

## BEING AND BECOMING SCOTTISH

*Ross Bond and Michael Rosie*

### INTRODUCTION

Now that the Scottish parliament has been delivered, will devolution lead Scots to place a greater emphasis on being Scottish, or to downplay it in favour of being British? As well as raising questions about the salience of Scottishness, devolution also brings into sharper focus the **nature** of this identity. All parties in the Scottish Parliament stress a belief in an inclusive Scottishness determined by factors such as birthplace and residence rather than more exclusive determinants like ethnicity and parentage. In short, making a contribution by living in Scotland is given greater weight by politicians than simply being born here.

Recent government initiatives by the Scottish Executive have highlighted the extent to which an open and inclusive perspective on national identity prevails among Scotland's political elites. To what extent is this image of an open, civic Scottishness shared by the general population? To what extent can someone **become** Scottish if they are not born and brought up in Scotland? What if your place of birth, ancestry and/or upbringing makes it difficult for you to feel straightforwardly Scottish? And do those born and brought up in Scotland, for whom Scottishness is relatively unproblematic, accept 'outsiders' as Scots anyway? What factors do native-born Scots think are most central to Scottish national identity, and do they think Scottishness is inclusive, that you can be a Scot simply by living here?

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## Scottish Affairs

### **METHODS**

Questions designed to answer many of these questions were included in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey carried out by the National Centre for Social Research in 2003. 1,508 randomly-selected adults were interviewed throughout Scotland. The results described here are all taken from this survey which was funded by The Leverhulme Trust, and the Economic and Social Research Council.

### **FINDINGS**

#### *Measuring the strength of Scottish identity*

In the 2003 survey respondents were asked to choose as many or as few national identities, such as being Scottish, British, English or whatever, as they felt applied to them. More than 8 out of 10 people chose Scottishness as one of their national identities.

It is, however, one thing to know how people **describe** themselves; it is quite another to find out how **important** they feel their Scottishness to be compared with other aspects of themselves. Accordingly, respondents were asked to pick the first, second, and third most important identities from a list of likely identities such as their gender, social class, religion, ethnicity, national identity, age, employment and domestic status. Table 1 shows the proportion who chose each identity as **any one** of their three choices.

The table shows that Scottishness is a very important aspect of the self-identity of a large number of people in Scotland. Being Scottish is as important as being a parent, and more important for most people than their employment status, being married, their gender, their social class, and far more significant than being British.

## Being and Becoming Scottish

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**Table 1**

**Most important identities in Scotland, 2003**

Identity	% choosing identity
Scottish	49
A mother/father	49
A working person	30
A wife/husband	29
A woman/man	27
Working class	21
British	13
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1508</b>

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We have then two different measures of Scottishness in our sample – choosing it as their national identity, and including it as one of their three most important social identities. These can be combined to create three broad identity categories.

- **‘Prioritised Scots’** (49%): Regard themselves as Scottish and see that identity as very important to their sense of themselves.
- **‘Background Scots’** (36%): Regard themselves as Scottish but do not view that identity as of central social importance.

**‘Non-Scots’** (14%): Do not regard themselves as Scottish in either sense.

### *Sources of Scottishness: birth, parentage and residence*

Think of people as possessing certain resources relevant to their sense of national identity. Using our three identity categories we can look at how Scottishness varies according to possession of these three resources – in terms of birth, ancestry and residence.

## Scottish Affairs

Table 2 shows the centrality of birthplace. The vast majority (95%) of respondents who were born in Scotland hold some kind of Scottish identity, whilst a clear majority (61%) of those respondents born outwith Scotland fall into the ‘non-Scots’ category. Important though birth is as a marker of Scottish national identity, it does not seem to determine it. For example, as many as 4 in 10 of those born outwith Scotland regard themselves as Scottish, with a notable minority, almost 2 in 10, **prioritizing** this identity. This suggests that people feel able to ‘become’ Scottish even if they are not born in the country.

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**Table 2**  
**Scottishness and place of birth**

	Born Scotland %	Born elsewhere %
Prioritised Scots	56	18
Background Scots	39	21
Non-Scots	5	61
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1231</b>	<b>271</b>

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However, those not born in Scotland may have **other** resources upon which they base their Scottish identity. One such resource – ancestry – suggests a more ‘ethnic’ and therefore ‘closed’ interpretation of Scottishness, given its association with blood lineage. So the (limited) non-coincidence of birth and identity demonstrated in Table 2 need not be indicative of an open, civic national identity. Other criteria may be at work in defining who is or is not Scottish. Table 3 examines the relationship between identity and ancestry, defined here in terms of where the respondent’s parents were born.

## Being and Becoming Scottish

**Table 3**

**Scottishness and parental place of birth**

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	<b>Both</b> parents born in Scotland %	<b>One</b> parent born in Scotland %	<b>Neither</b> parent born in Scotland %
Prioritised Scots	58	47	10
Background Scots	38	39	25
Non-Scots	5	14	65
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1081</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>215</b>

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Like birthplace, parentage is clearly associated with how Scottish one claims to be. A very large majority (96%) of those with two Scots-born parents and a slightly smaller majority (86%) of those with one Scots-born parent adopt a Scottish identity, either strongly or weakly. Amongst those with no Scots-born parents, in contrast, two-thirds (65%) regard themselves as 'non-Scots'. Having Scottish-born parents however is by no means a necessary requisite for feeling Scottish. More than one-third (35%) of respondents with **no** Scottish parentage adopt some degree of Scottish identity, hinting at some kind of process by which individuals can, in their eyes, 'become' Scottish.

To understand this process further we can look at length of residence in Scotland. Table 4 shows that Scottishness is most evident among those who have always lived in Scotland, and those resident for 25 years or more. While majorities among those who have lived in Scotland for less than 25 years see themselves as 'non-Scots', once more we can see that lengthy residence is not an absolute prerequisite for feeling Scottish. So the table suggests that, for some people at least, one can 'become' Scottish on the basis of residence.

## Scottish Affairs

**Table 4**  
**Scottishness and length of residence in Scotland**

	Always lived in Scotland %	25 years or more %	11-24 years %	0-10 years %
Prioritised Scots	57	46	21	7
Background Scots	38	40	26	13
Non-Scots	5	15	53	80
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>87</b>

Birth, parentage and residence, however, are not independent of each other. To get a clearer idea of the extent to which people can feel that they have ‘become’ Scottish through residence alone, we need to look at the identities of the small number of respondents (186) **not** born in Scotland and who have two parents born **outside** Scotland.

**Table 5**  
**Scottishness and length of residence in Scotland, excluding those with Scottish birth or parentage**

	25 years or more %	11-24 years %	0-10 years %
Prioritised Scots	20	-	-
Background Scots	42	20	12
Non-Scots	38	80	88
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>81</b>

Table 5 highlights the importance, by inference, of birth and parentage. Without these resources, for most people Scottishness is only adopted after a

## Being and Becoming Scottish

long period of residence. Among those resident for 25 years or more, six out of ten (62%) express some degree of Scottishness, whereas among those resident for a relatively short period, this is the case for between one in five and one in eight. These results confirm that, the longer they live in Scotland, the more people feel able, on the basis of residence, to 'become' Scottish.

### *Being and becoming Scottish: majority perspectives*

Place of birth, parentage and residence are then important in deciding whether or not people see **themselves** as Scottish. But these identity resources will also be important in determining people's views about the identities of **other** people. In Scotland, a large majority possess all three key resources of Scottishness; 81% were born in Scotland of at least one Scottish parent. How do people view those who lack (or appear to lack) these resources? Assessing which of these factors people judge to be most central to Scottish national identity allows us to assess whether this identity is indeed open and inclusive.

Respondents were offered two scenarios. In the first they were asked to think of someone who had been born in England but now lived permanently in Scotland and who claimed that they were Scottish. In the second they were asked to think of a non-white person living in Scotland, speaking with a Scottish accent and who claimed they were Scottish. In each instance respondents were asked whether they thought that **most people** would consider this notional person to be Scottish, and then whether they **themselves** would consider the person to be Scottish.

Table 6 focuses on the first scenario, the English-born person living in Scotland. There is a marked tendency for people to claim to be more liberal than they believe others to be. Second, being born in England seems to be a significant barrier to receiving a sympathetic response to any claim to be Scottish<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In tables 6 and 7, where the figures in columns add up to less than 100 per cent, 'other', 'don't know' and 'not answered' have been omitted.

## Scottish Affairs

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**Table 6**

**Can an English-born person living in Scotland be Scottish?**

	'Most people' %	'Respondent' %
Definitely	5	11
Probably	25	33
Probably not	50	34
Definitely not	18	20
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1508</b>	<b>1508</b>

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**Table 7**

**Can a non-white person with a Scottish accent and living in Scotland be Scottish?**

	'Most people' %	'Respondent' %
Definitely	5	23
Probably	37	47
Probably not	43	19
Definitely not	12	9
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1508</b>	<b>1508</b>

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The difference between respondents' own views and those they assume are held by other people is even more marked in the case of the notional non-white person (Table 7). More positively, overall perspectives are much more

## Being and Becoming Scottish

inclusive than in the English-born scenario, with 70% saying that they would probably or definitely regard the non-white person as Scottish. Less positively, more than three-quarters have at least some doubt as to whether this person could be Scottish, and a substantial minority (28%) adopt an exclusivist position. This is despite the fact that the non-white person is said to have a Scottish accent. Thus substantial numbers are rejecting the claim even though it implies that the person was born in Scotland or has lived there for a substantial length of time. This suggests that while most people claim to see ethnicity as relatively unimportant to Scottish identity – or at least not as a barrier to claiming to be Scottish – a sizeable minority (but it is a minority) believe the opposite.

### CONCLUSIONS

People feel Scottish because of their birthplace, ancestry, and length of residence in Scotland. They make judgements about other people on these grounds also, and taken together we get some idea of what it means to be Scottish. The fact that place of birth is thought to be more central to Scottishness than ethnicity provides some support for the view that the vision of an open, inclusive Scottish identity favoured by the political classes is shared by people in Scotland. However, there is also evidence to the contrary. Many are sceptical that someone born in England can become Scottish, while some appear not to accept the claims of non-white minorities even when they have the requisite qualifications of residence and accent. Nevertheless, living in Scotland for a lengthy period does seem to allow people not born in Scotland and with no Scottish parents to make claims to be Scottish.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Public policy initiatives such as ‘Fresh Talent’ do not depend on incomers to Scotland readily adopting a Scottish identity. Nevertheless, the success of such initiatives is likely to be hindered if many Scottish-born people are reluctant to accept that in-migrants can become fellow Scots. Our findings suggest that such reluctance is fairly widespread. Moreover, it may not simply be ‘New Scots’ who find a Scottish identity less than open to them; even people born in Scotland with Scottish accents may not be accepted by some people if they belong to non-white ethnic minorities. This suggests that government programmes such as ‘One Scotland, Many Cultures’ should be intensified and augmented if more inclusive attitudes are to be encouraged.

## Scottish Affairs

### **RELATED PUBLICATIONS**

Rosie, M. and Bond, R. (2006) 'Routes into Scottishness?', in Bromley, C., Curtice, J., McCrone, D. and Park, A. (eds.) **Has Devolution Delivered?** Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming.

Bond, R. (2006) 'Belonging and Becoming: National identity and exclusion', **Sociology**, 40 (4) forthcoming