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The Complexities, Contradictions and Consequences of Being 'Anti-social' in Northern Ireland

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Introduction

Anti-social behaviour as a concept has numerous complexities. The definitional slippages and lack of clarity often lead to a range of contextually specific consequences. Although Northern Ireland is in the process of working through and moving away from its violent past, there are times where informal justice responses are still used. The most extreme consequence of being deemed as behaving in an anti-social manner in this context is being physically attacked by a paramilitary grouping.¹ This complex phenomenon will be questioned and analysed within this chapter.

To begin, a brief exploration of the anti-social behaviour policy context in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2013 will be discussed. The chapter analyzes how community activists from Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) and Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) communities view and define anti-social behaviour and questions, why at times, these behaviours are deemed anti-social yet at other times are not. This is followed by an exploration as to the extent of punishment attacks still taking place in Northern Ireland; followed by a discussion around the perceived ineffectiveness of the formal justice system and the impact this has on resorting to informal means of justice to deal with anti-social behaviour. The chapter also investigates the relations between the community and paramilitaries, and analyses why some paramilitary groupings at times justify the use of punishment attacks. It concludes with examples of community restorative justice projects, which not only work with those under threat, but have provided an alternative to violence for both the paramilitaries and the broader community.

Policy and legislation about anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) has become a normalized term and a concept that is often used as a catch-all descriptor with few parameters or clear definitional elements. In formal justice systems, the practicality of assessing what is deemed anti-social lies with the criminal justice

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system in arbitrating the implementation of law. The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) publishes a monthly update on the number of incidences of anti-social behaviour recorded in Northern Ireland. In 2007-2008, the year after the category was first introduced, there were 97,548 incidents reported and classed as anti-social. In 2011-2012, this dropped to 64,184, raising the question whether anti-social behaviour policies and policing are 'working,' or whether categorisation and classification has been altered over the years. For example, prior to the 2011-2012 data the incident type 'Hoax Calls to Emergency Services' was counted as anti-social behaviour. However, in the new collated data this is not included, thus suggesting a change of categorisation rather than a change in the public's behaviours.

Following the Westminster government's introduction of legislation, the Anti-Social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 was created. Anti-social behaviour is now a normalized concept, couched in standardized rhetoric, making it indefinable due to its diversity of application. Despite this, the legislation derived from the anti-social behaviour agenda can criminalize people for a range of diverse behaviours. The same informal 'criminalization' process can happen within communities in Northern Ireland. The punitive policies demanded for by some from the formal justice system are mirrored by the punitive demands made by some community members for informal justice in the Northern Irish context.

Defining anti-social behaviour in the Northern Irish context

Anti-social behaviours are not new in Northern Ireland any more than the rest of the United Kingdom, but the years of the violent conflict resulted in a plethora of informal ways of dealing with these behaviours. Informal interventions have taken place with four community restorative justice focused groups. A community group who work in a traditionally Loyalist community aligned with the Ulster Defence Association (UDA); Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) are a Nationalist group traditionally aligned with mainstream Republicanism; Alternatives are a community restorative justice programme who began working with the Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the fourth group is a non-mainstream Republican grouping made up of community workers and people with non-mainstream political views. Three of the groups assert the principles of non-violence and

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condemn any continuing paramilitary attacks, arguing for a restorative justice approach. The non-mainstream Republican grouping also suggest that their preference for alternatives to violence, but acknowledge, and at times justify, why informal practices continue to happen against those deemed anti-social.

Firstly, it is necessary to articulate the meaning of anti-social behaviour. All interviewees explained that the anti-social behaviour in their communities was varied, one group mentioned activities such as bike stealing or gang culture akin to that found in English cities. The non-mainstream Republicans suggested anti-social behaviour can be nuisance behaviour or can be more serious in nature, such as assaults, fighting, or any behaviour that is perceived as threatening to the broader community. Alternatives also acknowledged that within the community context, the behaviours deemed to be anti-social were wide ranging and often geographically contextual. For instance, behaviours carried out locally may be considered anti-social, whilst the same behaviours carried out in the centre of town may be seen as criminal. Interestingly, they also questioned whether maintaining the lack of a clear definition of anti-social behaviour was beneficial for policing purposes, to allow them to ascertain the strength of the punishment depending on the person and context.

The issue of drugs was also discussed as a dominant anti-social act. The Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist community group were encountering issues with young people under the influence of illegal drugs. Young people were carrying weapons, bringing about community concerns that addiction issues may lead to criminal activities in order to raise money to fuel their addictions.

The age of those involved in these behaviours was generally seen as between 14-19 years old. In contrast, Community Restorative Justice Ireland suggested that anti-social behaviour was not solely limited to young people. From a neighbourhood perspective, they explained, that it could be people coming out of bars, vandalism, partying, drug or drink parties or people with barking dogs. In relation to young people what was viewed as anti-social was:

[...] a lot of it is making noise in the wrong place, it's congregating in large numbers and then what goes along with that is they bring ghetto blasters, there is drink, there is some drugs, there is vandalism and some graffiti, there is back chat if some of the neighbours go out to say will they move on and I suppose in many ways that is where it is at [CRJI].

It was generally recognized that anti-social behaviour was a generic term for a range of behaviours that are often, but not solely, perceived as relating to young people. All those interviewed noted that anti-social behaviour is created by the environment in which the young people find themselves; be that a consequence of difficulties in family life; feeling disenfranchised, lacking identity or sense of belonging, feeling let down, or marginalized within society. In a more practical sense, it was noted that young people have very little to do and few opportunities available to them. The non-mainstream Republicans argued that the broader political policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government that came to power in 2010 were anti-social and having negative impacts on youth services that will further cause localized anti-social behaviours.

The interviewee from Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) effectively summarized the problem with anti-social behaviour: 'There is a continuum in relation to this stuff and I suppose if we see these things through one lens then we have missed the point. It is a multiplicity of lenses.'

While the terminology can be debated, and notwithstanding an acknowledgement of environmental and political factors, the fact that these behaviours can still create community tensions which can have a range of consequences and contradictions must be explored. The most extreme of these is punishment style attacks.

Paramilitary attacks against anti-social behaviour

The years of open violent conflict (1968-1998) resulted in many local communities across Northern Ireland relying on paramilitary punishment style attacks to deal with unacceptable behaviours. In many Catholic, Nationalist and Republican communities, this was a result of the conflation of policing with state security forces;² the targeting of the police by paramilitary organizations and the rejection of the formal justice systems as illegitimate and reliant on emergency powers. However, the reliance on paramilitary structures to identify and implement informal means of justice and retribution were often highly controversial, with communities varying in their demands and reactions, as well as their relationship to the paramilitaries that carried out punishment attacks. In Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist

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communities, there was not the same level of alienation from the State, but paramilitaries still commanded a powerful role in the maintenance of control in their communities. Consequently, as a direct result of the conflict, both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries engaged in localized 'policing' of their communities, often in response to local demand, administering beatings, banishments and shootings (Mika and McEvoy, 2001). The so-called 'informal or alternative criminal justice system,' that evolved since 1969, constituted a range of punitive measures against individuals 'who violate some community norm, as defined by the paramilitary grouping' (Knox, 2002: 172), or indeed that were presented to the paramilitaries by community residents with the invariable demand that action needed to be taken. Since the Good Friday Agreement (1998), there has been an attempt in some communities to move away from the previous physical force approach by using community restorative justice practices, as will be discussed in greater detail below. Nevertheless, there are still some paramilitary groupings who continue to rely on punishment style attacks to both establish their position in local areas and to respond to expressed community concerns.

Paramilitary violence (Knox, 2002), punishment attacks (Feenan, 2002), punishment beatings (Winston, 1997) or paramilitary vigilantism (Silke and Taylor, 2000) are contested terms used to describe attacks by paramilitary groupings against people seen as engaging in 'anti-social behaviour' and/or criminal behaviour, as well as a means of disciplining those seen as challenging the organization (Jarman, 2004). Andrew Silke and Max Taylor (2000) question the use of the term punishment to describe paramilitary attacks arguing this implies that the behaviour is defensible or appropriate. The 'punishment' for the deemed behaviours can vary from warnings, threats, curfews, beatings, shootings, exiling and execution (Silke, 1998). A variety of weapons have been used within these attacks including baseball bats spiked with nails, power tools (Knox, 2001), hurley sticks, clubs, batons, bars, hammers (Feenan, 2002) or guns: 'The resulting physical damage ranges from bruising to severe laceration and fracturing of bones. Shootings can be through the soft tissue on the legs, but includes bone shattering in the ankles, knees and wrists' (Feenan, 2002: 154).

The true extent of paramilitary attacks is difficult to ascertain as many go unreported (Knox, 2003); but from 2003 to 2013 there were a total of 1,198 casualties as a result of

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paramilitary style attacks, both shootings and assaults according to police statistics (Police Service for Northern Ireland, 2013: 5). The Policing Boards 7th Human Rights Annual Report (2011: 122) notes the amount of young people involved in these attacks:

Between 1 April 2010 and 30 September 2011, there have been 118 casualties reported to the PSNI of paramilitary style assaults and shootings: this figure accounts for 71 casualties of assault and 47 casualties of shootings. Of those, 52 (44%) were aged between 16 and 24.

Silke and Taylor (2000) found both Republicans and Loyalists were targeting young people under the age of twenty more than previously, with the majority of victims being young men. The PSNI security statistics for 2012-2013, state that although, in general, the security situation in Northern Ireland improved significantly over the previous decade from 2003-2004, there were still 63 casualties, known of, due to informal means of justice, 27 paramilitary style shootings and 36 paramilitary style assaults, sixteen in total lower than 2011-2012. These figures were considerably lower than ten years prior with 149 paramilitary style shootings and 149 paramilitary style attacks in 2003-2004. Of these attacks, 26 out of 27 paramilitary style shootings were carried out by Republican groups and of the 36 assaults, 27 were carried out by Loyalist groups and 9 by Republicans (Police Service for Northern Ireland, 2013: 2, 5).

Rachel Monaghan (2002) divides the activities liable to be punished into 'normal' and 'political' crime. Andrew Silke (1999) similarly divides the behaviours into 'civil crime' and 'political crime.' 'Normal' or 'civil' behaviours identified as a target can also be criminal, such as joy-riding (the stealing of cars illegally and racing them), drug-dealing, burglary (Silke and Taylor, 2000), vandalism (Jarman, 2004) or muggings (Silke, 1999). They can also be 'anti-social' such as youths engaging in nuisance behaviour or abuse of senior citizens (Monaghan, 2002). Colin Knox (2001) notes that the victims of these attacks are often identified as a type of person who engages in anti-social behaviour and therefore is a 'deserving' victim.

'Political' crime may '[...] include informing, misuse of the organization's name, collaborating, or fraternizing with the enemy' (Monaghan, 2002: 441). Similarly, actions which are not deemed as criminal but do not conform to the pre-set community norms have also been targeted (Silke and Taylor, 2000). As Anna Eriksson succinctly states:

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Punishment violence exists for a number of interrelated reasons, but the most commonly cited are the absence of legitimate or adequate policing, rising levels of anti-social behaviour, the perceived failure of the criminal justice system to prevent and effectively deal with crime, and a consequent community pressure to 'do something; about crime and anti-social behaviour in both Republican and Loyalist areas (Eriksson, 2009: 37).

As will be discussed below, this legitimate or adequate policing is a complex matter given that sections of some communities do not see the Police Service of Northern Ireland as a legitimate source of protection, whilst others feel the move from quick justice cannot be replaced by the lengthy procedures often encountered with the formal justice system.

Leaving aside the organizational or 'political' (Monaghan, 2002) rationale for paramilitary style attacks, the focus here is on those attacks against, generally but not solely, young people who have been involved in anti-social behaviour activities. In instances where punishment attacks still take place, they generally only occur after a series of warnings or threats have been issued. It is more likely for repeated acts deemed anti-social to be targeted or where restorative practices have been continuously unsuccessful.

Paramilitaries do not however operate independently from their communities (Feenan, 2002). Tom Winston, a former Loyalist prisoner and community worker, clearly explains this in describing the situation in the Loyalist Greater Shankill Area of Belfast,

[...] these individuals do not represent some group of strangers in the community that rule with an iron fist. Rather, these individuals are someone's brother, father, son. They are local people involved in organisations with long histories and family connections. They exist within a long tradition of defence organisation within the Protestant communities in Northern Ireland (1997: 122-3).

Due to this interconnectedness, young people can be caught in a difficult position, where particular behaviours are at certain times seen as legitimate and defending their community, whilst at other times can be classed as anti-social and against their community (Jarman, 2004). As one interviewee noted, '[...] young people are getting caught in the middle of adult game playing.' These conflicting messages can leave young people in a contradictory position resulting in them feeling further marginalized from their communities.

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Perceived ineffectiveness of the Formal Justice System

A further layer of complexity is that communities can at times be unwilling or simply not accustomed to reporting incidents to the police or waiting on the formal justice procedures to run their course. As such, they can tacitly or explicitly support swift community action against people engaging in behaviours deemed anti-social (Knox, 2002).

In Republican communities, the traditional lack of reliance on formalized policing led to a vacuum resulting in local communities putting pressure on paramilitaries to deal with anti-social and criminal activities (McEvoy and Mika, 2002). In Loyalist areas the Police Service of Northern Ireland may not be welcomed due to levels of community based illegality, including racketeering, drug dealing etc. (Knox, 2003). Winston (1997) also found that many people saw '[...] punishment beatings as a more tangible, visible, and immediate form of retribution [...]' (Winston, 1997: 124). This can result in over-reliance on these informal mechanisms to deal with community problems making the 'quick response' popular (Brewer, Lockhart and Rodgers, 1998; McEvoy and Mika, 2002; Winston, 1997).

The non-mainstream Republicans acknowledged that violence is not the sole answer, but also held that the state cannot deal effectively with anti-social behaviours. They suggest there is little community trust in the police exacerbated by the fact that they are seen as ineffective in dealing with social problems. Moreover, they felt that people in their community did not want to go to the police for fear of being stigmatized: 'When cops arrive to the door you are seen as a tout [*someone who tells tales to the police*].'

When asked who would perpetuate this label, they suggested it would be the normalized community response if an incident was reported to the police. Although certain contradictions in relations to the state were apparent in all communities, Community Restorative Justice Ireland suggested:

[...] see as soon as a rape happens, the police are phoned, see as soon as a murder happens, the police are phoned, see if someone encounters a burglary, the police are phoned, see if there is a body lying in the street, the police are phoned, see if there is a wee child missing, the police are phoned.

This demonstrates the complexities apparent in the perception of the police as a legitimate source of support and justice in the North of Ireland context.

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Community ambivalence towards punishment attacks

Where police interventions are not seen as an option and community based restorative justice practices have either not worked or not seemed relevant, some community members may still express an understanding for resorting to violence. A mother of a young man in Derry, alleged to be a drug dealer, told BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour that she allowed her son to be shot by a republican paramilitary group, in order to help deal with his problems. She explained that she turned her back while her son was shot twice and then went to his aid:

In Northern Ireland this is acceptable, it happens and we have to do this. Now he can get the help with his problem. Beforehand he wasn't going to accept there was anything wrong, he didn't feel that he was doing any harm and he has said that he is going to get help now [...]. My son is there, he is alive, he got off lightly, all it was, was just something that had to be done to try to save him (BBC, 2012).

This suggests that in Northern Ireland certain behaviours are not accepted and are regarded by some within the community as punishable. Colin Knox (2003) notes that this view of understanding is not uncommon with some attacks carried out by mutual appointment, a fact that clearly exemplifies the complexity of these relations and the multi-faceted contradictions and consequences of dealing with anti-social behaviour.

A non-mainstream Republican interviewee stated that there can often be ambivalence towards paramilitary attacks in communities. People who were against the violence with regard to broader political conflict may be more ambivalent in the case of internal community attacks – 'That's awful what happened last night [...] but he didn't get it for saying his prayers.'

Knox (2003) notes this system cannot only become self-perpetuating and reinforcing, satisfying the community demands for justice, but reinforces the power and control that the paramilitaries have in these areas. However, communities are not homogeneous and not all community members call for these actions. It must also be noted that the power and control reinforced by these actions may augment the fear of community members in turning to formal justice structures.

All interviewees acknowledged the historical reliance and normalization of dealing with behaviours through paramilitary action and the community reliance and expectation of

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quick responses to problems. Community Restorative Justice Ireland effectively summed up these sentiments:

What I also think happened looking back on it over all the years, definitely in the republican side is they actually spoiled the community; they disempowered the community in terms of dealing with anti-social behaviour. You went to the local OC [Officer Commanding] and they say 'such and such are messing me about' he would say "well what are they doing,' 'well they are at the corner and they are messing me about' and he would send somebody round to sort it out and it was sorted out in the sense 'move on' or there would be a threat or whatever. Now they come and they say well you need to report that to the cops, then the cops ask them for a statement and they will want them to go to court and they are not used to any sort of...they were always used to someone doing it for them.

If as Community Restorative Justice Ireland promote, paramilitaries refuse to carry out these actions then a 'quick fix' is no longer an option. However, there can be the paramilitary belief that they have a responsibility to the community which further complicates the reciprocal relations: 'Paramilitary group see themselves as community protectors; their actions are aimed ostensibly at maintaining 'law and order' through tackling petty crime such as car theft, joyriding, burglary and drug dealing' (Knox, 2003: 25).

These intersecting dynamics can essentially create a cyclical relationship where there is a community dependency on informal means to deal with anti-social behaviour and/or criminal behaviours, and where it is somewhat normalized, resulting in the danger (Knox, 2001) that these people, often young people, are seen as legitimate targets.

In the Northern Ireland context, there are extensive layers of complexity concerning anti-social behaviour. There are policy demands to deal with these behaviours, popular demands and support for punitive policies (Pearson, 1983; Cohen, 1972) elaborated by Governments and then in Northern Ireland, there is the added complexity whereby communities and paramilitary groupings make a decision on what is deemed anti-social and independent action can follow. Permission for certain behaviours can shift, with them being regarded as acceptable at certain times and in certain circumstances, whereas at others individuals engaged in such behaviours are chastized, threatened and/or subjected to punishment attacks. Further, there is the added issue that the role and authority of the police service is undermined resulting in a lack of trust, engagement or belief in them as a means of procedural justice. This has resulted in the creation of community based

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restorative justice practices in an attempt to engage with these complexities and find solutions that are acceptable to the multi-faceted communities in which they are based.

Community based restorative justice initiatives

The change in the political landscape, married with internal discussions amongst the Republican movement, resulted in an exploration of alternatives to these paramilitary punishment practices. Community based restorative justice practices began to emerge as a means to facilitate paramilitaries to move away from the punishment attacks (McEvoy and Mika, 2002).³ Despite critics (McGrattan, 2010) of community based restorative justice, paramilitary attacks were, and are, occurring at a community level and it is at a community level that solutions are utilised (Mika and McEvoy, 2001; Eriksson, 2009). As such, ex-prisoners and those who were involved in the conflict have played a significant role in restorative justice practices within Northern Ireland in an attempt to move away from punishment attacks and more broadly to maintain the peace process.

Two of the most established community restorative justice initiatives are Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) from the Republican community and Alternatives from the Loyalist community; others are in the early stages of developing these practices. These initiatives are working to prevent paramilitary style attacks and to find community based alternatives to violence. They not only work with those under threat, but can negotiate with paramilitaries and provide support for the broader family circle, both during the situation and after it has been resolved.

Alternatives began in 1996 and started by working with people who were referred to the initiative, highlighting the importance of the need for the broader community 'buy-in' to community restorative justice practices. 'Those referred would be individuals who had come to the attention of the community and paramilitary organisations as a result of their involvement in anti-social behaviour' (Winston, 1997: 125). A process of negotiation and mediation would occur and support work would ensue. The central focus of Alternatives is to work with young people who are involved in persistent or serious cases of anti-social behaviour (Eriksson, 2009). They work on community-based disputes and have also set up a proactive engagement with young people in the form of youth work. This is in an attempt to

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prevent behaviours getting to a stage that they are seen as damaging either by community residents or by the paramilitaries.

In contrast, Community Restorative Justice Ireland had the ability to adopt a wider remit due to the support from the Republican movement (Mika and McEvoy, 2001). There is a broader 'buy-in' from the community and thus they can deal with a greater range of community issues. This support was not instantaneous and nor was it an easy process. It took the paramilitaries to agree not to engage in the punishment style attacks as much as the workers to engage with a range of key people and to build up a positive representation through working with individuals. Eriksson explains the importance of the paramilitary support for non-violence:

Occasionally, people would go to the IRA instead after realising that they would not receive the desired results. However, the IRA generally referred people back to CRJI, saying that they were no longer offering to shoot or beat people as a result of their involvement in anti-social behaviour (Eriksson, 2009: 72-3).

This approach not only provided an alternative for community members, but also for the paramilitaries engaged in these activities. Community Restorative Justice Ireland explained that during the transitional period from violence to restorative practices, they had to deal with the changing role of particular members:

[...] there were people who would have been dealing with those issues within a neighbourhood whose power was removed, whose rationale for being had changed, whose role within life, or role within a struggle or role within a political space had changed.

Both these established initiatives have been involved in the restorative process for many years. For others the process is newer and they are still trying to get people on board with the ideas. As Neil Jarman (2004) warns:

[...] the political and social leaders of Loyalism and Republicanism have to be patient in convincing their supporters that political and community activity is more effective than violence and may risk being outflanked by more radical groups who may be seen to be more effective in responding to a threat either from within their own community or from the other side (Jarman, 2004: 433).

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Today paramilitary attacks are still occurring, albeit at a lesser rate, and can be seen as effective answering to a community call to engage in swift, violent action against people engaging in anti-social style behaviours. Of course it must also be questioned whether the continuation of these attacks is being carried out for political or social benefits by those who are not in political dominance.

Community based restorative justice practices are not going to create a solution overnight, but whilst there are still paramilitary groupings that are willing to administer paramilitary attacks for anti-social behaviours, then there may be some community members who ask for these practices. Violence against any acts deemed anti-social or not, is not conducive to a more peaceful Northern Ireland and importantly these types of attacks rarely have lasting positive impacts:

From the physical punishment point of view we are on the wing that says – it doesn't work. Let's understand it didn't work when the Republicans were doing it, what it did do was it gave a sense that something was happening, or someone was doing something or someone was making an effort [CRJI].

In contrast, community based restorative justice can take time, takes dedicated workers and takes community 'buy in' but being grassroots will surely ensure longer term solutions. These projects are now being inspected and certified by the criminal justice authorities and can deal with cases referred by the police and public prosecution service, meaning they are legitimised and promoted by the formal justice system as well as the community structures. However, as Alternatives explains it can be a difficult process that involves commitment from all involved.

[...] [I]t works because it is relational; it is about building a holistic, long term, sustained relationship with the young person and their family, it is not an in/out intervention, it is not a one off and that's really important. [...] it is underpinned by cognitive approaches. [...] One young person said to me 'I wish I had just taken the beating' and I said 'why son?', 'because it is so, so much easier than being asked these difficult questions, so much easier than having to reflect on who I am and the choices and the decisions I am making' and that is the reality, this goes beneath the surface.

This demonstrates the need for a relational and sustainable process of engagement both for the victims and those committing punishment style attacks, in an attempt to move away

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from the severe and negative consequences for some people engaging in what are deemed as anti-social behaviours.

Conclusion

The chapter has explored the complexities, contradictions and consequences of being anti-social in Northern Ireland. Applying a vague and elastic concept of anti-social behaviour has resulted in punitive policies and punitive responses that criminalise people for, at times, relatively minor incidents in the formal justice system. Similarly, in the informal justice system, in Northern Ireland, the same process of applying an unclear descriptor has resulted in community criminalization and violent punitive responses. Despite the potential usefulness for the formal justice system to criminalize and prosecute, it can also cause contradictions in terms community based reactions as to what is deemed anti-social. Young people in particular may be engaging in these behaviours due to difficulties in family life, feeling disenfranchised, lacking identity or sense of belonging, feeling let down or marginalised within society. This is only furthered by the lack of clarity and consequently the level of punishments delivered depending on the wider political or social context at the time. The disengagement from the formal justice system and the perceived ineffectiveness of them to deal with anti-social behaviour, as well as the historical reliance on paramilitary groupings to resort to informal means of justice, only serves to muddy the waters further.

Nevertheless, the continued support for community restorative justice projects that work with those under threat and have provided an alternative to violence for both the paramilitaries and the broader community should be promoted. Although behaviours which are deemed anti-social may still lack clarity and yet continue to be the target of punitive policies, the use of violence to control these various behaviours must be marginalized in order to maintain Northern Ireland's transition to a peaceful society. Furthermore, the highlighted complexities, contradictions and consequences should be drawn upon to question whether the concept of anti-social behaviour should continue to be used in any guise, without clear definitional clarity and without a well-defined statement of purpose.

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Key-words

anti-Social behaviour; community relations; Northern Ireland; paramilitary attacks; restorative justice

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Abstract 193

Anti-social behaviour as a concept has numerous complexities. The definitional slippages and lack of clarity often leads to a range of contextually specific consequences. The most extreme consequence of being deemed anti-social in the North of Ireland context is being attacked by a paramilitary grouping. This chapter explores the anti-social behaviour policy context in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2013. It discusses how community activists from Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) and Catholic, Nationalist and Republican (CNR) communities view and define anti-social behaviour. The extent of punishment attacks taking place in Northern Ireland is discussed and it questions why some resort to informal means of justice to deal with anti-social behaviour. It concludes with examples of community restorative justice projects, which not only work with those under threat, but have provided an alternative to violence for both the paramilitaries and the broader community.

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¹ There are five main paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland that are currently on ceasefire these include three Republican groups- The Official IRA, The Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army. Within Loyalism there is- The Ulster Freedom Fighters/Ulster Defence Association and The Ulster Volunteer Force, Red Hand Commandos. In addition to this there are a number of 'dissident' Republican groups that are not on ceasefire which include the Real IRA, Oglagh na hEireann and a range of other groupings, as well as some splinter Loyalist groups.

² The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the British Army.

³For a detailed explanation of the history of community based restorative justice in Northern Ireland see Eriksson, 2009 and McEvoy and Mika, 2002.