

Identity on the March: Contentious Rituals in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

Jonathan S. Blake¹

Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Political Science

Columbia University

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Abstract: Contested cultural expressions such as ethnic processions, the display of religious symbols, pilgrimages, and commemorative ceremonies raise intergroup tensions and trigger violence in divided societies around the world. Yet we know little about who participates in these contentious cultural events or why they do so. Existing theories premised on the logics of ethnic rivalry and collective action fail to explain individual-level variation in participation. To fully understand this political behavior, I propose that we should recognize it as an example of ritual. Building on theories of ritual in sociology, anthropology, and religious studies, as well as the contentious politics literature, I argue that participation is motivated by the process-oriented benefits intrinsic to the act of taking part in a symbol-laden public tradition. I test this argument with data from an original household survey and semi-structured interviews from Northern Ireland, where contested parades by Protestant organizations are a major source of Protestant-Catholic tension, conflict, and violence.

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As I walked apprehensively through the parked phalanx of armored police vehicles, my heart raced and two things struck me as bizarre. First, though the situation just a few yards to my left teetered on the edge of violence, no one stopped me as I made my way from the Catholic rioters' area to behind the tight police line forming on the other side of the cars. And, second, this tumult erupted from a parade.

By the time I emerged from the commotion, the parade had passed, but a few of its Protestants supporters lingered—and the palpable tension remained much longer. The broader curiosity, however, is that this script—parade-protest-violence—is common in Belfast, Northern Ireland. While most Protestants see loyalist parades such as this one as an essential tradition celebrating their faith, culture, and history and a proud display of their loyalty to the United Kingdom, most Catholics see them as triumphalist and incendiary demonstrations by anti-Catholic organizations dedicated to Protestant supremacy. As a result, controversial parades by Protestant organizations remain a primary source of inter-ethnic tension and violence and an impediment to Northern Ireland's transition from war to consolidated peace.

This dynamic, however, is not unique to Northern Ireland. Across the globe, people choose to participate in “contested cultural expressions” that heighten tension and trigger violence in divided and post-conflict societies (Ross 2007). Disputed ethnic and religious practices help determine the form (Davis 1973), timing (Tambiah 1996), and location (Feldman 1991) of violence around the world. For example, Hindu religious processions through Muslim neighborhoods frequently trigger riots in India (Jaffrelot 1998; Wilkinson 2004) and pilgrimages were often occasions for violence in Mandatory Palestine (Wasserstein 1988). Even when they do not spark violence, cultural practices such as flying flags, celebrating national holidays,

erecting monuments, pilgrimages to sacred sites, ritual animal slaughter, visits to cemeteries, commemorative ceremonies, and mass worship can exacerbate tensions between groups and make conflicts more difficult to resolve.

Despite the central causal role that these sparks and triggers play in the dynamics of ethnic conflict, scholars generally leave them untheorized and assume that they will simply appear, particularly if it is in the interest of elites (e.g., Wilkinson 2004, 24). But polarizing cultural practices are often mass events involving many individuals, so we cannot presume participation (Olson 1965). This paper, therefore, asks an important question about ethnic conflict: *Why do ordinary people choose to take part in collective actions that drive a wedge between groups, fan the flames of suspicion and hostility, and occasionally spark violence?*

Existing theories of provocative behavior rest on narrowly instrumentalist assumptions that hinder a complete explanation of participation in loyalist parades. I argue this is because parades and many other triggers of conflict are rituals—“symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive” (Kertzer 1988, 9)—a distinct and non-instrumental type of collective action. Describing an act as “ritual” is often a way to ignore it or dismiss it as “merely symbolic,”² but I argue that it is exactly the ritual character of these contested events that holds the key to their explanation. Drawing on the extensive literatures on ritual in sociology, anthropology, and religious studies, I provide two general insights that help explain why individuals participate. In brief, the first is that participating in a ritual is not just “going through the motions;” participation offers distinct and specific “process-regarding benefits” (Wood 2003, 240), benefits inherent in the process or experience of acting collectively in a meaningful

² Religion scholar Jonathan Z. Smith (1992, 102) attributes the general denigration of ritual in Western scholarship to the “Protestant insistence on the ‘emptiness’ of ritual.”

activity. Process-regarding benefits can, thus, motivate action without consideration of the act's consequences. The second insight is that the meaning of ritual is ambiguous, which allows for multiple, even conflicting, meanings to exist simultaneously. Hence, participants need not share an understanding of their actions with other members of society, or even among themselves.

I test my argument against the alternative theories with original data on individual-level participation in Protestant loyalist parades collected during eight months of fieldwork in Northern Ireland. First, I use quantitative data from a randomized household survey of parade participants and comparable nonparticipants that I conducted in 2013. Second, I analyze semi-structured interviews with 82 participants and nonparticipants. By collecting data from both participants and nonparticipants, my research addresses shortcomings in existing studies of parades (McAuley, Tonge, and Mycock 2011) and other “cultural forms of political expression” (Taylor, Rupp, and Gamson 2004, 106), which only sample participants.

My argument and evidence challenge influential theories of ethnic conflict that are based on the instrumental logics of ethnic rivalry and collective action. The ethnic rivalry explanation of conflict assumes that individuals act to achieve an outcome oriented at a rival ethnic group, such as provocation or humiliation. The collective action explanation of conflict assumes that individuals act to maximize personal material gain. Thus both theories treat participation in parades as means toward an external end, whereas I show that people approach participation in ritual parades as an end in and of itself. They do not view parades instrumentally. Though the ethnic rivalry and collective action approaches to ethnic conflict have proven to be powerful explanatory tools in a wide range of contexts, by attributing instrumental motives to participants, they do not explain variation among individuals in Northern Ireland. Contrary to the expectations

of ethnic rivalry theories of conflict, I find that participants are not more anti-Catholic or pro-Protestant than nonparticipants. And contrary to the predictions of collective action theories, I find that participants do not receive material benefits and that pre-existing social ties do not increase the likelihood of participation.

By developing an argument about participation in rituals and applying it to the case of loyalist parades in Northern Ireland, my research makes three important contributions. First, I expand our view of political participation and contentious politics to include cultural practices, which, despite their political significance, are often ignored by political scientists.³ Second, I further the social scientific understanding of rituals and other cultural practices by highlighting the question of choice faced by potential participants. Third, I build on the multidisciplinary field of ritual studies to develop a novel argument about participation in contentious political events. By approaching participation through the lens of ritual, I provide a proactive perspective on expressive motivation and behavior, which are generally used as a residual explanation when instrumental accounts fail (Schuessler 2000). For example, studies of violent situations have provided evidence that expressive benefits can motivate collective action in the absence of instrumentally rational motives (e.g. Wood 2003; Einwohner 2003). But the instability of such circumstances is not conducive to the assumptions of rational choice theory. In contrast, the stability and predictability of parades provide an easy test for instrumental rational choice theories. Thus the failure of the instrumental accounts to explain participation in parades presents a strong challenge to these theories' universal applicability. In addition to these conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions, this paper helps explain a seemingly intractable political

³ See Harris and Gillion 2010 for a general call for a broader view of political participation in American politics.

problem in contemporary Northern Ireland that regularly escalates Protestant-Catholic tension and violence.

In the remainder of this paper, I elaborate the argument of ritual participation and support it with original data from Northern Ireland. First, I set the stage by describing the politics of parading in Northern Ireland. Next, I introduce the concept of ritual and show how rituals do and do not fit into existing conceptualizations of collective action. I then develop an individual-level theory of participation in rituals. Following that, I review how dominant theories of ethnic conflict explain participation in parades. I then describe the quantitative and qualitative data used to test the competing hypotheses, my empirical strategy for analysis, and how it corrects for biases in existing studies. In the first of two empirical sections, I demonstrate statistically that ethnic rivalry and collective action approaches to conflict are insufficient to explain participation in parades. Second, I provide evidence from the survey and semi-structured interviews to support the ritual interpretation. Finally, I conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for our understanding of political participation and raising questions for further research.

Parades in Northern Ireland

Each year in Northern Ireland, Protestant organizations perform 2,500 parades to display their allegiance to the Protestant faith, the Protestant people of Ulster, and the constitutional union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain (see Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000).⁴ During

⁴ A note on terminology: unless otherwise specified, I use “Protestant” and “Catholic” to refer to the two main ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. The terms do not imply religious beliefs or practices. Since I am writing primarily about ethnic relations, I use those terms rather than unionist/loyalist or nationalist/republican, which are political designations, not ascriptive identity groups. Unionism refers to the belief, held mainly by Protestants, that Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom, while nationalism refers to the belief, held mainly by Catholics, that Northern Ireland should unite with the Republic of Ireland. The more extreme version of unionism, often associated with support for paramilitary violence, is loyalism; its nationalist counterpart is republicanism.

parades, participants use their bodies, uniforms, flags, banners, and music to demonstrate their culture and their views to the world. The parades are often festive events along routes lined with cheering fans waving flags and happily singing along to the tunes. Most parades take place in the spring and summer, with the pinnacle of the parading season on the Twelfth of July. On that day, tens of thousands of members of the Orange Order and marching bands parade past throngs of supporters in cities and towns around Northern Ireland to celebrate and commemorate the military victory of the Protestant King William III (of Orange) over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

However, in Northern Ireland's divided social landscape, not all citizens view the parades favorably. Many, if not most Catholics, see parades as anti-Catholic triumphalism and provocative "carnival[s] of hate."⁵ They associate the Loyal Orders with Protestant domination and the marching bands, particularly self-styled "blood-and-thunder" or "kick the Pope" bands, with loyalist paramilitaries. The Twelfth of July, to take the most well-known example, marks a great victory for Protestants, but for Catholics, the battle marks the start of a long era of subjugation to Protestant supremacy. The Twelfth's content and form symbolize the subsequent centuries of Protestant hegemony in Ireland. Most Catholics would prefer not to have this indignity rubbed in their faces. Consequently, groups of Catholic residents often protest parades, causing the police to occasionally block the marchers from entering certain streets. Disputes over parades increase communal tension, harm the political peace process, and undermine grassroots peace-building on a regular basis.

⁵ "A Carnival of Hate," *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, July 4, 1996, quoted in Frampton 2008, 126.

This sectarian divide is clearly evident in public opinion on the issue: in a 2010 survey, 72% of Catholics and 8% of Protestants stated that parades should not be permitted in Catholic neighborhoods, while 0.3% of Catholics and 48% of Protestants stated that the parades should be allowed to march anywhere they like (Tonge, Hayes, and Mitchell 2010). These disputes occasionally precipitate violence, including significant riots in 2012 and 2013. The seemingly endless cycles of parades, protests, and violence embody what Brendan O’Leary and John McGarry (1993) call Northern Ireland’s “politics of antagonism.”

Though very few parades each year are protested—and even fewer turn violent—all of them are intimately political. Every parade makes a claim about the central question of politics: who should rule? Their answer—the United Kingdom—clashes with the aspirations of many Catholics who seek a united Ireland, free from British dominion. Though the claim is often made obliquely through the use of flags, music, and other symbols, it touches on the question that has dominated politics in Northern Ireland—and before that, all of Ireland—for over a century.

Although all major parties agreed to the end of violence in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, tension between Protestant and Catholic communities persists. In fact, disputes over parades are a major arena in which the conflict between the two communities is continued. The most well-known parading dispute occurred in the mid-1990s, as the peace process commenced, in the small city of Portadown. In 1995, Catholic residents organized to stop the Orange Order’s annual parade to and from Drumcree Church, which passed through their neighborhood, but the police forced Catholic protesters off the road to allow the marchers through. The following year, the police announced that the parade had to be re-routed elsewhere, but Protestants across the province responded with protests and violence, so the police reversed their decision. The police

forcibly removed Catholic protesters once again in 1997, but in 1998, the Catholic residents won and ever since the police have blocked parades from entering the area.

A similar dynamic is ongoing in north Belfast. For years, Catholics from the Ardoyne neighborhood protested and rioted in response to parades on a road adjacent their community. Against the backdrop of increasingly severe riots following parades in recent years, the failure to reach an agreement between the Orange Order and Ardoyne residents groups led the Parades Commission, the independent statutory body charged with regulating parades, to ban the route on 12 July 2013. The decision was followed by several nights of rioting by Protestants.

These parading disputes, along with other recent controversies such as the 2012 decision to no longer fly the Union Flag on Belfast City Hall every day, are viewed by many Protestants as part of a larger “culture war” against Protestantism. They believe that their culture and way of life is under threat from assertive republicanism. But these fears rest on a paradox. Protestant parading culture is at an all-time high,⁶ and the strength of the union has never been firmer. A 2013 survey shows that 52% of Catholics wish to remain in the United Kingdom, and only 28% desire a united Ireland. Further, a slim majority of Catholics now view themselves as having at least some British identity and only 48% identify as exclusively Irish (ARK 2014). Despite this newfound security, many Protestants fear for their future in Northern Ireland.

Broadly, there are two types of parading organizations: the Loyal Orders and marching bands. The Loyal Orders are all-male fraternal orders dedicated to the promotion of Protestant culture and the maintenance of Northern Ireland’s place in the United Kingdom. They are seen by many Protestants as the embodiment of the community’s politics and values. The three main

⁶ “More Parades and More Bands, but Order Says ‘Culture War’ Is Real,” *News Letter* (Belfast), 1 July 2014.

orders are the Orange Order, the Royal Black Institution, and the Apprentice Boys of Derry.⁷ With an estimated 36,000 members, the Orange Order is the largest and most prominent Loyal Order (McAuley, Mycock, and Tonge 2011, 126).⁸ It was founded in 1795 as a Protestant self-defense association, but quickly became best known for its parades commemorating King William III's victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. During the nineteenth century, the Orange Order became an influential political force as a voice of grassroots unionism and came to hold tremendous power within the ruling Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Throughout the half-century of UUP rule (1921-1972), all but three government ministers were members of the Orange Order (Bryan 2000, 60). In 2005, the Orange Order broke its official ties with the UUP, but it still holds outsized influence within unionist politics. A recent survey of members of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Northern Ireland's largest political party and the senior party in the power-sharing executive, shows that 35% are Orangemen (the term for members of the Order). The proportion increases to 54% among DUP elected officials (Tonge et al. 2014). The Royal Black Institution is seen as more focused on religion than politics. Finally, the Apprentice Boys of Derry parades to commemorate the events surrounding the 1689 siege of Derry.

The second type of parading organization is the marching band. Recent estimates place the number of bands across Northern Ireland at over 600 and number of members at 30,000 (DCAL 2012, 12). While some bands are quite musically talented, the majority are known as blood-and-thunder bands because they play a style of music that is noted more for its volume

⁷ There are also smaller orders including the Royal Arch Purple, the Independent Orange Order, and the Orange Order's all-female sister organization, the Association of Loyal Orangewomen of Ireland.

⁸ The Orange Order's membership is actually waning and is far below its apex of 93,000 in 1968. Liam Clarke, "Orange Order Ranks Drop to Record Low," *Sunday Times* (London), June 28, 2009. But, as Tonge, McAuley, and Mycock (2011, 1) state: "although reduced [in size] in recent decades, [the Orange Order] still more than quadruples the combined memberships of all Northern Ireland's political parties."

than skill. The general trend in loyalist parading since the 1970s has been the rising prominence of bands, particularly blood-and-thunder-style flute bands (Bryan 2000, 145). Many people associate these bands with the loyalist paramilitaries, and during the Troubles they were often closely linked. Today, although both the Loyal Orders and bands have a reputation for sectarianism in many quarters, bands are seen as particularly hateful. Band members are viewed by many as “thugs” out to offend Catholics by flying loyalist paramilitary flags, carrying banners commemorating paramilitary members, and performing paramilitary or anti-Catholic tunes.⁹

There are important differences between and among the Loyal Orders and bands, but they share core features, values, and interests, so for the purposes of this paper I consider them together. Throughout, I refer to parade participation as parading with either a Loyal Order or a band, without distinction. Critically, unlike, say, Fourth of July parades in the United States, all loyalist parades in Northern Ireland are instances of contentious politics, in that they are public “claim-making performance[s]” that bear on the rights and interests of others (Tilly 2008, 4; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). At least four factors make Northern Irish parading contentious politics. First, social, cultural, and political life in Northern Ireland takes place within a deeply divided context. People view most aspects of public life, including cultural institutions, through that divide and therefore parades are viewed as zero-sum. Second, as I discussed earlier, loyalist parades make a claim directly about the division and the central political question, who should rule? Third, it is impossible to not know about the controversy surrounding parades; participants know that their actions are contested, even if they dismiss the

⁹ Popular loyalist band tunes include “The Billy Boys,” with the lyrics “we’re up to our necks in Fenian blood / surrender or you’ll die,” and “No Pope of Rome,” with the lyrics “Oh give me a home / Where there’s no Pope of Rome / Where there’s nothing but Protestants stay. ... No chapels to sadden my eyes / No nuns and no priests and no Rosary beads / Every day is the Twelfth of July.” Available at: http://rangerspedia.org/index.php/No_Pope_Of_Rome. Accessed 7 July 2014.

legitimacy of the opposition. In the US, conversely, it is very easy to celebrate the Fourth one's entire life without knowing that some segment of the population objects. Finally, Catholics (as well as uninterested or disapproving Protestants) are always an audience of parades, even if they are not physically present (Fillieule and Tartakowsky 2013, 16-7; Blee and McDowell 2012).

Theory of Ritual Participation

To explain participation, I propose that we view loyalist parades as an example of ritual and therefore treat them as a distinct class of collective action for the purpose of analysis.¹⁰ As I will demonstrate, introducing the concept of ritual helps explain these events and why people participate in them. Following Kertzer (1988, 9), I define ritual as “symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive,” though I restrict my interest to rituals that are collective and public. Importantly, rituals are not limited to religious acts; it is a more general type of action used by secular actors as well, including states, ethnic groups, and political parties (see, e.g., Boccock 1974; Edelman 1971; Etzioni and Bloom 2004; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Kertzer 1988; Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Wedeen 1999). Using this definition, there are innumerable instances of politically significant rituals.¹¹ In fact, scholars have identified rituals as an element of successful contentious collective action, generally in discussions of “movement culture” or as mechanisms for generating solidarity and sustaining activism (e.g., Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Gould 2009; Jasper 1997, 1998; Kanter 1972; Staggenborg and Lang 2007). But there are far fewer investigations of ritual *as* collective action.

¹⁰ This is not a novel step. Ritual is a central concept in most scholarship on parades (e.g., Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000) and paraders themselves use the term. My contribution, laid out in the coming pages, is to use ritual to develop an argument about participation.

¹¹ Included among them are loyalist parades, which meet Kertzer's definition of ritual, make a political claim, and have political consequences.

Rituals are not normally discussed in the language of political economy,¹² but in some ways many of them are usefully classed as collective action according to Mancur Olson's (1965) definition. This is because many rituals involve multiple people working together to produce a non-excludable, public good. Though not all rituals produce a public good, many do, be it pleasing the gods, providing a socially integrative function, or communicating on behalf of the social group. Consider, for instance, a sacrifice made to a divine being to bring rain. If it succeeds (within the actors' worldview), contributors and free-riders alike reap the benefits. Loyalist parades provide several collective goods. Primarily, they publicly represent the Protestant community and assert their rights and interests. Additionally, they reinforce communal boundaries, generate social solidarity, socialize youth into communal norms and beliefs, provide a festival for all to enjoy, and, according to some, provoke and/or intimidate the Catholic community in order to maintain political power and ethnic status.

Framing rituals in this way highlights the dilemma of individual participation in a way left unquestioned by sociological, anthropological, and popular theories. Some accounts even describe rituals as if they somehow compel people into participating. For example, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim (1995, 192) claims that “[w]hen a native is asked why he follows his rites, he replies that ancestors have always done so and that he *must* follow their example” (emphasis added; see also Alexander 2004, 535). However, as religion scholar Catherine Bell (1992, 92) argues, “Ritual is never simply or solely a matter of routine, habit, or ‘the dead weight of tradition.’” Even when faced with a ritual, humans retain agency and individuals still confront the choice to participate or not.

¹² For exceptions, see Chwe 2001; Patel 2007; and Stepan 2012.

But, rituals differ from canonical collective actions, such as labor strikes and peasant rebellions, in four critical ways: repetition, goal demotion, symbolism, and perception. First, by definition, rituals are characterized by repetition.¹³ Yet unlike repeated contentious performances, rituals are repeated for their own sake, not to achieve some extrinsic goal. Repetition is a fundamental feature of ritual, not an element of strategy. This leads to “goal demotion,” the second distinction. As Liénard and Boyer (2006, 816) explain, “Frequent repetition bolsters this intuition that [ritual] actions are disconnected from their ordinary goals.” This view was famously articulated by philosopher and South Asianist Frits Staal (1979, 9): “Ritual is pure activity, without meaning or goal. ... Things are either for their own sake, or for the sake of something else. ... [M]y view is that ritual is for its own sake.” Third, rituals are heavily focused on symbols and tend not to have a material outcome. Rather, the collective outcomes of ritual are intangible, such as communication on behalf of the group or the generation of symbols (Collins 2004). Fourth, people view rituals as action somehow set apart from normal life. Rituals are experienced differently, and therefore are approached differently, than other actions (Bell 1992; Durkheim 1995; Turner 1969). For these four reasons, it is valuable to understand ritual as a distinct and “particular type of social action” with “properties that distinguish [it] from other types of action” (Roth 1995, 320).¹⁴

Consequently, rituals cannot be fully explained with theories of participation developed with other behaviors in mind. Political science understands most human actions through a narrowly rationalist and strategic lens that requires an analytic distinction between desired ends

¹³ Repetition is a key feature of many prominent definitions of ritual, not only Kertzer’s; see, e.g., Tambiah 1985, 128; Berezin 1997, 7; Smith 1992, 111 discusses the place of repetition in Freud and Lévi-Strauss.

¹⁴ There are other collective actions, however, which have elements of ritualization. Social and political actions which are often considered expressive, for example protest or voting, take on, to greater and lesser degrees, these four features of ritual.

(benefits) and the means used to achieve them (costs) (see Jasper 1997, 23-4, 26; Hirschman 1982, 82-91, esp. 85-6). But, as the previous paragraph adumbrated, in ritual, means and ends are not always neatly separable. As Liénard and Boyer (2006, 816) suggest, “the standard connections between means and ends seem broken.” Further, an implicit assumption of rational choice theory is that people approach all actions in the same way.¹⁵ But, as noted above, people explicitly approach rituals differently. To fully explain participation in rituals, we require a theory that can account for these peculiar features. Therefore, we must turn to scholarship on what rituals are, how they function, and what they mean for participants. In particular, two fundamental insights from the sociology and anthropology of ritual and religious studies illuminate the question of participation.

The first insight is that rituals are not “merely symbolic” reflections of reality; for participants, rituals do things. Specifically, rituals provide benefits for participants such as collective effervescence, emotional energy, a sense of belonging, and meaningful interpretations of the world (Eliade 1959; van Gennep 1960; Douglas 1966; Turner 1969; Durkheim 1995; Collins 2004). The second conclusion is that rituals are multivocal and ambiguous (Turner 1967; Cohen 1985; Kertzer 1988). They do not have a fixed meaning across time or individuals. Together these two observations suggest that rituals provide valued experiences for participants and that these experiences can be different for each participant.

These insights lay the groundwork for my argument about participation in political rituals. The benefits that rituals provide are intrinsic to the act of participation and thus not reliant

¹⁵ For example, Anthony Downs (1957, 7-8, quoted in Green and Shapiro 1994, 35) states that people approach “*every situation* with one eye on the gains to be had, the other eye on costs, a delicate ability to balance them, and a strong desire to follow wherever rationality leads” (emphasis added).

on the successful achievement of a communally valued outcome. Therefore, participation is not motivated by expectations of outcome benefits—the benefits to the individual that result from achieving the goal of the collective action—but by expectations of process-regarding, or intrinsic, benefits which are internal and inherent to the process of acting collectively (Elster 1989, 34-46; Wood 2003, 231-256; also Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 1995; Jasper 1997; Varshney 2003). To act on process-regarding motives is to make a future-oriented calculation designed to obtain the benefits provided by participation, which as noted earlier include emotional energy, a sense of belonging, and meaningful interpretations of the world. My argument, therefore, is not that participants are irrational; they are simply acting to receive a different type of benefit. The benefit is participation, not its consequences.

Intrinsic benefits are not unique to rituals. Scholars have found them to motivate a wide range of collective behavior, especially when the actions or their contexts lack the usual conditions conducive to collective contention. For example, Elisabeth Wood (2001; 2003) finds that during the civil war in El Salvador, both nonparticipants and participants received access to liberated land, but acts of rebellion provided the pride and pleasure in agency only to *campesinos* who participated. Rachel Einwohner (2003) finds that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place under conditions of reduced political opportunity, but resistance gave Warsaw Jews the occasion to assert their dignity and honor in the face of certain death. A number of scholars have attributed people's choice to vote to "expressive motives," since it is otherwise irrational to go to the polls (e.g., Downs 1957, 48; Brennan and Lomasky 1993; Schuessler 2000; Hamlin and Jennings 2009). But in all of these cases, there is no *ex ante* reason to suspect that process-oriented motives would trump outcome-oriented, instrumental ones. Generally, scholars find expressive

motives only when all else fails. By pointing to specific features of ritual, my argument provides an *a priori* justification of when to expect intrinsic motives to matter.

Observable Implications

The argument for ritual participation provides several observable implications that we can expect to find in the data. Each element of the argument, process benefits and ambiguity, has implications about who participates and how they understand their actions. If participants receive and act on internal benefits inherent to the process of collective participation in a ritual, we expect to find three regularities in the data. First, participants need not be motivated by material rewards or the threat of social sanctions. Second, participants are likely to have pre-existing ties to other participants, but these social ties operate differently than the commonly articulated information, identity, or exchange approaches to social networks and mobilization (Kitts 2000, 244-5). Rather, close ties of family and friendship increase the expected pleasures and meanings of acting collectively, not simply the ease of mobilization. Third, when participants discuss parades they should not view them instrumentally as a means to an end—as expected by the ethnic rivalry and collective action approaches I will discuss shortly. Instead, participants' discussions should center on the value of participation itself. Their descriptions of parades, therefore, should minimize or even neglect the outcomes of parades (exciting the Protestant community, intimidating the Catholic community, receiving a material benefit, etc.). Rather, they should highlight the experience of participation: what it is like to march through the streets. Relatedly, they should not view participation as a cost or burden, but as a benefit in and of itself—despite the fact that it requires significant time and resources.

If rituals are naturally polysemic, and thus open to interpretive ambiguity, we expect one pattern in the data. The multiple available meanings imply that Protestants and Catholics can maintain firm and opposing interpretations of parades, each valid. If, in fact, Protestants do not view parades as hostile attempts to offend and provoke Catholics, then there is no reason to expect that participants hold any more ill will toward Catholics than nonparticipants. Therefore, an implication of ritual's ambiguity is that parade participants should express the same level of sectarian attitudes as nonparticipants. Due to ritual ambiguity, the fact that Catholics view parades as hateful does not mean that Protestants do too.

Alternative Explanations

Before testing the argument about ritual, we must review other possible explanations for participation. In this section, I present the logic and hypotheses of two alternative approaches to ethnic conflict: ethnic rivalry and collective action. Each provides a plausible explanation for individual behavior, but, as I will show, do not adequately explain participation in parades.¹⁶

Ethnic Rivalry Approach

The first explanation focuses on the role of ethnic difference and rivalry in motivating conflict. This approach comes in primordial and constructivist flavors, but both camps argue that conflict and contentious rituals stem from the existence of ethnic difference (see also Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). Through this lens, contentious rituals are seen as symbolic assertions of

¹⁶ A third influential theory of ethnic conflict focuses on strategic elites (e.g., Snyder 2000; Snyder and Ballentine 1996; de Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Gagnon 2004). The theory suggests that inflammatory acts, such as contentious rituals, are used strategically to polarize a society by provoking the out-group into overreacting in order to promote distrust between communities, create a negative image of the out-group in local or international courts of opinion, or discredit in-group moderates (Wilkinson 2004; Brubaker and Laitin 1998, 433). The elite approach, however, fails to account for why anyone participates, so I ignore it henceforth.

group dominance (Horowitz 1985, 2001) or status (Petersen 2002, 2011) intended to intimidate the other group into submission. As mass public events, contentious rituals allow individuals to articulate their ethnic pride or ethnic grievances (Gurr 1970). The logic of these arguments suggests that individual-level participation is best explained by the attachments that people hold to the group. Participation is a way for people to further the interests of their ethnic group and thus it is expected that the more people identify with their ethnic group, the more likely they are to participate (see Varshney 2003, 93; Barreto 2012, 327-8).¹⁷ However, these events do not just celebrate the ethnic in-group and help it achieve its goals: they simultaneously denigrate and offend the ethnic out-group. Contentious rituals are a way to express grievances against the out-group. Therefore, it is expected that people are more likely to participate the more they dislike the out-group. Overall, the ethnic rivalry approach suggests that participants are distinguished from nonparticipants by their attitudes towards the in-group and out-group.

Collective Action Approach

A second major approach to ethnic conflict builds on Olson's (1965) logic of collective action. Given that the private costs of ethnic conflict outweigh the private benefits, thereby creating incentives to free-ride on the actions of others, collective action theorists ask: Why would anyone voluntarily participate? One answer is that participants are provided selective material incentives (Popkin 1979; Lichbach 1995). Thus, it is expected that people are more likely to participate if they receive selective material benefits. Some theorists of collective action have expanded their understanding of selective rewards to include non-material benefits such as "fun" (Muller and Opp 1986) and "reputation" (Chong 1991), but, as critics have shown, these

¹⁷ This hypothesis is also supported by studies of social movement mobilization such as Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008; and Simon et al. 1998.

attempts to rescue the rationalist approach fail to provide a coherent explanation of participation (Green and Shapiro 1994; Jasper 1997, 23-9; Petersen 2002, 32-3; Wood 2003, 253-4). So to have a clear test between the collective action theory and the ritual argument, we must clearly limit the selective benefits of collective action to material benefits.

A second answer to the collective action problem is that rational individuals will participate to avoid social sanctions targeted at nonparticipants (Taylor 1988; Chong 1991). Consequently, it is hypothesized that people are more likely to participate if they expect social sanctions for not taking part. Overall, the rationalist collective action approach suggests that participants are distinguished from nonparticipants by their private rewards or punishments.

Finally, research on collective action finds that pre-existing social ties to other participants are an important predictor of participation (e.g., McAdam 1986; Scacco 2010; Kitts 2000; Krinsky and Crossley 2014). Social ties can increase the likelihood of mobilization by providing information, nurturing an activist identity and solidarity, or giving social approval and encouragement. Therefore, it is expected that people are more likely to participate if they have social ties to parade participants. Existing studies of parades have found that social ties are indeed a key factor in mobilization. For example, in a survey of Orange Order members, McAuley and Tonge (2007, 37) find that 85% joined because they were asked by friends or family. Family connections and friendships are cited as a main reason for joining marching bands as well (NIYF 2013, 14).

To test the performance of the three approaches, we must turn to the data and look for the observable implications of each. Table 1 summarizes what the three theoretical approaches lead us to expect to see in the data.

Table 1: Observable Implications of Theories.

Approach	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Ethnic Rivalry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More pro-Protestant than nonparticipants • More anti-Catholic than nonparticipants 	
Collective Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive material rewards • Report experiencing more social sanctions than nonparticipants 	
Ritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more anti-Catholic than nonparticipants • No material rewards or social sanctions • Less likely to note instrumental purposes than nonparticipants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social ties increase pleasures and meaning of participation • Do not see parades instrumentally • Discuss experience of parading, not the outcomes

Research Design and Data

Testing hypotheses about participation in contentious rituals requires systematic data on participants and nonparticipants. Yet existing studies of participation in loyalist parades (McAuley, Tonge, and Mycock 2011) and other “cultural forms of political expression” (Taylor, Rupp, and Gamson 2004, 106; also Rupp and Taylor 2003; Taylor et al. 2009) only collect information on participants. As a result, they cannot compare the two groups or make valid claims about what differentiates them. Even the most systematic and methodologically sophisticated study of cultural contentious politics, Verta Taylor et al.’s (2009) excellent research on same-sex weddings in San Francisco, is limited by this sampling issue (pp. 872-3, esp. note 6). This paper addresses these limitations by using quantitative and qualitative data collected from participants *and* nonparticipants. By exploiting Belfast’s sectarian housing segregation, I am able to construct a random sample of participants and comparable nonparticipants with which I can test the competing hypotheses.¹⁸

I collected quantitative data from a randomized household survey conducted in nine Protestant neighborhoods in Belfast between May and August 2013. Local interviewers, whom I

¹⁸ Housing segregation means that almost every neighborhood in Belfast is considered either Protestant or Catholic. See Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Lloyd and Shuttleworth 2012.

trained and managed, conducted 228 valid face-to-face surveys. The nine neighborhoods were purposely selected based on three criteria and, therefore, are not nationally representative. First, since the goal of the survey is to distinguish actual participants from potential participants, I restricted the survey to Protestant neighborhoods. Second, I wanted to maximize the likelihood of sampling parade participants, so I selected neighborhoods with high concentrations of participants.¹⁹ Participants primarily come from working class neighborhoods, so that is where the surveys focused, but I also surveyed two middle class neighborhoods to increase the survey's representativeness. Third, I sought geographic diversity, so I choose three neighborhoods each in East, West, and South Belfast.

The neighborhoods in which I sought to conduct surveys are highly insular. I was told repeatedly by local academics, community activists, and residents that respondents would be very suspicious of interviewers they did not recognize and unlikely to complete the questionnaire. Therefore, to ensure that respondents would open the door and comfortably speak with an interviewer, I trained interviewers who were from each neighborhood or had connections there. Although this may have caused problems regarding respondents' willingness to divulge personal information to people they recognize, I concluded that this problem was less severe than the likelihood of having too few respondents.²⁰

Although the nine enumeration areas were selected purposively, rather than randomly, respondents were randomly selected within each neighborhood. First, I used detailed maps to

¹⁹ I based these decisions on conversations with academic experts and parade organization leaders, as well as my own observations. This criterion also furthered the goal of sampling nonparticipants who could potentially participate.

²⁰ Additionally, several people I trusted independently mentioned that they thought that sending a team of unknown interviewers into some neighborhoods could put them at risk. Residents suspicious of outsiders traipsing the neighborhood with clipboards could warn the interviewers to leave or even call the local paramilitary.

generate a list of each address in a Small Area, the smallest geographic unit in the census. Then, using a random number generator, I selected one-quarter of the houses in each Small Area for the survey. To be eligible for the survey, a household needed to have a male, 18 years old or older, from a Protestant background, who usually lives there. Although women do march in parades, they are a small minority and to include females in the sample would have reduced the number of participants surveyed.²¹ If the house had more than one eligible subject, the man with the most recent birthday was selected. If the household did not have an eligible subject, then the address was replaced using the original randomization. I did the same if the respondent refused to participate in the survey. If the respondent was not home, interviewers were to try to make an appointment, or, if that was not possible, to return to the house until he was home (up to four times). Once the interviewer identified and reached the selected respondent, they conducted the interview in person, recording the responses on paper.²²

Studying the processes of mobilization into parades also requires data with more nuance than a close-ended survey could provide. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 82 participants and nonparticipants between 2012 and 2014. Interviewees were selected both purposely and using snowball sampling. The majority of interviewees lived in greater Belfast, though I also sought the views of some people from the rest of the province. I also interviewed several women, in contrast to the survey. Nearly all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in full; all were analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software.

²¹ On the role of women, see Racioppi and See 2000 and Radford 2001.

²² In one neighborhood, interviewers had trouble gaining cooperation for face-to-face interviews and therefore left the questionnaire to be filled out by the selected respondent. Wherever possible, they sat with the respondent as they filled it out.

Semi-structured interviews provide two specific advantages.²³ First, the variation in many of the variables of interest, such as the nature of ethnic and religious identities or social sanctions, is too diverse and/or subtle to measure accurately and reliably with close-ended survey questions. The open-ended questions of a semi-structured interview allowed me to capture importance nuance in these variables while remaining focused and ensuring that I asked all the necessary questions. Second, the broad questions I asked allowed respondents to help direct the course of the interview toward the topics they found important and meaningful. What people say and the way they say it—including non-verbal communication such as hand gestures and tone of voice—can reveal a lot about what is on their mind.²⁴

Finally, though this paper only rarely relies on them explicitly, I recorded fieldnotes of my observations at dozens of parades and related activities (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995).

Empirical Strategy

I begin with an analysis of the quantitative data, which were collected more systematically and provide the cleanest tests of the alternative hypotheses. Testing the ritual hypothesis, however, requires a multi-methods approach. I conduct a first cut using the quantitative data to test for participants' views on the purpose of parades. I then analyze the qualitative interview data, looking for how participants conceive of and discuss parades. Since the ritual approach offers predictions about the characteristics of participants and about how they think about their actions, both methods are necessary.

²³ On the advantages—and limitations—of semi-structured interviews, see Mosley 2013; Leech 2002; Lamont and Swidler 2014; Blee and Taylor 2002.

²⁴ Fujii (2010) explains how this “meta-data,” “spoken and unspoken expressions about people’s interior thoughts and feelings, which they do not always articulate in their stories or responses to interview questions,” is of great value (p. 232).

Table 2: Determinants of Current Parade Participation, Logistic Regressions.

	Model 1 (Main model)	Model 2 (Disaggregate social pressure)	Model 3 (w/o controls)	Model 4 (Multiple Imputation)
<i>Ethnic Rivalry</i>				
Protestant Identification	-0.07 [0.13]	-0.07 [0.13]	0.04 [0.11]	0.11 [0.15]
Anti-Catholicism	2.56 [1.92]	3.07 [1.87]	1.88 [1.26]	2.14 [1.40]
<i>Collective Action</i>				
Social Pressure	0.79 [0.17]***		0.68 [0.15]***	0.76 [0.22]***
Family Expected Participation		0.56 [0.32]		
Community Think Less of Nonpartic.		1.12 [0.39]**		
<i>Social Ties</i>				
Family Marched	-0.11 [0.80]	-0.04 [0.83]	-0.04 [0.83]	0.13 [0.70]
Close Friends at Age 16	0.31 [0.38]	0.29 [0.38]	0.31 [0.30]	0.10 [0.33]
Been Asked to March	0.22 [0.92]	0.30 [0.90]	0.43 [0.53]	0.49 [0.55]
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Marched as Youth	0.93 [0.47]*	0.96 [0.49]*		0.71 [0.33]*
Age	-0.05 [0.03]	-0.05 [0.03]		-0.02 [0.02]
Education	-1.14 [0.94]	-1.12 [0.91]		-0.26 [0.66]
Children under 18	-1.48 [0.74]*	-1.51 [0.71]*		-1.01 [0.52]
Full-Time Job	2.59 [0.83]**	2.56 [0.80]**		0.96 [0.66]
Church Attendance	0.35 [0.15]*	0.35 [0.16]*		0.25 [0.09]**
Constant	-4.50 [2.14]*	-4.99 [2.45]*	-4.93[0.90]***	-5.42[1.27]***
Number of observations	160	160	174	227
Correctly predicted	90.6%	91.25%	90.80%	
Reduction in error	16.67%	22.22%	23.81%	
Standard errors clustered at neighborhood level in brackets. Interviewer fixed effects are not reported. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001				

The Determinants of Participation in Loyalist Parades

I begin by quantitatively assessing what distinguishes parade participants from those who choose not to march. The dependent variable, *Parade Participant*, takes a value of 1 if a

respondent is currently a member of a Loyal Order or marching band and a value of 0 if he is not.²⁵ Twelve percent of the sample are current parade participants (N=28).²⁶ I estimate the determinants of participation using logistic regression with standard errors clustered by neighborhood and interview fixed effects. To account for deleted observations due to missing data, I reestimate my main model specification using multiple imputation. Except for one (Model 3), all specifications include six control variables: *Marched as Youth*, *Education*, *Church Attendance*, *Children under 18*, *Full-Time Job*, and *Age*.

Testing the Ethnic Rivalry Hypotheses

The ethnic rivalry approach to participation looks to an individual's attitudes towards their in-group and the out-group. The first hypothesis is that people are more likely to participate the more they identify with their own ethnic group. I measure positive feelings towards the in-group with a measure, *Protestant Identification*, that captures how strongly the respondent identifies with the Protestant community. *Protestant Identification* is an additive scale of three survey questions, each with five response categories.²⁷ I find that stronger identification with the Protestant community is *not* significantly associated with an increased probability of parade

²⁵ A benefit of this variable is that it measures participation in a specific, discrete action, rather than general support for a cause or vague "movement participation." Using this type of precisely measurable dependent variable is recommended by McAdam (1986) and Wiltfang and McAdam (1991). Further, while many quantitative studies of ethnic politics examine preferences or attitudes, this measure captures participation in an ethnic activity.

²⁶ Using existing membership data on the Orange Order, Apprentice Boys, and marching bands, I estimate that 13% to 17% of Protestant men nationwide are current parade participants. Membership data are from McAuley, Tonge, and Mycock 2011, 126; Interview with Apprentice Boys of Derry senior leader, August 3, 2012; and Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure 2012, 6. Population data are from: 2011 Northern Ireland Census, Table DC2115NI: Religion or Religion Brought Up in by Age by Sex, available at http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/Download/Census%202011_Excel/2011/DC2117NI.xls. Accessed 29 October 2013

²⁷ Respondents were first asked if they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements "I feel strong ties with other Protestants in Northern Ireland" and "In many respects, I am like most other Protestants in Northern Ireland" (coded from -2 to 2). Then they were asked "Would you be proud to be called an Ulster Protestant?" on a five-point scale from "not at all" to "very much" (coded 0 to 4). The three responses were summed to produce a scale ranging from -4 to 8, and Cronbach's alpha is 0.7071. For similar measures, see Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008; and Simon et al. 1998.

participation. This null finding is highly robust to alternative measures of identification (not shown), including entering each component variable individually or substituting with an indicator for self-description as British (as opposed to Irish, Northern Irish, or Ulster-Scots).

The second ethnic rivalry hypothesis is that people are more likely to participate the more hostility they feel towards the rival out-group. I measure negative feelings towards the out-group with a variable, *Anti-Catholicism*, that captures the degree of anti-Catholic views expressed by the respondent in four survey questions.²⁸ I find that anti-Catholic prejudice is *not* a significant predictor of participation in any of the model specifications. The null finding remains if I recreate the scale without the question on whether Catholics deserve their economic gains, which had substantially more non-responses than the other three questions (not shown). Importantly, these two attitudinal findings meet the expectations of the ritual theory and fail to support a key tenet of the ethnic rivalry approach to conflict.²⁹

Testing the Collective Action Hypotheses

Rather than looking at the respondent's attitudes, the collective action approach looks to the private costs and benefits of participation. The first hypothesis is that individuals are more likely to participate if they are offered *Selective Material Benefits*. I measure this variable by

²⁸The first question asked how much the respondent would mind if a close family member married a Roman Catholic. The second asked "Do you think that sometimes Catholics need to be reminded that they live in the United Kingdom?" The third asked "How much of the sectarian tension that exists in Northern Ireland today do you think Catholics are responsible for creating?" The fourth asked: "Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that over the past few years, Catholics have gotten more economically than they deserve." Each variable was scaled from 0 to 1, with 1 as the most anti-Catholic view, then added together, and then re-scaled from 0 to 1. Cronbach's alpha is 0.7790. The third and fourth questions, as well as the scaling, are adapted from the Symbolic Racism 2000 Scale developed by Henry and Sears 2002.

²⁹ Both identification with the in-group and hostility toward the out-group are likely endogenous to parade participation, since participation could increase one's attachment to the Protestant community and prejudice towards the Catholic community. But, collecting a valid retrospective measure of these attitudes from before a respondent joined would be near impossible. Thus, we cannot attribute any causality and must settle for association. Although extreme sectarian attitudes do not motivate participation, using generalized ordered logit models (not shown) I find that especially low sectarian attitudes do dissuade marching in (or even attending) parades.

asking whether membership in a parading organization ever helped financially, such as with a small loan, job, or promotion. This question was only asked of men who had ever been parade participants, so it is not included in the regression, but the data show that material benefits did not motivate participation. Only one current participant reported that he gained financially from his parading (it increases to three when former participants are included).³⁰ And, when asked for open-ended reasons why they marched in the last Twelfth of July, not a single person mentioned anything even slightly related to material gain.³¹ In the semi-structured interviews, nearly every time I asked a parade participant if there were any personal financial benefits the answer was an emphatic “no.” Then, without skipping a beat, most would continue by saying that parading actually *costs* considerable money. Further, 70% of current paraders in the survey said that they would not put a parading leadership position on a resume or job application, for fear of discrimination. Paraders also expressed this concern in the semi-structured interviews: many interviewees believed they could be punished at work for admitting they marched in parades.

The second hypothesis of collective action theory is that people are more likely to participate if they expect to pay a social cost for not participating. I measure this variable, *Social Pressure*, by summing the level of sanctioning expected from two sources: family and community. Pressure from the family is measured by how much the respondent believes his

³⁰ Supporting this claim is evidence from those who have not paraded. They were asked if they thought that being in a band or lodge helps people financially, and only 11% think that it does. While paraders might not want to admit that they have benefitted financially, non-paraders have little reason to hide knowledge of material transfers.

³¹ My survey enumerators protested that even looking for financial benefits to parading was a fool’s errand. The survey instrument included the open-ended question “What attracted you to the specific lodge/band that you joined first?” Interviewers were to mark any of the fourteen listed items that the respondent mentioned. One of them was “financial/employment,” and on several occasions when going over the survey with the interviewers during training, they laughed or told me bluntly that there was no reason to have it as an option. I would insist that though it might be unlikely, I really wanted to know if anyone mentioned it as a reason. In the end, my interviewers were of course correct: in all of the surveys that they administered the box was never ticked.

Family Expected Participation.³² Pressure from the community is measured by whether the respondent believes that his *Community Thinks Less of Nonparticipants*.³³ Each component part is measured from 0 indicating no pressure to 3 indicating most pressure, and the sum, *Social Pressure*, ranges from 0 to 6. I find that my measure of social sanctions is positively and significantly associated with participation in loyalist parades. The effect, however, is quite small. If all other variables in Model 1 are held at their median value, changing *Social Pressure* from its minimum to maximum only increases the probability of participating 10%.³⁴ In Model 3, I disaggregate social pressure into its two components. The results show that the correlation is substantively and statistically stronger with the measure of community-based social pressure. Men who believe that their community thinks less of nonparticipants are more likely to parade.

The semi-structured interviews, however, tell a somewhat different story about social sanctioning. Bar several exceptions, the men I interviewed recall experiencing no social pressure to participate in parades. Even between fathers and sons, the relationship where we would most expect direct social pressure, I found little evidence. Many men were asked by their fathers to follow in their footsteps and join them in a parading organization, but they say that they felt no pressure from it.³⁵ Several interviewees recall that, in fact, it was their father *not* asking them or pressuring them to join that inspired their decision. Alexander states that “what impressed me was I asked my dad, ‘Should I join?’ And he says, ‘It’s your decision, you decide.’ That

³² “Do you think that your family expected you to join a Loyal Order or band? Would you say definitely, somewhat, not really, or definitely not?”

³³ “Do people in this community think less of people who choose not to join Loyal Orders or bands? Would you say definitely, somewhat, not really, or definitely not?”

³⁴ Calculated using Clarify for Stata 10. The standard errors could not be clustered in the simulated model.

³⁵ Quantitatively, there is no relationship between being asked to join by one’s father and participation. Similarly, when *Family Marched* is disaggregated into dummy variables for the father and other family, neither is statistically significant (results not shown).

encouraged me to join more, because I didn't feel like I was being forced to join." The fact that his father made clear that the decision was one that he had to make for himself left a lasting impression on Alexander and encouraged his membership.

Regarding the role of social sanctioning, then, the quantitative and qualitative evidence diverge. The statistical analysis suggests that men who report social pressure are somewhat more likely to participate. The semi-structured interviews, conversely, suggest that social pressure plays little role in actually motivating participation. The data is inconclusive, but provides tepid support for the the second collective action hypothesis.

A second major approach to participation in collective action is social ties. The general hypothesis is that people are more likely to participate if members of their social network participate. I measure two specific social ties for each respondent: *Family Marched* measures whether or not family members were paraders and *Close Friends (Age 16)* measures how many of their close friends at age 16 were paraders.³⁶ Third, I measure whether or not a respondent has personally *Been Asked* to join a parading organization (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schussman and Soule 2005). None of these measures are statistically associated with loyalist parade participation. This is a striking finding, given the robustness of the result across a range of studies on mobilization (Kitts 2000 and Krinsky and Crossley 2014 review the literature). I believe it reflects how deeply parading organizations are embedded in Protestant communities. It is hard *not* to know a member of a loyal order or band. Even among nonparticipants (i.e., men who have not marched since at least age 16), 69% have family who march, 62% have current

³⁶ *Family Marched* takes the value of 0 if no family marched, 1 if either the father or other family members marched, and 2 if both the father and other family members marched. *Close Friends (Age 16)* ranges from 0 for none or almost none to 4 for all or almost all. It is measured retrospectively since current friends are clearly endogenous to parade participation.

friends who march, and 22% have been personally asked to march. These figures are even higher in working class neighborhoods, where parading organizations are stronger (77%, 78%, and 28%, respectively).

Although the statistical evidence demonstrates that having social ties to participants does not increase the likelihood of participation, those who do join generally do so through social ties. Pre-existing social ties, therefore, remain a central pathway to mobilization. We can see this both quantitative and qualitatively. Among men who have paraded since age 16, 77% cited social ties as what attracted them to the specific parading organization that they joined (59% said friends, 17% said their father, and 20% mentioned other family; they could list more than one attraction). It is, therefore, unsurprising that 93% already knew a few or many members at the time of joining. The interviews confirm these trends. Jamie is typical when he recounts that he chose the band to join because he “wanted to be in a band that was more home. And the [East Belfast Flute Band] has quite a few of my family: one, two, three, four family members in it, cousins and stuff like that. And then all the other guys in it, there’s quite a few I used to go to school with.” The band is the only band from the neighborhood that he grew up in, so though he now lives in a different part of Belfast, Jamie says that joining the EBFB was a “no-brainer.” George, too, is typical, if perhaps a bit eager. When he retired from the British army, buddies from his unit approached him about joining the loyal orders that they belonged to:

I was asked to join the Apprentice Boys, I had an idea what it was all about, but I said certainly. So I joined that. And within three weeks I was asked if I wanted to join the [Orange Order] lodge that the lads were in. I said, I would. So I joined that. And within three months, I was asked if I wanted to join the [Royal] Black that they belonged to. I said I would.

Social ties, despite not affecting the likelihood of initial mobilization, clearly still matter greatly for those who are mobilized.

Multiple Imputations

To account for the loss of observations due to missing data, in Model 4 I reestimate the main model using the AMELIA II program (Honaker and King 2010; Honaker, King, and Blackwell 2012). The program imputed values for missing data in the independent variables, but I deleted the one observation that was missing the dependent variable. I then used the new imputed datasets to estimate the logit regressions (to conserve space, only the results of the main model are shown). As we can see in Model 4, the results with the five new datasets are similar to the original results, increasing the confidence in the initial estimation. Participants remain undistinguished by their ethnic attitudes and social ties, but do report greater social pressure.

Testing the Ritual Hypothesis

To test the ritual hypothesis, I will now review the evidence for the four observable implications of the theory. Recall that if the ritual approach explains participation, we can expect the data to show: (1) no material rewards or social sanctions; (2) that pre-existing social ties increase the meaning and pleasure of acting collectively; (3) that participants do not view parades instrumentally, and that when talking about parades, they will focus on the process rather than the outcomes; and (4) no difference in participation by levels of anti-Catholicism. The previous section demonstrated that selective material benefits play no role in parade participation, that the evidence for social sanctions is inconclusive but possible, and that

participants are not distinguished by their anti-Catholic attitudes. The following pages will demonstrate that the other two implications are present in the data.

The survey data show that men with more pre-existing ties to paraders were not more likely to participate, but also that those who do parade were generally mobilized through their social networks. What is the mechanism behind this within-network mobilization? Though I find some evidence for mechanisms that have been established in the existing literature (Kitts 2000), especially the information mechanism, this study's data suggests that a more important mechanism for rituals is that social ties, particularly family ties, to other participants increase the intrinsic benefits of participation, making parading more pleasurable and meaningful (Jasper 1997). Having family members who parade increases process-oriented benefits in two ways. First, participants articulated a deep pride in following in their fathers' and grandfathers' footsteps, emphasizing that it is a family tradition. In fact, interviewees often began the discussion of how they got involved by listing all their ancestors who paraded. Second, the meaning of parading is enhanced by fond childhood memories of going to see their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other relatives parade. Participants also discussed the close bonds they form with the other members of their lodge or band, describing it as a "band of brothers."³⁷ And though we cannot distinguish cause from effect, paraders' social lives come to be dominated by their band or lodge. Even outside of meetings, practices, and parades, participants spend their time with other paraders (see also Ramsey 2011, 150).

To test for the third implication, that participants do not view parades instrumentally, we must look at how participants talk about parades. If participants focus on the outcomes of

³⁷ Interview with Dan, August 18, 2012.

parades, it would be evidence that participants view them as a means toward an end, and a strike against the ritual approach. A focus on the experience of participation, conversely, suggests the appeal of process-oriented motivations, the core of the ritual approach.

As a first cut, I use a question from the survey—“In your opinion, what is the purpose of parades?”—to test whether participants are more likely to attribute intrinsic, rather than instrumental, purposes to parades. Each response was coded with at least one of ten purposes, with some responses receiving multiple codes. The codes were developed inductively to accurately capture the concepts conveyed by respondents (see Table 4 in the Appendix for a definition of each code). I then grouped the purposes into two general categories based on their orientation: *Intrinsic* and *Instrumental*. Intrinsic purposes (culture, tradition, celebration, commemoration, social, and carnival) are internally-oriented and achieved simply by doing the act. For example, successfully continuing a tradition is accomplished simply by doing the traditional act. Instrumental purposes (taking a stand, displaying loyalty, promoting, and causing a negative outcome) are externally-oriented and only achieved if they accomplish something external to the act itself. For example, successfully promoting Protestant culture requires a response from someone else.

Simple two-tailed t-tests (Table 3) show that participants are significantly more likely to mention intrinsic purposes than instrumental purposes. The first column in Table 3 displays the results for current participants (92% intrinsic vs. 13% instrumental; $p = 0.00$) and the second column shows the results for respondents who have ever paraded since age 16 (88% intrinsic vs. 14% instrumental; $p = 0.00$). Interestingly, current paraders are also more likely to cite intrinsic purposes than nonparticipants (92% vs. 73%; $p = 0.04$).

Table 3. Purposes of Loyalist Parades Reported by Participants: Intrinsic vs. Instrumental (%)

	Current Participants	Ever Participated
Intrinsic Purpose	92%	88%
Culture	46%	47%
Tradition	38%	34%
Celebration	29%	25%
Commemoration	17%	16%
Social	4%	8%
Fun/Carnival	4%	3%
Instrumental Purpose	13%	14%
Take a Stand	8%	6%
Display Loyalty	4%	2%
To Promote	0%	3%
Negative	0%	2%
Intrinsic-Instrumental Difference	79%	73%
P-Value (Two-Tailed)	0.00***	0.00***
Observations (N)	24	64

Each response could take multiple codes, so columns do not sum to 100%.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The semi-structured interviews confirm that participants are far more interested in the process than the outcome of participation. In analyzing participants' stated purposes of their actions, the same two categories emerged: intrinsic and instrumental. But intrinsic purposes were cited most often and with the most vigor. For most, if not all, paraders, the central purpose of a parade is the expression, celebration, and commemoration of a multifaceted Protestant identity. In interview after interview, participants described parades as opportunities to articulate "what I am"³⁸:

³⁸ Interview with Mark, July 11, 2013.

Ours is about going out and showing our cultural identity—not through violence, but through music and through the pageantry of it all. And to show how well and respectful we can be. (Walter, band member, West Belfast, July 31, 2012)

The overarching purpose is to say to the world, “here we are.” Not “here we are as Orange bigots who will continue to cry ‘no surrender!’” but “here we are as members of the Protestant, reformed, evangelical faith. This is our cause and we want the world to know.” I think that’s the purpose. (George, Orange leader, West Belfast, August 14, 2012)

As these quotes demonstrate, participants do not always agree on what the content of the Protestant identity is, but their intention is to parade that identity in public. As constructivist theorists of identity have shown, we all have multiple identities (e.g., Barth 1969); the ambiguity of parades means that people can be motivated to express different dimensions of their Protestant identity while marching behind the same banner (see Cohen 1985, 21 and 56-7). So while George parades to express his religious identity, Walter parades to articulate his “cultural identity.” Both men, however, are engaging in the basic human act of self-expression.

A second major purpose for parades cited by participants is commemoration of the Protestant past, particularly historic battles. Commemoration also follows a process-oriented logic: the goal of a commemorative act (that the past be appropriately marked) is inseparable from the means of achieving it. And participants see no extrinsic purpose in commemoration; they are driven to commemorate by a drive to commemorate, not to use the commemoration for another purpose. For example, Albert told me that, “The 1st of July [parade] commemorates the [1916 Battle of the] Somme [and the] 36th (Ulster) Division [in World War I], 12th of July [parade] commemorates Battle of Boyne [in 1690]. They’re all battles we remember.”

“Just to continue the memory?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied, “to continue the tradition.”

Or, take Sammy's statement: "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." Both Albert and Sammy are motivated to honor the memory of the great victories and sacrifices of Ulster Protestant history. Their comments attest to this intrinsic motivation: the benefit they receive is the satisfaction of joining with friends "to continue the tradition" and "keep it going."

Though some participants do mention instrumental goals, one that they never so much as hint at is antagonizing Catholics or polarizing society, the expectations of the ethnic conflict approaches. On the contrary, they forcefully distance themselves from the negative outcomes of parades. In interview after interview, paraders emphasized that their actions are not intended to offend anyone. Isaac, to take but one example, told me earnestly that "I don't think we're going out to make an offensive statement. Certainly, anything that ever I have been personally involved in, I haven't seen any particularly offensive actions or anything that anybody could take as offensive." To explain why so many Catholics appear offended, participants believe that it is all disingenuous cant manufactured by the republican movement. Billy sums up this belief about Catholic anger and protests: "It didn't happen by accident. It's all orchestrated. It's created, deliberately created conflict where there was no conflict." Paraders make a particular effort to dissociate themselves from the violence that occasionally follows parades. "We're not causing the trouble," Sammy stresses. "It's violent republicans who are causing the trouble." In fact, participants try to distance themselves so far from these consequences of their actions, that they make the case that parades are not even political. They construct the claim that parades are actually anti-political—that they exist apart from and in contradistinction to politics. Thus, while politics is quintessentially instrumental behavior, parading is non-instrumental action.

The foundation of this claim that parades are anti-political, and thus non-instrumental, is their ritual nature. As rituals, parades provide participants with alternative (and genuinely apolitical) reasons to participate as well as with symbolic ambiguity that supports multiple and conflicting interpretations of the events. Further, rituals cultivate the notion that within them, the normal connection between means and ends is broken. Finally, the repetitive and formal qualities of rituals give parades a feeling of invariance, feeding the idea that parades never were and are not now political. These four features of ritual sustain the paradox of anti-politics, against evidence to the contrary.³⁹

Of course, Protestants have strong incentives to say that their actions are apolitical and non-instrumental, and that they do not intend to effect the harmful outcomes of parades, even if it is not true. Nevertheless, my formal interviews and informal conversations with a broad range of participants convinced me that most of them are sincere in their beliefs—even though the reader likely has justifiable doubts. More convincing evidence of the demotion of outcomes is that interviewees also devalued the positive outcomes of parades, such as entertaining the crowd of supporters or uniting the Protestant community. Why would they dismiss these positive outcomes, about which they can be justifiably proud, unless they really do not matter for them? These beneficial outcomes do happen, and they are a satisfying byproduct of parading, but, they told me, it is not why they act:

It's our right to do it. It's our belief to do it. The crowds and the spectators are an added bonus to us. We will walk the streets whether there is one person watching us or one hundred million people watching us. It's our right, it's our identity. It's our reason we exist. (Michael, Orangeman, August 19, 2013)

³⁹ I develop this argument in Blake 2014, ch. 6, "Culture, Politics, and the Paradox of Anti-Politics in Loyalist Parades."

[When there is a large crowd] it's just nicer. But if there wasn't as many of a crowd there it wouldn't bother me... I've been to parade where there hasn't been many people watching it, but it's still an honor and a privilege for me to walk with the Apprentice Boys. (Howie, Apprentice Boy, West Belfast, August 13, 2012)

My field observations confirm their claims: occasionally, I was the only person on the street watching the parade. But the more important point that these paraders make is that their motives are internal to the very process of participation: honor and privilege, fulfilling a right, acting on a belief, and living out one's identity.

More generally, discussions about parades and what they mean to participants center on the pleasures of participation. Most participants I interviewed happily talked on and on about how much they just loved to parade. The pleasures they discussed were varied, but all of them emerge from the very act of parading, not the consequences. Some came from the opportunity to spend meaningful time with dear friends and articulate shared values together:

[My last parade] was fantastic. You know, it's always a proud moment to be on parade. ... And just being part and just spending the day with people of like-minded views and showing your cultural identity. It makes me very proud. It excites me. (Michael, Orangeman, August 19, 2013)

[W]hen you're walking up the street in an Orange parade, it would be hard to define what the feeling is... Waving at people you know and being part of something that there's a sense of belonging and being owned and owning something. It's so hard to define. It's part of why it's so hard to leave. ... It's an undefinable quality of belonging. (Rich, ex-Orangeman, November 20, 2012)

The lasting impact of these pleasures is illustrated by Rich, the second man quoted. Rich actually quit the Orange Order many years ago because he disagreed with its confrontational and sectarian stances and he remains critical of parades. But the power of the experience is still unmistakable to him. Both men also articulated the emotional benefits of parade participation, something emphasized by others as well.

I enjoy the parades. The 12th of July, you feel proud. You like to wake up on the 12th morning and you get your best suit on, and get your best clothes on. You get your bowler hat out. You get your coat and hat out. You get your white gloves out. You get your cuffs out. You go on parade. You turn out your best to do the organization proud. And it's just a feeling of so proud of the tradition, the culture. (Billy, Orangeman and band member, Co. Armagh, August 6, 2013)

It's not routine to me. It's a totally refreshing day. It's one of those days when after you've walked 22 miles, you finish up with a load of energy. You're on a high, so you are. And it's thoroughly enjoyed, thoroughly enjoyed. If I was to walk five miles there today, I'd have sore feet and blisters. There's something magical about being in the band and playing your flute. I never have a blister. (Craig, band member, Carrickfergus, December 12, 2012)

This sense of pride and energy, attained in the company of friends and family, is a prime experience of participation. My findings resonate with Gordon Ramsey's (2011, 223) ethnographic conclusion that marching in loyalist bands is in large part motivated by the "emotional rewards of participation." More generally, they match what Elisabeth Wood (2001, 268) calls "emotional in-process benefits," the "emotion-laden consequences of action experienced only by those participating in that action." Craig, the Carrickfergus band member, makes two particularly interesting points related to the ritual nature of parades. First, though parades, like all rituals, are repetitive, they are "not routine" to him. Theories that do not consider the unique qualities of ritual assume that people would get bored or tired of repeating the same action, especially when there is no external goal or material rewards. Craig explicitly rejects this. And, second, the reason it never feels routine is the energy he gains from participating. Craig evinces that parades, as rituals, generate what Durkheim (1995) calls "collective effervescence" and Randall Collins (2004) calls "emotional energy." Emotional energy, Collins (2004, 38-9) argues, "makes the individual feel not only good, but exalted, with the sense of doing what is most important and most valuable. ... [It] has a powerful motivating effect upon the individual;

whoever has experienced this kind of moment wants to repeat it.” Feelings like this make it unsurprising that, despite the lack of personal or collective material gains, participants choose to return time after time.

Overall, the interviews demonstrate that parading is itself a symbolic and emotional benefit for participants. They look forward to parades, talk about them with their friends, and many, if not most, come to structure their lives around them. Participants even told me about missing family functions and damaging relationships with significant others in order to march in parades. Yet they certainly do not view parading as a cost—on the contrary, they even *pay* for the privilege to parade their pride and moral vision alongside dear friends and companions. The paraders I conversed with would reject Olson’s framework out of hand; rather, I believe, they would embrace Hirschman’s (1982, 87; originally italicized) dissenting view that free-riders “cheat themselves first of all.”

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the previous two sections have significant implications for our understanding of political behavior. I showed that participation in parades widely viewed as supportive of Protestantism and antagonistic toward Catholicism is not predicted by attitudes toward either group. Further, I demonstrate that this is the case because promoting Protestantism and antagonizing Catholicism are not participants’ main intention. In fact, many participants do not have external or instrumental intentions at all. Their motivations are internal to the very act of parading and they, therefore, disregard the outcomes of parades, be they positive or negative.

This means that people make decisions to participate without consideration of the profoundly political consequences of their actions.

Most theories of action in political science assume that people pursue a particular behavior in order to attain its consequences. Applied to parades, this suggests that participants intend to heighten ethnic conflict and polarize society, since these are often the effects, but I have shown that this is not the case. The ritual nature of their behavior severs the presumed connection between means and ends, thus creating the environment for sustained conflict. The divisive outcomes of parades are a byproduct of action motivated by other ends and desires, and attributing them as motives to paraders “would have produced a very distorted picture of their participation” (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2010, 489).

I have argued that we can best explain participation in loyalist parades, and other similar political behavior, by understanding them as rituals. I showed that the two most plausible existing approaches in the ethnic conflict literature do not explain the variation between participants and nonparticipants and in fact offer erroneous predictions when they try to explain why people choose to participate. Therefore, I developed a more satisfying and predictively accurate explanation for participation that specifically accounts for the unique and anomalous features of ritual. Building on insights from the study of ritual in sociology, anthropology, and religious studies as well as research in political science and sociology on participation in collective action and contentious politics, I proposed that rituals provide participants with intrinsic, process-oriented benefits and that rituals are inherently ambiguous. These two factors, I argued, help explain who participates and why. Using an original survey and semi-structured

interviews, I tested the competing explanations and found that the evidence best supports the theory of ritual participation.

The results are surprising from a theoretical, comparative perspective as well as from a local, Northern Irish one. The ethnic rivalry and collective action approaches have proven to be powerful explanatory tools in a wide range of contexts, so the overwhelming evidence against them is an unexpected challenge. Similarly, the findings question the prevailing beliefs in and about Northern Ireland. According to most Irish nationalists, as well as many more neutral observers, parade participants are simply sectarian bigots; meanwhile, many unionists see paraders as “super Prods,” highly committed and enthusiastic Protestants. My statistical analyses do not confirm either characterization: participants do not stand out from their neighbors on either measure. Thus, one of the primary sources of Protestant-Catholic tension, conflict, and violence in contemporary Northern Ireland is not caused by people motivated by notably extreme ethnic views. Rather, these confrontations are caused by people seeking the pleasures inherent in the collective expression of deeply-held shared identities and moral values—the controversy is at best an afterthought. Some of those pleasures, to be sure, are rooted in the conflictual and zero-sum nature of a divided society, but, fundamentally, paraders are men and women working to create meaning through collective action. For participants, loyalist parades are *the* “opportunity to articulate, elaborate, alter, or affirm one’s moral sensibilities, principles, and allegiances,” which James Jasper (1997, 15) considers “[t]he central satisfaction of protest.”

What are the broader implications for students of politics? What do Belfast’s paraders teach us about politics generally? First, I provide further evidence that process-benefits are a significant motive for political participation (Wood 2001, 2003; Elster 1989; Schlozman, Verba,

and Brady 1995; Jasper 1997, 1998; Varshney 2003). Much of the important research which supports the role of process-benefits, however, has been conducted on high-risk, violent situations (Wood 2003; Einwohner 2003), the type of circumstance where we would not necessarily expect the assumptions of rational choice theories to operate. The stability and predictability of parades, in contrast, actually provides an easy test for the utility of rational choice in explaining ethnic mobilization. Its failure to provide a convincing explanation suggests a limit to rational choice's foray into cultural politics. Conversely, the success of the ritual theory demonstrates the fruitfulness of turning to disciplines besides economics to help explain political phenomena. In particular, by drawing on sociology, anthropology, and religious studies, I was able to suggest conditions in which we can expect intrinsic, expressive motives to matter, rather than simply turning to them when existing economic theories failed.

Second, through my sustained theoretical and empirical treatment of loyalist parades, I present political rituals as an important and feasible topic for political scientists. Political rituals such as religious processions (Wilkinson 2004), public prayer (Munson 2008), or commemorative ceremonies (Ross 2010) often appear insignificant and illegible to dominant political science approaches. But by folding usable insights from other disciplines into existing political science frameworks, I demonstrate that loyalist parades and other political rituals are accessible to the discipline's body of theories and help illuminate longstanding questions. Further, though rituals are often analyzed using interpretive methods that remain marginal in political science (i.e., ethnography and close readings of texts), this paper provides a methodologically rigorous model for studying political rituals. I show that it is both valuable and possible to sample nonparticipants as well as participants. The leaders who invest great resources

in political rituals and the citizens who choose to participate in them have long understood their political import. It is high time political scientists did too.

Appendix

Table 4. Types of Purposes Attributed to Loyalist Parades

Intrinsic Purposes	
Tradition	It is a tradition to parade; to continue that tradition.
Culture	It is part of our culture to parade; or, parading maintains our culture.
Celebration	To celebrate Protestant culture and people.
Commemoration	To commemorate, celebrate, or mark the Protestant past.
Social	To bring people together to enjoy each others' company.
Fun/Carnival	To create a fun environment for people to enjoy; also to compete musically.
Instrumental Purposes	
To Promote	To promote a particular agenda, such as Protestantism or Protestant unity.
Display Loyalty	To display loyalty to the Protestant group, Northern Ireland, or the UK.
Take a Stand	“To show (other people) that one takes a political stand, or want to show which ideas one believes in” (Peterson et al. 2012, 291). Also to show your culture.
Negative	To cause trouble, be provocative or send a message of triumphalism.

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The genesis of the Northern Ireland conflict can be found in the birth of the province itself. In 1921, the island of Ireland was partitioned into the Irish Free State, which would later become the Republic of Ireland, comprised of the island's twenty-six southern counties and Northern Ireland, which contains the six northeastern counties in Ulster. Like most intractable conflicts, the Northern Ireland Troubles were multi-dimensional in both causes and drivers of the conflict. On March 1, 1976, the British government ended the special category status which had designated newly convicted members of paramilitary organizations as political prisoners, however the special category status for existing prisoners remained.