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Assessing sectarian attitudes among Catholic adolescents in Scotland

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### **Abstract**

Sectarianism is perceived as a serious issue in Scotland despite a lack of concrete evidence, according to the Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism. This paper addresses one of the gaps in knowledge, the attitudes of Catholic school pupils. Our research was designed to profile sectarian attitudes among a sample of Catholic school pupils in Scotland, using our own newly designed *Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes*. The research assessed the influence of five sets of factors on shaping individual differences in sectarian attitudes: personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (personality), religious factors (identity, belief, and practice), theological factors (exclusivism), and contextual factors (Catholic schools). The study draws on data provided by 797 13- to 15-year-old school pupils from schools in Scotland who self-identified as Roman Catholic. We offer a new tool for measuring attitudes to sectarianism and also findings that demonstrate that sectarian attitudes exist within the young Catholic community in Scotland and that this has possibly become part of a wider problem generated by the public visibility of religious diversity within an increasingly secular society. Further we find that Sectarian attitudes are higher among males than among females and are higher among nominal Catholics than among practising Catholics.

*Keywords: Catholic schools, Scotland, sectarianism, Eysenck, personality, sex differences.*

## Introduction

### The problem of sectarianism in Scotland

Sectarianism in contemporary Scotland normally refers to tensions between Catholic and Protestant Christians; this is classified as a hate crime and as a religiously aggravated offence (Scottish Government, 2018a). The establishment of an accepted definition of contemporary sectarianism has proved to be elusive. The Final Report of the *Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland* offered this concise definition:

Sectarianism in Scotland is a mixture of perceptions, attitudes, actions, and structures that involves overlooking, excluding, discriminating against or being abusive or violent towards others on the basis of their perceived Christian denominational background. This perception is always mixed with other factors such as, but not confined to, politics, football allegiance and national identity. (Scottish Government, 2015, 2.13)

Although this definition fails to take into account how sectarianism in contemporary Scotland can also include intra-Muslim conflict and fails to clarify the connection to politics in Scotland, it sets helpful boundaries around the way in which the problem can be operationalised and studied (McKinney & Conroy, 2015; McKinney, 2018). The roots of contemporary sectarianism are located in historical antipathy between Catholics and Protestants in the post-Reformation era. This was heightened with a gradual influx of Irish Catholics seeking employment in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and then was intensified with the arrival of large numbers of Irish Catholics fleeing a series of famines in the middle of the nineteenth century.

There have been periods in the twentieth century when sectarianism was perceived to be a serious social problem, notably in the recession of the inter-war years (McKinney, 2015a). There has been a series of initiatives in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century to identify and address the root causes and public manifestations of sectarianism in Scottish

society. The highly publicised escalation of hostility generated between football supporters and, arguably, the cumulative impact of contentious marches and parades in the early twenty-first century precipitated a Summit on Sectarianism on 14 February 2005. This was called by the then First Minister, Jack McConnell, and there was representation from the Christian Churches, the Police, the media, The Scottish Football Association, and Football supporter clubs (Scottish Executive, 2005). Four main themes emerged from the *Record of the Summit*: Interfaith activities, Education, Sports and Marches, and Parades. Interfaith connections and activities were recognised as making positive contributions to Scottish society. Education was identified as a key component in addressing sectarian attitudes among young people in their formative years. The *Record of the Summit* identified two aspects of Scottish life that are associated with sectarianism: football, and marches and parades. Further initiatives under the leadership of Alex Salmond (First Minister 2007-2014) led to anti-sectarian legislation in 2011 which could be applied anywhere, but especially at football matches. This legislation was later repealed in April 2018.

The Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism was established in 2012 ‘to provide the Scottish ministers with advice on all issues relating to sectarianism’ (Cosla, 2013). They produced two reports: Interim Report in 2013 and Final Report in 2015 (Scottish Government, 2013, 2015). The Advisory Group was instrumental in commissioning new research on sectarianism and on the impact of sectarianism and focused on: the evidence for sectarianism, public attitudes towards sectarianism, research in areas perceived to be affected by sectarianism, and the impact of public processions on communities (Goodall et al., 2015; Hinchcliffe et al., 2015; Hamilton-Smith et al., 2015).

The Advisory Group drew from this research and from their meetings with key individuals and organisations to identify five key points in relation to sectarianism (the enumeration is ours). First, a major challenge in the examination of sectarianism is the common

recourse to ‘anecdote and assumption’ rather than robust research evidence (3.1—3.2). There is a perception that sectarianism is a real problem, yet there is little clear evidence about its ‘form, character and extent’. Second, there remain pockets of sectarianism and Catholics are more likely to experience sectarianism, but only a minority of Scots have been affected. Many people have either not experienced sectarianism or can avoid it; and the more violent and extreme forms of sectarianism are concentrated in working class and impoverished areas (1.8.2; 3.11.6). Third, the Final Report commented that sectarianism is a complex problem and football is a key issue (3.11.11—3.11.12). Fourth, the Final Report recommended further research into key issues including: the role of gender in sectarianism (perceived to be a male dominated social problem), the role of families in fostering sectarian attitudes, and the role of social media in disseminating sectarian ideas (3.14.1). Fifth, education, especially school education, is understood to be vitally important in the strategies to tackle sectarianism (5.7.7). The Interim Report and Final Report are quite explicit that ‘sectarianism would not be eradicated by closing schools’ (4.41). This is understood to be referring to state-funded Catholic schools (McKinney, 2015b).

### **Measuring sectarian attitudes**

Although opinion polls have been commissioned for newspapers and the media to access public opinion on the locus and on the focus of sectarianism, this review will restrict examination to social science research. Since the beginning of the new millennium there have been a number of surveys measuring sectarian attitudes. Such surveys tend to have been clustered around the periods of the Summit on Sectarianism (2005) and The Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism (2013-2015). McAspurren (2005) produced a report that presented a brief review of the evidence on religious discrimination and sectarianism in Scotland. This literature search complemented an earlier briefing by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (Nicholson, 2002). The report makes a clear distinction between the measurement of

perceptions and attitudes, and also comments on the relatively small research community that focuses on sectarianism. The report highlights some useful background information provided by Bruce et al. (2004). Intermarriage has increased and almost 50% of Catholics marry non-Catholics. It is claimed that 20% of the population raised as Catholics now report as having no religion. It is reported that there is a perception that ‘the majority of sectarian attitudes and behaviour is linked to football and associated street violence’. The Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys of 2001 and 2003 examined religion and discrimination respectively. The 2001 survey showed that one in two Catholics perceived discrimination to be an issue in employment, though less than one in five had experienced ‘any discrimination in gaining employment or promotion’.

Glasgow City Council commissioned research into ‘Sectarianism in Glasgow’ (NFO Social Research, 2003). The study surveyed the views of a representative sample of 1,000 adults and there were two sets of focus groups conducted (1) with adults and (2) with four groups of S4 school pupils in Glasgow secondary schools (S4 refers to Secondary school year 4 and the pupils are aged between 15 and 16). Two of the school groups were in non-denominational schools and two were in denominational (Catholic) schools. There is little reported from the focus groups conducted with the school pupils, apart from two quotes from S4 girls from a Catholic school. One quote was about different forms of discrimination. This included being prejudged because of their attendance at a Catholic school and this was conflated with the sectarianism associated with Celtic and Rangers. The second quote referred to the limited amount of prejudice in the school and that there were opportunities to discuss prejudice in school time.

An update of McAspurren’s report was published in 2013 and revised in 2015. *An Examination of the Evidence on Sectarianism in Scotland: 2015 Update* (Scottish Government Social Research, 2015) examined the research that had been commissioned by the Advisory

Group (summarised above) and it is instructive to focus on the samples in these research projects. *The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014 Public Attitudes to Sectarianism in Scotland* and the *Community Experiences of Sectarianism* represent important surveys but were all focused on adults aged 18 or over (Hinchcliffe et al., 2015; Goodall et al., 2015). *The Community Impact of Public Processions* (Hamilton-Smith et al., 2015) included young people aged 16 and over, but they were neither contacted nor surveyed at school. There is also an annual Scottish Household Survey which reports on a sample of the general population. The annual survey contains a section on ‘Neighbourhoods and Communities’ that examines discrimination, including religious discrimination. The annual report does not survey anybody under 16 (Scottish Government, 2018b).

Qualitative Research conducted by Deuchar and Holligan (2010), focusing on sectarianism, gang culture, and social capital in some of the most deprived areas of Glasgow, was conducted among young people aged 16 and above who were contacted through voluntary organisations. This research identifies sectarianism as often associated with football culture and identifies a common feeling among the youth leaders who were interviewed that football bigotry was strongly associated with family influences and male tribalism and aggression (p. 21).

This review of the relevant literature demonstrates that there has been very little research on attitudes towards sectarianism conducted among young people in schools, either as the focus of a research project or as part of a research project. If young people are included in research, they are aged 16 and over, and are not normally surveyed in schools. Young people in schools have been included in qualitative research in the focus groups in the Glasgow research (NFO Social Research, 2003) which were limited to four groups and lightly discussed in the final report, and in the work of Deuchar and Holligan (2010) which was largely conducted outside a school context.



**Catholic schools**

The state-funded school system in Scotland currently has 2,483 schools which educate 693,251 pupils. This figure includes 2,012 primary schools, 357 secondary schools, and 114 special schools (Scottish Government, 2019). The schools are broadly categorised as denominational and non-denominational. The state-funded denominational schools are Catholic, except for a Jewish primary school that shares a campus with a Catholic primary school and a small number of Episcopalian primary schools. The most recent figures for Catholic schools in Scotland indicate that there are 361 Catholic schools, comprising 305 Catholic primary schools, 53 Catholic secondary schools, and 3 Additional Support Needs schools (there are also 3 independent Catholic schools). The Catholic schools are primarily located in the west of Scotland where the Catholic population is concentrated, although there are Catholic schools in most of the major cities and towns, for example: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Perth, and Inverness. The pupil roll for the 361 Catholic schools is 123,402 and it is assumed that the majority of these pupils are Catholic. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are increasing numbers of non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools and there are Catholic pupils who attend non-denominational schools through family choice or circumstance (where there is no Catholic primary or secondary school).

There have been longstanding debates about the continued existence of Catholic schools within the state-funded system and putative claims that Catholic schools cause or contribute to sectarian attitudes. The existence of separate Catholic schools is alleged to be sectarian in itself as the Catholic schools create divisions between children (Scottish Government, 2015). Another version of this is that the Catholic schools are not in themselves sectarian, but they reinforce the existing sectarian attitudes in society (Church and Nation

Committee, 2002). These claims have been supported by very little evidence (McKinney, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). Further, the Final Report of the Advisory Group is emphatic that:

There is no doubt that much of the sectarian behaviour exhibited and experienced by young people takes place in their communities outside of school (Scottish Government, 2015, section 4.26).

The Final Report focusses on the role of families and local communities in fostering and developing sectarian attitudes.

### **The Study**

This study provides important new insights into the attitudes of Roman Catholic pupils by developing a measure of Catholic sectarian attitudes that profiles the current level of sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils in schools in Scotland. The study draws on data provided by 797 13- to 15-year-old pupils from schools in Scotland who self-identified as Roman Catholic and assessed the influence of five sets of factors on shaping individual differences in sectarian attitudes: personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (personality), religious factors (identity, belief, and practice), theological factors (exclusivism), and contextual factors (Catholic schools).

### **Personal and psychological factors**

Conceptually sectarianism can be situated within the much larger domain of social attitudes. The long-established research tradition concerned with the exploration and explanation of individual differences in social attitudes has drawn attention to the significant predictive power of both personal factors and psychological factors. For example, in his review of the social scientific literature and new empirical evidence concerning factors shaping adolescent values, Francis (2001) documented the significance of two personal

factors in particular (sex and age) across a range of personal and social values. Before testing for school influence, it would be prudent to control for individual differences in sex and age.

In terms of psychological factors, the Eysenckian research tradition in particular has documented the connection between social attitudes and personality. This research tradition has distinguished between tenderminded social attitudes (emphasising, for example, social inclusivity and acceptance) and toughminded social attitudes (emphasising, for example, social exclusion and prejudice). In two now classic brief papers, Eysenck (1975, 1976) formulated the connection between low psychoticism scores and tenderminded social attitudes. The Eysenckian notion of psychoticism as a dimension of personality found expression in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ: Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) alongside the two other orthogonal dimensions styled extraversion and neuroticism. The on-going relevance of the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality for predicting individual differences in social attitudes, with special reference to prejudice, has been demonstrated by Village (2011).

### **Religious factors**

The social scientific study of religion offers a highly nuanced understanding of the nature and influence of religion that includes the notions of self-assigned religious affiliation, religious identity, public practice like worship attendance, private practice like personal prayer, and religious belief. Established research within the social scientific study of religion has refined and evaluated each of these concepts.

Self-assigned religious affiliation is core to the present study since the participants have been identified as Roman Catholic by the way in which they responded to the question ‘What is your religion?’ The inclusion of religious affiliation in the civic census, as introduced within England, Wales and Scotland for the first time in 2001, conceptualises this marker as a matter of public and social significance, an indicator like sex and ethnicity

(Francis, 2003). The predictive power of religious affiliation in areas of personal and social values among young people has been documented by Francis (2008a, 2008b).

By itself, however, self-assigned religious affiliation may be a precarious indicator of religious identity. Alongside the simple question about affiliation, some scientific investigations have included a further question concerning the importance of religious identity. This question helps to distinguish between those for whom their religious affiliation may be a relatively trivial matter and those for whom it may be more central to their personal identity.

Public practice, like worship attendance has been routinely collected in surveys such as the British Social Attitudes Survey. The predictive power of church attendance in areas of personal and social values among young people has been well documented by Francis (2001) in *The Values Debate*, and more widely by Gill (1999) in *Churchgoing and Christian ethics*.

There has been a long-established interest within the psychology of religion concerned with exploring the correlates of personal prayer, as reviewed in such studies as Brown (1994), Francis and Astley (2001) and Spilka and Ladd (2013). The predictive power of personal prayer in areas of personal and social values among young people has been documented by Francis and Penny (2016).

Religious belief or belief in God has also been brought to the fore in a number of scientific enquiries concerning the correlates of individual differences in religiosity. For example, Francis, ap Siôn, and Penny (2014) recently examined the difference in social and personal values held by young atheists (who do not believe in God) and by young theists (who do believe in God).

### **Theological factors**

The perspective adopted by empirical theology complements the perspective taken by the social scientific study of religion. While the social scientific study of

religion draws on and operationalises constructs shaped within the intellectual tradition of religious studies (illustrated in the preceding section by the notions of religious identity, worship attendance, personal prayer and belief in God), empirical theology draws on and operationalises constructs shaped within the intellectual tradition of theology, as reflected in the work of van der Ven in the Netherlands (see van der Ven & Scherer-Rath, 2004), Ziebertz in Germany and Francis in the UK (see Francis & Ziebertz, 2011), and as discussed by Cartledge (1999). A series of recent studies has explored the extent to which additional variance within individual differences in social attitudes can be explained by theologically-informed variables after variables shaped within the religious studies tradition have been taken into account (see Francis & McKenna, 2017a, 2017b; Francis, Village, McKenna, & Penny, 2018; Francis, Astley, & McKenna, 2019; Francis, Penny, & Astley, in press).

Of particular value in this respect are variables shaped by an understanding of the theology of religions. The notion of the theology of religions concerns the variety of ways in which religious traditions reflect on and express their self-understanding of their relationship with other religious traditions. Empirical measures of the theology of religion have been introduced into a series of empirical studies by Ziebertz (1993, 1995, 1996, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2012). Working on and developing the foundations proposed by Ziebertz, Astley and Francis (2016) constructed a new multiple-choice question inviting participants to select one of seven statements that comes closest to their own view on the status of their religious belief. The Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index (AFTRI) proposed the following seven items to assess six distinctively defined positions identified by the notions of exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, interreligious perspective, atheism, and agnosticism. Within this index two expressions of pluralism

are included in order to distinguish two levels of sophistication with which this position is expressed.

- Exclusivism: Only one religion is really true, and all others are totally false.
- Inclusivism: Only one religion is really true but at least one other is partly true.
- Pluralism A: All religions are equally true.
- Pluralism B: All religions express the same truth in different ways.
- Interreligious perspective: Real truth comes from listening to all religions.
- Atheism: All religions are totally false.
- Agnosticism: I do not know what to believe about religions.

Studies that have employed the Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index to explore the additional variance explained by the theology of religions (after measures proposed by the scientific study of religion approach have been taken into account) have drawn particular attention to the importance of the exclusivism position.

### **Research questions**

Against this background, the present study has been designed to develop a measure of Catholic sectarian attitudes, on the basis of which it is possible to address the following six research questions.

- What is the current level of sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils in Scotland
- to what extent are sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils related to personal factors (age and sex)
- to what extent are sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils related to psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism)
- to what extent are sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils related to religious factors (identity, belief, prayer, and church attendance)

- to what extent are sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils related to theological factors (exclusivism)
- to what extent are sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils related to attendance at Catholic schools (after other factors are taken into account).

## Method

### Procedure

The Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project set out to obtain responses from at least 2,000 13- to 15-year-old school pupils attending state-maintained schools in each of five parts of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, *and* London. In each nation half of the pupils were recruited from schools with a religious character and half from schools without a religious character. Within the participating schools' questionnaires were administered by the religious education teachers within examination-like conditions. Pupils were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and given the option not to participate in the project.

### Sample

The present analyses were conducted on information provided by the 797 pupils from schools in Scotland who self-identified as Roman Catholic. Of these, 746 (94%) were attending Roman Catholic schools and 51 (6%) were attending schools without a religious foundation. In terms of sex and age, 331 (42%) were male and 466 (59%) were female; 472 (59%) were in the second year of secondary education and 325 (41%) were in the third year of secondary education.

### Measures

*Sectarian attitudes* were assessed by the eight-item Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes (SoCSA) developed specifically for this study. This scale combines items specifically identifying Protestants, items concerned with social distance, and items

concerned with religious exclusion. An example item concerning Protestants is, 'I have friends who are Protestants'. An example item concerning social distance is, 'I would be happy to go out with someone from a different denomination'. An example item concerning religious exclusion is, 'We must respect all religions'. It is a negative response given to these three items that is interpreted as indicative of a sectarian attitude. Each item was rated on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2) and disagree strongly (1).

*Personality* was assessed by the abbreviated version of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (JEPQR-A) developed by Francis (1996) who reported the following Cronbach alpha coefficients: extraversion = .66; neuroticism = .70; psychoticism = .61; lie scale = .57.

*Religious attendance* was assessed by the question, 'Apart from special occasions (like weddings) how often do you attend a religious worship service (e.g. in a church, mosque or synagogue). Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale: never (1), sometimes (2), at least once a year (3), at least six times a year (4), at least once a month (5), nearly every week (6), and several times a week (7). These seven points allow data from the project to be mapped onto the levels of church attendance broadly discussed in the literatures concerning the social scientific study of religion.

*Personal prayer* was assessed by the question, 'How often do you pray in your home or by yourself?' Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: never (1), occasionally (2), and at least once a month (3), at least once a week (4), and nearly every day (5).

*Belief in God* was assessed by the statement 'I believe in God'. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5).



*Religious identity* was assessed by the question ‘My religious identity is important to me’. Responses were assessed on a five-point scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5).

*Theological exclusivism* was assessed by the statement, ‘Only one religion is really true, and all others are totally false’, one of the seven positions identified by the Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index (AFTRI: Astley & Francis, 2016). The other six positions were collapsed to create a dichotomous variable: exclusivism (1), and other positions (0).

*Sex, age and school type* were recorded as dichotomous variables: male (1) and female (2); 13-14-year olds (1) and 14-15-year olds (2); Catholic schools (2) and other schools (1).

### **Results and discussion**

The religious and theological variables included in the survey offer a thorough profile of the religiosity of the young Catholic participants. In terms of frequency of worship attendance, 20% reported never attending, 35% attended less than six times a year, 7% at least six times a year, 7% at least once a month, and 32% every week. In terms of frequency of personal prayer, 39% reported never praying, 34% occasionally, 5% at least once a month, 10% at least once a week, and 12% every day. In terms of belief in God, 67% agreed or agreed strongly that they believed in God, 21% were not certain whether they believed in God, and 12% disagreed or disagreed strongly that they believed in God. In terms of religious identity, 15% agreed strongly that their religious identity was important to them, 25% agreed, 32% were uncertain, 11% disagreed, and 18% disagreed strongly. In terms of theological exclusivism, 8% took the view that only one religion is really true, and all others are totally false.

The first step in data analysis explored the scale properties of the Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes (SoCSA) in terms of the correlations between the individual items and the sum of the other items, and in terms of the item endorsement on the sum of the 'agree' and 'agree strongly' responses. These data, presented in Table 1, demonstrate a good level of internal consistency reliability with correlations between individual items and the sum of the other six items ranging between .25 and .54. The percentage endorsement of the individual items demonstrates that fewer than two thirds of the Catholic pupils have friends who were Protestants (63%). Although only 6% take the extreme sectarian view that they would not like to live next door to Protestants, fewer than one third affirm their positive experience of Protestants: 31% claim that a lot of good is done in the world by Protestants and 32% are interested in finding out about Protestants. Fewer than two thirds of the Catholic pupils would be happy to go out with someone from a different denomination (65%), and the proportion drops to 57% who would be happy about a close relative marrying someone from a different denomination. Nearly a third of the Catholic pupils are reluctant to affirm the belief that we must respect all religions (29%) or to affirm the belief that all religious groups in Britain should have equal rights (33%).

- insert table 1 about here -

The second step in data analysis explored the scale properties of the four scales employed in the analyses in terms of the alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) and in terms of the means and standard deviations. Table 2 demonstrates that the Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes achieved a satisfactory level of internal consistency reliability with an alpha coefficient of .72. The neuroticism scale and the extraversion scale achieved alpha coefficients in excess of the threshold of .65 proposed by DeVellis (2003). The lower alpha coefficient achieved by the psychoticism scale is consistent with the recognised problems in operationalising this dimension of personality (Francis, Brown, & Philipchalk, 1992).

- insert table 2 about here -

The third step in data analysis explored the bivariate correlations between Catholic sectarian attitudes and personal factors, psychological factors, religious factors, theological factors, and contextual factors. These data are presented in the first column of Table 3. When each of these variables is considered separately, higher scores of sectarian attitudes are associated with being male, with recording higher scores on the psychoticism scale and lower scores on the neuroticism scale, with lower levels of personal religiosity (in the sense of not valuing religious identity, not believing in God, not praying, and not attending church), and with theological exclusivism, but not with age, extraversion or attending a Catholic school. The problem, however, is that these personal factors, psychological factors, religious factors and theological factors are not all independent of each other. It is for this reason that multivariate analysis is important.

- insert table 3 about here -

The fourth step in data analysis proposes a sequence of regression models that takes Catholic sectarian attitudes as the dependent variable and builds up an incremental model in five steps. Model one introduces the two personal factors (sex and age), model two adds the three psychological factors (psychoticism, neuroticism, and extraversion), model three adds the four religious factors (church attendance, personal prayer, belief in God, and religious identity), model four adds the theological factor (exclusivism), and model five adds the contextual factor (attending a Catholic school). The increase in  $R^2$  ( $\Delta$ ) shown at the bottom of Table 3 demonstrates that the first four steps each add significantly to the variance accounted for by the incremental model. The fifth step, however, demonstrates that adding the contextual factor does not significantly improve the model.

Model five demonstrates the effect of all eleven predictor variables when they are in the model together. Five main features emerge in model five. First, sex remains a significant

factor with male pupils displaying higher levels of sectarian attitudes than female pupils. Second, psychoticism is the dimension of personality that predicts individual differences in sectarian attitudes. This is consistent with Eysenck's (1975, 1976) model that associated toughminded social attitudes (like sectarianism) with higher psychoticism scores. Third, three of the four religious factors all contribute independently to individual differences in sectarian attitudes. Pupils who do not value their religious identity (as Catholics), who do not engage in public religious practice (church attendance) and who do not engage in personal religious practice (prayer) hold more sectarian attitudes. Fourth, the theological factor adds additional predictive power even when the religious variables are within the model. Catholic pupils who endorse the exclusivism position (Only one religion is really true, and all others are totally false) hold more sectarian attitudes. Fifth, despite being partly based on a very limited sample of Catholic children in non-denominational schools there is a tentative feature that attending a Catholic school neither increases or decreases sectarian attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

This study was designed to develop a measure of Catholic sectarian attitudes appropriate for use among 13- to 15-year-old Catholic adolescents that could be employed to address six specific research questions. The new Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes (SoCSA) was developed and the six specific research questions addressed on data provided by 797 pupils from schools in Scotland who self-identified as Roman Catholic. Seven conclusions can be drawn from the study.

First, the psychometric properties of the eight-item Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes demonstrate that this measure possesses a good level of internal consistency reliability with an alpha coefficient of .72. The eight items included in the scale have good face validity combining items specifically targeting Protestants with items more generally concerned with religious exclusivity. The scale demonstrates good construct validity in terms

of its location within the three-dimensional model of psychological space proposed by Eysenckian theory that links toughminded social attitudes (like sectarianism) with higher psychoticism scores (for review see Francis, 1992). In terms of reliability and validity this new measure can be commended for further use.

Second, the study addressed the first research question by employing the Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes to profile the current level of sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils (between 13 and 15 years of age) in Scotland. The data demonstrated that, although only 6% of Catholic pupils took the extreme view that they would not like to live next door to Protestants, fewer than one third of Catholic pupils affirm their positive experience of Protestants: 31% claim that a lot of good is done in the world by Protestants and 32% are interested in finding out about Protestants. Signs of sectarianism remain among 37% of Catholic pupils who do not feel that they have friends who are Protestants, 35% of Catholic pupils who do not feel that they would be happy to go out with someone from a different denomination, and 43% of Catholic pupils who do not feel that they would be happy about a close relative marrying someone from a different denomination. Such denominational sectarianism may be exacerbated by a more general suspicion of religious diversity, with 33% of Catholic pupils unable to affirm that all religious groups in Britain should have equal rights and 29% of Catholic pupils unable to affirm that we must respect all religions. In this way the Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes has demonstrated that sectarianism exists within the young Catholic community in Scotland and that this has possibly become part of a wider problem generated by the public visibility of religious diversity within an increasingly secular society.

Third, the second research question concerned the extent to which sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils were related to personal factors (age and sex). The data demonstrated that sectarian attitudes were significantly more prevalent among male Catholic pupils than

among female Catholic pupils. This finding provides one response to the recommendation for further research in the Final Report of the Advisory Group to ‘focus on the role of gender’ in sectarianism and sectarian attitudes (Scottish Government, 2015, 5.7.1). At the same time, the data found no significant association between sectarian attitudes and age among this sample of Catholic pupils. This finding is, however, of limited significance in light of the very restricted range within which the age comparison was made. The comparison was only between 13- to 14-year-old pupils and 14- to 15-year-old pupils in two school year groups.

Fourth, the third research question concerned the extent to which sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils were related to psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism). The data demonstrated that a significant positive association existed between higher psychoticism scores and higher levels of sectarian attitudes. This finding is interesting for two reasons. The first reason is that this pattern is consistent with the broader context of Eysenck’s (1975, 1976) theory locating social attitudes within the three-dimensional model of psychological space proposed by the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). This finding, therefore, links sectarian attitudes firmly within the more general theory of toughminded social attitudes that reflect fundamental personality characteristics. In other words, sectarian attitudes may be construed within the wider field of antisocial attitudes and behaviour. The second reason is that psychoticism (as assessed by the Eysenckian family of measures) is strongly related to sex differences. Routinely males record higher scores than females on the psychoticism scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976). The regression model confirms, however, that being male still remains a significant predictor of higher sectarian attitude scores even after taking individual differences in level of psychoticism into account. In other words, the higher level of sectarian attitudes recorded by male Catholic pupils cannot be accounted for by the effect of personality factors. Socialisation within male culture carries a significant effect as well.

Fifth, the fourth research question concerned the extent to which sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils were related to religious factors (identity, belief, prayer, and church attendance). The data demonstrated that religious engagement among Catholic pupils is a significant predictor of lower levels of sectarian attitudes. When each religious factor is considered separately, frequency of church attendance, frequency of personal prayer, importance of religious identity, and belief in God each predicts less acceptance of a sectarian position. When these four religious factors are considered simultaneously, three of the factors remain significant. Catholic pupils least likely to espouse sectarian attitudes are those who regard their religious identity as important, attend church frequently (as an indicator of public religiosity) *and* pray frequently (as an indicator of personal religiosity). Catholic pupils most likely to espouse sectarian attitudes are those who endorse Catholic identity, but who do not engage in church attendance (as an indicator of public religiosity), do not engage in prayer (as an indicator of personal religiosity), and who do not rate their religious identity as really important. In other words, sectarian attitudes are associated with nominal Catholics rather than with actively practising Catholics.

Sixth, the fifth research question concerned the extent to which sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils were related to theological factors (exclusivism). The data demonstrated that this theological factor functioned independently of, and additionally to, the effect of the religious factors. Catholic pupils who took the exclusivist view that only one religion is really true, and all others are totally false recorded higher scores on the scale of sectarian attitudes. This finding is totally consistent with the view underpinning the Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index (AFTRI; Astley & Francis, 2016) that individuals who adopt an exclusivist position may disdain those who espouse other religious traditions.

Seventh, the sixth research question concerned the extent to which sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils were related to attendance at Catholic schools (after other factors had

been taken into account). The data demonstrate that there is no evidence either from the bivariate correlation coefficient or from the beta weight in the fifth regression model (when all other factors have been taken into account) to support the theory that Catholic schools within the state-maintained system of education in Scotland contribute to the formation of sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils.

The present study has broken new ground by the development of a measure of sectarian attitudes relevant for use among 13- to 15-year-old Catholic pupils and by testing the significance of a range of predictors of individual differences in levels of sectarian attitudes. There are themes in the present study that need to be addressed by future research. First, the new measure of sectarian attitudes is limited to eight items embracing the two related fields of specific attitudes towards Protestants and a broader attitude toward religious diversity. A more nuanced account of the nature and prevalence of sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils in Scotland could be facilitated by the development of a larger and enriched instrument. Second, the number of Catholic pupils involved in the study was restricted to a sample of 797 participants who self-identified as Catholics within the context of a wider study concerned with the attitudes of young people toward religious diversity. A more detailed future study developed specifically to examine sectarian attitudes among Catholic pupils should be structured to include a wider range of Catholic participants. Third, there was a very strong imbalance between the proportions of participants recruited within Catholic schools (94%) and the proportion recruited within schools without a religious character (6%). This imbalance cautions against reliance on the conclusion regarding the influence of Catholic schools. In future research this finding deserves rigorous testing among a better-balanced body of participants. Fourth, the exploration of the significance of age in shaping sectarian attitudes was restricted by the inclusion of only two-year groups of pupils (13- to



14-year-olds and 14- to 15-year-olds). Future research would be enhanced by including a wider age range of pupils.

This study is able to offer some educational guidelines for Catholic schools in Scotland where the majority of the participants are educated. A small proportion of Catholic pupils (6%) expressed the strongly sectarian attitude that they would not like to live next door to Protestants. Such pupils were likely to be male nominal Catholics who counted no Protestants among their friends and who were more likely to be intolerant of religions more generally. These are issues that need to be addressed within Religious Education and Social Studies classes to equip young people for living in and growing up in plural religiously diverse societies.

#### Note

Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project (AHRC Reference: AH/G014035/1) was a large-scale mixed methods research project investigating the attitudes of 13- to 16-year-old students across the United Kingdom. Students from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds from different parts of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the addition of London as a special case, took part in the study. Professor Robert Jackson was principal investigator and Professor Leslie J. Francis was co-investigator. Together they led a team of qualitative and quantitative researchers based in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, within the Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick. The project was part of the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and ran from 2009-2012.

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Table 1

*Scale of Catholic Sectarian Attitudes (SoCSA): Scale properties*

|   | <i>r</i> | Yes<br>% |
|---|----------|----------|
| A lot of good is done in the world by Protestants*                                      | .40      | 31       |
| I am interested in finding out about Protestants*                                       | .38      | 32       |
| I would not like to live next door to Protestants                                       | .25      | 6        |
| I have friends who are Protestants*   | .32      | 63       |
| I would be happy to go out with someone from a different denomination*                  | .50      | 65       |
| I would be happy about a close relative marrying someone from a different denomination* | .53      | 57       |
| All religious groups in Britain should have equal rights*                               | .47      | 67       |
| We must respect all religions*  | .54      | 71       |

Note: Yes% = sum of agree and agree strongly responses

*r* = correlation between individual item and sum of other nine items

\* = items reverse coded to calculate *r*

Table 2

*Scale properties*

|                             | N<br>items | $\alpha$ | $M$   | $SD$ | Low | High |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------|-------|------|-----|------|
| Catholic sectarian attitude | 8          | .72      | 19.05 | 5.39 | 8   | 40   |
| Extraversion                | 6          | .69      | 4.78  | 1.51 | 0   | 6    |
| Neuroticism                 | 6          | .67      | 3.19  | 1.77 | 0   | 6    |
| Psychoticism                | 6          | .55      | 0.98  | 1.20 | 0   | 6    |

Table 3

*Regression model on Catholic sectarian attitudes*

|                              | <i>r</i> | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Personal factors</i>      |          |         |         |         |         |         |
| Sex                          | -.16***  | -.17*** | -.09*   | -.09**  | -.08*   | -.08*   |
| Age                          | .01      | .01     | .00     | .01     | .02     | .02     |
| <i>Psychological factors</i> |          |         |         |         |         |         |
| Psychoticism                 | .31***   |         | .29***  | .24***  | .22***  | .23***  |
| Neuroticism                  | -.08*    |         | -.05    | -.06    | -.07    | -.07    |
| Extraversion                 | .06      |         | .06     | .06     | .06     | .06     |
| <i>Religious factors</i>     |          |         |         |         |         |         |
| Church attendance            | -.25***  |         |         | -.11**  | -.11**  | -.10**  |
| Personal prayer              | -.25***  |         |         | -.10**  | -.11**  | -.11**  |
| Belief in God                | -.19***  |         |         | -.06    | -.07    | -.07    |
| Religious identity           | -.24***  |         |         | -.10*   | -.10**  | -.11**  |
| <i>Theological factors</i>   |          |         |         |         |         |         |
| Exclusivism                  | .11**    |         |         |         | .12***  | .12***  |
| <i>Contextual factors</i>    |          |         |         |         |         |         |
| Catholic school              | -.02     |         |         |         |         | -.03    |
| Total $R^2$                  |          | .028    | .110    | .182    | .196    | .197    |
| $\Delta$                     |          | .028*** | .082*** | .073*** | .014*** | .001    |

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$