic or Protestant churches at some point in the past – even if that involvement amounted only to declaring the religious denomination in a (previous) census.

LGDs 2011: IDENTITY by NO COMMUNITY BACKGROUND (CB)

%c/ (c+p)	Local Government District	No CB	Total	% No CB	seven: % inc. British	% No CB inc. British
43.96	Antrim	3,950	53,428	7.39	57.77	69.89
13.64	Ards	7,301	78,078	9.35	75.21	71.35
49.17	Armagh	1,800	59,340	3.03	46.29	61.48
22.39	Ballymena	3,358	64,044	5.24	71.98	69.98
32.60	Ballymoney	1,418	31,224	4.54	62.50	72.08
33.49	Banbridge	2,520	48,339	5.21	62.57	64.39
52.94	Belfast	20,784	280,962	7.40	45.36	60.14
9.95	Carrickfergus	4,014	39,114	10.26	78.63	72.38
23.91	Castlereagh	5,776	67,242	8.59	68.10	67.53
28.75	Coleraine	3,414	59,067	5.78	64.93	64.31
60.29	Cookstown	921	37,013	2.49	38.83	60.33
46.79	Craigavon	4,751	93,023	5.11	51.65	63.31
77.17	Derry	2,220	107,877	2.06	24.16	46.06
66.24	Down	3,359	69,731	4.82	41.16	60.06
63.51	Dungannon	1,330	57,852	2.30	34.12	51.69
60.60	Fermanagh	1,539	61,805	2.49	38.60	56.94
26.62	Larne	2,059	32,180	6.40	71.21	69.79
61.32	Limavady	794	33,536	2.37	43.04	60.61
39.19	Lisburn	8,144	120,165	6.78	57.05	67.94
67.37	Magherafelt	919	45,038	2.04	32.27	53.67
61.77	Moyle	507	17,050	2.97	39.46	60.67
81.33	Newry & Mourne	2,174	99,480	2.18	21.12	46.09
24.22	Newtownabbey	7,241	85,139	8.50	68.37	69.72
14.73	North Down	9,533	78,937	12.08	73.68	68.39
71.55	Omagh	910	51,356	1.77	29.62	53.63
65.69	Strabane	433	39,843	1.09	33.59	51.94
47.57	Northern Ireland	101,169	1,810,863	5.59	50.25	64.93

DISCUSSION: National Identity and Religion in the 2011 NI CENSUS

This paper has focussed on the use which may be made of data from a new question in the 2011 Northern Ireland Census, that on 'national identity', in conjunction with the questions on religion. It has been primarily designed to demonstrate how far census data may be used to examine whether claimed religion and memory of religion can be linked to national identity and what part (if any) residential location, age and socio-economic position play in such a link.

In deciding on their responses to the National Identity question in the 2011 Census it is far from clear whether respondents are using their 'religion', their culture or their approach to constitutional 'politics'; indeed how far each of these can be distinguished from the other is a matter for debate.

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A. The difference between responses from 'Catholics' and responses from 'Protestants' is dramatic: those with a 'Protestant' background who gave a response which included 'British' constituted a consistently very high percentage in each Local Government District whereas, in contrast, those with a 'Catholic' background varied markedly between each LGD.

So it appears that, for 'Catholics', choosing an identity which includes British is rather more likely where 'Catholics' are in the minority; whereas the identity chosen by 'Protestants' appears not to be affected by the religious environment in which they live.

B. By comparing data for the whole of Northern Ireland of religion by age bands and national identity by age bands it is clear that for those under 25 years of age 12.5% more people chose a response which included 'British', those aged 35-44 6.6% and those aged 65-74 2.5% than the base of people aged over 75.

So, irrespective of religious background, it appears that the younger the respondent the more likely that they will have given a response which includes British.

C. A marked pattern emerged of a high percentage of those with a 'Catholic' background in a Local Government District who gave a response which included 'British' being linked to a low percentage of those with a 'Catholic' background in that LGD (and, of course, vice versa).

So it appears that 'Catholics' who live in minority situations may have been influenced by their 'Protestant' neighbours, whereas 'Protestants' living in minority situations may appear not to be influenced by their 'Catholic' neighbours.

D. In those areas with low numbers of people of high socio-economic position and which have a 'Catholic' majority, the numbers whose response included 'British' were even fewer than predicted by the marked pattern; whereas this was not true of 'Protestant' majority areas. In mixed ('Catholic' and 'Protestant') areas those whose response included 'British' was rather more than predicted. In those areas with high numbers of people of high socio-economic position choice of identity appears not to be affected by the religious composition of the area.

So it appears that working-class 'Catholics' living in 'Catholic' areas were even less likely to give a response which included 'British' than fellow working-class 'Catholics' living in mixed areas.

E. Lapsed Catholics from areas where 'Catholics' are in a substantial majority are much less likely to respond with an 'Irish and not British' response to national identity. While lapsed Protestants from areas where Protestants are in a substantial majority are slightly less likely to choose an identity which includes British, this reduction is very much less than the analogous reduction for lapsed Catholics.

Investigating those with no apparent community background would suggest that removing – if that is an appropriate term – themselves from a 'Catholic' community background also involves, to some extent, removing from an 'Irish and not British' response to national identity.

So it appears that the further away from the Roman Catholic religion that a person from that origin is the more likely are they to have given a national identity which included British.

What do all these conclusions tell us about national identity and religion? They appear to tell us that the power of culture, politics and nationalism is rather less strong when people with a Catholic heritage live **outside** a Catholic, low socio-economic, environment than is the power of culture, politics and unionism when people with a Protestant heritage live **outside** a Protestant, low socio-economic, environment.

Fact or Opinion in the NI Census

What lessons may we learn from this study of two questions in the 2011 Northern Ireland Census, that on religion and that on national identity?

Whether one's religion is a 'factual' matter or not seems to have depended on the century or decade in which such a question has been asked. In the nineteenth century it appears to have been a 'factual' matter; even well into the twentieth century. The last half century has seen one's religion become a matter of conscience, and, of course, the introduction by the census office of a 'community background' supplement to the religion question has added memory to the mixture.

The tentative conclusions offered about *national identity* in this paper indicate that, for many, the question involves culture – itself perhaps a combination of memory, opinion and conscience. Permitting the census to include questions which go beyond what is routinely considered to be 'factual' material opens a can of worms both for the individual respondent and for the census analyst. Does the limited benefit of analysis such as presented in this paper outweigh the disadvantages of opening that can of worms? Perhaps we should resist the inclusion of such questions and seek

to retain the integrity of the Census as a universal exercise which avoids engaging in political debate.

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