

**The Demise of Dominant Ethnicity in English Canada?:  
Orange Order Membership Decline in Ontario, 1918-1980<sup>1</sup>**

**Dr. Eric P. Kaufmann, Dept. of Politics, University of Southampton,  
Southampton, U.K.**

This paper considers three facets of ethnicity - communities of putatively shared ancestry - that have received scant attention in the academic literature to date. Namely, dominant-group ethnicity, Protestant ethnicity and ethnic decline. Protestant ethnicity concerns ethnic groups for which Protestantism serves as the key boundary marker. By dominant ethnicity, I refer to the ethnic community within a nation - whether state or sub-state - that is politically hegemonic, economically and culturally advantaged, and demographically dominant. As both myself and others remark, all of these conditions do not always hold, so it is not necessarily an easy task to delineate a clear 'majority' group, but the term 'dominant ethnicity' still serves us as a useful shorthand for empirical work. (Doane 1997: 376; Kaufmann 2000) Finally, a dominant ethnic group may be said to have declined when (one or more of) its political power, economic and cultural hegemony, and demographic preponderance is reduced.

The Orange Order, or Loyal Orange Institution (as it is officially known) has played a pivotal organisational role for British-Protestant dominant ethnic groups in Canada, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and, to a lesser extent, northwest England. Accordingly, this association serves as a lens through which we can focus on processes of dominant ethnicity as they interact with the forces of late modernity in English-speaking Canada. The Orange Order has never been the subject of primary social scientific investigation, though Ruth Dudley Edwards' *The Faithful Tribe* (1999) provides the first journalistic account for Northern Ireland and Cecil Houston & William Smyth's *The Sash*

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*Canada Wore* (1980) is an important historical-geographical work. However, the latter book concentrates on the nineteenth century rise of the Orange Order, and only speculates about the reasons why the Canadian Order declined in the late twentieth century. Other historical work on the Canadian Orange Order does not address the question of twentieth century social change (Senior 1972; Pennefather 1984). Some high-quality historical research has also taken place in Britain and Ireland, but here again, the post-1939 period remains neglected (Gray 1972; MacFarland 1990; Walker 1992, 1995; MacRaild 1998).

This paper will primarily address the decline of the Ontario Orange Order, but aims to do so in comparative perspective. This entails consideration of the pattern of Orange membership in other parts of Canada, Northern Ireland, West-central Scotland and north-west England. Indeed, one of the more pragmatic questions posed by the striking demise of Ontario's Orange Order is whether its sharp decline in the twentieth century can yield any insight into the future of the Ulster Orange Order - which has begun to lose middle-class and youth membership at a rapid rate since the early 1970s. Such an approach, which attempts to explain the impact of modernising processes, also requires an engagement with theories of social change and social capital. Accordingly, this paper promises to broaden our understanding of how dominant ethnic groups are affected by techno-economic and cultural variants of modernisation.

### **Dominant Ethnicity in English Canada**

The population of English-speaking Canada (Newfoundland excepted), received its first substantial European settlement with the exodus of some 19,000 American Tories between 1774 and 1783. The largest number of Loyalist settlers arrived in the settlement of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Others settled in what became New Brunswick. Together with subsequent "late Loyalist" immigrants, some 50,000 souls came, 35,000 to the Maritimes (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) and 15,000 to Quebec (which later divided into Upper and Lower Canada) - though subsequent internal migration increasingly favoured Upper Canada. The combined effect of Loyalist and American immigration was to create a viable English Canada. (Gentilcore 1987: 21)

This was not always the case. Before 1776, the British North American colonies had an almost exclusively French population and Governor Carleton assumed that the colonies "must, to the end of time, be peopled by the [French] Canadian race, who have already taken such firm root, and got to so great a height, that any new [British] stock transplanted will be totally hid..." (Wallace 1921: 4-5) By 1800, the situation had changed. The population of some 300,000 was 30% British and growing. American immigration into Upper Canada was the chief engine of growth, boosting the population to 150,000 by 1824.

The first, largely American, wave of English-Canadian settlers laid down a 'Loyalist' culture and identity, shaped by the migration experience of the original American refugees and the test of the War of 1812, in which many English-Canadians fought alongside British regulars. The Anglo-Canadian population distinguished itself in battle, producing several heroes (notably Isaac Brock and the aboriginal Loyalist Joseph Brant) and a series of communal foundation myths. (Errington 1987: 80-86) The American wave of settlers established English Canada - notably Upper Canada (i.e. Ontario) - as a liberal-democratic pioneer society (despite the Tory label) possessing an American speech-pattern. (McRae 1964: 238; Chambers 1975: 6; Scargill 1977: 12) In subsequent decades, however, the American-origin population came to be outnumbered by a largely Celtic immigrant population.

The administrators of the British North American colonies always pushed hard for immigration from Britain, as opposed to the United States. The period from 1815 to 1865 finally brought the much hoped-for British immigration, which numbered well over a million entrants, though half found their way to the more prosperous United States. This was a predominantly Celtic wave, roughly 60% Irish and 20% Scottish in composition, with the rest mostly English (non-British made up just a few percentage points of the total, far less than in the United States). The result was that the Upper Canadian population exploded from 150,000 in 1824 to 925,000 in 1851. A doubling of population also occurred in the Maritimes. (Gentilcore 1987: 21-3) Upper Canada, the cradle of English Canadian identity, now had a British immigrant majority, a factor that reinforced English Canada's Unionist proclivities.

The most numerous group of British immigrants were Irish Protestants, whose loyalty to the Crown sat so well with the Loyalist-Tory element that many Canadian-born Loyalists joined the Orange Order, which arrived with the first Ulster-Protestant settlers in the 1820's. The Ulstermen began arriving as early as the 1810's and by 1871, one in four Canadians of British origin was an Irish Protestant. The Orange Order was to prove a bastion of Loyalism: "By providing, as it often did, the shock troops of Canadian toryism, it [the Order] proved to be one of the most important consequences of the recent British immigration. An element had been introduced into Canadian life that was to have remarkable durability over the next century and more." (Craig 1963: 230) The initial result of the new immigration was to render Canada, especially Upper Canada, a largely immigrant society. The nature of 1840's Upper Canada (Canada West) prompted visitor John Robert Godley to remark that

There is a curious feature about Upper Canada...which strikes the stranger very much, and that is, the exceedingly heterogeneous and exotic character of its population: it is much more remarkable here than in the States...there appears to be no groundwork of native population at all: every body is a foreigner here; and "home," in their mouths, invariably means another country. (quoted in Craig 1955: 143)

Given the harmony between the Orange and Loyalist traditions, however, it was not long before the Irish Protestants began to mix with the established (largely English) American Tory population. One indicator of this assimilation is intermarriage: 27 percent of English marriages, 17 percent of Irish and 24 percent of Scottish marriages crossed ethnic lines in 1871. The proportion among the native-born was even higher: 27% among the Irish and 30% among the Scots. A century later, only a small minority would be able to claim unadulterated Scottish or Irish descent. (Richard 1981: 108-11) Overall, the new British immigrants reinforced British North America's Loyalist identity and imparted a less American flavour to the country.

In Douglas Cole's estimation, the imperial nationalisms that burst forth in settlement colonies like Canada after 1850 were not forms of indigenous nationalism, but represented a pan-Brittanic ethnic nationalism. As he puts it, "Imperialists were imperialists in large measure because they were acutely conscious of ethnic ties and

ethnic differentiation. Their own ethnic consciousness was deeply British ('Brittanic' is a less confusing word) and Anglo-Saxon. Their ethnic identification, bolstered by commonality of culture (eg. language and institutions), by common ethnic origin (e.g. "race" and ancestry), by the feeling of a common history, and by the belief in a common destiny, has all the characteristics of nationalism. " (Cole 1970: 45-6)

Britannic nationalism was particularly pronounced in Canada, bolstered by a romantic Loyalist Revival in the post-confederation period as well as a series of conflicts in which Orangemen featured prominently as bastions of British Loyalty. These included the Rebellions of 1837-8, the Crimean War (1854-6), the Riel Rebellions (1869-70, 1885), the Manitoba Schools Question (1890), the Boer War (1899-1902) and the First World War (1914-18). In many nationalist addresses, rhetoric about the glory of Empire was linked with the idea of the Britannic blood tie and the special position of English Canada. (Kaufmann 1997) The Britannic nationalist spirit thereby helped to incubate the spirit of Orangeism among all Protestant ethnic groups in Canada's British-origin population.

A congruence of loyalisms enabled the Orangeman to submerge his Protestant loyalty within Canada's United Empire Loyalist mythology. The new synthesis is best expressed by Clarke Wallace, grand master of the Orange Association of British North America, who proclaimed that: 'it is not religion which is at the bottom of the matter but...race feeling.' (Berger 1970: 135) This kind of sentiment was in turn reciprocated by George Sterling Ryerson, president of the United Empire Loyalist Association, who gave his assent to the Orange-influenced Protestant Protective Association during the Manitoba Schools question.

### **Comparative Loyalism: Canada and Northern Ireland**

An interesting exercise in comparative study is to examine the similarities between the two strongest Orange societies: English Canada and Northern Ireland. Both Canada and Ulster were settler societies whose dominant group members identified themselves not with any particular British *ethnie* (ie. Irish, Scottish, English), but as composite, *ethnic* Britons. In both societies, competition with a Catholic ethnic opponent

(French-Canadian, Irish-Catholic) helped to reinforce the Protestant accent of the Loyalist group. Likewise, competition with a Republican foe - the Americans for Canada and Catholic Nationalists in Ireland - fortified the Imperial bond. Furthermore, the connection between the Ulster-Protestants and Anglo-Canadians (or 'British Americans') extended to demography: fully 25 percent of Canada's British population was Irish Protestant in 1867, rendering this group a highly over-represented category of the population. (Richard 1991: 44, 48, 83; Burnet 1972: 102-4; Buckner 1998: 11)

Both Loyalist groups also faced similar ontological and political problems, namely that of maintaining British identity in the face of neglect from the mother country and each group's lack of identifiably 'British' culture. Indeed, the English-Canadian struggle to be un-American bears a direct parallel with the Ulster-Protestant struggle against Irishness. Given the similarity between Anglo-Canadians and Ulster-Protestants, it is not surprising that the Orange Order emerged as the leading social movement within *both* groups from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Finally, the collapse of the British Empire after the 1950's was a blow which both groups have struggled to come to terms with: Anglo-Canadians have variously embraced multiculturalism and anti-establishment populism, while Ulster-Protestants have increasingly attempted to establish a more 'home-grown' sense of ethnic identity. (Dunn & Morgan 1994; Adamson [1982] 1991; Kaufmann 1997: 130; Craith 2001)

### The Origins of Orangeism in Ireland

Though the English had dominated the south of Ireland for several hundred years, they had not succeeded in subduing the Ulster chiefs in the north of the island before the seventeenth century. Even so, connections between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland had been constantly renewed through migration and conquest flowing back and forth between Antrim, in Ulster, and the western isles of Scotland. However, with the large-scale conversion of many Scots to Presbyterianism in the late 16th century, particularly in the lowlands, the stage was set for a new cultural dynamic.

This took the form of Queen Elizabeth's settlement of Ulster in the early 1600s with Scots and English Protestant planters. The Scots were the largest contingent, and

settled predominantly in the eastern areas of North Down, Antrim and Belfast. (Boal & Douglas 1982) The English, a largely Roundhead element, settled more lightly in the western sections of the province. Everywhere they went, the Protestant settlers met resistance, which they quelled with the aid of the British government, particularly under Cromwell, who massacred and evicted many native Catholic inhabitants in the 1640s. (See 1986)

The re-establishment of the monarchy was followed by an attempt by King James Stuart to re-establish Catholic supremacy in Britain through a raid from Ireland. James' forces laid siege to Londonderry, but was held off by the local Protestant inhabitants, a number of whom ('The Apprentice Boys' of Derry) symbolically refused to grant James access to the city. James was subsequently defeated at the Battle of the Boyne in Londonderry when Protestant forces under the command of the Dutch Prince William of Orange arrived in the city. These events provide the mythical storyline behind the Orange Order's principal narrative and an important cornerstone of the Ulster-Protestants' collective memory.

The Order itself formed over a century later, in 1795, in response to a rumoured alliance between the liberal, but Protestant, United Irishmen and the Catholic Defender movement. The organisation began with a largely peasant base, but counted a number of elite figures within its ranks, the most illustrious of which was the Duke of Cumberland, heir to the throne of George IV. Its cardinal principles involved a pledge to defend the Monarchy, the British connection, and the Protestant liberties of the Reformation. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Orange Order came to ally itself with the Tories, partly due to Liberal support for Catholic Emancipation (in the 1820s), a ban on Orange incorporation (in the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century), and Irish Home Rule (by the 1880s). (Gray 1972; Edwards 1999)

The advent of Catholic Emancipation and Irish Home Rule helped to activate the Protestant 'garrison' mentality which still characterizes the Ulster Protestant psyche today. Together with Irish Catholic immigration and labour competition, these aforementioned forces similarly engendered a steadily growing support for Orangeism in the western lowlands of Scotland and the north-west of England during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus Orangeism existed within a Unionist

ethnic and political environment in Northern Ireland, Scotland (particularly in the western part of the central belt) and areas adjacent to Liverpool in north-west England. (Gallagher 1988; MacFarland 1990; McCrone 1992; MacRaild 1998)

### **The Orange Order in Canada**

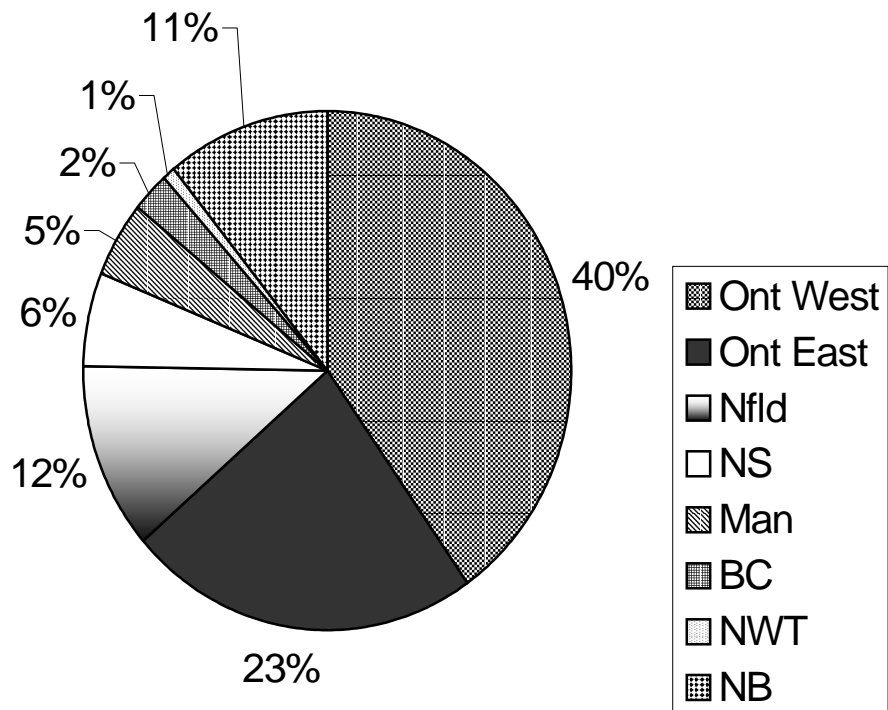
The processes which spawned the rise of the Orange Order in the British Isles operated with equal, or greater, vigour, in Canada. Few contemporary English-speaking Canadians realise that as many as one in three adult Protestant males in Canada were members of the Orange Order between 1870 and 1920 while the influential Ladies' Orange Benevolent Association (LOBA) proved that the principles of the Order were not gender-specific. The Canadian Order was not an Irish organisation, but instead brought together several ethnic components of English Canada's Protestant majority. (Houston & Smyth 1980: 84, 95-6, 104) Founded in Ontario in the early years of the nineteenth century as an association for Irish Protestant immigrants, by the 1860s, the Orange Order had become firmly 'native' in outlook.

Its power was centred in Ontario and New Brunswick, but the Order maintained a strong network of lodges in all provinces - though the Quebec wing was noticeably weak. (See figure 1) Its growth was fed by the same local mechanisms of anti-Republicanism and anti-Catholicism that operated in Ulster and west-central Scotland, though the organisation was given an external boost by the large-scale migration of Irish Protestants in 1820-65. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Canadian Order benefited from an imperialist political climate. This was manifested through a Britannic nationalist exuberance for both Empire and the 'civilizing' mission of the Protestant crusade. This fervour far exceeded the enthusiasm of the British metropole - where imperialism divided liberals (allied to the cause of Irish home rule) and Tories. (Rasporich 1968: 140-56; Senior 1972: 62, 71, 96; Berger 1969) For instance, the Royal Tour of Canada in 1901 drew crowds that regularly exceeded the local population. "Everywhere the crowds were huge and enthusiastic," writes Philip Buckner. "In Toronto, between 200,000 and 250,000 people lined the streets." (Buckner 1998: 12)



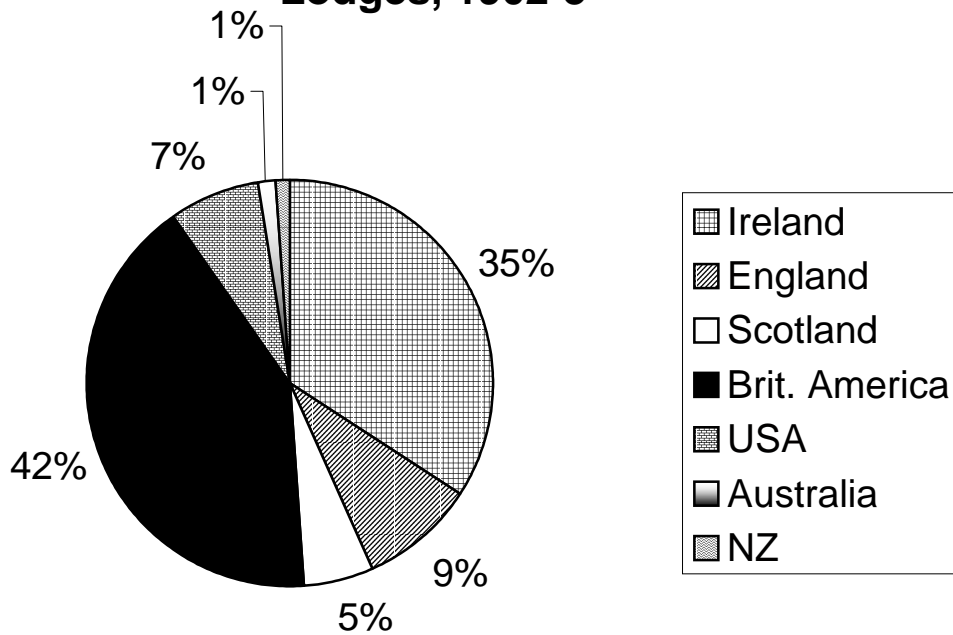
Orange expansion in the nineteenth century was so great that the Order had become larger in Canada than in Ireland by 1900. (See figure 2) When we consider that the population of English Canada was just 3.8 million at this time, we must conclude that English Canada was as Orange a society as Ireland. (Buckner 1998: 14) Furthermore, the concentration of membership in Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland compared favourably with Orange density in the six counties of what became Northern Ireland.

**Fig. 1: Orange Membership, by Province, 1903**



Source: IGCW Report, 1903, pp. 34-40.

**Fig. 2: Global Distribution of Orange Lodges, 1902-3**



Source: IGCW Report, 1903, pp. 34-40.

The Order's mainstream nature and political influence as a bastion of popular toryism is attested to by the many conservative politicians who passed through its ranks, from Sir John A. Macdonald and Oliver Mowat in the mid-nineteenth century to prime minister John Diefenbaker and Toronto mayor Leslie Saunders in the mid-twentieth. (Senior 1972) In Ontario, the Order was influential both at Queen's Park and on Toronto city council, enforcing sabbatarian ordinances and temperance laws that influenced the character of 'Toronto the Good' until the Second World War. Indeed, Toronto ('the Belfast of Canada') had almost no non-Orange councillors until the 1930s.

### **The Decline of the Orange Order in Canada**

By the third decade of the new century, Order membership growth in Toronto was failing to keep pace with the city's skyrocketing population. (Houston & Smyth 1980: 154-7, 162-80) And from the 1950s, the Orange Order began to lose political influence, a change

symbolised by the fact that John Diefenbaker proved to be Canada's last Orange prime minister. Its male membership in 1984 stood at just over 14,000 in 616 lodges, a significant drop from the more than 58,000 members and 4000 lodges which made up Canadian Orangeism in 1955. (GOLOWret 1985; ICGW 1955) Thereafter, particularly in its Ontario heartland, a slow but steady decline set in. Today, the organisation is dwindling and is viewed as an interesting survival from another age. (Houston & Smyth 1980: 162-3)

By contrast, owing to stable or rising membership, the Order's presence in Northern Ireland neatly parallels its former influence in Ontario. Thus the Order maintains an influential presence in both civic and provincial politics, with many Belfast city councillors (including mayor Stoker), and nearly all Ulster Unionist Party MPs counting themselves as members. In addition, its 200-year history, tens of thousands of members, and its position on the Ulster Unionist Council ensure that the Orange Institution is a significant political and social player in Northern Ireland. This is highlighted annually during its 3-4,000 July Twelfth parades - including the highly controversial Garvaghy Road route at Portadown. Such a profile provides a definite contrast with Ontario, where the Order's July Twelfth parades arouse little excitement, while few of those under fifty are familiar with the organisation.

Therefore, the Order's elderly Canadian alumni hold the key to a puzzle of cultural modernisation: what caused the decline of the Orange Order, a structural backbone of Anglo-Canadian dominant ethnicity? Secularisation would appear to be a promising explanation, and it is among the factors listed by Houston and Smyth in their speculations about the reasons for the Order's demise. (Houston & Smyth 1980: 170-71) Yet this can serve at best as a partial answer, since Orange decline preceded the decline in Canadian Protestant religiosity by some twenty to forty years. Value change, in a liberal-egalitarian direction, offers a competing explanation behind the decline, as does a more general decline in the prestige of British Loyalism. To some extent, this has been borne out by recent research concerning the decline of Loyalism in Canada. (Schwartz 1967: 74-6, 106-123; Cheal 1980)

On the other hand, techno-economic rationality, immigration (or some other variable) might turn out to be critical - and all are offered as competing hypotheses by

Houston and Smyth. In many ways, therefore, the puzzle of Orange decline in Canada touches upon the very questions which lie at the heart of debates in social and empirical political theory.

### **Theoretical Context**

In theoretical terms, this research intersects with three major discourses: social theory, social movements theory, and ethnicity/nationalism theory. The analysis attempts to explain why a 200-year old organisation at the centre of one society can enter into sudden decline, while remaining stable in other places. It also tries to determine, more generally, which forces drive the growth and decline of a large-scale social movement over place and time. The Orange Order has been much more stable over the past two centuries than more radical Protestant organisations like the Scottish Protestant League, American Protective Association or (Canadian) Equal Rights Association.

Furthermore, the Orange Order's existence as a traditional fraternity exactly parallels that of the modern period, thereby providing an interesting window into the interplay of tradition and modernisation. A stable organisation like the Orange Order likewise provides a good yardstick for assessing the transition from industrial modernity to post-industrial or 'high' modernity (Giddens 1991). If Orange membership and political influence rose with modernisation but declined with the advent of post-industrial modernity, this suggests that there may be something qualitatively different about this 'postmodern' phase.

Another implication of this project for social theory concerns the cause of fluctuations in Orange membership and power. Here, one axis of debate centres around whether the engine of social change is the techno-economic 'base' of society (the position held by orthodox Marxists and many rational choice theorists) or its cultural-symbolic 'superstructure,' the explanation favoured by many in the Durkheim-Weber tradition (Inglehart 1990). To these 'economistic' and 'culturalist' theories, one must add the more recent empirical political theories which ascribe independent causal power to institutional processes and events (i.e. March & Olsen 1984).

Debates in social theory have their correlates in social movements theory, particularly in the work of Robert Putnam. Putnam's recent research, using American data, attempts to explain the decline in 'social capital,' or voluntary association, in the United States. Fraternal societies like the Orange Order or Freemasons, Putnam notes, are amongst the hardest hit by recent developments. Putnam surmises that the rise of television accounts for much of the change, and that a significant difference in attitudes toward civic engagement exists between pre and post-World War II generations (Putnam 1995). This techno-economic explanation is challenged by 'culturalists,' who contend that attitude changes are the significant factor, and by empirical political theorists who point to the causal impact of events like the First World War or institutional forces like the federal government.

This paper assesses cultural, techno-economic and institutionalist explanations for changes in patterns of Orange membership over time and place. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, I therefore weigh the relative effect of techno-economic (i.e. television and automobile penetration, urbanisation, class), cultural (i.e. religious composition and change, education, media coverage, attitudes) and political factors (i.e. events, political violence, public sector growth) on Orange membership. Accordingly, this paper attempts to test high-level theories with empirically grounded research, thereby bridging an important divide in social science.

At a more middle-range level of analysis, ethnicity/nationalism theorists are concerned with the question of whether ethnicity, dominant or otherwise, tends to decline in high modernity. One school of thought, modernisation theory, holds that this is precisely the case (Durkheim 1893, Parsons 1951, Deutsch 1953, Kerr 1960). To some degree, Steve Bruce, a leading authority on comparative Protestant politics, subscribes to this viewpoint, claiming that Protestant hegemony in Britain and North America has declined due to the combined impact of secularisation, Protestant schism and structural differentiation (Bruce 1998). Which of these forces, if any, are significant in accounting for changes in Orange membership and power? Our analysis will shed important light on this question.

Since the 1970s, modernisation theory has been eclipsed as the main paradigm in ethnicity and nationalism theory by more conflict-based approaches (Smith 1981;

Horowitz 1985). These advance the notion that ethnic groups either resist decline or *increase* their social importance in post-industrial modernity. This is prompted by improved methods of communication, which facilitate greater group consciousness. This occurs because ethnic media and education networks become both more intensive and more extensive, all within an atmosphere of increased awareness of other groups. This paradigm would construe Orange decline as either temporary, or as an aspect of the 'translation' of Protestant tradition from the Orange Order to new social constellations like sports teams or Unionist marching bands (Bell 1990; Bairner 1997). Here again, the analysis will try and assess the relative merits of these two main approaches. In summary, the research will provide a compelling test of some of the major approaches in social theory, social movements theory and ethnicity/nationalism theory.

### **Methodology of Research**

The quantitative portion of this research is based on an examination of Orange Order membership figures for all years available since 1890, broken down geographically (nationally, and by province, county, and district). The quantitative analysis is complemented by a qualitative dimension, including interviews with Orangemen and women, lodge reports, lodge newsletters and city newspapers. The goal being to grasp some of the more complex influences on Orange membership as well as to provide a subjective perspective on the dynamics of Orange political power. It is important to recognise that Orange Order data has generally not been available to academic researchers and that the data presented here has never previously been published.

### **Qualitative Research**

In terms of qualitative findings, most Canadian Orangemen and women whom I interviewed appear to ascribe their organization's decline to structural, as opposed to political or cultural, changes which modernity has wrought upon daily life. A number of respondents suggested an increase in shift work and labour mobility after 1945 was a source of decline. 'Half our membership used to live around here,' remarked one middle-

aged Torontonians, 'Now, they're all over the place.' Others pointed to the increase in alternative avenues of recreation, particularly on Sundays, as a source of competition: 'After the war, there were just so many more things on the go. Before that there was nothing,' noted an elderly gentleman from suburban Toronto. His daughter added that she simply 'drifted away [from the Junior LOBA]...I started curling instead.' Ladies of the Birchcliff L.O.B.A. in Scarborough likewise agreed that recreational competition among youth held the key to explaining decline, while political or cultural shifts were not significant. (TO-1999)

Grand Master's addresses in the period 1945-70 appear to reiterate the theme of socio-economic change affecting membership. Hence as early as 1958, Grand Master Leslie Saunders, also the mayor of Toronto, flagged recruitment problems in the Junior Lodges as an area of weakness. In his 1959 address, he reiterated the problem, and its new (hoped for) solution:

Our programme for Juveniles has not been as successful in recent years. It has not been easy to secure and retain guardians, and, in several instances it has been difficult to secure boys of the proper age as members. There are many reasons for this, and one has only to look about and witness the many boys' activities carried on in every community to realize what a problem it is to add yet another to the large list of time-absorbing activities. (Saunders CGL1959: 15)

Grand Master George Warren, a cabinet minister in Orangeman Joey Smallwood's Liberal Newfoundland administration, continued to make similar observations several years later, speaking of a 'speed up' in social life which affected younger people:

The school curriculum covers a much broader area than the teaching of the three R's. It has been extended to take in such activities as organized sport, physical education, and as many cultural activities as is possible to work into an already full programme. More and more demands are being made on their time and energy. The social aspect has changed too. The days when children and young people, were to be seen and not heard, have long since eased to exist. We encourage them to express themselves, by joining in various programmes, especially those involving competition. The church programme, too, has been extended from one hour of church school on Sunday afternoon, to a through-the-week programme. The bringing of entertainment into our living rooms, through the medium of television, has affected the lives of our young people. By this means, they come under influences, and ideas and propaganda from which we

ourselves were protected. All those influences can be confusing to a growing mind. In fact, it very often leads to difficulty in making a choice between the competing groups. Hence my concern. (Warren CGL1963: 23)

Grand Master Gordon Keyes continued to bemoan the new socio-economic challenges at the 1964 meetings of the Imperial Grand Council of the World. 'Native born Canadians,' declared Keyes, 'and indeed new Canadians from the British Isles...find difficulty in devoting time to lodge affairs. Perhaps the ever increasing attitude of materialism, or selfish attainment contributes to neglect of our heritage....' (Keyes IGCW1964: 30)

While socio-economic concerns loomed large in the minds of many contemporary respondents and writers, it likewise remains true that these factors exerted pressures on other organisations like the Masons or Service Clubs. But if American data are anything to go by, these declined only after 1960, and even then, much less noticeably. (Putnam 1995) Secularization was mentioned by a minority of both respondents and grand masters as a contributing factor to membership decline, but this does not provide a good fit with national trends. After all, Orange decline preceded the decline in church attendance in Canada by some twenty to forty years, and was far more dramatic. (Bibby 1987) Why, therefore, was Orange decline so much more severe?

One possibility might be the influence of cultural or political factors. While many respondents downplayed these, this could be the simple consequence of social desirability bias or the operation of what R.K. Merton referred to as latent (as opposed to manifest) motivations. It should also be noted that most respondents mentioned that cultural and political changes were evident. One middle-aged Toronto member, for example, remarked that his ex-wife refused to go on parade with him and his daughters in the 1970s, while many members were 'ashamed of being in the Orange.'

Another elderly member claims that where once there was a 'nucleus of [Protestant] ministers that weren't ashamed to be associated with it,' the clergy began to turn against the Order after the 1950s because it was not, in his terms, 'politically correct' any more. In a similar vein, the ecumenical movement within mainline Protestantism was singled out by both executive and rank-and-file respondents in Canada, Scotland and Northern Ireland as a negative, if minor, influence on the organisation. (Keyes IGCW1970: 12; TO-1999; GLASG- 2000; BFST-2000) In fact, one pamphlet on sale at



the organisation's Glasgow headquarters denounced Ecumenism as 'The Great Mid-century Myth,' while another ascribed its spread to the influence of Rome. (Webber 1990; De Semlyen 1993)

Ecumenism certainly did emerge as a factor in some of the responses of those few ex-members (and non-joining children of members) I was able to track down. Thus one middle-aged Ontarian whom I interviewed, whose father was an Orangeman, broke from the family tradition in the late 1950s under the influence of ecumenism. He later became a socialist at university and joined the Anglican ministry as a Modernist - all of which led to repeated arguments with his father. Overall, while respondents acknowledged that a minority of Protestants had always been inclined to view the Orange as a 'bigoted' organisation, this tendency appeared to gain force some time during the 1950s. Indeed, some Toronto papers, notably the *Telegram* (as with the *Glasgow Citizen* in Scotland) regularly carried uncritical photo-spreads of 'happy' Orange gatherings as late as the 1960s. By the early 1970s, this format had been relegated to the past as 'Protestant' papers went defunct or were taken over while media outlets multiplied. (TO-1999; GLASG-2000; GOLOW; GOLS)

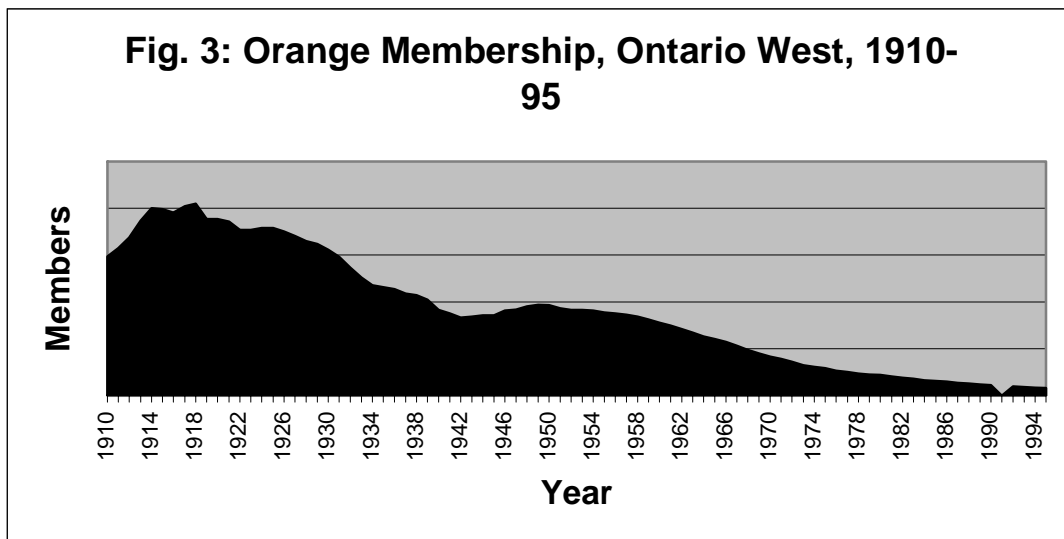
In a related way, others complained that Orangemen began to be portrayed in a more negative manner by the media. Whilst acknowledging that the press had never been friends of the Orange, one senior Toronto member added that negative opinion was minor in the 1940s and 50s. This, however, began to change, as coverage of the July Twelfth parade was reduced, and 'as the population changed its opinions, we got less good press in newspapers.' (TO-1999) This is supported by evidence from 1960s Grand Masters' addresses where dismay is expressed at the negative attitude of 'so-called "Protestant" papers' toward the Orange Order. Grand Master Keyes later lamented the fact that 'Some news columnists have written us off and gloat over what they term "our demise." Even one church paper joined in the glee.' (Smith CGL1969: 23; Keyes IGCW 1970: 11)

In summary, while respondents and Orange leaders singled out socio-economic factors as the most significant explanation for Orange decline in Canada, nearly all sources mention the operation of broader shifts in the cultural and political climate. Indeed, the gradual change in the ideological position of the Orange Order - toward defending ever more limited traditional redoubts - demonstrates this pattern. Lodge

reports of the 40s and early 50s warned against the erosion of the British connection and urged increased British immigration. In the next decade, attention shifted to federal bilingualism and the preservation of the Union Jack or Red Ensign as the national flag. Having faced defeat on all fronts by 1970, the Order instead focused on provincial bilingualism, Quebec separation and state aid for Roman Catholic separate schools. (CGL 1946; 1947; 1951; 1964; 1970)

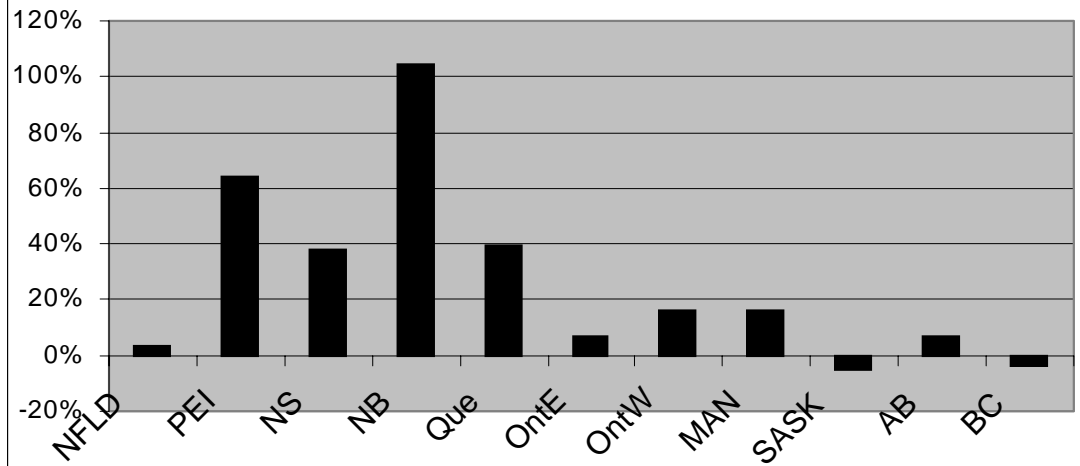
### Quantitative Research

Orange membership patterns in Ontario can help to give us some sense of what happened to Canadian Orangeism in the twentieth century. These are based on surviving internal membership returns of the Ontario East and West provincial lodges - material which has not been previously open to scholarly scrutiny. Through developing contacts with the Grand Lodge of Ontario West, I have managed to examine their annual membership returns, which provide a more accurate picture of decline than the number of operating lodges - the indicator used by Houston & Smyth in their excellent 1980 study. In contrast to Houston & Smyth, who suggested the Second World War as a watershed, these figures suggest that World War I marks the major turning point for Orange influence in Ontario. (See fig. 3)



Source: GOLOW returns. (N.B. - Data missing for 1991.)

**Fig. 4: Canadian Orange Membership Decline (% Terms), 1918-25**

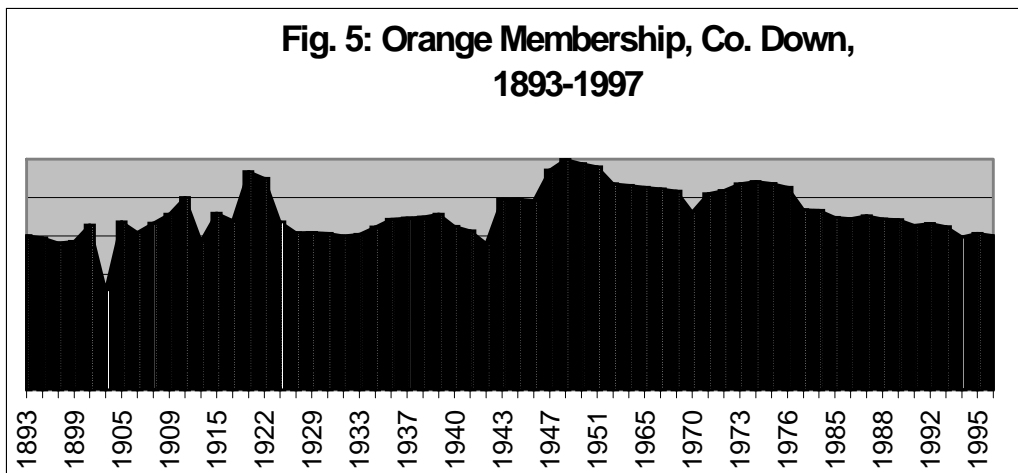


Exactly why this should be the case presents somewhat of a mystery. The considerable number of casualties borne by patriotic Orangemen in the Great War does not provide an adequate explanation for decline. This is so for at least three reasons. First of all, the post-1945 period, unlike the post-1918 one, resulted in a surprising, trend-bucking *increase* in Orange membership rather than a decrease. (See fig. 3) Second, membership changes as a result of the war varied enormously by province. (See fig. 4)

Source: CGL reports. (N.B. - A negative figure indicates membership growth)

Finally, membership changes varied widely by country within the Empire. In the north west of England, much of Canada, and Australasia, Orange decline followed the Ontario trajectory. (Edwards 1999). This decline appears to have occurred in step with a general decline in sectarian politics and attitudes, though it is difficult to ascertain which link in the causal chain transpired first. (Waller 1981; Bruce 1998: 119) Interestingly, in Ulster, Newfoundland, and Scotland, the Order largely resisted decline. (Houston & Smyth 1980: 162-75)

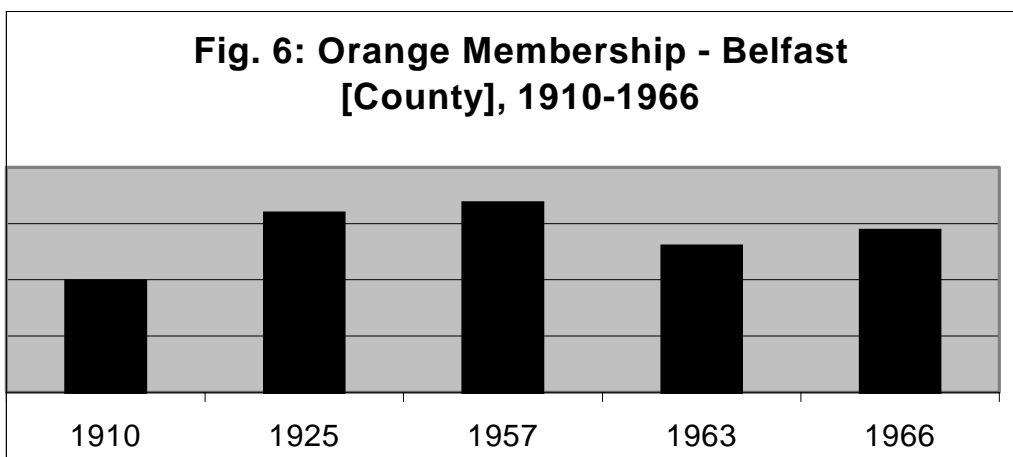
Consider the steady growth of Orangeism in Northern Ireland after the First War. Scattered figures from the Grand Lodge of Ireland suggest that membership rose steadily through this period across the six counties of the North. County Down, whose records are most complete, displays a pattern of steady membership, with a post-1918 surge, a subsequent decline during the Depression, and membership steady or rising until the 1970's. (Fig. 5)

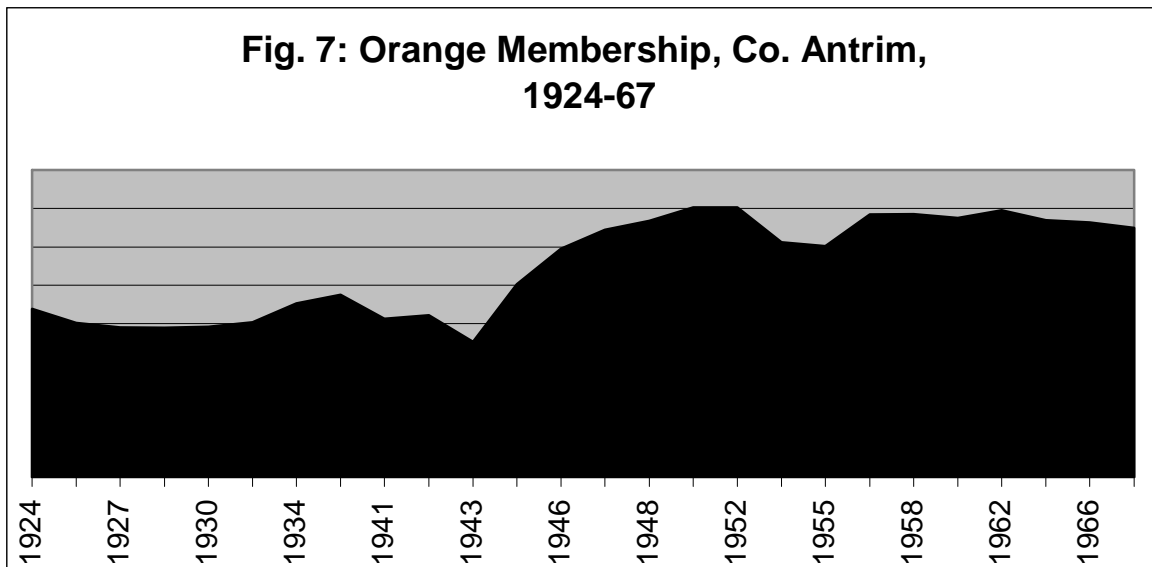


Source: GOLJ reports

A broadly similar pattern appears in Belfast and Antrim counties. (figs. 6 and 7)

Source: GOLJ reports.





Source: GOLI reports.

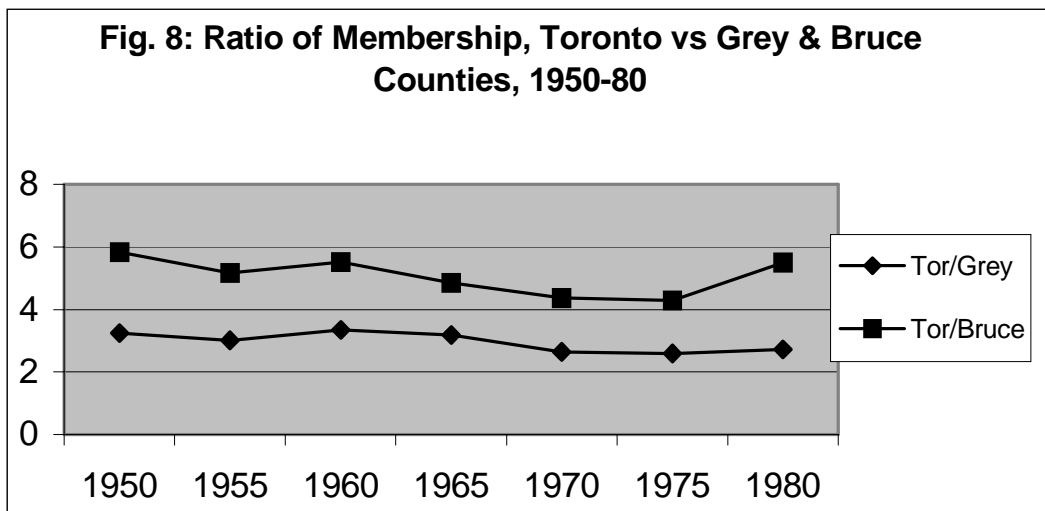
The post-World War II period in Ulster, as in Ontario, spawned membership growth, but, as the figures for County Down demonstrate, decline *has* set in since the early 1970's. Though less marked in rural areas, this trend has become a torrent recently, with several knowledgeable Ulster Orangemen suggesting to me that membership is dropping by nearly 1,000 per year at present. This is particularly acute in Belfast: an analysis of county returns from Northern Ireland show a membership decline of 300 percent in Belfast between 1966 and 1995! (GOLI; BFST-2000; GOLRet)

Losses are particularly severe among middle class lodges, such as Eldon # 7, Belfast, the former lodge for Stormont ministers. (Edwards 1999: 64-6) Indeed, a host of recent analyses point to a general withdrawal of the middle class from ethnic Unionism. (Coulter 1997: 134; O'Dowd 1991: 153-5) This has accentuated the rural and working-class nature of Orangeism in the province – the historical norm in periods of Orange decline. The Presbyterian clergy has also largely withdrawn from the organisation, something which is evident from examining the decline of instances of the title 'Rev.' from local executive committee lists in Canada, Ulster and Scotland. (GOLI 1950-99, GOLS) Any visitor to the headquarters of the Presbyterian church in Belfast is immediately struck by the primacy of the ecumenist posture in the church's image. This

evidence appears to support a culturalist hypothesis, but only weakly so – hence the need for further research.

### Micro Patterns in Ontario Membership

In Ontario, meanwhile, post-1918 decline appeared to impact relatively evenly across various regions of Ontario West. The figure below shows that the ratio of lodges between (urban) Toronto and (more rural) Grey and Bruce counties held relatively steady during the period of decline. Evidently Toronto's suburbanization, immigrant-driven growth and rapid social change did not lead to a rate of membership decline significantly different from more rural parts of Ontario. This casts doubt upon - but does not disprove - explanations linked to immigration, suburbanization or rural-urban variation. (See fig. 8)

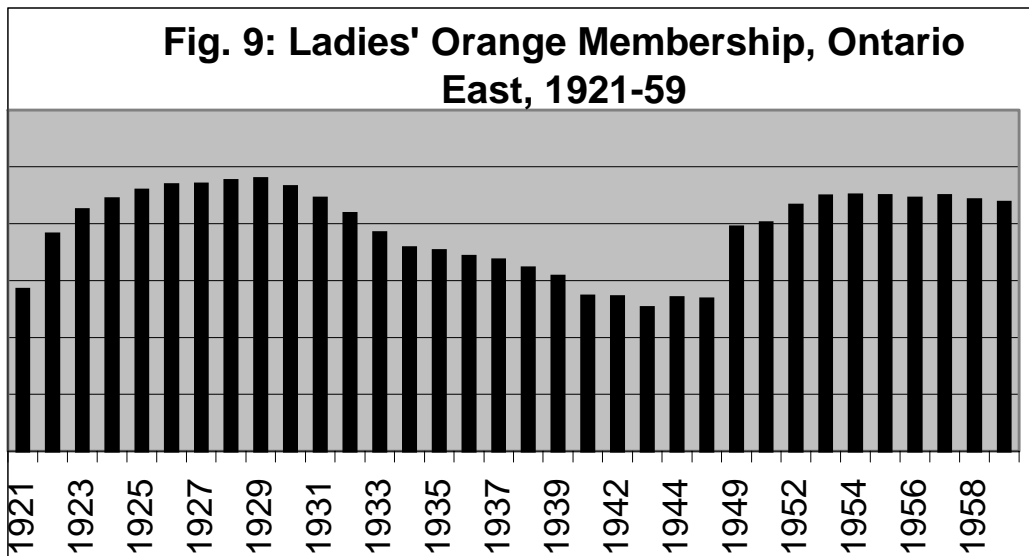


Source: GOLOW returns

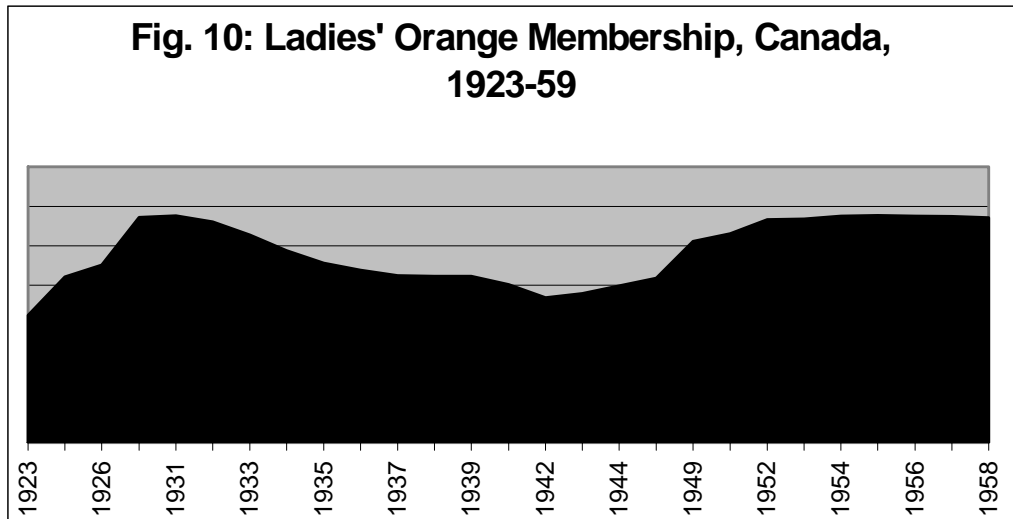
One other intriguing possibility, mentioned by one internal critic, is that membership decline coincided with a 1919 increase in per capita tax from 8c to 1\$ per member, levied in order to appoint provincial organizers. (GOLOW 1944: 65-6) This would support both materialist and institutionalist hypotheses. Nonetheless, this explanation is difficult to square with the wide variation in Canadian membership decline by province. (See fig. 4) It also seems flawed in view of the fact that the whole point of appointing organizers was to strengthen membership. Finally, support for retention of the

tax at both the 1925 and 1926 annual meetings (after steep declines had made their impact) was overwhelming, with particularly strenuous support voiced by representatives of Maritime provinces whose membership decreases were most dramatic. (CGL 1925, 1926)

The Ladies Orange Benevolent Association (LOBA) provides another useful vantage point for our analysis. The LOBA only started life in earnest after 1920. However, following an initial period of rapid growth, this organization's membership entered into a slide during the depression years which parallels that of the male Lodges. Canadian and Ontario East membership figures for the LOBA are displayed below. (See figs. 9 and 10)



Source: LOBA Ont. E. Reports



Source: LOBA Reports

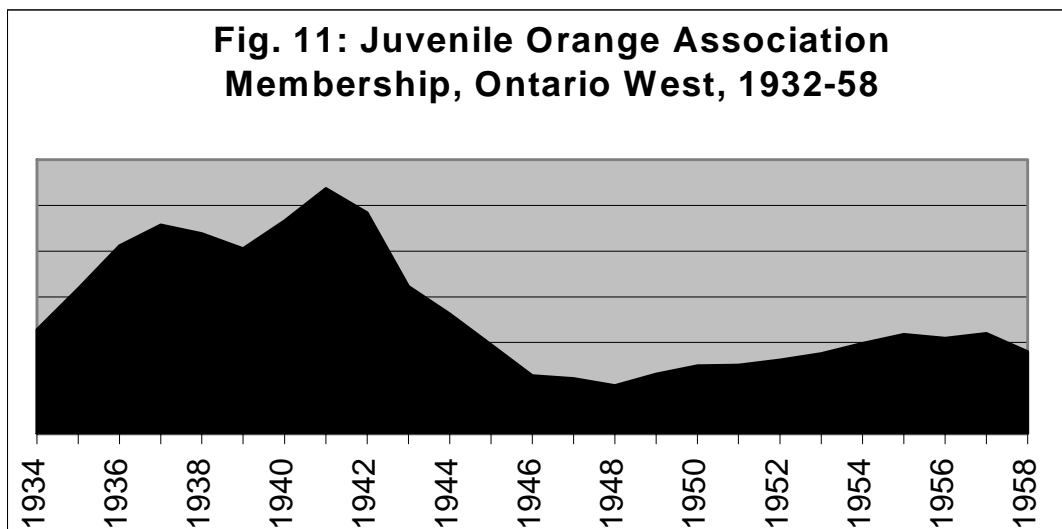
Notice that LOBA membership patterns suggest that World War I did not deliver a fatal blow to all branches of Orangeism. However, the effect of the Great War may have been obscured by the late mobilization of the LOBA. The LOBA might thus have been increasing its membership by drawing upon an established, but shrinking Orange network. The rise of LOBA membership during the period 1945-55 is striking and exceeds the male Orange increases of this decade. It thus appears that the Depression and Second World War had similar effects on both male and female Orange lodges. If anything, Ladies' lodges proved healthier post-war and more resistant to decline after 1955. (LOBA; LOBA Ont. E) Changing gender roles thus do not appear to have been a significant factor in Orange decline - though further research is needed to substantiate whether this pattern holds for the post-1960 period.

Another affiliated organization that bears scrutiny is the Juvenile branch of the Orange Order, which enrolled young men and women aged 8 to 18, who were not eligible for full Order membership. Ontario West's juvenile branch was by far the largest and most significant in the country. It acted as a pilot project for the Order, and received a great deal of attention from Grand Lodge. Its membership returns for the years 1932-58 appear below.<sup>2</sup> (See fig. 11)

<sup>2</sup> After 1958, most juveniles were transferred under the umbrella of adult lodges.



**Fig. 11: Juvenile Orange Association Membership, Ontario West, 1932-58**



Source: GOLOW reports.

These are revealing for what they say about the impact of the Second World War. In contrast to the adult Orders, which posted strong membership gains post-war, the juvenile Ontario West lodges suffered a 500 percent decline in membership between 1941 (2680 members) and 1948 (530 members). Subsequent recovery was too modest to recoup losses.

Actual losses on the battlefield were not a major cause of decline, as juvenile reports illustrate. Juvenile enlistments, the lack of adult supervisors, rationing, and the wartime duties of both mothers and children are instead singled out. (GOLOW) Does this pattern suggest that the Second World War was the primary cause of Orange decline because of the defection of a new war-torn generation? This must be considered but a tentative conclusion given the experimental nature of the juvenile scheme and its anemic recovery post-war.

Indeed, the fact that their parents were rejoining the Order *en masse* after the war should have lifted juvenile numbers back to pre-war levels. The welter of competing recreational activities of which Grand Masters like Saunders, Keyes and Warren complained might have provided distractions for post-war youth. On the other hand, anti-Loyalist or ecumenical cultural predispositions - possibly gleaned from the experience of war - may have influenced them. Pressures endogenous to the juvenile organization

provide a third possible explanation: these may have convinced many youth to either quit entirely or delay joining until after age 18. One direction for further research would be to conduct a more in-depth study of these juvenile membership patterns, but, for now, the analyst should exercise caution before reading too much into them.

## **Conclusion**

The similarities between two British Protestant ethnic groups, the Anglo-Canadians and the Ulster-Protestants, are striking. Unsurprisingly, both of these Loyalist Protestant groups provided fertile ground for the rise of the Orange Order, a voluntary association dedicated to defending the British Crown and Protestantism. Among both groups, the Orange Order formed the associational backbone of the dominant ethnic. Yet in much of Canada, after the First World War, the Orange Order went into steep decline, much as it did in England and Australasia. This decline was resisted in Newfoundland, Scotland and Northern Ireland, suggesting an interesting variance with which to test current theories in sociology, social movements research and ethnicity/nationalism.

Research suggests that the Orange Order is entering into a decline in Northern Ireland that is at least as rapid as that which took place in Canada some fifty to seventy-five years ago. The causes of this decline remain obscure, though the liberalisation of Protestant attitudes among the bourgeoisie, particularly the urban middle classes, appears to be one driver of change. Canadian grand lodge reports and interview-based research suggests that the differentiation of Canadian society - manifested by a proliferation of social and recreational activities - figured centrally in Orange decline. On the other hand, references to increasingly adverse media coverage and charges of 'bigotry' directed at Ontario Orangemen suggest that political and cultural factors were also important.

Quantitative evidence indicates that the impact of events was significant - notably the first and second World Wars, and the Depression. However, the fact that the post-WWI period gave rise to steep membership decline while the post-WWII era led to a revival of membership suggests important interactions between the effects of war and other factors. The divergent impact of the wars on the membership of male vs. female lodges, adult vs. youth lodges, Ontario vs. other provincial lodges, and Canadian vs. other

countries' lodges further signifies that the wars had a complex effect on Orange strength. It appears that the First War prompted Orange decline among Canadian males in general, but that something specific to the Canadian context drove this. The aftermath of World War II saw a boost in the fortunes of Orangeism in all jurisdictions bar the junior ranks - which suffered unprecedented losses that ultimately presaged the current terminal decline of the organization (male and female) after the late 1950s. This disjuncture between junior and senior ranks in the 1940s and 50s likely reflects the operation of two important forces: techno-economic differentiation and a cultural shift from a narrative of Britishness/Imperialism to one of native Canadianism. Discriminating between these two theories of change will require future research - particularly in the quantitative domain - which considers the impact of broader economic, institutional and cultural shifts.

Should future research demonstrate that Orange decline (and a broader decline of dominant ethnicity and sectarian conflicts) is a feature of post-industrial social organisation in Ontario and the broader Anglo-Saxon West, this would be of tremendous significance. After all, as the recent upsurge of ethno-nationalism in Fiji, India and Austria highlights, dominant-group ethnicity is a tremendously volatile force in our late modern state system.

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GLAS-2000 - Interviews conducted at Glasgow, Scotland, September 2000

GOLI - Grand Lodge of [Northern] Ireland county reports

GOLiret - Grand Lodge of [Northern] Ireland county returns

GOLS - Grand Lodge of Scotland reports and media files

ICGW - Imperial Grand Council of the World reports

CGL - Canadian Grand Lodge reports

GOLOW - Grand Lodge of Ontario West reports and media files

GOLOWret - Grand Lodge of Ontario West provincial returns

LOBA - Ladies Orange Benevolent Association, Canada, annual reports

LOBA Ont. E - Ladies Orange Benevolent Association of Ontario East, provincial returns

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