

# THE ROLE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PROCESS OF DESISTANCE FROM CRIME

FROM PRISON TO DESISTANCE

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## TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- ▶ How the catalan system works: the transition from prison to open prison and parole
- ▶ The role of social workers
- ▶ Desistance theory
- ▶ "What works" and desistance theory
- ▶ Giving content to the desistance theory
- ▶ Social work and desistance

# CATALAN SYSTEM

- ▶ ARTICLE 25.2 CE: 'Custodial sentences and security measures are oriented towards **RE-EDUCATION** and social **REINTEGRATION**.'
- ▶ Model: **RNR AND THE TRIPLE RISK MODEL**
- ▶ Risk evaluation programme: **RISCANVI**
- ▶ **CBT** programmes
- ▶ Itineraries: **STANDARD, VIOLENT CONDUCT, ADDICTION-RELATED CONDUCT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE.**

# CATALAN SYSTEM

- ▶ 14 penal institutions
- ▶ Transition from closed regime to open prison: ESSENTIAL
- ▶ Multidisciplinary intervention teams: **PSYCHOLOGIST, LAWYER, SOCIAL WORKER AND SOCIAL EDUCATOR**
- ▶ PIT (Individualised Treatment Programmes)
- ▶ We avoid the release at the end of convictions. Criminal recidivism improves if there is a gradual transition to the third degree. (Capdevila et al., 2023)

# ROLE OF THE PRISON SOCIAL WORKER

- ▶ In Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona.
- ▶ Helping relationships and providing professional **SUPPORT** for people deprived of their liberty.
- ▶ **SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS** of inmates' circumstances.
- ▶ Support inmates in their **SOCIAL REINTEGRATION** from the moment they enter prison until their final release.
- ▶ **NOT A FINAL SERVICE**; it promotes integration processes outside the criminal justice system.

# ROLE OF THE PRISON SOCIAL WORKER

- ▶ Identifies inmates' **NEEDS**.
- ▶ Promotes processes of **CHANGE**
- ▶ Access to **SOCIAL SERVICES** and **BENEFITS**
- ▶ Prevents breakdown of family and social ties
- ▶ It acts as a **BRIDGE**: inmates, families and community
- ▶ It promotes **PROTECTIVE FACTORS** and minimises risk factors
- ▶ Others: parenting, homelessness and gender
- ▶ **GROUP INTERVENTIONS** with inmates and families

# DESISTANCE THEORY

- ▶ Focus on **SUCCESS STORIES**
- ▶ Focus on protective factors, **STRENGTHS**

What we've learnt

- ▶ Essential:

**SATISFACTORY JOB PLACEMENT, FAMILY, SOCIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNITY TIES, MEANING IN LIFE,  
RELIGIOUSNESS/SPIRITUALITY AND PURPOSE**

# DESISTANCE THEORY

- ▶ Primary desistance: **OFFENCE FREE-PERIOD.** It is not a process.
- ▶ Secondary desistance: **INTERNAL SELF-IDENTITY CHANGE.** They stop seeing themselves as a criminal and start seeing themselves as someone who committed crimes in the past (Maruna, 2001).
- ▶ Tertiary desistance: Society stops seeing the inmate as a criminal and integrates him as just another citizen (McNeill, F., & Schinkel, M., 2024 )



# "WHAT WORKS" AND THEORY OF DESISTANCE

- ▶ Compatible? Complementary?
- ▶ Difference focusing on STRENGTHS rather than RISK:  
**PARADIGM SHIFT**
- ▶ CBT programmes help processes of change, secondary desistance, but they do not guarantee tertiary desistance
- ▶ Evaluations of prison programmes do not seem to indicate statistical effectiveness in reducing reoffending ( Martínez y González, 2022); (Loinaz, 2023)

# GIVING CONTENT TO THE THEORY OF DESISTANCE

- ▶ What does this mean in practice?

## **SOCIAL SUPPORT**

- ▶ Without: desistance is **FRAGILE, INCOMPLETE**
- ▶ Investment in prisons: improving structures, adapting facilities to climate change and increased prison populations = **SAFETY**
- ▶ Investment in open environments = **SOCIAL SUPPORT:**  
**WORK, FAMILY/SOCIAL NETWORK/COMMUNITY TIES, SENSE OF BELONGING (REAL INCLUSION)**

# GIVING CONTENT TO THE THEORY OF DESISTANCE

- ▶ Desistance is a **SOCIAL MOVEMENT** (Maruna, 2017). Inmates and former inmates must lead social initiatives that promote desistance.
- ▶ **GENERATIVE JUSTICE:** "Social processes and community practices in which people affected by the justice system participate and which, in some way, generate relationships characterized by solidarity" (McNeill, F. 2022)

# MY RESEARCH: SOCIAL WORK AND DESISTANCE

## THE ROLE OF PRISON SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PROCESS OF DESISTANCE FROM CRIME

### Objective:

- ▶ To analyse the perceptions of inmates, their families, and prison system workers regarding the **ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS** in connection with **DESISTANCE**

### Questions:

- ▶ Do social workers provide support during the criminal desistance process?
- ▶ To what extent? How could this support be improved?
- ▶ Which professional role is considered most appropriate for providing this support?

# MY RESEARCH: SOCIAL WORK AND DESISTANCE

## Methodology:

### Mixed qualitative-quantitative approach

- ▶ 1.- Semi-structured interviews applied to a sample of: inmates in the final phase of their sentence, other professionals in the prison system and intermediate managers.

Three different sample groups according to the phase of the inmates' sentences: closed prison, semi-open prison, and parole.

- ▶ 2.- Discussion group. Sample of 7-9 social workers.
- ▶ 3.- Statistical survey questionnaire administered to inmates' families

# SUMMING UP...

- ▶ The gradual transition from prison to community is essential in the catalan prison system.
- ▶ During the second grade (closed regime), we use the RNR model to offer support for secondary desistance.
- ▶ During the third stage (open prison), our focus should be on providing social support to strengthen desistance.
- ▶ The role of social workers in both open and closed regimes should be to enhance inmates' strengths and provide social support to those on the desistance journey.
- ▶ Desistance theory implies a **PARADIGM SHIFT** in our prison systems.

# REFERENCES

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# THANK YOU !

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