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**Mapping frontiers, plotting pathways:
routes to North-South cooperation
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**IRISH BORDER COMMUNITIES:
QUESTIONING THE EFFECTS OF STATE BORDERS
AND ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES**

James Anderson

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ABSTRACT

IRISH BORDER COMMUNITIES: QUESTIONING THE EFFECTS OF STATE BORDERS AND ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES

This paper discusses some of the general problems of differentiating between the effects of state borders and the effects of related ethnonational identity differences, and particularly between the combined effects of ethnicity and borders and the effects of all sorts of other influences on behaviour and attitudes in border communities, including class, gender, age and geographical circumstance. It examines how borders and ethnicity interact with other such influences. Reflecting on the pitfalls in rushing to judgement on territorial and ethnic factors, and on perceived shortcomings in Irish border research, it attempts to avoid these various problems in elaborating a research design for a questionnaire survey of border households in Northern Ireland and the Republic. It devises a basic questionnaire with adaptations for different sides and sections of the border, and a random sampling framework which is stratified by distance from the border, with equal numbers on either side, and equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants—traditional markers of Irish and British national identity, though this too is questioned. Highlighting factors such as age, gender and class, it points to asymmetries across the territorial and religious divides which may significantly influence the behaviour and attitudes of the different groups.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

What is it like to live near a state border? What difference does it make to everyday life? How does it shape people's ethnic or national identities? And how do people's identities shape their attitudes to territorial borders and their behaviour patterns in relation to them?

Answers to such questions vary widely from one state border to the next, from one side of the same border to the other, and between different communities and groups, whether they are on the same side of the border or they straddle it. Each state border and border region, each section of border, each particular border or cross-border community, however delimited, is unique in important respects. Yet despite all the variations, the same sorts of questions and issues recur. And they can reveal a lot about the changing character of national states, about how they affect people's lives, and how they command or fail to command their loyalty or acquiescence.

But how are we to get reliable answers and understandings of these questions and issues? In particular, how are we to distinguish the effects of a state border from the related but not synonymous effects of ethnonational identity, and, even more important, how to distinguish the combined effects of territorial and ethnonational divisions from all the other social, personal, historical and geographical influences on people's attitudes and behaviour?

These and further reflections on research problems apply to border studies in general. But they were occasioned by a preliminary overview of some interesting recent studies and comments on the Irish border, and particularly by some of their perceived gaps and shortcomings. The reflections inform an attempt to address some of these shortcomings through a questionnaire survey of rural communities on both sides of the middle section of the Irish border, and from both sides of Ireland's ethnonational divide as traditionally expressed in the religious terms "Protestant" and "Roman Catholic". Introducing the project, this paper first discusses some general problems of border research and their particular manifestations in Ireland; it then elaborates a research design which attempts to respond to these problems; and lastly it describes cross-border and cross-religion asymmetries in the study area which will have to be taken into account when comparing behaviour and attitudes.

GENERAL RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND THE IRISH BORDER

It is often quite difficult to get reliable, meaningful information about the effects of territorial borders. Issues and data tend to be distorted by disjunctures, competition or simply lack of contact between different national systems and sometimes between conflicting nationalisms—indeed these "distortions" are often an important part of the reality which has to be analysed. It can be difficult to distinguish "border effects" from all the other types of factors which affect behaviour and attitudes in border regions as elsewhere; and it is difficult to say what difference identity makes. It is sometimes hard to tell whether something would or would not have happened whether the border was there or not, or whether effects are due to identity or other factors. Many of the problems seen as "typical" of border regions, such as the oft-quoted "problem of peripherality", are also problems for other regions, and in fact not all border regions suffer from them. What is "blamed on the border" may be a more general problem of rurality or geographical isolation, of industrial restructuring or something else, though being close to the border might make things worse—or, alternatively, perhaps better. How close does one have to be for the border to make a difference? How do the effects of the border decline as distance from the border increases; and how does this "distance-decline" vary for different aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life? More generally, what and where is the "border region"? How do we delimit it—does it start at the border or cross it, and how far do "border regions" extend on either side? What do we mean by "border communities"?

Irish border research

The border dividing Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic, and more particularly its mid-border region(s) in counties Fermanagh, Tyrone and Armagh in Northern Ireland and in counties Cavan and Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland, provide good sites for addressing general problems of border research. Since Ireland's partition was first mooted over a century ago, and then carried out some 85 years ago in 1920-21, the Irish border has constituted a complex and evolving political context between Irish nationalists and pro-British unionists, Catholics and Protestants, both north and south of the present borderline. Considerable attention has been paid to cross-border relations and in some contexts the lack of them, the border seen alternatively as a "bridge" or a "barrier"—and with opinion divided on whether these are "good" or "bad" things. In some respects the whole of Ireland is a "border region", or two "border regions", with both North and South intimately affected by the land border which divides the island, and also by the sea border dividing Ireland from Great Britain. Edna Longley put it very well. With the "postmodern" sensibility of the literary critic, she likes the fact that Belfast "up to a point, lets you live in three places at once"—Britain and the Republic as well as Northern Ireland:

As local and Irish-British media intermingle, you can move, mentally at least, to another public domain when a particular set of voices becomes too annoying. This is what it means to inhabit a European borderland, even if not every citizen reads every newspaper or has the inclination or freedom to culture-surf. The downside is that you can be politically depressed in three places at once (Longley, 2005: 123-4).

Well said, but what else does living in a borderland mean? What of “postmodern sensibilities” along the border, the value-added or the extra depression? What does it mean for people living close enough to move to “the other side” not just mentally via the media but in the social materiality of their daily (or perhaps weekly or monthly) lives?

In terms of political and economic, if not necessarily social, materialities, the whole island is made up of “border regions”. For example, the Belfast Good Friday Agreement of 1998 set up cross-border institutions of governance covering all of Ireland (see Wilford, 2001); and earlier research focused on the “all-Ireland” level when moves towards a “single island economy” through North-South integration was seen as economically desirable with both parts of Ireland becoming integrated into the single European market after 1990 (Anderson, 1994; Bradley, 1996; Hamilton, 2001). But prior to that the attitude was often a Fawlty-esque “Don’t mention the border”—rather surprising considering its centrality in Irish life over several generations, but reflecting instead the dominant social science view developed in larger more stable states that borders were in every sense “peripheral” in the hey-day of the “nation state”.

There continued to be relatively few studies at more local levels in the immediate border region, and even fewer dealing with both sides of the border. Liam O’Dowd’s detailed studies of local cross-border relations in the early 1990s were a notable exception (O’Dowd, 1994). While more recently there have been other interesting local studies and accounts, significant gaps and limitations still remain. Local “border regions”, for example, are usually defined as local authority areas contiguous (or close) to the border, which makes sense in terms of local government responsibilities along the border and the possible availability of official statistics (O’Dowd, Moore and Corrigan, 1994), but it can be rather arbitrary and indeed misleading in terms of everyday life. Such administrative definitions tell us little about the actual experience of the border and cross-border relations, which may decline quite steeply with increasing distance from the border and hence may vary greatly within given local authority areas, especially the larger ones. More detailed anthropological studies covering identities and such activities as shopping and socialising (for example, Donnan and Wilson, 1999), and the use of in-depth interviewing and focus groups, do help to close this gap, while personal accounts of the border, replete with tales of smuggling or the contradictions of officialdom (for example, Logue, 1999), help fill in subjective meanings. But they too have their limitations, particularly for making systematic comparisons, and their representativeness may be in question.

Findings for one side or one section of border may not hold for the other side or for other sections. For example, an excellent recent study in our chosen mid-border section by Triskele (a research and training group based in Co. Monaghan) used focus groups to research a range of predefined “border communities”, including women, ex-political prisoners, and the Protestant minority, but it only covered the southern side of the border (Harvey et al, 2005). As for different sections, Ian McCracken, who works with Protestants on the north-west section of the border in east Donegal, and is a long-standing member of that community, sees no difference

in Protestant and Catholic attitudes to the everyday effects of the border. Whereas northern Protestants in Co. Londonderry just across the border see it as a barrier protecting their British identity, the Donegal Protestants are unconcerned about the border and “are moving on from being a passive remnant of pre-partition Ireland to an active minority who identify as being Irish” (McCracken, 2004: 24). But do his observations from the Northwest hold for the mid-border area? Our questionnaire survey suggests they may not, or not completely. And how reliable and widespread are views gleaned from talking in depth to a small selection of local people (even ones as well-informed as McCracken), as distinct from questionnaire surveys of larger, more randomly chosen and perhaps more “representative” sample populations?

Another interesting study of border Protestants by Kathy Walsh (2004) does include a substantial questionnaire survey as well as in-depth interviewing, but again it deals only with the southern side of the territorial divide as well as only one side of the religious divide. With northern co-religionists and Catholics both North and South all sidelined from the analysis, there is inevitably a lack of comparative perspective across both divides. In fact very few systematic questionnaire surveys of any description have been carried out along the border, and those which have been undertaken are generally limited to “local notables”, to the minority of people directly involved in cross-border projects, or to other “minorities”, rather than encompassing the general border population of so-called “ordinary people” North and South. One of the few systematic studies of “ordinary people” on both sides of the border was based on random samples in Dundalk and Newry (O’Dowd and Corrigan, 1996), but here the religious divide was not particularly relevant as the focus of the study was economic, and along this eastern section of the border the population on both sides is in fact overwhelmingly Catholic and nationalist.

Rather than relying on information from a small number of selected individuals, or concentrating on what a predefined group or groups think, useful as that usually is, we need a more systematic study of different groups to see them in comparative perspective. Furthermore, we need to cover what people actually do rather than relying simply on what (they say) they think. And we need to take more systematic account of other factors such as their social class, occupation, gender and age, which may sometimes explain as much or more than differences of religion or of state territory. We also need to take into account differences or asymmetries in the geographical structure of opportunities and of problems on either side of the border, for again these may be more important than differences of identity or attitudes to the border per se.

This all makes the general point that in borders research there is always the danger that if we go single-mindedly looking for the effects of borders, and/or the effects of ethnonational identities, we will of course find what we are looking for, and conversely may fail to see anything else. The danger in rushing to territorial or ethnonational judgement is that we become blind to other socio-economic or locational influences which might well be as or more important. Furthermore, we also need to deal explicitly and in some detail with such other influences precisely because ethnic and territorial factors actually work with or through them, rather than existing in some abstract isolation of their own.

Thus, while often illuminating, personal accounts and focus groups encouraged or set up to concentrate on borders and identities may in some circumstances miss important parts of the story. In the “worst case scenario” the collection of anecdotes and opinions may simply recycle stereotypical views or perhaps half-truths, and hence reinforce and legitimise questionable “conventional wisdoms”.

Some of these research problems can be at least minimised, if not overcome, by systematic questionnaire surveys of representative sample populations; and also by the careful design and sequencing of questionnaires, avoiding “leading questions”, for example, contentious ones in the initial stages of questioning, or ones which might particularly “colour” later answers. However, such surveys too have their own limitations, as we shall see. Indeed, faced with the inherent difficulties of isolating specific “border” and “ethnonational” effects and seeing how they interact with other influences, and given the respective strengths and weaknesses of the different methodologies, it would ideally be better to think of them not as alternatives but as complementary. Thus a questionnaire survey which establishes broadly reliable factual information about behaviour patterns and attitudes might be followed up by in-depth interviews or focus groups which concentrate on the interpretation of these findings, something for which questionnaire surveys themselves are not especially well suited.

BORDER COMMUNITIES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

With such considerations in mind, it was decided to carry out a systematic questionnaire study covering North and South and Catholics and Protestants in equal numbers, to facilitate cross-border and cross-religion comparisons. The mid-border section was chosen as the study area for several reasons (see below) but primarily because of its religious “balance”, its broadly homogeneous rural character and the relative absence of natural obstacles to (potential) cross-border linkages and movements. In these largely rural borderlands, in counties Cavan and Monaghan in the South and from Fermanagh through Tyrone to Armagh in the North, over three quarters of the population are Catholic, but there are sizeable Protestant minorities on both sides of the border. At the time of a bitterly disputed partition, the religious affiliations of Protestant and Catholic were almost synonymous with political (British) unionism and (Irish) nationalism, but when the border was set up in 1920 sizeable political-religious “minorities” found themselves “on the wrong side” of it. Subsequently much has changed, and particularly in the South where as we shall see Protestant ethnonational identity is now highly problematical. Because of this we refer to “cross-religion” rather than “ethnonational” comparisons, though in the North religion is still generally accepted as a main identifier of national affiliation—perhaps especially in the immediate border area on the northern side, religion and national identity are still synonymous for most people. Indeed this identification has arguably been reinforced by the North’s three decades of armed struggle against or for partition. But we can further hypothesise that the conflict may have actually reinforced partitionist attitudes and behaviour more widely on both sides of the border, not least because it made crossing in both directions more difficult for nearly 30 years.

In any case, there are still four distinct territorial-religious groups defined or delimited by the state border: northern Protestants and Catholics, and southern Protestants and Catholics—though the extent to which they constitute four separate “communities” (or fewer, or more) remains to be seen. There are interesting symmetries and asymmetries between the four groups that are united and divided by the border and religion. For instance, all except the southern Catholics are still constituted as numerical “minorities” in different ways, locally in the case of both the border Protestant groups, and in terms of Northern Ireland as a whole in the case of the locally dominant northern border Catholics. But while the national affiliations of southern Protestants are now an open question, both sets of co-religionists have to some extent diverged politically because of the border. And in all four cases there are questions about the extent to which subjective identities and stated attitudes are reflected (or not) in material behaviour patterns in relation to the border.

Attitudes and identities taken on their own can be slippery evidence, and we also need to compare northerners and southerners, Catholics and Protestants, in terms of their actual activities. We need to see how or the extent to which the border circumscribes their spatial behaviour and social networks; how the two divides, territorial and religious, interact; and which is the greater source of difference, while also taking account of other factors. Here there are really three sets of interconnected issues involving both attitudes and activities: (a) North-South, cross-border comparisons and relations between the two parts of the island; (b) cross-religion Catholic-Protestant comparisons and relations; and (c) the cross-cutting or intermeshing of the two. The hyphens in “North-South” and in “Catholic-Protestant” refer both to comparing the separate territorial and communal entities, and to actual social processes, linkages or mixing across the respective divides.

Study methods—questionnaires and sampling frameworks

The rationale for the questionnaire and the sampling framework follows from the discussion of problems and gaps in border research. Altogether some 400 rural households were covered on a stratified random sampling basis, giving subsamples 50:50 North-South and 50:50 Catholic-Protestant, or, in other words, some 100 households in each of the four territorial-religious groups. However, the full sample of 400 and the study area were divided into two halves: 200 in the Fermanagh-Monaghan-Cavan section (FMC), and 200 in the Armagh-Tyrone-Monaghan (ATM) section. Analysing all 400 together reduces the statistical problems of small numbers when the data are subdivided into several different categories (for example, combining religion, location, and occupational class); but separating the data into the two halves allows us to compare two distinct (albeit adjacent) sections of border to see if there are any significant differences in attitudes and behaviours between them. The initial comparison of the four groups provided below is based only on the FMC sample (available first), but it already shows how we need to take account of social and economic asymmetries in the group profiles, and cross-border asymmetries in the character of the study area. A basic problem of cross-border and cross-community comparisons is that one cannot always compare like with like.

The questionnaires: There are four main parts to the questionnaire (see appendix 1). In line with not “rushing to judgement” on the territorial and religious divides, it starts with an “apolitical” survey of travel patterns: potentially sensitive questions are initially avoided, and indeed the border itself is not actually mentioned until question 12. Part 1 focuses on spatial movements and linkages of all household members irrespective of whether or not the border is crossed. Then part 2 concentrates explicitly on the cross-border movements and linkages of the individual interviewees, but the tone is straightforwardly “factual”: there are no overtly political questions until question 20, and even then the questioning invites factual answers rather than the expression of opinion. Not till question 24, and in particular part 3, are there sensitive questions expressly about political identities and attitudes. The hope is that this graduated, “funneling” approach increases the possibilities of getting reliable information on what people actually do, rather than what they think they ought to do or say, or “their politics” unduly influencing their answers. There is also an element of repetition in the questions as a check for (in)consistency and to aid interpretation (which as noted can be a problem with questionnaire data).

Thus parts 1 and 2 have a strongly materialist orientation and cover a wide range of activities including education, work, different types of social networks, shopping for different types of goods and services, the use made of various information and entertainment media, and cross-border cooperation. Part 3 focuses on the subjective realm of ideas, identities and attitudes across a variety of political issues, including partition and Northern Ireland’s future, security, cross-border cooperation in different fields, Protestant-Catholic relations, and the attitudes of the four groups to co-religionists across the border and in the rest of the same state. Several questions were repeated or adapted from the annual “Northern Ireland Life and Times” (NILT) surveys of public opinion, in order to get a perspective on how the border population compares to the whole population of Northern Ireland, though NILT has not included some of the more relevant questions in recent years. With four open-ended questions (Qs. 24, 29, 30 and 41)—another aid to interpretation—we get further views on the advantages and disadvantages of living near the border and how things have changed since the ceasefires ten years earlier.

Part 4 of the questionnaire provides information on household and interviewee characteristics which can be correlated with the behavioural and attitudinal variables, including data on the occupational and social class status of the chief income earner of each household (see appendix 2), and the age group, gender and formal educational attainment of the interviewee, along with religion, and location (North-South, and zonal). These data, together with other questions on car ownership, material possessions and farm size (or non-involvement in farming), also give us an overview of the border population in general and profiles of the four groups in particular (see below), revealing social and economic asymmetries which might explain some of their behavioural and attitudinal differences. As usual with questionnaires, this one is an intuitive compromise between keeping within a reasonable length and maximising the quantity and quality of the information collected.

The sampling frameworks: Being stratified to give equally sized subsamples, 50:50 North-South, 50:50 Catholic-Protestant, the overall sample of 400 households

is clearly not intended to be directly representative of the general rural population in the study area, where the overall Catholic:Protestant ratio is around 3 to 1. However, giving the findings for the Catholic component a three-fold weighting can make it more generally representative. The households have been chosen randomly within the stratification framework and the representativeness of the four groups can be checked against available census data.

In addition to these stratifications (and the division of the total sample into two sections), the sampling was further stratified so that there were equal numbers of Protestant and Catholic households at specified distances from the border on either side. The stratification included three distance zones, A, B and C, on either side of the border (within which the Catholic-Protestant equality was maintained); and the main problem here was deciding appropriate distances and fitting them to the road pattern. The piloting of the questionnaire, together with a smaller survey of four border towns, had suggested that in this general area local border effects and cross-border contacts fall off sharply beyond around 10 miles or so for many activities, and therefore it was decided to test this hypothesis and confine the samples to strips within about 12 miles of the border. In addition, to try to gauge the varying rates at which the effects and contacts decline with increasing distance for different types of activity—their “distance-decay functions”—it was decided to divide each “12-mile strip” into the three zones; and furthermore to weight the sample towards the zone adjacent to the border (in effect “hedging one’s bets” to minimise the amount of sampling “wasted” by being beyond the range of most “border effects”). Thus half the sample, both North and South, is within three miles of the border (zones A North and A South); and the other half is divided into 30% between three and seven miles (zones B), and the remaining 20% between seven and 12 miles (zones C). However, because of the “small numbers” problem, zones B and C are sometimes combined to give a “50:50” basis of comparison between zones B and C (3 to 12 miles from the border) and zones A (zero to three miles).

The six zones on either side of the border were mapped in terms of generalised road distance from the nearest border crossing point, and then households were randomly selected within this framework. Because Protestant households are nearly everywhere in a local minority and thus “harder to find”, they were identified first in an elaborate process involving electoral registers, guess-work (generally accurate) on the basis of surnames combined with forenames, and (in the South where the research use of electoral registers is now restricted) advice from local people and Protestant clergy who were very helpful in provided names of parishioners. From this the interviewers were provided with the names and addresses of most of the Protestant households in the study area, many more than were needed in each zone, and they selected households randomly from the lists until the quotas were met in each case. The corresponding Catholic quotas in each zone were met by going to nearby houses in the same or adjacent townlands which were not on the lists provided and which in almost all cases were indeed Catholic (though a tiny minority of interviewees recorded a non-Christian religion, or no religion, or refused to specify one). In addition, to minimise the problem of the interviewee sample being disproportionately female and/or elderly (because females and the elderly were perhaps more likely to be at home during the day when the interviewers called), each

interviewer was limited to a 60% maximum both for female interviewees and for people aged over 65.

THE STUDY AREAS AND POPULATION PROFILES

As well as having the requisite Protestant minorities on both sides, the mid-section of the Irish border has other interesting or relevant features. For instance, of all sections of the Irish border, the town of Clones and its surroundings have arguably suffered most from partition and from the recent “troubles”. It is at the centre of the FMC half of the study area on the Monaghan border, but much of its traditional economic hinterland and religious organisational infrastructure (both Catholic and Protestant) were—and continue to be—in Co. Fermanagh. The town is surrounded by the border on three sides, over half the roads out of town cross the border within a short distance, and many of those were “spiked” or otherwise rendered impassable by the British army until the paramilitary ceasefires of the mid-1990s. You do not have far to look for “border effects” in this locality.

They have been equally felt on the northern side where people also suffered from the decline of Clones and other southern border towns; and where the local Protestant minority felt particularly isolated and vulnerable during the “troubles”, not least because of the proximity of the border, which was considered a bolt-hole for terrorists (despite the “spiked” roads). There is in fact a fairly dense network of roads and relatively easy cross-border access along most of the mid-border section; and its particular geography and conflictual historical legacy—and contrasts with the Donegal-Derry and Newry-Dundalk sections—may be reflected in contemporary attitudes and behaviour. It has greater cross-border accessibility, and hence perhaps more potential for “cross-border community”, than the north-west section at least as far as the respective rural populations are concerned. The Foyle river and lough constitute a substantial natural barrier to movement between rural Co. Donegal and rural Co. Londonderry, with no comparable barrier in the FMC, or ATM, survey areas; though, on the other hand, the city of Derry which is located astride the only bridging points on the Foyle (and in itself is an “urban” barrier to the creation of a cross-border rural community) is the focus for a cross-border community of commuters and shoppers. The mid-border area, with its greater religious mix than the eastern Newry-Dundalk section, also has an historical legacy of local sectarian conflict being more intensive and extensive; and something similar seems to apply in the comparison with the Donegal border, despite its substantial religious mix. There are historical reasons for thinking that Ian McCracken’s observations about the national identity of his fellow-Protestants in east Donegal might not hold in this mid-border area considering its legacy of conflict and contemporary continuities. Conversely, if the historical legacy of “border problems” can be overcome in this area, it can arguably be overcome anywhere in Ireland.

While all sections of the border were disputed at the time of partition (see Rankin, 2004), in the mid-border section there was more locally organised and conflicting opposition by both sides. The Protestant Orange Order, the unionist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were all strongly supported.

Between 1917 and 1923 political violence in Co. Monaghan was generally over twice as prevalent as in other Ulster counties, and nearly three times the Donegal level (according to Hart, 2003, table 1). There were noted incidents such as the “Clones ambush” (of a cross-border train carrying British soldiers from one part of the North to another in 1922); and the “Belfast boycott” (generally of Protestant businesses) was very actively pursued in Co. Monaghan where the local IRA leader was Eoin O’Duffy, later famous as the first Commissioner of the South’s police force, the Garda Síochána, and infamous as Ireland’s putative fascist leader in the 1930s. At the time of partition there was also significant local Protestant migration northwards across the new border into Fermanagh, though not of Catholics moving South (see, for example, Hart, 2003: 258); and the recriminations about Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan unionists being “thrown from the lifeboat”, to give a six-county “Ulster” its “safe” 2:1 Protestant majority, were especially heated in Co. Monaghan. This era has been evocatively recreated by Daragh McDonald in his historical novel, *The Sons of Levi*, based on the rural Protestant community of Drum which still has a strong presence some eight miles south of the border at Clones; and another novelist from near Clones, Eugene McCabe, has also written interestingly on the border saga.

In comparing across different sections and sides of the border we are often not comparing like with like. On the one hand, the study area is relatively homogeneous in that both sides are rural with small towns, unlike the north-west, where the city of Derry has no counterpart in Donegal, of which it has been effectively the “capital”. On the other hand, the imposition of the border resulted in very distinct cross-border asymmetries in the study area’s “central place system” of towns and villages of different sizes: for example, there are marked differences between the ATM and FMC sections, while in the FMC section the centres on the southern side are notably larger and closer to the border than their northern counterparts. This seems to have had two consequences, with the southern towns (for example, Belturbet and Ballyconnell as well as Clones) economically suffering more from the border than similar sized northern ones (for example, Lisnaskea); but—because still larger—they continue to attract more cross-border trade than the smaller centres (for example, Newtownbutler, Roslea) just across the border on the northern side. The presence or absence of practical opportunities, or differential configurations of “intervening opportunities”, whether for shopping, employment or social activities, have to be recognised when comparing levels and directions of movement: the geography of opportunities may sometimes explain more than political or ideological preferences. Asymmetries in the socio-economic structure of particular borderlands can be crucial in border studies making comparison more complicated but also more interesting, like asymmetries in the composition of the different population groups.

The territorial-religious groups in profile

Stratified only by location and religion, the sample was otherwise random with no controls for other variables such as social class, occupation, standard of living or education levels. These, together with the gender and age of the respondents (which as noted were subject to a quota), were the focus of questions 31 to 40 in part 4 of the questionnaire (appendix 1). The initial analysis of the FMC data pro-

vides an indicative snapshot of part of the study area's population and highlights some of symmetries and asymmetries in the four territorial-religious groups which will need to be taken into account when comparing their attitudes and behaviours.

The 200 households in the FMC sample had a total household membership of some 660 men, women and children over four, and the numbers were fairly evenly balanced between North and South, and Catholic and Protestant, as planned. But on the other variables there are some significant asymmetries or biases in the sample. The overall sample can be roughly characterised in social class terms using the standard occupational classes of market research for both sides of the border (see appendix 2). Moving from higher to lower status, 17% of households are ABs, 36% are C1s, 25% C2s, and 22% DEs, which is roughly in line with the wider society (though with relatively fewer DEs and more C1s than the UK norm). Perhaps more remarkably for this FMC rural population, only 19% of households are involved in "full-time" farming, while only another 15% have "part-time farmers"; and fully two-thirds of all these rural households are not involved in farming at all. This reflects the transformation in agriculture and rural society in recent decades and means many more people go out to work with much more travelling, including more potential for cross-border travel, than in the past. Of the 660 household members, just over half (52%) travel out to work or education. With fewer, larger farms, 26% of the holdings are over 100 acres, 49% are in the 50 to 100 acre category, 22% are between 20 and 50 acres, and only 4% are now less than 20 acres (when under 50 is of doubtful viability nowadays). Clearly there is significant social deprivation and inequality in the overall border population, with nearly a tenth of households lacking a car (now a necessity for rural dwellers), and 7% lacking a telephone, while 59% of interviewees had finished their formal education by the age of 16, and only 20% had continued after age 19. This general socio-economic pattern applies to North and South, Catholic and Protestant, though there are some significant variations.

Class and standard of living: According to the occupational class figures, the northern subsample has more higher status households and fewer lower status ones than the southern subsample; and likewise the overall Protestant sample has generally a somewhat higher occupational status than the Catholic sample. For instance, the relatively high status C1 category accounts for 46% of the northern households but only 27% of the southern ones, and 39% of the whole Protestant sample compared to only 29% of the Catholic one. Conversely, the low status DE category accounts for only 13% of all northerners and only 19% of all Protestants, but 31% of all southerners and 25% of all Catholics. Looking at the northern sample on its own, the class composition of Catholics and Protestants is quite similar, whereas in the southern sample there is more differentiation and polarisation (for example, 24% of southern Protestant households are in the DE category, but the figure rises to 40% for southern Catholics). Thus southern Catholics as a group have the lowest occupational status, and northern Protestants the highest (respectively 38% and 68% in the highest two class categories; and 58% and 28% in the lowest two). The other two groups come in between, with the northern Catholics very slightly higher than the southern Protestants (for example, the latter have twice as many DEs, partly reflecting their older age profile and hence greater dependence on state welfare).

These significant socio-economic asymmetries suggest that of the two divides the territorial is perhaps more important than the religious. It seems there is both more deprivation and greater social inequality on the southern side of the border, and this is broadly in line with some other socio-economic differences. The comparative figures for farming show that 43% of the northern households are involved in agriculture, full- and part-time in equal proportions; but much fewer southern ones farm (26%)—only 16% full-time, and even fewer, 10%, part-time, which leaves three quarters of the southern households with no income from agriculture. This is significant for North-South differences because while farming does not have the economic status it once had—and even farms of over 50 acres may have marginal viability—nevertheless it is an important source of income and especially supplementary income for part-timers, and very few households with farms are in the lowest class categories. However it is even more significant for Protestant-Catholic differences. Relatively few of all Catholic households are involved in full-time farming (13%) and even fewer part-time (9%), whereas nearly half of all Protestant households (46%) are involved, in roughly equal proportions full- and part-time. There are less cross-border differences in farm size (for example, a quarter of the 74 farms are over 100 acres, and they are evenly divided between North and South; and in both places half the farms are in the 50-100 acre category). Here the differences by religion are more marked, especially in the North where nearly all the farms of over 100 acres are Protestant-owned. In the South, ownership patterns are very similar across the religion divide, except in the top "over 150 acre" category: the sample has four such farms in the South and four in the North and all eight are owned by Protestants.

Ownership patterns for cars, telephones and seven other household and personal appliances (questions 34 and 35) support the evidence on social class, with levels lower in the South in virtually all cases, if not always by much. The ABs, not surprisingly, have higher than average levels, and the DEs have the lowest in most cases. For example, of the 9% of households without a car, two thirds are in the South and they are nearly all in the DE category. While 44% of northern households have two cars, and 10% more than two, the corresponding southern figures are only 30% and 6%. Again, of the 7% of households without a phone, two thirds are in the South and again nearly all are DEs.

Protestant-Catholic differences are more mixed and sometimes less clear. In car ownership or non-ownership, in lack of a phone, and on such now fairly standard household items as dishwashers and freezers, there are little if any differences. But more interestingly, Catholic percentages are significantly higher for the five "newish" IT appliances—mobile phones (82% of Catholics have them compared to 74% of Protestants), home computers (70% compared to 59%), satellite or cable TV (36% to 24%), video players (91% to 78%), and DVD players (64% to 47%). The Protestant sample may be more "conservative" as it tends to be older.

Age, gender, access to travel, and education: The educational attainment figures (as with class and standard of living) show that levels are generally lower on the southern side of the border. While 59% of all the FMC interviewees left formal education at 16 years or younger, 65% of the southern ones did so compared to 54% of the northerners; and while 20% overall continued beyond 19 years, only 13% of the

southerners ones did compared to 28% of the northerners. Differences by religion are significantly less marked overall, and are complicated by age differences. Educational levels are closely associated with class in the highest and lowest categories (for example, 30% of ABs continued beyond 19, compared to only 9% of DEs; conversely, while 36% of ABs left at 16 or younger, 79% of DEs did so, and fully 43% of them are in the “younger than 16” category). This overlaps with age, as older interviewees tend to have lower occupational status, and older respondents of both religions have significantly less formal schooling than younger ones (for example, 86% of over-65s had left school by 16 compared to only 21% of those under 25)

Similar proportions of Catholics (58%) and Protestants (62%) left school at 16 or younger, but more Catholics have continued in education beyond the age of 19 (24%, compared to only 15% of Protestants). Catholics with traditionally less farmland and relying more on paid employment may perhaps put more emphasis on formal education. But age seems the more important factor: the Catholic interviewees are decidedly younger (for example, 15% are in the 18-24 age group compared to only 8% of Protestants; and 12% of Catholics are over 65 compared to 32% of the Protestants). These data may exaggerate the differences but the ATM survey also shows a clear tendency for the Protestant interviewees to be older.

Age, and also gender, are important factors when comparing individual activity patterns across the territorial and religious divides. In contrast to religion, there is not a big overall North-South variation in age, though the southern Protestant subsample of interviewees is the oldest of the four by a substantial margin (38% are over 65, compared to 25% of northern Protestants, and only 12% of both Catholic groups). On gender, women generally tend to have fewer opportunities for mobility, or choose to travel less than men, and the interpretation of travel patterns in terms of location and religion will have to be qualified by gender imbalance. Overall there is a reasonable balance between female (55%) and male (45%) interviewees, and no significant overall gender discrepancy between the Catholic and Protestant subsamples. But the proportion of female interviewees is higher than in the South than the North (59% compared to 52%) and is highest among southern Protestants (64%, compared to 54% for southern Catholics). However, the ATM survey is more balanced in gender terms which will mean less “bias” in the combined data.

The FMC figure for women interviewees travelling out to work or education is 48% compared to 57% for men. But there is marked North-South difference with only 41% of all southern interviewees travelling out, and 59% either working at home or unemployed or retired. The respective figures for the North are virtually a “mirror image”: 62% travel out and only 38% do not. In part this reflects gender, age and class differences between the northern and southern samples, but it is also in line with the traditionally higher “economic activity rates” of Northern Ireland’s population compared to that of the Republic. The proportions travelling out are lower for old than for young adults as would be expected, and it is particularly low for the lowest class category, the DEs. But overall there is no significant difference between Catholics and Protestants—here, gender, age, class and location are all more important factors than religion.

CONCLUSION

In these “mixed messages” of similarity and difference, symmetry and asymmetry, there is already a warning and a promise for the analysis of behaviour and attitudes. The northern sample is generally somewhat younger and higher in occupational class terms, and with more involvement in farming, than the southern sample. The Protestant interviewees are generally older than the Catholic ones, and they appear to be more traditionally “rural” with many more Protestants than Catholics working in agriculture. But on some important issues there is little or no difference between the religious groupings, and more between North and South, although in other instances this is reversed. While most of the comparisons point to a relative social disadvantage of households south of the border, and of Catholic compared to Protestant ones on both sides, some do not. It is also clear that there are big variations within each of the four territorial-religious groups and that other categories such as gender, age and class can be at least as important.

Attitudes and behaviour patterns are shaped by a wide variety of factors and the particular effects of the border and ethnonational identity must be seen in this context. Too often, analysis in this field is overly shaped by nationalist or sectarian assumptions, even—or indeed especially—if we are not always aware of them. We need to avoid rushing to judgement about the effects of state borders and ethnonational identities.

But the conclusions here are brief. In discussing general research problems and outlining a particular research design in response, this paper provides only the recipe: “the proof of the pudding will be in the eating”.

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APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The same basic questionnaire was used in all the surveys but in a few questions there were variations depending on whether the interviewees lived North or South, and whether they were on the FMC or the ATM section of border. The version reproduced here was for the northern (Fermanagh) component of the FMC survey, and the variations for the southern (Monaghan-Cavan) component are noted below.

This version is not the actual version used by Millward Brown Ulster, who organised the interviewers. The firm added some extra ancilliary questions and an elaborate coding system to aid the interviewing and data entry processes. So the version reproduced here is the one initially provided to the firm, but with the question numbers changed in line with their final version and the numbering system used for crosstabulations.

In the Monaghan-Cavan survey in question 17 southerners are asked about their use of a comparable set of villages and urban centres across the border in the North; and in questions 18 and 19 southerners are asked about visiting relatives and friends across the border in Fermanagh; and in question 28 they are asked about their willingness to live in Fermanagh. Similar variations were made in the ATM questionnaires.

In question 28 the last two statements are different, the northern ones referring only to northern Protestants and Catholics, the southern one only to southern Catholics and Protestants. Southerners were asked to respond to the statements: "Border Catholics feel let down by nationalists in the rest of the Irish Republic", and "Southern Protestants feel let down by northern unionists".

There were similar variations in the ATM questionnaires, but apart from these few exceptions the other questions were the same across both the FMC and ATM samples, as in the version below:

TRAVEL PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES IN BORDER AREAS A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF HOUSEHOLDS IN CO. FERMANAGH

Q. 1. Firstly, to confirm the *Townland* your household is in?

[Q. 1] _____

[for coding distance from border]

[Qs 2-4 part of Q.5 >>]

PART 1. TRAVEL PATTERNS AND ACTIVITIES

Q. 5. Where does each member of your household travel for work or study?

Household Members:	Location of Main Workplace <i>or</i> Place of Education (townland, village, town, or city) [Location, <i>not</i> name of firm or school and "Home", "Retired", or "Unemployed" as appropriate.]

a. *Interviewee*: "...starting with yourself?"

b. *Other adults*:

c.

d.

e.

f. *Children over four*:

g.

h.

i.

j.

k.

Q. 6. Where does anyone in your household travel for the following things?

Main place? (townland, vil- lage, town, or city)	Any other place? [ask if only one place mentioned]

a. Weekly household groceries

b. Bigger purchases (e.g., household appliances)

- c. Convenience shopping (e.g. only for bread or milk)
- d. Buying petrol or diesel—for the car
- e. Going to the dentist
- f. Going to church or chapel
- g. Meeting relatives—the ones visited most often

7. Where do you personally go for the following social activities?

	Main place? (townland, village, town, or city)	Any other places? [ask if necessary]	N/A
a. Going to the cinema			
b. Going out for a meal			
c. Attending sporting activities			
d. Going to the pub			
e. Going to clubs & dances			
f. Visiting friends			

Q. 8 to 11. Newspapers, TV and radio in your household...

In your household...	Most often?	Second most often? [ask if only one mentioned and if none cross-border]	N/A
8. Which <i>local weekly</i> newspapers are bought			
9. Which <i>daily</i> newspapers are bought			
10. Which TV channel <i>news</i> is watched			
11. Which radio stations is listened to			

PART 2. YOUR OWN CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL AND CONTACTS

Q. 12. How often do you personally travel across the border?

- a. four or more times a week
- b. two or three times a week
- c. weekly
- d. once or twice a month
- e. two or three times a year
- f. once a year
- g. less than once a year
- h. never

Q. 13. How far do you live from the border [range of distances from less than a mile to more than ten] _____

And please explain how you worked out that distance (e.g., to the nearest point on the border, or to the nearest crossing place, or...?)

Q. 14. Please say whether the following possible reasons for crossing the border are Very Important, Quite Important or Not Important, (or Not Applicable) to you:

Possible reasons for crossing the border:	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important	N/A
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- a. for work or work-related activities
- b. shopping for groceries
- c. shopping for consumer durables (e.g., appliances)
- d. buying petrol for the car
- e. entertainment and leisure activities
- f. visiting relatives or friends who live across the border
- g. other reasons (see Q. 8, below)

Q. 15. If you cross the border for *other reasons* (g), please say what they are:

Q. 16. If you cross the border for *work-related* reasons (a), please tell me about them:

Q. 17. How often do you go to the following places? [comparable sets for the southern FMC, and for ATM surveys]

To:	Twice or more a week	weekly	once or twice a month	2 or 3 times a year	once a year	less than once a year	never
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1. Redhills
2. Scotshouse
3. Cloverhill
4. Clones
5. Ballyconnell
6. Belturbet
7. Cootehill
8. Cavan Town
9. Monaghan Tn.
10. Dublin

Q. 18. If you have relatives living across the border in Co. Monaghan or Co. Cavan [Fermanagh for FMC southerners] how often do you see them?

- a. At least once a week
- b. Every two weeks
- c. Once a month
- d. Two or three times a year
- e. Once a year
- f. Only on special occasions
- g. Not applicable

Q. 19. If you have close friends living across the border in Co. Monaghan or Co. Cavan [Fermanagh] how often do you see them?

1. At least once a week
2. Every two weeks
3. Once a month
4. Two or three times a year

5. Less than twice a year
6. Not applicable

Q. 20. Do you participate in any local activities or groups which operate on both sides of the border ? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes... Please specify:

Q. 21. Are you involved in any organizations or activities which are supported by EU or "peace and reconciliation" money? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes... Please specify:

Q. 22. Do you participate in any work or social activities where Protestants and Catholics mix together? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes... Please specify:

Q. 23. Do you normally carry euro as well as sterling currency? [vice-versa for southerners] Yes _____ No _____

Q. 24. In your opinion, how has living near the border changed since the paramilitary cease-fires ten years ago?

PART 3: YOUR IDENTITY AND ATTITUDES

Q. 25. How would you describe your own national identity? [do you think of yourself primarily as...]

- Irish
- British
- Northern Irish
- Ulster
- southern Irish
- Other (please specify)

Q. 26. Do you think of yourself as:

- A unionist?
- A nationalist?
- Or neither?

If "neither", can you please say how you describe yourself politically?

Q. 27. For each of the following activities, please say how strongly you support or oppose cross-border cooperation with the Irish Republic [Northern Ireland]:

	Strongly support	Support	Neither for nor against	Oppose	Strongly oppose
Agriculture					
Education					
Decisions about Northern Ireland's political future					
Health					
Security					

Q. 28. Please say how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Before the paramilitary ceasefires, border checkpoints and road closures were essential for security.					
If moving house, I would happily move across the border to live in Co. Cavan or Co. Monaghan. [Co. Fermanagh]					
There should be more integrated schools for Protestant and Catholic children in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.					
Cross-border cooperation has increased only because of EU and "peace" money.					
Re-opening border roads has been very important for the prosperity of my area.					
In 20 years time Northern Ireland will still be part of the UK.					
In the border region the main division is between Catholics and Protestants rather than between North and South.					
Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK.					
Northern Ireland should join the single European currency—the euro.					

Cross-border cooperation will lead to prosperity in the border region.

Cross-border cooperation will lead to a united Ireland.

Border Protestants feel let down by unionists in the rest of Northern Ireland. [Border Catholics...by nationalists in rest of Republic]

Northern Catholics feel let down by southern nationalists. [southern Protestants...by northern unionists]

Q. 29. Please say briefly what in your opinion are the main *benefits* or *advantages* in living near the border?

Q. 30. What, briefly, are the main *problems* or *disadvantages* living near the border?

PART 4: FINALLY, A FEW DETAILS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Q. 31. What is the main occupation of the chief income earner in your household?

Q. 32. Does the household farm ? Full-time___ Part-time___ Neither___

Q. 33. If your household farms, roughly how many acres in total:
N/A__ Under 20__ 20-50__ 50-100__ 100-150__ Over 150__

Q. 34. How many cars are there in your household?
None__ One__ Two__ More than two__

Q. 35. Does your household (or any household members) have a:

	Yes	No
Telephone		
Mobile phone		
Home computer		
Washing machine		
Dish washer		
Stand-alone freezer		

Satellite or cable TV

Video player

DVD player

Q. 36. What is the religion of your household?

- a. Presbyterian
- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Other Protestant
- d. Roman Catholic
- e. Other religion
- f. No religion

Q. 37. Record interviewee's gender: Male _____ Female _____

Q. 38. Which of these age groups are you in...
 18-24 _____ 25-39 _____ 40-65 _____ 65+ _____

Q. 39. What age were you when you left full-time education? _____

Q. 40. How long have you lived in this area?

And, lastly...

Q. 41. What do you think are the most important issues for the border and border region (perhaps including issues which we have not already dealt with properly)?

Thank you very much for your time and help

APPENDIX 2: OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL CLASSES

Rather than using the different official census classifications for Northern Ireland and the Republic, the four basic market research categories, based on the occupation of the "chief income earner" in the household, were used as approximate indicators of relative "class status".

The Market Research Society (1991) definitions of the four classes (and component parts) are:

1. AB—made up of A, approx. 3% of the UK population, including professional people, senior managers, and owners of large businesses; combined with: B, approx. 14% of UK population, including middle managers, and top ones in smaller businesses. Together A and B account for around 17% or one-sixth of the UK population.
2. C1—includes junior managers and non-manual employees, and accounts for about 25% of the UK population.
3. C2—includes foremen and "skilled" manual workers, accounting for another around 25%.
4. DE—made up of D, approximately 20% of the population and including the "semi-skilled"; plus E, around 13% of the population, including casual workers, the long-term unemployed and others (e.g., the elderly) dependent on state provision. D and E together account for about 33% of the population.

While the general gradation from A to E is clear, these broad categories can be difficult to apply accurately (perhaps especially in rural areas with owner-occupied farms of widely different sizes), and they give only a rough overall indication of "class" as a factor across the sample population as a whole. The FMC sample has relatively fewer DEs and more C1s than the UK norm, but otherwise is broadly in line with it: AB—17%; C1—36%; C2—25%; and DE—22%.