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SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, COLLECTIVE CATEGORIES AND IDENTITY CHANGE

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Social Transformation, Collective Categories and Identity Change.¹

Abstract

Changes in collective categories of identity are at the core of social transformation. The causal linkages between identity change, institutional change and change in modes of practice are, however, complex. Developing and adapting ideas from Pierre Bourdieu's work, this article shows the coexistence in tension of a plurality of elements – in particular oppositional and non-oppositional elements - within each collective identity category. On this basis, it proposes a typology of logically possible responses at the level of identity to socio-political change. This allows an explanation of patterns of identity change in terms of wider social processes and resource distribution, while remaining open to the sense and complexity of the individual's experience, and the moments of intentionality which arise when individuals face choices as to the direction of change. The worth of the model is shown by analysis of modes of identity change in a society presently experiencing radical change in socio-political structures - post-Good-Friday Agreement Northern Ireland.

Keywords

Identity change, social transformation, collective categories, national identity, Bourdieu, habitus, intentionality, Northern Ireland, Good Friday Agreement.

Introduction

A succession of recent works has focused on processes of social and political transformation. In all of these analyses, the process of change in collective categories of identity is central. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly see identity change and cognitive shift as core elements common to all forms of political contestation.² Changes in identity and aspiration play a key analytic role in a number of studies of the new European regional-nationalisms³ In other studies of national, ethnic and social mobilization, processes of

¹ I acknowledge the helpfully critical comments on an earlier version of this paper by members of the Identity, Diversity Citizenship project and the Intergenerational Transmission of Identity project at the Institute for the Study of Social Change, UCD. It has been written as part of a project funded by the European Union programme for peace and reconciliation. I also thank Orla Muldoon, Karen Trew, Iseult Honohan, Maeve Cooke, Gladys Ganiel, Claire Mitchell and Joseph Ruane for comments on earlier versions of the paper.

² Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Dynamics of Contention. Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, for example p. 56.

³ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, vol II of *The Information Age*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. M. Keating, *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

self-categorisation have been core elements.⁴ It is clear why identity has thus come back into analysis: it is only when institutional changes are accompanied by changing self-perceptions that new institutions begin to create new dynamics of interaction; otherwise new institutions and practices become assimilated within older meanings and oppositions.

That social transformation involves an interrelation of institutional change and self-change has its classic statement in Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach. The question is how best to analyse and grasp the interrelations. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly argue that identity, institutional and interactive aspects are interrelated in each phase of mobilisation and contestation.⁵ They see social interactions and relations as core aspects of social life; institutionally and environmentally structured and mediated through individual perceptions, self-categorisations and interests and strategic calculations.⁶ Within this nexus, variation in identity categories is a key link in the causal chain. On the one hand, subtle shifts of meaning of identity categories may be key variables in the explanation of major change in political and social behavior: in ethnic interface situations, for example, such shifts may make a difference in who is included or excluded, killed or let live, and whether peace or conflict prevails.⁷ On the other hand, change in identity categories is itself provoked by and responsive to changes in institutional structure and social practice.

The causal links between category change and interactional and institutional change are often complex with time lags. In some cases there may be overtime disruptions of cognitive categories, underlying concepts which are put in question, inchoate cultural unease, new practices which allow old concepts to fade into irrelevance, and these subtle changes provide the underlying conditions in which new categories suddenly become foregrounded in practice, new self-definitions are crystallized and major institutional change occurs. Gradual changes in the 'cultural substratum' then become threshold conditions for sudden radical category change and social transformation. In other cases, imposed socio-political changes with correlative changes in social practices and incentive structures fail – at least at first – to impinge on collective categories of identity. This has been the case with European integration and with many peace settlements in situations of

⁴ S. Kakar, *The Colors of Violence, Cultural Identities, Religion and Conflict*. Chicago U Press, 1996. R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996

⁵ Indeed they expand the role of interpretative framing from that assumed in classic social movement theory: see, for example, the discussion of 'opportunities and threats', McAdam et al, *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 44-7.

⁶ McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly discuss these aspects of relationality in *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 57-8. While they focus on the interactive process, and in particular criticize the assumption that identities exist 'within people's heads' (p. 57) they also acknowledge the other aspects, see pp. 274ff, 310, 344. Charles Tilly tends to be more robust in dispensing altogether with the subjective and intentional aspect of individual identity: see C. Tilly, *Stories, Identities and Political Change*, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. In the present article, individuals and intentionality are brought back in, but explicitly as moments of a broader analysis which interrelates intentionality, institutions and interactions.

⁷ Rawi Abdelal, Y. M. Herrera, A. I. Hohnston, R. McDermott, 'Identity as a Variable' (May 10th 2003 version), Weatherhead Initiative in International Affairs, Harvard University, www.wcfia.harvard.edu/misc/initiative/identity/papers/index.htm p. 1. On ethnic boundaries, see for example, Donald R. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*: 2nd edition. LA, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 66-7.

ethnic conflict.⁸ While the changes brought institutionally and in social practice are significant, short of transformation of collective identity categories they remain less than transformatory; in some cases, older conflicts are simply transposed within the new structures.⁹ The key political question in such cases of institutional change is whether and when identity change will follow, and how it may be promoted.

Identity change is, however, complex to recognize and explain. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly treat identity shift, in its subjective, meaningful dimension, in very broad strokes.¹⁰ They are concerned with shifts in macro-categories, rather than with more subtle shifts in modes of identification, categorical content and relations among categories.¹¹ Yet the changes in contemporary national identity posited in the theoretical literature, to take one example, involve not just change in the bare category of nationality, but the mode in which it is held and its associated meanings.¹² In practice, the changes which make major impact are not, or not solely, the giving up or adoption of a Spanish, or a European, identity, but becoming a different sort of Spanish or European.

If the fact or failure of change in collective identity categories crucially affects social behavior, what factors favour such change? A typical explanation in the literature appeals to the activity of political or 'identity' entrepreneurs – for example, rhetorical category formation, brokerage, definitions of opportunities, manipulation of fear.¹³ These are

⁸ Tobias Theiler, *Political Symbols and European Integration*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. Some theories of ethnic conflict explicitly assume that settlements must regulate conflict between existing identities rather than encourage change in identities, see J. McGarry, and B. O'Leary, eds, *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflict*. London: Routledge, 1993. Yet it is also the case that some forms of settlement are unthinkable without change in oppositional forms of identity: see J. Darby and R. MacGinty, eds., *The Management of Peace Processes*. Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2000, on the importance of common symbols of identity within peace processes.

⁹ A number of examples are discussed in J. Ruane and J. Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996. This process of transposing new elements within older meaning-systems is exemplified in the ritual of 'la sape', analysed by J. Friedman as a case of 'weak globalisation', see Friedman, 'Global system, globalization and the parameters of modernity', pp. 69–90 in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Ronald Robertson, eds, *Global Modernities*. London: Sage, 1995.

¹⁰ For example, they explain the peaceful character of the Spanish post-Franco transition in part by the movement towards a European identity (McAdam et al, *Dynamics of Contention*, 181-3), but the diversity of, for example, Europeaness, Spanishness, Catalaness, and Basqueness, and of their combinations within Spain from the 1970s to the present, which at once underlies the possibility of consensus on the 1978 constitution and the ongoing contention over it, is elided. On this diversity, see *La Question de L'Espagne, Hérodote: revue de géographie et de géopolitique*, no. 91, 1998. On the expression of these diverse understandings within constitutional debate, see J-M Comas, 'Spain: the 1978 constitution and centre-periphery tensions', pp. 38-61 in J. Ruane, J. Todd and A. Mandeville, eds., *Europe's Old States in the New World Order: The Politics of Transition in Britain, France and Spain*. Dublin: UCD Press, 2003.

¹¹ On the multiple dimensions of any collective identity category, see Richard D. Ashmore, Kay Deaux and Tracy McLaughlin-Volpe, 'An Organizing framework for collective identity: articulation and significance of multidimensionality', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol 130 no 1, 2004. 80-114..

¹² On theories of changing forms of national identity, see Keating, *Plurinational Democracy*; Castells, *Power of Identity*; J. Nederveen Pieterse, 1995. 'Globalization as hybridization', pp. 45–68 in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson, eds, *Global Modernities*. London: Sage..

¹³ On the role of political entrepreneurs, see McAdam et al, *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 142ff. See also Rogers Brubaker, 'Ethnicity without groups', *Archives Européennes de Sociologies*, xlii.2, 2002, pp. 163-189, pp. 166-7,

elements in any explanation of category change, but they are not the only elements. Political entrepreneurs are always with us and most of the time they fail to meet any public response. Then, suddenly, they mobilize the masses.¹⁴ Why do some entrepreneurs succeed and others fail, and why does success come when it does, rather than earlier or later? Part of the explanation lies in social structure and changing interests, but part lies in perceptions, in peoples' sense that these are demands that they would be happy to stand behind, or that the discourse simply does not speak to their key concerns. Once again we are thrust back to the 'cultural substratum', the changing ways individuals and groups understand and interrelate categories.

To identify subtle changes in collective identity categories requires attention to the cultural substance of these categories as well as to behavior and boundaries, and analysis of how this is constituted and changed at the micro as well as macro level.¹⁵ To bring meaning and individual variation back in makes explanation considerably more complex. I argue in this article that it is possible, at least when we focus on a few politically-crucial meanings of identity categories (in this article on the interrelations of oppositional meanings and substantive values within the same collective identity categories). It is also worthwhile: it allows us to discover patterns in the ways in which collective categories are used and reshuffled in times of social change, the instability of some meaning-configurations and their evolution into others, and dissonances between seemingly authoritative official meanings and on-the-ground popular meanings: in short it allows more subtle typologies and robust explanations of change in collective identity categories. It is also of political importance to recognize patterns of identity change and the conditions which favour or disfavour particular directions of change, while change is ongoing, before an old stability of categorical opposition evolves into a new stability of categorical opposition. Just such a period of categorical flux is discussed in the final section of this paper.

In the next section of this paper I argue that the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which incorporates social interaction, institutional structure and subjective meaning, can usefully be developed to deal with identity-categories and identity change. On the basis of this discussion, I outline a typology of logically possible responses at the level of identity to socio-political change. This is intended at once to allow the explanation of patterns of change in terms of wider social processes and resource distribution, while

¹⁴ The unexpected nature of entrepreneurial success is striking even to the entrepreneurs themselves: a veteran republican activist once described to me (in an interview in 1988) his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. He was involved in the organization of the CRM from the start, as he had been involved in every anti-state or protest movement in Northern Ireland for as long as he could remember. At the time, he saw the civil rights movement as no different, another phase and strategy of anti-state activism: he had no idea that this one was going to have such major consequences.

¹⁵ Behaviour and boundaries are themselves richly meaningful, although their meaning may be multiple, ambiguous and disguised. On the need to go beyond analysis of cultural boundaries to analysis of cultural content, see Hopkins, Nick and Steve Reicher, 1996. 'The construction of social categories and processes of social change: arguing about national identities', pp. 69-93 in G. M. Breakwell and E. Lyons, eds, *Changing European Identities: Social Psychological Analyses of Social Change*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

remaining open to the sense and complexity of the individual's experience, and the moments of choice (and the constraints on choice) which arise in social transformations. I then show how these responses are exemplified in one contemporary case of politically-engineered change – post-Good-Friday Agreement Northern Ireland. Most of the examples in the paper are about changes in national categorizations, although the argument is intended as a more general one.

Collective categories and the formation of identity.

Collective categories of identity

As has been shown in a number of important recent articles, a range of contemporary scholarship on identity categories has converged in highlighting personal variability, moments of choice or intentionality in identity formation, and new combinations of meaning as exemplified in individual life stories.¹⁶ This 'soft constructivist' analysis decisively breaks with the notion of identity-categories as fixed and defined, as concepts into which individuals fit. Just as there is no longer any hegemonic cultural order, so there are no longer any hegemonically defined identity-categories – national or otherwise.¹⁷ It emphasises the fluctuating, relational and situational quality of self-definitions which are constructed in social practice and interaction, not in depth psychology.¹⁸

Brubaker and Cooper show, however, that this approach can easily become conceptually incoherent.¹⁹ Identity becomes plural, identities proliferate, varying in each situation where a new aspect of self is performed. 'Identity-language' classically referred to the stability of the self through a succession of roles; once 'identity' is unmoored from such individual stability, it loses its *raison d'être*. It also loses its usefulness for the analysis of social transformations. If we think of identity in terms of multiple, free-floating macro-categories which individuals may choose to emphasise or ignore, depending on charismatic orators, calculations of strategic self-interest, the needs of particular situations, their degree of suggestibility at any point in time, identity change loses any claim to be a significant part of the causal patterning of social change. It becomes no more than interactional change, epiphenomenal.²⁰

¹⁶ Cerulo, 'Identity construction'. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society* 29, 2002, 1-47. Somers, Margaret, 'The narrative construction of identity: a relational and network approach', *Theory and Society*, 23, 1994, 605-49.

¹⁷ T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Oxford, Berg, 2002.

¹⁸ Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond identity', pp. 7, 9- 11. Tilly, *Stories, Identities and Political Change*, pp. 46, 49, 75; Tarrow et al., *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 56-7.

¹⁹ Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"'. .

²⁰ Taking this notion of identity categories, Tilly rightly sees no point in looking at identity apart from interaction; see Tilly, Charles, 2002. *Stories, Identities and Political Change*. Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield, pp. 49, 75. Brubaker and Cooper see the very term as dispensable., 'Beyond identity', pp. 1-2.

If, however, we take seriously the view that collective categories of identity play a significant causal role in framing action, and if we posit a slowly changing ‘cultural substratum’ which may underlie more radical category change, we need a different model of how identity-categories function. We need to recognize not just the complex and varying meanings of these categories and their lack of fixed or foundational status, but also their social ‘embeddedness’ and their personal ‘anchorage’, which allow change or stasis to occur out of phase with other variables, and to affect them in turn. Pierre Bourdieu’s work provides just such a model.²¹ In what follows I outline the importance of his perspective for the task set out in this paper, and then show that it must be adapted to cope with social transformation (rather than the social reproduction which he analysed), to allow for the ‘moment of intentionality’ and to analyse identity formation and change (rather than the broader concept of the *habitus*). This falls well short of a theory of change in collective categories, but it allows the development of typologies of ways that category change and identity change may proceed, and the conditions that make it more likely that they proceed in one direction rather than another.²²

Habitus, social practice and identity

Pierre Bourdieu has shown how the social patterning of individual subjectivity and categorization takes place. He has given a powerful theory of social reproduction whereby individuals internalize the distinctions and values which structure the social world, and then, acting spontaneously in the light of these distinctions, reproduce the social structure whose meanings they have internalized.²³ He has analysed how the *habitus* – dispositions which give bodily form to collective categories and distinctions – is formed from earliest childhood, as the child situates itself in structured, gendered and differentially path-ed social space, and internalises its objective life-chances in its own subjective expectations and interests.²⁴ Such processes produce a set of cumulative, superimposed meanings, dispositions and modes of perception embodied in the individual. Some of these may be laid down in infancy, but they are social products even if they sometimes appear to individuals as ‘primordial’ givens.²⁵

²¹ I focus particularly on the following works where Bourdieu emphasizes class distinction: P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. R. Nice, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, tr R. Nice, Cambridge Ma, Harvard University Press, 1984; P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, tr. R. Nice, Cambridge, Polity, 1990. In some of his later articles, he analyses collective categories more generally. See P. Bourdieu, P., *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed and intro by John B. Thompson, Tr G. Raymond and M. Adamson, Cambridge, Polity, 1991.

²² Ashmore et al, ‘An organizing framework’, pp. 83ff. note at least fourteen dimensions of each collective identity category, including salience, affect, group-belonging, as well as different aspects of content, together with the further dimensions of interrelations of categories and their social contextualisation. The present article deals only with the cognitive content and interrelations of collective identity categories, and their relation to the social context.

²³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 78-9; Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, p. 58.).

²⁴ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 86.

²⁵ The phenomenological depth of, for example, ethnic identity is emphasized by D. L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985. W/ Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1994, A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986. Ethnic and national categorizations are not normally as deeply

Social practice is at the core of his analysis; it is where individuals at once encounter and internalize distinction, and where, even in new situations, the habitus reproduces socially structured distinction and ensures historical continuity as if spontaneously²⁶ Through this process, collective categories are interrelated in understanding and habitus just as they are institutionally. The precise set of such interrelations from any particular standpoint in any particular society gives the subjective possibility of shared 'national' and class experience.

Bourdieu moves decisively beyond many of the dichotomies which characterize contemporary writing on identity. Individual and social identity, instrumental and affective modes of identification are intrinsically interrelated in his writing.²⁷ Collective categories are embodied in the individual habitus and expressed not simply in collective action but also in the subtler signs of individual distinction, down to the choice of jewellery, make-up and clothing.²⁸ This reproduces collective distinction at the micro-level, ensuring that spontaneous attraction and friendship, marriage and family relations tend to fall within collective categories. All such embodied collective categories bring with them a felt immediacy. All give the potential for immediate contact with others whom we recognize as 'like ourselves', and a related sense of belonging with those who share our categories and who recognize and respond positively to our immediate intuitive distinctions. But while, in practice, the embodied categories carry this emotional charge, analytically the formation of shared experiences and the 'warm' sense of group belonging and solidarity may be explained coolly, in terms of core social variables.

Bourdieu's theory, in these respects, provides an invaluable starting-point for analysis of identity. It has, however, been criticized for its failure to explain change and to account for variation.²⁹ Whether or not these criticisms are accurate of Bourdieu's work as a whole is a question beyond the scope of this paper.³⁰ They do, however, show that the preliminary schema presented above requires refinement. That schema appears to explain

embedded in the individual as are gender categorizations, but they can come close: see R. Harris, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster: A Study of Neighbours and 'Strangers' in a Border Community*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1972, p. 148.

²⁶ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, p. 56

²⁷ For a discussion of the opposition between social and individual identity, see Abdelal et al, 'Identity as a Variable'; the distinction between instrumental and affective modes of identification is pervasive in discussions of ethnic identity, see J. Hutchinson, and A. D. Smith, eds, *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. On the interrelations, see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 80-2. For a discussion of the transcendence of the related material/ideal and economic/cultural dualisms in Bourdieu's work, see David L. Schwarz, 'Drawing information from Bourdieu's sociology of symbolic power', *Theory and Society* 32, 2003, 519-528, p. 525, and Frédéric Lebaron, 'Pierre Bourdieu: Economic models against economism', *Theory and Society* 32, 2003, 551-565, pp. 560-563.

²⁸ B. De Wita, *French Bourgeois Culture*, tr. J. A. Underwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

²⁹ For a measured critique, see John R. Hall, 'The Capital(s) of cultures: a non-holistic approach to status situations, class, gender and ethnicity', pp. 257-285 in Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds, *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* Chicago, U Chicago Press, 1992.

³⁰ For a useful discussion, see Nick Crossley, 'The phenomenological habitus and its construction', *Theory and Society*, 30, 81-120, 2001.

social reproduction and social evolution but not radical social change.³¹ It appears that such change can only come from outside intervention or the impingement of wider processes, since internal feedback patterns ensure the reproduction of both the habitus and the social order. Radical cultural change can, it seems, only be the delayed result of such imposed social change.³² However, if this is the only source of cultural or categorical change, it may be signally ineffective, since new elements may be ‘indigenised’ by social practices determined by older distinctions. This practice, well theorized by Bourdieu, is a common phenomenon in deeply divided societies where actors are able to incorporate new resources brought by potentially radical social transformations such as industrialization or democratization or European integration within the divided social structure.³³

Part of the problem lies in the positing of one dominant social and symbolic order. In complex modern societies, there may be several competing symbolic orders coexisting in tension within specific institutions or ‘fields’, not just one authoritative system.³⁴ Studies of the state show, for example, different sets of policy orientations and different key conceptual oppositions embedded in different state institutions and sometimes competing within them.³⁵ Class distinction too may be experienced and produced in different ways: Lamont’s studies show that bourgeois individuals may choose to define themselves in terms of ethical rather than cultural or material distinction and this choice does not appear to follow the particular bourgeois ‘fraction’ to which the individuals belong.³⁶ More radically again, there are some societies where one finds not just contested variants of one symbolic order but at least two different symbolic orders within deeply contested social institutions. This is most evident when one moves from class to ethno-national or religious divisions. In situations where two groups with their already formed symbolic systems are brought into conflict, the distinct cultural substance associated with each is not lost, even when one group gains decisive socio-political control. The symbolic orders tend to become formally homologous – precisely because the dominated order must answer and oppose each aspect of the dominant – yet they retain distinct cultural

³¹ Gradual social evolution which allows historical continuity through the capacity of the habitus to apply old distinctions in new circumstances is, however, at the core of Bourdieu’s theory. For discussions of this and of more radical change, see, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 95, *Logic of Practice*, p. 67

³² But see Crossley, ‘Phenomenological habitus’, pp. 92-3.

³³ On the ‘indigenisation’ of new elements through the habitus, see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 78-81; for one set of historical examples, see J. Ruane, and J. Todd, 1996. *Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

³⁴ Hall, ‘Capital(s) of culture’, points out that the notion of ‘field’ does not resolve the difficulty because a dominant order is presupposed within each field.

³⁵ The very concept of ‘governance’, for example, dispenses with the notion of a central ordering point within the state, in favour of a plurality of disparate potentially competing institutions, embodying different modes of practice and norms, and interlinked in a variety of ways. In a quite different tradition of thought, but referring to comparable phenomena, Marxists point to ‘contradictions’ within the state, see C. Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, ed. John Keane, London, Hutchinson, 1984, and N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, London, New Left Books, 1978. See also B. Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, Cambridge, Polity, 2002.

³⁶ Michèle Lamont, *Money, Morals and Manners, The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago, U Chicago Press, 1992.

substance.³⁷ It follows that what the child, or adult, internalizes from their social practice may be alternate rather than official meanings, recessive aspects of the social order, implicit contradictions between one set of practices and another. What is embodied in the habitus is a transposition of (and in some circumstances an alternative to) the distinctions of the ‘dominant social order’, and it may come more or less into tension with it.

There is also a tendency to narrow the ‘grammar’ of the habitus to a set of binary oppositions based on power relations. Bourdieu’s explanation of social reproduction centers on the role of structured social practice as the mechanism by which objective life-chances are transposed into the habitus. More than binary oppositions are thus constituted as dispositions. Complex social practices typically involve at once relations *with* others (which can build cooperative capacity, skills and virtues) and relations *against* others (which mark one off from those outside).³⁸ The point is clear in Bourdieu’s own empirical studies of crafted interactional patterns or the forming of aesthetic taste.³⁹ Yet the real values, and sometimes also virtues, associated with these practices are subsumed within class distinction, and not prioritized in his analysis.⁴⁰ Thus one of the internal tensions within the individual habitus – and another potential source of change – is elided. For example, ethno-national distinction is built both from participation-with-others in institutions and social practices, and by exclusion-of-others from these institutions and practices: at once from the multitude of everyday practices and norms that make up ‘banal nationalism’ and from an institutionally credited ranking of these practices which defines the value of cultural capital and constitutes a set of power resources for some and against others.⁴¹ National identity at once involves positive values, which grow out of participation and mutual dependence, and implicit oppositions with lesser nations.⁴² Similarly, in deeply divided societies, ethnic categories are mutually opposed, yet they also resonate with values derived from specific traditions and practices.⁴³ Ethnic and national conflict is all the more intense because the actors know that what is at stake is not empty categories or mere power, but also real values rooted in specific traditions.

A third general point arises from the fact that Bourdieu’s work centred on the habitus, that totality of dispositions produced without conscious intent. Identity, however, is not the habitus: there is too much in the habitus, much of it below the level of consciousness,

³⁷ On opposed ethno-religious symbol systems see J. Ruane. and J. Todd, *Dynamics of Conflict and Transition in Northern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2004 and S. Farrell, . *Rituals and Riots: Sectarian Violence and Political Culture in Ulster 1784-1886*. Lexington, Ky: University of Kentucky Press, 2000.

³⁸ On the formation of skills and virtues from complex social practices, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Duckworth, 1981.

³⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

⁴⁰ Although she does not theorise it in these terms, one might say that it is precisely these values which some of Lamont’s interviewees emphasise in *Money, Morals and Manners*.

⁴¹ On these different aspects within national identity categories see M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, 1995. T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Oxford, Berg, 2002. . Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

⁴² For different views, see Iseult Honohan, ‘Friends, strangers or countrymen? Citizens as colleagues’ , *Political Studies* 49 1, 2001, 51-69. D. Miller, *On Nationality* Oxford: Clarendon, 1995. B. Parekh, ‘Ethnocentricity in the nationalist discourse’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.1, 1995, 25-52

⁴³ George Schopflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe*, London, Hurst, 2000,

much irrelevant to how one conceives of oneself.⁴⁴ The habitus rather gives a substratum from which identity is formed in a process of arrangement and rearrangement of some of these elements of embodied meaning and value, with some held close to the centre of self, others left on the margins.⁴⁵ Identity-narratives are the reports of – sometimes the performance of – the arrangement and rearrangement of these blocks of meaning.⁴⁶ Identity formation and change is thus a continuous process which involves a considerable degree of intentionality. It takes place by the incorporation of new elements of embodied, meaning and value, or the rearrangement of old. New elements may be created, not *ex nihilo* but by the choice to foreground particular practices and relations rather than others, so that over time the meanings embedded in these practices become an integral part of the self, while others fade. Such choices are not costless: after years of work and sacrifice, one may find that a sense of belonging in one's adopted society still eludes one; similarly, old meanings may be marginalized but never totally fade. By the same sort of process, this time combining social practices in new ways, new combinations of meanings can come into being. Again, choice is typically constrained, on the one hand by socially entrenched symbolic codes and multiple social pressures not to break them, and on the other hand by personal history which may have laid down some dispositions so early in infancy that they are changeable, if at all, only by depth analysis. Complex patterns of identity change may result. When, for example, peripheral nationalist parties in Catalonia or Scotland or Northern Ireland at once oppose the central state and seek involvement in European networks and global linkages, they begin to constitute a hard-edge anti-statist but non-exclusivist, hybrid national identity. If, however, access to European and global networks is restricted until anti-statism is softened, this tends to create a different sort of national-identity-configuration and one which may not meet voter expectations, thus opening the way to future shifts in voter support (from CiU to ERC in Catalonia, from SDLP to Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland).

These points allow us to identify three mechanisms of change in collective categories of identity: dissonances between the social order and the individual habitus; dissonances within the individual habitus; and the moment of intentionality in identity formation. They also allow a more subtle and differentiated analysis of collective identity categories. First, the discussion shows that meaning of collective identity categories is complex, composed of a plurality of elements coexisting in tension. These elements include binary oppositions, substantive values and virtues and normative principles, cognitive assumptions, and understood relations with other categories.⁴⁷ Each is derived from

⁴⁴ For example, whether and to what extent the meanings and values embedded in work and working relations which colour one's expectations, perceptions and responses are incorporated into identity varies dramatically depending on the satisfaction and fulfillment or tediousness and alienation associated with work. If the norms and skills of creative professional work can willingly be assumed into identity, routine work can be factored out.

⁴⁵ Here the notion of the active subject or agent is brought in; for a discussion of why this is necessary and how it is (conceptually) possible, see Crossley, 'Phenomenological habitus'.

⁴⁶ Somers, 'Narrative construction of identity'.

⁴⁷ This list of elements to be discussed below parallels three of the elements of identity-content discussed in Abedelal et al, 'Varieties of identity' (they mention constitutive norms, relational comparisons and cognitive models as well as social purposes), although I give a rather different reading of each.

meanings embedded in the social structure. A mapping of these elements, and of their typical combinations, can be achieved by focused research.⁴⁸

Second, there are diverse ways of constructing identity categories. The elements may be intertwined in different permutations and combinations with varying degrees of tension. The meanings of these categories cannot therefore be read off from dominant political discourses: there may be numerous ways to 'be Irish' or 'be Basque', quite different from 'official' views, pursued spontaneously by different groups and sub-sets of groups and individuals. These may not be adequately represented by politicized contest in the public sphere, yet they are in no sense 'private languages' of purely personal significance; each variant may be recognizable within the culture and appeal to particular historical traditions within it. Arguably this divergence of popular and 'official' categorical identification, and variation and flux at the popular level, is a phenomenon of the contemporary age, experienced by many individuals reassessing their options in societies experiencing economic restructuring, europeanisation, globalisation and new phases of immigration.⁴⁹

Third, there is a 'moment' of intentionality in the making and remaking of identity categories, a choice of which permutations and combinations of elements to accept. This choice is, however, highly qualified. Its exercise may require a high level of cultural and social resources. For example, to distinguish oppositional aspects of national categories from the cultural substance of these categories, when both are conflated in one's identity requires considerable cultural resources and intellectual stamina, while to separate the meanings in public interactions may require unusual courage. To engage in new social practices which allow a recombination of meanings requires institutional and social opportunities. Change may be achieved only at high personal cost: as elements of meaning are centred or decentred, the interpretation of key episodes in the past in which these meanings came into play may also be changed, and the sense of self affected.⁵⁰ Cultural and social resources, not least in the form of public acknowledgement of the costs of such a wide-spread process of change and an acknowledgement of the multiple perspectives on the past, can aid such processes of change.⁵¹ The form and distribution of key social and cultural resources, therefore, are among the determinants of the likely directions of change in identity categories.

Fourth, change in collective identity categories is on-going. Individuals and sets of individuals often find their intuitive categorizations out of phase with those of their class or group, and still more so with official, state-centred categorizations, or they find the

⁴⁸ This was precisely Bourdieu's achievement in *Distinction*. Such mapping requires a triangulation of methods: theoretical hypotheses drawn from existing research and comparative work, refined through individual interviews and tested by a range of methods, from surveys to participant observation. See Abdelal et al, 'Varieties of identity' for discussion of some relevant methods.

⁴⁹ See J. Ruane, J. Todd and A. Mandeville, eds., *Europe's Old States in the New World Order: The Politics of Transition in Britain, France and Spain*. Dublin: UCD Press, in particular chapter 7.

⁵⁰ On the ontological role of narrative, see Somers, 'Narrative construction of identity', eg pp 618-9, 629-31.

⁵¹ C. Vicencio and W. Verwoerd, eds, *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, London, Zed Books, 2000.

elements of their own categorizations come into internal tension. Unease, personal discontent and revision of category structures proceeds, sometimes cohering with, sometimes appealing to new modes of identity-construction put forward by political or communal entrepreneurs.⁵² More radical, society-wide identity change is provoked when socio-political changes bring the elements of collective identity categories into evident contradiction for whole populations. Then individuals are forced to re-sort the elements of their identity. The broad directions of possible change can be defined by looking at the logically possible combinations of elements. Which directions are chosen depend in part on the prior processes of gradual identity reconstruction within the population, in part on available new resources. When whole populations face such choices, the directions chosen have major political effects.

Social-political change and identity change

Modes of identity transformation

One cause of change in categories of collective identity is social change. In a society structured throughout by a key set of power relations, radical change in the relations will also cast in doubt the oppositional elements of the collective identity category and their interrelations with other elements. Where, for example, economic position has been correlated with racial or ethnic or gender categories, effective fair employment practices change the 'entry tickets' to economic positions and with them the socially sanctioned interrelation of these categories with meritocratic norms and pride in achievement. With the official recognition of the value of minority or dominated cultures, the socially sanctioned association of particular cultural categories with norms of progress, civility or rationality are 'decertified'.⁵³ With new actors in positions of power, the networks of informal influence change, and with them socially sanctioned expectations of having, or not having, an authoritative voice in society. Where identity has been entwined with power, these changes are experienced not simply as a change of regime, but – for the dominant group - as an overturning of the moral order, an insult to their own integrity and identity, a placing of the undeserving above the deserving. It is a particularly sharp form of dissonance, where the world is not ordered as they had come to expect, and where these expectations were constitutive of their sense of themselves. Those who have long opposed the dominant order may also find that change disrupts the categories in terms of which they had defined themselves. Others, already uneasy with the dominant categorical oppositions, will welcome the opportunity to move beyond them.

If identity change – or more precisely, change in the place of the binary oppositions based on the old power relations - is predictable in these circumstances, there are at least six logically possible directions of that change. These directions are distinguished in terms of

⁵² This was the type of process which was evidenced in (unpublished) semi-structured interviews (80 in all) conducted in Northern Ireland in 1988 by the author and a colleague. There was much individual variation in elements of meaning: significant numbers reported periods when they had rethought their sense of nationality.

⁵³ On certification and decertification, see McAdam et al, *Dynamics of Contention*, 145-148, 204-7.

the form of change in the elements of the collective identity category and the extent to which that change is expressed in practice (see Table One below). Each direction of change may prove unstable and evolve into another.

TABLE ONE: DIRECTION OF CHANGE IN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY CATEGORIES

	No change: binary oppositional elements retained	Subtle change: binary oppositional elements rejected or qualified, other elements retained	Total change: all elements of category changed and/or category itself changed
Transparency and coherence between practice and category	Reaffirmation	Assimilation	Conversion
Ambiguity and tension between practice and category	Adaptation	Ritual appropriation	Privatisation

- *Reaffirmation* This option reaffirms the existing core binary oppositions and welcomes or resists change in their name. For those who have benefited, the elements within the identity-category may be reaffirmed because they sense they are winning, they are ‘on a roll’, ready to seize the chance to give public prominence to their values, ideas, and concepts at the expense of their former superiors. Those who were once dominant, in contrast, reaffirm their categories in the very process of resisting change. In some cases, where those who resist set up their own networks and social mechanisms of mutual support (as did the French resistance in WWII), the resistance option may be self-confirming. In other cases, resistance introduces new elements into the identity structure: the experience of marginalisation, the practice of conservation and the threat of extinction produce quite different cognitive assumptions, meanings and values than did the previous experience of successful, expansive social interaction.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Marc Augé shows the changing meanings of symbolism when actors face the threat of cultural extinction. M. Augé, *The War of Dreams*, tr. L. Heron, London: Pluto, 1999, p. 19. Terence McCaughey has pointed to the changing character of the Irish language now that it is ‘conserved’ rather than a living encounter with the world. Terence McCaughey, ‘Religion and reconciliation in Irish politics’, paper

Sometimes, too, key elements of the old identity-categories may be eroded - respect for authority, the belief in progress, the sense of order and the expectation of influence are unlikely to survive social marginalisation and sustained opposition. In these cases, while the oppositional aspect of the collective identity category is retained, its evaluative content, core assumptions and relations with other categories change, sometimes to the extent that the identity-structure collapses, and reaffirmation turns to conversion.

- *Conversion.* For those who were once-dominated, and who constructed their identity *against* the dominant order, as for those who were once-dominant, structural change may render irrelevant older categorical oppositions. As the linkages between the elements of the identity-category collapse, and as many of the old elements are sensed as absurd in the new situation, the symbolic grammar embedded in the new order may simply be accepted as a package, in a form of conversion. Of course converts must also find within themselves the capacity to work within the new set of categories, or else they will be liable to disillusion and further change. The stability of conversion depends on how far the substratum of individual dispositions may be reordered within the new structure. In some dramatic and seemingly sudden cases of category change, for example with whites during the South African transition, the conditions for change had long been prepared in the increasing lack of fit of categories of practice, in inchoate unease as self-perceptions did not meet the perceptions of others, in the strain of holding to an ideology which no longer met either interests or experience.⁵⁵
- *Privatisation.* An alternative to conversion, when older oppositional categories and meanings are thrust into irrelevance or official disapprobation, but the new categories implicit in practice cannot be accepted, is privatization. This option rearranges the elements of identity, marginalizing all macro-social elements, all national, political, class and status categorizations, shrinking the core of identity into the private, the familial, perhaps also the religious sphere. This option requires strong family linkages, private cultural and social resources or religious faith (or alternatively, enough spending power to move to a consumerist individualism). Collective categories may not fully be rejected but narrowed to the personal sphere: religion becomes pietism and prayer; national identity shrinks to a personal or familial enjoyment of national culture.⁵⁶ This option has been described in numerous autobiographies of people living in fascist or

presented to the conference 'Old Structures, New Beliefs: Religion, Community and Politics in Contemporary Ireland', Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin, 15 May, 2003..

⁵⁵ Darby and MacGinty, eds, *The Management of Peace Processes*. On individual processes of change, see Vicencio and Verwoerd, *Looking Back, Reaching Forward*. For a classic discussion of such a collapsed identity system (albeit one which has become subject of historical contention), see M. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1981.

⁵⁶ Josep R. Llobera, 'The role of commemorations in (ethno)nation-building: the case of Catalonia', pp. 191-206 in C. Mar-Molinero and A. Smith, eds., *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula: Competing and Conflicting Identities*. Oxford: Berg, 1996, p. 193 notes that the family was a prime site of reproduction of Catalan national identity during the Franco years.

authoritarian regimes. The pushing aside of collective categories of identity may not be a total rejection of them, simply a making of them recessive, thus allowing persons to live relatively happy personal lives under regimes which are alien to them, while re-appropriating the older elements when it becomes possible so to do. In this latter case, privatization begins to converge with adaptation. In other cases, privatization may become impossible if ascribed collective categories affect even the pursuit of private happiness.

- *Adaptation.* In this case, actors adapt to the practices required in the new social order without changing the core elements of their identity. They are 'sensible' and agree that the new is here to stay, but they 'act' in it while keeping their own values and self-categorisations distinct from this practice. Equally, they keep at a distance the meanings and values embedded in their new social practice, ensuring that they do not touch their core identity. Examples may be found in many social groups in Franco's Spain: Catalans who acted prudently but retained their older values and identity and seized the opportunity for change when it came.⁵⁷ In this case, however, the meanings embodied in their newly adaptive social practice remain a second language whose logic and rationale always remain alien; adaptation is always grudging, incomplete, with signs of the older values and oppositions always likely to appear.⁵⁸
- *Assimilation.* In this case, actors reshuffle the elements of identity, marginalizing some binary oppositions which were associated with the old social order, placing other categories closer to the centre of identity; differentiating the substantive cultural meanings of, for example, ethnicity from associated oppositions based on status and power hierarchies and retaining the former while casting out the latter. They thus find in themselves the dispositions and expectations necessary to succeed in the new order, while retaining a sense of continuity with their older selves: this is autonomous development of identity, not conversion or the unwelcome intrusion of new elements. This assimilationist option is only open to those who have already available to them, as second nature, elements of value and meaning consistent with the new practices which they can foreground without a sense of total personal upheaval. It was the option taken, for example, by those in old East Germany who responded to unification not by adopting neo-liberal values (conversion), nor by resistance or denial (adaptation) but by combining their own entrepreneurial aims and skills with the strong sense of and valuation of linkages which had been built up in the old regime, thereby retaining a level of continuity with the old (East) German-ness while adapting successfully to the new.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Llobera, 'Commemorations'.

⁵⁸ In one recent autobiography, this distancing of practice and belief has been called 'the silent no'. H. Hamilton, *The Speckled People*, London: Fourth Estate, 2003. On the linguistic analogy, see Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, p. 67.

⁵⁹ This process of using old linkages to act effectively in a new social order has been much more discussed in the globalisation literature than in the literature on identity: see, for example, S. Lash and J. Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*, London, Sage, 1994, chapter 4. For an overview of the literature on different responses to reunification in the old East Germany, see Jan Werner Muller, 'East Germany:

- *Ritual appropriation.* In this option, new practices are accepted and assimilated within old narrative forms and ritual structures which are used to legitimate, appropriate and redefine the practices, thus assuring continuity of meaning despite change in practice. Unlike adaptation, however, the new practices and the older categories are not held apart one from another but are mutually assimilated, so that the tensions and contradictions between the new elements of meaning and the older categorical oppositions play themselves out in practice. This is explicitly a group-centred rather than an individual response to change; it is how 'nations' and the individuals within them modernize while retaining a sense of national tradition and community.⁶⁰ So, for example, the expansive neo-imperial tradition which once constituted the symbolic content of Britishness is continued ritually by the British royal family's involvement in the Commonwealth, although the changed practical significance of the British world role has given both ritual and identity a new meaning and one which threatens – for example in the transition-crises of the British royal family – to break the older ritual form.⁶¹

In each of the cases outlined above, change may not affect the general collective categories: self-reported identity as German or French may remain. It does, however, affect the meanings, interrelations and salience of the collective categories and their role in social practice, sometimes in very radical ways.

Transforming identities in Northern Ireland

Contemporary Northern Ireland provides a clear example of the type of socio-political change which is highly likely to provoke radical and widespread identity change. The British state had long informally upheld and (unintentionally) reproduced a power structure in which Protestants and unionists were dominant.⁶² The Good Friday

Incorporation, Tainted Truth and the Double Division', pp. 248-274 in Alexandra Barahona de Brito 'Carmen González-Enríquez Paloma Aguilar, *The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratizing Societies*. Oxford, OUP, 2001, pp. 270-274).

⁶⁰ Some examples of the ways (national) continuity is asserted in times of change are to be found in Wright's study of facets of everyday life and symbolism in Thatcher's Britain. P. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*. London: Verso, 1995. Of course the 'oldness' of the ritual in terms of which the new is integrated may itself be radically exaggerated in the ritual itself. See D. Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the 'invention of tradition', c. 1820-1977', pp. 101-164 in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983..

⁶¹ See E. Frazer, 'Citizenship and culture', pp. 203-18 in P. Dunleavy, A. Gamble, I. Holliday and G. Peele, *Developments in British Politics 6*. London: Macmillan, 2000, and T. Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy*. London: Hutchinson Radius, 1988.

⁶² For discussions of the form of conflict in Northern Ireland, see Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics of Conflict* B. O'Leary and J. McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*, London, Athlone Press, 1993. J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1995. J. Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991.

Agreement of 1998 signaled change in this power structure.⁶³ The strongly consociational devolved administration equalized the influence of unionists and nationalists, not just for the present but for the longer term. Provisions for reform of security, rights, criminal justice and employment equality meant that the state could no longer be dependent on the Protestant and unionist community for policing and administration. The commitment to parity of esteem in Northern Ireland meant that the remaining British state presence would no longer ‘certify’ the value and meanings embodied in Protestant and unionist rather than Catholic and nationalist practices. Meanwhile, the Irish government’s role in governance acted as a check against the unintended bias of the British state.

For long, unionists had understood being British in Northern Ireland in terms of a set of binary oppositions which were derived from these social relations and which reproduced them. Unionists saw themselves as representing order vs disorder; law vs terrorism; authority vs rebellion; pragmatism vs extremism; British vs Irish. This set of overarching binaries, however, coexisted with a multiplicity of individualized cultural understandings of what it was to be British, indeed whether or not ‘British’ was itself a *cultural* category, rather than simply a reference to citizenship. Up to the 1990s, however, even the most far-reaching liberal reformulations of unionism implicitly repeated the old binaries.⁶⁴ Similarly with nationalism and republicanism. A multiplicity, plurality and increasing reflexivity in what it meant to be Irish, evidenced in interviews and in writings, coexisted with a continuing tendency to see being Irish in opposition to being British and to associate it with resistance to unjust power.⁶⁵ Constitutional nationalism radically changed its ideological structure, but remained open to interpretation in terms of the classic binaries; republicanism underwent major strategic and social changes but retained the classic binary oppositions of British vs Irish; assimilation vs resistance, compromise vs idealism, corruption vs purity.⁶⁶ With the Good Friday Agreement, both unionist and

⁶³ See variously B. O’Leary, ‘The Nature of the British-Irish Agreement’, *New Left Review*, 233, 1999, 66-96. J. Ruane and J. Todd, ‘The Politics of Transition: Explaining the Crises in the implementation of the Belfast Agreement’, *Political Studies*, 49, 2001, 923-940. J. Ruane and J. Todd, forthcoming. *Dynamics of Conflict and Transition in Northern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. R. Wilford, ed., *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. M. Cox, A. Guelke and F. Stephen, eds., *A Farewell to Arms: From ‘long war’ to long peace in Northern Ireland*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 167. J. Ruane and J. Todd, eds, *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 1999.

⁶⁴ On the binary oppositions, see Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics of Conflict and Transition*, chapter 4. For a clear statement of the liberal unionist position, see Arthur Aughey’s *Under Siege: Ulster Unionism and the Anglo-Irish Agreement*, Belfast, Blackstaff, 1989. For a range of Protestant and unionist views, see Susan McKay, *Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People*, Belfast, Blackstaff, 2000, and J. Coakley, ed., *Changing Shades of Orange and Green: Redefining the Union and the Nation in Contemporary Ireland*, Dublin, UCD Press, 2002.

⁶⁵ On the diversity, see F. O’Connor, *In Search of a State: Catholics in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Blackstaff, 1993.

⁶⁶ J. Ruane, ‘Contemporary republicanism and the strategy of armed struggle’, pp. 115-132 in M.J. Bric and J. Coakley eds., *From Political Violence to Negotiated Settlement*. Dublin : University College Dublin Press, 2004. J. Todd, ‘The Limits of Britishness’, *Irish Review*, 5, 1988. J. Todd, ‘Nationalism, republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement’ pp. 49-70 in Ruane and Todd, *After the Good Friday Agreement*. Coakley, ed, *Changing Shades of Orange and Green*. A. McIntyre, ‘Modern Irish republicanism and the Belfast Agreement: Chickens coming home to roost or turkeys celebrating Christmas?’, pp. 202-22 in Wilford, ed., *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*..

republican binaries were cast in doubt. Many unionists saw a world turned upside down. They divided almost equally between those able and willing to accept to this new world, and those who resisted it.⁶⁷ Republicans and nationalists too had to reconceive their place in Northern Ireland.

The social and political changes following 1998 problematised core categories of identity for unionists, nationalists and republicans. The modes of change, however, have been subtle. Table Two shows that there has been no significant change in self-reported national identities.⁶⁸

Yet interviews and qualitative research suggest that there is quite radical rethinking going on in both communities, and that this is connected to emergent divisions within them. Contemporary scholarship and commentary has come to radically opposed views of the directions of change.⁶⁹ The schema sketched above allows us to differentiate and clarify the directions of change within and between groups, and the possibilities of further change.

⁶⁷ Life and Times surveys show a steady decrease in the percentage of Protestants who supported the Agreement, declining from just over a half in 1998 to just over a third in 2000, 2001 and 2002 (<<http://www.qub.ac.uk/ss/csr/nilt>>). This division also existed at the political party level, between the main unionist parties and within the predominantly pro-Agreement Ulster Unionist Party.

⁶⁸ The biggest single change in self-reported identity occurred among Protestants, over a quarter of whom switched to a British identity between 1968 and 1978. An explanation of this lies beyond the scope of the paper, but it is relevant to note that the criteria used by Protestants may themselves have changed due to the political context – by 1976 they focused on political loyalty rather than on wider cultural issues. For discussion, see E. Moxon-Browne, 1983. *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland*. Aldershot: Gower, pp. 6-11.

⁶⁹ For example, some analysts emphasise the increasing moderation of the extremes. See Mitchell, P., B. O'Leary and G. Evans, 'Northern Ireland: flanking extremists bite the moderates and emerge in their clothes', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54 (2000): 725–42, at pp. 734–5). Others emphasise increasing polarization, see R. Wilford and R. Wilson, 'A route to stability. The review of the Belfast Agreement', Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, 2003, <http://www.democraticdialogue.org>. On the objectively open possible futures and the diametrically opposed interpretations of actors as well as social scientists see J. Ruane, 'The end of (Irish) history. Three readings of the current conjuncture', pp. 145-170 in Ruane and Todd, eds., *After the Good Friday Agreement* and Ruane and Todd, 'Politics of Transition'.

TABLE TWO: SELF-REPORTED IDENTITY: NORTHERN IRELAND⁷⁰

	1968	1978	1986	1989	1994	1998	2000	2001	2002
<i>British</i>									
Protestant	39	67	65	68	71	67	72	65	75
Catholic	15	15	9	10	10	8	9	9	10
<i>Irish</i>									
Protestant	20	8	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Catholic	76	69	61	60	62	65	59	62	62
<i>Northern Irish</i>									
Protestant	Not	Not	11	16	15	18	15	19	14
Catholic	asked	asked	20	25	28	24	28	23	25
<i>Ulster</i>									
Protestant	32	20	14	10	11	10	7	9	6
Catholic	5	6	1	2	0	0	1	1	1

- *Affirmation and resistance* : Some Protestants have reasserted the traditional binary oppositions and resisted political change. Some have turned to fundamentalist religion which provides extra cultural resources to strengthen their political resolve: these include some new Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) voters. They reject violent protest and are willing to negotiate, even enter government. This, however, is within the limits of their categorical structure: ‘terrorists’ (that is Sinn Féin) are not to be admitted into government; British sovereignty rules out public equality for Irish culture. The act of negotiation, however, may itself lead them to compromise in practice, allowing the DUP to follow the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) into the mode of adaptation.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Sources: Rose, R., 1971. *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective*. London: Faber & Faber. Moxon-Browne, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland*. Smith, D. J., 1987. *Equality and Inequality in Northern Ireland*: London: Policy Studies Institute. Trew, K., 1996b. ‘National Identity’, pp. 140–52 in R. Breen, P. Devine and L. Dowds, eds, *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland: The Fifth Report*. Belfast, Appletree. Life and Times, (Northern Ireland) 1997–2002. Life and Times Survey, website <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/ss/csr/nilt>>

⁷¹ The DUP did not participate in the multi-party talks which led to the Good Friday Agreement and initially opposed the Agreement, although the party worked within it and entered the executive and their policy towards the Agreement changed from rejection to renegotiation. In the 2003 Assembly elections in

Other Protestants have resisted change more forcibly. These resisters – predominantly working class, increasingly marginalized politically and economically – cannot avail of the opportunities presented by the Agreement. Instead they see their jobs, status, and even their territory diminished with Catholic equality and demographic growth. Their response is to reassert the old binary distinctions between Protestant and Catholic, loyal and disloyal, righteous and unrighteous. They have protested against the Agreement, they have joined paramilitary groups, they have marched at Drumcree against government bans on their ‘Orange’ marches; they have tried to prevent small Catholic schoolgirls walking to school in North Belfast. They have reasserted their identity in the traditional rituals which assert Protestant hegemony. But the new order changes the meaning of these rituals. In the past, loyalist rituals served to bind together large segments of the Protestant community; now they can no longer count on wider Protestant support. In the past, loyalist practices celebrated victory, now they are the last stand of those who have come to define themselves as victims not victors. The resisters are no longer reconstituting their community but are desperately asserting an older set of oppositional meanings that is (quite properly) in process of being wiped out.⁷²

There is no parallel resistance among Catholics and nationalists; even dissident militant republicans who oppose the Agreement have for the moment accepted the inevitable and moved to adaptation. However a section of the nationalists who accept the Agreement find that it confirms their traditional identity and in particular the binary opposition between Irishness to Britishness; they feel their Irishness confirmed, rising in status in the new institutional context corresponding to an equivalent drop in the status of Britishness.⁷³ In this respect, and against the drafters’ intentions, the new institutions may favour and reproduce the older binaries within some nationalists’ identity.

- *Privatisation:* Privatisation has increased since the Good Friday Agreement. The elections of 2003 saw a low turn-out and a much commented-upon public indifference. Claire Mitchell, on the basis of qualitative interviews, has noted an increasing privatization among the Protestant population.⁷⁴ This may take the

Northern Ireland, they replaced the Ulster Unionist Party (which had negotiated the Agreement and had formed the largest unionist party in the first assembly) as the largest unionist party. On what she calls these ‘purifying’ Protestants, see C. Mitchell, ‘Protestant Identification and Political Change in Northern Ireland’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26:4, 2003.

⁷² P. Shirlow and I. Shuttleworth, 1999 “Who is going to toss the burgers?” Social class and the reconstruction of the Northern Irish economy’, *Capital and Class*, 69, pp. 27-46. McKay, *Northern Protestants*. D. Bell, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland*. London, Macmillan, 1990. See Dominic Bryan, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control*, London, Pluto, 2000, for the tensions between rough and respectable within loyalism

⁷³ 62% of Catholics in 1999 felt that they were ‘not at all’ British (compared to 51% of Protestants who felt that they were ‘not at all’ Irish) By 2001, more Catholics than Protestants felt that their tradition was protected, more Protestants than Catholics felt that they were underdogs, a marked reversal of previous perceptions (Life and Times surveys, (<<http://www.qub.ac.uk/ss/csr/nilt>>)

⁷⁴ Mitchell, ‘Protestant Identification’.

form of familial or religious privatization. For some of Gladys Ganiel's interviewees, for example, the response to the new order is a turn inwards, to a pietistic concern with God's values, rather than an assertion of these values in the political arena.⁷⁵ Among Catholics, privatization takes a somewhat different form; for those whose nationalism was primarily a resistance to unjust rule, their initial response to change is to concern themselves with ordinary everyday, rather than political, issues now that the major problems associated with unionist and British rule are being removed.

- *Assimilation* : ⁷⁶ A section of Protestants positively support the Good Friday Agreement. The business community welcomed it and campaigned for a 'yes' vote in the 1998 referendum. They welcome the stability that it promises, and they have not found it antipathetic to their own values; the institutional changes allow them to maintain the British linkages that they value, while also building potentially useful Irish linkages. Economically and culturally, their investment is increasingly in the linkages, rather than in the nation-state and they have no problem in casting off notions of absolute sovereignty or in moving away from a notion of British identity as essentially opposed to Irish identity. In effect, they have cast off the binary oppositional character of Britishness while keeping what they see as the valuable cultural substance of that element of their identity. It is significant that this group includes the richer, more mobile, more educated section of the Northern Irish Protestant population, who have the economic and cultural opportunities to reconstruct identity more effectively than the marginalized working class.

This response is echoed among moderate nationalists, willing to give up the binary opposition between British and Irish, while retaining much of the cultural substance of Irish identity. These changes had already been prefigured in nationalist ideology, and many nationalists found the new institutional changes confirming and certifying. Others – previously unconvinced - find the political changes sufficient to allow them to put aside older enmities and even to identify with the category of Britishness in some of its aspects, now that the category of Irishness is also institutionally recognized.⁷⁷

- *Conversion*: There is little evidence of cultural conversion among either population. Neither British-identifying Catholics nor Irish identifying Protestants are more prominent now than they were in the past, and Northern Irish self-

⁷⁵ G. Ganiel, 'Evangelical Political Identity in Transition: mapping the intersections of religion, politics, and change in post Belfast Agreement Northern Ireland'. *ISSC working paper* 04/01. Dublin, University College Dublin, Institute for the Study of Social Change, 2004.

⁷⁶ See Mitchell 'Protestant identification'.

⁷⁷ On nationalist ideology, see J. Todd, 2002. 'The reorientation of constitutional nationalism', pp. 71-83 in Coakley, ed., *Changing Shades of Orange and Green*. About a third of Catholics have a weak sense of British identity which they combine with a sense of Irish identity: the rest either have a strong sense of Britishness and no sense of Irishness (about 10%), or a strong sense of Irishness and no sense of Britishness at all. Just less than half of Protestants have some sense of Irish identity. (Life and Times, 1999: <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/ss/csr/nilt>>).

reported identification has only slightly increased from 1986, and not at all since 1998 (see Table Two). Nor is there any evident political conversion to the new order; neither moderate unionists nor moderate nationalists have changed in significant proportions from unionist/nationalist to cross-community party identification. Moderates have rather made of themselves people who can feel at home in the new order, without radical change in who 'they' are; they have assimilated, rather than converted.

- *Adaptation*: Most unionists have decided to adapt to the new order. The daily trials and internal fractures of the pro-Agreement Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), however, show the difficulties of this option. These unionists, who have worked within the new institutions while holding the core of their own identity stable, have found that their values and expectations have constantly been challenged by the practical demands made upon them. They have tried to be accommodatory, but they are working with conceptual categories in which the old binaries are clearly visible. Because their concept of Britishness is state centred, the 'parity of esteem' of national symbols demanded by nationalists seems to them to be radically inappropriate.⁷⁸ Because their concept of order and authority assumes a continuity with the past, the peace process itself (which has brought ex-paramilitaries into government and required radical reform of the security forces) cannot easily be accepted. Moreover even where one reform package is – with great difficulty – accepted, its logic and rationale is not. The next phase of implementation of the Agreement is therefore opposed just as strongly as the last, and the UUP appears always to give at best grudging acceptance of the new institutions. It is precisely as if they are applying an inappropriate logic to the institutions of the settlement. The contradiction between the meanings implicit in the institutions and the meanings and assumptions implicit in the identities of those who are key actors within them, is thus permanent, and has created ongoing political crises.⁷⁹
- *Ritual appropriation*: Republicans, faced with parallel cognitive problems to unionists, could have opted for a strategy of adaptation. Instead they chose ritual appropriation. They have worked within the new institutional structure, but interpreted the meaning of their new practices in terms of older legitimating symbols and rituals. Thus they have asserted an essential continuity between past and present. Yet the conceptual oppositions expressed in the older symbols are coming into tension with practices which assume that the path to Irish unity lies in compromise, gradualism and work within British institutions. Dissident republicans and liberal unionists predict that the older republican identity system will collapse (if it has not already done so), and that pro-Agreement republicans

⁷⁸ This is shown in numerous articles by liberal unionists in the pro-Agreement newspaper, *the Belfast Telegraph*. See for example, Eric Waugh, *Belfast Telegraph*, 04.07.01.

⁷⁹ There have been continuing crises within the Ulster Unionist Party. David Trimble, leader of the UUP, faced constant challenges to his leadership within the ruling Ulster Unionist Council between April 1998 and winter 2003. Each challenge was fought off, but in each case it was a close-run fight. See Northern Ireland monitoring reports (Nations and Regions: Dynamics of Devolution. Constitution Unit website <http://www.ucl.ac.uk>). See Ruane and Todd, 'The politics of transition'.

become assimilationist nationalists.⁸⁰ Pro-Agreement republicans portray their practice as that of a new modernizing republicanism which retains its radical thrust. The outcome of this mix of developing symbol-system and developing practical action is not predictable; it is on principle open-ended, allowing a movement towards reflective equilibrium between identity and practice. Where that equilibrium will lie depends, in large part, on other actors. Increasing resistance and division among unionists allows republicans to confirm much of their older identity, while also showing their own willingness to reshuffle its elements. Stability and assimilation among unionists would demand either adaptation or assimilation by republicans.

These changes are ongoing, worked out in practical life and interactions, conditioned by the uneven distribution of cultural and social resources, sometimes reflected upon and opened to conscious choice. In and between these changes and choices are the multiple political entrepreneurs, political parties and political manoeuvrings of the negotiation process. All of this is important: had the leadership of the pro-Agreement unionists been less grudging in its support for the Agreement, perhaps more unionists would have been won to assimilation from adaptation. Had pro-Agreement republicans adopted a different strategy, there would almost certainly have been a major republican split. But the one lesson that should be learned from the last thirty years of conflict in Northern Ireland is that the public does not follow the admonitions of its leaders unless these grasp its own worries and uncertainties and hopes. Before analyzing the impact of political discourse and competition on the public, it is necessary to map the inchoate but discernible trends of change in that public. The map proposed here is in need of development and revision in light of more systematic qualitative research: it is intended, however, to give a useful framework for that research.

Conclusion

The analysis put forward here sketches a model of change in collective categories of identity, which takes place either by rearrangement and recombination of socially-rooted elements, or by the appropriation of new such elements. Each mode of change has social as well as individual preconditions and costs. The paper suggests the variety of directions of such change and shows evidence for this rich variety from contemporary Northern Ireland. It offers an analytic perspective that can link individuals' reports of their own experience of social and self change to wider socio-theoretical explanations of change, while retaining the sense and complexity of the individual's experience.

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⁸⁰ Paul Bew, 'The unionists have won, they just don't know it', *Sunday Times*, 17.5.98. McIntyre, 'Modern Irish republicanism'.

