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### Demographic change and conflict in Northern Ireland: reconciling qualitative and quantitative evidence

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## **Demographic Change and Conflict in Northern Ireland: Reconciling Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence**

*Eric Kaufmann*

James Fearon and David Laitin (2003) famously argued that there is no connection between the ethnic fractionalisation of a state's population and its likelihood of experiencing ethnic conflict. This has contributed towards a general view that ethnic demography is not integral to explaining ethnic violence. Furthermore, sophisticated attempts to probe the connection between ethnic shifts and conflict using large-N datasets have failed to reveal a convincing link. Thus Toft (2007), using Ellingsen's dataset for 1945-94, finds that in world-historical perspective, since 1945, ethno-demographic change does not predict civil war. Toft developed hypotheses from realist theories to explain why a growing minority and/or shrinking majority might set the conditions for conflict. But in tests, the results proved inconclusive.

These cross-national data-driven studies tell a story that is out of phase with qualitative evidence from case study and small-N comparative research. Donald Horowitz cites the 'fear of extinction' voiced by numerous ethnic group members in relation to the spectre of becoming minorities in 'their' own homelands due to differences of fertility and migration. (Horowitz 1985: 175-208) Slack and Doyon (2001) show how districts in Bosnia where Serb populations declined most against their Muslim counterparts during 1961-91 were associated with the highest levels of anti-Muslim ethnic violence. Likewise, a growing field of interest in African studies concerns the problem of 'autochthony', whereby 'native' groups wreak havoc on new settlers in response to the perception that migrants from more advanced or dense population regions are 'swamping' them. (i.e. Marshall-Fratani 2006) Recent violence in Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, Uganda

and even South Africa can be traced to this dynamic. (Green 2010) But we can also cite non-African cases such as the ‘indigenous’ coup in Fiji in 2000 or Assamese attacks on Bengali immigrants in India since the 1960s. (Wiener 1983)

There is considerable evidence that ethnic change tends to trigger an ethnonationalist response from a locally-dominant ethnic group which believes the congruence between itself and its sacred territory to be under threat. For Kaufmann (2004), indigenesness, the idea that this land is ‘our’ land and that ‘we’ are ontologically and culturally the rightful proprietors of it, is central to the concept of dominant ethnicity, which also underpins many established nation-states and thus plays a role in anti-immigrant sentiment. (Kaufmann 2004; Smith 1986) Dominant ethnicity can express itself not merely at state level (i.e. WASPs in USA, Persians in Iran), but regionally (French-Canadians in Quebec) or locally. Thus it is territorially-compact, indigenous ethnic groups that are implicated in violence rather than dispersed immigrant groups who lack a sense of ‘native’ attachment to ‘sacred’ territory.

Melander (1999) found that groups who make up at least 70 percent of their home region are more likely to mount a violent rebellion against the state than more dispersed groups. Toft (2003) reported similar findings, going further to show how geographically concentrated groups living in areas they consider their homeland were more likely to attempt to violently secede. In a recent unpublished paper, ‘Sons of the Soil, Immigrants and Civil War’, Fearon and Laitin take the argument further, noting that demographic incursions of settlers into territory that ethnic groups deem to be their homeland are responsible for 32 of the 101 ethnic civil wars (defined by a 1000-battle death threshold) recorded for 1945-2008. Moreover, a further 36 indigenous ethnic groups - defined as those who have inhabited their region prior to 1800 - were involved in ethno-communal rioting or ethno-communal warfare (less than 1000 battle deaths) since 1980.

So does demography matter for ethnic violence or not? This paper suggests that there is potential in both perspectives and methodologies. To begin with, we are more apt to spot a quantitative association between ethnic change and conflict in sub-state data. Furthermore, given the decennial nature of census data (which therefore cannot be sensitive to outbreaks of violence in a given year), we need to deploy models that seek links between ethnic change and conflict levels, rather than onsets - the measure used by Laitin and Fearon (2003). Furthermore, the processes we shall trace are often indirect - either mediated or multi-stage - rather than first order.

#### The 'Orange State': Unionist Demographic Hegemony in Northern Ireland

We shall begin with the observation that Northern Ireland was explicitly formed as a Protestant state after Unionist resistance convinced the British to partition the island in 1921 rather than maintain it as a unitary entity under Home Rule. Demography played an important part in Unionist calculations from the outset. Some Unionists sought to incorporate the full nine counties of Ulster into the new state. However, this 'greater' Unionist solution would add three Catholic-majority counties, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, to Northern Ireland, diluting the Protestant advantage. Though these counties contained significant minorities of Protestants (by all-Ireland standards) and Protestants in these three 'left out' counties were extremely active in Unionist causes such as Orangeism, the balance of opinion among northern Protestant leaders favoured a more compact 6-county 'Ulster' with a solid two-thirds Protestant majority. Their decision thus prevailed over the protests of 'cut-off' Unionists.

The expansion of the British welfare state attendant upon the election of Clement Attlee's Labour government in 1945 led to growing sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland as the Protestant government of Northern Ireland parcelled out the new social largesse in a biased manner. Though a part of Great Britain, Northern Ireland had secured distinct privileges under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, partly because of sympathy from Unionists in mainland Britain and partly because of the Ulster Unionists' threats of civil unrest. The terms of the Act permitted the Unionists to have their own assembly at Stormont, a form of self-rule not extended to Scotland or Wales until Devolution in the late 1990s. Based on a majoritarian electoral formula despite the divided, ethnic nature of the province's party system, the Stormont assembly returned the Protestant Official Unionist Party (later UUP) to office every year between Northern Ireland's founding in 1922 and the end of the Assembly in 1972. (Bew and Patterson et al. 2001)

Protestants' domination of Stormont, and their control of local government through gerrymandering - even in Catholic majority cities like Derry - permitted them to direct the resources of the British Treasury toward Protestants. This was vital in an economy dependent on government to the tune of over 85 percent of GDP where most housing and good jobs were publically-provided. In housing, health care, education and government employment, Protestants disproportionately benefited while Catholics disproportionately emigrated. Work permits for Irish migrants from the south were directed toward southern Protestants and away from Catholics, whom the Unionists suspected as a fifth column bent on the 'peaceful penetration' of the North. (Patterson and Kaufmann 2007, ch., 1)

The demography of Northern Ireland is fascinating. Catholics entered the demographic transition 60 to 80 years after Protestants. Traditional Catholic teachings on birth control as well as rural poverty and lower levels of female education contributed to this difference. However,

though they formed just 35 percent of Northern Ireland's population, Catholics made up 60 percent of its emigrants. The disproportionate losses among Catholics in the 15-40 age cohort reversed the gains that would otherwise have accrued to the Catholic community. Indeed, the 20-24 age cohort was 25 percent smaller than the 15-19 cohort in 1971. (Leuprecht 2010; Compton 1991)

Protestants acted on several levels to make life difficult for Catholics, which encouraged emigration. At the grassroots, Protestants tried to prevent Protestant land and houses being sold to Catholics. Protestants who did so faced sanction from their community. The quasi-Masonic Orange Order, a fraternity which enrolled a fifth of Protestant men over 18 in the province (rising to a half in rural areas of Border counties where Protestants are often a minority) developed a 'Land Fund' to purchase land for Protestants. It persists to this day.<sup>1</sup> The scheme began in 1938 in Fermanagh - a border county with a nearly even mix of Catholics and Protestants - and was soon copied elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

At the Order's Central Committee in 1959, a resolution from Portglenone district in County Antrim was tabled to offer a stick as well as a carrot to prospective Protestants seeking to sell land to the highest bidder: 'Any member of the Order who in future sells or in any manner whatsoever disposes of his farm house or other property to a RC [Catholic] should be expelled from the Order'.<sup>3</sup> This attitude is reinforced by informal community sanctions running the gamut from 'friendly advice' to threats, as well as a system of 'gatekeeper' auctioneers, solicitors and estate agents who withdraw land from sale if a buyer of the correct faith is not found. (Murtagh 1997: 33, 48-50)

The Orange Order connected the grassroots to the levers of power. For politicians it was almost a sine qua non for election. Indeed, all but 11 of the 149 Official Unionist Party MLAs

between 1922 and 1972 were Orangemen, as were all Prime Ministers of Northern Ireland.

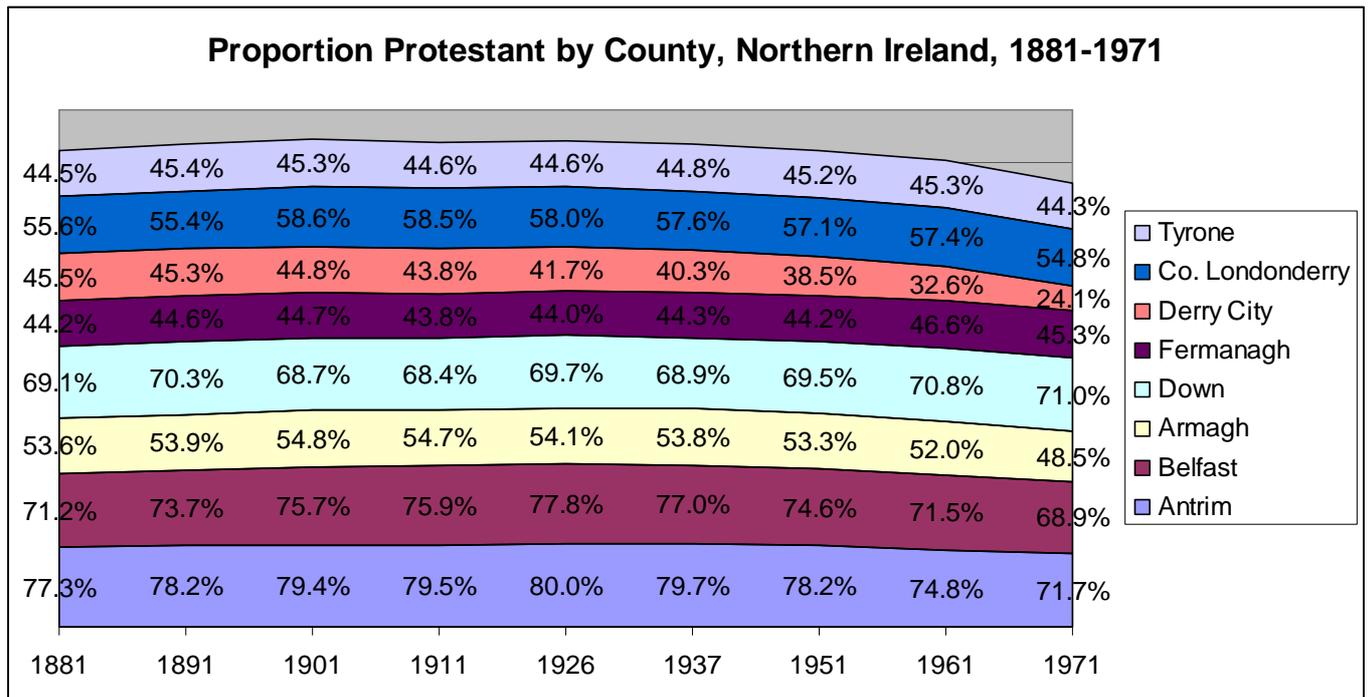
(Harbinson 1973) The Order and local Unionist Party branches - often the same people - acted as conveyor belts for local Protestant fears. Thus the North Armagh Unionist Party branch wrote to the party's headquarters in April 1950 'Protesting strongly against the action of our Ulster and Protestant government in permitting the appointment of a Roman Catholic to be in charge of the allocation of houses built in county Tyrone, Fermanagh, South Derry and a large part of the county of Armagh [areas with an even ethnic balance]...We feel that all our endeavours to increase the Unionist majority have been brought to nought by the action of this unacceptable person who has for instance allocated over 90 percent of houses in Keady [a South Armagh town with a Catholic majority of 79 percent in 1971] to RC Republicans. We demand their immediate withdrawal from their position of responsibility.' (Patterson and Kaufmann 2007: 50)

### Northern Ireland's Changing Ethnic Demography

Unionist efforts seemed to bear demographic fruit for many decades. Figure 1 shows the Protestant share of the population in the six counties and two county boroughs (cities) of Northern Ireland between 1881 and 1971. Notice that Protestants retained their share of the population through most of the period despite a birth rate 50 percent lower than the corresponding Catholic rate. In the finely balanced rural border counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh and Londonderry, Protestants managed to increase or maintain their strength until 1961. Only in the cities, especially Derry, did a Catholic influx change the composition of the population. After 1961, the Catholic share of the province's population began to rise as

emigration tailed off - in part due to the expansion of the province's welfare state. At this point, Northern Ireland was still considerably more prosperous than the Republic.

**Figure 1.**



Source: Census of Ireland 1881-1911; Census of Northern Ireland 1926-71<sup>4</sup>

Northern Ireland's growing Catholic population coincided with increasing pressure from the British government on the Unionist-dominated Northern Ireland government at Stormont to reduce discrimination in jobs, housing and voting. Already present under Macmillan's Tories, this moral suasion increased during the Labour administration of Harold Wilson from 1964 to 1970. The new realities alarmed Protestants. As the Unionist Prime Minister Terence O'Neill - branded a traitor by many Unionists for his attempts to implement egalitarian reforms - put it in 1969: 'The basic fear of Protestants in Northern Ireland is that they will be outbred by the Roman

Catholics. It is as simple as that.' (Gillespie and Jones 1995: 105) Catholics were increasingly staying put, and by 2001, they formed an estimated 47 percent of the population and a majority of schoolchildren - on course, therefore, to eventually becoming the majority. (Courbage 2003)

While demographic fear was the prevailing leitmotif in the Unionist community, a sense of optimism sprang up on the other side of the communal fence. Favourable demographic trends soon formed the linchpin of the emerging strategy of the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. Adams used the demographic argument to convince the IRA's Army Council to back his tactic of shifting from 'the armalite [i.e. armed struggle] to the ballot box'. After all, he reasoned, if Nationalists became the electoral majority, they could vote for a United Ireland. This is certainly possible under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 which only requires 51 percent support across Northern Ireland. In April 2001, prior to the eagerly anticipated release of the 2001 Northern Ireland census figures, *The Guardian* wrote that Irish Republicans felt "a sense of destiny". In June 2008 in a speech at the London Irish Centre, Adams once again reaffirmed this logic: 'The economic and demographic dynamics in Ireland make Irish reunification a realistic objective within a reasonable time scale.' (Bean 1995; McEldowney et al. 2004; Socialist Campaign Group News 2008)

Demographic Shifts and Violence in Northern Ireland: in search of quantitative clues

Given the above, what can we say about the relationship between ethnic change and violence in Northern Ireland? The hypothesis that dominant ethnic groups react in 'sons of the soil' fashion to the growth of minorities might suggest that Unionists would kill in response to Catholic growth. But such an interpretation is too crude. The Unionist grassroots and their

government were alarmed at Catholic growth, but were also constrained by a number of factors. First of all, most Unionists did not support violence, which they deemed to be part of the Republican/Catholic 'physical force tradition'. This was considered alien to the law-abiding Protestant tradition as exemplified by the almost entirely Protestant police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), not to mention the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) of the British Army and its local military auxiliary, the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR).<sup>5</sup> RUC and UDR men were overrepresented in the Orange Order, whose leadership - and most members - deemed the Order a traditional, law-abiding organisation. Accordingly, it frowned on the activities of secular Protestant paramilitaries like the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Defense Association (UDA) which were responsible for virtually all Protestant-on-Catholic civilian deaths. This remained true even though there were local pockets of paramilitarism within the Order.<sup>6</sup>

Second, the British government controlled the purse strings in Northern Ireland. In an economy whose GDP depended overwhelmingly on government, this gave the generally nonsectarian British government important leverage over the activities of the Unionist administration at Stormont. Finally, while the Unionists viewed the six counties as 'theirs' by virtue of the deal they had struck to give up the southern 26 counties, they never challenged the claim that the Catholic population was native to Ulster, which arguably undercut the more typical, 'sons of the soil' ethno-nationalist claims deployed by, for example, Serbs in Kosovo, Sinhalese in Sri Lanka or Melanesian Fijians in Fiji.

The 'Troubles', or civil war, in Northern Ireland began in mid-1969 and largely died down after the first IRA ceasefire of 1994. Malcolm Sutton records 3526 conflict-related deaths during the period 1969-2001. Of these, 1521 were identified as Catholic and 1287 as Protestant. Among Protestants, close to 80 percent of deaths came at the hands of Republican groups,

namely the provisional IRA (PIRA) or, to a lesser degree, the smaller INLA.<sup>7</sup> Catholic fatalities came from a wider spectrum with under half from loyalist paramilitaries, a fifth from the British army and close to a third from Republicans (mainly PIRA) themselves - largely in the form of reprisal killings.<sup>8</sup>

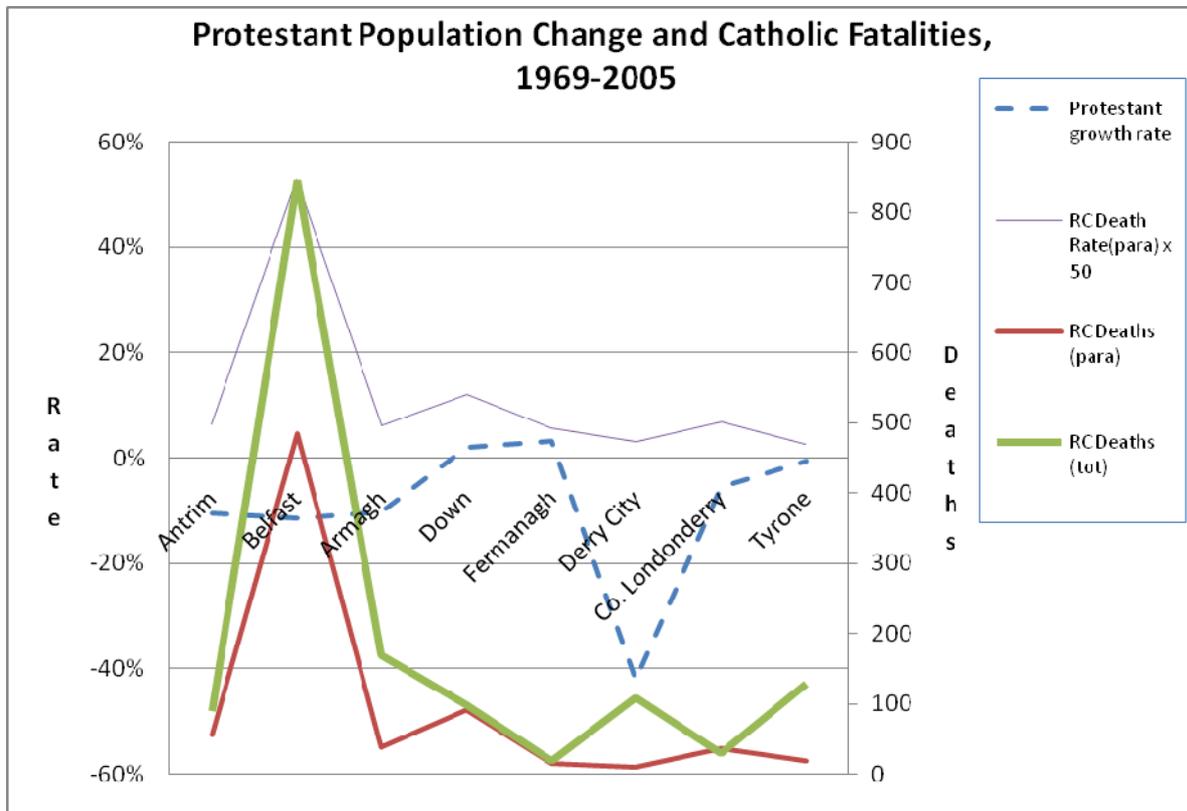
Among the Republican groups, strategy was proactive, ideological and offensive in the sense that PIRA and INLA sought to attack symbols of the British state such as the army, RUC and UDR and those who cooperated with them. The struggle was cloaked in anticolonial ideology, and in the 1970s, Republicans spoke of an 'Algeria strategy' to push the British from Northern Ireland as the FLN had forced the French from Algeria. For Protestant paramilitaries, by contrast, violence was almost entirely reactive: a combination of community defence and a tit-for-tat response to Republican violence. Retribution and self-defence were also part of PIRA's *raison d'etre*, but less so, and the loss of an offensive vision sapped the movement's strength. In the words of Eamon Collins, an ex-PIRA man, by the 1980s, the 'IRA's struggle had become pointless: the only justification for our existence was to protect Catholic areas from loyalist death squads.' (Collins and McGovern 1999: 242)

The suspicion that population change played little part in the violence - especially once a cycle of retribution was underway - is borne out in the data. According to the 'sons of the soil' theory, Protestants would be expected to attack Catholics more viciously in areas where Protestants had experienced population decline. Changes to census boundaries do not allow us to calculate the rate of population change after 1971, but the violence crested during 1969-72, so we should be able to draw robust conclusions from the 1926-71 census data chronicled in figure 2. In figure 2, we clearly see that shifts in the Protestant share of the population at county level during 1926-71 (dotted line) bear absolutely no relationship to the numbers of Catholics killed

during 1969-2005, whether this is measured in terms of the absolute number of Catholic fatalities from the conflict, total Catholics killed by Protestant paramilitaries or the rate of Catholic fatalities from paramilitaries per Catholic population.<sup>9</sup>

What jumps out instead is the demographic implosion of Protestantism in Derry City - which elicited no increase in Protestant killing, though the British army did conduct many operations there hence the spike in Derry's overall, but not Protestant-orchestrated, Catholic death count (see difference between thick and thin lines in Derry in figure 2). Moving to the eastern, more Protestant end of Northern Ireland, there is a very high level of Protestant-on-Catholic fatalities (and fatality rates) in Belfast, which is difficult to explain from the gradual growth of Catholicism in the city from 22.3 percent in 1926 to 31.4 percent in 1971.

Figure 2.



Source: Census of Northern Ireland; Sutton 1994; 2001; McKeown 2009

This analysis is borne out in the models in table 1 which compare McKeown's (2009) fatality figures from the 18 parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland with 2001 census data by constituency. The unemployment rate and social class composition of a constituency proved to be insignificant in predicting Catholic deaths and death rates there, as did the absolute levels of population and the denominational composition of the Protestant population. Being a Belfast constituency, on the other hand, proved strongly significant when predicting Catholic deaths and death rates at the hands of paramilitaries. Belfast was the epicentre of Protestant paramilitary activity. It was the stronghold of a tradition of secular, working-class, independent

Unionism, as represented by the paramilitaries and the Peter Robinson wing of the hardline Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

The Protestant death rate also predicted a higher Catholic death rate, intimating that a tit-for-tat dynamic was at work. For Catholics, a larger Catholic population reduced the chances of being killed by Protestant paramilitaries, but had no impact on the absolute number of Catholic fatalities.

**Table 1. Correlates of Catholic Deaths and Death Rates at Protestant Hands**

	<b>Catholic Deaths (para)</b>	<b>Catholic Death Rate (para)</b>
<b>Belfast (dummy)</b>	76.083 ** (19.884)	.004*** (.001)
<b>Protestant Deaths</b>	.340* (.116)	
<b>Proportion Catholic</b>		-.003* (.001)
<b>Constant</b>	.171 (10.633)	.002* (.001)
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.733	.709
<b>N</b>	18	18

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

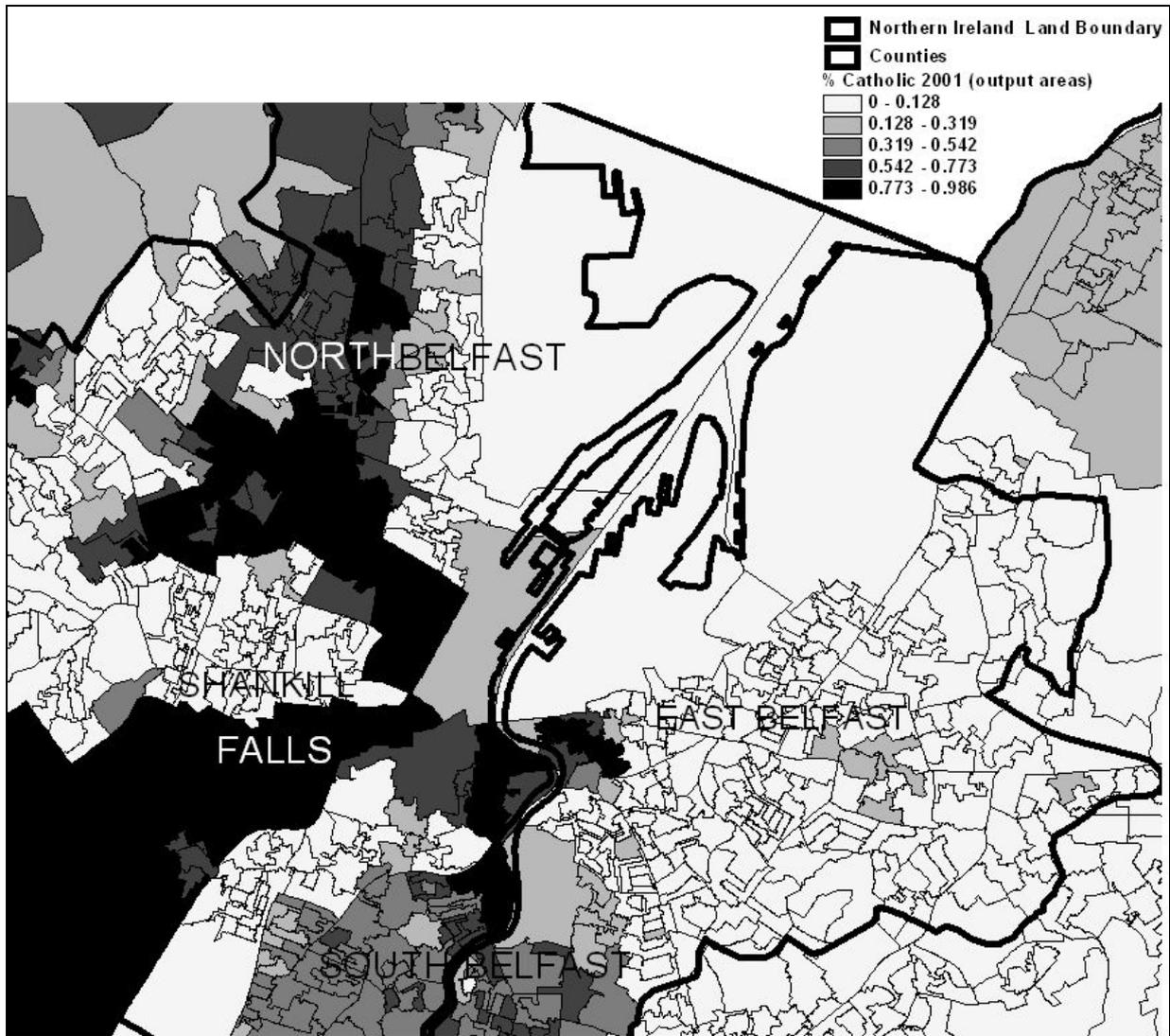
*Note:* Model fit improves without constant in both cases. Other variables tested and found to be insignificant include: Protestant death rate, occupational classes, place of birth (in or out of county) education levels, religious denominations (including no religion), unemployment rate and total population.

This makes sense insofar as the denominator in the Catholic death rate is the size of the Catholic population and it is more difficult for paramilitaries to operate in heavily Catholic areas. It also resonates with qualitative evidence that many of those killed were 'caught on the wrong side' or resided in minority pockets or 'interface' areas (dividing lines) that experienced ethnic cleansing and the 'burning out' of minorities. We can go further and specify that the death rate for Catholics was 3 to 4 times higher in East and North Belfast than anywhere else. What are the main

characteristics of these areas? The map in figure 3 shows that East Belfast is almost entirely Protestant, North Belfast has a slight Protestant majority but is heavily segregated, while West Belfast (home of the infamous Shankill-Falls divide) is majority Catholic and also highly segregated. All three are largely working-class with strong paramilitary youth cultures. South Belfast is the more middle-class, professional part of the city and clearly more residentially integrated.

Catholics were more vulnerable to Protestant paramilitaries in the East and North of the city. West Belfast's ethnic geography is more clean-cut, which meant more peace walls and military cordons which contained some of the violence. This also made it harder for paramilitaries to operate: they had to enter large swathes of hostile territory and surmount security barriers. North Belfast's ethnic geography is somewhat less compact, hence violence was more difficult to police and easier to perpetrate. All of this speaks to a more militarily-driven dynamic along the lines of the Fearon-Laitin (2003) thesis, whereby centres of paramilitary activity and security considerations - rather than mass attitudes or population changes - are associated with violence.

**Figure 3. Belfast: Proportion Catholic by Output Area, 2001**



Source: 2001 Northern Ireland Census; 2001 Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI)

Digital Boundary Data

Does this mean our quantitative case is closed? Not exactly. For while one can dismiss the operation of a direct sons-of-the-soil terror response among Protestants to Catholic population growth, one can find quantitative evidence of a more multi-stage process which begins with

demography and culminates in violence. These demographic factors led to Protestant retrenchment, which provided one of the precipitants for violence.

We can begin by noting that the Orange Order, the principal Protestant ethnic organisation, is strongest in more Catholic counties. Comparing census data for 1971 against Orange membership figures in that year shows that the proportion of adult male Protestants enrolled in the Order is three times as high in Fermanagh and Tyrone, where there is an even balance of Protestants and Catholics, as in heavily Protestant Down, Antrim and Belfast, where little more than 1 in 10 Protestants were Orangemen in 1971. Panel data for 1891-1971 using census data and available county membership figures - model 1 in table 2 - shows that proportion Catholic is positively associated with Orange membership density at the  $p < .001$  level. Economic characteristics (occupations, wealth, education level) of a county were not significant, but the denominational mix within the Protestant population was. The Church of Ireland is the established Protestant denomination and stronger in rural West Ulster. Presbyterians, Methodists and other dissenters, who are more numerous East of the River Bann, were not found in any significant numbers in the largely pro-landlord Orange Order until some way into the nineteenth century. (Flynn 1999)

That said, the Catholic share of a county's population is just as powerful a parameter as the proportion of Church of Ireland members, and together they predict two-thirds of the variation in county Orange membership across this 80-year period. Note, however, that the model relies mostly on cross-sectional variation. Its power to account for 'within-effects', i.e. the association between ethnic change and Orange membership over time, is just over 5 percent, compared to its 'between-effects' performance of 87 percent of the variation. This should alert us to the fact that ethnic change over time does not always produce the same effects as changing

ethnic variation over space (i.e. ethnic geography). More Catholic counties have more Orange-minded Protestants, but as counties become increasingly Catholic their Protestants do not seem to become more Orange, at least not in the 1891-1971 period. This may be because changes over time are more gradual whereas those over space can be very dramatic and abrupt. Initial Orange takeup in the nineteenth century was affected by the ethnic mix in a county, but once set, patterns became less responsive to gradual demographic changes.

More recently, there has been a decline in the Order's strength in urban areas - likely as a result of declining social capital and the rise of independent loyalist marching bands. The latter are more in tune with young urban Protestants' predilection for frequent parading and relaxed rules on drink, paramilitary banners and musical style than the Orange Order, with its formal ritual and lengthy meetings. (Kaufmann 2007; Bryan 2000) The second model in table 2, which is limited to 1993, focuses on a lower level of geography, the 101 District Electoral Areas (DEAs). Notice that the proportion of Catholics in a district is no longer a significant predictor of Orange mobilisation within the Protestant community. More important, at this micro level, is whether a district is transient or close-knit. Those with a higher proportion of people who move (an aspect of urban areas) are less hospitable to Orangeism. In our county model, by contrast, the proportion of those born outside a county was not a significant predictor of Orange strength. Thus the relationship changes with level of geography. We also see an effect whereby relatively high Protestant unemployment (compared to Catholic rates) - seems modestly associated with Orange takeup.

A final factor is the standing of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Ian Paisley in the local DEA. A strong DUP presence predicts a weak Orange presence. This may seem counterintuitive in that both organisations trade on their hardline Protestant credentials.

However, the two should be considered substitutes until very recently. This has a long history. The Order had banned ministers from Paisley's Free Presbyterian church from serving as Orange chaplains since the 1950s and maintained an official link to the dominant Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and mainstream churches. Paisley - who once accused the Order of being more interested in promoting liquor than the 'pure gospel of Jesus Christ' - and the Orange leadership only patched up their 50-year rift after they united in opposition to David Trimble of the UUP and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. (Kaufmann 2007: 230-4) Support for the DUP has generally been strong in relatively secular working-class areas like East Belfast and Derry's Protestant enclave of Waterside where older Protestant traditions have broken down due to the in-migration of low-income Protestants fleeing sectarian violence in more Catholic neighbourhoods. (Farrington 2006) Hence it is unsurprising that we find Orangeism to be weaker among Protestants living in more DUP-voting districts in 1993.

**Table 2. Predictors of Orange Mobilisation Among Protestants**

	<b>Model 1: Orangemen per adult Protestant Population in County, 1891- 1971†</b>	<b>Model 2: Orangemen per adult Protestant Population by District Electoral Area (DEA), 1993††</b>	<b>Model 3: Orangemen per adult Protestant Population in Northern Ireland, 1959-2005†††</b>
<b>Church of Ireland as Proportion of Protestants</b>	.328*** (.091)	Not significant at p<.1	Weak predictor
<b>Proportion Catholic</b>	.304*** (.071)	Not significant at p<.1	Weak predictor
<b>DUP support among Protestants</b>	n.a.	-.119** (.035)	Weak predictor
<b>Geographic Mobility</b>	n.a.	-1.412*** (.233)	-.0000166*** (1.45e-06)
<b>Protestant-to-Catholic Unemployment ratio</b>	n.a.	.002* (.001)	n.a.
<b>Protestant Troubles Deaths</b>	No relationship evident for 1971	Not significant at p<.1	.0000124** (4.26e-06)
<b>Constant</b>	.287*** (.076)	-.175*** (.024)	.296*** (.021)
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.672 (Within-effects R <sup>2</sup> : .053; Between- effects R <sup>2</sup> : .871)	.323	.981
<b>N</b>	45	85 (16 DEAs dropped due to no DUP vote)	36

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

†Prais-Winsten time series regression with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE). 8 county units across 1891, 1901, 1911, 1926, 1951, 1961 and 1971 censuses (no censuses taken in other years, and census boundaries changed after 1971). Dependent variable from Orange Order membership reports and returns. Other variables from historical census were tested and found to be insignificant. These include: total buildings per capita (a measure of wealth), proportion born outside county, industry and occupation, education, rural/urban and total population. Protestant religious denominations were also significant, but not at the .001 level. Within and between-effects derive from fixed-effects regression with same variables.  
 ††OLS regression across 101 DEAs using 1993 electoral and Orange data and 1991 census variables for education, occupation, unemployment, religious composition, age groups, population, housing, income, education, industry, class, transience. Transience measured as proportion migrants (intra and inter-postcode, inter-district, intra-UK and international).

††† Based on a time series analysis of thirty variables of annual data, largely from NISRA (1995-2005), the Ulster Yearbooks (1959-77) and the N.I. Annual Abstract of Statistics (1981-95). Methodology is based on time-series analysis in Stata 7.0 using Prais-Winsten and ARIMA AR(1) modelling, in both regular and first-differenced formulations. Road Mileage was the indicator of transience and fell out of the (de-trended) first difference model so we cannot rule

out the presence of a nonstationary model. Variables tested and found less satisfactory or insignificant cover growth of flights, TVs, cars, primary/secondary/university education, family allowance and public housing expenditure, population, as well as unemployment rate, birth/death/marriage/divorce rates, and Troubles Deaths (total).

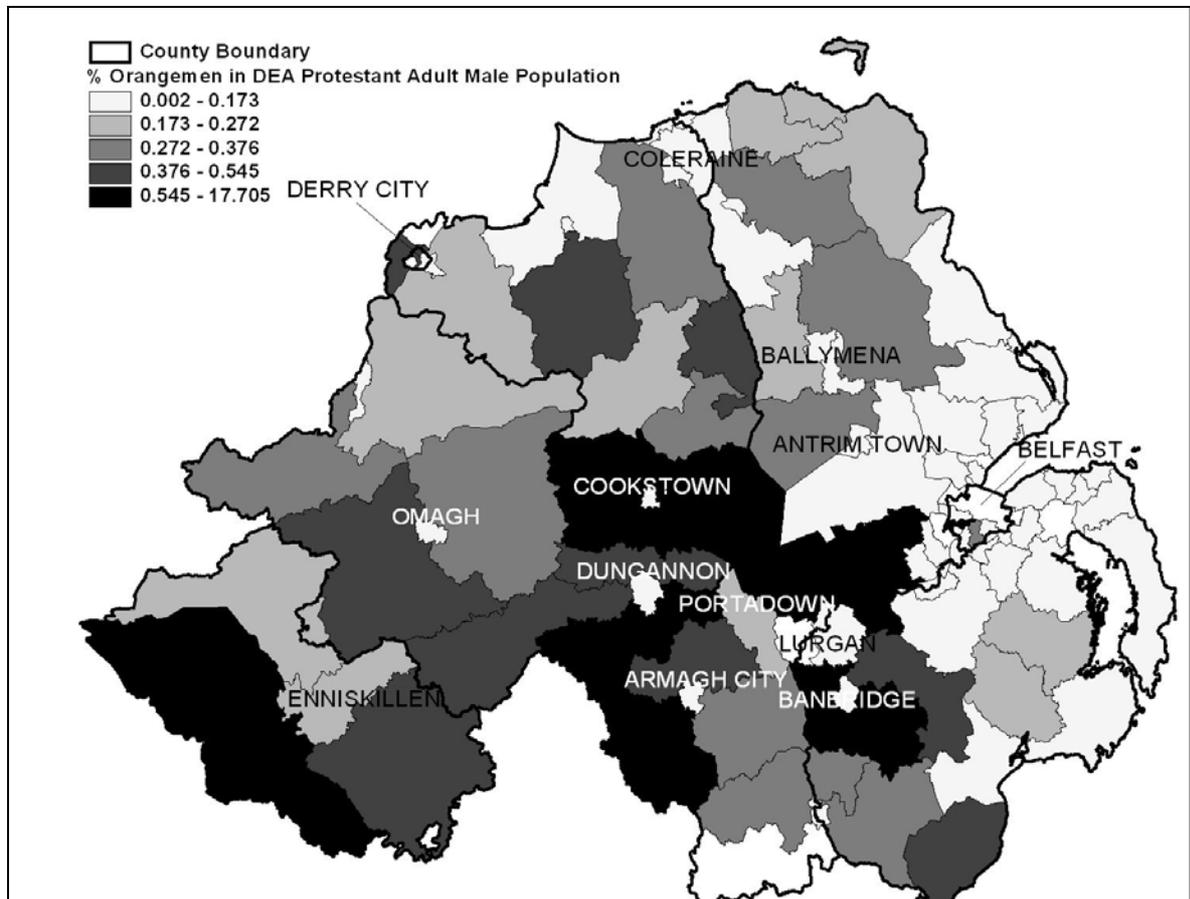
Comparing these models provides a number of salutary lessons when it comes to spotting the effects of demography on conflict. First, we clearly find that the predictive power of demographic factors alters depending on whether we look over time or over place. Ethno-demographic change tends to be sharper over land than over history, thus changing ethnic geography is more likely to be associated with variation in rates of ethnic mobilisation and conflict. Second, even if we restrict our purview to spatial variation, we may encounter the 'modifiable area unit problem' in geography, i.e. that findings can change with level of analysis. A strong Catholic presence does stimulate Orange Protestant mobilisation, but this depends which level one chooses to focus upon. Within counties - with their distinct histories, identities and political structures (of government, parties and Orange Order jurisdictions) - a mixed composition intensified Protestant mobilisation. At lower levels of geography, however, mixed areas (i.e. Malone Road in South Belfast) typically signal a more tolerant local atmosphere. The fit between census districts and 'real' communities is also important since an imperfect overlap could occlude the important relationships at work, creating an 'ecological fallacy'.<sup>10</sup>

Does the second model invalidate the first and show that demography counts for naught? If DEA boundaries did not intersect county ones, we would be able to test a multilevel model to assess this thesis. Even so, a graphic look at the problem reveals truth in both patterns. What we find today is that Orangeism is strong in rural districts where there is a substantial Catholic population: notice the generally dark hue of the southern and western border areas in both figure 4 and 5. The Order is relatively weak in the lighter, Protestant-majority areas of greater Belfast,

notably North Down and South Antrim. Finally, membership is essentially nonexistent in what were once 'no-go' zones for Protestants such as the Slieve Gullion of South Armagh, or Bogside in Derry, which are over 95 percent Catholic and where the few local Protestants keep a low profile.

But Orangeism is especially weak in areas of geographic mobility, which are principally the urban areas. Towns such as Dungannon, Coleraine and Cookstown, not to mention Belfast and Derry, show up as white patches against dark hinterlands in figure 4. This mobility effect is, however, a more recent (post-1971) development: in 1971, Derry City and Belfast were as Orange as their surrounding hinterlands. This shift reflects both the rise of 'rebel' forms of Unionism in towns and cities - notably independent 'kick the pope' bands - and the general decline of Unionist social capital in urban areas. (Kaufmann 2007: 274-85) It is noteworthy that road mileage, our measure of transience in model 3, predicts Orange membership in the province over 1959-2005 almost perfectly ( $R^2=.96$ ).

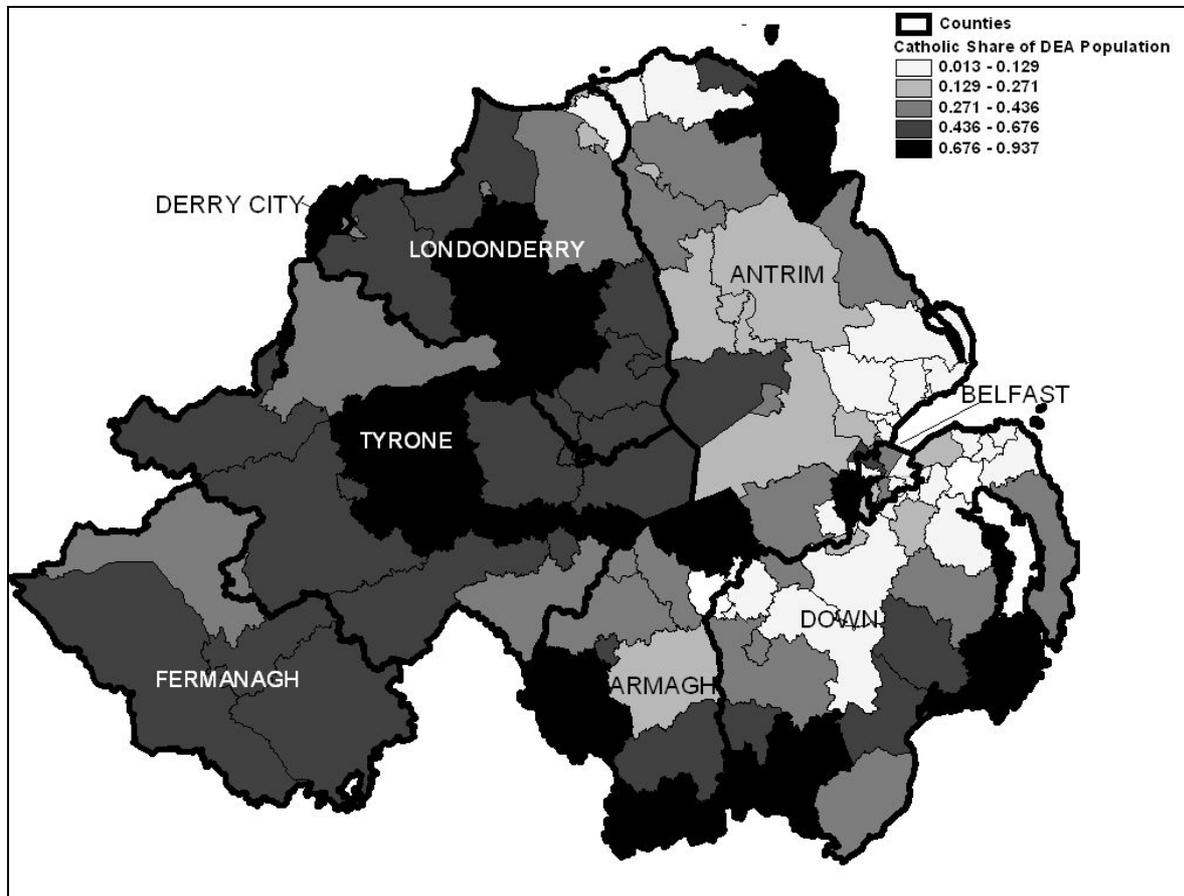
Figure 4.



Source: 2001 Northern Ireland Census; 2001 GOLI returns; 2001 OSNI Digital Boundary Data

Note: Orangemen can exceed local adult Protestant population because Orange population counts are based on lodges which often draw from outside the DEA boundary.

Figure 5.



Source: 2001 Northern Ireland Census; 2001 OSNI Digital Boundary Data

Gurr and Harff (2003) identify mobilisation into ethnic associations such as Orangeism, as an important precursor to ethnic conflict. Yet repression is also integral to their model. Another aspect of our argument, therefore, is that Protestant repression fuelled Catholic support for the IRA, and hence violence. Whereas the IRA's abortive 1955-62 'Border Campaign' failed to win local Catholic support, the response in 1969 could not have been more different. Popular graffiti even accused the IRA of acting as if its acronym stood for 'I Ran Away' when it failed to

strike soon after British troops arrived in 1969. One of the key ingredients in the change was Unionist repression of the Catholic Civil Rights movement, extending to police (RUC) clampdowns on civil rights marches in 1968 and 1969.<sup>11</sup>

The Orange Order was one of the principal forces calling for further restrictions on civil rights marches. At a special meeting of the Order's Central Committee on 8 November 1968, a letter was tabled from the Londonderry Unionist Association which had been sent to the Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs and the RUC: 'in recent weeks loyal [i.e. Protestant] people in the city of Derry have been disgusted and indeed humiliated by...republican and nationalist elements.' Billy Douglas, a hardline Londonderry county Orangeman, asserted that these civil rights marches were not going to be permitted again and that the RUC had only 'softened' due to adverse media coverage. The Order formed a committee to address the issue and meet the Northern Ireland Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs (both Orangemen in their own right) to 'press' them and warn them of the 'repercussions' of permitting further marches.<sup>12</sup>

More vocal in this respect was the Order's adversary on the Unionist right, Ian Paisley. Paisley's antics included mobilising a mob to seize an Irish tricolour flag from a building in a Catholic area of West Belfast, which led to the Divis Street Riots of 1964. (Boyd 1969, ch. 11) The display of the Irish flag technically contravened the government's sectarian 'flags and emblems act' which prohibited the display of all but the Union Jack, thus Paisley sought to show up the relative 'tolerance' of the governing Unionist Party. From the late 1950s onward, he persistently sought to outbid the Order and Official Unionist Party (later UUP), castigating them for permitting an Orange march to be diverted from a Catholic town in 1959 and pouncing on any signs of accommodation to Catholic demands. The principal difference between Paisley and

the Order was that the latter worked through established Unionist channels and frowned upon violence. Paisley formed his own rival institutions and engaged in street protests and provocative rhetoric which, while falling short of direct sponsorship of street violence, helped encourage paramilitaries and their supporters. In June 1959, he fanned local anti-Catholic mob violence in the Protestant Shankill enclave of West Belfast:

You people of the Shankill Road, what's wrong with you? Number 425  
Shankill Road - do you know who lives there? Pope's men, that's who!  
Fortes ice-cream shop, Italian Papists on the Shankill Road! How about  
56 Aden Street? For 97 years a Protestant lived in that house and now  
there's a Papisher in it. Crimea Street, number 38! Twenty five years  
that house has been up, 24 years a Protestant lived there but there's  
a Papisher there now. (Moloney and Pollak 1986: 54)

Angry crowds stormed off to these addresses, looting the premises and firebombing the residents out of their homes.

The parliament at Stormont was eventually abolished by the British in 1972 for failing to implement reforms. Soon after, reformist UUP Prime Minister Brian Faulkner agreed to share power with Catholics and establish a symbolic North-South cross-border council with the Republic of Ireland under the Sunningdale Agreement. This split Unionist public opinion. Paisley, the Order and the Order-backed breakaway Unionist party, Vanguard, called for the restoration of the status quo ante. It is instructive in this context to examine the pattern of support for power-sharing among Protestants. Prior to the Macrory Report into the reorganisation of local

government in June 1970, border Unionists in West Ulster were among the most hostile to reform. Their interest was in retaining gerrymandered local government power in areas that were often populated by Catholic majorities. The situation in Derry, where a one-third Protestant minority managed to control the city, is the paradigm case. Prime Minister Faulkner and the Eastern-based Unionist leadership, by contrast, under pressure from the British government, felt that yielding on local government was unavoidable, and the prudent thing to do. So long as Unionists dominated the province, they argued, local control could be ceded in Catholic-majority areas. This was bitterly resisted by border Unionists like Harry West, who formed the West Ulster Unionist Council (WUUC) to defend the interests of Unionists from west of the River Bann in 1970. (Patterson and Kaufmann 2007: 109-12)

For Faulknerite Unionist Captain Bill Henderson, this reactionary stance was unrealistic. At a UUP meeting he chided that: 'they [WUUC] were bemoaning the fact that the three western counties will be lost to Unionist control but was it not a fact that they were lost already what with our people leaving and the other side breeding us out. How do we keep control- by applying compulsory birth control or by transplanting Protestants?' (quoted in Kaufmann and Patterson 2007: 113) In 1973 and 1974, no pro-Faulkner Unionist candidates stood in border constituencies like Fermanagh and South Tyrone where Harry West was resoundingly elected UUP leader by local Protestants. (Whyte 2010) Only Belfast gave the reformist Faulknerites significant support.

Even in 1978, we find residues of West Ulster's trenchant conservatism in the early Northern Ireland Attitude Surveys. In that year, the 816 Protestant survey respondents split roughly evenly into groups favouring a return to Stormont and those endorsing power-sharing with Catholics. But this concealed wide regional variations, with 55 percent of those in Fermanagh and Tyrone favouring the rejectionist position (return to Stormont) and just 18

percent endorsing it. By contrast, in Belfast, more Protestants favoured power-sharing (37 percent) than a return to Stormont (32 percent). This is not a function of education: region remains significant in multinomial logit models which control for income, age, education and other background variables. The same configuration could be seen when it came to supporting Paisley's DUP: Fermanagh-Tyrone residents felt significantly warmer to the party than respondents from other regions. (Kaufmann 2007: 140-1)

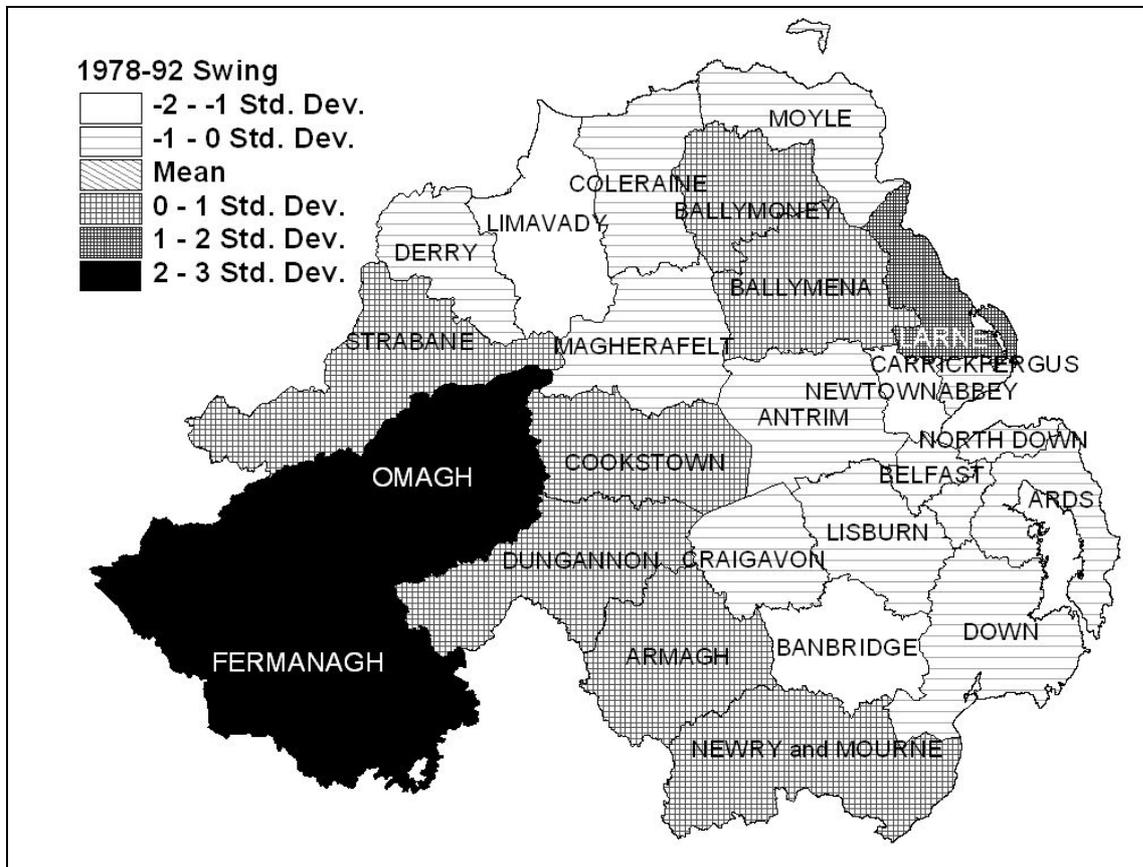
By 1992, only 34 percent of Unionists sought a return to Stormont, but what is remarkable is the extent to which West Ulster had lost its conservatism. Figure 6 shows the contrast in terms of attitudes in 1992 versus 1978 by standard deviation, with darker areas showing where opinion has hardened in relative terms (and vice-versa for lighter areas). Faced with the daily need to work with a majority Catholic population who held local power, border Unionists had become relatively conciliatory and frowned on the incendiary sectarianism of Ian Paisley. They were now the least likely to support Paisley's hardline DUP, which drew its primary support from more securely Protestant eastern areas such as Antrim and Belfast. Having lost the prospect of domination, they swung 180 degrees from reaction to reform, with Fermanagh and Tyrone serving as the most liberal (i.e. pro-Trimble) jurisdictions in the Orange Order in the post-1998 period.

Many Fermanagh and Tyrone Orange leaders feared that Orange belligerence of the kind on display at the Drumcree riots in Portadown during 1995-2002 would affect their ability to hold traditional local parades in Catholic-majority districts where they now depended on the goodwill of the Catholic majority. In its reply to the Orange leadership's hardline Parades Strategy circular of 1998 which called upon Orangemen to come out onto the streets in protest at the rerouting of their Drumcree Parade, County Tyrone Orange Lodge replied:

Many of the [Tyrone] towns and villages now had Protestant minorities and it was felt that we would only be adding to our own local future problems if we were to protest in many of the Districts...the recent atrocity in Omagh [bombing of centre] has caused so much grief within all sections of the community that any immediate action over these next weeks and months would be seen as very insensitive'.<sup>13</sup>

Ethnic demography mattered, but its valence changed in interaction with political processes.

**Figure 6. Change in Protestant Acceptance of Power-Sharing, 1978-1992, by District Council**



Source: Moxon-Browne 1978; Elliott, Ditch and Moxon-Browne. 1992; 2001 OSNI Digital Boundary Data

This discussion hopefully reveals that demography counted in the conflict, but not in a straightforward way. Changing ethnic demography inclined Protestants to make life difficult for Catholics so as to encourage their emigration. This spawned the Catholic Civil Rights Movement of 1967-9 which was suppressed by the Unionist government in a heavy-handed manner at the behest of fearful Unionists in the Orange Order and pressure from Paisley's radical movement. The Order heavily constrained or even controlled the Stormont government through their

position in the Ulster Unionist Party. Protestants in heavily Catholic counties were strongly mobilised into the Order, which defended their interests locally and province-wide. The result of Unionist resistance to reform and suppression of the Civil Rights movement was mounting Catholic support for the IRA, whose military campaign burst into flame in 1969 and burned thereafter, now propelled by its own internal dynamic.

We have noted the lack of any association between Catholic population increase and Protestant violence against Catholics. But even this is too broad a generalisation. In fact direct responses to demographic change did occur when Catholic population growth expressed itself in the form of 'encroachment' into Protestant neighbourhoods. The symbol of 'losing' a street to the 'other side' fused territory and demography in inner-city Belfast, where Protestant paramilitaries were already active. Though Protestants acted to limit land sales to Catholics in rural areas, Catholic growth could take place through greenfield expansion on Catholic-owned land. It thus proved less provocative to Protestants and did not depend on the acquisition of Protestant property (as in Belfast). Since much of the province's housing is publicly-controlled, the decisions of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) are heavily politicised and act as a conduit for demographic forces that can stoke anxieties. I vividly recall a Tyrone Orangemen wistfully (but not angrily) describing the shift in the town of Dungannon's population from two-thirds Protestant to majority Catholic within his lifetime, largely as a result of development in Catholic areas.<sup>14</sup> In central Belfast, however, this kind of change could only involve the NIHE appropriating or demolishing vacated Protestant homes to house Catholics.

Between 1969 and 1996, the Protestant population of the Shankill in West Belfast shrank from 72,000 to 20,000. In North Belfast the Protestant electorate fell by 20,000 between 1981 and 1997 alone. Those departing were overwhelmingly skilled working and middle-class people,

leaving behind the poor and unemployed. In these derelict, depopulated areas, paramilitaries found fertile soil for their activities. Indeed, 'Gusty' Spence, who reformed the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) into the first latter-day Protestant paramilitary in 1966, used demographic reasoning to justify early UVF atrocities, arguing that these were needed to 'hold the line' in Protestant areas against Catholic incursion.

The Holy Cross dispute in North Belfast in 2001 illustrates the issue. Unionist picketers, with paramilitaries in the lead, harassed and intimidated Catholic schoolchildren and their parents on their way to school for a full year. The episode made headlines and brought shame on the Unionist community. Part of the backdrop to the dispute was the fact that radicalised loyalists from the Shankill had been re-housed in this section of North Belfast. But for local Unionists, the picket was also an expression of frustration at the relative demographic buoyancy of Catholic areas like neighbouring Ardoyne in comparison with their Protestant enclave of Glenbryn. Protestants blamed the NIHE for demolishing Protestant streets in Glenbryn to make way for housing to be allocated according to need, which in practice meant to Catholics.

According to Billy Hutchison, a leading figure in the UVF-aligned Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), considered a socialist intellectual and a relative moderate by UVF standards:

If you look at Glenbryn it is really a very small community surrounded by a much larger republican one. People there are hemmed in and they see Ardoyne expanding constantly. Continual talk of the rising nationalist population makes people feel that even more. To Protestants in Glenbryn it feels that if they give away any more ground they will be wiped out as a community. People there are always on the defensive and feel their plight is ignored. The [Holy Cross] protest was a disaster in terms of putting their cause forward

but it was a genuine expression of their anger and frustration and fear over what is happening in that part of North Belfast.

Hutchison adds that these pressures have resulted in Protestant attacks:

People are apprehensive about the future, they don't know what it is going to bring and often that fear can manifest itself in violence. Before the cease-fires that anger expressed itself in shootings and bombings, and even if people didn't go out and join organisations like the UVF or the UDA they felt that their interests were being looked after by them. Since 1994 people haven't had that and I believe that is part of the reason for the rise in sectarianism at the interfaces. No-one is going out and doing the shootings or the bombings so people from interface areas are more likely to vent their anger on each other.

Fraser Agnew, an Independent Unionist (i.e. hardline) MLA for North Belfast even admitted that 'there has been an orchestrated pipe-bombing campaign by loyalists against Catholics, designed to intimidate them out of their homes in North Belfast'. (Heatley 2004, ch. 1)

A more prominent instance of local violence whose origin lies in demographic change is the Drumcree Parade dispute in Portadown, County Armagh. Catholic population expansion led to new housing which reached the formerly sparsely inhabited Garvaghy Road, site of the Drumcree Orange parade route. However, in 1995, Catholic residents of the area mobilised to stop the parade, which brought loyalist intimidation and sectarian songs to their area every year. This led to thousands of Unionists pouring in to the disputed site from all over the province. Unionists also blocked roads across Northern Ireland in protest. Threatened with civil violence

on a grand scale, the police agreed to let the Orangemen march. This proved such an important victory for Unionism that it helped make the career of David Trimble: his presence at the celebrations following the Drumcree parade in 1995 was favourably contrasted with the absence of then-UUP leader James Molyneaux and Orange Order Grand Master (and Trimble's UUP leadership contender) Martin Smyth.

Trimble was crowned UUP leader, and for two more years, despite strong Catholic protests, Unionist mobilisation (in which Orangemen rubbed shoulders with paramilitary men) forced the authorities to permit the march in the interests of public safety. Each time, riots broke out, police were attacked and injured, and local homes burnt. However, in 1998, 1000 British soldiers and a further 1000 police barricaded the area with a 14-foot trench and barbed wire, preventing the parade from taking place. Portadown Orangemen have not marched since. Violence surrounded the annual Drumcree standoffs for several more years, and this became a sore point for Unionists in subsequent constitutional negotiations. (Godson 2004: 280-3) Tellingly, the Orange Order's membership figures for Portadown district exhibit a spike between 1995 and 1998, followed by a catastrophic slump in the years thereafter.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper contends that demographic variation over space and time is an ingredient in the ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland. This effect is not, however, a direct one. It works in interaction with housing policy, geographic factors, economic change, political events and the internal machinations of paramilitary movements. From ethnosymbolist nationalism theory, we would expect locally-dominant ethnic groups to respond to the growth of minorities if these are

perceived to be making incursions into the perceived homeland of the dominant group. Yet this form of direct, 'sons of the soil' violence has been rare in Northern Ireland. Only in demographically-declining Protestant 'interface' areas adjacent to Catholic zones, largely in Belfast, where paramilitaries are active, do we find this. One reason why the increase in Catholic population from roughly 35 percent in 1960 to nearly 50 percent today<sup>16</sup> has not resulted in sustained 'sons of the soil' violence may be because Protestants do not perceive themselves as more indigenous than Catholics. If anything, they acknowledge themselves to be a community with 17th century British Plantation roots. This does not mean they accept 'settler' status, but merely that they do not question the indigenosity of their rivals the way, for instance, Sinhalese, Fijians or southern Ivorians do.

Indeed, Unionist demographic fears have been articulated by Unionist leaders more in the guise of a nervous dominant group than an outraged indigenous one. This is relatively easy to document qualitatively. It is far more difficult to pin down quantitatively. There is no significant relationship between Catholic population growth and Protestant-on-Catholic violence, either over time or at several levels of geographic space. However, in this paper, we have identified a series of robust statistical relationships. First, there is a strong and significant association between the proportion of Catholics in a county and the degree of Protestant mobilisation into the Orange Order. Second, the rate of Protestant fatalities and the presence of violent events such as the Drumcree standoff significantly correlates with increased Orange mobilisation over time.<sup>17</sup> Finally, we find that regions - notably the southern 'Border Counties' of Fermanagh and Tyrone - where Protestants are in the minority or a bare majority were once the most hardline in their Unionism but have since become among the most moderate. Demographic variation can thereby alter its effect on politics as other interacting variables - in this case political ones - change.

Demographic dynamics are linked to Orange mobilisation, DUP support and anti-power sharing sentiment. All are in turn associated with roadblocks on the path to reform, first of housing and local government, then of the majoritarian system at Stormont. This intransigence is widely acknowledged to be a major contributor to Catholic support for the PIRA, which, once formed, engaged in an armed struggle with the nearly all-Protestant police and British army.<sup>18</sup> This war then took on a life of its own. In other words, demography was a driver of the conflict, but this occurred four or five steps upstream from the violence, i.e.

Ethno-demographic variation over place → Protestant mobilisation in Border counties → Unionist resistance to Catholic civil rights → Catholic support for the IRA → IRA violence.

The methodological lesson of Ulster is that one cannot dismiss demographic explanations of conflict on the basis of datasets that contain national-level ethnic data, typically drawn from one point in time. Even the absence of direct correlations at the substate level does not amount to *prima facie* evidence. We must be alert to the fact that ethnic demography varies more over space than over time; alters by level of geography and the congruence of census tracts to real communities; and often acts as a mediating variable, or in interaction with other variables. This does not mean we should abandon quantitative research - even large-N work - to rely only on qualitative accounts. Instead what is needed is a mixed-method approach and a sensitivity to the limitations of existing data, which some of those who dismiss demographic explanations of conflict fail to exhibit.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland (GOLI) report, June 1996, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> County Fermanagh Grand Lodge minutes, December 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland (GOLI) Central Committee minutes, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Census Material, 1901-1971, digital version compiled by M.W. Dowling et al. (UK Data Archive study SN 3542 <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk>).

<sup>5</sup> The UDR and RUC and those suspected of working for them - even as contractors - were singled out by the provisional IRA as high-priority targets.

<sup>6</sup> Having said this, there were pockets of paramilitary support in particular Orange lodges, notably in East Belfast, where one lodge was colloquially known as the 'UVF Lodge' and sported paramilitary banners in defiance of the Order leadership. (Kennaway 2006) Control over the grassroots was only ever partial in the Order, and Dominic Bryan suggests that there has always been a divide between the 'respectable' Orangeism of the leadership and the 'rough' forms of symbolic expression of some of the rank and file, especially when on parade. (Bryan 2000)

<sup>7</sup> Though loyalist paramilitaries accounted for 233 Protestant deaths during 1969-2001 and the British Army for 43 - most of whom were members of paramilitaries. (Sutton 1994)

<sup>8</sup> See Sutton 1994 and updated list at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/>.

<sup>9</sup> It is also worth noting that virtually all of those killed by loyalist paramilitaries were Catholic civilians rather than Republican combatants.

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<sup>10</sup> Due to the nature of the available data, this is an ecological, rather than individual-level analysis. The validity of this kind of model has been established in the methodological literature and holds well in this case as the unspecified characteristics of counties, unlike those of neighbourhoods, are almost certainly too diffuse to decisively affect our dependent variable. (King 1997)

<sup>11</sup> See Darby 1997, for example.

<sup>12</sup> GOLJ Central Committee Minutes 8 November 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Co. Tyrone reply to Parades Strategy Committee, 26/08/98

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Co. Tyrone Grand Secretary Perry Reid, Moy, Co. Tyrone, 2 November 2002

<sup>15</sup> GOLJ membership returns, 1966-2005.

<sup>16</sup> Though there is a small ethnic minority population and a rising group who refuse to state their religion on the census, the reality on the ground, and in terms of residence, schooling and voting, remains that of a divided society in which Catholics have grown. This rise has slowed, however, and the fact that far more Catholics oppose a United Ireland (25%) than Protestants support it (6-7%) means that a Nationalist demographic triumph is highly unlikely.

<sup>17</sup> This is true of both the Drumcree period and the Troubles, especially 1969-72. (GOLJ membership returns, 1966-2005)

<sup>18</sup> The composition of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was influenced by the fact that Catholics who joined the force were targeted by PIRA.