

## *Religion and Occupational Class in Northern Ireland\**

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*Précis:* The author constructs economic profiles of Protestants and Catholics based upon an examination of occupational and, to a lesser extent, industrial characteristics. In this task the Hall-Jones scale is used as a guide to classify more than two hundred occupational groupings. The religious composition of certain significant occupations are also examined in more detail in order to illustrate salient differences between the two groups. In particular, major variances between Protestants and Catholics, both at the manual and non-manual level, are highlighted and compared. Previous studies of Northern Ireland have frequently attributed the disunity of the working class to the prevalence of politico-religious antagonisms, giving minimal attention to possible occupational differences. This article provides evidence which might support an additional explanation for the failure of class organisations to bridge the religious divide: prominent occupational differences reinforced the religious cleavage thereby providing an added barrier to reconciliation.

THERE is no consensus on the relationship between occupational class and religious persuasion in Northern Ireland, but the dominant view appears to be that the two are largely unrelated, i.e., that economic class distinctions cut across religious divisions. Frank Gallagher (1957, p. 208), in a detailed, if somewhat partisan, study of relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland concluded, almost two decades ago, that "both sections are stratified in similar ways. Generally speaking, there are proportionally the same numbers in the professions, in the trades, in clerical groups, and so on". More recent, and more objective, studies have appeared to give qualified support to this general conclusion. On the basis of an examination of the occupational structure of

\*This article is a summary-analysis of research undertaken as part of a larger comparative study of conflict relations in Northern Ireland and New Brunswick (Canada). The author would like to thank D. P. Barritt, L. Blaxter, C. F. Carter, A. I. Patience, W. R. Schonfeld, and R. D. Scott for their many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The financial support of the Canada Council is gratefully acknowledged.

the major religious denominations in Belfast, Budge and O'Leary (1973, p. 245) concluded that "marked occupational differences did not occur among adherents of the various denominations". Richard Rose, in the most comprehensive survey to date of social relations in Northern Ireland, determined that economic differences between the two religious groups were very slight. Rose (1971, p.280) found only "a limited tendency" for Protestants to have a higher occupational class than Catholics and noted that the median Protestant and the median Catholic were both manual workers. In direct contrast to these surveys, however, an examination of the community of Portadown undertaken by Barritt and Carter (1962, p. 54) found "a marked difference in the economic status" of the two major religious groups: "the Protestants tending to provide the business and professional classes, the larger farmers, and the skilled labour; and the Catholics the small farmers and the unskilled labourers".

If, as appears to be frequently assumed, the two religious persuasions are largely similar in terms of their occupational stratification, a particularly salient characteristic in the social development of Northern Ireland is the relative absence of effective class organisations containing both Protestants and Catholics. Compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, the trade unions have been considerably weaker in social influence and their political arm, the Northern Ireland Labour Party, has not had a significant impact upon Northern Ireland politics. The failure of class organisations to cross the religious divide effectively has been widely attributed, not to any class differences between the two religious groups, but rather, to the perpetuation of religious bigotry by both Protestant and Catholic middle classes. This "conspiracy" theory asserts that the capitalist class has used the device of sectarianism to divide the working classes and thereby, prevent them from threatening the economic control of the élite. The Irish historian Owen Dudley Edwards (1970, pp. 132, 154), for example, puts the blame for the social tensions on political leaders and capitalists who have exploited religious differences within the working class in order to weaken labour organisation and to increase job competition. Liam de Paor (1970, pp. 94, 106) suggests that the Unionist government applied a strategy of *divide et impera* in order to keep itself in power: it exacerbated religious hostility thereby keeping the working class disunited. Bernadette Devlin (1969) and Eamonn McCann (1974) have similarly attributed a large measure of the working class disunity to the promotion of religious tension by the bourgeoisie. The view is perhaps best summarised by Robert Moore (1972, p. 32) in a recent study of "race" relations:

Northern Ireland is a society in which social stratification derived from the social relations of an industrial society is found within the major religious groups. Attempts have been made to organise on a class basis across these groups but these have always been defeated by playing upon the hostilities and fears derived from the colonial past and expressed in modern sectarianism. These fears and hostilities have been deliberately used by groups in power to prevent the emergence of class organisations, and thus to preserve their own power.

The purpose of this article is to examine the extent to which occupational and religious differences may or may not be related, i.e., to examine whether, in fact, both religious groups are stratified in similar ways. If there exist significant differences in the occupational class of Protestants and Catholics this may explain, in itself, the reason why class organisation has failed to cross the religious divide: it would indicate that certain class divisions reinforced the religious divisions. For while many observers have claimed that only minimal class differences exist between Protestants and Catholics, there has been insufficient empirical evidence to either corroborate or refute this claim. This article will attempt to provide such empirical evidence. (The second claim, that politicians and capitalists have encouraged religious tension, while a worthy subject for investigation in its own right, will not be examined in this article.)

The logical place to begin such an examination is with the results of the Northern Ireland census. Unfortunately, however, although the census questionnaire requests that each respondent specify his religion, full information on the relationship between religion and occupation has not been made available since the 1911 census of Ireland, i.e., before partition. A partial exception to this was the 1961 census which provided information on the relationship between religion and family size, by socio-economic group, for a restricted sample of women. It appears likely, however, that the Northern Ireland General Register Office will publish *Religion Tables*, based on the 1971 census, sometime in 1975. These will give, for the first time, reliable information on the social characteristics of the major religious denominations. In the meantime, the Census Office has made some of the preliminary data for these tables available for use in this study. This data provides a classification of the employed population, by religion and sex, into 222 occupational groups.<sup>1</sup>

In order to reduce these groups to a scale convenient for analysis, each was classified according to the Hall-Jones scale of occupational prestige.<sup>2</sup> The Hall-Jones scale was chosen, first, because it permits an empirically derived ranking of occupations according to their social status. Second, because it contains eight occupational classes, it gives sufficient detail for analysis. When this classification was completed, it was found that a relatively small proportion of the Northern Ireland population was contained in each of the non-manual classes. Several of these were combined, therefore, in order to simplify their presentation.

In most cases, the occupational descriptions were sufficiently precise that each occupational group could be readily allocated a position on the Hall-Jones scale. However, two groups were felt to be so broad that they overlapped several levels and thus, they were omitted from the classification.<sup>3</sup> Further, individuals who

1. For a more detailed description of these occupational groups, see: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1970).

2. A guide to this scale is contained in Oppenheim (1966, pp. 275-284). For more details on the construction of the scale see Hall and Jones (1950) or Moser and Hall (1954).

3. These two groups were (1) Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners, and (2) Members of the armed forces.

were recorded as out of employment were added to the lowest occupational class, the class containing unskilled workers. Apart from the obvious low status of the unemployed, those who are unemployed in Northern Ireland have generally come from the ranks of the unskilled workers.<sup>4</sup>

The results of this classification show that Protestants are disproportionately represented in the non-manual and the skilled manual occupations, while Catholics are disproportionately represented only in the semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed classes. Although the difference between the proportions of Catholics and Protestants at each occupational level does not, at first, appear to be as great as that found by Barritt and Carter in the Portadown study, some of the general trends are confirmed. It is particularly noteworthy, that while the median Protestant is a *skilled* manual worker, the median Catholic is a *semi-skilled* manual worker. (The occupational differences between Protestant and Catholic will be shown to be even more pronounced when *men*, alone, are considered.)

*Religion and occupational class 1971, economically active men and women*

<i>Occupational class</i>	<i>Hall-Jones classification</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Total</i> <sup>5</sup>
1. Professional, managerial	I, II, III	12%	15%	14%
2. Lower grade non-manual	IV, V (a)	19%	26%	24%
3. Skilled manual	V (b)	17%	19%	18%
4. Semi-skilled manual	VI	27%	25%	26%
5. Unskilled, unemployed	VII	25%	15%	18%
Total		100%	100%	100%

N=564,682

While there is a very distinctive tendency for Catholics to fall into a lower occupational class than Protestants, it would be misleading to over-emphasise this tendency. These results indicate that both religious groups have large proportions in each of the five classes. Although the proportion of Catholics in non-manual occupations (31 per cent) is significantly smaller than the proportion of Protestants

4. A recent study of Belfast has noted that the overwhelming majority of the unemployed are manual workers, frequently from industries such as Construction which have high proportions of unskilled labour. See Boal, Doherty and Pringle (1974, p. 26).

5. These percentages are calculated only for those individuals who stated a religion. Approximately 9 per cent of the respondents at the 1971 census did not give their religious persuasion. It might be expected that, because census officials are frequently identified with the Unionist regime, those who refused to give their religion would be largely Catholic. However, a cursory comparison of "Catholic" occupations with "Protestant" occupations, and "Catholic" counties with "Protestant" counties, in terms of the proportions not stating a religion shows no significant differences. While not fully conclusive, this suggests that the omission of these respondents from our calculations is not likely to bias the results toward one or the other of the religious groups.

(41 per cent), it is sufficiently large to indicate the existence of a substantial Catholic middle class. In part, the fact that such a Catholic middle class exists at all may be attributed to the high level of segregation in Northern Irish society: this segregation creates the conditions which support the existence of a professional and business class whose rôle is specifically to satisfy the needs of their own religious group. For example, the division of the educational system into Protestant and Catholic schools, creates the need for large numbers of Protestant and Catholic teachers. Similarly, the high level of religiosity in Northern Ireland provides the environment for large numbers of clergymen and related religious workers. Without this need of each religious community for such specific professional services, it is doubtful that the Catholic middle class would be as large as it is. Among Catholics, primary and secondary school teachers and clergymen account for over a third (34 per cent) of those in professional and managerial occupations. By contrast, among Protestants, primary and secondary school teachers and clergymen account for less than a fifth (19 per cent) of those in this class.

Further, the prominence of religion in Northern Irish society encourages a loyalty to members of one's own group which is evident in the world of small business. Where possible, Catholics will shop in Catholic stores, while Protestants will patronise only Protestant stores. In some circumstances, this may simply be the consequence of a high level of residential segregation: shopping facilities and community services tend to be located in areas which are relatively homogeneous in terms of religion and, as a consequence, tend, themselves, to employ a homogeneous staff.<sup>6</sup> However, even in regions which have a religious mix there appears to be a definite tendency to support the members of one's own religious group. Many observers, for example, have remarked on the large number of shops which exist in the smaller Northern Irish communities. Where Protestants and Catholics live in substantial numbers, there is inevitably a duplication of the shops of each type in order to accommodate the religious cleavage. Rosemary Harris (1972, p. 6), in her study of a small rural community in Co. Fermanagh, has observed:

The advantages offered by one shop over its rival had to be very considerable before a Protestant owner could attract Catholic customers, or vice versa. One shop, no matter how good, could never monopolise the trade, and no matter how poor it could normally expect a number of faithful clients.

J. M. Moge (1955, p. 11), similarly, has commented on the large number of shops and businesses in Northern Ireland, relative to its population size, noting that this is a consequence of a duplication which exists throughout the society: schools, voluntary societies, cultural festivals, sports meetings, all must have duplicate arrangements in order to satisfy the religious division.

6. The phenomenon of segregated residential communities leading to segregated shopping activity is well illustrated by F. W. Boal's study of the Shankill-Falls area of Belfast. See, for example, Boal (1969) and Boal (1972).

Thus, while Catholics are proportionately under-represented relative to Protestants in the non-manual occupations, it is apparent that the very existence of a high level of religious segregation in the society has created the conditions which have led to the development of a limited Catholic middle class. Each religious community centres around its own church, school, and shops. While school and church employees make up a significant proportion of the higher grade non-manual workers, shop proprietors and employees compose the majority of those in lower grade non-manual occupations.

A number of important, but generalised, distinctions may be drawn between those Catholics and Protestants who are employed in non-manual work. First, if we consider the professional and managerial class, it is apparent that the occupations filled by Catholics are largely those which respond to the felt need of each religious group to have certain services provided by their co-religionists. The need for Catholic teachers, inspired by the segregated educational system, is the most notable example of this phenomenon. By contrast, professional and managerial occupations providing services required by the whole community, rather than a specific religious section, are very disproportionately Protestant. The educational system provides an instructive, but by no means the most dramatic, illustration. At the primary and secondary level, where schools serve their own particular religious community, Catholics represent 39 per cent of the teachers in employment. At the university level, however, where the educational service is non-segregated, providing a service to the whole society, Catholics represent only 17 per cent of the teachers in employment.<sup>7</sup> In comparing these figures it should be kept in mind that Catholics constitute 31 per cent of the economically active population of Northern Ireland. We would expect that this employment pattern also exists in the lower grade non-manual occupations, however, this cannot be as readily tested: there is insufficient data concerning these occupations to draw a distinction between those which serve a particular religious community, and those which serve the society at large.

Second, and closely related to our first observation, Catholics tend to be disproportionately represented in the social services, while Protestants are disproportionately represented in finance and industry. This is particularly true in the professional and managerial class. Well over half (56 per cent) of the Catholics in this class are employed either in teaching, at the primary and secondary school level, or nursing. These same occupations account for only 29 per cent of the

7. A possible explanation for the over-representation of Protestants at university level might be the practice, at The Queen's University, of recruiting teaching staff from the United Kingdom as a whole, rather than simply from Northern Ireland. See, for example, Scott (1973, p. 129). In this respect, then, it is interesting to note that the proportion of Catholics teaching at university level is closer to the proportion of Catholics in the United Kingdom (10 per cent) than to that in Northern Ireland (35 per cent). Nevertheless, the fact that the Protestants are also substantially over-represented among the clerical and technical staff at the university, even though this staff is recruited locally, suggests that this is not the only explanation. Catholics constitute only 13 per cent of the non-teaching staff employed at university level in Northern Ireland.

Protestants in this class. A comparison of those employed as either agents or managers in finance and industry, however, shows that these occupations account for about a quarter (24 per cent) of all Protestants in the professional and managerial class, but less than a tenth (9 per cent) of all Catholics in the same class. A similar pattern is found among the lower grade non-manual occupations, where Catholics can frequently be found to be concentrated in the sphere of routine services. This is combined with a traditional tendency for Catholics to operate certain of the smaller businesses and shops, while Protestants dominate the larger and more substantial business concerns. This is partially illustrated by an examination of "industrial" groups, rather than "occupational" groups: disproportionate numbers of Catholics work in smaller businesses such as betting and gambling (72 per cent), public houses (70 per cent), hairdressing (49 per cent), hotels and other residential establishments (48 per cent), restaurants (42 per cent).

*Religion and non-manual occupations 1971, employed men and women*

<i>Occupational group</i>	<i>Hall-Jones classification</i>	<i>total employed</i>	<i>per cent women*</i>	<i>per cent Catholic*</i>
<b>A. "Catholic" occupations</b>				
1. Publicans, innkeepers	IV	2,026	21%	73%
2. Waiters, waitresses	V(a)	2,145	84%	50%
3. Hairdressers, manicurists	V(a)	2,828	76%	49%
4. Domestic housekeepers	V(a)	1,582	100%	48%
5. Nurses	III	12,249	90%	43%
6. Primary, secondary teachers	II-III	15,726	63%	39%
<b>B. "Protestant" occupations</b>				
1. Company secretaries	I	347	15%	7%
2. Police officers and men	V(a)	4,046	3%	10%
3. Chemists, biologists (i)	I	711	11%	11%
4. Engineers (ii)	I	3,282	—	11%
5. Managers (iii)	II	10,312	6%	12%
6. Senior government officials (iv)	I	1,383	10%	13%

\*The percentage of women employed in each occupation is calculated on the basis of the total number employed, while the percentage of Catholics in each occupation is calculated on the basis of the total who stated their religion.

(i) includes those classified as chemists, physical and biological scientists.

(ii) includes those classified as civil, structural, municipal, mechanical, electrical, electronic, etc., engineers.

(iii) includes managers in engineering, building, mining, personnel, sales.

(iv) includes Ministers of the Crown, M.P.s, senior government officials, senior officers in Local Authorities.

*Note:* In comparing these occupational groups it should be kept in mind that Catholics constitute 31 per cent of the economically active, and 29 per cent of those in employment.

Third, those non-manual occupations which have the largest proportions of Catholics, relative to the total number employed in the occupation, tend to be lower status occupations, compared to those which have the highest proportions of Protestants. Thus, even within the non-manual levels, there are significant status distinctions between what might be termed "Catholic" occupations and "Protestant" occupations. If we examine those occupations which are most heavily Protestant, it is evident that nearly all of them are in the top levels of the non-manual classes. The only one with a relatively lower social status, police officers and men, is clearly counterbalanced by its strategic significance. This evidence confirms what has been, in any case, common knowledge, *viz.* that Protestants control the top positions of economic and political power. Catholics are concentrated in lower status occupations, generally with minimal political influence or strategic significance.

This status difference takes on added importance if we consider non-manual occupations related because they share a common "working context". In the medical services, for example, Catholics represent only 21 per cent of the qualified medical practitioners, but 43 per cent of the nurses. Thus, considering the social relations within this sphere only, it is apparent that Protestants control the superior positions of authority, while Catholics are disproportionately members of the inferior positions. In the educational services, Catholics constitute only 15 per cent of those in administration, but 39 per cent of those in teaching. Thus, when the working context is considered, the relationship between occupational stratification and religious denomination appears to be considerably stronger than might otherwise be anticipated. While a clerk may be a Catholic, it is more likely that the office manager will be a Protestant; while a skilled craftsman may be a Catholic, it is more likely that the supervisor will be a Protestant; and while a nurse may be a Catholic, it is more likely that the doctor will be a Protestant.

A further observation which should be made about the non-manual occupations concerns the sexual distinctions existing between the two religious groups. The non-manual occupations with the highest proportions of Catholics tend to be "feminine" occupations while those with the highest proportions of Protestants tend to be "masculine" occupations. If we examine the professional and managerial class, the two occupations with the highest proportions of Catholics are nurses (90 per cent women) and teachers (62 per cent women). On the other hand, the most "Protestant" occupations have a negligible proportion of women: engineers are virtually 100 per cent male, while managers are 94 per cent male. By way of comparison, it should be noted that women constitute 35 per cent of those in employment in Northern Ireland. Taking the class as a whole, *men* are in the great majority (69 per cent) among Protestants, while *women* are in the majority (51 per cent), albeit slight, among Catholics.

This observation, based upon the top non-manual class only, appears to be borne out, in general, for the non-manual occupations taken as a whole. Women have traditionally made up a large number of those employed in the non-manual occupations, particularly in the lower grades which include clerical and secretarial



staff, shop assistants, waitresses, etc. However, since in absolute terms women are a smaller proportion of the work force, they do not make up the majority of those employed in non-manual occupations, except within the Catholic community. For while the majority of Protestant non-manual workers, by a small margin, are men, the majority of Catholic non-manual workers are women. In absolute terms, the number of Catholic women employed in non-manual work is 25 per cent greater than the number of Catholic men in these same occupations.

This evidence, combined with what is known about unemployment in Northern Ireland, suggests that Catholic men may be in a more disadvantageous position than Catholic women, in terms of employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup> At the 1971 census, unemployment among women amounted to less than 5 per cent. However, among Protestant men it was 7 per cent, and among Catholic men, 17 per cent. Although Catholic men are less than 21 per cent of the economically active population, of both religions, and both sexes, they represent 44 per cent of the unemployed. This pattern of high unemployment and low economic status for Catholic men creates a particular problem in Northern Ireland given the extent of rôle stereotyping which exists within the society. Perhaps even more than in many other western societies, the stereotype of the dominant, assertive male is firmly entrenched. According to the psychiatrist Morris Fraser (1973, p. 23), this is a consequence of the "settler" traditions which Northern Ireland has inherited and holds in common with other frontier communities. Further,

. . . this is to some extent an expression of population selection, the immigrant conforming to his stereotype—tough, male-dominant, hard-working, go-getting, self-starting. It also reflects the strong religious conservatism in both Protestant and Catholic camps, with its roots deep in Old Testament Judaism—a religion in which the male daily gives thanks to God that he was not born a woman.

*Non-manual and manual occupations 1971, by sex*

	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Catholic men	21%	79%	100%
2. Protestant men	33%	67%	100%
3. Catholic women	48%	52%	100%
4. Protestant women	55%	45%	100%

*N* = 564,682

8. Harold Jackson points to Londonderry, the largest city in Northern Ireland with a Catholic majority, as a prime example of the male unemployment problem. Londonderry's major industry, textiles and textile products such as clothing, is a light industry which offers employment largely to women. According to Jackson (1972, p. 7): "This has meant that for years the main breadwinner in many families has been the wife. A common sight in the city is to see groups of men lounging away in the desolate housing estates that lie above the centre".

In the Republic of Ireland, the rôle of the woman in the society is made clear by the policy of the Civil Service (up to recently) and some private employers, of dismissing female employees when they marry.

The importance of the male in Northern Irish society, and the significant discrepancy between male and female occupational class, suggests that a more accurate indicator of the occupational differences between Catholics and Protestants might be a measure which used only males, or "heads of households". Since it might be expected that the status of the family would most often derive from that of the male head, we have recalculated the religious distribution over the five occupational classes, for males only. It is not possible to compute the results for "heads of households" from this 1971 census data, however, a possible approximation, for purposes of comparison, can be taken from the 1961 census. The *Fertility Report* of the 1961 census provided a classification which showed the family size of married women over the age 45, by religion and socio-economic group of husband.<sup>9</sup> From this information, it is possible to calculate the relationship between occupation and religion, albeit for a restricted sample of the population, i.e., mature married males.

The results of these computations give us two pictures of the relationship between religion and occupation which are considerably different in terms of their sources: (1) one is from the 1971 census, the other the 1961 census; (2) one deals with all economically active males, the other only with those who are married to wives over the age of 45; and (3) one is coded using the Hall-Jones classification, the other is based on the Registrar-General's categorisation of socio-economic groups. Given these differences in derivation, it is perhaps surprising that the results are so similar.

These results reveal a higher level of class distinction between Protestants and Catholics than was observed when the occupations of both men and women were

*Religion and occupational class 1971, economically active men*

<i>Occupational class</i>	<i>Hall-Jones classification</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Professional, managerial	I, II, III	9%	16%	14%
2. Lower grade non-manual	IV, V(a)	12%	17%	16%
3. Skilled manual	V(b)	23%	27%	26%
4. Semi-skilled manual	VI	25%	24%	24%
5. Unskilled, unemployed	VII	31%	16%	20%
Total		100%	100%	100%

N = 365,948

9. In classifying these socio-economic groups, three were omitted because they did not clearly fall within any one occupational class. These were (1) Farmers, (2) Members of the armed forces and (3) Own account workers.

*Religion and occupational class 1961, mature married men*

<i>Occupational class</i>	<i>Socio-economic group</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Professional, managerial	I, II, III, IV	9%	17%	15%
2. Lower grade non-manual	V, VI, VIII	14%	22%	20%
3. Skilled manual	IX	21%	27%	26%
4. Semi-skilled manual	VII, X, XV	25%	18%	20%
5. Unskilled manual	XI	31%	16%	19%
Total		100%	100%	100%

*N* = 85,936

examined. As noted earlier, the majority of both Catholics and Protestants are manual rather than non-manual workers, however, if modal averages are considered, it is clear that the Protestant is most likely to be a *skilled* manual worker while the Catholic will be an *unskilled* manual worker. This pattern is more evident if the results are visualised in graph form. The class distribution of Catholics shows a negative, linear relationship: as the status of the class declines, the number of Catholics in the class increases. The peak is reached at the lowest level, the class of unskilled manual workers. By contrast, Protestants are distributed about a central peak at the skilled manual class: this distribution is fairly symmetrical in the 1961 results, but somewhat skewed in the 1971 results.

In spite of this tendency for Catholics to be unskilled and Protestants to be skilled, it should be noted that Protestants, because of their larger numbers overall, still constitute an absolute majority of those who are unskilled. Nevertheless, a closer examination of those employed in manual work, and especially those who are unskilled workers, reveals another form of status differentiation: differentiation based upon industry, rather than occupation. When similar occupations are compared, it becomes evident that Protestants tend to be over-represented in the higher status industries, and Catholics in the lower status industries.

The nature of this industrial segregation may be partially illustrated by examining the distribution of those classified by the Census Office as "labourers". If the labourers are matched with their appropriate industrial group, the previously observed pattern of *occupational* differentiation is emphasised: the proportion of labourers who are Catholics is greater than the proportion, in the industrial group as a whole, who are Catholics. However, a comparison of the different industrial groups shows an additional pattern of *industrial* differentiation such that labourers in the higher status Engineering and Textiles industries are predominantly Protestant, while those working in lower status industrial groups, such as the Docks and Building-contracting, are predominantly Catholic. Even this breakdown by industrial group fails to demonstrate the full extent of this segregation however. For example, although the census data does not provide further detail, it is known

*Religion and industry 1971, labourers*

<i>Classification of labourers</i>	<i>total employed</i>	<i>per cent Catholic</i>	<i>Appropriate industrial group</i>	<i>total employed*</i>	<i>per cent Catholic</i>
Engineering**	2,440	16%	Engineering	46,945	15%
Textiles	2,191	30%	Textiles	41,701	25%
Railways	183	33%	Railways	1,296	23%
Chemicals	98	43%	Chemicals	1,735	27%
Docks	1,439	54%	Port, water transport	3,945	35%
Building, contracting	12,118	55%	Construction	58,058	41%
Glass, ceramics	173	59%	Pottery, glass	499	41%

\* includes labourers.

\*\* includes those labourers employed in (engineering) foundries.

that the dock workers themselves are further subdivided: deep-sea traffic is handled primarily by Catholics, members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, while cross-channel traffic is handled largely by Protestants, members of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union. (See, for example, Barritt and Carter (1962, p. 103).) Traditionally, the deep-sea work has provided casual and irregular employment; the cross-channel work, employing Protestants, offers more regular, stable employment.

The general pattern of industrial differentiation may be studied further by examining briefly the major employers of Protestant and Catholic manual workers. Engineering has both the highest proportion of Protestants relative to Catholics and the highest absolute number of Protestants employed, in any industry. The proportion of Protestants in Engineering as a whole amounts to 85 per cent, although in certain fairly prominent sections of the industry, notably shipbuilding, the proportions are even higher.<sup>10</sup> In absolute numbers, the number of Protestant men employed in Engineering and allied trades is equal to more than a fifth (22 per cent) of the total number of Protestant men employed in manual work. Apart from being the industry which is the most identifiably Protestant, the Engineering and shipbuilding industry is also the most prestigious and influential of the major industries employing manual workers.

Some of this influence is a consequence of the greater economic prominence which the industry once had. The shipyard in Belfast, at its peak during the war years, employed more than 30,000 men and, since it was concentrated in one region,

10. The chief convenor of the Belfast shipyard, Mr. Sandy Scott, recently estimated that Catholics amounted to approximately 600-700 out of a total of 7,000 non-clerical employees at the shipyard, i.e., about 9 or 10 per cent. (Personal interview, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, April 27, 1974.) The 1971 census shows that of those employed in the field of shipbuilding and marine engineering, as a whole, 466 out of a total of 9,103 individuals who stated their religion were Catholics. An additional 551 individuals did not specify their religious denomination.

had considerable economic and political impact on the province. The fact that, at the beginning of the Troubles in 1969, many in Northern Ireland looked to the shipyards for token leadership, indicates that in spite of its subsequent economic decline, much of its historic influence still remains. (See McNerney (1970, p. 9).) Isles and Cuthbert (1957, p. 71) attribute much of the shipyard's importance to its historic rôle in the development of the Northern Ireland economy but note that "its influence is all the greater because the workers are almost exclusively men, a large proportion of them being skilled workers, and the industry is highly localised in Belfast". The decline of shipbuilding has been partially compensated for by the expansion and diversification of the Engineering industry in recent years, particularly in the manufacture of electrical and mechanical goods. The Engineering-shipbuilding industry continues, today, to be the largest employer and probably the major exporter of all the manufacturing industries.<sup>11</sup> Its higher proportion of skilled labour and generally higher pay scales make it a relatively more prestigious employment, even for the relatively unskilled.

The industries employing the largest proportions of Catholics, however, offer a considerable contrast to the Engineering industry. In terms of the manufacturing industries, the Clothing and footwear industry has the largest proportions and the largest absolute numbers of Catholics employed. Unlike Engineering, it employs predominantly women rather than men, and has both the lowest wage levels and the lowest proportion of skilled labour, of the major manufacturing industries. If industries outside manufacturing are also considered, however, it is Construction which employs the largest number of Catholic manual workers. Construction accounts for more than a third (34 per cent) of all Catholic men employed in manual work. The Construction industry also has the highest proportion of labourers of any major industry and this likely contributes to its lower social status. It attracts workmen, especially the unskilled who, when unemployed elsewhere, seek casual employment in building and contracting. Isles and Cuthbert (1957, p. 65) described it as the "sump into which workmen, particularly the unskilled, tend to drift as casual workers". Not surprisingly it also has the highest level of unemployment of any of the major industries, with the possible exception of the declining agriculture industry.

In very general terms, the comparison suggests a broad division which has Protestant manual workers tending to be employed in higher status industries and Catholic manual workers tending to be employed in lower status industries. However, since only the largest Northern Ireland industries have been considered, some caution must be exercised in making these generalisations. Considerable variations exist within these industries and it would be difficult to attribute these solely to status differentiation. Nevertheless, if some of the smaller industries are examined, a similar pattern appears to exist. Workers in the Leather goods industry, the lowest paid in Northern Ireland, are 47 per cent Catholic. On the

11. The exact totals of exports are not known since the government does not release such information for the shipbuilding and aircraft industries. See Northern Ireland Office (1973, p. 129).

*Religion and industry 1971, major industries employing manual workers*

<i>Industry</i>	(i) <i>hourly earnings*</i>	(ii) <i>total employed</i>	(iii) <i>per cent male</i>	(iv) <i>per cent unem- ployed**</i>	(v) <i>ratio of salaries to wages 1970</i>	(vi) <i>per cent Catholic</i>
<i>A. Manufacturing</i>						
1. Engineering***	68p	46,945	80%	4.9%	.44	15%
2. Textiles	65p	41,701	58%	5.7%	.32	25%
3. Food, drink, tobacco	64p	25,797	65%	4.9%	.21	23%
4. Clothing, footwear	58p	25,289	15%	3.7%	.19	44%
<i>B. Other</i>						
1. Transport, communication	68p	25,894	86%	7.6%	—	29%
2. Agriculture, forestry	—	44,962	95%	19.6%	—	34%
3. Miscellaneous services****	62p	49,065	50%	6.6%	—	35%
4. Construction	55p	58,058	97%	18.7%	—	41%

\* These figures are the earnings of manual workers during the month of October, 1971. Since 1970, such earnings have been compiled only for the month of October of each year.

\*\* The percentage employed is based only upon insured employees for the month of June, 1971.

\*\*\* This includes mechanical, instrument, electrical, and marine engineering and allied industries such as shipbuilding and vehicle construction.

\*\*\*\* This includes primarily motor repairers, garages, filling stations, public houses, betting shops, cinemas, restaurants, and hotels.

*Data sources:*

(i), (v), Ministry of Finance (1973).

(ii), (iii), (vi), Census Office, Northern Ireland, unpublished sources.

(iv), Northern Ireland Office (1973).

other hand, workers in Gas, electricity and water, one of the highest paying industries for manual workers in the 1970s are only 16 per cent Catholic.<sup>12</sup>

In examining the non-manual occupations, it was noted that a look at the working context of certain occupations revealed a pattern of stratification which was otherwise concealed. This was particularly true of related occupations, such as doctors and nurses, which, while differing in status, fell within the same occupational class. It is likely that a similar pattern of differentiation exists within each of the manual classes, however, without more detailed investigation, it is frequently

12. The importance of this industry is determined, however, not by its pay level but by its strategic significance. The support given by workers in this industry to the political strike organised by the Ulster Workers Council was crucial in bringing down the power-sharing Executive in 1974. Attempts during the past two years to increase the number of Catholic employees in the Protestant-dominated electricity board have been met with concerted resistance and scattered violence.

difficult to identify these status distinctions. One such relationship which is known may be cited by way of illustration. It appears to be frequently accepted in the building trade that carpenters enjoy a superior status to bricklayers, although both are skilled occupations.<sup>13</sup> This may be due to a presumed difference in skill or to the fact that bricklayers, by the nature of their work, are more likely to be exposed to the natural elements. It is worth noting, therefore, that while carpenters and joiners are predominantly Protestant, bricklayers and plasterers are, by a slight margin, predominantly Catholic. Nevertheless, for most related occupations, without further information, we can only speculate whether differences in the religious proportions are a consequence of status distinctions or, rather, are due to other factors.

*Religion and selected occupations 1971, construction and engineering*

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Occupational class</i>	<i>total employed</i>	<i>per cent Catholic</i>
<i>A. Construction</i>			
1. Managers, building and contracting	I	1,025	18%
2. Carpenters and joiners	III	10,424	35%
3. Bricklayers, tile setters	III	4,305	51%
4. Plasterers, cement finishers	III	1,817	51%
5. Labourers, building and contracting	V	12,118	55%
<i>B. Engineering</i>			
1. Managers, engineering	I	737	8%
2. Fitters, n.e.c.	III	8,045	15%
3. Electricians	III	6,613	20%
4. Motor mechanics	III	6,102	27%
5. Labourers, engineering	V	2,440	16%

In summing up the results of this analysis, it should be noted that at least three principal forms of stratification exist between Protestant and Catholic occupations. First, in its most simple form, there is a marked tendency for Protestants to dominate the upper occupational classes while Catholics are found predominantly in the lower classes. Thus, the majority of Catholic men are either in semi-skilled or unskilled work or unemployed, while Protestants are most likely to be in skilled or non-manual work. This is the traditional form of horizontal stratification.

Second, there appears to be, what might be described as, a form of "vertical" stratification. As well as being stratified horizontally by occupation, there is a tendency for the major religious groups to be partially segregated by industry:

13. This observation is made on the basis of conversations with site agents and union officials in Co. Antrim.

Protestants are concentrated in the higher status industries, while Catholics are disproportionately represented in the lower status industries. This is, to a limited extent, compatible with the simple form of horizontal stratification since some industries may be preponderantly non-manual, skilled manual, or semi-skilled manual.

Third, there exists a more complex form of horizontal stratification. While both Protestants and Catholics exist in varying proportions within each of the major occupational classes, these classes are further subdivided into segments of differing status. When occupations within the same class, and the same working context, are considered, it would appear that Protestants dominate the superior positions while Catholics are over-represented in the lower status positions.

An important aspect which might be pursued further is the extent to which these occupational differences are translated into the shared stereotypes of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Multidimensional analysis would be useful in enabling us to distinguish between the different public images which the two groups possess, and the extent to which these are derived from their differing occupational characteristics. Some time ago, Rosemary Harris (1955, p. 163) observed an example of this type of relationship, in her study of a small rural community:

The difference in the class structure of the two religious groups affects their relations with each other because in the ascription of stereotyped characteristics to the members of the other group, something which almost inevitably takes place under the local conditions, the characteristics of the poorer classes are ascribed by the Protestants to the Catholics as a whole and those of the better off group by the Catholics to the Protestants.

On the basis of our own analysis, a number of dimensions which might be further explored in an attempt to define these ascriptive characteristics, can be outlined.

1. *Skilled—Unskilled*. On the basis of modal averages, the "typical" Protestant male is a skilled worker, and the "typical" Catholic, unskilled.
2. *Employed—Unemployed*. Although less than a third of the economically active population of Northern Ireland, Catholics constitute a majority of the unemployed.
3. *Masculine—Feminine*. Most occupations which can be identified as strongly Protestant tend to be male, while a significant number of those identifiable as disproportionately Catholic tend to be predominantly female.
4. *Superordination—Subordination*. Many of the occupations which have higher levels of authority and influence tend to be dominated by Protestants, while many of the lower status services are disproportionately Catholic.

Whichever of these dimensions is considered, it is apparent that there exist significant differences in the occupational characteristics of the two religious



groups. While occupation is only one of several characteristics contributing to an individual's generalised social class position, if these other characteristics follow a similar pattern, it would indicate a noteworthy congruence between the class cleavage and the religious cleavage in Northern Ireland. Such a congruence would partially explain the ineffectiveness of class organisations in crossing the religious divide.

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