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## **ESRC: End of Award Report - RES 000-23-1614**

### **The Social and Political Bases of the Orange Order in Northern Ireland**

**Professor James W. McAuley & Professor Jon Tonge**

#### **Background**

Although still one of the largest organisations in civil society in Northern Ireland, the Orange Order has only recently been the focus of serious academic study. Kaufmann (2007) and Patterson and Kaufmann (2007) enjoyed unprecedented access to Orange Order archives and Ulster Unionist Council papers to produce illuminating studies of the evolution of the Order, Orange geographic density and relations with the Ulster Unionist Party. Their findings refute perceptions of a homogeneous, united Orange-Unionist movement, instead offering a more nuanced and convincing picture of, firstly, intra-Orange divisions between urban, left-leaning working-class Orangemen and conservative rural brethren suspicious of Catholic encroachment and secondly, a sometimes fractious relationship between the Orange Order and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Nonetheless, an overarching sense of cross-class Protestant-Orange-British-Unionist unity usually inhibited serious fragmentation.

The Northern Ireland peace process and the 1998 Belfast Agreement brought to the fore internal unionist divisions. Although the UUP supported the deal, it was soon evident that this backing was not shared by many Protestants. Most Orange Order members opposed the Agreement and the anti-Agreement Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) increased its support. Long bereft of political influence, strongly opposed to the Agreement and fearful of a dilution of their Orange-British culture (a concern exacerbated by restrictions upon some contentious Orange parades) the

Orange Order finally severed its contentious, century-old formal alliance with the UUP in 2005, many of its members within the UUP having opposed that party's leadership and many of those outside the party supporting the DUP.

To properly assess these developments, it was necessary to explore the demographic basis (was there, for example, a social class or age basis to the allegiance shift?) and political outlook (is there a clear 'Orange' view on political issues?) of the Orange Order membership. Hitherto, no systematic study of Orange Order members had been conducted. This research aimed to fill that void by completing a detailed quantitative survey of the characteristics and attitudes of Orange Order members, allied to in-depth qualitative interviews. Seemingly politically isolated, afflicted by secularism, culturally defensive and socially increasingly confined to the lower social classes, what *are* the contemporary characteristics of a member of the Orange Order; what shapes continuing loyalty to Orangeism and what does this entail?

## **Objectives**

The project had five original objectives, to which was added a sixth, on leavers of the Orange Order, at the request of the project referees. The objectives were:

- (i) *To establish the views of members of the Orange Order on a range of political and religious issues.*
- (ii) *To ascertain the motivations and values underpinning these political and religious positions.*

- (iii) *To examine the extent to which the Orange Order membership has realigned from its historical connection to the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) (a link formally abolished in 2005) towards support for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).*
- (iv) *To assess the political motivations and demographic basis of the shift in political allegiance to the DUP.*
- (v) *To explore the degree to which the Orange Order contributes towards the maintenance of a conservative Protestant-British political, religious and cultural outlook.*
- (vi) *To ascertain why members of the Orange Order choose to leave the organisation.*

## **Methods**

The overarching aim of the research project was to provide the first ever dataset on Orange Order members in Northern Ireland, detailing their social composition and political attitudes. The project deployed quantitative research, primarily involving a questionnaire survey (101 questions) of Orange Order members from 90 private lodges across Northern Ireland, weighted according to district geographical strength, eliciting nearly 1,400 replies and permitting the construction of an ESRC dataset (SPSS) of responses. The project also used qualitative research, which, following a review of the existing literature on the Orange Order in Northern Ireland, involved 129 semi-structured interviews with existing members of the Orange Order, at all levels of the organisation, plus six focus group discussions, each of 8-12 members, and 40 semi-structured interviews with individuals who have left the Orange Order since 1998. Questionnaires were mailed to randomly selected members of private lodges using membership lists. Lodge leavers were identified through discussions with lodge secretaries.

There was an issue in respect of the size of the Orange Order membership, which impacted upon the number of questionnaires. The Orange Order's claimed membership, on which the original bid was based, totalled 70,000. Upon working on the project with the Orange Order leadership, it became apparent that the Order's true membership figure was substantially lower, at 40,000. Moreover, this 40,000 was based upon a total of 850 'live' lodges, rather than the previously claimed 1,400. Given this, we reduced the number of surveyed lodges to 90 (amounting, ratio-wise, to more than the 1 in 10 lodges we originally anticipated surveying), rather than 140, and sent out 4,000 questionnaires, plus reminders, receiving a response rate of 35 per cent (1376 replies).

Aggregate responses were very similar to the pilot survey findings from 302 shorter questionnaires, strengthening belief in the robustness of our sample. Costs were increased by the Orange Order's desire to include several questions of their own, adding to the length of the questionnaire and postage costs. However, the Order's questions were very useful in terms of the research, as they concentrated upon the rebranding of Orange 'Boyne' commemorations on the 'Twelfth' as 'Orangefest', raising political, religious, social and cultural issues. Given the 'reduced' Orange membership, we increased the qualitative dimension of the research, adding six 'focus group' general discussions with up to a dozen Orange Order members present on each occasion and adding an extra 40 interviews with former Orange Order members, who have left the Order since the Belfast Agreement in April 1998.

## Results

Full data results are available via the dataset lodged with the ESRC at the same time as submission of this report. What follows is a summary of key findings:

### *Who are the Orange Order members?*

A key point of the survey was to provide reliable information on who are Orange Order members, to replace the description and speculation that surrounds the composition of the institution. Our profiling revealed that the Order is genuinely cross-denominational. Almost half of its members are Presbyterian; one-third belong to the Church of Ireland with a further 7 and 4 per cent respectively belong to the Methodist or Free Presbyterian churches (historically, Free Presbyterianism was not associated with Orangeism, but interview respondents raised few theological objections). The supposed retreat of Protestants west of the Bann in Northern Ireland is reflected in the geographical distribution of membership, with the counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone and Londonderry/Derry yielding only 17 per cent of members.

Objectively, the Order is a mainly, but not overwhelmingly, working-class organization. Subjectively, a majority of members (56 per cent) regard themselves as working class, but 25 per cent do not see themselves as a member of any social class and 17 per cent view themselves as middle-class. Whilst Kaufmann and Patterson's proletarianisation thesis appears likely given the current class status of members, the absence of time series data means we cannot confirm longer-term trends. The presence of a significant middle-class membership would also – but further comparative research is needed – appear to distinguish the Orange Order in Northern Ireland

from its almost exclusively working-class counterparts in Scotland and Merseyside. Few (less than 10 per cent) of Orange Order members in Northern Ireland are drawn from the unskilled working-class; skilled workers are more than six times more common. One-in-five Orange Order members are self-employed. Not only is this above the Northern Ireland average of 15 per cent, but Northern Ireland itself has the second-highest rate of self-employment in the UK. A traditional image of the Orange Order as comprising a local labour aristocracy of skilled workers (over half work in manual jobs) or small business owners is not without foundation. One quarter of members attended grammar school and 15 per cent possess university degrees, but 30 per cent possess no educational qualifications. Almost 90 per cent of members are homeowners. Median income is in the £15,000-£25,000 range (incomes generally are 20 per cent lower in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK). Although often seen as an elderly, ailing institution, the median age range is 45-54, slightly lower than that for political parties such as the UUP and SDLP for which data was gathered by the researchers in other projects.

### *Political viewpoints*

Although politics are not *in isolation* a major motivation for joining, Orange Order members tend to be politicised, with a substantial majority (84 per cent) claiming interest in politics and only 5 per cent admitting that they did not vote in the 2005 general election. Moreover, interviews reinforced the Kennaway (2007) view that the present generation of Ulster Protestants look at their religion through political eyes. Despite favouring the DUP (see below) a big majority (74 per cent of members) also claim to desire unionist political unity, against a perceived republican threat. The appeal for the reconstruction of the ‘unionist family’ is persistently made, as it ‘is not too late for Unionists to get their

act together and to defeat this evil conspiracy which seeks to destroy their position and this Province and put it under the heel of Dublin' (*Orange Standard*, April 2003). Such calls for unity have become central to much of the public discourse of Orangeism, and can be seen in claims that for Orangemen: 'the great desire is still for a single Unionist party' (*Orange Standard* June 2005) and that the Order 'will lobby for Unionist unity on all key issues' (*Orange Standard*, April 2005) or through demands that 'Unionist parties must agree', (*Orange Standard*, July 2005).

A common perception is that of the need to halt the 'retreat' of Protestant-Unionist-Britishness. Following the Belfast Agreement, which the *Orange Standard* (the Order's newspaper) declared in April 1998 that 'no Protestant in good conscience could support' until the DUP-Sinn Fein deal of 2007, a majority of Orange Protestants opposed entry into government with Sinn Fein and backed the DUP as an opponent of such a deal, until the DUP's changed stance, following IRA decommissioning and Sinn Fein's support for policing. 60 per cent of Orange Order members voted 'no' in the Belfast Agreement referendum in 1998 and 65 per cent claimed they would vote 'no' if a further referendum were held tomorrow. The 1998 'yes' vote of 29 per cent fell to 26 per cent and was predictably strongly correlated to party support (UUP 'yes') on the same question. Whilst overwhelmingly (90 per cent) supportive of devolved government, Orange Order members remain uncomfortable over the requirements of the Agreement to share power with historic 'enemies'; an 'official' 12<sup>th</sup> July resolution in 2007 declared, 'like many others within the unionist community, [Orangemen] share grave reservations about the presence of those in government whom we would not see as democrats in the accepted sense of the term'. Moreover, a majority would prefer power-sharing to be bereft of the all-island economic bodies established under Strand Two of the Agreement.



A sizeable minority (31 per cent) of Orange Order members claims not to support a particular party and there are signs of discontent following the DUP-Sinn Fein 2007 deal. The far-reaching consociational political deal, headed by the DUP and Sinn Fein took place during our questionnaire survey. The emergence of an anti-deal strand alliance/party, Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) took place soon afterwards and represented a new shade of anti-UUP AND anti-DUP opinion, with which, our interviews indicated, a minority of Orange opinion sympathised. By this point, however, it was too late to add TUV to our list of party options on the questionnaire.

A considerable majority (62 per cent) of Orange Order members voted for the DUP in the 2005 general election, double the level of support for the UUP and in line with the wider Protestant vote. 56 per cent would do likewise 'tomorrow' with 30 per cent voting for the UUP. The peace and political process in Northern Ireland is still seen as the most important issue by Orange Order members and the DUP is perceived as the party most capable of acting in Orange interests. There is, however, considerable evidence of the now-severed historic link between the UUP and the Orange Order in that older (over 55) Orange Order members are less likely to support the DUP, evidenced a) in terms of raw scores (32 per cent support for the UUP, compared to only 30 per cent UUP support) b) via a simple Chi-Square test of association (25.104,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and c) when controlling for other sociological and geographical variables. Among young (under-25) members of the Order, whose political socialization has occurred after the era of UUP dominance, support for the DUP runs at five times the level of that for the UUP. Age is the most significant variable, but the other statistical association of note is social class. Although a DUP

lead is found in both social classes, it is much more pronounced amongst working-class Orange Order members. Among middle-class members, there is evidence of continuing distaste for the populist loyalism long associated with the DUP.

Given its sectarian reputation among critics, few might expect the Orange Order membership to be an arena for electoral de-frosting. Ethnic thawing may nonetheless be apparent in the claim of 36 per cent of Orange Order members would consider a lower preference transfer vote to the SDLP (less than 2 per cent said likewise in respect of Sinn Fein). Whilst there is no statistical relationship between age and propensity towards lower preference voting across the confessional divide, there is a significant association between social class and bloc-straddling. Middle-class members of the Orange Order are significantly more likely to transfer across the ethnic divide, with working-class members (more likely to live in residentially segregated areas) far less tempted.

Orange Order members are hostile to religious quota recruitment to the police service (80 per cent oppose and only 11 per cent support). A sizeable proportion of police officers killed during the conflict were also members of the Orange Order (see nominated output Tonge and McAuley 2008 for data) and there are strong senses of political and often personal loss at the replacement of the Royal Ulster Constabulary by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, particularly among border lodges. Here, the perception of Catholic-nationalist 'ethnic cleansing' is most acute, although members of urban lodges also regularly used the term. Policing issues remain highly sensitive; 311 Orange Order members were killed serving in the British security forces during the conflict.

Orange Order members also strongly oppose (only 5 per cent supported) the paramilitary prisoner releases of the Belfast Agreement (but 19 per cent feel loyalist violence was justifiable) and overwhelmingly (86 per cent) think the Parades Commission should be abolished, although a pragmatic wing (one-third) feel it is necessary to negotiate with the Commission pending its abolition and 19 per cent think the Order should not march through nationalist areas.

### *Religious perceptions*

On religious issues, Orange Order members are divided over whether their organisation could be construed as ‘anti-Roman Catholic Church’ (57 per cent concur) and reject the idea (72 per cent to 20 per cent) that the Order is ‘anti-Roman Catholic’. Few (21 per cent) favour ecumenical projects and only 6 per cent would ‘be happy for their child to marry a Roman Catholic’, with 81 per cent disagreeing, three-quarters of these ‘strongly’. One-third would not shop on the Sabbath. The hostility of the Order towards ‘Romanism’ remains overt. As the Orange Standard (June 2003) commented: ‘the naivety of ecumenical-minded Protestants never ceases to amaze’.

Younger members of the Order lack the level of religious observation of their elders, a theme regularly highlighted and acknowledged (by young and old) in discursive interviews and in our own basic Chi-Square test (35.781, df=3, p<0.001) which found a significant association between age and level of church attendance. For young members, weekly religious observation is far from negligible (claimed by 41 per cent of those under 25 years of age) but considerably lower than that undertaken by those over 55 (68 per cent). Younger members stated the

importance of faith as a reason for joining the Order, but as a secondary consideration alongside the social and cultural benefits of membership, whereas older members tended to stress religion as a primary consideration. These differences of emphasis were also noticeable in terms of younger Belfast members, who acknowledged that competing , secular demands for attention tended to diminish the religiosity of younger brethren, many of whom were more attracted by ‘band-playing’ than by the bible. Older and rural members tended to be more sympathetic to the Kennaway (2007) view that the Orange Order has lost some of its religious aspects.

The views of Orange Order members are infused by a conservative social outlook, regular religious worship and a sense of cultural and religious threat. Almost two-thirds of Orange Order members claim that religion is more important than politics and the themes of religious and constitutional defence are intertwined to produce a cautious political outlook which opposes ‘Catholic’ political and religious encroachment. For many Orange Order members, republicans have merely changed tactics, but the political basis of the previous ‘war’ remains unchanged. Only 15 per cent believe the IRA’s armed campaign is over; 63 per cent believe that ‘most Roman Catholics sympathize with the IRA’ and there is scant recognition of pluralist developments within the Irish Republic, 80 per cent believing that the Roman Catholic Church is still ‘strongly influential’ there. Given this, a discourse of ‘siege’ and ‘need for vigilance’ remains apparent within the Order.

### *Discourse, Culture and Identity*

As the main inter-denominational Protestant organization, the Orange Order plays a significant role within that community. Although social reasons are not seen as a primary reason to join the Orange Order, joining is part of a local socialisation process, 83 per cent of joiners being asked to sign up by family or friends. The joining process is important in reinforcing the unity of the Orange movement, from which two broad categories of discourse are discernible; first, that which contains ‘internal’ messages, as Orangeism represents a classic discourse community of those with a shared outlook. Second, the Orange Order also projects ‘external’ messages that seek to frame and position the Order within distinct moral, social, and political arenas of life. Within these categories, there are several, sometimes overlapping discourses currently on offer within Orangeism; official; continuity; political; unity; and cultural resistance. The official discourses framed by the Orange Order are most readily identified by the ‘resolutions’ adopted annually at the Twelfth of July parades. These resolutions are categorised under three headings: faith; loyalty; and state.

The most important function of the Orange Order, according to its members, is a cultural one (49 per cent identified this as the main role) followed by a religious role (45 per cent). Only 2 per cent saw the Order’s main role as political. These findings reflected the perception, evident throughout our interview work, that the members a) see the Order as the most important promoter of a British-Protestant way of life b) fear that their cultural-religious form of Britishness is under greater immediate threat than is the Union *per se*, but both are being challenged c) desire intra-unionist unity in terms of the promotion of common cultural-religious

values, impossible in the political sphere given continuing unionist party rivalries d) acknowledge that the political influence of the Orange Order collapsed with the replacement of UUP majoritarian direct rule from Westminster in 1972 and will never return.

The political identity of Orange Order members is predominantly (63 per cent) British, with most other members identifying as either 'Northern Irish', 'Ulster' or 'British Ulster'. Whilst much of the literature on the Ulster-British versus Ulster-Loyalist divide has tended to stress the working-class basis of those in the latter category of identifiers, this is not found in our survey, with no statistically significant linkage. Whilst Orange Order members are secure in their own identity – the supposed crisis of Orange/loyalist identity is more imagined than real, but what they fear are the perceived *challenges* to their way of life.

Members' primary concerns are to stop what they see as the removal of symbols of British faith and culture. Orange Order members tend to see the cultural retreat as part of 'official' government policy, whilst also pointing to local sectarian actions, with Grand Lodge documenting 293 arson attacks upon Orange halls since 1990. These physical attacks apart, recent discourses suggest that while the physical war has been replaced by 'a cultural war being waged against unionism and Orangeism' (David Hume, *News Letter*, 13 July 2007, repeated in our interview 21 October 2007. As the *Orange Standard* (July 2007) expressed it:

The shooting and bombing 'war' in Northern Ireland is hopefully over, but the battle for the hearts and minds of the people will be fought with greater intensity than ever. Let no-one be under any illusions. The campaign by republicans and nationalists to erode the British identity of Northern

Ireland will be stepped up in many ways, and the Orange Order will need to be in the vanguard of resistance to this latest phase in the strategy of the republican-nationalist alliance to try and achieve their objective.

Dispossessed politically and making few economic or educational advances, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, in its submission to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (9 February 2007) outlined “the general loss of confidence and alienation within the Protestant community...there is a lack of education and understanding within our own community and this leads to lack of confidence in expressing ‘ourselves’”. Interview respondents tended to be particularly critical of the way in which they perceived the Order had been excluded from systematic input to decision-making within new political institutions and did not feel compensated by the fact that half of Unionist MLAs are members of the Orange Order (the percentage figure is slightly above 50 per cent of DUP MLAs, slightly below in respect of UUP MLAs). Respondents argued that whereas elected Unionist representatives might once have articulated Orange interests first and party interests second, this was no longer the case. Moreover, the Order has not been invited to sit on the Civic Forum, a body created to allow pluralist forms of representation from a wide variety of organizations in Northern Ireland. The belief that there is discrimination against Protestants in Northern Ireland is held by an overwhelming majority of Orange Order members (over 90 per cent).

In addition to our original objectives, we also examined, via a separate set of research interviews with former Orange Order members (and at the specific request of the reviewers of the original research proposal) why people chose to leave the Order. The most common reasons, in order, were lack of time, movement to another area, or the closing of a lodge. Other reasons also

emerged, such as personality clashes and disagreement with lodge policies, but the bulk of reasons offered can be located within two broad categories: competing pressures, which have had wider implications beyond the Order in terms of diminished social capital and geographical dislocation. The perception that the Order is in decline is held much more strongly in urban areas, notably in Belfast, where interview respondents were far less sanguine concerning the future of the Order than their colleagues in more rural locations. Overall, 46 per cent of members believe the Order is in decline, with only 36 per disagreeing, with the most important variable being the location of the respondent. There was pessimism evident across geographical locations that the current modes of recruitment to the Order were adequate. Family mobility, the decline of the extended family, higher entrance to university and exodus to other parts of the UK meant that, as one respondent put it, 'stocks are not being replenished'. Fewer than 20 interview respondents claimed that their private lodge numbers had increased over the previous decade and our quantitative data showed that 85 per cent of members had joined prior to 1998, often long before this date.

### *Relocating Orangeism in theoretical and situational contexts*

In Northern Ireland, the boundaries between society and the state, between civil activity and the political realm remain blurred. This is readily identified in the roles undertaken by Orangeism and the structures and discourses of the Orange Order. Orange discourse remains centred upon several core elements: the Protestant faith and Christian principles; loyalty to the Crown; and to a state that guarantees civil and religious liberty. What appears to have altered is the basis of membership. Political influence and patronage have long disappeared. Although politics may influence joining, membership benefits are confined to social networking, cultural reinforcement, parading and collective religious observance.



Orange Order members no longer support the political party with which the Orange Order was associated for a century, a majority having switched allegiance to the DUP. Instead, Orangeism is, for many, part of a process of socialisation and community ritual (but one mostly confined to the working-class) which extends to a cultural-religious defence of a distinctive form of Protestant-Britishness, which is still seen as being under strong challenge. The parading traditions of the Orange Order remain a constant across the age groups, but there are urban-rural distinctions on the level of religiosity and the social functions of the Order.

The traditionally conservative and cautious Orange Order has undergone transformation in recent years. Having undergone rapid transformation from ‘establishment’ body to politically dispossessed organisation at the beginning of the 1970s, the Orange institution has struggled to adapt to reduced circumstances. This has meant the triumph of what Kaufmann (2007) identified as the less deferential, ‘rebel’ strand of Orangeism, more militant in tone than its genteel predecessor, in defence of what it saw as fundamental rights of procession and hostility to compromise. However, as Northern Ireland’s conflict has subsided, the militancy and defiance evident through political dislocation, cultural retreat and religious indifference is being addressed. The Orange leadership, if not all members, appear conscious of a need to ‘de-sectarianise’ the public image of the Order in order for the institution to play a constructive role in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi- or even no-faith Northern Ireland. For leaders and members, the Belfast Agreement, although still resented, presents an opportunity as well as a challenge. The Agreement’s explicit focus on the equal legitimacy of Protestant-Unionist-British and Catholic-Irish-Nationalist identities has reinforced Orange determination that ‘their’

community should be afforded equal treatment and respect. This, however, leads to the continued negative portrayal of Orangeism as a sectarian ethno-religious organisation rather than a contributor to any embryonic civic pluralist dispensation.

The Orange leadership's attempt to rebrand the climax of the Order's 'marching season' as 'Orangefest', described by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board 'one of Europe's largest cultural festivals with music, marching and street pageantry' undertaken in a 'carnival atmosphere' (<http://www.discovernorthernireland.com>) and containing less emphasis on 'Faith, Crown and Loyalty' platform resolutions, has been met with a mixed response among members. Some endorse the Order's need to promote a more benign, less sectarian image; others argue that a dilution of the Protestant-British traditions of the Order represents further retreat from the articulation and defence of Protestantism that the institution once represented. Uneasy with the DUP's unlikely new political bedfellows, Orange Order members remain cautious over recent political, religious and cultural changes in Northern Ireland, whilst the leadership has become more cognisant of the need to adapt to changed circumstances, promoting the organisation as a religious and cultural, but non-sectarian, entity whose modern relevance lies in its defence of (rarely fully defined) 'Protestant values' and its contribution to community social capital.

### **Activities**

Dissemination of the research has been undertaken via a range of publications and through presentations at national and international conferences. A conference paper has already been delivered at the Political Ideology in Ireland from the Enlightenment to the Present conference at Brest University (23-24 November 2007) with further papers to follow at the Political Studies

Association of Ireland annual conference at Galway University, 15-17 October 2008 and at the  
Political Studies Association annual Manchester in April 2009.

## **Outputs**

Two journal articles have been accepted/published; ditto two book chapters and a book proposal  
has been submitted to Manchester University Press. Published/accepted outputs:

McAuley, J. and Tonge, J. (2007) "'For God and for the Crown": Contemporary Political and  
Social Attitudes among Orange Order Members in Northern Ireland', *Political  
Psychology*, 28.1, 33-52.

McAuley, J. and Tonge, J. (2008) "'Faith, Crown and State'. Contemporary Discourses within  
the Orange Order', *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 15.2, forthcoming.

Tonge, J. and McAuley, J. (2008) 'The Contemporary Orange Order in Northern Ireland', in M.  
Busteed, F. Neal and J. Tonge (eds) *Irish Protestant Identities*, Manchester:  
Manchester University Press, 289-302.

Tonge, J. and McAuley, J. (2009) 'Still Marching After All These Years': Orange Ideology and  
the Culture War in Northern Ireland', in O. Coquellin (ed) *Political Ideologies in  
Ireland/ L'ideologie Politique en Irlande*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.

## **Impacts**

The impacts of the research have yet to be fully measured. However, as one example of possible  
policy impact, the researchers have provided briefings to the Orange Order leadership indicating  
that a section of their members do support dialogue with the Parades Commission and there have

been signs of a more conciliatory approach from Grand Lodge on this issue. Findings from the research have been published in the *Irish News* and the *Newsletter*.

### **Future research priorities**

Future research priorities in this area would be:

- 1) to examine the impact of the far-reaching consociational deal struck between the DUP and Sinn Fein upon the political attitudes of the ethnic electoral blocs they represent. Has an elite level deal helped thaw differences between the grassroots?
- 2) To examine whether marginalised groups such as the Orange Order are afforded any significant access to the new institutional settings in Northern Ireland?
- 3) To assess whether secularism and/or the removal of the threat to Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom will further diminish the size and relevance of the Orange Order?
- 4) to explore the Orange Order as global institution; to what extent have the problems of secularism, diminished size and relevance and proletarianisation increasingly evident in Northern Ireland already afflicted the organisation in other former areas of strength, such as the West of Scotland, Merseyside and South-Eastern Canada?

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