

Dear PPWers,

I am presenting a draft of chapter 5 from my dissertation, "Ritual Contention in Divided Societies: Participation in Loyalist Parades in Northern Ireland," which explores who participates in contested Protestant parades and why. My planned table of contents is below.

A bit of background: Parades are a controversial topic in Northern Ireland. Each year, 2,500 parades organized by Protestant organizations march down the streets of the province carrying flags, banners with historical and religious images, and other symbols. There are two types of parading organizations: the Loyal Orders (these are all-male Protestant fraternal orders, the main ones are the Orange Order, Royal Black Institution, and Apprentice Boys of Derry) and marching bands. These organizations are broadly dedicated to the promotion of Protestantism and defense of Northern Ireland's union with the UK. As a result, their parades are often vigorously opposed by Catholic communities along the parade routes. In the past two decades, in particular, parades have been the site of violence between Protestants, Catholics, and the police, including serious riots in 2012 and 2013. This chapter is primarily based on semi-structured interviews with 40 parade participants that I conducted in 2012 and 2013, but it is also informed by interviews with non-participants, politicians, clergy, and community activists and by my observations of many parades and related activities.

Please note that this chapter is still rough and it is missing a lot of citations. Suggestions of relevant literatures are appreciated. I also apologize that it's on the long side.

Thanks,

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Expected Chapters

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Marching to Different Beats: How Participants Perceive Parades

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To explain why men and women participate in parades (or really most any action for that matter), we must understand how they view parades. That is to say, we must understand what parades look like to the men and women who march in them. When they walk down the street together, what do they think they are doing? What type of event do they see parades as? What message do they think they are sending? How do they interpret parades? How would they like the rest of us to interpret parades? People walking on a street together could be many things: a parade, yes, but also a mob, a protest, a fundraiser, rush hour, or “an organized walk in the traffic lane.”¹ The events are nothing beyond a collection of bodies moving in the same direction until they are assigned meaning by a cultural schema. So we cannot explain why individuals choose to participate until we first grasp what exactly it is that they think they are participating in.

As analysts, it is sometimes important that we assign meaning to the actions of others—to say what it is that they are *really* doing (see Munson 2007, 122). But other times, we must ask the participants how they see things. To explain actions that are hotly contested in society, I argue that it is necessary to do both. We must be able to view the parades both from our desk chairs and from the street. Asking “why do paraders participate in hateful, provocative actions?” can only get us part of the way, since the actors do not see themselves as participating in anything hateful or provocative. Conversely, asking the question solely from their point of view ignores the fact that parades are contested and all participants know that many people say that parades are hateful and provocative. We must be able to approach the actions from both points of view. Indeed, many of the most interesting questions emerge from the gaps between the two narratives.

Although this chapter tries to describe how participants see parades and not why they participate in them, the latter does slip in. This, I argue, is a symptom of the way in which participants think of parades. Specifically, for many of my informants, the purpose of parades constitutes the motivation to participate. This is because, as I have argued, rituals are process-driven, rather than outcome-driven, forms of human action. For rituals, purpose and motive cannot be as neatly separated as they can in classical models of instrumental action. When the desired outcome is the very performance of the ritual the distinction between “what we do” and “why we do it” blurs.

This caveat aside, in this chapter I present “what we do” and hold off on “why we do it” as best I can. I proceed as if we can keep them separate and find that the interviews reveal three broadly consensual responses to the question what kind of events are parades? First, parades are identity events tightly linked to participants’ identity. Second, parades are instrumental events; they are means to an end. And third, parades are social events full of enjoyable and meaningful interactions with others. I then explore a more contested question: Are parades political events? Although the majority respond with an emphatic no, there is more dissent apparent among a minority of participants. Once we establish this subjective ontology in this chapter, the following chapter describes the experience of marching in parades. I use these two descriptive chapters to identify the process benefits available in participation. After we understand what the benefits are we can build an argument about who is likely to participate.

“It’s an Identity Thing”: Parades and Identity

For many, if not most, paraders, a central, if not *the* central, purpose of parades is the expression, celebration, and commemoration of a cultural identity. The three actions are separate, yet

¹ Maureen Dowd, “Parade Marches Backwards,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2014. She is quoting Panti Bliss, a drag queen from Dublin, criticizing the New York City St. Patrick’s Day Parade’s ban on gay groups. The full quote is: “‘If they’re not kind of gay, they’re not really a parade,’ he said. ‘A heterosexual parade seems to me an organized walk in the traffic lane.’”

intertwined. Most parades do all three, but in some parades there is an emphasis on one or two. I will examine each in turn.

“To Show Your Identity”: Expressing Identity

Parades are an expression of identity. In particular, for participants, parades are *public* fora where the participants *show* their *identity* to *others*. In this section, I will expand on the four highlighted elements. First, parades are fundamentally public. They take place on the streets where anyone and everyone can see and hear them. The publicness of their actions is not lost on the participants. One Orangeman called parades an “outward expression of [our] belief” and another, who is also a member of the Royal Black Institution and Apprentice Boys of Derry, said they are a “visible outworking of the association.”² Others linked it the Christian requirement to witness their faith or evangelize the gospel. There is no point to these activities, including parades, if done in private. Publicness is a *sine qua non* of parades: if a parade is not public, is it even a parade?

Second, the public nature of parades allow parades and their participants to communicate with others. The specific form of communication is displaying. Parades are not conversational or dialectical, they are unidirectional communication. The verbs that participants use to describe the communicative action they perform on parades include: to show, to express, to represent, to say, to make a statement, to demonstrate.³

If parades are public expressions, what do they say? For paraders, they are showing their identity. In particular, participants articulated four distinct identities: a cultural identity, a national identity, a religious identity, and an organizational identity. Although I discuss each identity as if it is distinct, they are actually tightly intertwined, as we shall see. Firstly, when on parade, participants are expressing a Protestant cultural identity. Parades are “about going out and showing our cultural identity... through music and through the pageantry of it all,” said Walter, a member of a blood and thunder band from West Belfast.⁴ Second, parades represent the Protestant people as a national group, i.e., a cultural group with political aims. Some call the political belief Unionism, some call it Loyalism, others just call it love for the British Crown. For Mark, an Orangeman from Carrickfergus, “it’s a statement of loyalty to the Crown, loyalty to the British way of life, to everything that this country was built upon.” Third, parades are an expression of a religious identity, specifically as adherents to the Protestant faith. This message is more prominent for members of the Loyal Orders that it is for members of the bands. As George, a leader in the Orange Order, put it, “The overarching purpose is to say to the world... ‘here we are as members of the Protestant, reformed, evangelical faith.’” An Orange chaplain and Presbyterian minister from County Antrim agreed: “we’re making a statement that we stand for the Reformed faith.”⁵ For some participants, the parade actually merges with the prayer services to which or from which they are marching. The parade itself becomes a form of worship or devotional practice. “I parade to give thanks to God for a reformed way of life,” said Robert, a retired factory worker, devoted Presbyterian, and active Orangeman.⁶ “A goal?” reflected a 28-year old member of the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys. “To worship. To parade to and from

² Interview 642, Carrickfergus, July 11, 2013; Interview 587, South Belfast, May 1, 2013.

³ To show: Walter; to represent: Interview 690, City Center, August 8, 2013; to say: Interview 762, West Belfast, August 14, 2012; to make a statement: Interview 642, Carrickfergus, July 11, 2013; to demonstrate: Interview 927, South Belfast, July 9, 2013.

⁴ To help the reader, I have given pseudonyms to informants who I quote repeatedly throughout the text.

⁵ Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

⁶ The merging of worship and collective action has been noted in situations as diverse as sixteenth century religious riots (Davis 1973) and contemporary anti-abortion activism (Munson 2007, 2009). Munson (2009, 169-77) crucially cautions scholars not to rely on the deceptively simple analytic distinction between religious and political action.

the church, to worship.”⁷ In fact, the Orange Order describes their parades as “the largest public Protestant witness of their kind anywhere in the world.”⁸ Fourth, parades show off an organizational identity of the particular group marching. For one Orangeman, “our message is we are a religious organization.”⁹ A West Belfast member of the Orange Order and Royal Black told me matter-of-factly that the purpose of parades is “Just to show your identity.” When I asked which identity, he replied, “the Orange Institution.”¹⁰

For bandsmen, too, representing their bands’ identity is central to parades, possibly even more so. Walter, a member of his local band in West Belfast, told me that “My goal is to show how good my band is. My goal is to make my band the best.” One reason for showing off his band’s skill is that his band is the public face of his neighborhood. Bands are often closely linked to the community where they are based. They draw on the community for band members and supporters, and the community’s name is generally part of the band’s name—Shankill Protestant Boys, Pride of Ardoyne, or South Belfast Young Conquerors, for instance.¹¹ As a result, “you’re representing your area,” Walter explained. “[Our community] is known throughout the land because of [our band]. It takes [our community’s] identity everywhere. It’s on our bass drum. So [our community’s] identity is all over Northern Ireland through the band, not through anything else, but through the band.... If you go out and cause trouble and make a fool of yourself, you’re making a fool of your whole community.” So as Walter sees it, when he is marching in a parade, he is not only representing his band, but the rest of his community as well.

Ultimately, all of these identities bleed together and are in some sense inseparable. The very name of the collective identity captures the convergence (and confusion). “Protestant” refers to a religion and an ethnic group, both of which imply a political program. The boundaries of all three groups, though not entirely coterminous, are largely overlapping. When Robert, the retired factory worker and Orangeman from West Belfast, said that the purpose of parades is “to show that we are members of the Protestant community,” which Protestant does he mean? I would suggest he means all of them. For example, one Orangeman says that parades are about “expressing my faith... and... show[ing] my loyalty to the general public and to King William and to the throne.”¹² In one breath he suggests that parades are a manifestation of Christian faith, Protestant peoplehood (“the general public”), and political loyalties. Or take Rachel, a university-educated member of a blood and thunder band, who referred to being in a flute band as “a high expression of Protestantism.” Her view is that “Protestantism is broken in to Protestant culture and Protestant religion”; but, she said, “I see myself in both elements.” When I asked her directly if when on parade she is representing Protestant culture, the reply was affirmative. And when I asked if she is representing Protestant faith, the reply was again affirmative. Some individuals prioritize one identity over the others. Some might even deny their allegiance to a particular facet of the identity (in particular to Protestant faith). Additionally, some parades emphasize one side of Protestantism over others: church parades, for

⁷ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

⁸ Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, “A Parading Tradition,” available at: <http://www.grandorangelodge.co.uk/parading>. Accessed March 3, 2014.

⁹ Interview 128, City Center, August 19, 2013.

¹⁰ Interview 763, West Belfast, August 20, 2012.

¹¹ See Hall (2014, 5): “The band is there as a unifying thing for the local community. Like in Ardoyne or in Suffolk, the local community gels round the band, runs fund-raising events to support them.” Also Bell 1990, p. 98. Note that throughout the chapter I supplement what I heard in the field with footnoted quotes from Michael Hall’s (2014) edited *Towards a Shared Future (5): Ulster’s Marching Bands*. Like all of the volumes in Hall’s excellent “Island Pamphlets” series, it is an edited transcript of a conversation between people from Northern Ireland on a topic of pressing concern. The quotes, therefore, are from anonymous band members who took part in this conversation.

¹² Interview 128, City Center, August 19, 2013.

example, emphasize faith, while band parades minimize it. But as a whole, all elements of Protestantism are salient and expressed through the actions of the participants.

The expressive nature of parades is evident in how participants talk about them. The general message is “we *are*” rather than “we *want*.” The claims are constitutive. For example, a one loyal order member from Carrickfergus said that when on parade “you’re representing what you are,”¹³ and Mark, also from Carrickfergus, claimed that parades a “statement about what I am.” For one Orangeman parades are a way of showing “what our society is and what our society does.” For Robert, the retired factory employee: “We are members of the Protestant community.” For George, the Orange Order leader: “We are unashamedly Ulster Protestants.” For Mark: “it’s almost once a year saying we’re still here, we’re still living, we’re still breathing.” For Ben, an Orangeman, Apprentice Boy, and DUP elected official: “We are a community. We exist.” These phrases also reflect a deeply collective sentiment. According to my informants, parades are about the group, not the individual: they are about who *we* are, not who *I* am. In this sense, parades are fundamentally *collective* actions.¹⁴

Parades, however, do more than just proclaim the existence of the Protestant people as a distinct group; they also provide content to the identity. They say something *about* the identity. George, the Orange leader, put it well: parades are not only statements of “here we are,” but “here we are, these are our colors.” In other words, this is who we are *and* this is what we stand for, this is what we believe in. “This is our cause and we want the world to know,” George continued. For Mark, the Carrickfergus Orangeman, parades say, “We’re still here and we still adhere to very old-fashion British values of honesty and decency.” For a County Antrim-based Presbyterian minister and Orange chaplain, parades are about “making a statement that we stand for the reformed faith. We stand for our values, the values... [that] would be enshrined in the British and even the US Constitution.”¹⁵ These participants suggest that in addition to drawing the lines which delimit the group, parades also suggest what belongs inside the lines. For instance, as we just heard from Mark and the pastor, parades articulate the community’s values. Values and religious beliefs as well as collective memory and other subjects represented by parades contribute a new dimension to the actions. This content allows parades to articulate not only *who* a Protestant is—i.e., group boundaries—but *what* a Protestant is and should be—e.g., proper beliefs and ideological commitments.¹⁶ Parades therefore provide a model for “what ‘membership’ in the ‘community’ consists” of (Swidler 2001, 212).

For many participants, parades are a way to counter negative perceptions of Protestants and particularly loyalists. There is a widely held belief among many Ulster Protestants that they are a “maligned people,” so looking sharp and behaving with dignity while in a public procession is a way that many individuals fight back against negative stereotypes and assert self-respect and collective respectability. For Walter, the West Belfast bandsman, parades “show how well and respectful we

¹³ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

¹⁴ Here I emphasize the vernacular meaning of collective action as “doing something together or acting together” as opposed to the rational choice theory meaning of the “combination of actions of different individuals.” Gilbert 2006, 4 and 3. Additionally, parades involve acting together to represent a shared identity. As such, they require what the philosopher John Searle (1995, 23) calls “collective intentionality.” By collective intentionality he means “not only that [people] engage in cooperative behavior, but that they share intentional states such as beliefs, desires, and intentions.” “We intentions,” he argues, are irreducible to the individual group members’ “I intentions” (i.e., “I intend and I believe that you intend and that you believe that I intend...”), and instead each individual holds the thought “we intend” (Searle 1995, 23-26). So from the basic thought process to the actual enactment of the event, parades are irreducibly collective.

¹⁵ Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

¹⁶ For a fascinating account of the relationship between the content and form of paraded symbols, see Zubrzycki 2013.

can be.” George, the Orange leader, specifically acknowledged one of the stereotypes he hopes to rebut: “The overarching purpose,” he stated, “is to say to the world, ‘here we are.’ Not ‘here we are as Orange bigots’... but ‘here we are as members of the Protestant, reformed, evangelical faith.’” For Ben, the DUP politician, parades declare “That we exist... and we have things to celebrate and remember.” Here Ben is articulating that parades are not simply celebrations and remembrances (the subjects of the next two sections), but statements that Protestants, contrary to the stereotypes, have things to celebrate and remember. Parades remind Protestants (and others) that they have things to be proud of. Therefore, parades are seen as proclamations of worthiness, and more basically, of normality. Parades are a way in which participants announce that Protestants, Loyalists, and/or Loyal Order and band members are decent men and good citizens. Public displays of worthiness, such as these, are central to Tilly’s definition of social movements. A necessary characteristic of social movements, he argues, is that they perform “WUNC displays,” or public representations of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Tilly and Wood 2009, 4). For paraders, parades meet all four WUNC criteria, and I will return to the other three in the course of this chapter.

Fourth, parades are showing their identity not (just) to themselves, but to others. This is why the publicness of parades is so central. Who is their intended audience? The general answer is everyone. This is one reason why parades are so loud and why they so often move geographically from Protestant space by Catholic space into neutral space. A parade that marches through Belfast City Center, as many do, not only claims the space and marks it as Protestant, but also transforms the crowds of people—be they Protestant, Catholic, migrants, or tourists—into an audience, whether they like it or not. For example, George, the Orange leader, says that the point of parades is “to say to the world” and “to show to the world.” Walter, the bandsman, breaks down “the world” for us: “it’s an identity thing, [I am] showing my identity as a loyalist to everyone. And I’m not just showing it loyalist people. I’m showing it to nationalist people. I’m showing it to people who don’t really care”—including tourists: “Japanese people or American people or people from all over the world,” as he put it.

Some paraders articulated a more specific intended audience, either Protestant or Catholic. For example, Walter said that point of a parade is to “make people feel passionate... passionate about their culture and passionate about the music.” Walter’s “people” are clearly Protestants. He hopes that his band’s performance excites Protestants about Protestant culture. Similarly, Rachel, the university-educated bandswoman, discussed playing music for a particular interface Protestant community which they pass on a parade route. This neighborhood is under regular attack from nearby Catholics, so for her, the band’s music is meant to lift the spirits of the besieged residents. Her band’s music is decidedly not intended for the Catholic community across the street. For others, however, Catholics are the intended audience of these identity displays. George, the Orange leader, told me that his intention when marching is to “demonstrat[e] our culture and history and heritage to those who oppose us.” Many other interviewees had told me that passing Catholic neighborhood was simply a byproduct of needing to get from point A to point B, so I asked George if he disagreed. He explained that he does: “We do have to get from A to B. But if that was the case, why not just take a bus and then parade? So it’s not really about that. That’s the more moderate line, but it’s also the point about ‘here we are, here is what we’re all about.’” Catholics are deliberately made into an audience and are exposed to Protestant culture. If paraders did not want to perform their identity to Catholics, they do not need to. They could take a bus by Catholic communities rather than parade. But they do not do that, because the whole point, for George and others like him, is to demonstrate their identity to their ethnic rivals.

“It’s a Celebration”: Celebrating Identity

A related, but distinct function of parades is to celebrate identity. Through their parades, the participants celebrate their identity as a cultural heritage and as a community of people.¹⁷ One can express one's identity in many ways, but parades are almost inherently celebratory: the loud music, the cheering crowds, the bright colors, they all point towards celebration.¹⁸ They parade to celebrate who they are and what they stand for. One Orangeman argued that parades should be just called celebrations. "I hate the word 'demonstration' being used in the context it's used with these parades, etcetera. To me, it should be 'celebration' as opposed to 'demonstration.' We're not demonstrating anything, we're celebrating our culture and heritage."¹⁹ Mark, the Orangeman from Carrickfergus, agrees when he stated: "Bottom line is we parade to celebrate our faith and our culture. End of story." Speaking specifically of the Twelfth of July, he said, "It's a celebration. The celebration is of the Protestant faith and the victory of the Battle of the Boyne." Through all of these quotations we again see the blurring of various aspects of Protestant identity. The quote from Mark also demonstrates how parades can bring together the present ("the Protestant faith") and past ("victory of the Battle of the Boyne"). It is to this relationship that we now turn.

"We Remember": Commemorating Identity

The third central element of identity work that parades perform is commemoration.²⁰ Through the parades, the participants remember and commemorate great moments in Protestant history and the individuals who gave their lives for the cause. Certain parades commemorate specific events—the Twelfth of July commemorates the Battle of the Boyne (1690), the First of July commemorates the Battle of the Somme (1916), the two main Derry parades commemorate the Siege of Derry (1689), several parades commemorate specific individuals killed during the Troubles—but they all connect the present to the past. They serve to link people to their history.

There are three ways that my informants approach the past. Some approach the past broadly and on its own terms, some approach it from a presentist position, and some approach it from a narrowly personal position. One common theme uniting all three approaches is that the past they are interested in is a Protestant past. History has been sectarianized, and Catholics are almost always excluded—unless they make an appearance as the villain. In their commemoration, participants are primarily there to remember, celebrate, and mourn the Protestant dead and those who died for the Protestant nation and the Union.²¹ This, of course, is common in collective memory and national commemorations, which seek to produce and reproduce myths, and therefore solidarity, of the nation (e.g., Gillis 1996).

¹⁷ See NIYF 2013, 22.

¹⁸ Of course, parades can be somber, funeral processions, for example. But there is something about parades that veers towards carnival. Even the demonstrations by the AIDS group ACT UP which could involve intense anger, fear, despair, and sorrow, were also intensely fun, funny, and even erotic. See Gould 2009, esp. chap. 3, "The Pleasures and Intensities of Activism; or, Making a Place for Yourself in the Universe."

¹⁹ He is referring to the fact that the Orange Order's formal name for its parades is "demonstration." Interview 430, December 5, 2012.

²⁰ See NIYF 2013, 23.

²¹ A few informants also mentioned Catholic dead in their discussions of memory and commemoration. Specifically, they point to the men of the 16th (Irish) Division of the British army in World War I who died alongside the 36th (Ulster) Division at the Somme. These informants argued that their symbols and commemorations apply to the Irish dead as well. "What do you do? Not remember them because they were Catholic?" asked one bandsman rhetorically. "They were still soldiers, so that's the way I look at it." An Orange chaplain stated that the purpose of the Drumcree church parade was "to remember all those who died in the First World War, not just the Ulster Divisions, but the 16th Division from the South. You know, it wasn't saying, 'You know, we remember all the Orangemen who died, or all the Protest—' It's to remember all those who died." Interview 259, East Belfast, December 12, 2012; and Interview 630, East Belfast, July 25, 2013.

First, there are those who seek to commemorate the past for its own sake. The past is valued simply for being passed. The dead, too, are valued because they have passed. Their memory has intrinsic value and should be carried on for that reason alone. We see this clearly in my conversation with member of the Orange Order and Royal Black from West Belfast. He stated that “The First of July commemorates the Somme, 36th (Ulster) Division, Twelfth of July commemorates Battle of Boyne. They’re all battles we remember.” “Just to continue the memory?” I interrogated. “Yes,” he replied, “to continue the tradition.”²² The memory has inherent value and that alone merits its survival. Consider also this statement by an East Belfast bandsman: “You’ve got the commemoration parades, like the Twelfth. That to me is all part of my history. People fought and died for that and I want to be part of it to keep it going.”²³ The very fact that men gave their lives gives meaning to their memory so that he wants to continue the memory forward. This band member sees his actions as bridging past, present, and future as he keeps memories of the past alive today so that they may endure for the generations to come.

Other informants, however, specifically connect with the ways in which the past shaped the present, and cite that as the reason it is worth remembering. A member of the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys stated this logic clearly: “you’re celebrating what people have done in the past to make you who you are today.”²⁴ By helping to fashion the present, the past deserves not just commemoration, but celebration. His position remained clear when I asked him what the point of all the commemorating is. “Well if you don’t commemorate what these people [have] done *for you*, it’d be lost history... If you don’t [celebrate and remember] ... *then you wouldn’t know how you became who you [are] or how the country became what it is...* If you don’t remember it, you’ll forget. It’s as simple as that” (my emphasis). This interviewee views his responsibility to history solely in terms of the past’s relationship to the present. Presumably, he would find no reason to remember times, places, people, or events which did not shape his world. Northern Irish Protestants see their present indelibly marked by the Siege of Derry, Battle of the Boyne, and Battle of the Somme, which one bandsman called “very much key influencers for Northern Ireland and particularly the state of Northern Ireland.”²⁵ An elderly Orangeman from South Belfast said something similar about the Twelfth, which is “to remember the change and settlement of our Protestant reformed faith as part of the fiber of our nation.”²⁶ For an Apprentice Boy from West Belfast, the impact is more universal—in that it is also connected to Catholics in Northern Ireland. Speaking of the Apprentice Boys parades, he said:

The purpose of it is to celebrate the deeds that were done by the defenders of Derry and to remember the deeds that were done. That would be the purpose of it. That these two days should never be forgotten and the hardship that the defenders of Derry put them through. And really, the sacrifice that they made, everybody in this country enjoys today. At least they should enjoy it: free religious liberties. Where nobody should be discriminated against or persecuted. So the deeds that the defenders of Derry done, everybody in this country enjoys that now. That’s really the purpose of it.²⁷

²² Interview 763, West Belfast, August 20, 2012.

²³ Interview 259, East Belfast, December 12, 2012.

²⁴ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

²⁵ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

²⁶ Interview 949, South Belfast, July 19, 2013.

²⁷ Interview 578, West Belfast, August 13, 2012.

For him, the value of the past is twofold. First, the past should be remembered simply for what happened, specifically the “hardship” and “sacrifice” endured by Derry’s defenders. But second, the memory is premised on its positive impact on the present. So as exemplified by this Apprentice Boy, but also seen in men like the bandsman and elderly Orangeman cited above, the point is not just to remember past deeds for the sake of remembering, but to recognize the deep imprint of the past on the present. The past is not valued for its own sake but for its influence on the present.

Third, informants personalize the past; that is, they narrow the memories from the broad Protestant past to highlight one sliver of history with a more immediate connection. An active parade from Carrickfergus, for example, sees memorial parades as times for individual members to connect with their family history. “The likes of the memorial parades,” he said, “you’re, you’re remembering possible family members—do you know what I mean?—who’ve fought and died in conflicts throughout the world.” This personal connection “adds that wee bit more depth to it for you.” Interestingly, he remarked that he does not feel much of a personal connection with the Boyne or events from centuries ago because “chances of trying to trace back family to that, very, very hard.” He contrasted this to the First and Second World Wars, which were “only a couple of generations ago... Grandparents, great grandparents, you know what I mean?”²⁸ For the elderly Orangeman in South Belfast, the point is to continue the specific memory of members of the Orange Order who died. “Whether, for example, it’s a memorial [parade], like our First of July [parade], to remember the Battle of the Somme. Not so much the battle, but the thousands of Orangemen who remain lying in flats.”²⁹ Although memory of the Somme plays a large role in Protestant myth and identity in general (e.g., Jarman 1999; Graham and Shirlow 2002), this older member sees a more specific role for the Orange Order’s parade: to remember and to commemorate their own dead.

For some informants, parades serve as personal memorials where they commemorate and connect with a familiar past outside of the official past. Parades are intimate sites of personal memory and mourning that are not shared even with fellow participants. For example, an Orangeman and elected representative from the DUP discussed how being on parade brings up memories of parading with his father, who is now deceased. “Parading now is tinged by sadness,” he said.³⁰ Rachel gave an extended account of how parades have connected her to her ancestors.

I cried the first time I walked, down a stretch of road, up with the band. My granny died when I was eight but partly I'm her double, I'm exactly like her, I'm very stubborn in everything that my granny had, I have, I'm just a double of my granny. She died when I was eight and she lived in [redacted] Street and on the 1st of July, the Battle of Somme parade goes up the street beside my granny's, and my granny used to love watching 'Old Mud Cabin.' I asked our band captain to play it going past because my dad said back in the 60s and the 70s my granny loved whenever they played 'Mud Cabin' and we played it. I had tears running down my face because we were doing the same route that my granny had done and my great-granny had done for years and years and years. I enjoyed it as much as they did and it's just remembering like the routes that they did that means quite a lot to me and playing the same tunes.

Playing a specific song in a specific place that both hold significant personal weight let out a flood of emotions. Performing a song that her grandmother loved on the street where she used to live created a direct connection between past and present, the living and the dead. Rachel was always her

²⁸ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

²⁹ Interview 949, South Belfast, July 19, 2013.

³⁰ Interview 653, West Belfast, July 27, 2012.

grandmother's "double," but at that moment, playing that song in that place, the connection was palpable. Like for the politician, the performance of the ritual (in part because rituals ooze continuity, connecting past and present with a sense of enduring uniformity; a sense that despite all the change, some things are still the same) produced an emotional reaction because it stands as a memorial to deceased loved ones.

We must, however, be cautious of overextending the idea of blurring past and present. Although participation in rituals such as parades may highlight elements of history and vivify memories of the past, there are limits to the blurring. The present does not become the past or vice versa. That so many participants value the past for its role in shaping the present is evidence that they keep the two periods analytically distinct. The causal logic behind this claim implies a temporal sequence. In both current affairs and the experience of parades, History might be front and center, but it remains past. But this warning is best articulated by a middle-aged bandsman. I asked him, "Does [parading] connect you with the past? Does it help bring... the past into the present through the commemoration?" "No, no, no," he replied. "I'm not sure that there's what we're trying to do at all there. ... [W]e're not trying to recreate the past, so we're not there. The past is gone forever as we know. We're not trying to recreate it. But we're not forgetting about it either."³¹ This distinction between acknowledging the past's pastness versus keeping the memory going is key. Although in many ways parades are *about* the past, they occur in the present. Though some scholars have argued that conjuring up the past extinguishes the distinction between now and then for those people involved, for this participants, at least, it clearly does not.³²

Parades are a means to an end

For the participants, parades are not only mere expressions of a multifaceted Protestant identity. They see an instrumental side to parades as well. Participants use parades to accomplish particular goals. What are the goals that they have in mind? When explaining their perspective we must separate what participants intend to happen from what actually happens. So in section, I will not discuss provocation or intimidation, the two goals most often attributed paraders by their critics; neither will I discuss the production and reproduction of boundaries, the symbolic claiming of public space, or other such functions attributed to parades by academic observers. As I demonstrate, these ends do not factor into their accounts of what parades do or are intended to do. Later in this chapter I will return to the question raised by the gulf between intentions and outcomes and explain how participants navigate this seemingly large disconnect. For now, I limit myself to the goals which parade participants set for themselves. I find three general instrumental goals of parades—communicating with Nationalists, achieving Protestant unity, and maintaining Protestant culture—and two goals held by a more limited set of informants—competition and keeping the roads open for future parades. I now discuss each in turn.

³¹ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

³² Mircea Eliade, the historian of religion, for instance, makes strong claims that the line between past and present fades away during religious rituals. For example, in *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959, 77), he writes "this commemoration of the Creation was in fact a *reactualization* of cosmogonic act"; and in *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958, 392-3): "In religion as in magic, the periodic recurrence of anything signifies primarily that a mythical time is *made present* and then used indefinitely. Every ritual has the character of happening *now*, at this very moment. The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made *present*, 're-presented' so to speak, however far back it may have been in ordinary reckoning. Christ's passion, death and resurrection are not simply *remembered* during the services of Holy Week; they really happened *then* before the eyes of the faithful. And a convinced Christian must feel that he is *contemporary* with these transhistoric events, for, by being re-enacted, the time of the theophany becomes actual." All emphases in the originals.

Sending a message to Nationalists and Republicans

For many participants, parades are a means of communication with Nationalists and Republicans. Their intention in marching in parades is to send a message to them. Writing on loyalist parades, Smithey argues that “Ritualistic collective action... facilitates communication with opponents and third parties.”³³ That parades are ritualistic matters for how the communication is sent, and how it is received. In particular, the message of parades is made obliquely through the display of symbols—flags, collarettes, uniforms, music, banners—and through the physical presence of the marchers. So the two necessary ingredients which jointly constitute a parade—symbols and bodies—are simultaneously the means for communication. That means that parades eschew the use of explicit signs, flyers, speeches, chants, or other canonical elements of the contemporary contentious politics repertoire, and instead rely on the core elements of its very performance to communicate a message.

What, then, is the message that participants intend to send when they show up at a parade? At its core, they intend to let Nationalists know that “we are here.” George, the Orange leader, for instance, said that “the intent” is “to say we’ve always been here and we’re not going away.” This is not a message that George hopes will fall on deaf; he does not just send it because it makes him feel good. The point of sending the message is that for it to be received, understood, and internalized. Republican dreams be damned, Protestants are on Ireland and are not going anywhere. An East Belfast bandsman agrees. Parades are “about making the stand that we can’t just be forced out of our own country,” he said.³⁴ “It shows we’re still here,” stated Walter, a bandsman from West Belfast. “It shows that the people still want to be part of Ulster. They want to remain loyalist, they don’t want to be part of anything else, just our own—This is our wee country. And this is our band’s walk on the streets to show that we can do, how many of us there is [sic], and that’s the support there is for our cause, which is loyalism.” Walter’s comments link parades to another element of Tilly’s WUNC displays, numbers. The physical presence of paraders communicates that they are numerous, which implies that “our cause” is powerful.

For an Orangeman from Carrickfergus, parades also suggest a specific political cause: “I think it goes hand-in-hand with why we parade — the political message that, you know, we are a Protestant society and we uphold the rule of law and we uphold the British Commonwealth and you see our Queen is the head of our country and that goes hand-in-hand, you know, being a Unionist political agenda.”³⁵ Conversely, a Free Presbyterian minister and Orange chaplain sees parades’ message as one of negating Republicanism rather than affirming Unionism. “I look at it as not simply about a parade, but it has to do with civil liberty. It has to do with tyranny. It has to do with [not] giving into the violence, giving in to the people who want to take away your civil rights, which I would look upon as Republicanism.”³⁶ Through parading, this clergyman sees himself take a stand against Republicanism.³⁷ In all of these examples, we see that communication with Nationalists is not just a byproduct of parades, but a major intent. Whether they are trying to maintain the Protestant political position or erode that of Nationalists, parades are used as a means to communicate with Nationalists.

Statements such as the ones from the last paragraphs look a lot like similar statements that I previously identified as expressions of identity. Why now do I argue that similar statements are better described as instrumental messages? In the statements discussed earlier, the means and the ends were one and the same. The goal of announcing “we exist” is to announce that “we exist”; simply

³³ Smithey 2002, 96.

³⁴ Interview 259, East Belfast, December 12, 2012.

³⁵ Interview 128, City Center, August 19, 2013.

³⁶ Interview 630, East Belfast, July 25, 2013.

³⁷ See Hall (2014, 27): “Our band culture is the last obstacle standing in the way of militant Irish Republicanism.”

marching in the parade (i.e., the means) achieves that goal. In other words, the very act of doing the means constitutes the ends—the means *are* the ends; the ends *are* the means. The later quotes, conversely, have an end that is external to the statement's enunciation. These statements suggest that parades are the means to achieve a goal that is separate from the parade's performance. Specifically, some audience must receive the message. For example, when George, the Orange leader, said that the purpose of parades "to say we've always been here and we're not going away," he was talking about telling this to someone else. The parade is the means with which he sends this message, but the goal is for someone else to receive the message. Successful articulation of "we're not going away" is contingent on the intended audience receiving and understanding the message. This is to say that when it comes to sending a message, parades are strategic; their success depends on the response of others.

Protestant Unity

Parades are symbols of Protestant unity. But for participants, parades do not merely represent unity, they cause Protestant unity and prescribe future solidarity.³⁸ Parades are models of and models for unity, to use Geertz's (1973, 93) famous analysis of symbols. The model is primarily intended for the Protestant community where unity is understood as necessary but elusive. Protestants often see themselves as divided by religious denomination, class, and political allegiances (e.g., Smithey 2011, 208-10), and my informants are no exception.³⁹ But parades have long been a source of and forum for ethnic unity (Bryan 2000; Arthur 1984, 40), a point not lost on participants. Robert, the Orangeman from West Belfast, for example, described how parades create cross-denomination and cross-class unity among Protestants:

I think it brings a lot of people—we have a lot of clergy from different denominations—it brings them together. We have a lot of ministers, pastors, and city missionaries would all be in the [Orange] Order and with people we have from the humblest person, a bus driver, a member of the Loyalists [paramilitaries] to a doctor and professors and, yes, we still have a high court judge in the Order and we have a lot of, a big lot of our MLAs and politicians are members of the Order and we, we'd walk and show they're, that they're members of the Loyal Order.

In Robert's view, parades not only "show[] that we're together," they help generate the togetherness. By bringing together so many likeminded people from across the religious and socioeconomic spectrum, parades create a sense of community that might otherwise be lacking among Protestants. Ben, the Orangeman and DUP politician, agrees that parades help sustain community. He further sees parades prescribe future unity. So parades are a cause of unity and send the message that they must remain united. Since Ben is an elected official, I asked him where parades help unionist political parties. He replied:

Yeah, it helps unionism and Protestantism. I mean the Twelfth of July has hundreds of thousands of people participating at it. It's sending a message of community. It's a very simple message, it's essentially: "you're British, you're Protestant, and you live here." You know there isn't that much of a complexity and basically [the message is,] "when times get rough here we should band together, and even in the good times we

³⁸ See Hall (2014, 30): "The unionist community is more and more fragmented, and the bands are the only thing which is holding the Protestant working-class community together at the present moment." Also Ramsey 2011, 147.

³⁹ Additionally, Bell (2013, 7) finds that Protestants believe they have a harder time building a unified community than Catholics, since Protestant theology is founded on individualism while Catholic theology rests on community.

should always worry that at some point it may turn pear shaped so we do need to have bonds between us.” That’s essentially the message of the Twelfth. So in terms of that, yes, it communicates across class, across geography a commonality, and then that obviously communicates on to unionism, gives you a base to work from.

Parades, for Ben, help secure a future for Protestants in Northern Ireland. So they are more than expressions of faith or ethnic pride, parades are a method for producing Protestant unity, since they never know when they are going to need it.

“To Maintain the Protestant Culture”: Spreading Culture, Keeping It Alive

Thirdly, parades are a means of spreading Protestant culture and keeping it alive in Northern Ireland.⁴⁰ Parades are a way to disseminate culture through the music, banners, and other symbols. A bandsman and ex-soldier from East Belfast stated that the goal of parades is to “bring the music out to the people.”⁴¹ Walter, also a bandsman, added that the music carries a particular lesson: “It’s telling your history through music.” He said that his band plays “true Irish traditional music,” “historical music,” as opposed to “Nationalist/Republican people [who] play music that they call Irish traditional music... [but] they have stolen bits of music [from us].” Banners, too, communicate Protestant culture. For example George, the Orange leader, said, “We show our banners: here’s King Billy crossing the Boyne, here’s the church at Whiterock.” The banners a lesson in Protestant history and culture (see Jarman 1997, 163-91).

Spreading the culture strengthens the culture, ensuring its survival. For example, Walter argued that a goal of parades is to “make people feel... passionate about their culture.” Parades, then, are an antidote to cultural amnesia. For the ex-military bandsman, the sole message of parading is Protestants must keep their culture going. “If there’s any message,” he said, “it’s that we have to keep our history alive and keep that culture alive, and that’s the only message I think that we would send out. I don’t think there’s any other message part from that.”⁴² Parades provide a wakeup call to Protestants who might be complacent or otherwise indifferent. They make it clear that Protestant culture is worth saving and must be saved. Rachel, the bandswoman, state it most succinctly: the goal of parades is “to maintain the Protestant culture.”

A major means of keeping a culture alive is to keep maintain memories of the culture’s history. Cultures often look to the past as they look to the future. For Robert Bellah and his coauthors (1985, 152-5), a real community is always a “community of memory” in that it must be predicated on some shared notion of its own shared past. In order to maintain those memories, members of the community must be taught their history through myths and stories that get retold; the commemorative landscape of monuments, murals, and memorials; and commemorative practices. As two of the informants just quoted mentioned, teaching history to maintain the community are part of what parades do. There are two distinct ways in which parades keep history alive. The first is by commemoration, which involves recalling the past. The second is by tradition, which involves continuing the past.⁴³ Parades engage in the former through their content (the battles, Great Men, and martyrs of the past) and the latter through their formal, repetitive, and seemingly fixed form.⁴⁴ Each

⁴⁰ See NIYF 2013, 23.

⁴¹ Interview 588, East Belfast, December 13, 2012.

⁴² Interview 588, East Belfast, December 13, 2012.

⁴³ Note that neither commemoration nor tradition needs to reflect the “true” past. A nation’s past, like its traditions (or for that matter itself), is invented.

⁴⁴ Connerton (1989, 48) suggests a third mechanism beyond content and continuity, “the explicit claim to be commemorating such continuity.” This meta-mechanism goes further than simply claiming a ritual’s continuity to commemorating past commemorations. Quoted in Bryan (2000, 10).

pathway brings the share past to the fore and generates a shared interpretation of it. By using both methods of connecting to history, paraders intend to combat cultural erosion.

“The Goal is To Win”: Parades as Competitions

A fourth instrumental aspect of parades is relevant only to band parades: they are competitions, and participants aim to win. Many of the parades held throughout the year are band parades, which are generally held as a fundraiser for a local band. In these parades, which do not involve the loyal orders, the participating bands (sometimes upwards of 60) march around while being judged on a number of dimensions. At the end, awards are given to the winners. As an ex-solider bandsman put it: “The goal of a band parade is to go out and try and win an award at whatever discipline it is, you know, who has the best drum major or best flute corps or best this here, best small band, best large band, whatever. You know, the goal then is to win something for your playing.”⁴⁵ Another bandsman elaborated: “It’s about your style, your comportment, how well you are playing, how well you are marching, all things like that there.” Competition, for this parader, is what it’s all about. “To me personally,” he explained, “it means I want to go out and win. I want to do my best. I want to look smart.”⁴⁶ So for bandsmen, the goal of a parade is to compete against other bands and go home victorious.

Keeping the roads open

There is a final instrumental view of parades held by some participants: that parades keep the roads free for future parades. In other words, parades on a particular street serve the purpose of preventing the precedent of parades on that street being banned. Each parade helps to maintain the parading movement’s current bargaining position. The captain of a West Belfast band explained the logic:

The bands are having band parades to keep the roads open.... If we have an annual parade and we walk from A to B, we can walk that road as a band. But if we stop having that parade, then we lose it. We will not be allowed. Some of these routes have been going for hundreds of years. If we don’t keep those routes open, the police will stop them. “You didn’t do them this year, so you don’t need to do them next year.” You’re obligated to keep these roads open.⁴⁷

So parades serve a very specific purpose related to future parading. But this must be understood in a broader context, partly illuminated by the discussion of parades role in Protestant culture’s survival. Parades symbolize the Protestant community as a whole. When a parade is banned from a street, many Protestants view it as an assault on the community and a threat to their future (see Ross 2007). A banned parade is a threat to the community’s ontological security (Smithey 2011, 119; also Kay 2012).⁴⁸ Keeping a road open for parades therefore does more than allowing the parade to pass in the future, it provides a guarantee that Protestants have a safe future in Northern Ireland. George, the Orange leader, summarized this sentiment: “For as long as we’re able to march on these streets... then our Britishness remains with us.”

“It’s a Day Out with the Guys”: Parades as Social Events

⁴⁵ Interview 588, East Belfast, December 13, 2012.

⁴⁶ Interview 259, East Belfast, December 12, 2012.

⁴⁷ Interview 358, West Belfast, August 18, 2012.

⁴⁸ For further expressions from working class Protestants that culture, and particularly parades, are “all that we have left,” see Hall (2014, 25-7)

The third central element of parades for participants is that they are a social event. Parades are a gathering of friends and family. Annual marches, particularly the Twelfth of July, bring together friends who might not have seen each other since the previous year's parade. In interview after interview, participants went on about how fun parades are, especially the social aspects. One East Belfast bandsman summed up what almost every participant feels: "I enjoy it. . . . It's socializing."⁴⁹ A rural-based parader's approach would also probably resonate with every participant I interviewed: "If you're not enjoying it, why do it?" he asked.⁵⁰

A West Belfast Orangeman's description of a parade highlighted the socializing: "They would [put] tea on and things and we'd have a wee natter, a wee talk, before we'd head to church. . . . [It] just brings us together more."⁵¹ For an Orangeman and DUP politician, the Orange Order is a "political, cultural, faith-based hobby" where he gets to "meet with like-minded individuals on a monthly basis."⁵² Even nominally somber parades, such as the July First parade to commemorate the huge casualties suffered at the Battle of the Somme, are fun, social events. "The First of July, you know it's about the Somme. . . . That's in the back of the mind and that will be talked about in the clubs and pubs afterward, no question about that. . . . But they didn't fight in the war for everyone to be depressed. Yes, you remember them, but then you go enjoy yourself."⁵³

Participants often described a parade as "a day out." It's a day outdoors with friends and family, what could be better?⁵⁴ And this fun is not just for the marchers. They see themselves as providing a service for the whole community. Parades are free entertainment for everyone.⁵⁵ "People like to go out and watch them, it's a spectacle. People like to listen to bands. People like to see their brothers and sisters, their family walking. People like to see it. That's what we do," a North Belfast Orangeman and Apprentice Boy declared proudly.⁵⁶ The fact that parades are so fun for the participants is one of the reasons they articulate for not being able to understand Catholic opposition to parades. How can something that is so enjoyable be so bothersome?

My own observations at parades in 2012 and 2013 confirm that parades are highly social events. The actual marching is interspersed with lots of time for socializing among participants and with supporters as well. My fieldnotes are filled with episodes of people just standing around chatting with each other. Any time when they do not need to be in position to march, the participants gathered in small groups to converse, laugh, and sometimes take a swig a beer.

Combination

The previous sections delineated three aspects of parades from the perspective of the participants. I elaborated on how parades are three things to them: identity-events, means to an end, and social days out. Now I want to make clear that the divisions are analytically imposed and in reality the three categories often bleed together. Probably all participants agree that parades are each of the three, though they may disagree on their relative rankings. In fact, the three categories are

⁴⁹ Interview 259, East Belfast, December 12, 2012.

⁵⁰ Interview 547, Lurgan, August 6, 2013.

⁵¹ Interview 362, West Belfast, December 4, 2012.

⁵² Interview 896, East Belfast, August 5, 2013.

⁵³ Interview 803, East Belfast, August 14, 2012.

⁵⁴ Kaufman (2007, 236) argues that the fact that parades are Orangemen's "day in the sun" explains "the ferocious Orange reaction to parade bans."

⁵⁵ See Hall (2014, 9): "One woman [at a community meeting in East Belfast] said, 'We struggle all year to make ends meet, and watching the bands is the only bit of holiday time we get.'"

⁵⁶ Interview 289, North Belfast, August 27, 2012.

intertwined. One of the things that make parades so important is that they combine elements of each. Parades are something done with friends and family to express and defend one's central identity. They are opportunities to honor a cherished past and secure the culture's future at the same time. We can see how they think about these aspects in combination by looking at how seamlessly they switch from one category to another in talking about parades. One aspect blends into the next and together they comprise a participant's full vision of a parade. As an example, notice how this rural Orangeman and bandsman's description of the Twelfth moves without pause from historical commemoration to a party atmosphere. "Yes, the Twelfth of July is, first of all, it's to commemorate of the Battle of the Boyne, 1690. But that's also again, it's a day of meeting up with people, renewing friendships, a chance to take your family for a day out, have a bit of fun, hav[e] a meal. Just a general get together, a good atmosphere and enjoy something different once a year."⁵⁷ In this parader's perspective, the historical and social aspects come together to create a great time. For an Orangeman from Carrickfergus, parades combine friends, self-expression, and faith: "It's just the fact of you're getting out with your friends, you're with your friends, you're representing what you are, you're going to your church service... worshiping God the way you should be."⁵⁸ To understand what parades mean to these men and women and to see parades how they see them requires appreciating how these core elements of the human experience—family, friendship, identity, faith, self-expression, pleasure, recreation—are brought together at symbolically meaningful times on the streets of Northern Ireland.

Are parades political?

Thus far, my discussion of the subjective ontology of parades has been fairly consensual. I believe that most participants would personally agree with my interpretation and agree that most other participants feel the same way. But there is one question which elicits great disagreement: Are parades political actions? Most participants believe that parades are absolutely not political, while a significant minority believes that parades do have a political nature. Understanding the origins and nature of many people's disagreement illuminates an important aspect of parades and how they work.

At the outset, I must say that I believe that parades in Northern Ireland are fundamentally political.⁵⁹ This position is held by almost all serious analysts of parades as well as a significant segment of non-participants that I interviewed, including Protestant religious and political leaders.⁶⁰ Their political nature is essentially two-fold. First, parades make a political claim. At times they do so implicitly using symbols while other times they make them explicitly, in speeches for instance. These claims speak directly to the central political question in Northern Ireland: should the territory be part of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland? The two main answers to this question form by far the most significant political and social cleavage in Northern Ireland. All politics is debated around this cleavage and all policies are interpreted through it. And this question was central to the thirty years of violence in the late twentieth century.⁶¹ Second, parades have a political effect. They are hotly debated in political institutions, they polarize the two communities, and they affect the political peace process and grassroots social peace building. Additionally, their performance often requires the coercive apparatus of the state, and creates opportunities for both loyalist and republican paramilitaries to mobilize. Even if you reject my first point about political claim-making, I believe

⁵⁷ Interview 547, Lurgan, August 6, 2013.

⁵⁸ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

⁵⁹ For an important discussion of how observers should approach "the political" and navigate the differences between their own views and the "native" view, see Eliasoph 1998, pp. 14-5.

⁶⁰ E.g., Bryan 2000; Jarman 1997.

⁶¹ For a political interpretation of the Troubles, see Bourke 2012.

the second point about parades' political impacts is irrefutable. How to interpret their political impact, however, is a contested matter, as we shall see.

Parades are political

There are participants who agree with me. They, too, see parades as inexorably linked to the central political question in Northern Ireland. There are two general viewpoints among those who see parades as political. The first approach sees parades as fundamentally and deliberately political while the second sees them as political because of the context and not anything inherent in them. Participants with the first view take the position that expressing national identities, flying national flags, and demonstrating national loyalty are inherently political actions. An Orange chaplain and Presbyterian minister from County Antrim recalled that “the impetus to join [the Orange Order] was probably political.” It was the early 1970s, the height of violence, and he did two things “as a way of saying, look, I’m British”: he joined the Orange Order and he joined the part-time police force.⁶² Both of these actions were ways to express his national, and therefore political, allegiance and to defend his community. But it is a DUP elected official and party strategist and member of the Orange Order, who gave the clearest and most forceful articulation of this approach.

JB: I've talked to a lot of people who would really deny that there's really anything political about [parades], so what – can you explain a little bit more about what –

Interviewee: Well there is when it comes to identity. There is when you consider – And, so it's not party political. So you'll not find the Orange Order advocating for political position of the Ulster Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Progressive Unionist Party, or whatever – but on those big ticket items, on Northern Ireland being a part of the United Kingdom, on reverence for the monarchical system that we have and our head of state, it is, it is political.

JB: I see.

Interviewee: Its roots, obviously, come from a political time of strife, political disharmony within the province it was borne out of inter-communal tension and, obviously, looking to King William one hundred years previously, looking to those seismic battles that shifted the historical focus of the UK as a whole. So it is political.

JB: Are parades political demonstrations?

Interviewee: ... Yeah, the idea that the parade is a parade to a demonstration, to a demonstration field, a field where you have resolutions, which focus the purpose of your being there, your purpose of membership and your drive as an organization. So absolutely it's a demonstration—it's a public and outward sign that these are people who share certain ideals, aspirations for the province.⁶³

In this segment, he makes three arguments about why and how parades are political. First, he argues that parades are political because they weigh in on the “big ticket items,” namely the sovereignty question. Second, he argues that parades are political because they were born that way. The Orange

⁶² Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

⁶³ Interview 896, East Belfast, August 5, 2013.

Order emerged at a “time of strife [and] political disharmony within the province, [and] it was borne out of inter-communal tension.” And at that time of strife, the founders looked to the “seismic battles” fought by King William III for inspiration.⁶⁴ So parades have been political since their very beginning – a point we shall see vehemently opposed by many participants. And third, he returns to the idea that parades include explicit and specific political claim-making, this time in resolutions announced publicly at the Field on the Twelfth of July. But then later on in my interview, he suggests a fourth political aspect of parades: they are politically useful, “not only [in] energizing people, [and] getting the people on the streets, but [in] showing that there’s such level of support for political aspiration, for a political goal.” As a unionist politician, he understands the political utility in large public actions. They mobilize people and get them excited about the unionist cause, which is useful since it re-energizes the unionist base. Parades can also influence people who do not even attend by demonstrating to them that the ideology has huge support. This is important to communicate to supporters as well as opponents of unionism. Protestants see that unionism is alive and well—which might forestall electoral defection—while Catholics can see that it remains a formidable political force.

The second approach that views parades as political events sees them as reluctantly political or contextually political. The participants with this point of view believe that parades are not necessarily political by nature, but that when placed in the context of Northern Ireland they are inseparable from politics. It is the context rather than the event itself that makes parades political. As an Orangeman and elected official stated, “It’s not a political day, but it’s mainly supported by one side, so in that sense it is. ... Because it’s Northern Ireland, there will be politics, but it’s not a political event.”⁶⁵ The reluctance to accept the political life of parades is evident in my interview with a youth worker who is very active in the parading scene, being a member of the Orange Order, Apprentice Boys, and a band.

JB: Are parades at all political?

Interviewee: Some certainly can be.

JB: In what way?

Interviewee: In this country there’s a political dimension to almost everything in some way or other, but for me I don’t talk about the politics, to me it’s more Christian orientated. Culturally, religiously, that’s what it’s about for me. But without a doubt, I’d be a liar to say there’s no politics involved, because politics is involved, in [the] nationalist and unionist side in this country regardless of whether you want it or not.

JB: Do parades play a role in maintaining the union?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

JB: In what way?

⁶⁴ Bryan (2000, 31-35) places the birth of the Orange Order (in 1795) and its appropriation of William of Orange in the contexts of the sectarian conflicts and political upheavals of the late eighteenth century, including the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798.

⁶⁵ Interview 653, West Belfast, July 27, 2012.

Interviewee: Well it's about demonstrating our British identity. We carry a Union Flag, we carry an Ulster flag. We carry flags remembering the First and Second World Wars, remembering the conflicts that the United Kingdom has been in.

JB: So does that then make it more political?

Interviewee: You could say that. But, to me that's more, that is the culture of Protestants, that is the culture of British people. In other parts of the UK they do likewise. In Scotland they certainly do.⁶⁶

For him parades are centrally cultural and religious, rather than political. And each time he suggests a political aspect to parades, he immediately clarifies that for him parades are really more cultural. Even when he affirms that that parades help sustain Northern Ireland's constitutional union with the UK, he describes them as cultural. The flags he identifies that parades use to demonstrate British identity and thereby solidify the union are really just "the culture of Protestants [and] British people."

Mark, the Orangeman from Carrickfergus, has views which straddle the two approaches. On the one hand, he makes statements that suggest he believes that parades are inherently political and are used politically. On the other hand, he identified the Northern Irish context as why parades are political. Regarding the former point, he suggests that parades have a political component due the fact that they commemorate political events. "Obviously there is a political part," he said, "I mean the Battle of the Boyne was won in 1690 by the king of England, which in a way heralded a change in almost the constitution of the United Kingdom that guaranteed the rights of everybody." Secondly, he argues that parades today make an explicit political claim. "You know, the parades are almost a statement of what we stand for, and we stand for the union between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.... It is a political statement in that regard. Although, we don't set out — we simply set out to celebrate this is what we are and this is what we stand for, and what we stand for is the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland." But then he also sees the context as shaping the political nature of parades. He provides two comparisons to show how this is the case. First, he said that while parades in Northern Ireland are Protestants saying "we're still here," in the Republic of Ireland, parades might something entirely different since "they have a different set of problems to deal with." And second, he argued that parades have "political connotations ... because ... you are carrying the Union [Flag]." "This is the difference in thinking, Jonathan," he told me. "If there was a parade by a religious group in the United States and they flew the Star Spangled Banner on the parade, would you deem that parade as being political? Probably not. But if you fly the Union Jack in Northern Ireland it's political." So Mark is torn between his understandings of parades' politics. He cannot quite seem to decide whether parades are political by nature or whether Northern Ireland's social, political, and historical context made them so. His reluctance to accept the politics of parades is not unfounded. In fact, it is deeply rooted in the Protestant public discourse around parades. For most participants, as I will now show, there is not even a question. The debate is settled firm with the latter, but with more nefarious explanation.

Parades are not political

Many participants strongly disagree with my assessment. Their belief is that parades are in no way political.⁶⁷ In fact, in this section I will argue that for many participants, parades are anti-political, in that they exist outside the realm of politics. Rather, parades have been strategically

⁶⁶ Interview 927, South Belfast, July 9, 2013

⁶⁷ Also Ramsey 2011, 226-7; Casserly 2010, 11.

politicized by the Republican movement. So parades, which are not political, have been *made* political by the enemies of Protestantism. In the coming pages, I will explore this belief.

For most participants, politics is the domain of elite and electoral competition. In their eyes, politics is about politicians and political parties jockeying for advantage and competing for votes. This is a narrow, but not incorrect, conception of political life.⁶⁸ And by this definition contemporary parades are not especially political. Though the Orange Order was once tightly linked to the Ulster Unionist Party—and therefore Orange parades were practically party rallies—the parading organizations today do not advocate for a particular party.⁶⁹ In large part this is because the membership of parading organizations reflects the panoply of unionist political parties. As Rachel, the East Belfast bandswoman, put it, “We avoid bringing up politics in band because it’s a very, very, very sensitive issue.... It just takes one snide comment and a whole band can be torn apart.”⁷⁰ So in this confined sense, parades are not political.⁷¹

But that is not the main reasoning that drives participants’ belief. Rather, participants believe that parades are not political because they are cultural, which they see as a mutually exclusive category. The two categories are often juxtaposed by participants.⁷² For example, when I asked a bandsman and Apprentice Boy from Lisburn if parades are political, he replied that he “would define Orange parades as cultural.”⁷³ Politics and culture are defined in contrast to each other. Another bandsman stated that, “They wouldn’t be seen as political from anybody there coming from a parading side there. It’s a cultural thing.”⁷⁴ We can see the contrasting concepts used by one very active parader as he compares himself to this brother. His brother is very interested in politics: “he can’t not watch the news every night and he was a member of like the DUP party and stuff he was quite politically minded.” This participant, however, has “no real interest” in politics. Instead, he is interested in parades. “As [for] what I do as in like the Orangeism and the band scene and stuff like... I’m more culturally minded to politically minded.”⁷⁵ Culture and politics, then, are seen as distinct, even opposing, points of view. For this man, culture replaces politics. The contrast between the cultural and the political is made explicit by Rachel, the university-educated band member: “Anytime it’s said that the Twelfth of July is making a political statement, no, it’s not. It’s a cultural statement. The only time that it would be making a political statement [is] if it’s a protest against

⁶⁸ In fact, many political scientists probably agree. For a discussion of varying approaches to “politics” and “the political,” see Mason 1990. The “elite competition as politics” approach is even narrower than what Mason calls the narrow approach, which would be anything having to do with government.

⁶⁹ From 1905 to 2005, the Orange Order sent 15 percent of delegates to the Ulster Unionist Council, the governing body of the Ulster Unionist Party (Kaufmann 2007, 216). The two organizations broke their formal tie in 2005. However, the Order’s real power in the UUP is reflected in one revealing statistic: from the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921 until the imposition of direct rule in 1972, all but three Stormont cabinet ministers were members of the Order (Bryan 2000, 60). Given the Order’s power in the UUP, and the UUP’s control of the government for those five decades, Bryan (2000, 60) has called Twelfth parades “rituals of state.”

⁷⁰ Also Ramsey 2011, 145.

⁷¹ Ramsey (2011, 163) writes that “Participating in a loyalist parade is almost universally seen by outsiders as a display of political and religious allegiance, an act of power or resistance with a political goal. Some within the band may accept such characterization to some degree... Yet... in six years of intensive involvement in the band scene, spanning some of the most politically controversial events of the peace process, I have never heard politics or religion discussed seriously in a bandroom.” Later in his book, Ramsey (2011, 226) describes how the bandsmen he knew referred “to *other* bands as political bands, by which they meant those bands with paramilitary affiliations” (emphasis in the original).

⁷² Also Ramsey 2011, 227.

⁷³ Interview 516, Lisburn, July 30, 2013.

⁷⁴ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

⁷⁵ Interview 672, City Center, August 1, 2013.

[something], like say flag protest, or if it's a civil rights march, then that's political. But if it is cultural, it's not." For Rachel, there is no overlap between culture and politics. Politics is protests and "trying to score political points against other Unionist parties," as she says several moments later; culture is parades, tradition, music, history, and the like. And if it is one, it cannot be the other.

This belief is built on more than just definitional and conceptual distinctions. Parades' non-political character rests on a comparative and empirical foundation as well. One piece of evidence that informants cited to me is that parades are not political because they are a widely enjoyed cultural practice. How can parades in Northern Ireland be political when they are simply one example of a global means of self-expression and celebration that elsewhere is apolitical? One interviewee was certainly correct when he said, "people all around the world celebrate with parades. It's not unique to Orangemen, to Northern Ireland, or to Britain."⁷⁶ So was the North Belfast Orangeman and Apprentice Boy, who provided more details to this argument: "The army has parades, schools in America have parades, they have parades on St Patrick's Day. People want to parade."⁷⁷ And in all of those cases, he argued, there are no political problems. Therefore, the logic insists, parades in Northern Ireland are not political as well.

Secondly, parades are a tradition, in that they have been practiced for a long time. Again, this is true: parades commemorating the Boyne date to the 1740s, the Orange Order held its first parade in 1796, the Apprentice Boys was founded in 1814.⁷⁸ Participants draw two related conclusions from this origins myth. First, since parades have been going on for a long time, they cannot have relevance to contemporary politics. A tradition that began in the eighteenth century and has continued unchanged to the present day, cannot speak to today's political debates. Relatedly, parades are about the past, not the present, so they do not have relevance to contemporary politics. If anything, the era that parades commemorate was a time when Catholics and Protestants were united against a common enemy. As a number of interviewees smugly pointed out to me, William of Orange and Pope Alexander VIII were allies in 1690. How, they ask, can parades which celebrate a cause supported by the Pope himself be considered political by Catholics?

The second conclusion drawn from parades' longevity is that parades cannot be political today because they were not political in the past. By definition, traditions do not change over time. Therefore, the apolitical character of parades continues today. "How can there be a political parade," a West Belfast band captain asked, "when it's been walking that road for one hundred years?"⁷⁹ Yet even the staunchest defender of parades' non-politics recognizes the situation today is different from the situation a century ago. Since the change, by definition, could not be internal, it must have come from outside the parading community. Examining participants' explanation of the change is the subject of the next section.

Parades have been politicized

So parades are not inherently political by their origins, their subject of focus, or their history. Why, then, are parades so contested today? How did they become the subject of such intense political controversy? The nearly universally-held answer is that that parades were politicized by the Republican movement. Sinn Féin, the Provisional IRA, and others deliberately transformed parades into subjects of politics. By doing so, republicans inserted politics where it had not been before. And

⁷⁶ Interview 653, West Belfast, July 27, 2012.

⁷⁷ Interview 289, North Belfast, August 27, 2012.

⁷⁸ Kelly 2000, 15-16; Fraser 2000a, 4; Fraser 2000b, 174. The first known commemoration of William of Orange took place in Cork in 1690, when two days after the Williamite army entered the city the Cork Corporation proclaimed that the date of his entry "should 'be kept as an anniversary [of] thanksgiving.'" Kelly 2000, 12.

⁷⁹ Interview 358, West Belfast, August 18, 2012.

their campaign of politicization succeeded: parades today remain “not political, but they’re *perceived* as political.”⁸⁰ This explains why events which, from their perspective, are and always have been about culture are so political today.

The story informants told me over and over goes like this.⁸¹ For decades, parades were never a contested issue. In fact, they were attended and enjoyed by Protestants and Catholics alike. Many participants tell stories of childhood Catholic friends who wanted to parade with them, or of a Catholic neighbor coming over on the morning of the Twelfth to pin a flower on their father’s lapel. This all changed around the 1980s and 1990s. In those years, Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA developed a strategy to turn the Catholic population vehemently against parades. The intensity of this campaign increased during the peace process as the PIRA began demobilizing its troops and Republican prisoners were released. Suddenly, the Republican leadership needed something for these men to do beyond armed conflict. So, they placed operatives in Catholics communities to manufacture anti-parade emotions and orchestrate local protests against parades. A number of informants referenced a well-known rhetorical question that Gerry Adams asked to a Sinn Féin meeting in Athboy, Ireland in 1997: “Do you think Drumcree happened by accident?”⁸² As protests mounted and succeed in a particular place, Republicans moved their attention to new parade routes, with the intention of one day banning all parades from Northern Ireland.⁸³

This narrative, often in far less detail, is ubiquitous among my interviews. For example, the West Belfast-based band captain remembered that “twenty years ago on the Twelfth day, Catholics used to come out. Now it’s all been IRA orchestrated to try to stop bands going where they want to go. The bands used to go by Catholic areas and they would turn the radio up: live and let live, it’ll be by in a minute. But now they’re out in the streets trying to stop parades. It has changed.” An Orange chaplain and Presbyterian minister also has rosy memories of a bygone era: “Neighbors lived at peace with each other. What has happened is that we’ve all become contentious now. You know, you didn’t need a Parades Commission before the Troubles.”⁸⁴ One bandsman told me that “the reality is people have marched down the same road there for umpteen years, so they have there, without causing offense until Sinn Féin/IRA politicized it.”⁸⁵ Or in Mark’s telling, “During the thirty years [of the Troubles] the republican community weren’t interested in parades, because they had other

⁸⁰ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

⁸¹ The history is also recounted by parading’s senior leaders in public addresses. See, for example, Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland Drew Nelson’s speech of January 17, 2014, excerpted in “Is the Long War on the Orange Order Over?,” available at: <http://www.grandorangelodge.co.uk/news>. Accessed 9 February 2014.

⁸² Drumcree Church parade was the most contested parade in the mid-1990s. Dominic Bryan point out to me the irony that this is the only thing Gerry Adams ever said that these men believe.

⁸³ Parts of this account are accurate. There was a Republican strategy to target parades that began in those years, and Adams was reported to have said that (O’Doherty 1998, 173-76 and 183; Frampton 2009, 126-7; Dingley 2002, 42-79; Neumann 2005, 85-86; though Bryan [2001, 45] cautions that we should not give too much credit to the strategic view which “underestimates the local community dynamics that have long existed in places such as the Garvaghy Road and the political space the peace process created for public opposition to parades”). However, my informants’ interpretation of the years before 1980s is the result of selective memory (e.g., on parades and Protestant-Catholic violence in the nineteenth century, see Farrell 2000 and Doyle 2009.). My point is not to dismiss their understanding of history, rather it is to investigate how their understanding of the past works in the present. What kind of power does this narrative have and how does it affect behavior? For a general account of cultural polarization following political polarization, see Swidler (2001, 169-75). She specifically addresses ethnic conflict in note 10 on page 259. For a similar analysis to mine also based on interviews with Protestants, see Southern 2008, 79-80 (though Southern only interviews elites). On recent dynamics, especially the irony that the residents groups got too powerful and now Sinn Féin cannot control them, see Patterson 2011, 75-6.

⁸⁴ Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

⁸⁵ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

things on their mind: how they were going to plan their next atrocity, who they were going to murder next. They seem to have changed tactics and come away from that. ‘Ok, let’s pick a soft target now during the peace process,’ which is a parade.”

The story they tell is of a passive Protestant community being acted on by Republican activists.⁸⁶ Paraders are not agents in their own history; politicization happened to them. Participants spoke of parades being “pulled into politics” by “a very serious negative propaganda attack from Sinn Féin.”⁸⁷ Unionists and Loyalists watched as “the Republican agenda played out in parades.”⁸⁸ “The situation has been politicized,” one said.⁸⁹ As in these examples, when speaking of parades, participants tended to use the passive voice; but when talking about Republicans, their verbs are active, and their language is the language of conspiracy: “There was a deliberate policy formulated by Sinn Féin/IRA... when they were in prison”; “Sinn Féin created the controversy and problems.... Sinn Féin made them controversial”; parades become contentious when “republicans deem them to be contentious”; republicans “sectarianize the unionist tunes”; “They’re going out of the way to cause problems.”⁹⁰ A member of the Orange Order and a band summarized the sentiment: “It’s all orchestrated. It’s created, deliberately created conflict where there was no conflict.”⁹¹

A conclusion drawn from this narrative is that all anti-parade sentiment is artificial.⁹² The only people who are offended by parades choose to be offended by parades. And they choose to be offended by parades because they hate Protestants and want to drive them off of the island of Ireland. Therefore, any opposition to parades is illegitimate.

Sherill Stroschein (2012, 238) also finds that people tend to blame ethnic mobilization by another group on that other group’s elites. In her study of Romania and Slovakia, she demonstrates that people see elite manipulation at work in the other ethnic group’s mobilization but not their own group’s. From this she draws the interesting conclusion that this is a mechanism to reduce tensions in the daily interactions with members of the other ethnicity. Rather than blame your neighbor for contentious mobilization, you can blame their elites for manipulating them, and that way you can continue shopping at their stores and saying hello on the street. I interpret this tendency to blame rival elites in Northern Ireland very differently. Rather than facilitate good relations, I see it as stripping “the enemy” of their own autonomy and agency. It transforms the other group into one undifferentiated whole who are slaves to their masters. In the context of Protestant-Catholic relations this builds from and feeds into the old idea that Catholics just follow orders. It is at least partially rooted in theological differences between the two faiths, where Protestantism is seen as rooted in personal choice, while Catholicism is rooted in submission.⁹³ Placing the blame on Republican elites reinforces the idea that “Home Rule equals Rome Rule.”

⁸⁶ It is common for groups to view their rivals as far more organized and unified than themselves, or than the rival actually is. Jervis 1978, chap. 8, “Perceptions of Centralization.”

⁸⁷ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012.

⁸⁸ Interview 987, East Belfast, July 23, 2012.

⁸⁹ Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

⁹⁰ Interview 509, City Center, December 12, 2012; Interview 653, West Belfast, July 27, 2012; Mark; Interview 927, South Belfast, July 9, 2013; Interview 578, West Belfast, August 13, 2012.

⁹¹ Interview 547, Lurgan, August 6, 2013.

⁹² Or perhaps even coerced. One parader told me the following: “I had a very good friends in there who are Catholics and talking to them and chatting like the way we are, they would say, ‘The parade’s been going down here for a lifetime. It didn’t annoy me, because I didn’t go to see it. But I didn’t tell you that. I can’t openly say that. If I openly say that, I would be told to get out.’ So they’d be under pressure for that” (Interview 547, Lurgan, August 6, 2013). And another related to me that “I have been told by Catholic friends that they were visited by Sinn Féin activists and told that if they got anywhere near Orange parades, the Twelfth of July, well, the repercussions would be fair — further down the road, so then they stopped coming” (Interview 430, December 5, 2012). Whether or not these stories are true, they are certainly part of the dominant narrative.

⁹³ Bell (2013, 5, 7, 61-71, 106)

Culture, Politics, and Anti-Politics

Through all my discussions of the politics (or lack of politics) of parades with participants, a strong theme emerged. Most participants distanced parades from politics. I have already discussed the two explicitly articulated arguments for this distance: (1) that politics is the realm of elite competition, and (2) politics and culture are mutually excluding worlds. However, these do not explain why there is such a strong and sustained resistance to thinking of parades as political. We can see this opposition emerge in my dialogues with participants. I would often push them on the political implications and message of parades, but they would push back. Sometimes they would even list aspects of parades that appear patently political, even by their definition—such as helping maintain the union—but then when I asked, “well doesn’t that make them political?” they would revert to “no, no, no, it’s cultural.” In this section I will address why. First, participants’ approach to politics is shaped by an understanding of the world where culture is inherently good and politics is inherently bad. Second, I argue that there is power in the discourse of anti-politics. This discourse shapes debates and political outcomes because if parades are political they are open to criticism, but if they are not political, they are immune from critique and they are protected from compromise. Participants, therefore, want parades to be outside of politics because, ironically, there is political power in the claim of transcending politics.⁹⁴ So parades are more than just passively apolitical, they are actively anti-political.

For most participants, as previously discussed, politics and culture are separate spheres of social life. Politics is the sphere of politicians, their parties, and their competition for power. Culture, meanwhile, is the sphere of faith, tradition, and heritage. Layered on top of this distinction is an implicit normative ranking: culture is good, politics is bad. Culture is pure, politics is corrupt. Culture is about communal identity, politics is about individual greed. This negative view of politics emerges in their language and argumentation. Parades are “tarnished as being political,” Rachel, the university-educated bandswoman, told me. Politics is dirty and soils parades. For one thing, politics is about naked self-interest. As George, the Orange leader, told it, parades “crept into the political realm because various politicians have used the political network to assist their own ends.” He put the blame on Sinn Féin, but then also criticized “our political people, who have used it for their own ends when needed.”

Part of this conceptual division is the idea that “we” do culture, but “they” do politics. Informants argued that Nationalists even pushed politics on their own culture. Irish nationalists politicized, and therefore excluded Protestants from, elements of Irish culture such as the Irish language and St. Patrick’s Day.⁹⁵ Likewise, Republicans made parades political to serve their political agenda. The West Belfast-based band leader summed up the general thinking. He was telling me about protests orchestrated by the IRA, so I asked him, “Why is the IRA interested in

⁹⁴ See also Bryan 2000, esp. chap. 10, “‘Tradition,’ Control, and Resistance.” Ramsey (2011, 228) suggests a third reason why bandmen in particular resist a political label, “music defined as ‘political’ is devalued *as music*” (emphasis in the original).

⁹⁵ Interview 927, West Belfast, December 4, 2012; Interview 430, December 5, 2012. In a speech at the weekly loyalist protest in North Belfast, Grand Master of the Belfast County Orange Lodge, George Chittick, warned Protestants against learning the Irish language because “it’s part of the republican agenda.” According to the BBC, “He said the Irish language had not been ‘political’ in the past, but this had been changed in recent times by republicans.” Mark Simpson, “Orangeman says Protestants should not learn Irish language,” *BBC News Online*, 1 February 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26000146>. Accessed 5 February 2014. Again, Gerry Adams has made statements which back up their claim. For example, he wrote: “The revival of the Irish language as the badge of identity, as a component part of our culture and as the filter through which it is exposed, is a central aspect of the reconquest.” Adams 2000, 139, cited in Kearney 2007, 128.

this?” “They want to break the loyalists down. They want a united Ireland,” he replied.⁹⁶ All of the protests, all of the anger, all of the restrictions, then, are part of the Republican agenda leading to a united Ireland. And they are able to do this because Republicans are brilliant strategists and excellent manipulators. Protestants, on the other hand, are just plain-spoken, honest folk who were outgunned from every angle, so to speak. So “they” do politics with their “sophisticated republican propaganda teams,” their “real propaganda machine.”⁹⁷ And it has worked because “the Republican media/PR machine has been so good,” as Mark put it. A Presbyterian Orange chaplain explained the problem: “They’re better at manipulating the press, they’re better at spin... We’re blunt and straight to the point... We call a spade a spade, that’s what it is. We don’t flower it up or dress it up, and sometimes that straight truth needs dressing up. Republicans dress it up, so people tend to believe what republicans are saying.”⁹⁸ So “they,” with their sophisticated propaganda machine, play politics, while “we” do what we’ve always done, culture.

In bemoaning the politicization of parades, participants also yearn for the lost innocence of the “good old days,” a mythic past of ethnic harmony under Unionist rule. The contrast between the friendly parades of the halcyon, pre-political era and today’s anger and hyper-contestation could not be clearer. “When Unionists controlled the country, we could parade anywhere. There were no such thing as contentious parades,” a university-educated bandsman told me.⁹⁹ An Orange chaplain recalled the era when “the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary, an all-Protestant police force] policed all those parades and there never was really any trouble.”¹⁰⁰ But these statements inadvertently reveal the trick. The earlier era was not pre-political, parades were *always* tied up with politics and political power. It’s just that they used to like the politics, since it permitted them, and in fact helped them, to “parade anywhere” they liked. But, as I discussed previously, their general understanding of the historical shift from quiescence to protest is that Catholics’ attitudes changed, not that the balance of power in government changed. This is reflected in the heartfelt desire expressed by several participants that one day Catholics would come to love parades as much as Protestants do. As Walter, the West Belfast bandsman, said: “I wish they could feel the passion that we feel.” “I would love the day,” a middle-aged Apprentice Boy mused, “and I think it probably does happen but it’s not being reported—I want to see the day when the Catholic community can come out and enjoy it. Enjoy the spectacle of it and enjoy the music of the bands. That’s the way it used to be whenever I was growing up... We would have traveled into Belfast, whenever we were young teenagers and them guys [Catholic friends] would come with us to watch the parade.”¹⁰¹ If only the future would be like the past, everything will return to normal. For many paraders, the solution to current problems surrounding parades is for Catholics to accept, or even embrace, loyalist parades, just liked they did in their memories and interpretations of the past.

There is a second aspect to the language of anti-politics and the logic of de-politicization. There is power in anti-politics. The idea is that culture transcends politics and is therefore exempt from the practices of democratic politics, including critique, debate, and compromise. Culture and cultural practices, as anti-political phenomena, are simply beyond the reach of democratic processes and procedures. The discourses of culture and tradition are thereby a free pass to act in ways that

⁹⁶ Interview 358, West Belfast, August 18, 2012.

⁹⁷ Interview 752, East Belfast, July 20, 2012; Robert. Relatedly, there is a widespread sentiment amongst my informants that the media is out to get Protestants, in general, and parades, in particular. Also NIYF 2013, 29

⁹⁸ Interview 803, East Belfast, August 14, 2012.

⁹⁹ Interview 987, East Belfast, July 23, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Interview 911, City Center, August 12, 2013.

¹⁰¹ Interview 578, West Belfast, August 13, 2012.

would not normally be acceptable in society. As traditional cultural practices, parades simply have to be accepted.

What do I mean by anti-politics? By identifying parades claims and rhetoric as anti-political, I intend to highlight their view that parades are not merely not political, but above and beyond politics. This is similar to the distinction that Hannah Arendt (1998, 242) makes in *The Human Condition*, when she argues that “love... is not only apolitical but antipolitical.” Anti-political is a stronger, more extreme stance than just apolitical. Something that is apolitical is passively not political, whereas being anti-political is an active and antagonistic stance against politics and the political. Things that are anti-political are not on the same spectrum as things that are political; there is an absolute difference in kind.¹⁰²

Other scholars have identified the use and power of anti-political discourses in a range of issues. For example, political theorist Wendy Brown (2004, 543) writes that human rights “generally presents itself as something of an antipolitics—a pure defense of innocent and the powerless against power, a pure defense of the individual against immense and potentially cruel or despotic machineries of culture, state, war, ethnic conflict, tribalism, patriarchy, and other mobilizations or instantiations of collective power against individuals.” It is human rights’ very anti-politics, she argues, that allows it to pursue political projects (including liberal imperial expansion) unquestioned. Historian Samuel Moyn also finds that the human rights movement and its predecessors mobilized the language of anti-politics to its advantage. For example, in discussing Warsaw Pact dissidents of the 1970s, he writes that “In reality, of course, the movement ‘was political in the sense that it threatened the foundations of Soviet power.’ But it was based on a politics that worked precisely by claiming to transcend politics” (2010, 136-7).¹⁰³ The moralism of human rights that Brown and Moyn identify as anti-political, has been similarly observed in other social movements. Deborah Gould (2009, 378-92) identifies and theorizes the role of moralism in the fracturing of the AIDS activist group, ACT UP. She finds that moralism can supplant real political dialogue, since moralizing claims question the very essence of your opponent. Therefore, covering an issue with moralizing rhetoric removes it from it the possibility of political debate, persuasion, bargains, or compromise.

Anti-political rhetoric is also powerful outside of social movements. In possibly the most well-known argument about anti-politics, James Ferguson (1990) argues that the anti-political, technocratic rhetoric of economic development is a source of power for the development industry. He concludes that “the ‘development’ apparatus” is an “anti-politics machine” whose trick is “the suspension of politics from even the most sensitive political operations.” By using its variation on Midas’s Touch, “a ‘development’ project can end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under the cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object” (256).

Presenting an issue as anti-political operates in all three approaches to power identified by scholars.¹⁰⁴ Within the one-dimensional approach to power (Dahl 1957), the discourse of anti-politics can be used to influence decision-makers. It is a resource to be wielded by *A* in their bargaining with *B* to resolve a conflict over issue *J*. Within the two-dimensional approach to power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962), claiming an issue as anti-political is a way to get that issue off the agenda in the first place. The second face of power is where this discourse’s influence really takes shape. There may

¹⁰² Perhaps a more precise term would be “extra-political,” which would make clear that I mean outside of politics, rather than merely opposed to politics, but anti-political and anti-politics are more commonly use terms.

¹⁰³ He is quoting Boobbyer 2005, 89. Looking specifically at the Polish opposition, David Ost (1990, 16-17) argues that not only did they need to reject state-centered politics, they wanted to abandon state-centered politics in favor of civil society. “Anti-politics... is not a negation of politics,” he writes, “but a relocation of the political public from state to society. It is this ‘anti-political’ project that is crucial to understanding Solidarity’s practice.”

¹⁰⁴ My understanding was greatly improved by the discussion in Gaventa 1980, 5-20.

still be a conflict between *A* and *B* over issue *J*, but *J* is never put up for debate since it is not a political issue and therefore *B* is prevented from raising the issue in political fora. Within the three-dimensional approach to power (Lukes 1974), the discourse of anti-politics affects *B* so profoundly that *J*, which is objectively detrimental to *B*, is not even considered a problem by *B*. Here too the power of anti-politics can be profound. *B* cannot even get to the point of conceiving that *J* is detrimental because they are convinced that *J* exists outside the realm of political conflict.

This source of power is not lost on many groups and causes who try to use it to their advantage in the defense of culture and traditional practices. The rhetoric of anti-politics is commonly used in an attempt to influence political outcomes related to cultural issues. For example, historian David Hollinger (2008, 145-6) argues that Americans tend to “give religious ideas a pass,” meaning that they follow the “convention of protecting religious ideas from the same kind of critical scrutiny to which we commonly subject ideas about almost everything else.” This convention is not only founded on the “virtues of decency and humility,” but also a “constitutional tradition that does indeed treat religious ideas as a distinct category. . . . [And] a history of religious diversity that renders silence a good way to keep the peace.” The result of this convention is that American politicians frequently justify their positions on religious grounds and their critics cannot question their reasoning. Religion is a “conversation-stopper,” as Richard Rorty (1994, 1-6; cited in Hollinger 2008, 145) wrote. Proponents of controversial practices such as female genital cutting and flying the Confederate flag in the American south appeal to culture and tradition to defend their actions. By shifting the debate to culture and tradition, these actors are arguing that society needs to them a pass. By appealing to culture and tradition, they are moving the debate away from politics.

We see the same logic at work with loyalist parades. If parades are political, then they are open to normal democratic politics and processes. Compromise becomes a necessary part of doing business. Accepting restraints and restrictions on parades becomes inevitable. And, possibly worst of all, to be political is to acknowledge the legitimacy of nationalist opposition. It means taking their complaints seriously, which in turn requires a hard look in the mirror and the possibility of seeing something unexpected and undesirable. The distinction between “good, cultural us” and “bad, political them” disappears, and suddenly the moral landscape is level. This, then, is the protection provided by the anti-politics of culture and tradition. It protects parades from the inevitable distasteful compromises inherent in democratic politics; and it protects participants’ moral vision of the world.

Now we are in a better position to understand why for many paraders culture, including parades, is not just defined as not political, but in contradistinction to politics—hence my use of “anti-politics.” Additionally, this framework explains why even participants who explained to me the patently political functions and effects of parades, ardently refused to call them political. We see this, for example, with Robert, a kind, retired-factory worker very active in the Orange Order in West Belfast:

JB: Now is parading at all political?

Robert: Well I don’t think so. Now there was a time it would have been termed that [because of the connection to the UUP], but I’m thinking over the last 30 years it’s not, it used to be everything had to be a politician on the field, but you find a lot of places that wouldn’t be. Yes, there’s members of the Orange Order that are politicians and they’d maybe speak, but it’s normally they’ve done away with the political, excuse me, agenda so.

JB: So I mean does parading help to maintain the union?

Robert: Yes, it does let people see we're still here and we haven't gone away and I think that's one of the main things.

JB: What's one of the main things?

Robert: That we see that we maintain the Union with Great Britain. [It] lets people see we're still very strong in numbers. ...

JB: So if parading relates to Unionism, isn't that—is that not political? Or is that—

Robert: Not really. I would say most of the Orangemen would—Alliance people not many and some, well, quite a lot of independents, but most of the Orangemen would be of a Unionist family background. No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say it was political.

He had just told me that helping to maintain the constitution union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is “one of the main things” about parades. It is also, of course, *the* main thing in Northern Irish politics. But then then when I pushed him to acknowledge the politics involved in that action he demurred and returned to a discussion of party politics.

We see the same dynamic with Walter, the bandsman from a West Belfast interface community. He first argues that parades are non-political on the grounds that they are unrelated to political parties.

JB: So, I mean, some people would argue, right, that parading in general is political. I'm assuming you would disagree.

Walter: Well we don't have any political agenda.

[...]

Walter: I don't really know any bands that are [political]. The DUP probably would have had—

JB: Well maybe not party political, but political in kind of, I mean even in the most basic sense of the sovereignty issue or the constitutional issue. Does that play—

Walter: No.

JB: That plays no role in it?

Walter: No, not to a great extent. A lot of people believe that they want to be British, but it wouldn't be played out in a role within a band. The band wouldn't play a role of being—of wanting to keep the union, if you know what I mean. People in the band, yes, they want to keep the union, but they wouldn't use the band as a means towards an end.

Political agendas are things that politicians and political parties have. Cultural organizations, such as his band, do not have political agendas. People in cultural organizations hold political beliefs, but they do not emerge in that setting. But then later in the interview, I asked him if parading has a goal, and he said, “I think it has. It shows that we're still here. It shows that the people still want to be part

of Ulster. They want to remain loyalist, they don't want to be part of anything else, just our own— This is our wee country. This is our band's walk on the streets to show that we can do, how many of us there is, and that's the support there is for our cause, which is loyalism." So somehow for Walter wanting to be part of Ulster, opposing a united Ireland, and supporting the (political) cause of loyalism is not a political agenda. He builds this contradiction, I argue, because the admitting that there is politics in parade is an unbearable situation.

We can also now see how anti-politics is used to dismiss criticism and compromise. My discussion in the previous pages helps us understand two of the most illuminating things said to me during interviews. The first is from a senior member of the Orange Order and retired Unionist politician. I asked him, "Are parades at all political?" And he replied, "I don't think that they seem to be political. Some can be. I mean, there have been political processions in Belfast, but the Orange parade is not a political parade as such. The speeches designated by the Grand Lodge, the resolutions to which the speakers are asked to speak as to loyalty, as citizens to the United Kingdom. *That could be perceived as political if you don't like the United Kingdom*" (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁵ In his response, he first distinguishes between political parades and Orange parades. Then, he states that the resolutions proclaimed at parades are not political, rather they are merely about citizenship and loyalty to the state. His last quoted sentence, however, is the most illuminating: "That could be perceived as political if you don't like the United Kingdom." Seeing politics where there is not any is a pathology caused by hatred of the Union. It has nothing to do with the parades themselves. In other words, we need not take these people seriously, because they are not serious people. By calling parades political, this Orange doyen argues, the opponents of parades show their true cards.

The second remark comes from Rachel, the university-educated female band member from East Belfast. I have already quoted a piece of it earlier, but reproduce the entire segment here:

They're tarnished as being political because the other side would see that as being political, but when you're in them with your other friends, they're not political, they're cultural. This is one thing that keeps getting told off is that—again that girl said it on the documentary¹⁰⁶—as it being that this is a political problem. It's not a political problem, it's a cultural problem but it's ingrained in the minds of people that it's a political problem because Sinn Féin always puts it down as being over politics. I don't see— You know, fair enough, people see Ardoyne as being a political tension point because who's the first people to come out and stand by? It's politicians. *But it's cultural, they're not respective of our culture.* [Emphasis is mine.]

She begins by contrasting the cultural experience of parades with the false and negative perception of parades as political. Therefore, the problems surrounding parades are cultural problems, not political problems. And then she identifies the cultural problem: "they're not respective of our culture." The crux of the issue is that Republicans do not like Protestants, end of story. The implication being that no political solution is possible. Dialogue will not fix the problem, reason will not fix the problem, compromise will not fix the problem. These are political hammers that simply cannot bend this cultural nail. The logic of anti-politics leads to no other conclusion. Opponents cannot have a legitimate problem with parades because as cultural events there is nothing to object to, unless you object to the entire premise of Protestants in your presence. This is made clear in a large banner that was carried by a group of women in 2013 Twelfth parade and that I have also seen displayed by

¹⁰⁵ Interview 949, South Belfast, July 19, 2013.

¹⁰⁶ BBC Three had just aired *Petrol Bombs and Peace: Welcome to Belfast*, an hour-long documentary on parades and protest in North Belfast.

parade supporters in Ardoyne: “End hatred of Orange culture.” The message is clear: opposition to parades is caused by and reflects hatred of Protestant culture.

The discourse of tradition and cultural anti-politics does a lot of work for participants. It justifies their actions and delegitimizes opposition. It explains why other people object to them and simultaneously removes their objections from the agenda. Acknowledging the politics imbedded in parades opens the door to a number of distasteful outcomes. The platform of anti-politics, conversely, keeps the door tightly sealed. Therein lies the power of anti-politics.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored what parades look like from the perspective of the men and women who march in them. I argued that participants see parades as three types of collective actions: opportunities for the expression, celebration, and commemoration of Protestantism in its multiple facets; events designed to achieve some outcome, including symbolic communication with Catholics, creation of pan-Protestant unity, and the promulgation and survival of Protestant culture; and social get-togethers for friends, family, and the community at large. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, parades combine elements of each to generate highly meaningful and enjoyable experiences for individual participants.

The second half of the chapter examined in depth the question of parades’ political character. I found that most participants see parades as not just apolitical, but anti-political, meaning that they exist outside of the political sphere. I then analyzed the work performed by the language of anti-politics, concluding that parades’ anti-politics allows participants to dismiss the claims of Catholic protesters and shut down any discussion of compromise. This move protects both parades and parades’ self-image as respectable guardians of Protestant culture, faith, and history. As a whole, I hope this chapter gives readers a glance at parades from behind the flags, banners, and drums. The next chapter builds on this analysis and explores what parades feel like from this same perspective. Once we can imagine what it is that parades are to and do for participants, we will finally be able to approach the question of why they participate.