

* **The engagement of longterm prisoners in preparation for resettlement in Northern Ireland**

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- 1,981 men were interned without trial between 1971 and 1975 (Bowcott 2010)
- The 1975 Gardiner Report stated that men and women were to be treated as criminals rather than politically motivated offenders
- A period of resistance from prisoners to this assignation began with the blanket protests and escalated to the hunger strikes

* “loyalist prisoners did not have the experience of generations of imprisonment that was part of republican political culture..they often had less defined ideological commitment than republicans. As a number of authors have attested loyalist prisoners and ex prisoners have been less well accepted in their have in their communities.” (Rolston)

- * The Good Friday Agreement, May 1998, was followed by the NI Sentences Act which allowed for the early release of republican and loyalist prisoners.
- * 241 republican and 194 loyalist prisoners left prison

- * Prisoner release one of the most controversial and unpopular elements of the GFA
- * Supported by 31% of Catholics and 3% of Protestants (NI Life and Times Survey 2000)

* Weapons decommissioning:

* IRA 2005

* UVF 2009

* UDA 2010



* Research on political imprisonment is weighted towards the republican experience

- * 45% of prisoners sustained moderate or severe physical injuries as a result of the conflict (Jamieson et al 2010)
- * 70% of ex prisoners stated they experienced poor or very poor emotional health (Shirlow 2001)
- * 41% of ex prisoners reported taking medication for anxiety or sleeping difficulties
- * 66% over the threshold for hazardous drinking

* Resistance to rehabilitation

- * Assumes deficits in responsibility for offending and its consequences and an inability and/or unwillingness to change
- * Assumes deficits in values and skills required to reduce the risk of re-offending
- * Assumes the need to comply with the authority of the expert to assess, plan, intervene and monitor

* Rehabilitation

- * Have a clear political ideology and strategy to support their actions and its intended harmful consequences
- * Victims are defined as the enemy
- * Share a collective rather than individual responsibility for their actions which strengthens their commitment, loyalty and solidarity
- * Tend to be intelligent and to articulate their views clearly and assertively
- * Adopt an antagonistic position in relation to authority

* Politically motivated offenders

*The exercise of power is more explicit when working with politically motivated prisoners

- * Does desistance theory open up space to work on offending without prisoners feeling they are being 'rehabilitated'?
- * Does restorative justice open up space for politically motivated prisoners to think about their impact on victims and to understand non-violent responses to conflict?
- * Does a university course open up space for politically motivated prisoners to think about reintegration into their communities?

* Key Questions

- * Combines ideas from desistance theory and restorative justice particularly the movement from a condemnation script to a redemption script.
- * Refuses to pathologise
- * Does not moralise though engages in moral discourse
- * Is based upon a learning process - lectures, dialogue, reading, the use of DVDs, role play and assignments
- * Developed into an accredited University of Ulster certificate in Restorative Practices

* The Approach

“I came into this blind. I didn’t really know what it was going to be about. The truth is, I enjoyed it. It was a real eye opener, it was. I didn’t have any negative experiences. I didn’t think I liked RJ before coming here, but thought I liked it in the end. Even the homework has helped me put things into perspective. You think ‘yeah, that’s what I believe’. It is good to get it down on paper.”

- * To clarify what loyalism means and what it means to be a loyalist in practice on release
- * To consider how best to prepare for release
- * To offer an invitation to explore a different relationship between political conflict and violence through restorative practices

* Objectives

- * Build relationships
- * Download the ideology
- * Test the validity and effectiveness of the ideology
- * Offer alternative narratives
- * Test alternative behaviours through restorative justice
- * Raise questions of victims
- * Offer support on release

* The Process

- * Explained role and discussed the power implications
- * Reviewed possible roles
- * Chose learning model - student-teacher through which both parties had something to learn and to teach
- * Established our commitment to non-violence
- * Established respect - managing our own judgements and a commitment to listen and understand
- * Sought and gained permission to ask difficult questions
- * The emergence of rituals or etiquette

*** Build relationships**

- * Shaking hands
- * Exchanging small talk
- * Tea
- * Bringing a gift
- * You are visiting their 'homes'

*** The importance of
etiquette**

I found I had a voice in the class
...I was allowed to say what I want.
You did not take it in a bad way.

We became more open with each other.
Not only to you but to each other.

- * A sense of injustice and shame
- * Characterised by deep ambivalence between the positive 'sacred values' and the negative image of loyalism
- * Tended to result in 'circular' conversations which did not progress or generate new ideas
- * Created a healthy frustration

* **Download the
ideology**

“I’ve been living in a circle and I’m trying to break out of the circle”

“This class - where Loyalism is at, where is it going, how can we make a better environment for everybody. We want that. We all want that for our kids. But we can’t have that when we have the f***** Historical Enquiries Team constantly pulling you back to the past again and again.”

- * Critical thinking
- * Truth - the evidence, the facts:
- * Effectiveness - have your community, your family and you benefited more than lost?
- * "Nobody has ever asked me these questions"
- * Studying the history of loyalist politics to offer alternative narratives
- * Showing DVDs on restorative themes
- * Asking prisoners to consider questions about victims and remorse.
- * Role plays examining non-violent responses to harm

* Challenging the violence

“We know we are stereotyped. Thugs and gangsters. If you look out on that wall, you’ll see that each one of us has a blue dot by our names. That means we’re drug tested every week. Our cells are raided constantly. There’s never once been a drug found on our wing. But that is what people think. Can I ask you something: When you say to your wives that you’re coming in here to talk to Loyalists, what do they say? What do they say when you tell them we’re thinking about the future, trying to make a change? Can that be spread?”

- * Collective responsibility v personal narratives
- * The experience of being desensitised
- * Acceptance of remorse
- * But I would do it again if the conditions were the same cf 'sacred values' Atran

*** Questions of victims,
empathy and shame**

"I just want to make one point about being in a room with a Catholic [facilitator]. I never done that in my life before this. Leaving this class today, I've got more respect for Catholics than I ever had before. There is good in Catholics. I'm willing to learn in the future. This opened my eyes to things, the crime I was in for, and things I done in the past. I can see how there were victims. I never seen it like that before. I was just doing what I was told to do. I do have a heart, I do have feelings and they're starting to show. If there was another course [like this] I'd take it."

- * Foundation skills in restorative practices
- * Role play
- * Exploring non-violence in a prison and community context

*** Test new behaviours**

"Personally, I found this well interesting. Eye opening to be honest. Things were brought out that we'd never have thought of on our own. I'd have never given any thought to restorative justice processes for one. It made us think a lot more. In here, you're in a bubble and you just take each day as it comes. Me personally, I don't look back and don't think about what's to come."

- * Three prisoners have successfully completed a certificate in Restorative Practices
- * Five others have completed one module
- * Two dropped out
- * Two transferred to another part of the prison
- * Four have been released
- * One has been in contact with us on release and is working with a community restorative justice project

*** Preparing for release**

“It’s opened my eyes to crimes in the past. I now think about victims. Someone told me what to do and I done it. As I get older, I do have heart and have feelings.”

Harris (2005) has argued that many prisoners and ex-prisoners,

“hold negative attitudes toward the concept of rehabilitation and correctional treatment programs. In general, the distaste for such programs is linked to a sense that these interventions involve things being ‘done to’ or ‘prescribed for’ passive recipients who are characterized as deficient, ineffectual, misguided, untrustworthy, possibly dangerous, and almost certain to get into trouble again.”
(2005: 318)

*** How different are they from 'ordinary' offenders?**

* Thank you

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- * Combines ideas from desistance theory and restorative justice particularly the movement from a condemnation script to a redemption script.
- * Explores the relationship between personal agency and politics.
- * Examines stories, personal narratives and political discourses
- * Refuses to pathologise
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*The Approach

**I
believed
that it was the
best thing
I could do
In these
circumstances**

<p>Purpose and meaning To protect our community and way of life V To gain power and make money</p>
<p>Identity British, loyal and protestant V Bigoted scumbags</p>
<p>Beliefs Patriotism, the Queen and Protestantism. To sacrifice one's life V Sectarianism and racism</p>
<p>Capability Do what we do best - violence V Republicans are smarter</p>
<p>Behaviour Attacking republicans, defending the community V Drug dealing and gangsterism</p>
<p>Environment and history Grown up with violent conflict and sectarianism</p>

**I
don't
believe
I can
change
in these
circumstances**

The 'circle'