An Investigation into the Motivation, Initiation and Continued Participation of Irish Republican Socialist Political Activists

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study investigated the initiation, motivation and continued participation of Irish Republican Socialist Political activists. Using qualitative methodology and thematic analysis six participants were interviewed to explore these three themes for investigation. Eight sub-themes emerged representing patterns and commonalities amongst the participants experiences and views. The main findings suggest that 1) Irish Republican Socialists have distinct familial backgrounds than those of traditional Irish republicans, and 2) That their route to entry to Irish Republican Socialist political activism was also distinct from traditional Irish Republicanism. Other findings were made, however they broadly corresponded to existing findings on the subject.

1. Introduction.

The following literature review includes sections on the history and ideology of Irish Republican Socialism, social movement theories and social movement theories in an international and Irish context. The first section will overview the history, origin and ideology of Irish Republican Socialism and the movements which claim to have been adherent. The second section will give a brief overview of the broad social movement theories and theorists of social mobilisation. And finally the third section will look at research conducted in to social mobilisation in both and international and Irish context.

1.1 Irish Republicanism Socialism as Distinct: Ideology & History

1.1.1 Irish Republican Socialism as Distinct

Irish Republican Socialism can be seen to be a politically and ideologically distinct part of the lineage of Irish Republicanism. It has at different points in time manifested itself as a distinct organisational movement while also, at times, it has existed within non-socialist organisations and movements as internal activist groupings or tendencies. Irish Republican Socialism can be distinguished from broader Irish Republicanism in that it has sought to combine regular or traditional Irish Republican nationalist aspirations with a socialist or Marxist class analysis. This class analysis for Irish Socialist Republicanism resulted in a different set of aims than that of regular, or 'traditional', Irish Republicanism. Irish Republican Socialism not only seeks the unification of the island of Ireland and the removal of the British presence, but also the creation of a 'Socialist Republic'.(O' Broin, 2009). This

Irish Republican Socialist perspective is best expressed in the following quote by James Connolly:

> "*If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.*"(Nevin, 2006, p.24)

This, where socialism can be defined as "*a system of social organisation based on collective or state ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.*", and in the Marxian sense, "*a traditional phase between capitalism and full economic and social communism*". (McLean & McMillan, 2003, p.497)

These aims of course have changed since these words were expressed by James Connolly. The British state is no longer the sole barrier to achieving a '32 County Socialist Republic'. The emergence of partition and of the Irish 26 county state means that in Republican Socialist analysis, both the British and Irish state are presented as enemies and a as barrier to achieving a socialist republic.

The following is a brief overview of the history of Irish Republican Socialism as a distinct political and ideological tendency or movement within Irish Republicanism. The history can be broken down into four historical phases.

1.1.2 The Emergence of Irish Republican Socialism 1896-1916

 Irish Republican Socialism is an early 20th century phenomenon emerging in an organised form in 1896 with the formation of James Connolly's Irish Socialist Republican Party, and

expressed chiefly in the writings of James Connolly until his execution in 1916. Irish Republican Socialism is preceded by, and built upon, the historical continuum of Irish Republicanism laid out by organisations such as the United Irishmen, the Young Irelander's, the Fenians and of Irish Republican martyrs such as Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett. As with the emergence of socialist movements abroad in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the emergence of Irish Republican Socialism coincides with the growth of organised labour, industrialisation, a growing bourgeoisie and of urban growth in Ireland. It was thus a distinctly modern development in Irish politics.(O Broin, 2009) Irish Republican Socialism had been an integral part of early 20th century organised labour and trade unionism in Ireland, with James Connolly becoming the Ulster organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) in 1911, and then acting secretary of the ITGWU in 1914.(Devine, 2009) During the Dublin lockout of 1913 in which striking workers were attacked, dispersed and assaulted by the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), 'scabs' and hired gangs for the duration, the ITGWU under the leadership of James Larkin, and at the suggestion of Jack White, formed a 'workers defence militia' called the Irish Citizen Army. This developed following the lockout into the first Irish Republican Socialist paramilitary organisation, which under the command of James Connolly staged the unsuccessful insurrection of 1916 with the Irish Volunteers and Irish Republican Brotherhood, who were more traditional Irish Republican groupings.(Nevin, 2006)

1.1.3 Civil War & Post-Independence

Following the Easter rising of 1916 and the execution of its leaders, a new wave of national consciousness emerged. Many of those who had partaken in the rising joined Sinn Fein, who in 1918 went on to win a majority of the seats for Ireland in the U.K. parliamentary election.

In 1919 Sinn Fein parliamentarians set up the "First Dail", a declared revolutionary government independent of British rule. This the British state did not accept this authority and so ensued a war of independence by Irish Republicans. At this time Irish Republican Socialism did not exist as a strong independent force. While the Irish Citizen Army remained in existence and never formally dissolved, what remained was marginal and relatively inactive. Irish Republican Socialists joined the newly formed Irish Republican Army, or were active in Sinn Fein, putting their aspirations for a socialist republic secondary to the war for independence and the subsequent civil war.(O Brion, 2009) However during this period (1919-1922) the influence of events abroad such as the Russian Revolution of 1917 had a significant impact on the Irish context, with many Irish Republican Socialist volunteers in the IRA assisting in the formation and defence of 'Soviets' and workers councils around Ireland.(Cahill, 2003)

After the Civil War and the defeat of the Anti-treaty republicans, what followed was a period of stagnation for Irish Republican Socialism as the political context of the Irish Free-state reconfigured and formed around the dominant and governing formations. However the IRA and Sinn Fein maintained and continued an anti-partionist guerrilla struggle and position, and became increasingly swayed by left wing ideas. The 1930's saw the emergence from Sinn Fein a short lived Irish Republican Socialist formation called the Republican Congress, and it's lesser known IRA splinter the "Irish Citizen Army". The Republican Congress played an active part in street battles against the fascist blueshirts during the 1930's, and following the Republican Congress's disintegration, many left for Spain to fight for the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War.(O Brion, 2009)

Irish Republican Socialism played a marginal role in Sinn Fein and the IRA during the 1940's and 1950's, with traditional republicanism becoming dominant. During the 1960's however a

new generation of members and leaders of the movement became influenced by the ideas of Irish Republican Socialism, particularly due to the international context of the Cold-War, and they began to steer the movement in this direction. This culminated in a major split in the movement between the traditionalists, who formed the splinter 'Provisional Sinn Fein/Army Council' and those under the sway of Republican Socialism, later called 'Official Sinn Fein/Official IRA'.(O Brion, 2009)

1.1.4 The Troubles

The period of the troubles is marked by the emergence of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). A movement which initially consisted of both Catholics and working class Protestants who were left disenfranchised and discriminated against due to sectarian state policies such as the one-house one-vote rule. Repression of this equal-rights movement by a sectarian state and the subsequent failure of the British Army to protect Catholics and NICRA demonstrations from sectarian attack led to a vacuum in which the near defunct IRA found a purpose as a defensive organisation. That the IRA would be predominantly defending Catholics caused problems for the then dominant socialist based class analysis within the movement at that time which viewed such defensive measures as sectarian. This was a significant contributing factor to the split mentioned previously.(O Brion, 2009)

Following the split between the traditional Republicans and the Marxist-socialists, a 'third' way Irish Republican Socialist movement emerged with the splitting and formation of the 'Irish Republican Socialist Party' (IRSP) and 'Irish National Liberation Army' (INLA) from the Official Republican Movement in 1974.(O Brion, 2009) This new movement favoured defensive actions and offensive armed struggle while integrating Irish Republican Socialist

aims and principles.(SCMC, nd) Another major formation emerged in 1986 due to the dropping of abstentionism, from Provisional Sinn Fein/PIRA calling itself Republican Sinn Fein/Continuity IRA.

1.1.5 The "Dissidents"

Armed struggle and the 'war' against the British state by the main Irish Republican paramilitary organisation, the PIRA, and of its political wing Provisional Sinn Fein, continued through the 1970's, 80's and 90's until 1998, when, through separate referenda North and South of the border, the Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement was ratified.(McAuley, 2011) This brought an end to the Provisional IRA's armed struggle and brought their slow and continued co-option into establishment politics and institutions.

'Dissident' is a colloquial term to describe Irish Republicans who oppose the Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement, viewing it as entrenching and institutionalising sectarian divisions rather than reducing them, and also as the abandonment of Irish nationalist aspirations for a united Ireland. In addition, traditional Irish Republicans view it as yet another acceptance, following from the abandonment of abstentionism, of the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state-let and the southern 'free-state'. While Irish Republican Socialists, similarly, see it as an acceptance of the legitimacy of the bourgeois capitalist state(s) and their institutions.(McAuley, 2011)

Such a major shift in the political context, and the diverse and fragmentary political perspectives and traditions leaves 'dissident republicanism' where it is now, with five main overt 'dissident' groups, and three (now two) main paramilitary organisations. The overt organisations include the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), Republican Sinn Fein

(RSF), the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM), eirigi and the Republican Network for Unity (RNU). While the three main paramilitary organisations include the Continuity IRA (CIRA), Oglaigh Na hEireann (ONH) and the Real IRA (RIRA).As recently as late 2012 however, the Real IRA and Oglaigh Na hEireann along with a number of smaller paramilitary organisations such as Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD), merged to form a new paramilitary organisation calling itself the 'IRA', but which is currently dubbed the 'New IRA'.(Breadun, 2012) This now means that while there exists countless independent subversive organisations such as the Limerick splinter group the 'Real Continuity IRA' (RCIRA), there now remains two primary Irish republican paramilitary organisations, the NIRA and the CIRA.(Horgan, 2013)

Of these organisations only two do not subscribe fully to the aim of creating an Irish socialist republic, RSF and the CIRA. These maintain a traditionalist republican perspective, believing themselves to be the heirs to the legitimate government of Ireland, the Irish Republic.(RSF, nd)

1.2 Political Activism & Social Movements

1.2.1 Social Movement Theory

Overview

Social Movement Theory has become an increasingly popular research area since the early 1960's, when a new wave of social unrest, riot, labour strikes and demonstrations emerged across the world. However social movement theories and theories of collective action stretch back to the late 19th century, with French psychologist Gustave Le Bon developing the first

collective action theories from unrest in France in the 1890's. Here, Le Bon, with his theories of crowd behaviour viewed street protest as a form of deviant behaviour. Le Bon laid the foundations of what was to become Classical Mobilisation theories. Theories which viewed deviant or contentious political activity and unrest as generally negative and irrational, violent, expressive and spontaneous. These theories were popular until the 1960's when more contemporary theories became popular and developed to explain the new wave of social movements of the time.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Social Movement Theories span a number of different academic disciplines and sub disciplines. These include sociology, social psychology, anthropology, cultural sociology. Each providing their own explanatory basis to political activism.(Klandermans & Roggeband, 2010)

Klandermans & Roggeband (2010) identify nine shared themes central to Social Movement Theory across disciplines. These central themes include culture, emotions, globalisation, grievances, identity, meaning construction, networks, resources and strategy. Some of these are discussed below in relation to the mobilisation theories.

1.2.2 Theories

These themes within Social Movement Theory can be integrated into four broad theoretical approaches, three of which are macro-social and one micro-social.(Jasper, 2010) These approaches are categorised as Classical, Resource Mobilisation, Political Process and Social Constructivist approaches.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009) The following is a broad overview of those theories.

Classical Mobilisation Theories

Classical mobilisation approaches are structural theories which emphasise forms of structural causal strains that produce subjective tension and a consequent psychological disposition towards types of 'political action', or what it views as 'extreme behaviour'. These structural causal strains may take forms such as unemployment, industrialisation, poverty and urbanisation. All classical theories, be they mass society theory, relative deprivation or collective behaviour theories follow this sequence of a structural cause, followed by a subjective tension and a resultant psychological disposition. With classical theories the political activist is characterised as frustrated, angry, stressed, alienated, deprived and marginalised. A result of economic difficulty, systematic discrimination, lack of social rights or a general breakdown of normative social values.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009) Those afflicted with causal strains are, within classical theories, classified into broad categories such as class, gender and their general social disposition.

The earliest of classical theorists such as Gustave Le Bon perceived the 'crowd' as irrational and primitive. To him, the individual members of a crowd gained a sense of anonymity and lost personal responsibility as they became submerged in a broader mass of people. This facilitated the violent and irrational acts of individuals which were brought on by structural tensions, which made the crowd characteristically violent.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Later classical theorists such as Neil Smelser (1965) held that political protest emerged from social transitions and tensions such as unemployment, industrialisation and urbanisation. Political action derived its motivations from the dissatisfaction of life during these structural societal transitions and tensions. In addition to this, Herbert Blumer (1965) saw the political aspirations of the individuals involved as being important. Aspirations for a new social

system, policy or society. For Blumer political protest or deviant political positions were not merely the outcome of frustrations, but rather had a rational element to them. Both of which combined to produce a collective and political action.

Ted Gurr (1970) argued that when people find themselves in a situation of relative deprivation caused by structural factors, the probability and likelihood of forms of political unrest and protest increases. Individuals in a situation of relative deprivation compare themselves to their past situation or to others in society, and may be driven to political activity seeking to rectify their deprivation.

William Kornhauser (1995) argued that political activity resulted from people's anomie and alienation from society, and that political activity was characteristically done by those with limited social capital such as outcasts, misfits, the marginalised, nomads and those desperately poor. This he argued was a significant factor in the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany, in which they were capable of appealing to a society in a state of anomie and alienation.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Resource Mobilisation Theories

Resource mobilisation theories emphasise the organisational characteristics and resource distribution of social movements and those available to the individual participant. Resource mobilisation theories generally reject the grievances and ideology of political participants in explaining why they participate, and asks, rather, how an individual with a grievance becomes a political participant. To do this resource mobilisation theories analyse the resources that must be mobilised, the networks within and between social movements, groups

and individuals, the influence of external support for social movements and the extent to which authorities control and incorporate social movements.(McCarthy & Zald, 1977)

Resources may refer to a variety of resources from which an individual or group can draw upon, both tangible and intangible. Examples include income, time, employment, access to goods, services and media. Or trust, friendships, personal skills, institutional connections, leadership qualities, social networks and so on. In social movements, resources such as these are combined by individuals to achieve a collective and group goal. This is the mobilisation aspect, where resources are combined to mobilise for shared goals and preferences. In this way, resource mobilisation theories can explain the rise and fall of social movements over time as a consequence of either their lack of combined resources or the inability to combine them at a particular time in history.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Unlike classical theories, the protesters are viewed as well organised, professional, rational and resourceful and who partake in well organised political action to achieve their desired aims. Resources are seen as the main basis on whether a social mobilisation occurs, or whether it is successful in its goals.(Aslandis, 2012)

Political Process Theories

Political process theories emphasise a given set of political opportunities or a political context for explaining why individuals participate in political activism, and why social movements emerge. For political process theories, it is noted that at certain times in history opportunities have arisen with a particular political context. It is unlikely that well known political figures such as Adolf Hitler, Stalin, Ghandi, Martin Luther King and so forth would have been known today had it not been for a given set of political conditions which allowed

them to gain power.(Klandermans & Roggeband, 2010) For political process theories, therefore, it is the external political, cultural and structural environment and institutions shaping the political conditions that is emphasised. External structural forces which are dynamic and which change over time.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

There are two competing views with political process theories, one emphasising the 'Political Opportunities' available to activists and social movements, and the other, the broader 'Political Context'.

Political opportunities very much relate to the relative openness of the political system and its structures. That is, how 'easy' it is for a social movement or individual to actively participate in the formal political process and system. For Charles Tilly (1978), the more open and accessible the political system, and therefore the more opportunities that arise, the greater the likelihood of political participation. Peter Eisinger (1973), on the other hand, argued that there is a balance between the openness of a political system and how closed it is, with extremes in either direction affecting political participation. If the system is too open, he argued, it would render a requirement for a social movement unnecessary, while a closed system suppresses social movements and political participation.

A 'Political Context' refers to a broader set of social and political conditions than just the openness of a political system A political context may include a number of factors which come together to form structural influences. Influences such as the extent of repression in society, its cultural traditions, state policies, the level bureaucratisation and the form of state.(Klandermans & Roggeband, 2010) The actions of the political activist, therefore, are not purely random or psychological, but rather are shaped by the structural conditions and the contextual and cultural variables at any given time. A context from which 'opportunities' arise.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Social Constructivist Theories

Social Constructivist theories are the most contemporary of the theoretical frames. Social constructivist theories emphasise the changing identities, culture and lifestyles of the political activist, and their subjective motivations, perceptions and beliefs. In particular, focus is given to social and political mobilisations in post-industrial societies, where individuals seek new material wants and forms of self-actualisation. This alongside the search for a sense of belonging in a society where the traditional community forms and structures were disintegrating.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

Social constructivist approaches look at how individuals and groups interpret and relate to these changing conditions. In particular, Social Constructivist approaches, through an analysis of identity and meaning, attempt to explain why people in similar circumstances materially, respond differently and construct their political identities differently. That is, why some people seek radical change to the social structure while others, who are arguably in a very similar situation, seek to maintain it.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

To explain this, Social Constructivist approaches emphasise group identities and collective identities. Where individuals come to defend their own group and collective identity against, and in opposition to, other identity groups. This irrespective of what social system or political system those identities may favour or advocate. The individual then, in this view, is adopting an identity to belong and integrate into an identity group, rather than necessarily, or exclusively, due to the economic and material situation they may be in.(Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009)

1.2.3 Social Movement Theories in an International Context

This section will look at two influential theories first studied in an international context, as providing explanations as to why an individual may become a political activist. These are Mark Granovetter's (1973) '*The Strength of Weak Ties*' and Karl Dieter Opp's (1993) study of social dissidents East Germany.

Granovetter's 'strength of weak ties' theory is one which looks at the effects of one's social network and relations to the identity formation of an individual. In his theory there are both strong ties and weak ties. Strong ties are typified by frequent interaction, strong emotional bonds and closeness. These could include one's parents, brothers and sisters and ones close or immediate circle of friends. While weak ties represent the opposite, with infrequent or fleeting interaction, and a lack of emotional closeness. For Granovetter, ones' social network is saturated with these weak ties through the multitude of infrequent social encounters one encounters.(Baer, 2010)

For Granovetter, weak ties are particularly important to identity formation and the development of creative ideas. This because they allow exposure and access to socially distant and non-immediate information and ideas. Ideas and information which the individual may find 'novel', and would therefore pay closer attention to, and perhaps adopt as part of their identity. Additionally, the synthesis of the individuals immediate realm of knowledge and that which is socially distant allows for the emergence of 'creativity' and the creation of new ideas. Where on the other hand, without large quantities of weak tie social interactions, one's perspective and their realm of subjective understanding and thinking would be limited to those of their close and strong ties. (Baer, 2010)

Furthermore, weak ties can be seen as a vehicle in which one can gain access to further weak ties, and yet further realms of thought and knowledge.(Baer, 2010).

In this way, and as applied to the political activist, identity can work both ways. On the one hand when an individual is born to a political family with few(er) weak ties, the identity, understanding and realm of though will be more static and reproduced. On the other hand, when an individual is not born to a political family but may encounter many weak ties with political character, those ideas may seem novel, and the individual may the n be drawn to that political identity.

MACRO-LEVEL

Social Context	Political Events	Political Protest
groups	liberalization in	
personal networks	Eastern Europe, etc.	
coordinating mechanisms		

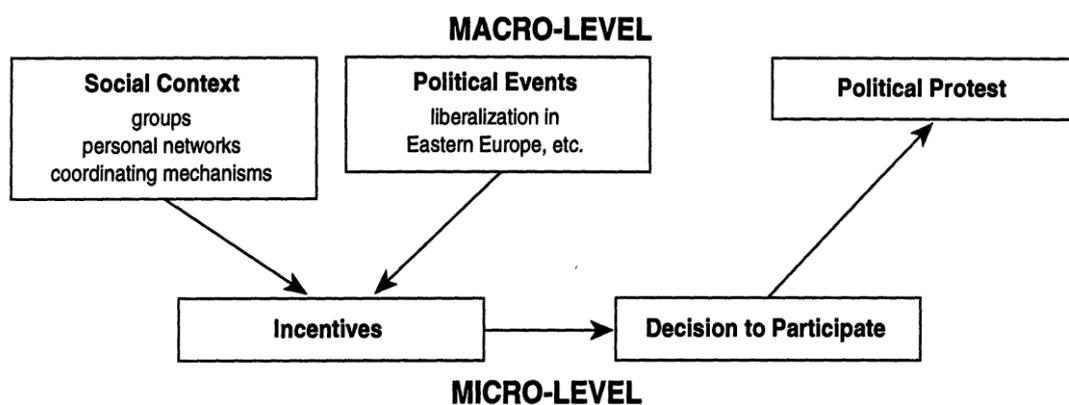| Incentives	Decision to Participate

MICRO-LEVEL

Figure 1. Theoretical Model for Explaining the Emergence of Large-Scale Political Protests

For Karl Dieter Opp, social networks were also important in his 1993 study '*Dissident Groups, Personal Networks and Spontaneous Co-operation: The East German Revolution of 1989*'. For Opp, interpersonal ties are crucial to political mobilisation as they act as a type of incentive for people to get involved. Of their study of political mobilisations in East Germany, they found that it was interpersonal networks of friends and co-workers, combined with a particular political context, which were most important for mobilising citizens at that time. This he called the 'spontaneous co-ordination model', and where few incentives are needed for the mobilisations to occur.. This he outlined in the following graph (Opp, 1993):

1.2.4 Social Movements Theories in an Irish Context

Very little research has been done in relation to Irish social movements. Most research found focuses on Irish Republican paramilitaries, and which only touches on Irish Republican Socialists when discussing aspects of Para-militarism..

Robert W. White (1988) in a study of Irish Republicans involved in 'High Risk Activism' found that the activists became involved for four primary reasons. First, the activists perceived that an injustice existed at the time of their initial involvement. Secondly, that many were raised in a family tradition of supporting political violence. Third, that they believed in the instrumentality of the republican armed struggle in attaining its aims. And fourthly, many were influenced by a commitment to their friends and community to partake in 'High Risk Activism'. While others, White found, combined all four of these factors for their involvement.

White (2010), in a more recent longitudinal study of Irish Republican political activists of Provisional Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein, and focusing on their continued participation and exit from political activism, found that the changing circumstances of activists lives as they grew older was the predominant factor in whether they continued or exited from political activism. Emphasising both structural and constructivist factors, White found that there existed increasing conflict between the newer non-activist social connections and family orientated identities formed by the activists as they grew older, and more distant from their earlier activist identities they adopted while younger. Factors including getting married, gaining or changing employment, loss of peers or loved ones were all factors contributing to whether an individual decided to exit from political activism or not. White also found that those born and raised in a culture of political participation, and who were born in 'activist families' were relatively immune from the changing life circumstances which

prompted others to exit. Additionally, White found that the longer a person remained in a social movement organisation the more that person became immune to changing life experiences and circumstances.

 Rogelio Alonso (2006) believes the research outlined above by Robert White as being defective and non-valid. Alonso argued that White's research method is uncritical as it was a "*purely descriptive account of self serving explanations*"(p.88), rather than it being a critical examination and explanation as to the real reasons. Alsonso also believed that White's own political ideology skewed the results, and where he cited White's own claim that he acted as a "*non-argumentative and supportive interviewer*". (p.88) And also as one who claims the beginning of his own political ideology as "*Tiochfaidh ar la*".(p.88)

David Burgess (2008) in research as to why individuals became members of Irish Republican paramilitary organisations identified 7 factors as to why individuals became involved in this form of high risk activism. The first factor was that there existed a grievance or perceived injustice by a sub group in the population. Secondly, that there was previous family involvement or support for the Irish Republican Movement, including historical membership. Thirdly, that there was a high status associated with membership of a paramilitary organisation within the community they lived. Fourth, that there was an element of coercion and conscription into joining the movement. Fifth, that members began their political involvement incrementally, in less risky activism such as spray painting or destroying property. Sixth, that there was a sense of vengeance behind some individual's motivations and a sense of wanting to hit back against past wrongs. And seventh, that there existed an opportunity to join an armed organisation, given that it existed.

2. **Methodology**

2.1 Materials and Apparatus

The materials and apparatus used to conduct this research included the following:

– A semi-structured interview guide consisting of some fifteen open ended questions used during the interviews. The questions were filtered and assessed by DBS staff members to ensure ethical conformity and their general suitability for the purposes of this research.

– Nvivo 9 Qualitative Analysis Software to assist with the coding, theme generation and analysis of the interview scripts when transcribed.

– An Olympus VN-8800PC Digital Voice Recorder and Dictaphone used for both the recording of the participants during interviews and the temporary storage of those interview files while awaiting upload to a secure personal computer.

– A password protected Toshiba Netbook to store uploaded interview files and to secure, and ensure, participant confidentiality.

– Participant consent forms.

– A notebook used for taking notes both during interviews and later during the reading and familiarisation with the text based data.

2.2 Participants

This research adopted purposive sampling for the study, and which involved a small cohort of 6 participants overall. Participants were chosen based upon the following criteria: 1) that they politically identified specifically as Irish Republican Socialists; 2) that they were active politically at the time of participation in the research; and 3) were based in county Dublin. All participants were male, and varied in age from their twenties to their early 60's. However, it must be noted that most were on the older end of the scale. Some were members, or past members of existing Irish Republican political groups at the time of the study, while others were 'independent activists' or involved in other politically orientated activities such as Trade Unionism. The origin of participants varied widely despite them living in Dublin, with two from England and one from Donegal, while the other three were from Dublin. All participants were accessed and sought through the researchers personal connections. Participants were approached in person and the research topic was explained. All those approached committed their participation to the study, and times and locations were set to commence interviews.

2.3 Data Collection & Design

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect and extract participant's subjective views, thoughts and feelings on the three main topics of this study: their motivation, initiation and continued participation in political activism. The technique of in-depth interviews is the most suitable to explore these subjective perspectives.(Patton, 1990) The use of in-depth interviews also allows the researcher to gather extensive quantities of data with minimal financial expense.(Dexter, 1970)

The semi-structured in-depth interviews lasted between 12 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes, and consisted of 15 open-ended questions forming an interview guide used to steer the topic of discussion towards the three main areas of research. While all interviews worked from the same interview guide of fifteen questions, the semi-structured character of the collection method allowed follow up question to explore and clarify the issues in greater depth. It also allowed for spontaneity and the exploration of information perhaps unforeseen by the researcher. These follow up questions varied from interview to interview while still addressing the three general areas of the study.

The willingness of participants to discuss their views and the questions put to them also varied from participant to participant, further explaining the variation in interview lengths.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

All participants completed an interview consent form before the commencement of their interview. They were also fully informed of the nature of the research, the topics to be covered and what it is that is expected of them before any interview commenced. The participants were informed that they did not need to answer any questions that they did not want to, or that they were discomfort able with answering, and that the interview, at their request, could be terminated at any time. Additionally, they were informed that withdrawal from the study at their request could be completed any-time up until the study is published.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic at hand, and in accordance with DBS ethical guidelines and standards, assurances were given that all recorded data would be kept secure and that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. To do this, pseudo-names were given to participants within the research and their real identity concealed. Concealment

also took the form of removing potential identifying data or features from the participants transcripts such as their exact age, organisations they belong or belonged to, or their exact origin.

2.5 Limitations

This research was limited in a number of important ways.

Firstly the sample was relatively small. This was partly to do with the time constraints placed on the researcher and the limited social connections available to access participants.

Secondly, the research unintentionally ended up with a cohort of all males, which is perhaps reflective of the general make-up of those who partake in Irish Republican political activism, with perhaps few exceptions. This cohort then may not reflect the experiences or views of the female gender who, observably, and for reasons only known to them, do not partake in this form of activism to the same proportionate degree.

Thirdly, due to the type of participants and what could be described a culture of little words and secrecy within political activism, and Republican political activism in particular, the interviews and the depth exploration of the issues could be seen to be limited to what the researcher could gather. This could be improved through the use of an initial pilot-study to test the adequacy of the questions and the interview guide in exploring the issues and extracting subjective data.

Fourth, the area of this research has been understudied. There has been few sociological research reports into the area of Irish Republicanism, let alone Irish Republican Socialism. While there is a large body of research into a wide range of activism outside of Ireland, little

has been done in an Irish context, and this limits the background information on which to inform research in this area.

And Fifth, most participants were of an older generation, and may have been influenced by factors not applicable to those of a younger generation, such as a political context like the Northern Ireland troubles.

2.6 Method of Analysis

This research used qualitative thematic analysis to develop identifiable patterns and themes across all interview data.

This involved a set of procedures to follow beginning with the transcription of interview data and the loading of that data into the Nvivo 9 software. Following this the research is thoroughly read by the researcher and 'coded'.

2.7 Procedure

Once the interviews were recorded and completed, the following procedure was used:

1. The recorded sound based interviews were transcribed to a text based format on Microsoft Word.

2. Familiarisation with the text, which required the thorough reading over of the text based data. Ideas and important concepts extracted from this familiarisation were noted separately in a notebook.

3. The data is loaded up to the Nvivo9 software ready for coding.

4. The creation of free-nodes which are made over extracts of text that appears useful or interesting to the researcher during thematic analysis. These extracts may include phrases, words or paragraphs of text and coding them, if necessary, under the same free-node categorisation. The result is free-node folders containing various extracts of coded text.

5. When the text had been suitably coded for all possible and identifiable useful features and information, the free-nodes were categorised further into tree-nodes. These tree-nodes were created by combining the free-nodes into relevant broader categories. In particular, free-node folders in which substantial data was coded in were kept, while free-nodes which did not seem useful to the development of themes were excluded.

6. Once tree-nodes were created using the data from the free-nodes, the data combined in the tree-nodes was studied to develop themes or common patterns throughout the text. These themes were categorises into sub-themes and main themes. These sub-themes and main themes were then discussed in relation to the overall research project in the discussion and results section.

3. Results

3.1 Introduction

A number of sub-themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data. These themes come under the three main themes of the study – initiation, motivation and continued participation. These will be reviewed in this section using direct excerpts and quotes of the transcribed data of the participant interviews. As per the ethical guidelines, pseudo-labels shall be applied with these excerpts to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. These will be P1 to P6, in the order that they were interviewed. The following are a list of the themes which emerged within the three areas of the research:

Initiation

- Family Influence

- Importance of Social Network to Participation

- Early Involvement with Far-Left and Trotskyist Organisations

Motivation

- Personal Satisfaction and Benefits

- Activism as Very Important.

- Strong Convictions and Beliefs

Continued Participation

7. Continue Until Death

8. Mixed Feelings of Achievement

3.2 Initiation

3.2.1. Family Influence

Five out of the six participants reported that at least some family members were political activists, or came from 'political families' or were from households where they 'talked politics'. Some of their families were very involved:

For Participant 1 (P1), both their parents were actively involved in trade union activity:

> "*I think my first memory would be when I was about 6 or 7 years of age.....That would be a memory like you know. I come from a labour family, so Longsbottom didn't get much room in our house yeh know. Experience I suppose on a picket line with my dad when I was about 12 or 13 back in the early 70's......So yeah, a picket line with my dad at the West-Yorkshire Road Car Company would be the first, what I would call experience, you know*"(P1)

Participant 1 also acknowledged that their parents as having influenced them:

> "*Me mam was involved with a tenants association when the barricades went up. Eh, there was a rent strike on, back again in the early 70's. Em, she was secretary of the tenants association. To which again was an influence on me at a young age.*"(P1)

Participant 3 (P3) had a brother and father involved in political activism:

> "*Well yeah he was politically yeah. He was a strange sort of fella, but he was a good laugh ye know. And my brother, who was, so we became political and then we went on the big mobilisations in 1968. The anti-war marches, and those soprt of things. So thats roughly where I come from you know.*"(P3)

And:

> "*Ehm, I think we bought a newspaper, and my brother sent off an eh, application form on the back of the newspape. And em, that was it I think. And he sent it back to me. He was my twin brother you know so we did sort of things together.*"(P3)

Other families, such as those of Participant 4 (P4), had long histories of involvement in political activism:

> *"Well I do come from a political family. My grandfather would have been out in 1916, and my, eh, grandmother would have been out in the war of Independence. And my father would have been in the Fianna, and there would have been a lot of politics spoken in the house and all the things like that. My father was then in the Republican Congress. He went strait from the Fianna to the Republican Congress, and then he would have spent the whole of the war years in England doing Essential Services"*(P4)

And:

> *"I had a brother who would have eh, been around during the Border Campaign. My Father disagreed with that. And then eh I had a sister who would have been in Sinn Fein in Birmingham. We moved to Birmingham when I was nine. My brother then went top the left and joined the Connolly Association, which my father was in anyway. And my father was also in the Communist Party of Great Britain."*(P4)

Other participants expressed a fleeting reference to family influence or involvement. Such as with Participant 2 (P2) and Participant 5 (P5):

> *"I had two brothers who were interested in them aswell. We discussed politics for years in the family."*(P2)

And:

> *"Ehm. It probably would have been when I was 13 or 14 giving out leaflets on O' Connell St with my uncle. I cant remember what they were about now, but I remember coming home on my bike and getting stopped by the Guards. And its only later I think back who they were."*(P5)

3.2.2 Importance of Social Networks to Participation

The role of one's social network to initial participation, and also their continued participation, were revealed in all six interviews when family is included as part of one's social network. But excluding family, four participants expressed the importance, either to their initial

participation or continued participation in activism, to the social networks around them at any given time. For Participant 2 and 3, those around them determined whether they were politically active or not:

> *"Yeah, several times [laugh]. Several times I did retire from my political activism, depending on the people around me like, you know, how they, sort of thought, and how their opinions were based aswell like."*(P2)

> *"Eh, I suppose it is what other people are doing, if other people are getting involved. I dont do things on my own you know. If iv got other people around me who are willing to do things. If there are a few decent people around then ill get involved. Thats the main thing, otherwise I might have to do, you know, other things. Get on with my life you know what I mean."*(P3)

While others, such as Participant 1 and 6 indicated the importance of social connections to their initial involvement in activism:

> *"Eh through a group I became involved with Red Action, em, 80's, early mid 80's, em, I met a few lads at Old Trafford Manchester, through football, which again is political, em..."*(P1)

> *"Me and a few others from the mill [Clondalkin Paper Mill] joined ta group called the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) who were giving their support. We had got to know them through that you know. And t*hey had stalls set up there."*(P6)

3.2.3. Early Involvement with Far-Left and Trotskyist Organisations

Five of the Six Participants were initially involved in far-left communist and Trotskyist organisations before joining an Irish Republican Socialist organisation, or identifying as one. Three of those interviewed, Participant 2, 3 and 6 were members of one of these, the Workers Revolutionary Party, a British based Trotskyist Organisation:

> *"Well I first got involved as a young person in eh, a sort of British based party organised in Ireland....it was the Workers Revolutionary Party, the WRP."*(P2)

> *"No, not really. No, no. I was in the WRP in England, and there was a split at that time. And I think at that time it probably would have been the only time I thought about it. But even then I couldnt be out of turn you know."*(P3)

> *"Me and a few others from the mill [Clondalkin Paper Mill] joined a group called the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) who were giving their support. We had got to know them through that you know. And they had stalls set up there."*(P6)

While others were members of British based organisations like Red Action and the Young

Communist League:

> *"Eh through a group I became involved with Red Action, em, 80's, early mid 80's, em, I met a few lads at Old Trafford Manchester, through football, which again is political, em..."*(P1)

> *"Oh a major influence. When I was, say, 15 or 16. At 15 I was still at school in Birmingham and I was in the YCL, the Young Communist League. I was also in the Connolly Association"*(P4)

Another commonality amongst two of the participants were their involvement in the

'Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', or CND.:

> *"Eh, going on CND marches when I was young. That would have been 1965. That would be my first experience. From Aldermaston to, em, London. 3 day marches against nuclear bombs, taking in different, em, nuclear facilities for making nuclear and chemical weapons. I was in YCND, young CND at the time."*(P3)

> *"Well I would have got involved with the YCL in Birmingham and we would have been involved with em, the CND which was going at the time. That would have been around the early 60's. 61 and 62. A we used to go every Saturday and we'd sit on the roads"*(P4)

3.3 Motivation

3.3.1. Personal Satisfaction and Benefits as a Motivator.

Five of the six participants expressed at least some form of personal satisfaction, enjoyment

and social benefits from their activism. Perhaps acting as a motivator:

> *"Eh, well I have achieved what I would call self respect. A class consciousness, and a principle. So I would consider them achievements."*(P1)

> *"Eh, well I achieved a sort of personal, and sort of understanding, more of an understanding. I got talking to people and got to meet people over the years, gaining knowledge from them aswell as the knowledge id gain myself from reading and writing."*(P2)

> *"Well also, there's a social side to it aswell, there was a social side. There's a buzz to it, and one enjoyed themselves. Go to best, good parties, you meet girls, you know, things like that. You make some friends and things like that. There's that side of it, and also, you know, it wasnt completely all one, just sort of like... We were having a good laugh all the time."*(P3)

> *"This stage. There's a certain amount of satisfaction. Eh, of, taking on the impossible and sometimes winning....Not being afraid of failure. If your only a working person and your up against the powers that be and you actually win, or you even upset them, you know you get satisfaction out of that."*(P4)

And

> *"Oh, well, I do feel that I was involved in different things that changed the, well that changed Ireland and probably Internationally too. I got a lot of personal satisfaction from it too, you know."*(P4)

> *"But its difficult to know what changes have been made. I know for one that I wouldnt be the same person. As an individual like. If I didnt do what iv done over the years. So there's those things that ehm, I think, eh, have improved who I am.. Meeting new people, and eh, developing my own views of whats happening."*(P6)

3.3.2. Activism as Very Important.

For all the activists their activism was considered of high importance, with some claiming it as "decisive" and an "obsession":

> *"Well, its become, from my own point of view, has become almost an obsession.[laugh] Iv often said, right, thats it, im getting out of this bollox, and know matter how hard I try, eh, everything, no matter what the conversation, somehow seems to drift around to politics.*(P1)

> *"For me it was a huge thing one time you know. It was centre to all my sort of activity, involved in politics for years like. But now it has less of a role like, than it had then."*(P2)

> *"Its very important. Its decisive. Its decisive. But i dont see myself as being any different than anyone else. I think that political activity in times that we are passing through now is essential. So its very important to me as, eh, a member of a class, no I mean as an individual I suppose."*(P3)

> *"Oh, eh, its part of life actually. Id have to get involved. If something was going on id have to sort of, eh, stick my oar in and give it a dig out if I was able to. You know. It is very important yeah."*(P4)

> *"Id say it would be pretty important. I mean I think its of absolute importance people get involved in changing things and fighting for a better world. And against the injustices thats there. I mean if nobody did anything sure the place would be an awful kip altogether. It comes naturally to me. What I find difficult to understand is why most people dont find it important.*"(P5)

> *"Its of great importance to me. But not as much as what it was when I was younger. The energy I had for it isnt the same."*(P6)

3.3.3. Strong Convictions and Sense of Injustice

All participants expressed strong political views and principles and a sense of injustice through their interviews. Indeed most of the interview hours recorded were made up of their views on various political topics as a tangent to the original questions asked. Here are some samples of these expressed:

"Em, there was something wrong in society and at that time it was quite obvious to me what was wrong. Em, working class people getting battered around. Not for a pay rise, but just to keep pits and communities open."(P1)

And

"The largest section of the population living in, em, basically robbed of a sizable amount of their labour produce they produce everyday of their work. Em, in the name of profit. Thats why you have to work a week in hand. The employer is never actually paying you out of his own pocket. He's paying you for what youv already produced. Not a bad little number being an employer is it. Ehm, deprivation, poverty, as you look around the world and whats on TV every day of the week theyr advertising for poor kids in Africa who through no fault of their own are starving to death. These countries were perfectly well advanced before the English, Belgians, Prussians and various other colonial, and later on, other imperialist powers intervened. Ehm, what happened in Ireland between 1845 to 51 in the famine, tragic and disastrous as it was, is happening every day of every year in them countries."(P1)

"Eh, growing up in the area where I lived in. It was sort of a slum dwelling in the inner city of Dublin. I noticed the sort of ehm, two tear standards in Irish society. And I became sort of aware of, it needed political change, from that."(P2)

And

"Eh, well hopefully to change Irish society, the nature of Irish society itself. Maybe world society, but starting with Irish society, as I lived there. Just to make political changes to benefit the people i lived amongst."(P2)

"Well, it was a sense of injustice that iv had, that, you know, youv always had if you come from an Irish background living in London."(P3)

"She keeps [the teacher] insisting that she lives in a Catholic country. And I keep insisting that we dont. I said the flag in this country has three stripes on it. You only honour one stripe, you dont honour the white stripe and you dont honour the orange stripe...So she took the last refuge of a female scoundrel and she turned on the water. She said I showed here disrespect in the class....And I got banned."(P4)

"I think its the very fact that the system dosnt work And everyone is telling you that it is. Its like someone saying black is white when its clearly white. You only have to spend 5 minutes walking through town to see that it dosnt work. The homeless and beggers everywhere. And this in a so called working system, you know. Unbelievable. Imagine what its like in Africa and places like that."(P5)

"Well its basically about equality. That I think is the main thing. Everyone has the same chances. Nobody has got too much more than anyone else or

anything you know. And thats what it means to me. And everyone gets to have the right to make their own decisions."(P6)

3.4 Continued Participation

3.4.1. Continue Until Death

When asked when or if they would retire from political activism, five of the six said they could not see themselves retiring from activism. Many said they would continue until their death or serious ill health:

> *"Many, yeah. Iv never been able to do so because that might aswell mean committing suicide really and ending life because if everything in life is political then its very hard to resign from political activism unless you resign from life....Death. The same answer ditto as the one above [laugh]."*(P1)

> *"No. Until I probably die. No when you get to an age when you just cant walk or something like that. You know there is always something to be done. But ill always be around attending meetings, keeping up to date and see who's making progress, and who isnt. And what sort of progress are they making. Its sort of an on-going thing for life."*(P2)

> *"I doubt if I will now. I probably wont. No unless, you know what I mean, I end up in a Coma or some bloody thing like that. No."*(P3)

> *"Id say when I die. Yeah, thats about all. And even then id say theyll have a big monstrous ceremony for me for at least two days. Ill become a saint [Laugh]."*(P4)

> *"No I cant see it. Im at it now, what, over thirty years, and if something hasnt put me off yet then it probably wont in the future. The only thing I can see then might be death. Or getting physically disabled or something."*(P6)

3.4.2. Mixed Feelings of Achievement.

The participant's views of whether they achieved anything socially or politically from their activism were mixed. With three of the six expressing a lack of achievement while the other

three expressing some positivity about what they thought were achievements. Those who

stated no achievement tended to deflect towards the personal benefits as discussed above:

> *"Ehm, not a great deal really. Ehm, known to the forces of, eh, shall we say, those who support the status quo and are prepared to uphold law and order, as they see it. Ehm, I wouldnt call that an achievement really. Id call it a liability. [Laugh], you know. Eh, well I have achieved what I would call self respect."*(P1)

> *"So, iv never achieved anything practical, but iv just achieved more of an awareness of whats going on in society."*(P2)

> *"Eh. Thats a tough one. I cant really point to anything definite. There's nothing I can say yes I achieved or changed that. Most things are like that. But its difficult to know what changes have been made. I know for one that I wouldnt be the same person. As an individual like."*(P6)

While others were immediately more positive, but still somewhat vague in their

achievements, and still reflecting back to themselves rather than their social or political

achievements:

> *"Eh, well that I, eh. Well its whatever point that your at now is what youv achieved I suppose you know. In the past iv done a few things, you know, but its what your doing now. I mean iv kept going and I think thats something you know what I mean. Just to keep going. Thats as much as I have achieved. I still bloody defy them the fuckers. Really, I mean, thats it you know."*(P3)

> *"Oh, well, I do feel that I was involved in different things that changed the, well that changed Ireland and probably Internationally too. I got a lot of personal satisfaction from it too, you know. And, eh , we won things like leading the contraception debate, we stopped the Vietnam war. It was great to be involved in that and see the Viet Cong winning. And then contraception we won that."*(P4)

> *"Well achievement is a difficult thing to measure. But yeah id say so. I think keeping the flame lit is an achievement, you know. Keeping the vision alive of another possibility. I mean if I or others didnt do that then we'd lose that. So, I think, thats an achievement. And then you have large marches. I mean they do do something but its not always easy to point out what that is. To say they dont have an effect is to say they didnt happen. You know what I mean?"*(P5)

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This research aimed to qualitatively explore three main areas of Irish Republican Socialist political activism - their Initiation, Motivation and Continued Participation. In doing so, eight sub-themes emerged from these three main areas. Rather than diverse and diffuse results and answers from the six participant interviewees, distinct patterns and strong commonalities were revealed as quoted in the Results section above. These themes and patters will be discussed in the following section in relation to the literature.

4.2 Initiation : Family Influence.

Five out of six participants said they have had family who were political, or active, in one way or another. The extent of their families involvement varied greatly from what was revealed, and the nature of the exact relationship included one's parents, brothers, grandfathers and uncles.

This corresponds with and re-affirms the results of the 1988 study by Robert White into Irish Republicans involved with „high risk activism', where one of the main four reasons in which people got involved was due to a family political tradition.(White, 1988)

While it also re-affirms and corresponds to the study by David Burgess in 2008 in which there was previous family involvement in political activism and a familial historical tradition of participation.(Burgess, 2008) This particularly is so with participant 4 (P4) whose familial participation went back to the 1916 Easter Rising and War of Independence.

However, some of the findings of this research differ from those of David Burgess's study. While five out of six participants had family members involved in politics or activism, they did not necessarily have a tradition of Irish Republican Socialist political activism. Rather, as with participant 1 and participant 3, their family activism involved left-wing campaigns and trade union type activities.

This in particular could be a distinct characteristical tendency for many of those involved in Irish Republican Socialism. That is, having a left-wing familial background as being a possible influencing factor to their later adoption of Irish Republican Socialist Ideology.

4.3 Initiation: Importance of Social Networks to Participation

All participants expressed the importance of other people and their social networks for their involvement. This again relates to White's (1988) study in which he found a commitment to friends and the community as a reason for participant's involvement in Irish Republican activism.

While it also relates to Whites (2010) longitudinal study in which he found increasing conflict between political and non-political social connections and identities as the activists grew older. This was particularly so for P2 and P3, where their involvement depended upon whether there was someone around to engage in activism with them. And where if there were no activists around them, they would find something else to do.

Another aspect to this was in terms of Opp's „*Spontaneous Co-operation Model'*, in which individuals get involved in political participation through interactions with friends and co-workers. This was particularly distinct with P1 and P6. Where P1 became involved in Red Action through „*Jads at Old Trafford'*, while P6 became involved through an industrial dispute and joined the WRP with co-workers from the Mill. In-line with Opp's theory, both

examples involved a particular political context – an industrial dispute and a sub-culture of skinhead anti-fascism. (Opp, 1993)

Granovetter's theory (1973) of Weak Ties may also apply here. P6 did not report having previous family involvement in politics, and their first involvement was through an industrial dispute at work in which the WRP gave support. Members of the WRP could be considered weak ties to P6, and perhaps there was a novelty to the previously un-encountered socialist ideas being presented by the WRP members. However this is speculative as further details were not made clear during the interview.

4.4 Initiation: Early Involvement in Far-left & Trotskyist Organisations

As touched upon partly in a previous section, this particular pattern may be a distinctive characteristic of those identifying as Irish Republican Socialism. That is, five out of 5 participants reported having left wing familial backgrounds or being members of left wing organisations. Strikingly, 3 out of 6 participants were members of the British based Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party. While a further two were involved in other British based left wing non- Irish Republican organisations. This is something which has not shown up in previous research literature on the topic of Irish Republicanism, and may distinctly apply to the tendency of Irish Republican Socialism.

4.5 Motivation: Personal Satisfaction and Benefits as a Motivator

Five of the six participants expressed at least some form of personal satisfaction, enjoyment and social benefits from their activism. This again is not something which showed up in previous research on Irish Republicans. The closest being Burgess's (2008) finding that there was a high status associated with membership of a paramilitary organisation within the

community they lived. And perhaps, one may derive some sort of satisfaction from that status.

Broadly, the Social Constructivist approach to social mobilisation may shed some light on this result. That is, that those individuals partaking in political activism seek to gain a type of self-actualisation and self-meaning from their political activism. In particular, P1, P2, P4 and P6 expressed a sort of „self building' and „self improvement' in terms of the „understanding' and „knowledge' they gained from their participation. While others, such as P3 saw it as a way of making friends and building ones social network.

4.6 Motivation: Activism as Very Important

All activists viewed their political activism as having high importance. There may be many theoretical approaches one could apply to explaining these expressions, since there may be many reasons why they view activism as being of high importance to them. Therefore a broader thematic context needs to be applied for greater understanding, such as expressions of the personal satisfaction they may get from their activism, or their particular political convictions, which will be discussed next to broaden the context.

4.7 Motivation: Strong Convictions and Sense of Injustice.

All participants expressed strong political convictions and a strong sense of injustice.

This corresponds to White's (1988) findings in which Irish Republican activist's involvement began with a sense of injustice. It also corresponds to Burgess's (2008) study in which there existed a grievance or perceived injustice by a sub group in the population. Additionally, a number of theoretical frameworks may be applied to these results. Firstly, Classical Mobilisation theories outline initial involvement due to subjective grievances caused by

structural causal strains. There is not sufficient information about each participant determine what exact causal strains may apply to them. Most express external concerns which may not directly affect them such as homelessness, hunger and Africa. Thus the individual causal strain may not be identifiable from the existing interviews. However P6 indicates their initial involvement from an industrial dispute, which could be interpreted as a structural causal strain in this instance.

Another theoretical approach which very much relates is that of Political Process theories. Where perhaps there was not a structural causal strain, but rather, a particular political context and atmosphere which motivates them. For example, two participants, P3 and P4 became involved early on in their lives in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament movement, which could be seen to be a particular political context and charged issue at the time. Additionally, P1 expressed throughout their interview that the miners' strike in England as big factor as to their involvement.

4.8 Continued Participation: Continue Until Death

Death and disablement were strong patterns which emerged from five of the six interviews when asked about their possible retirement from political activism. There is a correlation between this and the results found by White's (2010) longitudinal study where those born and raised in a culture of political participation, and who were born in 'activist families' were relatively immune from the changing life circumstances which prompted others to exit. And where also that the longer a person remained in a social movement organisation the more that person became immune to changing life experiences and circumstances. Most of those interviewed in this research were of an older generation. Many of them openly expressed the

very point that if other „life factors' hadn't put them off so far, then nothing will. And, as revealed above, most came from political familial backgrounds.

So while the Irish Republican Socialists of this study did not necessarily come from traditional Irish Republican backgrounds, it would correspond to whites findings that those born to „political families' are immune from the factors prompting others to resign from activism.

4.9 Continued Participation: Mixed Feelings of Achievement

While not a strong thematic pattern overall, strong demarcations in the answer of whether they achieved anything from their political activism were evident. Whether they believed they achieved anything or not, for most there was an element of self-achievement and self-gain from their activism. Similar to what was discussed above in the Personal Satisfaction theme. And as with above, the Social Constructivist theory would seem to apply strongly here. That is, that even for those who feel they have achieved little from their political activism, an activism which aims to make change, self-actualisation becomes a driver, reason and motivator for their activism. Perhaps unwittingly.

5. Conclusion

While many of the patterns which emerged from this study are well understood within the field of social mobilisation studies, and where many of the results from this research corresponds to previous research on Irish republicans as discussed above, two key and unexpected findings emerged.

1.) That there is a tendency for Irish Republican Socialists, unlike traditional Irish Republicans, to come from politically left-wing familial backgrounds, rather than explicitly nationalistic backgrounds.

2.) That most of those defining themselves as Irish Republican Socialists in this study first went through British based Trotskyist and further-left organisations.

These findings represent a new and contributory insight into Irish Republican Political Activists, and, it appears, illustrate that not only is Irish republican Socialism a distinct ideology with distinctive organised formations throughout history, but those who participate and join have distinctive backgrounds to those who are part of Traditional Republican activism.

6. Further Research

While these findings are clear, the limitations described in the methodology section pose many problems for the generalisation of these findings to all republican activists. Chiefly, that most interviewees in this study represent an older generation.

Due to this, a further and more complete research of a younger generation of Irish Republican Socialist activists would be useful and contributory. Of those who many not have been alive during the political context of the Troubles.

Additionally, further research could be conducted into female Irish Republican Socialists to explore the issues and motivators which contributes to their disproportionate participation.

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Appendix 1 - Interview Guide:

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Further, unwritten questions may be asked with this method to get further elaboration and information.

Initiation

- What was your earliest political experience or memory?

- How did you first get involved in political activism?

- Why do you think you got involved in political activism at that time?

- What was your very first act of political activism

- Was there anyone you knew or were close to, who encouraged or influenced your political involvement, or indeed your political views in general?

Motivation

- What does Republicanism and Socialism mean to you?

- What do you believe motivates you to partake in political activism?

- What do you feel you have achieved from your activism?

- Do you feel there exists such a thing as a political activist, as opposed to someone who simply partakes in forms of political activism?

- How important is political activism to you?

Continued Participation

9. Were there any times when you felt you should resign from political activism?

10. What factors, if any, do you think would influence you to resign from political activism?

11. Does the amount of time you devote to activism vary over your time?

4. How big a priority is participating in political activism to you in terms of life's other priorities?

5. Do you feel at some stage you will stop participating in political activism?

Appendix 2 – Participant Consent Form

An Investigation into the motivations, initiation and continued participation of Irish Republican Socialist Political Activists

My name is Sofian Murphy and I am conducting research that explores Political activists motivations.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part and any of the questions do raise difficult feelings, you do not have to answer that question, and/or continue with the interview.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored and stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact

Sofian Murphy, so-pm@hotmail.com

Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 3 – Supervisor Permission Letter

Mr Tom Prendeville,

Research Coordinator,

Social Science,

Dublin Business School.

4th December 2012.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct a research study with your members on: 'An Investigation of the Motivations, Initiation and Continued Participation of Irish Republican Socialist Political Activists'

Mr Sofian Murphy is enrolled as a final year **Social Science** student at **Dublin Business School**. DBS Social Science students are required to complete an independent research project during their final year of study. Sofian's final year research project is: **'An Investigation of the Motivations, Initiation and Continued Participation of Irish Republican Socialist Political Activists'**

All research conducted by final year students is done for the purpose of meeting course requirements. All results obtained are strictly confidential, and to be used for assessment of the researching student's qualifications for receipt of a BA Hons. in Social Science. Sofian is requesting written permission, as soon as possible, to collect research data.

Please feel free to address any questions regarding this research to Mr Tom Prenderville, Research Coordinator, Social Science Programme, Dublin Business School. Sofian (Email: so-pm@hotmail.com) can also provide further details about how he will conduct his research study. Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Tom Prenderville

Tel: + 353 1 417 8752

Email: tom.prenderville@dbs.ie