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## BOOK REVIEWS

Provisional Irish Republicans. An Oral and Interpretive History, by Robert W. White. (1993) Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut. 206pp.

Beneath the statue in Dublin of the late 19th century Irish parliamentarian James Stewart Parnell are inscribed the words, "no (one) has the right to fix a boundary to the march of a nation". No book, that I know of, proves the prophetic merit of that statement more definitively than Robert W. White's **Provisional Irish Republicans**. This book is essentially a case study of the various organizations that are the gatekeepers of Irish Nationalism. The major emphasis is on the Provisional Irish Republican Army and its political arm, Sinn Fein. It is important to sociologists for two reasons. One, it provides information about group conflict that challenges dominant social science theories of such violence. These theories include social breakdown due to rapid social change, an expectant-achievement gap, discrimination that promotes prolonged deprivation, and the inability to bear up under social stresses and strains. Secondly, it brings a social structural approach to its examination of the Irish Nationalist group formation and cohesion, where other studies take either a psychological or criminological viewpoint.

The author is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Indiana University in Indianapolis who specializes in matters of contemporary group violence. Over a period of several years, covering the greater part of the 1980's, he made a number of trips to Ireland and interviewed Nationalist activists across a broad spectrum of time and geography. For example, respondents included 100-year-old Tom Maguire, the oldest living Republican of the 1920's, and the last surviving member of the only All-Ireland constituted Dail (Parliament) of 1921. Other interviews covered prominent women nationalists (a segment of the population generally overlooked in writings of this sort), lifelong members, two English-born converts to Irish Nationalism, one of whom became IRA Chief of Staff, and the most recent converts to the cause. As to geography, the author included respondents from each of Ireland's contested six northern counties, and thirteen of her remaining twenty-six counties. Additionally, interviews covered nationalist activists of every generation from the Easter uprising of 1916 to the present time.

The book begins with a sociological discussion of traditional theories and policies dealing with small group violence in contemporary societies and a historical examination of the irrepressible phenomenon known widely as the IRA. Chapter 2 sets forth the reasons for the author's choice of the IRA and Irish Nationalism as a prime example of a small-group political mobilization heuristic. He further builds on the historical narrative in the opening chapter with a general examination of the resistance to British occupation until a reinvigorated Irish Republican Movement was jolted from its slumbers by state generated terrorism such as the "Battle of the Bogside" and "Bloody Sunday", in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

Chapters 3,4 and 5 continue the historical approach with personal oral histories from Irish Republicans to provide an understanding of why, what, when

and how recruits are attracted to the Republican Movement. These personal histories include the climactic 1969/70 period and the intensive recruitment activities that followed. One interesting outcome from an analysis of the interviews is that they point directly to state sponsored violence as the prime motivating factor for many of the respondents attraction to the IRA and its philosophy of force. There is also an informative discussion on the basis for the Provisional IRA's legitimation as a military and political force in the service of Ireland. This is centered on the fact that the 1921 Dail Eireann (Parliament of Ireland), which was never dissolved, "... remained the de jure government (p24)". Tom Maguire, as the sole surviving and legally elected representative of that Dail, transferred its legitimacy to the Provisional IRA.

In chapter 6 the effects of Republicanism from the four prime recruitment paths, vis-a-vis pre and post-1969 six-county and twenty-six-county Republicans, are examined. Chapter 7 discusses the findings of this case study in light of political mobilization theoretical perspectives. A detailed account of data collection and procedures is explained in the appendix.

White convincingly illustrates that the politically charged terrorism of the Northern Irish six-county region is not simply the irrational activity of disenchanting social actors in a legitimate-rational society. On the contrary, this research points resolutely to rationally calculated decision-making that must necessarily consider a great deal of self-denial. In his summation, White puts forth some general implications of underestimating the zeal and commitment of men and women who are determined to challenge the status quo when they perceive the erosion of their civil rights and national identity.

Regrettably, White's research is limited to a singular viewpoint from a group devoted to a common purpose. Other viewpoints, such as those held by Nationalist sympathizers for peace through consensus, and anti-Nationalist or pro-British advocates, would have added immeasurably to this study if for no other reason than a comparative study of the construction of social realities in small group political mobilization. Finally, the book's title does not relate very well to its content. Even though the main focus is on past and present IRA members, the aim of the book is to identify those factors which motivated its members to join. It is not, as the title suggests, a historical examination of the organization per se.

Nevertheless, this book is an important contribution to the literature on group conflict. Accordingly, it would prove interesting and profitable to anyone concerned with sub-state or small group violence.

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Classical Sociological Theory: A Positivist's Perspective, by Jonathan H. Turner. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1993. 205 pp.

The sub-title of this book, ironic in itself, should serve as a warning to those scholars seeking an insightful contribution to any discourse on classical sociological theory and its relevance to contemporary issues. Turner's specific goal with this book, linked to his usual agenda of *elevating* sociology to the status of a natural science--biology and physics--is to "...codify the wisdom of the masters so that we can move on and make books on classical theory unnecessary" (ix). While relying on Comtean presuppositions concerning the *natural laws* of the social universe, Turner "...tries to extract the essential theoretical ideas from [a] thinker's work and to articulate the implicit laws and, in places, models proposed by a thinker"(5). This is supposedly achieved through the reduction of ideas and theorists, which are historical individuals, existing and creating within a context, to their status as universally valid laws; these laws are represented in the book as a handful of theoretical models whose true value lies, ostensibly, in their ability to be snatched out of thin air and plugged into a data set to reveal social "Truth." To make matters worse, Turner reduces, dualistically, the "discourse" occurring in other "'sophisticated' theory circles" to the status of relativism which is doomed to failure because of its attention to substantive questions of human values and *perspectival* inquiry; readers are left with the impression that there are only positivists of Turner's brand and all other theorists conflated into a post-modernists category.

Many readers will take offense at Turner's actual treatment of theorists and theories in this book. For example chapter twelve is entitled "Spencer, Marx, Weber, Simmel, and Pareto on Power and Conflict." The author heroically reduces these theorists' ideas on power and conflict to thirteen pages and twelve principles. In admitting that Marx and Weber would not have approved of this treatment, Turner argues that "...to the extent that sociology is considered a science...we should try to extract the theoretical principles from scholars' work, state them formally, and use them in our theoretical and research efforts to build a cumulative science"(136). Further, it is stated that "[w]hen principles are extracted and abstracted, the surface incompatibility of various scholars' work is dramatically reduced"(136).

However superficially correct this may be, should we be concerned with the *reduction* of incompatibilities in theory or should we be concerned with an acknowledgement of them? Should we follow Turner in boiling down theory--excising history and cutting away individual intersections with it? Apparently Turner feels that neat and tidy theoretical packages can be blended together--merging in the middle of the road. At least with this approach sociologists would no longer have to deal with messy empirical realities that do not fit their models--simply reduce a bit further!

Similarly, sociologists interested in Mead or Weber will not be satisfied with Turner's reduction of them into: "Mead as a social physicist" or Weber's ideas on integration and conflict boiled down to nine pages--including models illustrating "Weber's Theory of Delegitimation and Conflict"(112) and "Weber's Propositions on Geopolitics and Conflict"(115) in which the author admits that