Moral Injury in Republican Ex-Prisoners from the Northern Ireland Conflict

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PhD

Declaration of Authorship

I, Eke Bont, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Eke Bont

Date: 30 July 2022

Declaration of Authorship

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Table 1:

Core differences between IPA and reflexive thematic analysis (p.131)

Table 2:

Themes and subthemes identified through IPA of interview transcripts (p.136)

Table 3:

Themes and subthemes identified through thematic analysis of interview transcripts (p.191)

Abstract

Continued research is required on the psychological effects of engagement in non-state political violence. To contribute to this, the present thesis explored moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners from the Northern Ireland conflict. Moral injury occurs when an individual perpetrates or witnesses a perceived moral transgression, which subsequently results in emotional or psychological distress, identity changes, and/or social issues. Specifically, the thesis examined when it occurred, how this impacted Republican ex-prisoners, and how others were protected from moral injury. Interviews were conducted with 11 Republican ex-prisoners (analysed with interpretative phenomenological analysis) as well as with 7 individuals in supportive roles working with this population (analysed with thematic analysis). The interviews with Republican ex-prisoners found some evidence for moral injury but also highlighted the resilience to moral injury in this population given a strength of their moral beliefs related to Republican violence and due to moral conflicts being commonly rationalised. The interviews with individuals in supportive capacities evidenced strong support for moral injury in the Republican ex-prisoner population as well as greater insight into when and how this affects individuals. Expected morally injurious events were identified in both studies, as well as novel moral conflicts and risk factors for moral injury. The continued need for psychological support for a variety of sources of trauma and psychosocial needs was also emphasised by both samples. These findings, and their limitations and implications, are discussed in relation to existing research in the final chapter of the thesis.

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Glossary of Acronyms

- GFA: Good Friday Agreement
- INLA: Irish National Liberation Army
- IPA: interpretative phenomenological analysis
- IRA: Irish Republican Army
- PIRA: Provisional Irish Republican Army
- PITS: Perpetration-induced traumatic stress
- PMIE: Potentially morally injurious event
- PTSD: Post-traumatic stress disorder
- RUC: Royal Ulster Constabulary
- TA: thematic analysis
- UDA: Ulster Defence Association
- UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force

Introduction

Actors of non-state political violence may suffer from negative psychological and emotional effects following their engagement in such violence. Related experiences could lead to trauma, depression, and/or severe guilt in some individuals. Building understanding on why and how actors are affected is valuable, given that these negative psychological effects may affect their involvement and reintegration following disengagement from non-state political violence. One of form of these possible negative psychological effects is moral injury. Moral injury has been predominantly studied in members of traditional state militaries and arises when an individual "perpetrates, fails to prevent, bears witness to, or learns about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al., 2009, p. 700). Such experiences may result in long-lasting psychological, social, emotional, and existential problems**.** This thesis investigates the occurrence of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners from the Northern Ireland conflict. It draws from personal experiences of Republican ex-prisoners who were active during the conflict themselves, as well as insights on this topic from individuals who have worked in various supportive roles with Republican ex-prisoners.

It is the first study to apply moral injury to a population that engaged in non-state political violence. However, preliminary research has been conducted on this topic by the author through the analysis of Irish Republican Army (IRA) autobiographies, which supported the applicability of moral injury to former IRA members (Bont, 2020, 2021). This population was chosen given that prior evidence suggests that experiences related to involvement in the conflict resulted in psychological distress in some individuals (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010), due to the organization sharing risk factors for moral injury which have been identified in traditional state militaries, and given the willingness of Republican ex-prisoners to participate in academic research. Interviews were chosen to explore the Republican ex-prisoners' personal experiences and the views of the participants with experience of working with and supporting Republican ex-prisoners. This second sample allowed for a more general overview of moral injury in this population, allowing for the inclusion of more experiences than just of those Republican ex-prisoners who agreed to be interviewed and who also may have not been able to, or willing to, disclose on this sensitive topic. The research therefore incorporates both individual lived experiences and broader views and expertise based on close engagement with this population. Loyalist ex-prisoners

were not interviewed due to the differences in organisational structure, experiences, and routes to engagement and disengagement.

This thesis uses the term 'non-state political violence' rather than 'terrorism'. This is out of respect for the sample of Republican ex-prisoners who were interviewed, and in line with the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which places value on their own interpretations of their lived experiences. They reject the label 'terrorist' and instead viewed their actions as military activity in a war. If the terms 'terrorism' or paramilitary' are used, this is due to the authors being referenced having used those terms themselves. Similarly, the conflict is mostly referred to as the 'Northern Ireland conflict' instead of the 'Troubles', as some interviewees felt this name was reductive and not representative of the horrors of the conflict. Lastly, the label 'Republican ex-prisoners/ex-combatants' is used for the population of interest. This encompasses all former members of the Republican groups active during the conflict that were included in the recruitment criteria: the Provisional IRA (PIRA), the Official IRA (OIRA), and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). The inclusion of these groups in the Republican ex-prisoners' sample was dependent on the willingness of former members to participate.

As this research relies heavily on accounts from Republican ex-combatants and individuals who support Republican ex-prisoners who are often from Republican communities themselves, the focus is not on the truth or ethicality of Republican beliefs. Neither does it claim the Republican ex-combatant experience was identical to morally injured combatants from Armed Forces in other conflicts. Rather, the beliefs and experiences of Republican ex-prisoners are at the forefront of the research, whether this is through direct interviews or indirectly discussed by individuals who have worked closely with them. It is the Republican ex-prisoners' perspectives of themselves and their motivations that are important to consider, as this is what subsequently shapes their experiences of, or resilience to, moral injury. This is reflective of previous approaches in research on this population, where the objective is to 'understand' (e.g., English, 2012; White, 2000), rather than to 'condemn' or 'condone' (White, 2000, p. 95).

Therefore, this research explores whether Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury and when, how this impacted individuals, and why others did not. This aims to build an understanding on moral injury as a concept by extending it to a novel population, and to

investigate further how Republican ex-prisoners were affected by their involvement in the conflict. This can be summed up by the follow research questions:

1) Have Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury as a result of their involvement in the conflict?
2) If so, what are the morally injurious experiences, and how did they impact Republican ex-prisoners and their involvement in the conflict?
3) If not, are there protective factors that prevent Republican ex-prisoners from being affected by potentially morally injurious experiences? Are there other ways they have been affected psychologically by experiences during this time?

The thesis starts with an extensive literature review. This provides necessary background information on the topics of (Republican) moral beliefs and moral injury, and justifies the applicability of moral injury to non-state political violence and Republican ex-prisoners specifically. The methodological choices of the research are subsequently explained. Interviews were conducted with Republican ex-prisoners to explore their personal experiences. These transcripts were analysed with IPA. A second set of interviews were conducted with individuals with experience of working with Republican ex-prisoners in various supportive roles. This obtained insights into their perspectives on moral injury in the general Republican ex-prisoner population and was analysed with thematic analysis. The findings of both these studies are discussed in the final chapters, together with the relevance and importance of the research.

Chapter 1. Morality and Moral Violence

Morality is not what generations of philosophers and theologians have thought it to be. Morality is not a set of freestanding abstract truths that we can somehow access with our limited human minds... Figure and ground reverse, and you can see moral philosophies not just as points in an abstract philosophical space but as the predictable products of our dual-process brain. (Greene, 2015, p. 239)

Morality binds and blinds. It binds us into ideological teams that fight each other as though the fate of the world depended on us winning the battle. It blinds us to the fact that each team is composed of good people who have something important to say. (Haidt, 2013, p. 366)

1.1 Introduction

There is no consensus on a universal principle that governs the moral behaviour of all people, in all cultures, and under all conditions (Bandura, 2016), and moral diversity occurs within nations, communities, and interactions (Fiske & Rai, 2015). Morality, simply put, indicates what is the "right" and "wrong" way to behave (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). People expect others to follow these behavioural guidelines and find it difficult to resolve differences if they do not, or may even resort to violence against those challenging their views (Ellemers et al., 2019; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). Morals can be defined as the "personal and shared familial, cultural, societal and legal rules for social behaviours, either tacit or explicit" (Litz et al., 2009, p. 699). Whilst morality is universal, morals are therefore culturally and socially relative, complex, and multifaceted (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Haidt, 2007, 2013).

Jonathan Haidt (2007) argues that moral psychology has undergone a multidisciplinary "synthesis" where social psychology plays a central role. This "synthesis" integrated relevant social and natural scientific findings from different disciplines to provide a transformed and broader view on morality, rather than it being studied through "unconnected mini-theories" in separate disciplines (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). As a result, Haidt advocates that moral psychology has shifted attention away from moral reasoning, and onto the roles of emotions,

social factors, and intuitions (Haidt, 2007; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). This area of morality research is discussed in the current chapter, rather than a philosophical one, as it is the social psychological background to morality that is pertinent to the study of moral injury and its impact. For example, moral intuitions are relevant to understanding the mechanisms by which morally disruptive situations might result in moral injury (Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021).

This chapter takes a social-functionalist perspective, summarising the adaptive role of morality in relations between individuals, groups, cultures, and societies, and emphasising the social and situational malleability of morality rather than describing its normative content. This includes a brief discussion of why morality has evolved and how we obtain many of our moral beliefs. This is important to the later discussion on how Republican ex-combatants developed their moral beliefs related to the conflict. This chapter also includes a summary of relevant moral emotions, as this expands on how morality functions and complements Chapter 2 on moral injury where these emotions are discussed in relation to moral injurious outcomes. This chapter subsequently argues most actors of non-state political violence consider themselves to be morally justified, and discusses the social processes involved in the development of their moral beliefs with a specific consideration of Republican ex-combatants in Northern Ireland. This provides an understanding on how these beliefs may conflict with subsequent morally injurious experiences, as well as how some individuals may grow disillusioned with their beliefs as a result.

The chapter discusses morality not in how it ought to function or what ought to be considered "moral" (such as in normative ethics) but describes morality's role in social relations and groups. As argued in the thesis introduction, the purpose is not to philosophise on the ethicality of, nor to place value judgements on, Republican ex-combatants' actions and beliefs. Rather, the purpose is to understand. This approach was chosen since outgroups generally do not consider actors of non-state political violence to pursue their causes through morally justified violence. However, this is how they view themselves, and it is their perspectives which are important to focus on when studying moral injury as this is what subsequently influences its risk.

This chapter therefore provides background information to the remainder of the thesis. By outlining what moral beliefs are, the thesis can then unpack how such beliefs can conflict with experiences to cause moral injury and the psychological impact of this. Similarly, by

discussing the moral views of Republican ex-combatants and other actors of non-state political violence, it sets the stage for investigating how these beliefs may put such individuals at risk for moral injury in later chapters.

1.2 Social-functionalist approach to the origins of moral beliefs

To understand the function of morality, and how moral perspectives related to the use of (Republican) non-state political violence were shaped, it is first important to explore how and why moral beliefs evolved. There is general consensus amongst scholars on the evolutionary picture of morality, where morality is designed by biological and cultural evolution to promote cooperation within groups (Decety & Wheatley, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013). This view originated with Darwin, who suggested morality evolved as a solution to the problem of selfish individuals reaping the benefits from cooperation (Darwin, 1871a; Greene, 2015). Morality encourages individuals to forego short-term, immediate impulses for the sake of other individuals and motivates behaviour with little obvious or direct personal benefits (Hoffman et al., 2018; Saucier, 2018). This gives groups survival and competitive advantages as it allows social groups and connections to be maintained (Darwin, 1871b; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010; Litz & Kerig, 2019). Morality can therefore be viewed as a collection of psychological capacities and dispositions that together promote and stabilise cooperative behaviour (Greene, 2015, p. 28). Acting morally secures an individual's inclusion and membership to a group and elicits respect from other members (Ellemers & Toorn, 2015). Those who transgress moral norms or pursue self-interest in moral communities are likely to be sanctioned (Ellemers, 2018; Haidt, 2013; Saucier, 2018). Rather than only being defined by mutual interdependence, genetic similarity, or direct contact, groups can have symbolic value and moral behaviour is not limited to overt displays of helping or empathy (Ellemers, 2018). Instead, very specific moral norms often demonstrate affiliation with a particular group. Morality continues to hold such significance to groups that even in the twenty-first century, communities across the world fight, kill, and die to defend their moral norms and institutions (Haidt, 2013).

Different groups can therefore have different moral intuitions, which can distinguish groups and create social identities, as well as function as a great source of conflict between them (Ellemers, 2018; Greene, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2018). As stated in the second opening

quote to this chapter, morality binds us into groups but also blinds us to the moralities of other groups (Haidt, 2013). Groups not only devalue their opponents, but even claim moral superiority over them (Ellemers, 2018; Smith, 2004). This is because morality evolved for within groups, not between groups, and can therefore undermine cooperation between groups with conflicting moralities (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013). This can result in tribalism or parochial altruism, where we tend to favour individuals closer to us and engage in costly intra-group cooperation whilst demonstrating hostility to outgroups (Bernhard et al., 2006; Choi & Bowles, 2007; Greene, 2015). This will be expanded on further in section 1.4, where relevant theories and processes (e.g., moral disengagement and deindividuation) will be discussed to explain how individuals can be facilitated to engage in 'moral' violence.

One can also have values that are at odds with the forces that gave rise to morality, which has become "more" in modern society than it had evolved to be (Greene, 2015). Given that morality is likely as much a product of cultural evolution as genetic evolution, morality can quickly and substantially change; such as technological advances increasing awareness of distant groups which expand our concerns for cooperation to prevail in other groups and the "human group" as a whole (Haidt, 2007). We are "wired" for ingroup bias and tribalism with distinctive moral commitments, but luckily we can "rewire" through experience and learning (Greene, 2015).

Given that morality has evolved for social purposes, it follows that societies and cultures have created moral value systems that are passed on to the majority of its members through socialization (Hoffman et al., 2018; Molendijk, 2018; Saucier, 2018). The different approaches to the psychology of morality have concurred that shared identities in social groups shape the development of specific moral guidelines, which in turn inform the behavioural regulation of individuals (Ellemers et al., 2019). Ellemers et al. state this is also affected by more immediate social cues. Therefore, individuals can continuously alter acquired moral beliefs and expectations, and adopt new ones, through interaction with social environments (Bandura, 2014; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; Molendijk, 2018a). The influence of the social environment on moral beliefs results in substantial cultural differences (Graham et al., 2016).

Other than the role of social culture on the development of moral beliefs, there are many more theories, perspectives, and research approaches to the study of morality. Jonathan Haidt (2013) suggests that historically there have been two common answers to the

question of where morality comes from. First is the nativist answer, where scientists such as Darwin (1871) believed morality to be innate and have a biological basis, with natural selection giving us minds preloaded with moral emotions. Second is the empiricist answer where morality was seen to have developed from nurture, observation, and social learning. This perspective proposes that children incorporate moral beliefs through transmission by parents and other adults (Bandura et al., 1996; Freud, 1930; Hoffman, 1970; Skinner, 1971).This includes children learning through parental discipline, or identification and imitation of models (Hoffman, 1977), and such processes are influenced by individual differences and contextual factors (Grusec et al., 2014). In the late 1900s there was a rationalist movement where psychologists such as Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1958, 1969, 1981) argued morality to be formed in a series of constructive stages during a child's development, rather than implanted by culture and socialization (Hoffman, 1977). This rationalist perspective views cognition and reasoning as central to the development of morality (Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932; Turiel, 1983). Whilst there are universalities in the order of development linked to increasing maturity and biopsychosocial changes, the validity of casting these change into discrete stages is contested, especially given the variation in cultural and social contexts in which children develop their moral beliefs (Bandura, 2014). Therefore, the remainder of this chapter focuses on a newer perspective on moral development from social psychology which is in line with its social-functionalist approach. It should be noted, however, that it is likely no unified theory of morality will ever be supported given its heterogenous and multifaceted nature (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010).

As mentioned in the introduction, Haidt (2007) argues that moral psychology has now undergone a new multidisciplinary "synthesis" following this rationalist movement where social psychology plays a central role and the focus has shifted to the studying emotions and intuitions rather than reasoning. He proposes we have evolved and innate moral foundations, which trigger intuitive reactions (Haidt, 2013). These are universal but can be built into different moral matrices and be revised during childhood to produce the diverse moralities across cultures. He therefore argues morality is innate, as a set of evolved moral foundations triggering intuitions, but is also learned socially as children learn to apply those intuitions within a particular culture. These intuitions are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

1.3 The role of intuitions and emotions in moral judgment

One of the biggest debates in the research on morality relates to the roles of reasoning and intuition in moral judgment. This is important to unpack to understand how moral conflict may arise, such as in moral injury as described in Chapter 2. Cognitive developmental theorists and rationalists (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932; Rest et al., 1999; Turiel, 1983) claim that cognition, reasoning, reflection, and rationality are central to moral judgment. More recent research (Greene et al., 2001; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2001, 2003; Hoffman, 2000) has instead highlighted the motivating role of intuitions and emotions in moral judgments and behaviour (Ellemers et al., 2019; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). This research is more consistent with the perspectives on morality in evolutionary psychology, and more relevant to the study of moral injury.

Intuitions and emotions are automatic, evaluative, and reactive (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013). They directly motivate and influence behaviour and decision-making (Damasio, 1994; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Seiler et al., 2010). They can also produce errors in unanticipated situations which can be perceived and corrected by the use of reasoning (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2007; Seiler et al., 2010). Reasoning is considered to be more conscious, explicit, practical and flexible (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Seiler et al., 2010). It can be viewed as the conscious application of moral rules. Thus, Greene argues that whilst emotions inform us, reasoning frees us from immediate impulses and works through complex and novel moral problems. Additionally, reasoning allows us to weigh different courses of actions and moral principles when we are faced by more than one moral orientation and as such also "educate" our moral intuitions and emotions (Lind, 2016). This reasoning may also be influenced by the feedback and interaction with others (Seiler et al., 2010). Whilst emotions are considered to be innate, they draw on and are shaped by past genetic, cultural, and individual experiences which create cultural differences (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Seiler et al., 2010). These differences are often a great source of conflict between groups and cultures. When disagreement and moral conflict occurs, either between groups or within an individual, cognitive reasoning can be used to rationalise or alter intuitive judgments, which requires increased cognitive control(Fiske & Rai, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013). If this rationalisation is unsuccessful, however, this may lead to cognitive dissonance and moral injury. This will be explained further in Chapter 2 and 8.

There are disagreements and different theories on how intuition and reasoning interact to influence moral judgment and decision-making, and in what order they occur (e.g., Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013; Hauser, 2006; Lind, 2016). For example, Greene and Lind believe reasoning players a larger role in morality than Haidt. Whilst this debate is outside of the scope of this thesis, an noteworthy review of the research concluded that there is evidence that both reasoning and intuition play a role in shaping moral judgment where reasoning can inform and shape moral intuitions, but intuitions can also be justified with post-hoc reasoning (Ellemers et al., 2019). This depends on the situation and the activated processes, as in some instances individuals may analyse moral conflicts in depth whilst in others they may react spontaneously (Seiler et al., 2010). Hence, neither alone can explain the complexity of moral thinking. Ellemers et al. (2019) therefore emphasise the importance of examining behavioural realties and emotional experiences to understand how individuals reflect on moral ideals. As a result, this consideration is also important in the study of moral injury, as will be apparent in the remainder of this thesis' chapters. For example, behavioural realities and emotional experiences influenced the risk for moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners, as discussed in Chapter 8. Applying these theories to real-world contexts and moral thinking can therefore strengthen the research on morality, which is still largely based on empirical, lab-based experiments and hypothetical moral dilemmas. The practical relevance of this research can also only be understood when studying moral decision-making and reflection in real-life contexts (Seiler et al., 2010).

The function and expression of moral intuitions and emotions are also relevant to an understanding of how situations may result in moral injury (see Chapter 2) and are therefore outlined in greater detail. Moral emotions can be functionally distinguished from nonmoral emotions in that they are primarily concerned with preserving and regulating social relationships (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Haidt, 2003; Rai & Fiske, 2011). They maintain social groups and connections through motivating the adherence to moral values. Whilst positive emotions support and motivate cooperation through reciprocity or reciprocal altruism (Greene, 2015), negative emotions often arise in response to transgressive acts that entail violations of what is expected by members of a group (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Rai & Fiske, 2011). The intensity of emotional responses to acts has been shown to be dependent on the nature of the situation, as well as on specific characteristics of the victim or target of morally questionable acts (Ellemers et al., 2019). This intensity also indicates the extent to which

situations require action to enact moral guidelines or sanctions (Ellemers et al., 2019), which include apologies, rectifications, self-punishment, and the modulation or termination of a relationship (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Moral emotions therefore provide the motivational force to cooperate and avoid transgressions, and guilt and shame appear to be particularly important in this process (Ellemers et al., 2019).

Guilt and shame are self-orientated, self-reflective, and self-condemning emotions that inform individuals of personal moral transgressions (Ellemers et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Tangney et al., 2007). Shame and guilt involve assessments of moral worth and fit within a group or community, and an ability to experience such emotions communicates the degree to which we consider an individual to be "human" and worthy of moral treatment (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Rozin et al., 1999). They signal that an individual is aware that a violation has occurred, therefore reducing the likelihood of further possible damage or punishment from others (Gilbert, 1997; Haidt, 2003).

Greater clarification is needed on the differentiation and definitions of shame and guilt (Blum, 2008; Gilbert et al., 1994; Kubany & Watson, 2003), although some differences in their properties and effects have been suggested. Lewis (1971, 1987) proposed that whilst shame involves a negative evaluation of the entire self, guilt involves a negative evaluation of a specific behaviour. Therefore, guilt is related to one's responsibility for a moral transgression and shame is focused on the perceived discrepancy between one's actual and ideal self (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018). As a result of this focus on the entire self, shame is argued to be more incapacitating (Lewis, 1987; Tangney et al., 2007). It commonly results in an individual withdrawing or externalizing blame and has been linked to further problematic behaviour such as substance abuse, anger and aggression (Gilbert et al., 1994; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 2007). Guilt is seen as more constructive and its associated experiences of remorse and regret are more likely to motivate action tendencies to "right" a perpetrated "wrong" (Lewis, 1987; Tangney et al., 2007). This is especially the case if the violation created a threat to one's relation with the victim, and therefore guilt motivates the restoration or improvement of relationships (Baumeister et al., 1994; Haidt, 2003).

On the other hand, when no communal relationship exists, guilt can motivate individuals to distance themselves from the victims such as by reducing contact or even dehumanizing them (Baumeister et al., 1994). Additionally, severe guilt perceived as

irreparable is maladaptive and not expected to diminish with time, given that such guilt cognitions continually recharge the memory of the guilt-evoking event with negative valence (Kubany & Watson, 2003). Shame and guilt negatively affect mental health when either repressed or when expressed intensely, frequently, or inappropriately relative to the context (Blum, 2008; Lewis, 1987). Both emotions have also been listed as symptoms of mental illnesses, such as depression and PTSD, and have been found to interfere with psychiatric treatment (Blum, 2008; Gilbert & Procter, 2006; Kroll & Egan, 2004). Kroll and Egan (2004) argue that they should not be dismissed or minimized simply as symptoms of mental disorders, but that these emotions and moral concerns cause significant problems in their own right and therefore require greater attention. Some of the maladaptive and problematic experiences associated with guilt and shame, such as in moral injury, is discussed in Chapter 2 and supports this claim. To understand how and when these emotions may be activated in groups employing non-state political violence, and their associated implications, the morality of such groups first requires greater clarification. Their moral beliefs related to the use of violence, and how these are formed, are therefore discussed in the following section.

1.4.1 Moral and altruistic violence

Some perpetrators of violence perceive their acts to be altruistic and moral. Despite the previous sections having emphasised the social relativity of morality, this may be controversial and difficult to comprehend given that violence usually conflicts with moral intuitions. However, as will be evidenced in the context of Irish Republicanism in section 1.5, there is evidence that when considering violence from a perpetrators point of view, this is indeed the case. This is important to outline to then investigate how such beliefs conflict with subsequent experiences in moral injury, whether in general non-state political violence (Chapter 3) or Republican ex-prisoners specifically (Chapter 4 onwards).

This consideration of violence as moral is argued in Rai and Fiske's "virtuous violence" theory, which is based on ethnographic and historical analyses, as well as on classical works on the evolution of cooperation and the sociology of crime. Through a social-functional perspective, Rai and Fiske propose that the majority of perpetrators of violence are neither pathological nor self-interested but convinced that what they are doing is morally right or even obligatory (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai et al., 2017; Rai & Fiske, 2011). The motives behind

such violence are argued to lie in social relationships with the victim or third parties, where violence is employed to make relationships what they "ought" to be according to culturally informed principles and moral sentiments. Violence therefore occurs if cultural implementations of the social relationships condone the violence, which depends on the culture, reasoning, method of perpetration, context, and identity of the victim. This means that violence can also decline when the socioecological conditions no longer perceive violence to be justified or if there are less costly, non-violent means to regulate relationships. Rai and Fiske argue that sociomoral emotions impel people to regulate their social relationships violently either immediately, or instead keep individuals focused on long-term planning and preparation for violence. Sometimes moral reasoning is also employed, especially when facing moral conflicts based on competing relationships or ideologically contentious issues. Further empirical investigation is still required in contemporary contexts by researchers other than Fiske and Rai to further strengthen support for the virtuous violence theory.

Fiske and Rai apply their theory across a spectrum of violent acts, ranging from everyday harm to large-scale atrocities. Additionally, they have applied it to non-state political violence, where they claim the moral motive for violence is ultimately to completely transform or terminate the relationship with political powers that are seen as controlling the violent actor's ingroup through illegitimate coercive forces (Fiske & Rai, 2015). Fiske and Rai also largely drew from the work by Ginges and Atran who argue that terrorists view themselves as parochial altruists committed to a moral cause (Atran, 2011, 2016; Ginges et al., 2011; Ginges & Atran, 2009). Their arguments have been strongly supported as they are based on interviews, field work, and psychological studies conducted in Palestine and Israel, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and many other areas. They argue that terrorists are not rational actors employing utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, but rather that they are devoted actors motivated and bound by communal and moral values (Atran, 2011, 2016; Ginges & Atran, 2011). For example, their studies found support for violent acts of terrorism was usually influenced by moral rather than rationally instrumental motives (Ginges & Atran, 2009), and that the perceived effectiveness of actions only predicted support for non-violent actions (Ginges et al., 2007).

Atran claims that what they fight for are sacred values, which are different from other values as they incorporate moral beliefs that drive action in ways out of proportion to prospects for success (Atran, 2011, 2016). These sacred values are not just religious but are

deeper cultural values that are bound within a group's collective identity and enhance the group's cooperation. These values become relevant, conscious, and salient when they are challenged (Atran & Axelrod, 2008), and cannot be conceded as this would be akin to altering or abandoning a core facet of their identity (Atran, 2011, 2016). Atran and Ginges emphasise that group cohesion plays a vital role, as social connections are what compel individuals to kill and die for their moral cause and sacred values (Ginges & Atran, 2011). This devotion has similarly been found between soldiers in traditional state armies (Grossman, 2009; MacManus, 2003). Therefore, it is argued that morally motivated or parochially altruistic terrorism occurs when a self-identity is fused with a unique collective identity, as well as with sacred values that provide all group members with a similar sense of significance (Atran, 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2013). Atran and Ginges theory is well-supported with a range of evidence from different contexts thus far but would benefit from continued investigation in other ideologies to evidence its applicability across the entire spectrum of 'terrorist' motivations and beliefs.

Both Rai and Fiske's virtuous violence theory and Atran and Ginges' theory are similar in that they view actors' violence as morally and socially motivated. These motivations are framed differently, where Ginges and Atran frame them in terms of "sacred values" based on the group's identity and which aim to enhance in-group cooperation, whilst Rai and Fiske argue these motivations are based on making social relationships what they "ought" to be. Virtuous violence theory is also applied to all violence, rather than focusing on terrorist actors alone. Other differences between these theories are unclear and should be elucidated, as they appear to make a similar argument under different labels. Clarification would be beneficial, as this perspective on violence contributes greatly to an understanding of actors' motivations and perspectives.

Other researchers also suggest a moral dimension to terrorism, such Githens-Mazer (2009) stating that they feel a "collectively defined" but "individually held" moral obligation to engage in violent action. O'Gorman, Silke, and Reeve have applied (parochial) altruism to terrorism (O'Gorman & Silke, 2015; Reeve, 2017, 2019). This altruistic dimension is linked to grievances and threats to an individual's ingroup, which increases the likelihood for the individual to engage in violence to redress this balance. This is therefore like the two theories on moral violence discussed in this section already, but places greater emphasis on grievances than social relationships within a group. Grievances have previously been linked to

radicalization (e.g., McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008), and moral emotions have been associated with this link as the driving forces for resulting retributive or retaliatory violence (Borum, 2014). This is in line with the morality literature, where moral emotions have been found to be directly translated into moral judgments, motivational states, and behaviour (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Seiler et al., 2010).

What is also highlighted in the literature is that terrorist groups form their "collective" or "revolutionary" normativity in reaction to, and in interaction with, the norms of the outgroup or outside context's conventional morality (Sprinzak, 1990; Taylor & Louis, 2004). The power of these group norms are strengthened by the fact that group members are usually socially isolated from alternative moralities and standards (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Reeve (2017, 2019) also suggests some individuals are more sensitive to perceptions of threat to their ingroup and are more susceptible to parochially altruistic responses. Bouhana and Wikström (Bouhana, 2019; Bouhana & Wikström, 2010, 2011) put forward similar arguments. They argue that terrorism can be conceptualised as moral action, and that the likelihood that a person perceives terrorism as an action alternative and chooses to carry out such an act depends on their personal morality (their moral values and emotions, including a weak commitment to law-relevant moral rules) and its interplay with their moral context (its moral rules and their reinforcement). Therefore, how an individual acquires an extremist propensity can be explained by how they come to see extremist actions as morally legitimate (such as through their moral and social ecology) and how they fail to develop or do not use their capacity for self-regulation, making them more likely to carry out a violent act in certain situations (Bouhana, 2019). Specific situations in a moral context may prompt an individual to engage in violence as they can exert social pressure on the individual, induce moral disinhibition, and produce emotional arousal (Taylor & Currie, 2012). As will be expanded on in section 1.5, experiences of day-to-day conflict, a socially enclaved community, and a romanticisation of the conflict and the tradition of armed struggle defined the moral and social contexts for Republican communities, for example, and influenced the decision-making processes of former paramilitary members (Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished).

Others have linked moral justifications to non-state political violence differently. For example, certain moral justifications may only be utilized and applied to get popular support by attributing blame to the outgroup, or may be applied with hindsight to reduce feelings of personal responsibility and guilt (Horgan, 2014; Rapoport, 1990). Therefore, continued

investigation is required on the distinction between those who experience moral imperatives to commit violence and those who only rationalise or justify it. This distinction is highlighted by Borum (2011b), who comments that those who feel violence as a moral imperative may struggle to justify why they should not commit it, and that this experience is more resistant to change. McCauley and Moskalenko (2017) put forward a similar distinction and claim terrorists and extremists can shift between levels of opinion; ranging from sympathising, to justifying, and to feeling a personal moral obligation to engage in violence. Of course, it may also be the case that some individuals engage in violence for non-moral or instrumental reasons, some of which may be self-serving (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai et al., 2017; Victoroff, 2005). In these cases, some antisocial individuals may use the moral cover of their affiliation with the group to disguise these drives (Victoroff, 2005). However, Victoroff concluded that pending data to the contrary it seems plausible that many terrorists act in a prosocial manner. Therefore, while there is a likely difference between morally justifying violence and perceiving it to be a moral obligation, and a minority may use this to mask selfish impulses, many "show a strength of what can only be described as a belief in the rightness of their actions" (Taylor & Quayle, 1994, p. 103). They are committed to their ingroup's moral values which create the group's collective identity, whilst in conflict with the moralities of outgroups. This social commitment is so powerful it enables them to engage in violence they perceived as justified or even obligatory.

1.4.2 Psychological processes facilitating "moral violence"

Whilst the previous section discussed the moral motives and justifications behind non-state political violence, this section will expand on the psychological factors that facilitate or inhibit such violence. Moral reasoning does not necessarily lead to moral behaviour (Seiler et al., 2010), and most individuals have an intense resistance to killing (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Grossman, 2009). Although this resistance is difficult to verify in research, and more empirical evidence is required, what is more easily verifiable and useful are the techniques to engage in violence. This section therefore summarises the processes, factors, and conditions where normal restraints against violence are weakened. In 'terrorism' research, the most known theory is that of moral disengagement, which will be discussed shortly (Bandura, 1990). A wealth of research has been conducted on this popular psychological subject, especially on traditional

state soldiers following the end of World War II, so only the most applicable theories are summarised. Research on traditional militaries is relevant to this thesis as moral injury has mostly been investigated in this population (see Chapter 2), and due to Republican combatants viewing themselves as soldiers and the conflict as a war (see section 1.5 and Chapter 3).

The methods employed by state militaries to overcome natural instincts to avoid killing or dying provide insight into techniques used by actors of non-state political violence, given that many organisations model after and perceive themselves as army structures. State militaries are perceived to employ moral violence (Bandura, 2002; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Kelman, 1973). Grossman (2009) outlines how militaries create physical and empathetic distances to the enemy; such as by evoking feelings of moral superiority, creating mechanical distances by utilising technologies, and emphasizing social and cultural differences which may result in dehumanization. He also claims leadership and hierarchies play a role in this, by allowing commands and decisions to be made by individuals who will carry out the acts themselves and therefore will be less at risk for associated negative psychological repercussions. Grossman explains that state militaries condition their soldiers through realistic training including life-like targets and combat simulation paired with positive reinforcement. Similar processes have also been used to train "normal" people to torture (Haritos-Fatouros, 1988). These techniques encourage desensitization and for reactions to become habitual (Grossman, 2009; Procter, 1920). Desensitization has also been found to occur in communities affected by non-state political violence. This is discussed directly in relation to Northern Ireland in the following section.

Grossman and other researchers argue that one of the most powerful factors facilitating violence in armies is the social cohesion between soldiers and the accompanying sense of accountability (Grossman, 2009; MacManus, 2003; Olsthoorn, 2007). As mentioned in the previous section, social relationships have been argued by Ginges and Atran to motivate terrorists to kill and die for each other (Atran, 2011, 2016; Ginges & Atran, 2009). This phenomenon is also in line with findings from evolutionary research on morality. Ginges and Atran explain that this is most likely the case because a terrorists' individual identity becomes fused the with terrorist group's collective identity which in turn is fused with its sacred values and moral cause. Additionally, deindividuation theory proposes membership of a group can lead to an increase in conformity and a lessening individual moral restraint related to

prohibited behaviour such as violence, which under normal circumstances the individual would not engage in (Horgan, 2014; Taylor, 1988). This is due to a reduction in self-awareness, a shift in perception of experience, a decrease in an individual's capacity to monitor or regulate their acts, an interference in ability to engage in rational thought or long-term planning, and a lessening in concern on how others regard their behaviour (Taylor, 1988). Social and group processes have also been established by other researchers to play an important role in initially attracting individuals to non-state political violence (Crenshaw, 1990; Webber & Kruglanski, 2018).

The most all-encompassing and relevant of psychological theories is Bandura's theory of moral disengagement, which focuses on moral conduct rather than moral reasoning. Bandura claims there are many psychosocial mechanisms that allow moral self-sanctions to gradually be selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct, therefore allowing individuals to engage in such conduct without experiencing self-condemnation or guilt (Bandura, 1990, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996). This is a gradual transformation. Once freed from this restraint, they are more likely to act on their resentments, as individuals usually do not engage in harmful conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions (Bandura, 2016). Moral disengagement can occur through morally justifying inhumane conduct as socially worthy, by applying sanitising language and exonerative social comparison, by reducing personal agency through a diffusion of responsibility in groups or displacing responsibility to authorities, by disregarding or minimising the negative consequences of actions, or by attributing blame to and dehumanizing those victimised (Bandura, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996). For example, moral justifications sanctify harmful practices by imbuing them with honourable purposes, and dehumanization weakens self-restraints by blunting empathy (Bandura, 2016). These processes can apply to individuals acting independently, as well as at group-level through collective disengagement (Bandura, 2016). Whilst this provides a useful overview of the techniques employed to justify immoral actions, it does not provide finer and precise detail on how these operate in propaganda campaigns (Sarma, 2007).

These processes have been directly applied to 'terrorism' (Bandura, 1990, 2016). For example, terrorists have been found to use sanitising language to legitimise their actions (Cordes, 1987; Horgan, 2014), with the most obvious example being the application of the label "freedom fighter" (Bandura, 1990, 2016). Additionally, by attributing blame elsewhere, terrorists construe their actions as morally justifiable, defensive responses (Bandura, 2016).

Neutralization techniques that closely resemble processes involved in moral disengagement have also been suggested to play a role in facilitating violence (Borum, 2011b; Horgan, 2014).These techniques similarly help suppress normative values and rationalise justifications to disinhibit internal guilt or external sanctions which would serve as barriers to violence, thereby increasing its likelihood (Borum, 2014; Horgan, 2014).

It is important to note that most of the psychological literature on these processes, such as moral disengagement, fail to consider the perspective that actors of non-state political violence perceive their actions to be morally justified. Theorists such as Bandura often see this violence as a mistake or incorrect moral reasoning (Fiske & Rai, 2015), rather than as an alternative morality. This results in the question of whether their sense of morality has been disengaged or replaced (Borum, 2011b). Fiske and Rai (2015) argue such theorists falsely believe that moral motives have to be peaceful, but this is clearly not a correct account of morality from a social or evolutionary psychology perspective. Therefore, whilst violence can be perceived as morally justified by an ingroup, these processes and factors may only help facilitate non-moral, instrumental violence as argued by Fiske and Rai (2015) and Rai et al. (2017), although Rai et al. do caveat that perpetrators may also be morally conflicted or motivated by both moral and instrumental reasons simultaneously. It could also be the case these "disengagement" or "neutralization" processes are what distinguish extremists from those who support but do not engage in violence from those who do (Borum, 2011b). Alternatively, it may be that these processes, as well as allowing individuals to kill and die, psychologically protect individuals from questioning the justification of their violent methods in pursuit of moral causes. There is currently not sufficient research available to provide answers to these questions, but they are revisited throughout this thesis.

1.5 Republican morality during the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland

> Commitment to the Republican Movement is the firm belief that its struggle
> both military and political is morally justified… (Irish Republican Army, Print
> date unavailable)

The Provisional IRA (PIRA) explicitly stated they perceived their armed struggle to be morally legitimate, as evidenced by the quote above. They claimed the right to wage war for Ireland in the "people's name", and fundamental to their ideology were the convictions that their violence was causally efficacious and necessary (Bowyer Bell, 1992; Shanahan, 2009). Whilst more literature is available on the IRA's moral stances than on the INLA's, which was smaller and less active, all Republican organisations believed they were morally justified and drew from the same arguments (McDonald & Holland, 2010; Sluka, 1988). On occasion, Republicans also asserted that the armed struggle was justified according to traditional just war doctrine, given that they conceived themselves as armies in a war (Shanahan, 2009; Sluka, 1988). This section describes the standard Republican narrative to illustrate how they perceived their violence to be morally justified. As explained in the introductions to the thesis and this chapter, the focus of this research is to understand their perspective on their morality, rather than to condemn or condone it.

The PIRA training manual or "the Green Book" (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable) argues that the pervasive injustices the Irish people were subjected to provided the moral grounds for their violence and war against the British occupational forces. Catholic and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland suffered long-standing injustices from political alienation during the late 1960s, as democratic elections or non-violent options offered no prospect of political influence or power (Alderdice, 2007, 2009). This led to civil rights marches that were met with the forces of the "sectarian state" (Sinn Fein, n.d.) and violent Unionist reaction in 1968 and 1969 (Barnes, 2005). This further blocked a route to peaceful political change (Alderdice, 2007, 2009). The PIRA therefore claimed to have been revitalized and formed directly as a response to defend the Catholic community against state-sponsored violence in the late 1968 and 1969 (Shanahan, 2009), and against the chronic oppression of the Catholic working-class (Moxon-Browne, 1981b). Other than just defending the community, they claimed their response was ultimately necessary against the injustices resulting from British colonial rule in Ireland, as it was the "people's destiny" to achieve an independent Ireland (Shanahan, 2009), and only in a united Ireland could justice be achieved (Moxon-Browne, 1981b). Republicans also linked the remedying of poor socioeconomic conditions to independence (Moxon-Browne, 1981a). It can therefore be argued that the Republican "sacred value", as Atran (2011, 2016) would frame it, is the prospect or "destiny" of a united Ireland.

Republicans claim that they initially chose non-violent means, but given the repressive response from the British government they "exercised their right as Irish people to defend their liberty by use of arms" and its military operations throughout the rest of 'Troubles' were "extensions of this basic moral mandate" (Shanahan, 2009, p. 14). They therefore claimed they had no option other than violence (Ferguson & McAuley, 2019; White, 1989). The Republican narrative is therefore in line with Fiske and Rai's virtuous violence theory (2015) as they felt, or at least promoted themselves as being, collectively responsible to change Ireland's relationship with the British state, and this theory argues violence to be employed when there is a perception of no alternative means. The PIRA's claim that its armed struggle was morally justified continued to be voiced even after the Good Friday Agreement, such as when reiterating their view that "the armed struggle was entirely legitimate" in a statement announcing the end of their armed campaign (Irish Republican Army, 2005). Additionally, even when the Republican movement became predominantly political, those leaving the PIRA in the 1997 split continued to justify the use of violence and portrayed themselves as "morally committed" to continue, given that a united Ireland had not yet been achieved (Morrison, 2010, p. 243).

The Republican narrative of moral violence against oppression was reinforced further by the harsh security responses from the British state following the outbreak of the violence, such as new legislation making it possible to intern and interrogate anyone irrespective of evidence (Barnes, 2005; Hillyard, 1993; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009). Such measures, in combination with atrocities such as Bloody Sunday where the 14 protesting civilians were killed by the British Army, resulted in greater anti-state Republican violence (O'Keefe, 2017; White, 2000). Grievances and emotionally driven motives to respond to such perceived transgressions are suggested to be a key motivator in non-state political violence (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; O'Gorman & Silke, 2015), as these moral emotions motivate retributive violence (Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Borum, 2014). And indeed, IRA activity, recruitment, and support was found to increase as a result of these events (Bowyer Bell, 2000; Gill & Horgan, 2013; Hamber, 2005; White, 2000), and autobiographical accounts and interviews with former Republican paramilitaries reveal that for some individuals their initial engagement with violent Republican organisations was a direct response to such events (Ferguson & McAuley, 2019; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished; O'Callaghan, 1998, p. 22).

As a result of the state policies and violence, a minority of Catholic communities supported or sympathised with violent Republican organisations (Hayes & McAllister, 2001, 2005; Moxon-Browne, 1981b; O'Keefe, 2017). This granted moral power to the IRA and INLA (Sluka, 1988). Some believed Republican violence to be successful and contribute to the Catholic community's progression (Burgess et al., 2007) or even symbolised "a hope for change" (Moxon-Browne, 1981a). This was because state and security actions predominantly affected Catholic communities (Hewitt, 1990), which alienated them and created feelings of distrust (Fierke, 2009; Hewitt, 1990). Therefore, whilst the outside world regarded state actions as responses against Republican violence, Catholic communities viewed Republican actions as responses to violence from the authorities themselves (McKittrick & McVea, 2012). Communities trusted and felt dependent on them for protection, given that the official institutions (including the police, British Army, and justice systems) gave inadequate protection to the widespread violence or were perceived as instigators of the violence themselves (Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Fierke, 2009; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished).

The IRA has been argued to manipulate its propaganda and violence to maintain public support for legitimization (Bloom & Horgan, 2008; Sarma, 2007). This is because it would lose support when "acceptable" or expect limits of the effects of its campaign were exceeded (Horgan, 2014). For example, the IRA claimed to forge an "economic bombing campaign". In bombings, there would often be a time lag and the IRA would report the planting of the bomb to security officials (Bloom & Horgan, 2008). This was because the attacks were aimed at causing damage rather than taking civilian life, as attacks that harmed a large amount of civilian lives would often result in a loss of support for the cause. In reality these attacks were usually unpredictable and difficult to control, putting civilians at great risk. Another example was a morally condemned human bombing or "proxy bomb" campaign being short-lived due to the backlash it received in the local community (Bloom & Horgan, 2008). This involved the kidnapping at gunpoint of Catholic civilians who were coerced to drive vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices into military targets, with their family's being held at gunpoint until completion of the operation at times as well (Bloom & Horgan, 2008). This clearly challenged the Republican morality outlined above of not targeting civilians. Similarly, the Real IRA's Omagh bomb which killed and injured a large number of civilians led to the loss of social support from the community and members as they disagreed with the targeting of nationalist communities and innocent victims (Morrison, 2010). The relation between public

support and other types of Republican violence, such as the targeting of criminals and informers to further "defend" their community, will be expanded on in Chapter 4.

Some scholars have argued that an attempt to avoid civilian casualties was not just to maintain public support but may also be motivated by the Republican perceptions of such deaths being morally wrong (Silke, 1998; Sluka, 1989). This can be supported by Republican "operational ethics" highlighting the distinction between immoral murder and killing in a just war (Sluka, 1989). Busher et al. (2018) identified that groups can put "brakes" on non-state political violence due to moral logic (where they question whether it is "right" to use violence under certain conditions) as well as strategic logic (where they question the effectiveness of violence in comparison to alternatives). Therefore, whilst some of choices related to the use of Republican violence may have been practical and strategical, it is possible that others were morally motivated. Further direct exploration through interviews with Republican ex-prisoners would clarify further what individual Republicans believed to be moral, what Republican actions they considered to be moral transgressions, and why. This thesis will directly investigate this in the final three chapters.

Other than immediate situational factors, the history and culture of violence in Ireland likely played a large role in the moral justification of the armed struggle. In Northern Irish communities, there was a tradition of using physical force to address political problems and ancestors were often honoured for their participation in historic struggles (Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Hayes & McAllister, 2001; Victoroff, 2005). Republicans operated within this context of a militant nationalist tradition "deeply rooted" in Irish history (Hewitt, 1990). This Republican tradition of using violence has been referred to as a deeply ingrained "romantic preference" (Smith, 1995, p. 13).

Among violent Republican organisations, Ferguson and McAuley (2019) found many could call on a lineage of republicans in their family, resulting in them being socialised into Irish Republicanism from an early age. It has been suggested that involvement in the violence in Northern Ireland reflects an identification with these significant figures and one's social ties, rather than solely a political motive (Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Morrison, 2016; White, 1988). As discussed earlier, culture plays an important role in shaping moral beliefs. Learning and witnessing this glorification of Republican violence therefore likely played a role in individuals joining (Ferguson & McAuley, 2019; Victoroff, 2005), as such violence was seen as exciting and virtuous rather than immoral. In fact, the moral development of young people

living with intense levels of political violence was found to be delayed (Ferguson, 2009; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996). In addition, it has also been suggested Northern Irish communities became habituated to the violence (Horgan, 2005; Murphy & Lloyd, 2007; Sarma, 2007). Lastly, the moral atmosphere of Northern Ireland was affected by communal segregation, social cleavage, and negative outgroup perceptions, emphasized by ethnic interpretations of history where ingroup violence was perceived as military victories over "them" and outgroup violence as murderous atrocity (Ferguson et al., 2014; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996). Such groupthink was likely increased further amongst members of violent Republican organisations, where individuals would be further insulated from outward opinions, and this likely further resulted in the removal of barriers to engagement in violence (Ferguson & McAuley, 2019). Therefore, several different factors shaped a unique moral environment in nationalist communities in Northern Ireland during this time, which influenced the perception of Republican violence being perceived as justified. These factors will be directly investigated further in final three chapters of this thesis.

The processes and contextual factors described in this section parallel the previously discussed findings of social and evolutionary psychology on morality, as well as the theories relating to the morality of non-state political violence. As mentioned previously, it is still unclear whether these narratives were strategical or whether all members perceived the armed struggle to be entirely morally justified. Some members of the Nationalist communities at the time may have viewed this Republican narrative to be entirely in line with their moral beliefs, such as the individual referenced in following quote: "the needs of the IRA were the touchstone of his morality" (Collins & McGovern, 1998, p. 353). For others, there may have been particular decisions or campaigns that were considered unjustified, such as the proxy bomb campaign. As a former PIRA member stated; "those who use political violence… like other political actors, make choices as they move through the labyrinthine world they find themselves inhabiting, all the while responding to the moral actions of others" (McIntyre, 2011, p. 293). The heterogeneity in the moral beliefs of members relating to the Republican armed struggle are likely to differ between individuals and to have been context dependent. As will be seen in Chapter 4, however, there are parallels in this with traditional state militaries. Chapter 4 will also illustrate further parallels with traditional state militaries, whilst drawing on the Republican moral beliefs and justifications described in the present section,

to justify the application of moral injury to Republican ex-prisoners and to outline potential morally injurious experiences.

1.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter set the stage for later discussions. Understanding morality and moral emotions provides clues about what is harmed in moral injury (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Litz & Kerig, 2019), given that people's moral views constitute a complex combination of socially shaped beliefs which therefore may conflict (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Molendijk, 2018a; Tessman, 2015). In addition, an outline of the moral beliefs held by actors of non-state political violence and violent Republican organisations specifically, as well as the processes facilitating their engagement in violence, is required to illustrate how they may be protected from or at-risk for moral injury. Therefore, this chapter summarised the development of moral beliefs through a social-functionalist account, and the role of moral emotions in moral judgment with an emphasis on guilt and shame given that these are central to the experience of moral injury. Secondly, this chapter argued that actors of non-state political violence, including members of violent Republican organisations during the conflict, view their violence as morally justified although there are likely to be context-dependent individual differences in their moral beliefs. All these topics emphasized the importance of social relationships and identification with groups in the shaping of moral beliefs.

Most of the theories outlined in this chapter, including both from the morality and political violence literature, require greater empirical evidence in holistic, real-world contexts. Investigating the incidence of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners through semi-structured interviews would contribute to this. It links the two topics of morality and non-state political violence, as investigating the moral and psychological consequences of involvement in groups utilising violence, such as during the conflict in Northern Ireland, will provide understanding into their moral judgment which in turn may yield insight into factors relating to their processes of disengagement and engagement with violence. Chapter 2 outlines the concept of moral injury to provide a better overview of what it entails before it can be applied to Republican ex-combatants.

Chapter 2. Moral Injury

The Army says I did the right thing, so why do I feel so guilty? How can I say I am a good soldier and a good man when I killed an innocent boy? (Berghaus & Cartagena, 2013, p. 291)

We ended up capturing 56 enemy, and I myself – there was probably 10 of us guarding these 56 prisoners – and I, myself, talked the lieutenant into killing these 56 people, so I personally killed 56, I mean I [literally] killed 11 of them myself with my hands, and it changed me forever that day. (Schorr et al., 2018, p. 2208)

2.1 Introduction

The opening quotes illustrate how soldiers from traditional state militaries can be negatively affected by their own actions, and that the subsequent psychological effects can be enduring. Until recently, research on the psychological consequences of moral violations, as suffered by either the victim or perpetrator, had been limited. The introduction of the concept 'moral injury' sparked greater interest in this topic. Moral injury describes transgressive harms and the outcomes from those experiences (Litz & Kerig, 2019).

Moral injury fills a gap in the study of trauma, which has not paid sufficient attention to the lasting impact of events with moral implications. Litz et al. (2009) suggest that in the study of military service members and veterans, this is due to clinicians and researchers having focused predominantly on the impact of life-threat trauma. For example, evidence-based models of treatment have emphasised fear memories (e.g., Foa et al., 1989). Perpetration of political violence as a source of trauma has also been historically understudied (MacNair, 2002b). The research on this source of trauma will be outlined in Section 2.2 of this chapter to provide background information to the concept of moral injury, which may arise because of perpetration of such violence. Section 2.3 will subsequently define moral injury, including a summary of its differences to PTSD and some of the key debates within conceptualisation efforts. Additionally, this chapter will discuss outcomes and symptoms of moral injury and morally injurious events and risk factors. Most of the research considered in

this chapter has studied moral injury in military contexts. Increasingly, moral injury has also been investigated in non-military populations and the chapter will conclude with a summary of these studies.

Therefore, whilst Chapter 1 focused on providing an overview of what morality is and how moral beliefs develop, this chapter will describe how moral beliefs can psychologically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually affect individuals when their actions do not align with those beliefs. As seen in Chapter 1, morality has been extensively researched and therefore only the more relevant perspectives were considered. Moral injury is a relatively new concept and as a result has a smaller research base. Therefore, this chapter can provide a much broader overview of the research on moral injury. The chapter is designed to introduce the concept, enabling its subsequent application to non-state political violence in Chapter 3 and Republican ex-combatants specifically in Chapter 4.

2.2 Psychological effects of perpetrating political violence

Before discussing the literature on moral injury, this section will provide an overview of the findings on the psychological effects of perpetrating political violence. This is relevant given that moral injury can arise following the perpetration of a perceived moral transgression (Litz et al., 2009), which in morally injured military personnel is commonly related to their engagement in political violence. It will therefore provide background information to the type of moral injury that arises in response to perpetration, which will also be relevant for the following chapters which argue involvement in non-state political violence may be similarly traumatic and may also result in moral injury. Lastly, the current section will emphasise that a historical unrecognition of this subject reveals a need for greater empirical investigation, which the study of moral injury contributes to.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Grossman (2009) suggests there are various training strategies and factors that allow military personnel to resist natural restraints against engaging in violence. Drawing from his experiences of counselling combat veterans, he suggests killing can be a source of PTSD and intense guilt when individuals do overcome this resistance. Relatedly, Purcell et al. (2016) established from interviews with veterans that there is a diversity in the psychological and social impacts of killing in war. These reactions ranged from feelings of supremacy, physiological arousal, and transcendence, to nausea or

revulsion. Killing and perpetration as a source of trauma has previously been understudied, as trauma has commonly been associated with experiences of fear, risk, and life-threat (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2012). As a result, PTSD research has focused almost entirely on people who were victimised by their trauma experience (MacNair, 2002a). However, among military personnel, exposure to stressors that are not necessarily life-threatening (such as involvement in atrocities and killing) is also associated with PTSD (Currier & Holland, 2012; King et al., 1995; Maguen et al., 2010).

Despite this, the current criteria for traumatic stressors do not explicitly reference acts of perpetration of violence as a source of trauma (Farnsworth et al., 2017; MacNair, 2002b). Trauma is a response to a traumatic event. The DSM-5 explicitly defines a traumatic event as involving "actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). This can be directly experienced, witnessed, or involve indirect exposure. Whilst the wording allows for perpetration to be considered a traumatic stressor, it is not explicitly referenced. The DSM-5 did add being "a perpetrator, witnessing atrocities, or killing the enemy" to the list of causal factors for PTSD but only for military personnel (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 278). It is vague as to what types of perpetration are envisioned, and "appears to set parameters on transgressive acts in a manner that could exclude or marginalise certain civilian groups" (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021, p. 265). It also limits killing to the an 'enemy' rather than civilians and appears to restrict involvement in atrocities to 'witnessing' only (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021). As will be discussed in later in this section and thesis, there is emerging evidence for perpetration being traumatic in non-military populations as well, which must in turn be clarified in diagnostic definitions.

The lack of attention paid to perpetration trauma has resulted in a call for a distinct disorder; "perpetration-induced traumatic stress" (PITS) (MacNair, 2002b). MacNair argues this is caused by being an active participant in causing trauma, and symptoms include guilt, detachment, intrusive imagery, sleep problems, and substance abuse. She proposes its occurrence in military personnel, veterans, torturers, executioners, convicts, policemen, Nazis, and even abortionists (MacNair, 2002b).

Since MacNair's first work on PITS nearly two decades ago it has only been investigated in a few studies, such as in populations involved in the killing and euthanasia of animals (Bennett & Rohlf, 2005; Whiting & Marion, 2011). MacNair herself admits it is a "small

amount [of research] to report" (MacNair, 2015, p. 313). It is likely that moral injury has received the attention in the literature instead. Whilst PITS and moral injury are separate in that moral injury requires the individual to perceive a traumatic event as a moral problem and PITS does not (MacNair, 2015), they are related in their focus on the perpetrator. Whilst MacNair argues for PITS to be considered as a new diagnostic entity (MacNair, 2002b), it would be more useful for research to explore perpetration as a causative event for PTSD without employing the specific label of PITS. This should be possible given that PITS is defined by MacNair as involving "any portions of the symptomatology of PTSD, at clinical or subclinical levels, which result from situations that would be traumatic if someone were a victim, but situations for which the person in question was a causal participant" (MacNair, 2002b, p. 7). Expanding PTSD's definition in such a way would prevent confusion between PTSD, PITS, and moral injury.

As part of her research, MacNair (2002a, 2002b) analysed data from the 1,638 combat veterans in the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). This analysis revealed PTSD scores were higher for those who said they had killed compared to those who did not. This remained the case even when those who admitted being 'directly involved' in atrocities (defined as the killings of innocent civilians and prisoners) were removed. PTSD scores were even higher for those who said they were 'directly involved' in atrocities compared to those who only saw them. There was no further explanation or definition of what 'directly involved' entailed.

Whilst the data did not support that higher battle intensity might account for these findings (MacNair, 2002a), there was no examination of other variables. There was no information on the influence of individual factors (e.g., length of service, number of tours, whether the individual was enlisted or drafted). There was also no detail regarding the circumstances of these killings (e.g., why the veteran killed, how many individuals were killed, the method of killing, etc.) or how such factors influenced the onset of PTSD symptoms. This was because the study was reliant on the data available from the NVVRS questionnaire, resulting in oversimplified findings. An exploration of the role of these factors is required, such as through questionnaires designed directly for the research topic and/or incorporating qualitative research methods. Furthermore, the data was self-reported over a decade after the war, and therefore may be unreliable. Whilst these limitations should not dismiss

MacNair's findings, they indicate more rigorous research is required to understand the role of perpetration on PTSD.

Other studies have similarly examined the psychological effects of perpetrating violence in soldiers and veterans. In line with MacNair's findings, McLay et al. (2014) found that for US veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, shooting at an enemy contributed to depression and PTSD symptoms more than being shot at. Other research on military populations and veterans of multiple generations and conflicts also support that killing is a significant predictor of chronic PTSD symptoms (Fontana et al., 1992; Fontana & Rosenheck, 1999; King et al., 1995; Maguen et al., 2009, 2010, 2011; Purcell et al., 2016; Van Winkle & Safer, 2011). A strong association has been found between killing in combat and suicidal ideation for veterans (Maguen et al., 2011, 2012; Rice & Sher, 2013), and killing predicts post-deployment alcohol abuse, anger, relationship problems, functional impairment, dissociation, and violent behaviour (Beckham et al., 2000; Maguen et al., 2009, 2010, 2011; Van Winkle & Safer, 2011).

Research has demonstrated that the participation or the witnessing of atrocities by veterans is also related to chronic PTSD (Beckham et al., 1998; King et al., 1995; Marx et al., 2010; Yehuda et al., 1992), and increases the risk for depression (Marx et al., 2010; Yehuda et al., 1992), psychiatric distress (Fontana et al., 1992), and suicidal behaviour (Hiley-Young et al., 1995). Killing in combat and involvement in atrocities are identified as important risk factors for mental health problems even after adjusting for combat severity (Beckham et al., 1998; Maguen et al., 2009, 2010; Yehuda et al., 1992). This indicates that these effects cannot be explained by combat severity alone and these factors appear to have an independent effect on mental health. "Combat-related guilt" triggered by acts of omission or commission, survival, or related thoughts and feelings, has also been associated with lower psychological well-being in military populations and has been identified as a risk factor for PTSD and suicide (Grossman, 2009; Hendin & Haas, 1991; Henning & Frueh, 1997; Leskela et al., 2002). Combat-related guilt has also been found to partially mediate the association between atrocities and mental health disorders (Dennis et al., 2017; Marx et al., 2010).

The studies listed in the paragraphs above have identified significant associations that illustrate the potential traumatic impact of perpetrating violence in military personnel and veterans. Nonetheless, these findings should be considered preliminary. There are many methodological limitations to these studies. For example, numerous confounding variables

were not accounted for yet may have a significant influence on the relationships between perpetration and indicators of trauma. These include factors such as the length of deployment/service, the number of tours, contextual factors of different conflicts, who was killed or harmed and how, and individual personality factors such as their moral beliefs on political violence. There was also an over-reliance on self-report data which is subject to bias caused by self-presentation concerns or different interpretations of questions. Further research should involve longitudinal studies which are conducted both before, during, and after tours. Given that the existent research largely identified associations between perpetration and indicators of trauma (e.g., PTSD scores), more qualitative research would also be valuable to better understand the nuance of these relationships. Therefore, whilst preliminary research indicates that perpetration of violence may be considered a risk factor for trauma in military personnel, little is still known on how and when this is the case.

Research has also indicated that populations other than veterans or military combatants are at risk for complex trauma, guilt, and PTSD symptoms directly because of perpetrating violence. This is relevant given that moral injury, as will be discussed in section 2.6, also occurs outside of military contexts. Perpetration of violence has found to be traumatic in gang members (Kerig et al., 2016), child soldiers (Annan et al., 2006; Betancourt et al., 2010; Klasen et al., 2015), police (Komarovskaya et al., 2011), torturers (Lifton, 1986; Phillips, 2010), convicted criminals (Crisford et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2007; Pollock, 1999; Ternes et al., 2020), homicide perpetrators (Badenes-Ribera et al., 2021), and civilians who unintentionally injured others (Connorton et al., 2011; Nickerson et al., 2011). In contrast, studies on members of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo suggest that perpetrating violence does not necessarily affect posttraumatic stress (Hecker et al., 2013; Köbach et al., 2015). Specifically, Hecker et al. (2013) found that whilst perpetrating violence was positively related to PTSD in forcibly recruited combatants, this relationship was not found in voluntary combatants. This would suggest that perpetrating violence is not intrinsically traumatic and may depend on the perception of violence. Therefore, whilst preliminary studies indicate that perpetration may be psychologically harmful for a variety of populations outside of a military context, these effects will be context-dependent and further research should establish specifically when and how perpetration is a potential traumatic stressor.

The research on trauma resulting from perpetration remains limited. Whilst some limitations have been discussed throughout this section, this lack of understanding could also be explained by lack of access given that individuals may be reluctant to disclose on their experiences (Litz et al., 2009; MacNair, 2002b). Further methodological limitations include the confounding possibilities of prior traumas, as well as stigma and controversy which may invoke bias (MacNair, 2002b). Despite these limitations, the research suggests that trauma is not solely fear-based and there appear to be significant psychological implications associated with the perpetration of violence in different contexts. This requires greater attention, given that differing traumatic events lead to diverse mental health outcomes that need to be understood in their own right for treatment (Fontana et al., 1992; Stein et al., 2012).

2.3.1 Conceptualisation of moral injury

The previous section discussed the psychological consequences of perpetrating violence but did not discuss its associated moral implications. However, Steenkamp et al. (2011, p. 99) have observed that for many veterans, the most "haunting and impactful" war events are those involving perceived moral transgressions. Many veterans and military personnel with PTSD describe guilt, shame, negative changes in ethical perspectives and behaviours, difficulties with forgiveness, and reduced trust as particularly problematic features of their psychological impairment (Drescher et al., 2011; Vargas et al., 2013). Clinicians who cared for prior generations of service members and veterans also often discussed the central importance of moral transgressions, and the role of painful moral emotions, in hindering recovery from PTSD (Currier et al., 2021). Moral injury is a concept that does consider this moral dimension of trauma. Chapter 1 explained how moral beliefs can be also be seen as social behavioural guidelines (Ellemers et al., 2019; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). The chapter also argued that moral beliefs differ across cultures, as well as within communities, conditions, and interactions (Bandura, 2016; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Haidt, 2013). Moral injury occurs when an individual's personal moral beliefs do not align with a behaviour, action, or experience, resulting in negative emotional, psychological, spiritual, existential, and social effects.

An early proponent of moral injury is Jonathan Shay who studied the experiences of Vietnam veterans who struggled to regain trust after feeling betrayed by their military leadership (Shay, 1995). Shay's (2014, p. 182) refined conceptualisation of moral injury is that

it occurs when there has been: "(a) a betrayal of "what's right", (b) either by a person in legitimate authority or by one's self, (c) in a high stake situation". This definition is based on classic literature and on his patients' narratives. Originally, however, Shay did not consider that moral injury can be experienced by the perpetrators of the moral transgression. Rather, it was Litz et al.'s (2009) review of literature, which focused predominantly on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that extended moral injury's applicability to perpetrators. They define potentially morally injurious experiences as occurring when; "one perpetrates, fails to prevent, bears witness to, or learns about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al., 2009, p. 700). This working conceptual model was labelled "preliminary" by the authors, and aimed to stimulate a dialogue about, and critical examination of, moral injury. Notably, Litz and co-authors did not include betrayal in their definition, despite this being commonly included in many other definitions of moral injury. Drescher et al. (2011, p. 9) provide a similar definition where moral injury, as a result of various acts of omission or commission, produces "disruption in an individual's confidence and expectations about one's own or others' motivation or capacity to behave in a just and ethical manner". Further definitions and conceptualisations have also been put forward that place greater emphasis on moral injury's empirically and theoretically recognised symptoms and maladaptive behaviours (e.g., Farnsworth et al., 2017; Jinkerson, 2016).

Out of these various definitions, the conceptual model proposed by Litz et al. (2009) is most commonly referenced in the literature, followed by the Shay (2014) and Drescher et al. (2011)'s definitions (Richardson et al., 2020). Litz's preliminary definition has proven to be a useful guide to direct further research. Now that this dialogue on moral injury has been successfully stimulated, an empirically validated conceptualisation with academic consensus is required. This is especially important as a systematic review on the definitions of moral injury found that nearly all definitions lack empirical support, and therefore the authors recommend a study that tests existent definitions through rigorous research design, conducted in a representative military population including active duty military personnel (Richardson et al., 2020). A greater discussion on the debates and critiques of moral injury's conceptualisation may be found in section 2.3.2.

Moral injury requires an experience that is at odds with core ethical and moral beliefs (Maguen & Litz, 2012). It occurs when an individual is (or becomes) aware of the discrepancy between their moral beliefs and this experience, which subsequently creates cognitive

dissonance and inner conflict (Litz et al., 2009). Therefore, the individual must appraise the event as being somehow morally wrong or violating deeply held beliefs or values, and may feel either a sense of personal agency about the occurrence of the event(s) or a desire to see the violations punished or rectified (Currier et al., 2021). Not everyone develops moral injury as a result of morally injurious events (Farnsworth et al., 2017). If the individual resolves this cognitive dissonance between their moral beliefs and actions, they are able to continue without impairment (Drescher et al., 2011). Individuals with unresolved cognitive dissonance, and who are unable to successfully accommodate the experience into their pre-existing moral schemas, suffer from the subsequent emotional responses and dysfunctional behaviours that characterise moral injury (Jinkerson, 2016; Litz et al., 2009). These include psychological, existential, behavioural, and interpersonal problems. These different outcomes have likely increased the interdisciplinary appeal of moral injury, with contributions to the concept coming from not only psychologists and other mental health professionals, but also chaplains, theologians, and philosophers (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021). While this allows for unique collaborations, Currier et al. (2021c) warn the continued lack of definitional specificity continues to create challenges in communication and reliability.

The idea that war can be morally compromising and psychologically harmful is not new. It has been a recurrent theme in art, religion, and literature (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash et al., 2013). For example, Shay's original exploration of moral injury arose from his study on the parallels between the experiences of Homer's Achilles in the Illiad to those of modern Vietnam veterans (Shay, 1995). Additionally, previous literature on stress in combat also holds many descriptions of enduring distress following events where combatants perceive moral codes to have been violated (Nash et al., 2013). What is new and developing is the topic's consideration from a clinical perspective (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash et al., 2013). What is also new is the consideration of the impact of moral transgressions on those who commit them (Litz & Kerig, 2019).

Drescher et al. (2011)'s interviews with 23 health and religious professionals with experience of working with military personnel and veterans supported the usefulness of the concept. Whilst prevalence rates are still unknown, moral injury and exposure to PMIEs has been argued to be relatively common in military personnel and veteran populations, and is found to have a considerable negative impact on mental health (Koenig et al., 2019; Williamson et al., 2019a). Despite this, unfortunately, there is still little recognition of moral

injury by mental health professionals who continue to predominantly focus on PTSD instead (Koenig et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Critiques and debates in conceptualisation efforts

As evident in the previous section, there are variations in the conceptualisation of moral injury and greater consensus is needed (Griffin et al., 2019). As construct validation is ongoing, divergent theoretical models have been applied to the understanding and treatment of moral injury.

For example, some researchers have placed moral injury on a continuum, where moral stressors are considered to range from reversible and benign to more severe and persistent leading to moral injury (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash, 2019). Moral injury can therefore be distinguished by its severity of emotional responses and symptoms, and by the impact this has on an individual's identity and self-attributions (Litz & Kerig, 2019). Nash (2019) therefore argues that moral injury occurs when there is persistent distress and lack of functioning, and when the stress is so substantial that it is harmful regardless of how the stressor is consciously appraised. Nash sees moral injury as a "literal wound to the mind, brain, body and spirit" (p. 456). Farnsworth (Farnsworth et al., 2014, 2017; 2019; Farnsworth et al., 2019) proposes an alternative model and argues that moral emotions are an expected response to morally injurious events that are in themselves not pathological. Farnsworth claims that it is the behavioural responses to these moral emotions that is maladaptive in moral injury instead. This is likely a more representative view of moral emotions and moral injury, as moral emotions were similarly described in Chapter 1 as intuitive and natural responses that motivate adherence to moral values and are therefore not inherently negative. Rather, they evolved to serve a positive function to preserve and regulate social relationships (Haidt, 2003; Rai & Fiske, 2011). For example, guilt has adaptive qualities as it promotes positive behaviour change (Tangney et al., 2007). Moral injury may have similarly evolved as a potentially adaptive response to avoid the consequences of moral violations, as it would signal to communities that individuals are less likely to commit a violation again (Zefferman & Mathew, 2020).

The differences between these models are related to the debate on the medicalisation of moral injury. Nash (2019) provides a medical model of moral injury with an emphasis on

the damaging role of physical stress. Litz and Kerig (2019) also suggest that for moral injury to be a useful construct in the clinical realm, and for valid empirical research to take place, moral injury needs to be defined as a reliably measured syndrome. They do, however, admit that it may turn out to be the case that moral injury does not have sufficient incremental validity for this. Farnsworth's (Farnsworth et al., 2017, 2019) interpretation is more likely, which warns against the "unnecessary" pathologizing of moral emotions and moral experiences. Nieuwsma et al. (2015) similarly argue against viewing moral injury as an illness given that moral beliefs are socially constructed. This is in line with the literature from Chapter 1 which similarly emphasised the influence of social factors and interactions on moral beliefs (e.g., Bandura, 2014; Ellemers et al., 2019; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013). Again, given that Nieuwsma and Farnsworth's views are more in congruence with the morality literature, they are more likely to be representative of moral injury as opposed to the medical model which is not currently supported with sufficient evidence. Moving away from a medical model may also benefit treatment efforts, given that providers require new, well-elaborated tools for conceptualising and intervening with morally complex issues, and cannot focus on the needs and distress of the individual alone (i.e., the historical focus in clinical practice) considering that morality should be viewed as intrinsically social and relational (Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021).

Molendijk (2018a) proposes that moral injury could be framed as an ethical struggle rather than as a psychiatric disorder. From her interviews with morally injured veterans, she concluded that they did not exhibit distorted cognitions or faulty logic but instead demonstrated confusion about their experiences, crushed moral certainties, and feelings that "morality itself" failed them. Relatedly, Stein et al. (2012) applied a coding scheme to 122 structured clinical interviews and found that service members may feel guilty about their actions despite understanding the underlying rationale for them and the influence of the context. This is also in line with findings from focus groups with veterans, which noted that individuals do not need to feel unjustified in their actions to experience guilt and distress (Schorr et al., 2018). Molendijk (2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018) rightfully critiques the current conceptualizations of moral injury for approaching morality as a harmonious belief system, as this is at odds with the morality literature which reveals individuals have multiple moral commitments and potentially conflicting values (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; Molendijk, 2018b; Tessman, 2015).

Taking this literature into account, Molendijk and others have expanded on the conceptualisation of moral injury further by emphasizing that some veterans describe the distress caused by morally injurious events as resulting from cognitive dissonance between their competing and multifaceted moral beliefs (Molendijk, 2018b; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). Moral injury should therefore be understood not just as a conflict between an act and an individual's moral code, but also as contradictions between or within moral codes (Molendijk et al., 2018). For example, there are cases where the appropriate moral action is ambiguous, and there may be moral incongruences between military and civilian values and identities (Molendijk, 2018b; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). This explains how it is possible for moral injury to occur only once an individual is separated from a military context and culture where the morally injurious event occurred (Litz et al., 2009), and when they are in a different "moral community" than the military environment (Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021). It also explains how societal misrecognition can contribute to moral injury, as public perceptions may exacerbate guilt and shame and leave a morally injured individual with a sense of societal estrangement (Jones, 2018b; Molendijk, 2018a). Given the social nature of morality, researchers have called for a more social and context-sensitive approach to the study and conceptualisation of moral injury (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Kinghorn, 2012; Molendijk, 2018a, 2019). This includes an advocation to recognise the role of political and military leadership in its development (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Molendijk, 2018b, 2019; Scandlyn & Hautzinger, 2015).

The moral injury literature also ignores the literature on morality in another sense. Although Drescher and Farnsworth (2021) suggest that moral intuitions are relevant to understanding mechanisms by which PMIEs result in moral injury, there is little recognition of the differentiation between the types of moral judgment (i.e. cognitive reasoning vs. intuition) that were discussed in Chapter 1. Although moral emotions are discussed in-depth as part of the outcome of moral injury, there is no discussion or differentiation between the roles of emotions, or intuitions, and reasoning in the development of moral injury. Given that moral injury occurs as a result of cognitive dissonance between a moral judgment and an event, one would expect greater discussion on the type of processes that are involved in making such judgments. This gap is notable especially because, as described in Chapter 1, the debate relating to the role of these different processes in moral judgments heavily dominates the morality literature. Further research into this would likely aid conceptualisation and

identification efforts. It could be hypothesized that moral intuitions are what cause the initial recognition of cognitive dissonance when the moral transgression occurs, followed by conflicts in moral reasoning that sustain the associated moral emotions. Alternatively, it could be that it is the conflicting moral reasoning that creates cognitive dissonance, with associated moral emotions subsequently sustaining the negative consequences of this. This requires further research. Rather than focusing predominantly on clinical aspects of moral injury, it is therefore recommended that researchers draw further from the morality literature. This would provide a much more detailed, and all-encompassing, understanding of moral injury.

A final issue in the conceptualisation of moral injury is that morally injurious events are sometimes mislabelled as "moral injuries", which conflates exposure and outcome (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016). Moral injury needs to be separated from the events that precipitate it given that exposure does not ensure moral injury and its associated outcomes (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Griffin et al., 2019). Rather, as with PTSD, events only shift to moral injuries following evidence of the lasting impact of those experiences (Litz & Kerig, 2019). As a result, events are best construed as potentially morally injurious events (Griffin et al., 2019; Litz & Kerig, 2019). These events will be referred to as "PMIEs" for the remainder of this chapter.

This issue of conflating exposure to PMIEs with morally injurious outcomes is reflected in the development of a measure of moral injury. Whilst more recent efforts aim to develop outcome-oriented measures of moral injury (e.g., Currier et al., 2018; Koenig et al., 2018; Yeterian et al., 2019), research so far has relied heavily upon exposure-oriented measures (e.g., Currier, Holland, Drescher, et al., 2015; Nash et al., 2013) despite exposure to PMIEs not necessarily resulting in morally injurious outcomes. Issues in conceptualisation efforts pose difficulties for measure creation, and existent measures of moral injury will be described and critiqued further in Chapter 5.

As Litz and Kerig (2019, p. 342) state, the "acceptance of the idea of [moral injury] has outpaced scientific knowledge, and, in some texts, the concept of [moral injury] has become reified without empirical validation or academic consensus". Clear agreement on the concept and its operationalization is urgently required for research to demonstrate replicability and generalizability. This is also needed to elucidate what will be targeted in its treatment, as there is currently no validated treatment approach for moral injury (Williamson et al., 2019a)

and treatments for PTSD do not adequately address all of the symptoms present in those with moral injury (Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Burkman, 2013).

2.3.3 Differences between moral injury and PTSD

Conceptualisation efforts benefit from, and are clarified by, the differentiation between moral injury and PTSD. Moral injury is considered to be separate from PTSD, yet there is some overlap (Koenig et al., 2020). The constructs differ in their triggering events, and in the subsequent symptomatology and outcomes.

PTSD and moral injury both develop following exposure to a precipitating stressor, resulting in automatic and involuntary stress reactions and maladaptive coping responses (Farnsworth, 2021). Despite both developing after a traumatic experience, the source of distress related to the trauma differs. PTSD in the DSM-5 requires direct or indirect exposure to life-threat or sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), whilst moral injury follows a moral conflict of one's actions, or the actions of one's peers or leaders (Currier et al., 2018; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz et al., 2009; Shay, 2014). Whilst a traumatic event is regarded as the primary cause for PTSD, it may occupy a secondary role in moral injury given that it is driven by evaluations of the self (Jones, 2020). Additionally, as discussed in section 2.2, PTSD does not consider the potential harm produced by perpetration in traumatic contexts. As a result, the moral struggles and condemnation of the self are treated as sources of stress in moral injury, whereas in PTSD these are treated as symptoms and cognitive distortions (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018). Farnsworth et al. (2017) proposes this difference is due to PTSD being inherently pathology-based, whilst moral emotions in moral injury can be healthy and normative responses to PMIEs. What complicates this event-based differentiation is that many PMIEs are also likely to entail life threat or occur in close proximity to such threats (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Stein et al., 2012). Therefore, it may be difficult to separate the concepts, as they are often associated with one another and may be co-morbid (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Jinkerson, 2016). Moral injury can also occur in the absence of active PTSD symptoms (Farnsworth et al., 2014).

Moral injury shares several features and symptoms with PTSD. The DSM-5 added symptoms to the diagnosis of PTSD, some of which involve moral emotions and reflect the growing literature on moral injury (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Schorr et al., 2018). The behavioural,

cognitive, emotional, and social implications of moral injury, including withdrawal, rumination, and self-condemnation, closely mirror the re-experiencing, avoidance, and emotional numbing symptoms of PTSD (Jinkerson, 2016; Litz & Kerig, 2019). Koenig et al. (2020) administered measures of moral injury and PTSD symptoms to 591 individuals who had served in a combat theatre and found some overlap between the constructs across all PTSD symptom clusters, with the largest overlap in the negative cognitions and emotions cluster. Some of this overlap can be argued to be in form but not in function (Farnsworth et al., 2017). For example, the symptom of avoidance in moral injury is based on shame, whilst in PTSD it is based on personal safety and fear (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009). Additionally, PTSD's symptom of exaggerated or misplaced blame is distinct from self- or other-blame in moral injury given that this judgment may be accurate or appropriate (Litz & Kerig, 2019). Furthermore, given that moral injury does not necessarily develop through an experience involving life-threat, it may not be associated with physiological arousal which is a central feature of PTSD (Litz et al., 2009; Shay, 2014).

There are several recent publications with varying methodologies that provide empirical evidence for the differentiation between moral injury and PTSD. Firstly, Bryan et al. (2018) examined the differences in PTSD and moral injury symptoms by surveying 930 US National Guard personnel. Results of their exploratory structural equation modelling revealed that both PTSD and moral injury were characterised by depression, but that PTSD was uniquely characterised by startle reflex, memory loss, nightmares, insomnia, and self-reported flashbacks whereas moral injury was uniquely characterised by guilt, shame, anger, anhedonia, and social alienation. Therefore, PTSD and moral injury were found to be separate constructs characterised by unique symptoms. Secondly, 23 health and religious professionals with experience of working with military personnel and veterans were interviewed, and unanimously agreed that the construct of moral injury is not adequately covered by PTSD diagnostic criteria (Drescher et al., 2011). Thirdly, preliminary evidence is emerging of different neural underpinnings between PTSD and non-danger-based traumas, such as moral injury (Barnes et al., 2019; Ramage et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2019). Lastly, an integrative review of 116 epidemiological and clinical studies concluded that morally injurious outcomes have a unique pathology and trajectory relative to other trauma types (Griffin et al., 2019). The combination of this evidence strongly indicates that moral injury can be differentiated from

PTSD. This demonstrates the value of moral injury as a concept, and that extending PTSD to perpetrators would not sufficiently capture this traumatic injury on its own.

Moral injury and PTSD's differentiation is complicated by the robust finding that past exposure to PMIEs predicts current symptoms of PTSD (Currier et al., 2019; Nash, 2019; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020). This relationship appears not to be bidirectional (Currier et al., 2019). Despite the establishment that moral injury and PTSD are distinct and empirically unique constructs (Bryan et al., 2018; Koenig et al., 2019), is not yet clear how and why this association exists. Greater understanding will require further examination of the incremental validity of moral injury's outcomes relative to the symptoms of PTSD (Griffin et al., 2019). These efforts naturally tie into the need for clarification on the conceptualisation of moral injury in the first place.

Research suggests that PMIEs are associated not only with PTSD, but also with various other mental health problems and debilitating outcomes (Maguen & Litz, 2012). For example, moral injury has been significantly associated with psychological conditions such as depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviour across a range of professions and a variety of countries (Bryan et al., 2018; Farnsworth, 2019; Farnsworth et al., 2014, 2017; Jinkerson, 2016; Koenig et al., 2019; Maguen et al., 2021; Williamson et al., 2018; Wisco et al., 2017). When moral injury arises in conjunction with other mental illnesses, it might contribute to their development, make such illnesses more severe, or inhibit natural recovery processes (Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2018). Therefore, moral injury's complex relationships with other psychological conditions requires further elucidation. Longitudinal research would contribute to the understanding of these relationships. Moral injury is also debilitating and severely distressing in its own right, and the symptoms, implications, and outcomes that uniquely characterise moral injury will be explained in the following section.

2.4 Moral injury's implications and outcomes

Moral injury is not categorised as a mental illness and at a given point in time, an individual may have mild to extreme manifestations (Maguen & Litz, 2012). Individuals present different combinations of symptoms (Farnsworth et al., 2014), but typically display emotional responses, cognitive reactions, and dysfunctional behaviours (Litz et al., 2009). Moral injury

can also be spiritually, existentially, and socially damaging in the long-term (Currier, Carroll, et al., 2021; Griffin et al., 2019; Jinkerson, 2016; Yeterian et al., 2019). Qualitative studies have found that responses can lie dormant for some time and often occur following periods of reflection, despite that the moral violation is recognised in the moment (Held et al., 2019; Schorr et al., 2018).

Some of moral injury's symptoms are similar to those of PTSD, such as intrusions, avoidance, numbing, and re-experiencing (Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Litz, 2012). Litz et al. (2009) suggest that avoidance thwarts successful accommodation of the morally injurious experiences, and that intrusion and re-experiencing symptoms serve as painful reminders of the moral violation. These symptoms therefore elicit significant psychological distress and may worsen the feelings of self-condemnation that uniquely characterise moral injury, such as shame and guilt (Bryan et al., 2018; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Litz, 2012). As Dombo et al. (2013) puts forward, in moral injury the experiences of guilt and shame share the feeling that the moral violation is an extension of the self - so that if the behaviour is "bad" then the individual engaging in that violation is also "bad". This explains the intensely negative self-appraisals associated with guilt and shame in moral injury.

Guilt and shame notify individuals of personal moral infractions and provoke action tendencies aimed at reducing conflict (Farnsworth et al., 2014). These action tendencies can be prosocial, such as to reduce social damage in the form of reparative or corrective behaviour. This is especially common following guilt (Litz et al., 2009). Resulting actions can also be maladaptive, such as where individuals self-isolate or punish themselves (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz et al., 2009). When shame and guilt result in social withdrawal, the individual loses supportive interactions that may have disconfirmed the negative self-appraisals. This may subsequently lead to the self-condemnation being reinforced further (Litz et al., 2009). Guilt is more commonly experienced when individuals feel remorse and tends to be related to the actions related to the morally injurious events, whilst shame is experienced as a result of self-blame and perceived personal inadequacies (Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009). The expressions and implications of guilt and shame in moral injury are in line with the research on moral emotions presented in Chapter 1.

As was also explained in Chapter 1, morality evolved for social purposes to promote cooperation within groups (Decety & Wheatley, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013) and as such

the social implications of moral injury are predictable. An individual may feel socially excluded as a result of their personal transgression, or feel conflicted about their "in-group" (Litz & Kerig, 2019). These social consequences of moral injury appear to be especially pernicious (Griffin et al., 2019). Social relationships can be damaged as a result of moral injury, for example due to individuals socially withdrawing (e.g., Bryan et al., 2018; Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Yeterian et al., 2019). As a result of this, their employment may also be affected (Williamson et al., 2019b). A loss of trust in others or themselves has been commonly noted (Currier et al., 2018; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Molendijk, 2018b; Shay, 2003, 2014; Yeterian et al., 2019). Shay (2014) suggests that when social trust is impaired, it is replaced by an expectation of harm, exploitation, and humiliation.

Relatedly, moral injury can also result in an altered worldview, existential issues, and disenchantment with society's morality (Molendijk et al., 2018). These radical shifts in moral worldviews may manifest as moral disillusionment or cynicism toward moral ideas and authorities, and individuals may abandon previously held moral practices (Farnsworth, 2021). This will be illustrated and discussed further in Chapter 4, where moral disillusionment following moral injury in Republican ex-combatants is suggested to contribute to disengagement from non-state political violence. Additionally, the spirituality and faith of some individuals can be impacted (Currier, Carroll, et al., 2021; Drescher & Foy, 2008; Farnsworth et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Williamson et al., 2019b; Yeterian et al., 2019). Morally injured individuals may display anger or even aggression (Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2019; Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Molendijk, 2018b). Feelings of senselessness, hopelessness, and helplessness are also common (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Molendijk, 2018b), as individuals with moral injury commonly feel at the mercy of events and constrained by strategies or hierarchical rules that govern their actions (Jones, 2020).

With a few exceptions (e.g., Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2019; Molendijk, 2018b), the literature referenced in this section predominantly consists of theoretical studies and literature reviews or qualitative studies with small samples and little generalizability. Much more rigorous empirical investigation is therefore required to consolidate and validate the symptoms of moral injury. This should include longitudinal quantitative and qualitative research with larger and representative samples, which would allow for symptoms to be tracked over time. Future research should also incorporate clinical interviews. Such validated diagnostic interviews would aid the differentiation of morally injurious outcomes from

diagnoses such as PTSD and depression. This is especially important as the samples in the qualitative studies commonly relied upon treatment-seeking veterans and/or veterans with diagnoses of PTSD (e.g., Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Held et al., 2019; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2019b).

2.5 Morally injurious events and risk factors

The symptomatology and expressions of moral injury are also dependent on the type of morally injurious event and the individual's role in it. There is disagreement and little clarity on what events constitute as morally injurious (Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2017), and there are no consensus criteria for the necessary elements of PMIEs (Litz & Kerig, 2019). As Litz et al. (2009) originally put forward, the event can involve an act of wrongdoing, a failure to prevent unethical behaviour, or the witnessing or learning about such an event. Put simply, it involves a moral violation by the individual themselves or by others (Stein et al., 2012). For military populations, this can include acts that are sanctioned during combat but prohibited outside of war (e.g., killing), as well as acts that violate military rules of engagement (e.g., atrocities) (Wisco et al., 2017).

There is consensus in the field that there are two broad types of PMIEs; acts of personal responsibility or commission, and acts of omission or where others are responsible (Griffin et al., 2019; Jordan et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash et al., 2013; Schorr et al., 2018). Acts of commission may involve either deliberate or accidental harm (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Schorr et al., 2018). Through clinician-led focus groups with 19 US veterans from various conflicts, Schorr et al. (2018) identified that acts of personal responsibility include killing/injuring an enemy in battle, engaging in disproportionate violence, harming civilians or civilian life, failing to prevent harm to others, whilst acts where others are responsible include betrayal by trusted others or systems, others causing disproportionate violence, or others harming civilians or civilian life. Interestingly, Bryan et al. (2016) administered the Moral Injury Events Scale to large clinical (N = 151) and nonclinical (N = 953) military samples, and their analyses supported that PMIEs should instead be divided into three types of transgressions with betrayal as a separate type. Despite this, the literature continues to focus on the two broader types of omission and commission. Similar studies with similar sample sizes to that

of Bryan et al. (2016) should clarify the possibility of betrayal as a separate type in future research.

The type of PMIE influences the outcome and symptoms of moral injury. For example, acts of commission have been found to be associated with guilt, shame, re-experiencing, and internalizing symptoms, whilst other-related events are associated with anger, resentment, humiliation, and externalizing symptoms (Litz et al., 2018; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Stein et al., 2012). Self- and other-directed moral injury reactions have also been found to have differential effects on social well-being outcomes (Chesnut et al., 2020). Self-directed moral injury appears to be especially distressing (Currier et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009). For example, a study with a sample of 315 post-9/11 veterans found that those who reported perceived culpability for doing a moral wrong were at a "substantially heightened risk" for depressive symptoms, PTSD symptoms, suicidality, and alcohol or substance abuse (Nieuwsma et al., 2020).

Contextual factors in military settings have been found to influence the degree to which the PMIE is initially dissonant or conflictual (Litz et al., 2009). Disproportionate violence, incidents involving civilians, and within-rank violence are identified as common contextual factors (Drescher et al., 2011; Schorr et al., 2018). From interviews with eight veterans, Held et al. (2019) found chaotic situations, power and rank dynamics, and a perceived need to prove themselves to have lead the veterans, at least in part, to act in ways that conflicted with their moral beliefs. Currier, McCormick and Drescher (2015), via interviews with 14 veterans from the Iraq/Afghanistan era, highlighted 25 contextual factors. Through these interviews, the authors were able to contextualise the PMIEs from the veterans' perspectives and gain insight into how such factors were related to the development of moral injury. The contextual factors the authors found were related to psychological, organisational, environmental, and cultural and relational circumstances. For example, an evolution of hateful attitudes towards Iraqis or Afghans contributed to PMIEs in a third of their sample, whilst several participants conversely experienced distress over civilians' ongoing predicaments and conditions of poverty and instability. Nearly half of their sample discussed a lack of trust or poor attachments with comrades in their units. Incompetence or betrayal of leadership was frequently mentioned. Relatedly, Molendijk (2019) suggests political decision-making and framing can increase the risk of moral injury and adversely affect its consequences, as this influences the way veterans experience their deployment and

homecoming. Litz et al. (2009) claim there is a higher likelihood for PMIEs in guerrilla warfare or counterinsurgencies in urban contexts, as these increase uncertainty and risk to civilians.

Little is known about the risk and protective factors that moderate the association between exposure to PMIEs and moral injury outcomes (Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2019). The appraisal of the PMIE is likely to be important (Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2021). Naturally, certain occupations such as being a member of the military or a first responder, is likely to increase risk for moral injury given the higher risk of encountering PMIEs (Rozek & Bryan, 2021). Certain roles, such as more active rather than passive ones, may also increase the risk for moral injury (Bryan et al., 2014; Litz et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2012). Additionally, gender differences have been found in the rates of PMIEs (Maguen et al., 2020). Other suggested vulnerability factors include: combat exposure/severity and deployment length (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Wisco et al., 2017), lack of training (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015), perceived lack of social support from command and loved ones (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Ferrajão & Oliveira, 2016; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Houtsma et al., 2017; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020), grief and anger (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Shay, 1995), individual traits such as shame-proneness, aggression, lower cognitive flexibility, deficits in emotion regulation, neuroticism, and dark triad personality traits (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Held, Klassen, Zalta, et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009; Papazoglou et al., 2019; Rozek & Bryan, 2021), perceived unawareness or unpreparedness for the potential consequences of one's decisions or low education attainment (Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020), racial-ethnic minorities of lower socioeconomic status (Wisco et al., 2017), and social stigmatization (Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Scandlyn & Hautzinger, 2015).

Whilst some of these self-evident (e.g., increased combat severity increases potential exposure to PMIEs), many of these factors require greater empirical validation. More qualitative research is required in particular, such as conducted by Currier, McCormick, and Drescher (2015) on the contextual factors in PMIEs. Despite their small sample sizes, these studies have allowed for more nuanced and in-depth exploration into the circumstances that contribute to moral injury.

Suggested protective factors for moral injury are better leadership and training in battlefield ethics (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Maguen & Litz, 2012), and viewing goals as attainable and having a just-world view (Litz et al., 2009). The moral disengagement processes

discussed in Chapter 1 may protect an individual from moral injury. These processes allow moral self-sanctions (e.g., self-condemnation or guilt) to be selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct (Bandura, 1990, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996), and as a result Bandura (2002) claims high moral disengagers experience low guilt over harmful conduct. It could also be the converse and increase the vulnerability to moral injury given that one such process of moral disengagement, dehumanization of the enemy, has been identified in circumstances for PMIEs (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Held et al., 2019), and due to moral injury, according to Litz et al. (2009), being only possible if an individual has an intact moral belief system.

Further research on risk, protective, and contextual factors is required. Greater differentiation between wars is recommended to investigate whether any factors are specific to particular conflicts and contexts. The existent research on these factors has been predominantly conducted on Western militaries and veteran populations and may therefore be exclusive to them. In general, research on moral injury in non-Western countries is urgently required to further the understanding of the concept. Given that moral beliefs differ across cultures (Haidt, 2013), it would be interesting to compare risk and protective factors between Western and non-Western cultures. For example, Zefferman and Matthew (2020) suggest from their investigation of moral injury in Turkana warriors from Kenya that combat-related moral injury is less likely to occur in small-scale societies, as combatants in these societies have greater moral autonomy than in Western military systems, and due to there often being more signals from small-scale communities that what combatants have done is normative and commendable. Prospective research, longitudinal research, and research at time of deployment is also recommended. This would determine when moral injury emerges relative to the timing of the PMIE, and how it emerges with respect to other indicators of psychological distress over time. Currently, the research is largely retrospective, which risks memory distortions in participants.

2.6 Application to non-military populations

Whilst the literature on moral injury thus far has predominantly focused on moral injury in military personnel and veterans, it is not an exclusively military-related context. Prior to Shay's proposal of moral injury, Jameton (1984) coined a somewhat similar concept; "moral

distress". Moral distress is experienced by nurses when they are constrained from acting in a way they believe to be ethical or moral due to institutional regulations. This can result in "moral residue", which refers to the long-term effects of the negative thoughts and feelings that endure after the event triggering moral distress has passed (Jameton, 1993; Webster & Bayliss, 2000). It is not yet clear how it differs from moral injury (Vermetten & Jetly, 2018).

Moral injury itself has also been applied to a wide variety of non-military populations. PMIEs with subsequent moral injury have been identified in certain occupations such as in journalists (Feinstein et al., 2018), professionals involved with child protection services (Haight, Sugrue, & Calhoun, 2017), educators (Currier, Holland, et al., 2015; Sugrue, 2019), medical students (Murray & Gidwani, 2018), emergency service and public safety personnel (Dentry et al., 2017; Roth, Andrews, et al., 2022), law enforcement (McCormack & Riley, 2016; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2019; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018; Tuttle et al., 2019) including online child sex crime investigators (Lee et al., 2020), and health care providers (Gibbons et al., 2013; Kilpatrick et al., 2020; Stovall et al., 2020; Talbot & Dean, 2018). Moral injury has also been identified in other populations such as in forensic psychiatry patients (Roth, qureshi, et al., 2022), refugees and asylum-seekers (Hoffman et al., 2018; Nickerson et al., 2015, 2018), widowed mothers (Haight et al., 2020), youth (Chaplo et al., 2019), parents involved with child protection services (Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017), women who experienced homelessness and/or intimate partner violence (Otte, 2015), and women with a history of substance abuse (Hartman, 2015). Moral injury has also been suggested to occur in criminal offenders (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021b), given that a publication by Lynd and Lynd (2017) described enduring moral suffering in some prisoners that appeared to be very similar to moral injury from military events. This is relevant to the expansion of moral injury to Republican ex-combatants, who identified as non-state military combatants yet at times engaged in criminal activity. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The studies on moral injury in non-military populations mentioned above utilised a combination of methods, including interviews, focus groups, narrative analysis, case studies, and newly created and/or modified existent moral injury measures such as the Moral Injury Events Scale (Nash et al., 2013). This research suggests that these PMIEs and morally injurious outcomes, whilst influenced by their specific contexts, are consistent with the literature on

moral injury in military populations. Additionally, one study was conducted in El Salvador (Currier, Holland, et al., 2015) and another with Akan (Ghanaian) women (Haight et al., 2020). This suggests that moral injury can not only be successfully applied to non-military populations but can also be applied to non-Western contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a surge of interest in moral injury affecting health care staff treating COVID-19 patients (e.g., Borges et al., 2020; Brown & Shell, 2020; Dunham et al., 2020; Greenberg et al., 2020; Greenberg & Tracy, 2020; Haller et al., 2020; Jetly et al., 2020; Kok et al., 2020; Maguen & Price, 2020; Mohsin et al., 2020; Roycroft et al., 2020; Tracy et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020; Zuzelo, 2020). Morally injurious events are suggested to have arisen in this population given that insufficient resources and preparation for the pandemic led to lives being lost unnecessarily (Borges et al., 2020; Greenberg et al., 2020; Greenberg & Tracy, 2020; Maguen & Price, 2020; Tracy et al., 2020; Williamson, Murphy, & Greenberg, 2020). Although greater empirical research into this application of moral injury is required, the surge of interest in moral injury during COVID-19 allowed for a much-needed increase in recognition of moral injury in non-military populations.

Moral injury has also been suggested to affect law enforcement (Kamkar et al., 2020; Komarovskaya et al., 2011; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2019; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018; Tuttle et al., 2019). This is relevant to Chapter 4, as violent Republican organisations engaged in vigilantism and community 'policing' (McGlinchey, 2019; Morrison, 2015). This involved attacking members of their community for civil and political crimes (Silke, 1998a, 1999). Chapter 4 will describe these 'policing' activities in greater detail. It will draw from the literature on moral injury and PMIEs in members of traditional law enforcement to demonstrate how vigilantism may have exposed Republican ex-combatants to similar PMIEs.

PMIEs in police are argued to be similar to those facing military personnel, and to occur when they face moral transgressions in their line of duty that are inconsistent with their personal beliefs (Tuttle et al., 2019). For example, police are exposed to atrocities and death in their line of duty (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017). Whilst they are instilled with the objective to save and support civilian victims, they may not be always be successful, which could risk guilt and moral injury (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017). There may also be organizational risk

factors for moral injury in police, relating to its hierarchical structure and a potential failure of an organization to recognize, anticipate, and actively mitigate routinely faced emotional challenges (McCormack & Riley, 2016). Specific PMIEs that have been suggested in police include having to apply the use of (lethal) force, witnessing or failing to prevent death or harm to a colleague or victim, witnessing and not reporting negative or unethical behaviour by colleagues, having to make critical decisions that turn out to be morally detrimental, and/or being exposed to child exploitation (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018; Tuttle et al., 2019). Such experiences can alter their beliefs about trustworthiness and about the safety and benevolence of the world (Litz et al., 2009; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017).

The Moral Injury Events Scale (Nash et al., 2013) has been administered to samples of National Police Finland, with results indicating evidence of moral injury in participants (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2019; Tuttle et al., 2019). For example, in one of the studies 74% of the 453 participants had moderate levels of moral injury, with 10% reporting high levels of "self-focused" moral injury and nearly 25% reporting levels of "others-focused" moral injury (Papazoglou et al., 2019). These findings are not necessarily generalizable to the general law enforcement population given that participants were from National Police Finland, predominantly male, and white. Additionally, whilst the Moral Injury Events Scale can measure PMIEs, it does not provide information on what these events were or how these may have differed from PMIEs in military samples.

One other study interviewed seven Australian police officers that were medically discharged with PTSD (McCormack & Riley, 2016). Participants revealed experiences of moral injury, with awareness and recognition of it occurring post-discharge. This was largely attributable to organizational factors including feelings of betrayal and invalidation given that they felt neglected when in need of support and rejected when discharged. Again, this study is not generalizable due to the small sample size and considering participants were medically discharged, which may have made them more likely to have experienced moral injury in comparison to the general population of law enforcement. Therefore, whilst moral injury does appear to occur in members of law enforcement, greater investigation is required with more generalizable samples to clarify when they are at risk for moral injury, how they are affected by it, and how their experiences differ from those of military personnel.

The successful application of moral injury to non-military populations supports the usefulness of moral injury as a concept. Continued investigation outside of traditional state military contexts is recommended, given that morality is ubiquitous and concerns a wide variety of life experiences, clinical issues, and research questions (Farnsworth et al., 2019; Griffin et al., 2019).

2.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter aimed to introduce and provide a broad overview of the literature on moral injury. It is a valuable and useful concept that provides insights into trauma that is not fear-based, and which can be caused by perpetration. Much promising research has come out in a short space of time. However, further research is needed in all aspects of the concept outlined in this chapter. First and foremost, greater consensus on the conceptualisation of moral injury is urgently required. Empirical research is required to strengthen the face validity and reliability of the construct, given the dearth of empirically designed research studies on moral injury (Richardson et al., 2020). Additionally, greater insight would be obtained from the application of moral injury to populations other than veterans or personnel from traditional state militaries. The next chapter will bring the research discussed in Chapter 1 and this chapter together, as it will outline the justifications and merits of applying moral injury to actors of non-state political violence.

Chapter 3. Applying moral injury to non-state political violence

I think it, it finally started to seep into my conscious mind, you know, like 'What are you doing? Do you want to be the bomber? Do you want to be, you know, that person that, that does this? Is it worth it? Is, you know, this the ultimate price I'm going to end up paying for what I'm doing?' And there were those times that I would have, you know, the little voice in my head saying 'You're a [expletive]. You know, there's something better.' – Former right wing extremist under the pseudonym "Sarah" (Horgan et al., 2017, p. 69)

The split second it happened, I lost part of myself that I'll never get back. You hear the bang and it's too late. Standing over the body, it hits you. I felt that somebody had reached down inside me and ripped my insides out. You've found somewhere you've never been before and it's not a very nice place. You can't stop it. It's too late. – Former UVF member Billy Giles (Taylor, 2000, p. 5)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter proposes moral injury can and should be investigated in individuals who were involved in non-state political violence. This would provide further insight into the individual psychological repercussions of engaging in non-state political violence. The chapter will first outline the research that is available on mental health and non-state political violence, including evidence on the mental health of actors prior to and following engagement. This research will demonstrate that actors are not necessarily more likely than the general population to be suffering from mental illness prior to their involvement and may in fact be susceptible to psychological problems because of their engagement in non-state political violence. This chapter will also argue that available research indicates that the negative psychological effects of involvement in non-state political violence may factor into some individuals' decisions to disengage from organisations that employ such violence. Subsequently, it will be proposed moral injury is applicable to these populations and that investigating the incidence of moral injury would provide greater insights into the topics covered in the chapter.

The chapter will present empirical and theoretical evidence, as well as support from case studies and quotes. "Sarah" and Billy Giles, whose quotes opened this chapter, are examples of such case studies and will be discussed in greater detail. The evidence discussed in this chapter provides direct insight into the various perspectives and experiences of (former) actors of non-state political violence from a wide variety of contexts, given that much of this research involved the conduction of interviews or the analysis of other forms of primary data.

3.2 Mental health prior to engagement in non-state political violence

Thus far, much of the psychological research on non-state political violence has focused on understanding motivations and vulnerabilities to radicalization (Crenshaw & LaFree, 2017; Grace, 2018; Horgan, 2017; Post et al., 2014). This research will be briefly outlined to demonstrate that actors of non-state political violence are not more likely to suffer from mental illness than the general population, with little evidence that psychopathology contributes to such violence. This is an important consideration when examining whether actors are psychologically affected by their engagement in non-state political violence as otherwise it could be raised as a confounding variable. In the specific case of moral injury, an "intact moral code" that can be violated is required, yet pre-existing mental health conditions such as psychopathy would affect this "moral code" (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021a).

Psychological illness in actors was originally investigated in an attempt to explain engagement in non-state political violence (Gill & Corner, 2017; Horgan, 2014). This likely resulted from a desire to attribute psychological disorders to violence, as actors were perceived as "psychopathic" and "abnormal" (Horgan, 2014; McCauley et al., 2013; Silke, 1998, 1999; Victoroff, 2005). Relatedly, terrorism researchers incorrectly conflated mental illness with irrationality and aggression, which may have been influenced by stigmatizing views of mental illness (Gill & Corner, 2017). This research was methodologically limited and of poor quality. For example, some studies had an absence of rigorous clinical diagnostic procedures (Corner & Gill, 2018; Silke, 1998b; Victoroff, 2005). Additionally, the research centred almost entirely on personality disorders and psychopathy with many complex psychological processes influencing engagement being ignored (Gill & Corner, 2017). For example, Horgan (2003) and Victoroff (2005) debunked the specific relationships of

psychopathy, Axis I (major clinical) and II (personality) disorders, and "insanity" criteria with terrorist involvement, rather than other forms of mental illness. Horgan and Victoroff did not claim there was no relationship with general mental illness but concluded there was no relationship between involvement in terrorism and those specific diagnoses. Misinterpretations of these conclusions by other researchers meant such nuance was lost and reviews in the field concluded that non-state political violence was not caused by mental illness (Corner & Gill, 2018; Gill & Corner, 2017). Claims and subsequent assumptions outright dismissing the role of mental illness were often made without necessary supportive evidence (Gill & Corner, 2017; Horgan, 2014).

A common conclusion in the literature now voices that terrorists are no more likely to suffer from psychopathology than the general population or control groups from similar backgrounds (Crenshaw & LaFree, 2017; McCauley et al., 2013; McCauley, 1991; Post et al., 2014). Rather, actors should be seen as "normal" given the lack of evidence for profiles that frame them as psychopathic or exhibiting "terrorist personalities", and as research has demonstrated that mental illness does not explain or cause non-state political violence independently (Horgan, 2014, 2017). In the context of Northern Ireland specifically there has been little evidence supporting that mental illness contributed to non-state political violence (Alderdice, 2007; McGarry, 2016; Weatherston & Moran, 2003). For example, Lyons and Harbinson (1986) compared a total of 106 political murderers and non-political murderers, and noted that in Northern Ireland political murderers suffered from significantly less psychological disturbance than criminals convicted for violent assaults. This conclusion is methodologically sound as it is based on psychiatric assessments, case records, and a 140-item questionnaire. The minority of actors in Northern Ireland that were found to suffer from psychological pathologies tended to be fringe members of groups, rather than central characters (Lyons & Harbinson, 1986; Silke, 1999). Rather, actors rationalised their violence and justified it with their belief in the cause and in the rightness of their actions, as highlighted in Chapter 1 (Lyons & Harbinson, 1986; Taylor & Quayle, 1994).

Currently, a growing body of research has identified some populations and subsets to exhibit higher than average rates of certain mental illnesses (Corner & Gill, 2018). For example, recent research on lone-actor terrorists has indicated they may be more likely to have a background that includes mental illness, such as schizophrenia and associated diagnoses (*CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, 2018; Corner

et al., 2016; Corner & Gill, 2015; McCauley et al., 2013). Lone actors with mental illness have been found to be able to plan sophisticated attacks (Borum, 2013). Further research should therefore continue to focus on whether specific populations or roles within an organisation significantly influence the relationship between involvement and mental illness. The role of specific symptoms also requires greater attention. Some associations have been found between symptoms of depression and vulnerability to radical ideologies (Bhui et al., 2019; Bhui, Everitt, et al., 2014; Bhui, Warfa, et al., 2014; Campelo et al., 2018). For example, Campelo et al.'s (2018) literature review on European adolescents who embraced the cause of radical Islamism suggests that depressive symptoms and suicidality may lead to adolescents seeking meaning from radical ideology, and as a result are especially attracted to the concept of martyrdom.

Clarification is therefore required at which point the experience of psychiatric symptoms is relevant to violent radicalisation and behaviour, and how they interact with other environmental factors and life stressors (Al-Attar, 2020; Corner et al., 2018; Corner & Gill, 2018; Gill & Corner, 2017). For example, specific symptoms may interact with social, attitudinal, ideological, and environmental factors to shape vulnerability indirectly (Al-Attar, 2020). Research should therefore further elucidate whether symptoms are a real risk factor for engagement, or whether they heighten certain vulnerabilities which in turn make them more likely to engage in violence or experience other risk factors (Gill & Corner, 2017). Recent research has therefore established a more balanced and nuanced approach to the study of psychiatric health and non-state political violence, with a recognition of the complexity of the relationship and with psychological disorders presumed to be one risk factor, amongst many, influencing involvement in non-state political violence for some individuals (Gill et al., 2021; Gill & Corner, 2017; Yakeley & Taylor, 2017).

3.3 Mental health during and after engagement in non-state political violence

Whilst mental health as a causative and explanatory factor for non-state political violence has received much attention over time, little direct research has been conducted on how involvement in non-state political violence affects the psychological wellbeing of its actors during and after their involvement, or its role in disengagement (Corner & Gill, 2018; Horgan, 2017; Morrison et al., 2021). It is unclear whether actors become "hardened" by their

experiences, or alternatively, how they cope and how engagement in violence affects them (Horgan, 2014). It has been suggested that some former actors of non-state political violence may suffer from PTSD (Alderdice, 2009). This is due to the lifestyle involving exposure to stressful, violent, and traumatic situations that may have an effect on their mental wellbeing (Al-Attar, 2020; Corner & Gill, 2019; Gill & Corner, 2017; Weatherston & Moran, 2003). Additionally, as highlighted in Chapter 2, killing and perpetrating violence have been found to be significant predictors of PTSD, moral conflict, psychological distress, and other trauma responses in veterans.

The research on the psychological effects of engagement in non-state political violence that has been conducted thus far indicates that it may result in psychological distress for some individuals. Evidence specific to the Northern Ireland context can be found in Chapter 4. It should be noted that direct research on this topic is still very limited and in an explorative stage. Corner and Gill (2019) conducted probability-based behavioural sequence analyses on 90 terrorist autobiographies. These analyses indicated that there are a wide range of risk factors and stressors associated with engagement and disengagement from terrorism. This was found to impact on multiple aspects of the lives of less resilient individuals and had long-lasting psychological effects. Individuals who reported psychological distress were significantly more likely to report guilt, regret, problems coping with their actions, problems with their lifestyle, and burnout. Barelle (2015) found from 22 interviews that some former violent extremists with varying ideologies suffered from anxiety, paranoia, trauma, substance abuse, burnout, depression, psychotic and emotional breakdowns as a result of their involvement in violent extremist groups. Similarly, van de Wetering et al. (2018) conducted interviews with 12 former right-wing extremists and described some suffering from panic attacks and depression. This was more prevalent in groups that used coercion and violence for internal discipline. Grace (2018) qualitatively analysed Al-Qaeda documents. Evidence of a host of psychological problems associated with involvement with Al-Qaeda was found, including self-directed suicide, depression, anxiety, and other psychological pressures and stressors. Other than the Corner and Gill (2019) study, all these studies were qualitative with small samples or limited material. Additionally, the Corner and Gill study was based on autobiographies, which are usually retrospective may be biased as the authors may wish to portray themselves in a certain light (Altier et al., 2012, 2017). Therefore, the conclusions on these relationships are not generalisable, and require further empirical research to establish

causative links between types of psychological distress and involvement in non-state political violence.

Interrogation and incarceration experiences as a result of involvement in non-state political violence have also been found to affect the mental health of some individuals (Grace, 2018; Weatherston & Moran, 2003). Robbins et al. (2005) identified evidence of mental illness, particularly clinical depression, PTSD and psychosis, in a number of foreign nationals detained indefinitely under the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001, and concluded detention to be the likely causative factor to these illnesses and deteriorations in mental health. Additionally, Betram (2015) put forward that isolation in prison could be detrimental to the mental health of a terrorist, reducing the likelihood of disengagement or deradicalisation. Individuals who decide to leave groups and movements may face additional psychological pressures. There are often barriers to disengaging, as leaving can be difficult and dangerous (Horgan, 2014). Jensen et al. (2020) looked at exit barriers in far-right extremists and identified two main obstacles that influenced disengagement pathways; past incarceration and the presence of radical family members or romantic partners. These barriers often clustered with other related barriers, such as limited social mobility or identity-related obstacles, to create contexts in which disengagement either succeeded or failed. If an individual succeeds in leaving, they may struggle with social isolation, a loss identity or purpose, and face the challenges of reintegrating back into a society which may stigmatise them (Corner & Gill, 2019; Ferguson, 2016; Horgan, 2014; Kruglanski et al., 2019). Mental health issues can also act as a barrier to disengagement and reintegration, especially in the absence of personal or social support resources (Barrelle, 2015; Jensen et al., 2020). Therefore, mental health disorders and psychological distress may be a by-product of involvement in non-state political violence or of related experiences, such as incarceration or post-disengagement challenges (Barrelle, 2015; Corner & Gill, 2019; Weatherston & Moran, 2003). Whilst these experiences are related to involvement and require attention, they may also act as confounding factors when researching the role of involvement in non-state political violence on mental wellbeing.

A number of disengagement and deradicalization programs do provide psychological interventions with some success, and mental health should be considered in the implementation and design of any intervention (Betram, 2015; Gill & Corner, 2017; Morrison et al., 2021; Yakeley & Taylor, 2017). Rabasa et al. (2010) evaluated a number of programs

and concluded the most effective programs offer different types of counselling. This indicates greater attention should be paid to the psychological issues that actors of non-state political violence may face. Whilst the UK's Desistance and Disengagement Programme claims to provide psychological support for former actors of non-state political violence (*CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, 2018), little information is currently available on what this support entails.

This subject necessitates further investigation as little is currently still known as few studies have still directly investigated the relationship between involvement in non-state political violence and mental wellbeing. The studies that have been conducted have produced interesting, explorative indications on this relationship, but not established a causal link or generalisable conclusions. Many questions remain unanswered, such as what aspects of involvement are most psychologically harmful, and what the incidence rates for psychological distress or trauma related to involvement are. Additionally, the role of such distress on disengagement processes should be directly explored, as disengagement may be induced by the negative psychological effects resulting from involvement in non-state political violence.

3.4 Relationships between psychological distress and disengagement from non-state political violence

Disengagement refers to the process where an actor ceases their involvement in non-state political violence and can also be understood as behavioural de-radicalisation (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2014). It does not necessitate cognitive change or the abandonment of their fundamental views, and many actors who disengage remain committed to the ideals and ideas that underpinned their use of violence (Ferguson, 2016; Horgan, 2014). The causes of disengagement included in this section, especially when there is evidence of psychological distress, are relevant as they allude to experiences of moral injury.

Disengagement may be sudden or gradual (Chernov Hwang, 2015; Horgan, 2014). Experiences such as prison, identity change, or ageing and related life changes may encourage gradual disengagement by providing opportunities for reflection (Ferguson et al., 2015; Ferguson, 2016; Horgan, 2009; Horgan et al., 2017; Reinares, 2011). There are differences between individual disengagement and collective disengagement. Individual disengagement refers to the process where an individual decides to end their involvement with non-state

political violence, whilst collective or group disengagement occurs when a group abandons their use of violence or ends their campaign (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009). During collective disengagement, a group may lessen their violence together with a parallel democratic process (Horgan, 2009). For example, in Northern Ireland, the dominant Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries collectively disengaged following the Good Friday Agreement, resulting in a gradual subsiding of violence (Amaral, 2018; Horgan, 2009, 2014). To further establish whether psychological distress factors in the disengagement process, this section will predominantly focus on individual processes of disengagement.

Given the emerging evidence in the literature that actors of non-state political violence are negatively psychologically affected by their involvement, this psychological distress may help induce disengagement from a group (Gill & Corner, 2017; Yakeley & Taylor, 2017). Although there is no single reason why individuals disengage, researchers have established a variety of "push" factors that make disengagement from non-state political violence more likely (Altier et al., 2014, 2017; Bjørgo, 2013). Push factors interact within various contexts to produce disengagement in some cases, but not others (Jensen et al., 2020). Whilst many push factors have been suggested to influence decisions to disengage, only the more relevant ones to the negative psychological effects of engagement will be discussed here.

One relevant push factor is burnout. Burnout may occur when sustained pressure and involvement in non-state political violence result in fatigue, exhaustion, and stress (Bjørgo, 2011; Ferguson et al., 2015). Burnout has been identified in former jihadists (Barrelle, 2015), former members of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or ETA (Reinares, 2011), former Red Brigade members (Della Porta, 2009), former members of Northern Irish Loyalist paramilitaries (Ferguson, 2016), former far-right extremists (Barrelle, 2015), and former militant Tamil separatists (Barrelle, 2015) as a reason for leaving the movement or accelerating their disengagement process. Altier et al. (2017) found that in 25% of the terrorist autobiographical accounts they examined, burnout was indicated as a reason for disengaging. Similarly, Corner and Gill (2019) found evidence of burnout as increasing a desire to disengage in their analyses of terrorist autobiographies.

Another relevant push factor is disillusionment. Perhaps the most robust finding in the disengagement research is that some form of disillusionment often precedes one's exit from a movement (Jensen et al., 2020). Disillusionment and subsequent disengagement may occur

when an actors' expectations are unmet, or when there is incongruence with their fantasies and the reality of non-state political violence (Altier et al., 2014; Bjørgo, 2011; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2009, 2014). Actors may become disillusioned with their group leaders or members, or with the organizational strategy (Altier et al., 2014, 2017; Barrelle, 2015; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2014; Webber & Kruglanski, 2018). For example, many individual paramilitary members in Northern Ireland were unhappy when the groups were moving towards the peace process (Ferguson, 2016). From analyses of terrorist autobiographies, Altier et al. (2017) concluded that disillusionment with tasks and disagreements with groups leaders, strategies, and other members played a major role in disengagement.

Actors may also become disillusioned with a group's strategy when the utility of violence is seen as counterproductive or detrimental (Barrelle, 2015; Chernov Hwang, 2015; Reinares, 2011). This is illustrated in a former UVF member's statements:

> It's a strange situation, because [prior to arrest] I had come to my own conclusion that violence wasn't achieving anything. … I just came to the conclusion that some day… we… were going to have to talk and come to some form of accommodation here. And that we were going to have to question the morality of it… if there was any morality about inflicting violence on people. It was really just a cycle then. (Horgan, 2009, p. 56)

Disillusionment can also occur when individuals have to face the reality of perpetrating acts of violence (Altier et al., 2014; Bjørgo, 2011). This is especially prevalent when an individual had romanticized their involvement (Horgan, 2009). Specifically, actors may struggle with matching reality with the moral reasoning of the movement (see Chapter 1 for a discussion on the moral reasoning behind non-state political violence). This type of disillusionment results in cognitive dissonance between their personal moral justifications for employing violence and the reality of its utilization. As a result of this cognitive dissonance, they may question their reasons for joining (Jacobson, 2010). For example, violence may no longer be perceived as justified by individuals when alternative routes become available. This change in perception is expressed by a former member of ETA:

This business about armed struggle, it was... it was okay, I guess, as long as there was no other alternative available and it was a sign that you had the people behind you, no? But that was when I began to see that no, no, it just didn't make sense any more. (Reinares, 2011, p. 783)

Disillusionment may also result from the development of positive relationships with members of "outgroups" (Horgan et al., 2017; Jacobson, 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2020). In these instances, the dehumanizing rhetoric promoted by their group is not reconciled with their real-world experiences (Busher et al., 2018). Simi and Windisch (2018) have put forward similar arguments. They suggest the failure to employ moral disengagement acts as a barrier to mass causality violence given that as a result, individuals are unable to justify it or are unable to engage in certain acts of violence.

A common experience across different contexts and ideologies that is cited as a source of disillusionment with the morality of non-state political violence is when violence is conducted indiscriminately or excessively (Chernov Hwang, 2015, 2018; Jacobson, 2010; Kahil et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Morrison, 2010; Neumann, 2015; Reinares, 2011; Simi et al., 2019; Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020; van der Heide & Huurman, 2016). This is usually perceived as "wrong" when victims include "innocent civilians". Again, this results in affecting perceptions on the morality of employing violence and propels individuals to disengage (Busher et al., 2018). Some actors may also disengage due to their inability to cope with the psychological effects of this violence (van der Heide & Huurman, 2016).

Although the events and contexts that elicit disillusionment with the morality of employing non-state political violence differ, they all include a form of moral questioning and commonly include feelings of cognitive dissonance between their moral beliefs and their experiences. A similar type of disillusionment in was found in the analysis of autobiographies of former Provisional IRA members (Bont, 2020, 2021), which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Although this type of disillusionment is a common finding in the literature, there is not yet a specific term for it. Therefore, this gradual change of perception in the morality of a strategy of violence was termed "moral disillusionment" by Bont (2020, 2021). This is how this phenomenon will be referred to in the rest of this thesis.

In relation to moral disillusionment, individuals have evidenced feelings of guilt and shame following a confrontation with the reality of their involvement with the movement

(Chernov Hwang, 2015; Corner & Gill, 2019; Horgan, 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Simi et al., 2019). Feelings of guilt may come across as a result of a single incident that served as a "tipping" or "breaking" point to motivate individual disengagement (Barrelle, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2015; Horgan, 2009; Simi et al., 2019). For example, one case study of a former IRA member who experienced guilt and disillusionment is "Michael", who stated "you don't get over the guilt. You don't. You can't" (Horgan, 2009, p. 88). A critical incident confirmed his initial doubts about his involvement in the organization. This was when another member he had admired made a remark he found "devastating":

> … it was a policewoman that was killed and I'm making tea and [KA – whom he'd
> previously "admired"] was sitting back and he said 'we might get two for the price
> of one'. She was pregnant [long pause]. I thought f***. I thought, f***, f***, f***.
> (Horgan, 2009, p. 92)

This remark was seen as "a step too far" (Horgan, 2009, p. 94). As a result of his guilt and negative experiences in the IRA, he became an informer for the Garda.

Alternatively, this type of disillusionment affects a more gradual decision to disengage. This occurred in "Sarah", a former right-wing extremist, who experienced deepening disillusionment over time that was originally triggered by seeing the aftermath of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing:

> I think it, it finally started to seep into my conscious mind, you know, like 'What
> are you doing? Do you want to be the bomber? Do you want to be, you know,
> that person that, that does this? Is it worth it? Is, you know, this the ultimate price
> I'm going to end up paying for what I'm doing?' And there were those times that
> I would have, you know, the little voice in my head saying 'You're a [expletive].
> You know, there's something better.' (Horgan et al., 2017, p. 69)

Sarah struggled with the knowledge of this being carried out by an extreme right-wing actor. She would "always do more drugs, drink more, become more involved to … push those thoughts away" (Horgan et al., 2017, p. 69). She experienced various barriers to disengagement, but eventually disengaged after spending time in federal prison which

included building relationships with non-white inmates. Sarah felt guilt for her involvement, but this guilt was alleviated through engagement in activities combatting violence and racism. Similarly, "Arif", a former member of an Islamist extremist group in Indonesia, experienced guilt related to innocent deaths in a bombing he played a role in (Chernov Hwang, 2015). His feelings ebbed over time, only to be reinforced at a later stage. This, in combination with being provided with an opportunity to help the Muslim community in an alternative way, then contributed to his decision to disengage.

Other factors may therefore also be required to disengage, and disillusionment and/or remorse may only be the beginning of the disengagement process (Chernov Hwang, 2015; Jacobson, 2010). Moral disillusionment and related moral emotions may instead be viewed as the cause of an initial cognitive opening where an individual becomes receptive to alternative worldviews (Fink & Hearne, 2008). This is in line with the literature outlined in Chapter 1 on moral emotions, where these emotions have been found to influence moral reasoning. However, not everyone who has these experiences will inevitably disengage (Chernov Hwang, 2015). It can also be felt by actors who are "stuck" in their group and have an absence of available opportunities for disengagement (Horgan, 2014).

These experiences may have long-lasting psychological effects on individuals even after disengagement. For example, a former UDA member, "Doug" stated it was not the killing that was difficult but the aftermath; "coping with it the rest of your life. Learning to live with it the rest of your life" (Horgan, 2009, p. 105). Relatedly, In Corner and Gills's (2019) analysis of terrorist autobiographies, they found those who reported psychological distress in the post-disengagement period were more likely to feel guilt for their roles in attacks and express regret for their actions when engaged.

Greater research is required to elucidate the relationships between disengagement, disillusionment, and psychological distress. This is required because although these experiences are often described in qualitative research, they are often not directly examined and instead are commonly cited as one of many disengagement factors found by researchers. Additionally, although similar conclusions on this topic have been made across different contexts and ideologies, they are not generalisable. The research outlined in this section is largely qualitative and draws from a small number of cases, and the individual actors discussed may be unique in their willingness to share their experiences. Whilst the existing research has allowed for the exploration of these topics, more quantitative or questionnaire-

based research with larger, anonymised samples would establish causative links. Further reviews on the disengagement literature, such as by Morrison et al. (2021), would also be beneficial to collate findings across these contexts and to pinpoint shared and unique contributing factors. As will be seen in the following section and Chapter 4, the application of moral injury to these populations further contributes to the existing research by directly investigating the links between disillusionment and psychological distress.

3.5 Applying moral injury to non-state political violence

This chapter has argued that there is evidence that involvement in non-state political violence can have negative psychological effects on some actors. As only a small number of studies have directly investigated this, there is scope for further exploration and understanding as much remains unknown. For example, specification is required on what aspects of involvement are especially psychologically distressing, and how this subsequently impacts the lives of disengaged actors. Moral injury's application to non-state political violence may contribute to this gap in the research as it would further elucidate some of the potential psychological, social, and moral implications of involvement. As outlined in Chapter 2, moral injury occurs when a moral transgression has taken place which an individual cannot accommodate into their pre-existing moral schemas (Litz et al., 2009). Whilst actors of non-state political violence believe or promote their actions to be morally justified, as highlighted in Chapter 1, this does not mean that they are not at risk for moral injury. Rather, they may be morally injured following exposure to specific incidents that do not match their personal moral beliefs. If that does occur, this could play a role in their decision to disengage.

Such experiences where individual experiences conflicted with an actor's moral beliefs, and led them to disengage, were evidenced in the section 3.4 from a variety of contexts. In some cases, guilt accompanied single "critical" incidents and directly contributed to disillusionment and disengagement, such as in the case of "Michael" (Horgan, 2009). Alternatively, such disillusionment and guilt following exposure to events that did not align with individual beliefs contributed to more gradual disengagement, such as in the cases of "Sarah" and "Arif" (Chernov Hwang, 2015; Horgan et al., 2017). Moral injury arises from cognitive dissonance between moral beliefs and acts (Litz et al., 2009). This can be between competing or contradicting moral beliefs as well as moral incongruences between military

and civilian values and identities (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2020). These three cases, as well as other evidence of moral disillusionment outlined in this section, suggests such cognitive dissonance between specific experiences and/or the reality of violence and their personal moral beliefs, and resulted in their questioning of the movement's moral justifications for utilising violence. This cognitive dissonance has previously been suggested by Busher et al. (2018), who propose it may arise when violence is done to "illegitimate" targets and ultimately lead to disengagement. Busher et al. cite a case from the extreme right as an example of this, who describes how participating in an attack on a group of women led to regret and shame which contributed to his eventual disengagement (Collins, 2011, p. 51).

Moral injury can result in psychological distress, guilt, disenchantment with an army's morality, and an altered worldview (e.g., Litz et al., 2009; Molendijk et al., 2016). All these outcomes were present in these three case studies and in the other research on disengagement and disillusionment outlined in section 3.4, where guilt, shame and regret often accompanied experiences of moral disillusionment and may encourage disengagement from a movement or organisation. This parallel therefore further suggests potential moral injury. The fact that "Sarah" and "Arif" gradually grew disillusioned does not mean that moral injury did not play a role, as studies on moral injury have found that although moral violations are recognised in the moment, it can lie dormant and occur following periods of reflection or upon separation from a military context or culture (Currier et al., 2015; Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Schorr et al., 2018). Furthermore, moral injury can occur through either witnessing events, or direct involvement in them (Griffin et al., 2019; Nash, Marino Carper, et al., 2013). Therefore, the fact that "Arif" was involved in the experience which led to moral disillusionment, whilst "Sarah" and "Michael" were not directly responsible for theirs, does not mean he was more or less likely to be at subsequent risk for moral injury.

It is not only their disillusionment and guilt that suggests moral injury. "Michael", "Sarah", and "Arif" were all motivated to engage in restorative and reparative acts following disengagement. This has been suggested to alleviate experiences of moral injury, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. Such cases therefore evidence similar trajectories to morally injured veterans and soldiers. It should be noted that the indicators of moral injury in these cases is limited and theoretical, given that these potential cases require further direct

interviews on this topic to establish its applicability. Additionally, it is recognised that these three individuals may be outliers given their willingness to participate in research. Therefore, it is not argued that these indicators evidence the occurrence of moral injury in these actors. Rather, they are used as case study examples from three different ideologies to illustrate and support further exploration of moral injury in actors of non-state political violence. Additionally, the previous sections also presented evidence of moral disillusionment, regret, psychological distress, and guilt in actors of non-state political violence from a wide variety of other contexts as well.

One further experience that particularly resonates with the descriptions of moral injury in Chapter 2 is that of Billy Giles. Giles took his own life after serving a 15-year sentence for the UVF killing of a Catholic man (McKittrick et al., 1999, p. 1461). He never recovered from the trauma of this killing. As he told Peter Taylor in an interview:

The split second it happened, I lost part of myself that I'll never get back. You hear the bang and it's too late. Standing over the body, it hits you. I felt that somebody had reached down inside me and ripped my insides out. You've found somewhere you've never been before and it's not a very nice place. You can't stop it. It's too late. (Taylor, 2000, p. 5)

I never felt a whole person again. I lost something that day I never got back. How do you put that back? You can't. You'll never get that back no matter what people say to you or what you say or think. I've done something and been involved in something that I can't ever change and I have to live with it. What would have been classed before as a decent young man, suddenly turned into a killer. That's Northern Ireland. (Taylor, 2000, p. 6)

Billy's suicide letter read: "I was a victim too. Please let our generation live normal lives, tell them of our mistakes and admit to them our regrets. I've decided to bring this to an end now. I'm tired" (McKittrick et al., 1999, p. 1461). Although Giles was a member of a Loyalist paramilitary, and therefore had divergent political views, the context and events are very similar to those Republican paramilitary members would encounter. This application of moral injury to Republican ex-prisoners specifically will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Despite contextual differences, actors of non-state political violence are also commonly confronted with several of the potentially morally injurious events identified in traditional military populations. For example, moral injury may occur when there is engagement in disproportionate violence, and/or when civilians are harmed (Schorr et al., 2018). Again, this may be applicable across different contexts of non-state political violence as disillusionment has commonly been identified in some individuals following indiscriminate or excessive violence, where the harm of "innocent civilians" is perceived as "wrong" (e.g., Chernov Hwang, 2015, 2018; Jacobson, 2010; Kahil et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Morrison, 2010; Neumann, 2015; Reinares, 2011; Simi et al., 2019; Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020; van der Heide & Huurman, 2016). Actors may be especially at risk for exposure to such morally injurious events which clash with their personal beliefs in hierarchical, large organisations. This is because very little autonomy is left in those groups, with individuals have little impact on the decision-making processes (Taylor, 1988). The increased risk of moral injury in traditional soldiers has been suggested previously, given that it can leave individuals at the mercy and feeling constrained by its strategies and rules that govern their actions (Jones, 2020).

If such actors do subsequently disengage, they may face further moral struggles when reintegrating, similar to traditional state veterans finding it difficult to reintegrate into the moral community of their family and friends and reconciling their civilian identities with the moral norms that accompanied their previous military experiences (Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021). Actors of non-state political violence are therefore not only likely to be exposed to similar potentially morally injurious events as state soldiers, but this can result in similar moral conflictedness in some individuals. The fact that non-state political violence is illegal does not prevent moral injury from being applicable to its perpetrators. In fact, Currier et al. (2021b, p. 265) have stated that certain "civilian" groups, such violent offenders, may have the "potentially highest risk" of moral injury. Chapter 4 will expand on the parallels relevant to moral injury between traditional state militaries and actors of non-state political violence in more detail by specifically focusing on the context of Republican ex-prisoners.

These parallels and potential indicators of moral injury (both in terms of morally injurious events and outcomes) in actors of non-state political violence justify further examination. This application of the concept to non-state political violence would provide greater insight into how actors are psychologically affected by involvement and how this

impacts their disengagement processes. Additionally, expansion of moral injury could impel society to acknowledge the humanity and need for evidence-based mental health case in populations convicted of violence, such as actors of non-state political violence, although how this will be received will be dependent on the larger political and social climate (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021b). Despite these important research implications, moral injury has only been investigated in the 'terrorist' context through one study. Williamson et al.'s systematic review (2021) found that both individuals who develop radical beliefs and those with moral injury share individual-level risk factors and are exposed to events which provoke similar adverse outcomes, such as a loss of personal significance. They therefore conclude that moral injury could be a useful way to understand the process of radicalisation. However, this study did not examine whether involvement in non-state political violence can cause moral injury. Therefore, the remainder of this thesis will directly explore this relationship in the specific population of Republican ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland.

3.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter aimed to demonstrate that actors of non-state political violence can be psychologically affected by their involvement in it. These psychological effects were demonstrated to, in some cases, influence disillusionment and decisions to disengage. Greater direct research is required into these effects and processes. Studying moral injury in contexts of non-state political violence would contribute to this.

Therefore, this chapter aimed to reveal indications from the wider literature on non-state political violence that these populations may be susceptible to moral injury. Evidence of guilt and moral disillusionment may allude to experiences of moral injury in particular. The literature discussed in this chapter included a large variety of different contexts and ideologies, which suggests that moral injury may be applicable to a range of types of non-state political violence. The following chapter will focus on moral injury in the specific case of Republican ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles'. This will allow for a more detailed discussion on the justifications and merits for investigating the application of moral injury to this population.

Chapter 4. Applying Moral Injury to Republican Ex-Prisoners

I realized that joining the Provisional IRA had been the biggest mistake of my life. One way or another the disgustingly stupid things I had been involved in would haunt me for years to come (O'Callaghan, 1998, p. 123).

4.1 Introduction

Looking at a specific context of non-state political violence, such as the Northern Ireland conflict, allows for a more thorough justification for the applicability of moral injury. This chapter will present how and why Republican ex-prisoners may have been at risk. It will also outline the merits of investigating the application of this concept to this population, as it would provide further insight into their psychological experiences of the Northern Ireland conflict and their moral beliefs. Firstly, the chapter will outline the existent research on how Republican ex-prisoners were psychologically affected by their involvement in the conflict, with a specific focus on experiences that may align with morally injurious outcomes. The chapter will then discuss potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) in the context of the Republican ex-prisoners. It will illustrate how the context of the Northern Ireland conflict may have evoked feelings of cognitive dissonance and moral conflictedness. This will include a discussion on the risk factors for moral injury that Republican ex-prisoners were confronted with, many of which have been identified in research on moral injury in military and law enforcement populations. Lastly, the chapter will provide preliminary evidence of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners, by summarising a previous study (Bont, 2020, 2021) which analysed autobiographical sources of former members of the Provisional IRA (PIRA). The literature presented in this chapter largely draws from interviews conducted with former political prisoners and paramilitary members in Northern Ireland. Therefore, like the previous chapter, it will provide direct insight into their personal perspectives and experiences.

This chapter will bring the literature from the previous three chapters together to help build the justification for applying moral injury to Republican ex-prisoners. Chapter 1 outlined Republican morality during the conflict. This will be revisited as the factors that shaped this morality also created an environment conducive to moral injury. Chapter 2 conceptualised moral injury and provided an in-depth overview of the emerging research on it. The findings

on morally injurious events and outcomes will be drawn from to reveal parallel experiences between Republican ex-combatants and morally injured soldiers from traditional state militaries as well as morally injured members of law enforcement. Chapter 3 demonstrated that actors of non-state political violence in general can be psychologically affected by their engagement in such violence and argued that this may reveal a susceptibility to moral injury. This chapter will move on from our broad understanding of moral injury and non-state political violence to consider its application and utility when considering the PIRA. This chapter will therefore bring the findings from the previous three chapters together to provide a theoretical justification for conducting further research on moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners to transition into the remainder of the thesis, which will consist of empirical research investigating this.

4.2 The psychological effects of the Northern Ireland conflict

Surprisingly, given the high rates of death and violence, there was not an obvious increase in overall mental health problems during the conflict (Curran, 1988; Fraser, 1971; Lyons, 1971). Rather, it appeared that contrary to initial fears and predictions, communities adjusted to and coped relatively well with the violence (Cairns et al., 1995; O'Neill et al., 2015). Some suggested explanatory factors include a lack of reporting, poor data collection, delayed trauma responses, under-diagnosis, and/or that an increase in social cohesion resulted in greater resilience and community wellbeing (Curran, 1988; McKee, 2016).

Currently, there is a mental health crisis in Northern Ireland, as there is indisputable evidence that its population has higher levels of chronic mental illness and substance abuse in comparison to other high-income countries (O'Neill et al., 2016). This may be due to changes in the factors listed above, such as in the presentation of and, help seeking for, delayed trauma responses and intergenerational trauma (Downes et al., 2013). Northern Ireland is reported to have a 25% higher overall prevalence of mental health problems than England (*Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023*, 2014). Evidence suggests that the Northern Ireland conflict has contributed directly to these rates (Bunting et al., 2012; Ferry et al., 2014; O'Neill et al., 2016). Northern Ireland's rates of PTSD are estimated to be some of the highest in Europe (O'Connor & O'Neill, 2015), and events that were characteristic of civil conflicts are accounted for the highest proportion

of the overall public health burden of PTSD (Ferry et al., 2014). This traumatic exposure interacts with other contributing factors for mental ill health, such as ongoing sectarianism, other types of childhood adversity, and high levels of poverty (Campbell et al., 2004; McLafferty et al., 2018; O'Neill et al., 2015; O'Reilly & Stevenson, 2003).

The high rates of mental health problems in the general Northern Irish population would suggest that individuals who were directly involved in the conflict also suffer from resulting negative psychological effects. This can also be surmised from previous discussions in this thesis which demonstrated that (non-state political) violence can affect perpetrators negatively. The potentially traumatic experiences faced by the actors discussed in Chapter 3 parallel some of those that negatively impacted former political prisoners of the conflict.

Outside of the direct engagement in violence during the conflict, former political prisoners in Northern Ireland experienced a complex combination of burdens and losses, including the mourning of deceased friends or loved ones, survivor guilt, fear, helplessness, anger, and anxiety (Burgess et al., 2007; Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010). Furthermore, they may have faced personal psychological loss in terms of how their lifestyle could have resulted in them losing their sense of self, control over their own lives, their sense of conscience, and their moral compass in order to engage in violence (Ferguson & McAuley, 2020). This is not commonly recognised in existing research.

Many former political prisoners have been found to be severely affected by their negative experiences during interrogations and imprisonment (Jamieson et al., 2010; McEvoy et al., 2004a). Political imprisonment across different contexts is recognised as a significant traumatic experience (Herman, 1992; Willis et al., 2015). It has been found to affect long-term physical and mental health, with an increased risk of psychiatric conditions (Ursano & Benedek, 2003). Republican ex-prisoners have also reported traumatic experiences such as extreme maltreatment and abuse during interrogations and imprisonment (Jamieson & Grounds, 2002). Ex-Republican prisoners were also psychologically and emotionally affected by the hunger strikes and no-wash/blanket protests (Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; McEvoy et al., 2004a). Additionally, when the conflict ended, former political prisoners had to face the significant challenge of transitioning from either prison or paramilitary organizations.

Through surveys and interviews with Republican and Loyalist former politically motivated prisoners, Jamieson, Shirlow, and Grounds (2010) found indications of resilience and reflectiveness. There was also evidence of significant psychological harm as a result of

their involvement in the conflict. The authors suggested that if their findings were representative of all former politically motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland, then as a group they are "substantially more likely than others in Northern Ireland to suffer from some form of psychological distress" (Jamieson et al., 2010, p. 40). They found that 39.9% had scores indicative of clinically significant mental health problems. Over half of the former political prisoners reported feeling seriously depressed at some time since their release, and over half reported symptoms characteristic of PTSD. For example, 51.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they were still troubled by memories or upsetting dreams about scenes they had witnessed directly. One former Loyalist prisoner commented:

> I know for a fact from talking to people from the Republicans they have big problems and people are tortured at night. Tortured at night. [...] A lot do. And that's maybe why I... I spend so many nights on my own. I prefer that. Um, only last weekend my partner was with me and I woke up absolutely swimming last weekend, swimming, swimming, and she said that I was shouting out... I was shouting a name out. And obviously I don't remember. [...] I struggle, I watch the hours going by, it is ... it's scary at times. It scares me but I... I've learned to work with it and I think everybody does because nobody wants to say, 'Oh f***, I'm scared.', or 'That was terrible.', but I do say, 'Oh f***, that was an awful dream.'
> (Jamieson et al., 2010, p. 49)

Additionally, 68.8% of the former political prisoners in the study engaged in hazardous levels of drinking, and 53.3% met the threshold for alcohol dependence. A number of the interviewees attributed their alcohol abuse, at least in part, to an attempt to "self-medicate" in order to cope with their experiences and losses (Jamieson et al., 2010, p. 55).

Other studies have reported similar findings of both resilience and psychological difficulties associated with imprisonment experiences during the conflict in former political prisoners (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Hamber, 2005; Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). From interviews and surveys of 100 ex-Republican prisoners and 40 relatives in North Belfast, McEvoy, Shirlow, and McElrath (2004a) found preliminary indicators of symptoms or clusters of symptoms of PTSD. These indicators were particularly related to the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events. The survey evidence

suggested that at least three in four ex-prisoners showed some symptoms of PTSD, but some of the partners and family members of ex-prisoners indicated these rates were higher and that symptoms were experienced more frequently than stated by the ex-prisoners. Additionally, over 70% of ex-prisoners stated that they considered themselves to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' states of emotional wellbeing. A limitation in analysing the effects of the conflict on former political prisoners is that it is difficult to disentangle the psychological effects of their victimhood and imprisonment experiences from the potentially traumatic impact of their involvement in groups perpetrating non-state political violence.

Shirlow (2001, p. N/A) concluded from interviews and surveys of 100 ex-Republican prisoners and 40 of their relatives, that "without doubt the witnessing and experience of violence has caused post traumatic stresses, which lead to depression, hyper activity, hyper alertness, negative self-appraisal, loss of sleep and deep seated emotional distress". Ferguson, Burgess and Hollywood (2010a) interviewed Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries on their experiences related to the conflict. Whilst many of their interviewees spoke of resilience and an ability to cope with trauma and stress, some made references to how their direct or indirect experiences of violence had caused them distress. They suggested that perpetrating violence "caused, or at least increased, the psychological harm they suffered as a result of the Troubles" (Ferguson et al., 2010, p. 878).

There are mixed findings on the incidence of regret in former Republican paramilitary members. White (2017) found in his research that many Republican activists evidenced pride and little regret for their personal involvement, and that involvement affected their lives in a positive way. Yet some activists did exhibit regret that more had not been achieved or were concerned about the suffering and costs of the conflict inflicted on others. For example, one former Provisional expressed regret that it took so long and that people died because of that (White, 2017, p. 351). These narratives lacking evidence of regret contrast with some other former Republican ex-combatants' reflections, such as that of Sean O'Callaghan who stated that joining the PIRA was the "biggest mistake of his life" (O'Callaghan, 1999, p. 123), although it should be caveated that he may be an outlier as he became an informer following his disillusionment. Further clarification is therefore required on who experienced regret and why or why not, and how moral injury may play a role in this.

Ferguson et al. (2010, p. 878) also found evidence for genuine feelings of guilt and regret in former paramilitary members about the violence they had committed. Some of

these individuals spoke of how the psychological pain of living with these actions had resulted in their fellow combatants committing suicide or turning to alcohol to cope. Another study by the same authors similarly evidenced psychological distress in those who were involved in the conflict, including struggles with coming to terms with the consequences of their actions (Burgess et al., 2007). For example, one participant stated:

I'm someone that's living that lived in the past, that went through it and is able to recount and tell them [the young today] the horrors of it. And how much it can take lumps out of your head. Because it has taken lumps out of mine, there's no doubt about it. I have the rest of my life to live thinking on things that I've done and maybe hurt people. And I'm very, very, sorry for it. (Burgess et al., 2007, p. 79)

Guilt for association with some armed activities was also experienced by an ex-Republican prisoner interviewed by Hamber (2005). This respondent noted:

What really changed me was when [names a specific event] happened. I had a prick of consciousness. I had never signed up to kill innocent people. I had never been ordered to kill innocent human beings or go into a church and kill innocent people. I did not like what had happened and I didn't want my name associated with this… I had an attack of conscience and also the fact I was now thirty-one and I had to get myself a life and get out of this business. (Hamber, 2005, p. 79)

Moral conflictedness has also been evidenced in other former paramilitary members. As a participant in Jamieson et al. (2010, p. 72)'s study stated; "I am a good guy, but I was a bad guy, even though I was a good guy". Similar experiences of guilt and moral questioning by former Loyalist and Republican paramilitary members in Northern Ireland were previously referenced in Chapter 3 in relation to influencing disillusionment and disengagement. These experiences of moral conflictedness and guilt may reflect experiences of moral injury in former actors of non-state political violence in Northern Ireland.

It is therefore clear that some individuals who were involved in non-state political violence during the conflict suffer psychologically as a result of a variety of traumatic

experiences. These traumas continue to affect Republican ex-prisoners in post conflict Northern Ireland yet are often overlooked aspects of the conflict (Burgess et al., 2007; Ferguson et al., 2010). The research that has been conducted on these populations also demonstrates their needs for further psycho-social support remain largely unaddressed (Ferguson et al., 2010; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). Encouraging help-seeking behaviour for emotional and psychological issues may be difficult given their fears regarding trust and the legal implications and the confidentiality of health care practitioners, given the potential illegality of their previous actions (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Jamieson et al., 2010; Shirlow, 2001). This is problematic considering their most troubling memories are often those which pose the largest difficulty in relation to disclosure (Jamieson et al., 2010). Additionally, the stigma attached to admitting to having psychological difficulties was found to prevent former politically motivated prisoners from seeking help, as they share attitudes with traditional state veterans who similarly feel a need to maintain perceptions of emotional toughness and stoicism (Jamieson et al., 2010). These issues highlight the need for further development of support for this population in general. Moral injury may provide further insight into this topic, given that the expressions of psychological distress and trauma in this population, such as guilt, may allude to symptoms of moral injury.

4.3 The Northern Ireland conflict as an environment conducive to moral injury

This section will expand on how the moral aspects of moral injury can be applied to the conflict, and how this context may have evoked feelings of cognitive dissonance and moral conflictedness in some Republican ex-prisoners. Prior to this discussion, it is important to outline some common contextual factors between the violent Republican organisations and traditional state militaries in which moral injury has been most researched. These similar risk and contextual factors for PMIEs in traditional state militaries may also risk moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners.

Republicans considered themselves as soldiers operating in a military hierarchy and the conflict as war (Shanahan, 2009). This is reflected in the military structure and language use of the movement (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable). Horgan and Taylor (1997) outline the command and functional structure of the IRA, and describe it as a cellular-based, hierarchically organised authoritarian structure with an elected Army Council (overall

'Army' leadership) which was responsible for the execution of all 'military' policies and had the authority to declare war or peace. The strategy and tactics of the PIRA were regulated and executed through its 'General Headquarters' Staff and Command Structure. The Northern and Southern Commands were comprised by 'Brigadiers', Commanding Officers (OCs), and Active Service Units (ASUs). The General Headquarters had ten Departments: quartermaster, security, operations, foreign operations, finance, training, engineering, intelligence, education, and publicity. The INLA was much smaller but adopted a hierarchical 'military' structure like the IRA, whose major operations were also sanctioned by their Army Council (McDonald & Holland, 2010). Moral injury, which has been mostly investigated in traditional state soldiers and veterans, may therefore be applicable to Republicans who viewed themselves as soldiers in armies as well. Heskin (1985, p. 481) examined political violence in Northern Ireland, particularly that of the PIRA, and argued that the parameters of its behaviour were in "some important respects" similar to other conflict-orientated groups including traditional national armed militaries. Heskin also commented that it is difficult to cite an armed conflict between national groups where the force used by one or both sides did not exceed what was necessary and referenced the excessive violence including during conflicts during the Vietnam War and World War II as examples.

Common contextual factors in PMIEs in military populations include incidents involving civilians, disproportionate violence, and events that involved within-rank violence (Drescher et al., 2011; Schorr et al., 2018). Examples of such events were common in violent Republican organisations. The PIRA was responsible for nearly 1,800 deaths between 1969 and 1998, and killed more than 500 civilians (White, 2017, p. 6). The INLA killed approximately 125 people during the conflict, of whom 45 were members of security forces ('Abstracts on Organisations', n.d.). For example, an OIRA revenge bomb attack for Bloody Sunday on the barracks in the Parachute Regiment's headquarters in Aldershot in 1972 'accidentally' killed 6 cleaning women and a chaplain (McDonald & Holland, 2010). The soldiers who were the intended targets were not present, and although warnings were made there was no security or controlled access to the camp. Similarly, the PIRA Enniskillen bombing in 1987 was also a 'mistake' as it did not kill the targeted British soldiers (MacDaniel, 1997; Raines, 1987). Rather, 12 bystanders were killed and over 60 were injured. These examples of unintended civilian deaths may therefore be morally injurious in a similar fashion to accidental civilian deaths caused by traditional militaries.

There was also "internal conflict" and a "high level and intensity" of violent feuding within and between Republican organisations, such as the OIRA, PIRA, and INLA (McDonald & Holland, 2010; Weatherston & Moran, 2003, p. 705). For example, Hugh Ferguson, a former OC of an OIRA unit who was subsequently in charge of an IRSP branch (the "political wing" of the INLA) was shot (McDonald & Holland, 2010). He was meant to be kneecapped but was accidentally killed by the OIRA. In an interview in 1993, a former leading member of the OIRA said, "the main involved was badly affected – and still is" (McDonald & Holland, 2010, p. 56). Furthermore, the PIRA was an organization "run with iron discipline" (Taylor, 1998, p. 356). It was responsible for almost 125 deaths of its own members although "several of them" were killed in premature explosions (White, 2017). For example, suspected informers were tortured, forced to confess, and murdered. One publicly released sample list of alleged informers killed by the PIRA between 1978 and 1994 contains dozens of individuals (McHugh, 2019). A draft official submission stated the PIRA made it clear that informers "can expect no mercy", and that in a number of cases those who were murdered were not informers (McHugh, 2019). Additionally, former PIRA member Gerry Bradley claimed to be ostracised and faced hostility following the publication of his book in which he revealed his involvement in several IRA operations ('Former IRA Man Gerry "Whitey" Bradley Found Dead in Car', n.d.). There is speculation that this contributed to his suicide. As will be discussed in section 4.4, Republicans also engaged in vigilantism which included violent attacks on members of their own community.

Additionally, chaotic situations, power and rank dynamics, and a perceived need to prove themselves have been identified as increasing the risk of soldiers acting in ways that conflicted with their moral beliefs (Held et al., 2019). Given the chaos from situations such as in premature explosions from the use of highly volatile explosive mixtures (Gill, 2017), the internal problems in the organizations including splits and feuding (McDonald & Holland, 2010; Morrison, 2015; Weatherston & Moran, 2003), and their military structuring (Horgan & Taylor, 1997), it can be assumed that these factors are shared.

Moreover, Litz et al. (2009) stated that there is a higher likelihood for PMIEs in urban environments and when employing guerrilla warfare, given that this increases uncertainty and risk to civilians. The PIRA claimed to engage in guerrilla warfare, employing "hit and run tactics against the Brits while at the same time striking at the soft economic underbelly of the enemy" (Coogan, 2000; Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable). This "economic

bombing campaign" aimed to make British financial interest in Northern Ireland unprofitable and to curb long-term financial investment (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable). In bombings, there would often be a time lag and the PIRA would report the planting of the bomb to security officials (Bloom & Horgan, 2008). The PIRA claimed these attacks were aimed at causing damage rather than taking civilian life, as such attacks would result in a loss of support. In reality, these attacks were often unpredictable and difficult to control, putting civilians at great risk. As a result, especially between 1971 and 1976, many civilians were killed in accidental explosions (White, 2017, p. 6). For example, bomb warnings failed to evacuate civilians on time on Bloody Friday in 1972, resulting in nine the deaths of nine people and hundreds of injuries by car bombs that were meant to damage buildings and infrastructure only (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable; Keefe, 2019). Similarly, failures in the 'warning system' have been argued to have led to the deaths of 21 civilians in the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings (MacDermott, 2016). This led Kieran Conway to temporarily leave the PIRA in 1975, who has expressed he was 'horrified' by it although he does not renounce his own Republican actions (Conway, 2014; Sheridan, 2016). Therefore, in such instances where large number of civilians were killed, moral injury could be triggered given that using or witnessing disproportionate violence against civilians, including when accidental, constitutes as a morally injurious event (Schorr et al., 2018). It may also generate feelings of moral conflictedness whereby these aspects or specific incidents of the armed struggle are not perceived as morally justified, despite continuing beliefs in the morality of the cause. This has been found in soldiers from traditional state militaries, who experienced moral injury and struggled with feeling justified yet troubled by their role in certain events (Schorr et al., 2018).

Previous research on moral injury has identified betrayal, such as by trusted others, leaders, or systems, as a PMIE (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Schorr et al., 2018; Shay, 2014). Some Republican ex-prisoners have commented on feeling deeply betrayed by the leadership for a variety of strategical choices, such as those relating to the eventual increased politicisation of the movement resulting in, what some argue, the compromising of Republican principles (Bradley & Feeney, 2011; McGlinchey, 2019; Moloney, 2011). Whilst the majority of the Republican agreed with the long-term strategy of politicisation, others felt abandoned as it was not what they 'fought and died for' (Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). Republicans also likely felt betrayed by informers or state agents within their organisation who they thought they could trust. A further example of a morally

injurious 'betrayal' by leadership relating to the hunger strike campaigns will be discussed in section 4.5.

Further relevant risk factors for moral injury are related to mental health issues and barriers to obtaining psychosocial support. Concurrent or a history of exposure to other stressors and traumas have been identified as increasing the risk for moral injury (Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). As discussed in the previous section, many Republican ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland underwent traumatic experiences separate from morally injurious experiences, such as victimhood experiences associated with living in Northern Ireland during the conflict and potentially traumatic experiences related to imprisonment and/or interrogations. Furthermore, a perceived lack of social support, societal misrecognition, and social stigmatization have been argued to increase the risk for moral injury (Ferrajão & Oliveira, 2016; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Houtsma et al., 2017; Molendijk, 2018a; Scandlyn & Hautzinger, 2015; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). Research conducted with former politically motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland experience these risk factors. They continue to be affected by social, cultural, and political 'exclusionary' processes; including the 'exclusionary stigma' of a 'criminal' status (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Jamieson et al., 2010; McEvoy et al., 2004a; Shirlow, 2001). For example, they face barriers to social and economic opportunity, especially regarding issues such as employment, travel, access to confidential health service provision, procurement of insurance, mortgages, and adoption of children (Deery & Barnes, 2017). This to the detriment of their reintegration and 'healing' (McEvoy et al., 2004a), as their negative emotions can be intensified by the complex modes of social rejection they may encounter (Shirlow, 2001).

Contextual factors in Northern Ireland during the conflict may also contribute to individuals experiencing cognitive dissonance between their moral beliefs and events. This type of cognitive dissonance is found in actors of non-state political violence and can contribute to moral disillusionment and disengagement, as well as may demonstrate that these individuals are at risk for moral injury (see Chapter 3). This type of disillusionment and cognitive dissonance, with resulting guilt and psychological distress, has also been found in Republican ex-prisoners. Examples of this, which provide preliminary evidence of moral injury, will be discussed in section 4.5.

As explained earlier in this thesis, various contextual factors shaped a unique moral environment in nationalist communities in Northern Ireland during the conflict, which influenced the perception of some individuals that Republican violence was justified. In particular, the lack of democratic, peaceful avenues for political change was one of the main justifications Republicans put forward to morally justify their strategy of violence. This unique moral environment may have created an environment for moral injury. Interviews by Ferguson et al. (2010) evidence this. They suggest that some former paramilitary members in this context may have joined paramilitaries to bring about political change, but then felt "forced" to engage in what they perceived as immoral behaviour which resulted in feelings of guilt. This may also be influenced by the authoritarian hierarchy of the organisations described previously in this section, which resulted in little autonomy being left for individual active members who were expected to follow orders without question (Taylor, 1988). Ferguson et al. (2010)'s interviews also revealed that the "abnormality" of Northern Ireland during this time resulted in "normal" people perpetrating immoral or violent acts, which they never would have committed if Northern Ireland had been a normal place. As one interviewee stated:

> I did feel all along that I was doing something wrong, it was against my grain and that's using violence, truthfully. And I hope that anybody I hurt along the way, I beg, I'm begging them, I beg them to forgive me. I'm a victim of my environment, and I don't want that as an excuse, but its fact, I did what I had to do in the circumstances that prevailed. (Ferguson et al., 2010, p. 871)

This dissonance between their moral beliefs and their actions as a paramilitary member suggest risk for moral injury, which occurs as a result of this cognitive dissonance being unresolved (Jinkerson, 2016; Litz et al., 2009) and evokes psychological distress and guilt (Bryan et al., 2018; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Litz, 2012). Furthermore, Ferguson and McAuley (2020) argue that the stressful and insulated environment that Northern Irish paramilitary members operated in contributed to risky and morally ambiguous decision-making. This may have resulted in moral injury upon later reflection.

Chapter 1 not only described the unique moral environment in Northern Ireland, but also discussed how an individual's moral beliefs are influenced by their social environment

and group memberships. As a result of this, people have multiple moral commitments which may conflict and motivate them in different directions (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; Molendijk, 2018b; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Tessman, 2015). It is possible that some Republican ex-prisoners subscribed not solely to the Republican morality, but also held personal moral beliefs influenced by their identification with other social spheres - such as from their personal relationships, upbringing, and/or communities. These other moral values may have clashed with the Republican moral justifications for violence. Such a clash has previously been recognised in soldiers in traditional state militaries, where their civilian moral beliefs conflict with their military moral beliefs (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2016; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). This conflicting of moral beliefs has been argued to contribute to the risk of moral injury (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2016; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). Perhaps, for some Republican ex-combatants, this may also have resulted in a failure to completely morally disengage, or alternatively, to fully accept the Republican narrative of their campaign being morally justified. This would then have implications for being at risk of moral injury. A continuing commitment to some more conventional societal values may possibly also influence the individual length of involvement (Bouhana & Wikström, 2011). Additionally, there may have been individual differences in moral beliefs in Republican ex-prisoners who were from differing contexts, such both North and South of the border. This would have further implications for individual differences in risk for moral injury. These hypotheses require direct empirical research for conclusions to be drawn.

Whilst there is little clarity on what types of events constitute as morally injurious with no current consensus criteria (Held, Klassen, Zalta, et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019), some of the current suggested risk factors of PMIEs in military populations were therefore encountered by Republican ex-prisoners during the conflict. If moral injury is identified in Republican ex-prisoners, this means that some of the literature on moral injury could be generalised to this population. For example, literature on treating moral injury would be beneficial to supporting disengaged Republicans if required. This section also outlined that individuals experienced cognitive dissonance and moral conflictedness as a result of their involvement in the armed struggle. The moral complexity of this context and parallel contextual factors in combination with the shared symptoms of moral injury discussion in the previous section, support the application of moral injury to this population.

It is important to note that there are still many fundamental differences between the experiences of traditional state soldiers and Republican ex-combatants, such as those related to the illegal nature of Republican violence and their lack of resources. As a result, not all the literature will be able to be generalised if moral injury is identified in this population. Identifying such differences and how they impact the incidence of moral injury would contribute to moral injury's conceptualisation and the understanding of its risk factors. Despite these differences, Republican ex-prisoners were still subjected to similar traumatic events and contextual factors that risk moral injury in military populations. In fact, they may have been at a greater risk for moral injury given that the factors that are listed above were more prevalent in the Republican 'warfare' than in traditional state militaries, such as the increased risk of civilian deaths in their bombing campaign in the 1970s. Therefore, these shared risk factors support why moral injury should be studied in this population, and the increased likelihood of such factors and events indicates a need to do so. Furthermore, given that moral injury is based on an individual's personal experiences, it is important to consider their perspectives of themselves and their motivations which subsequently shape those experiences. In this case, Republican ex-combatants viewed themselves as morally justified soldiers, and this perspective should be recognised when their experiences and potential moral injury is interpreted. PMIEs may not have been limited to their paramilitary activities. Rather, as will be discussed in the following section, other activities such as their engagement in vigilantism was likely also morally injurious for some individuals.

4.4 Moral injury research on police and Republican vigilantism

As discussed in Chapter 2, moral injury has also been identified in (former) members of law enforcement (McCormack & Riley, 2016; Papazoglou, Blumberg, Chiongbian, et al., 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2019; Tuttle et al., 2019). The PIRA not only saw themselves as an army, but also engaged in vigilantism (McGlinchey, 2019; Morrison, 2015). From the outset, they assumed the role of the "moral guardians", "protectors", or "defenders" of their communities (Bishop & Mallie, 1992). Whilst they portrayed this as community 'policing', they were looking to assert control over these areas (*Independent Reporting Commission: First Report*, 2018; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). This activity is also documented in the PIRA's training manual, 'the Green Book', which states that part of their strategy was to 'defend the war of

liberation by punishing criminals, collaborators, and informers' (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). They 'punished' for both political crimes (e.g., informing or defrauding the organisation, public criticism or disrespect, collaboration with security forced which were viewed as detrimental to the PIRA itself, intervention in paramilitary activities), and civil crimes (e.g., anti-social behaviour, joy riding, petty crime, armed robberies, drug dealing, physical assault, sexual crimes) which were viewed as detrimental to the wider community (Bishop & Mallie, 1992; Monaghan, 2004; Silke, 1998a, 1999). Attacks ranged in severity, and included warnings, curfews, fines, beatings, shootings, expulsions, and assassinations (Silke, 1998a). The PIRA had to resort to cruder and violent methods as a lack of resources meant they could not hold prisoners for extended periods of time as punishment (Silke, 1998a). Republicans have been suggested to have committed 1,228 of such shootings between 1973 and 1997, and a further 755 beatings during 1982 to 1997 (English, 2012, p. 275). It is difficult to get accurate figures given that many incidents did not get reported (Monaghan, 2004). Acts of vigilantism by radical/dissident Republicans continue to this day (McGlinchey, 2019; Morrison, 2015; Topping & Byrne, 2012).

This vigilantism allowed the PIRA to maintain tight control over nationalist communities in the North (Feenan, 2002b; McGlinchey, 2019; Silke, 1998a). The existing perception of illegitimacy of the Northern state in these communities was further damaged by the sectarian 'policing' and human rights abuses by security forces at the time (Feenan, 2002b). Therefore, there was a practical need and demand for a 'policing' system given the reluctance of the community members to involve themselves with the RUC (Bishop & Mallie, 1992; Brewer et al., 1998; Feenan, 2002b; Moloney, 2007; Morrissey & Pease, 1982). This also made it more difficult for the RUC and security forces to exercise their authority or gather intelligence (English, 2012; Silke, 1998a).

Silke (1998a) argues that their motivations also held a moral dimension, as they believed it to be "right" to assist the community by targeting criminal behaviour. Whilst efforts were made to create an impression of legitimacy, the reality usually lagged behind such ideals (Silke, 2000). For example, 'Peoples' courts' were established in Catholic 'no-go areas' in the 1970s to deal with minor offences and adjudicate disputes, but these collapsed and were not reactivated (Morrissey & Pease, 1982). This limited the vigilantism to the use of force as a means of 'punishing' (Jarman et al., 2007; Morrissey & Pease, 1982). Therefore,

unlike in traditional criminal justice systems, there was no right to a fair trial for the accused and according to Sinn Féin representatives there were no formal detection procedures (Morrissey & Pease, 1982). As in the discussion in the previous section relating to their perception of being an army, what is important is that they saw themselves as engaging in legitimate 'policing' activities despite their constraints of resources. As discussed extensively throughout the previous chapters, morality is shaped by one's social environment. Those involved in vigilantism likely also perceived this as 'right' and 'moral' as they grew up in Republican communities, where these actions got significant levels of community support during the conflict (Silke, 2001). However, this has also argued to be more accurately represented as a dependency on Republicans to deal with anti-social crime (McEvoy & Mika, 2001).

This means that whilst the PIRA's 'policing' and vigilante activities should not be equated with those of traditional state law enforcement, some of the findings from the literature on moral injury in law enforcement may also be applicable. Whilst PMIEs for traditional law enforcement and differences between these PMIEs with the military are not yet clearly established through research, some have been suggested. Suggested PMIEs in traditional law enforcement that may also apply to Republican vigilantes include the exposure to atrocities and death (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018), having to apply the use of (lethal) force (Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018), and having to make decisions that turn out to be morally detrimental (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020). Additionally, witnessing and not reporting negative or unethical behaviour by colleagues has been proposed to be morally injurious in police (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017). This may also be applicable to Republican vigilantes, as there are numerous accounts of individuals abusing their positions for personal gain despite the IRA frowning on any unsanctioned behaviour that may have brought the movement into disrepute (Silke, 1998a). McCormack and Riley (2016) found that former police members were morally injured and felt betrayed by their organization when discharged. Given that vigilantism was not considered the act of an established and respected figure for militant republicanism, some members may have felt similarly betrayed and insulted if relegated from active duty when considered 'high risk' and 'known' by security forces, such as former prisoners (Silke, 1999).

Republican vigilantes intentionally violently attacked civilians as 'punishment', rather than harming them accidentally or due to fears of safety which is the more common reason for employing violence against civilians in traditional law enforcement. This may make such incidents less morally injurious. It may also make it more morally injurious given this may be mean it is harder for some Republicans to morally rationalize upon reflection after the event. Additionally, the fact that their 'policing' employed intentional violence and was unable to conduct formal detection procedures and legal proceedings may have increased the number of PMIEs relating to this activity. Firstly, individuals have been violently attacked as a result of mistaken identity due to this (Monaghan, 2004), and a number of people died as a result of injuries that were intended to be non-fatal (Silke, 1999). Whilst there were limits imposed on them from the wider community on what they could do (Collins & McGovern, 1998; Silke, 1998a), a "combination of bad light, a nervous gunman and a struggling victim made for some horrific injuries" (Bishop & Mallie, 1992, p. 401). Secondly, paramilitary violence was only used to discipline people from the same community as the perpetrator (Jarman et al., 2007). In the 1990s, there was an increase of targeting community members under the age of 20 (Silke & Taylor, 2000), with some reports during this time even suggesting that community members under the age of 17 were physically attacked (Monaghan, 2004). And thirdly, the PIRA not only targeted alleged criminals in their community but also attacked and assassinated their own members for disobeying orders, breaching internal codes, or collaborating with security forces (Monaghan, 2004; Silke, 1998a). All these events related to the Republican vigilantism may have clashed with individual members' moral beliefs, potentially resulting in moral injury. Therefore, the PMIEs in the PIRA were not only related to their paramilitary campaign but may have also arisen because of their other activities such as the vigilantism in their communities.

4.5 Preliminary evidence for moral injury in Republican ex-combatants

A previous study found preliminary evidence of moral injury in the autobiographies of former PIRA members (Bont, 2020, 2021). The autobiographical sources written or co-written by members of the PIRA during the conflict and were analysed through interpretative phenomenological analysis. This included both rank-and-file members, as well as individuals who previously held leadership positions.

The analysis found evidence of PMIEs and morally injurious outcomes in five of the autobiographical accounts (Collins & McGovern, 1998; Moloney, 2011; O'Callaghan, 1999; O'Doherty, 2011; O'Rawe, 2016). The first PMIE identified was when individuals were confronted with the reality and consequences of the IRA's campaign of violence. The PIRA members appeared to be at particular risk for moral injury when "innocent civilians" rather than British targets were killed because of their own, or the PIRA's, actions:

> … I was horrified. Here in black and white, was the plainest proof that my use of violence had transformed me from an idealist on high moral ground to an offender with a seemingly endless list of human rights' violations to his name. None of this reeked of justice. I was coming face to face finally with the consequences of my long-distance bombings and I was not happy. There was no justification whatsoever for these injuries, and I was deeply sorry for the selfish and callous disregard I had shown for civilian casualties… (O'Doherty, 2011, p. 157)

Violence that PIRA members were not directly involved in could also be morally injurious. For example, Sean O'Callaghan (1999) experienced moral injury after witnessing the consequences of the Garda's inaction which resulted in a murder of an informer by the PIRA. An informer himself, O'Callaghan had provided persistent warnings to his Garda contact to prevent this, but despite these warnings the informer was murdered. Involvement in the hunger strike campaigns of the early 1980s was also found to result in moral injury in two cases (Moloney, 2011; O'Rawe, 2016). For example, moral injury was associated with the belief that they should have done more to end the campaign to prevent further deaths, especially when the British government offered reasonable proposals:

> Since that time, I have had to grapple with the terrible knowledge that I personally displayed an appalling degree of moral ambivalence on the issue of the hunger strike. I let my hunger-striking comrades down; I took the line of lead resistance rather than say the unpalatable words that no one wanted to hear. (O'Rawe, 2016, p. 171)

Despite the different circumstances, all these experiences revealed evidence of cognitive dissonance between the former members' moral beliefs and the actions that they were affiliated with, witnessed, failed to prevent, or perpetrated themselves (Litz et al., 2009). All these experiences also evidenced the significant psychological consequences associated with moral injury. For example, guilt, anger, shame, depression, psychological distress, despair, exhaustion, loss of trust, hopelessness, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts were evidenced. These symptoms have previously been identified as outcomes affiliated with moral injury (see Chapter 2 for further detail). The following quote by Collins provides evidence for some of these symptoms:

> I felt an extraordinary pain that would not go away. Every now and again I would fall off to sleep, but would wake again after what seemed a few minutes. In my sleep I moved in darkness, but the darkness seemed to have a form; like the mouth of a beast. I was inside the beast. Awake, the images in my mind were worse. I could see Mickey shooting him; see the lunchbox dropping to the ground, see Mickey's English football scarf catching the arc of blood that sprayed the air. I had never felt so empty. I had chosen this way and I could not turn back. I remember touching my wife, kissing her hair and crying silently. I was crying for Hanna, perhaps for his wife and child, but also mostly for myself, for what I had become. (Collins & McGovern, 1998, p. 118)

As a result of their symptoms of moral injury, some individuals felt motivated to make amends for their prior actions. This was attempted in different forms, including by apologising, informing, sharing their experiences and/or engaging in community work (Collins & McGovern, 1998; O'Callaghan, 1999; O'Doherty, 2011; O'Rawe, 2016). Reparative actions have been identified as a common response to moral injury (Held et al., 2019; Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009). They have been suggested to have a therapeutic role, given that they help restore the sufferer's self-esteem, reconnect them with their moral values, and encourage self-forgiveness (Held et al., 2019; Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009; Purcell et al., 2016). It may also be that the individuals wished to continue to be engaged in the conflict in a non-violent role. This motivation is common in former political prisoners in Northern Ireland, as many engage in a range of community work including restorative justice projects, peace-building

efforts, and ex-prisoner support services (Ferguson et al., 2015; Joyce & Lynch, 2017; McEvoy & Shirlow, 2009; Shirlow et al., 2005). This is largely through self-help initiatives and allows them to maintain their collective post-imprisonment identity whilst contributing to the community and "giving back" (Dwyer & Maruna, 2011; Ferguson et al., 2015; Joyce & Lynch, 2017). Some Republican ex-prisoners engaged in such work, alongside others also engaged in efforts supporting Republican ex-prisoners, will be interviewed for their views on moral injury in the Republican ex-prisoner population. This is expanded upon in Chapter 5.

Additionally, the analysis found evidence of moral disillusionment in two-thirds of the autobiographical sources (Collins & McGovern, 1998; McGuire, 1973; Moloney, 2011; O'Callaghan, 1999; O'Doherty, 2011; O'Rawe, 2016). This was found to contribute to the psychological and/or physical disengagement from the PIRA for some members, even if some of these individuals still supported general Republican ideology. This does not necessarily generalize to other former Republican ex-combatants, given that such disillusionment may motivate individuals to write autobiographies, but is in line with the previous research discussing moral disillusionment in Chapter 3. Both moral injury and moral disillusionment occurred most frequently when the PIRA condoned acts that resulted in disproportionate violence and "unnecessary" deaths, including those of civilians, informers, and hunger strikers. It is therefore likely that for some individuals, experiences of moral injury interacted with moral disillusionment and led to psychological and/or physical disengagement from the PIRA even if the Republican ideology was still supported. This is in line with suggestions that moral injury in military personnel can cause disenchantment with previously held values and an army's morality (Molendijk et al., 2016). The link between these two concepts should therefore be clarified in further research and will be examined in the current research (see Chapter 5 onwards).

The analysis also evidenced that some of the PIRA members did not experience moral injury or moral disillusionment. Rather, a perception of the PIRA's strategy of violence as morally justifiable, either temporarily or consistently, was commonly revealed. Different factors shaped the moral beliefs regarding the justification of violence, such as the culture of romanticisation of the Republican cause, a normalisation of violence, witnessing violence by British soldiers resulting in desires for revenge, an unquestioning devotion to the Republican cause, and personality types that were more prone to condoning the use of violence (Bradley & Feeney, 2011; Collins & McGovern, 1998; Doherty, 2017; O'Doherty, 2011; O'Rawe, 2016).

These factors are in line with the summary of Republican morality in Chapter 1. This perception on the justification of violence was suggested to have decreased susceptibility to moral injury as their actions would not conflict with their moral beliefs. The current research will therefore directly examine the factors that shape moral beliefs in this population and how this might protect individuals from moral injury. Alternative factors may play a role in this as well, such as the moral disengagement processes discussed in previous chapters, or other social factors given the social nature of morality.

By analysing autobiographies this investigation was limited in its ability to form decisive conclusions on the application of moral injury to former PIRA members. The fact that most of the individuals disengaged from the PIRA and evidenced disillusionment also means it is possible that these individuals were more likely to demonstrate evidence of moral injury than Republican ex-prisoners who did not publicly share their story. Autobiographical sources are potentially biased, as the authors may have been motivated to write them to portray themselves (or the PIRA) favourably or to justify their previous actions (Altier et al., 2012, 2017). Alternatively, they may have wished to portray the PIRA unfavourably due to personal agendas. It is also possible that the texts were revised by editors or co-authors. In addition, they may not have been truthful about their involvement and accounts could be disputed within the Republican movement yet are difficult to validate. Furthermore, some individuals may not have wished to disclose on the psychological impact their involvement had on them in public writing. This is especially an issue for individuals with moral injury, whose symptoms of avoidance, guilt, shame, or distress may prevent them from broaching relevant subjects. Anonymous interviews are conducted in current research to directly investigate the occurrence of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners to provide further supportive evidence, and to prevent some of these presentation concerns.

Therefore, this study provided preliminary evidence that moral injury can successfully be applied to Republican ex-combatants in Northern Ireland, and that these experiences may have also contributed to moral disillusionment with the organisation. Additionally, it provided preliminary evidence of how specific factors shaped moral beliefs that decreased susceptibility to moral injury. The rest of the thesis will present results from interviews to further establish the extent to which the concept is applicable to this population, what events are morally injurious, what the morally injurious outcomes are, and potential risk and protective factors.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to justify the application of moral injury to Republican ex-combatants. The available literature on how former political prisoners in Northern Ireland were psychologically affected was outlined, revealing the detrimental impact it held on some former political prisoners' mental health. Additionally, reasons for this context being an environment conducive to moral injury were outlined. This included drawing from the literature in Chapter 1 that discussed its unique moral environment and referencing the literature in Chapter 2 on moral injury in military and law enforcement populations. Lastly, preliminary evidence for the applicability of moral injury to Republican ex-combatants was discussed in detail. This study (Bont, 2020, 2021) evidenced that there are indications of PMIEs and morally injurious outcomes in autobiographies written by former members of the PIRA.

Direct interviews are required to gain further insights and form conclusions on whether some Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury. This research will provide greater clarification on how Republican ex-prisoners are morally and psychologically affected by their experiences, as well as how this may factor into disillusionment and disengagement processes. The remainder of this thesis will consist of research conducting such interviews, and the following chapter provides a more empirical rationale for this research.

Chapter 5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methodology and justifies its methodological choices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in two different samples with different interview questions. Therefore, the research is divided into two interconnected studies. Study 1 interviewed Republican ex-prisoners about their personal experiences. Study 2 interviewed professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners in various capacities about their perspectives on moral injury in this population. The reasons for including both these samples are outlined in section 5.4. They should not be viewed as purely separate studies, but rather as different samples that complement and inform each other on moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. Within this chapter, it will be emphasised when the same methodological choices were made for both studies, and where and why they differ.

Whilst the previous four chapters in this thesis summarised relevant literature to explain the concept of moral injury and provide theoretical justifications for applying it to Republican ex-prisoners, this chapter describes the method which directly examines the topic through interview research. It will begin by providing an empirical rationale for both studies, followed by explanations of why semi-structured interviews were conducted, the sampling choices and recruitment procedures, the interview process including the design of the interview questions, and the limitations of the interviews and their associated ethical considerations. The qualitative analysis choices and processes will be discussed last, which were interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) for Study 1 and reflexive thematic analysis for Study 2.

5.2 Rationale for approach and research questions

As discussed in Chapter 4, prior evidence was found for moral injury in autobiographies written by former IRA members (Bont, 2020, 2021). However, autobiographical accounts may have been affected by editorial decisions or personal agendas (Altier et al., 2012, 2017). This is less of a risk in anonymised interviews, where it is also possible to ask follow-up questions that help test the validity and reliability of answers (Dolnik, 2011). The current research (Studies 1 and 2) therefore explores this topic in greater depth by investigating moral injury's

applicability through interviews. Interviews provide direct access into interviewees' subjective perspectives and experiences (McGrath et al., 2019). They are therefore particularly useful when the research interest relates to personal accounts of non-state political violence and how actors perceive themselves and their motivations, attitudes, environments, organisations, and involvement pathways (Altier et al., 2012; Horgan, 2012; Morrison, 2020), as is the case for the current research.

Although preliminary attempts have been made to create a measure of traditional state military moral injury, these were not used in the current research. The most commonly used measure is the Moral Injury Events Scale, which attempts to measure potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) and some symptoms (Nash, Carper, et al., 2013). This measure has frequently been adapted for use in research on non-military populations (e.g., Feinstein et al., 2018; Haight, Sugrue, & Calhoun, 2017; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Mojallal & Baker, 2020; Nickerson et al., 2015; Papazoglou et al., 2019, 2020; Tuttle et al., 2019). The Moral Injury Questionnaire-Military Version also assesses PMIEs (Currier, Holland, Drescher, et al., 2015). Lancaster and Harris (2018) evaluated both these scales, and found they correlate similarly with expected symptoms of moral injury. Thus far, exposure-oriented measures have been heavily relied upon in research on moral injury despite exposure to PMIEs not necessarily resulting in morally injurious outcomes.

Recently, more outcome-oriented measures have become available. This includes the Expressions of Moral Injury Scale-Military Version which assesses its warning signs and expressions (Currier et al., 2018), and the Moral Injury Symptom Scale-Military Version which measures its symptoms (Koenig, Ames, et al., 2018). All of these scales have been psychometrically validated, with preliminary evidence finding them valid, and clinically and psychometrically useful (Bryan et al., 2016; Currier, Holland, Drescher, et al., 2015; Currier et al., 2018; Koenig, Ames, et al., 2018; Nash, Carper, et al., 2013). This empirical validation has been predominantly conducted by those who developed the measures. Koenig et al. (2019) reviewed all four measures and found them to have solid psychometric properties. Currently, there is an ongoing international effort to develop a psychometrically sound, content-valid measure of moral injury as an outcome; the Moral Injury Outcome Scale (Yeterian et al., 2019). This effort is using a bottom-up approach to ensure content validity given the lack of consensus on the conceptualisation of moral injury (see Chapter 2).

None of these existing measures use gold standard methodology (Koenig et al., 2019; Litz & Kerig, 2019). For example, in order to ensure that the measure comprehensively assesses the concept, the development of these measures should have started with representative focus groups to discover all possible symptoms, behaviours, affects, and cognitions of moral injury, and then investigated correlates to create symptom clusters (Koenig et al., 2019). At the present there is still no agreement on the boundary conditions of moral injury, yet a measure will need to include all unique symptoms and factors resulting from exposure to PMIEs (Yeterian et al., 2019). Continued psychometric development of these measures is needed (Griffin et al., 2019), with bigger sample sizes and longitudinal research. Given this lack of a gold standard measure of moral injury, and the current lack of consensus on the conceptualisation of moral injury, none of the existing measures were used.

Qualitative research is more suitable for the current focus, as it will allow for richer exploration and probing of participants' own framing around moral injury, including the emergence of novel ideas not previously imagined (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This is relevant as moral injury has not yet been researched in Republican ex-prisoners. As a result, the reasons for when and how it expresses itself in this population must be examined. Therefore, in both studies, a bottom-up discovery approach was taken to explore moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. This is appropriate for IPA (Study 1) which is an inductive approach (Reid et al., 2005), whilst thematic analysis (Study 2) is theoretically flexible and therefore can be inductive in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Morrison, 2020).

As the aim was to explore the topic flexibly and in detail there were no set hypotheses (Smith & Osburn, 2015). The research questions for both studies are as follows:

1) Have Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury as a result of their involvement in the conflict?

2) If so, what are the morally injurious experiences, and how did they impact Republican ex-prisoners and their involvement in the conflict?

3) If not, are there protective factors that prevent Republican ex-prisoners from being affected by potentially morally injurious experiences? Are there other ways they have been affected psychologically by experiences during this time?

These research questions are important to investigate as they will provide greater clarification on how Republican ex-prisoners have been morally and psychologically affected by their experiences during the conflict, which holds important implications for rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. This is important not only for the individuals, but also as this influences their families, community development, and transitional progress (Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). The research will also allow insight into how this may factor into disillusionment and disengagement processes and provide a better understanding of the moral beliefs and justifications behind non-state political violence. This knowledge may contribute insights into how individuals may be persuaded to giving up the use of non-state political violence, how barriers to disengagement may be removed, and/or how individuals may be deterred from joining violent organisations in the first place (Altier et al., 2017). For example, disillusioned accounts may "help to offset the positive history of community defiance passed on through the legacy of violence" in Northern Ireland (Burgess et al., 2007, p. 85). Given that moral injury has not yet been investigated in actors of non-state political violence, it will also further the conceptual understanding of moral injury. Extension of moral injury to non-traditional state military populations with a history of violence, such as Republican ex-prisoners, may compel society to acknowledge their humanity and need for access to evidence-based mental health support (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021b). Expansion on these research implications can be found in Chapter 8.

5.3 Semi-structured interviews

The chosen type of interview for both studies was semi-structured. This means an interview guide was used (see appendices A and B), but with greater flexibility than in structured interviews (Bryman, 2016). Such flexibility was beneficial to Study 1 as it was unknown ahead of time whether the participant had experienced moral injury. If they did not, for example, some follow-up interview questions relating to moral injury may not have been relevant or required rewording. Similarly, questions asked in Study 2 depended on whether the participant believed moral injury to be applicable to this population. If participants in either study discussed unanticipated experiences relevant to the research topic, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for this to be probed further (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Horgan, 2012). Semi-structured interviews balance researcher guidance with

participant "space" to represent their experiences (Willig, 2013). This was useful for Study 1, as it allowed for inclusion of the variety of the sample's experiences and perspectives on the morality of their actions. For Study 2, this balance led to the inclusion of a variety of perspectives on moral injury in this context from different types of occupations.

Semi-structured interviewing is recommended for IPA as used in Study 1 (Willig, 2013). As Smith et al. (2009, p. 65) state, because in IPA we want to "find out about the participant's lifeworld – rather than learn more about our own – that we need to throw ourselves into the unknown. Good research interviewing requires us to accept, and indeed relish, the fact that the course and content of an interview cannot be laid down in advance". Relatedly, as semi-structured interviews allow for the emergence of detailed and rich accounts, this is also appropriate for investigating the complexity of involvement in, and disengagement from, groups employing non-state political violence (Horgan, 2012). The design flexibility of thematic analysis means interviews can also be used in Study 2 (Braun & Clarke, 2021c; Terry et al., 2017). Semi-structured interviews specifically are in line with recommendations for reflexive thematic analysis, where a fluid approach is advocated that more closely resembles the flow of real-world conversation in that the interviewer can spontaneously respond to the participants' unfolding account (Braun & Clarke, 2021c).

Published qualitative research on moral injury has commonly used, or been based on, semi-structured interviews (e.g., Currier et al., 2015; Drescher et al., 2011; Haight et al., 2020; Haight, Sugrue, & Calhoun, 2017; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Held et al., 2019; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Molendijk, 2018; Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Yeterian et al., 2019). As in the current research, interviewees in these studies were either at risk for moral injury themselves or worked with morally injured individuals.

5.4 Sampling and participants

Study 1:

Participants for Study 1 were Republican ex-prisoners who were imprisoned during the Northern Ireland conflict and have disengaged from any violent Republican organisation (e.g., Provisional Irish Republican Army/PIRA and the Irish National Liberation Army/INLA) active during this conflict. Despite common assumptions that interviewing former actors of non-state political violence cannot or should not be done, such interviews for academic purposes

are more prevalent and frequent than might be expected (Horgan, 2012). The PIRA in particular is a movement whose members have regularly engaged with many academic researchers, both during the years of its campaigns and especially in the years since then (Horgan, 2008).

Participants needed to have disengaged from violence for legal and ethical reasons (see section 5.8), but also as it prevented current involvement from acting as a potential confounding variable on the discussions of their moral beliefs. This also made it more likely that they would be willing to provide substantial detail on their prior involvement (Horgan, 2012). Importantly, it must be noted that this disengagement from violent Republican organisations does not mean that they have disengaged from Republicanism. Rather, many of the participants included in this sample are still active Republicans and are now involved in community and transitional justice work following the Good Friday Agreement. Whilst the original ethics proposal of this study referred to the sample as "former political prisoners in Northern Ireland who have disengaged from the PIRA", this was amended to include prisoners from any violent Republican organisation during the conflict. This allowed for greater access to interviewees to gain a more representative perspective on this population's experiences and potential moral injury.

11 Republican ex-prisoners were interviewed for the study. All participants were male. 5 grew up in Belfast, 2 grew up in Derry, and 4 grew up in rural areas. 7 participants were former members of the PIRA and 2 participants were former members of the INLA. The INLA was a splinter group of the OIRA, hence publicly claimed it wished to combine the armed militancy of the PIRA with the left-wing political activism of the OIRA, and it was smaller and less active than the PIRA (McDonald & Holland, 2010). However, participant membership of different groups should not have a confounding impact on the results as they were exposed to similar risk factors for moral injury, such as involvement in the injuring and killing of civilians, participation in prison protests and hunger strikes, involvement in feuds, and membership within a military hierarchical structure (see Chapter 4). Additionally, the study's focus is on the individual experiences and beliefs of Republican ex-prisoners, rather than the collective views of the organisations they were once involved in. No former members of any other violent Republican organisations active during this time responded to interview requests. 2 participants were accused of and imprisoned for membership or activities of the PIRA, but not convicted. Those who were convicted all were active volunteers with varying

roles, and 1 participant stated he held a leadership position. All participants were teenagers when they joined or became involved in the conflict, except 1 participant who was in his early 20's. For those who shared why they disengaged, all except two said it was because of the peace process. Of those two, one left for political reasons in the 1980s and one left in the late 1970s due to moral disillusionment with the use of violence. 3 out of 11 participants did not support the Good Friday Agreement. A mixture of Republican political views and experiences were therefore included. Participants are now mostly involved in community work, charity, journalism, post-conflict justice work, and politics. No other demographic information was recorded or required for the purposes of this study.

The results cannot be generalised to, or perceived as representative of, all Republican ex-prisoners (Altier et al., 2012; Cohen & Arieli, 2011). This is due to the sample being limited to only those accessible and willing to participate. However, generalisability was not aimed for. Instead, the research should be viewed as exploratory and aiming for theory development rather than theory testing (Nilsson, 2018).

The sampling techniques utilised were purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is required by IPA to ensure the inclusion of relevant experiences to the research questions being explored (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osburn, 2015). Therefore, both known Republican ex-prisoners and known Republican ex-prisoner groups were directly approached to explore their personal, first-hand experiences. Snowball sampling is particularly common in research about sensitive issues, or where populations might be hard to reach such as in (former) conflict environments or when issues of trust come into play (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Horgan, 2012). It was therefore an advantageous approach for the current research and population of interest, as existing participants could vouch for the trustworthiness of the project as well as recommend individuals relevant to the research focus (e.g., other Republican ex-prisoners, and more specifically any ex-prisoners struggling with moral conflictedness about their involvement). While snowball sampling is associated with a risk of sample bias (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Khalil, 2019), this was not applicable to the current study as snowball chains in different networks were followed simultaneously.

Republican ex-prisoner groups in Northern Ireland were successfully contacted, such as Coiste na nIarchimí, Tar Abhaile, and Teach na Failte. Such groups are commonly contacted for academic research purposes (e.g., Jamieson et al., 2010; McEvoy et al., 2004; Morrison,

2016) and often have research protocols for interviews (e.g. "request for interview forms"), therefore serving as a gatekeeper to participant access. Given some difficulties in recruitment (see next paragraph), political wings, charities, and other organisations engaged in community work or transitional justice were also contacted. This was not successful. These approaches are in line with recommendations for interviewee access routes by John Horgan (2012). Additionally, individuals were directly contacted through e-mail or social media (e.g., Twitter). All interviewees were asked at the end of the interview whether they knew of anyone else that would be interested in participating in the research, and this successfully resulted in further interviews taking place.

A request for interview was made following a description of the research, which included an attached information sheet summarising the research in greater detail (see Appendix C). Some participants requested phone calls prior to the interview where the researcher explained the research in greater detail.

There were some challenges during recruitment. Firstly, Northern Ireland is one of the most researched post-conflict contexts (Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Rekawek, 2013). Other academics with experience in conducting field research on this population previously warned of interview fatigue present in Republican ex-prisoners who are often contacted by researchers given their prior willingness to participate and are now more likely to decline because of this. It is possible that this impacted the current research, as some individuals did not respond to requests or follow-up requests. Some political ex-prisoners were not interested in participating as they said they were more "forward-thinking" in terms of community development.

Interviews for Study 1 were conducted from January 2021 until August 2021. Whilst the original plan was to conduct all interviews in person, due to COVID-19 restrictions all initial contact and 9 of the 11 interviews had to be online or via the phone depending on the participant's personal preference. This impacted recruitment as it was more difficult to network, access potential interviewees, and build trust. For example, it was not possible to make informal approaches during events such as public meetings (Horgan, 2012). There were also benefits to online recruitment and interviewing. For example, participants were able to have more control over the interview as they were able to end the call at any stage and it allowed for greater anonymity (Braun & Clarke, 2013), especially when a gatekeeper's phone was used for the interview. It is possible that in those cases, participants may not have wished

to be interviewed in person. Remote interviews were also more flexible and time efficient for both parties (Bryman, 2016; Lo Iacono et al., 2016), as travel was not needed. When interviews were carried out in person following an easing in restrictions, the government guidelines regarding COVID-19 were closely monitored and followed. For example, the interviews were socially distanced. These interviews took place at a Republican ex-prisoner organisation office.

Some potential interviewees declined to be interviewed as they were too nervous. A gatekeeper advised that such feelings were worsened following the Boston College Belfast Project, where a confidentiality agreement was not upheld due to legal proceedings (Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Morrison et al., 2021). Whilst such and other trepidations are understandable, it may have impacted the results. For example, a contact mentioned one such individual was "likely to have moral injury or PTSD". This indicates that some individuals who might have been the most relevant for the research were not accessible. In addition, Republican ex-prisoners were not able to discuss events that they were convicted for. The data may have been limited by this, especially if such events were morally injurious.

A few potential interviewees were receiving counselling for conflict-related PTSD and concerned that by discussing their experiences outside of their treatment it would interfere with their recovery. Again, this was understandable as it is crucial that these individuals undergo no risks of further psychological harm due to engagement in research. However, in qualitative studies on traditional state military moral injury, participants are often treatment-seeking or receiving, such as for PTSD (e.g., Currier et al., 2015; Held et al., 2019; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b). Therefore, such participants are more likely to also have moral injury in comparison to the non-treatment receiving populations. This was also not possible in the current study given that Republican ex-prisoners often face barriers to clinical treatment, such as a lack of trust and fears relating to lack of confidentiality given the legal compulsion on practitioners to disclose to the police any unsolved or illegal activities (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010; Shirlow, 2001). In addition, gatekeepers tend to protect potential interviewees who are vulnerable (Dempsey et al., 2016), including psychologically. Whilst this indicates good gatekeeping, it may have resulted in the exclusion of participants most relevant to the current study. In these cases, potential participants were reassured on the fact that interviews would be anonymous and that they could refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview, yet many still decided

to decline. No attempts at persuasion were made, as this would likely have resulted in stress and suspicion (Adeloye et al., 2020).

Small samples are common in qualitative research on moral injury involving interviews or focus groups with individuals with, or at risk for, moral injury (e.g, Currier et al., 2015; Haight et al., 2020; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Held et al., 2019; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2020). Samples in these studies range from 6 to 30 participants. In fact, the recommended number of cases in IPA is six to allow for greater analytical depth (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osburn, 2015), and therefore the current sample (11) was quite large. Research on a sensitive topic (such as the current research focus) may require a larger sample, as people may find it difficult to talk about (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Morse, 2000). This sample size was also required to increase the likelihood of including morally injured participants, given that recruitment was not possible in a treatment-seeking group such as in research on traditional state military personnel. By attempting to speak to as many ex-prisoners as possible, it was hoped that this challenge of exploring moral injury in non-treatment groups would be minimized. This limitation and its impact on the findings will be explored further in Chapter 8. Further impact of the sample on the results (e.g., individual differences and political opinions) will also be discussed in this chapter.

Rather than setting a target sample size, the aim was to have a sample as varied as possible to include a range of experiences and perspectives until data saturation was reached. Saturation refers to the point when additional data fails to generate new information (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 1995; Sandelowski, 1995). The goal in saturation is therefore to have enough participation to generate rich data, but not too much that it interferes with deep engagement with it (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Despite the challenges and limitations in recruitment, data saturation was reached as similar themes and arguments repeatedly came up in the interviews. Although there is always a possibility of new information arising from new interviews, this was deemed sufficient for analysis.

Study 2:

Participants for Study 2 were professionals who worked with Republican ex-prisoners in various capacities. Therefore, moral injury in the general Republican ex-prisoner population

could be explored, rather than only the individual experiences of ex-prisoners themselves as investigated in Study 1. This therefore granted access not only to more interviewees, but also provided novel and broader insights into moral injury in this population. Therefore, the samples in both studies inform each other and provide both general and individualised insights into moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. They should not be viewed as purely separate studies, but as complementary. Whilst trust and rapport can be difficult to establish between a PhD researcher and political ex-prisoners, especially when discussing sensitive issues, it is more likely that Republican ex-prisoners discussed potential trauma with these professionals. Interviewing professionals as well as Republican ex-prisoners also allowed for triangulation as seeking complementary information, thus providing a fuller understanding of moral injury in this context (Horne & Horgan, 2012; Morrison, 2020; Willig, 2013). Other qualitative studies on moral injury have similarly interviewed individuals working with potentially morally injured populations, such as clinicians or religious professionals (e.g., Drescher et al., 2011; Haight et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b; Yeterian et al., 2019).

7 professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners were interviewed for the study. Participants were eligible for participation if they had significant experience working or engaging with Republican ex-prisoners in any post-conflict support capacity. This allowed for various perspectives on potential moral injury in this population to be included, which may be influenced by individual differences (e.g., political beliefs) and the type of occupation which may be approached by different Republican ex-prisoners for different support.

The current sample included 1 counsellor, 1 forensic psychiatrist, 1 priest, and 4 community workers. The community workers work for organisations that support Republican ex-prisoners and/or others in the community through education/training, social support, conflict resolution/reconciliation/mediation, youth development, family support services, representation, advocacy, counselling, welfare/financial/employment advice, etc. Several organisations the participants work for were set up during and after the conflict to help Republican ex-prisoners (and their families) needing support. These organisations emphasised the development of self-help values and are therefore usually run by individuals with shared experiences (Dwyer & Maruna, 2011). Many former Republican combatants have played key roles in the development of community-based initiatives, facilitating reintegration and contribution to post-conflict regeneration and social development (Dwyer, 2012). 5

participants grew up in Republican communities before or during the conflict. 3 of these individuals were Republican ex-prisoners themselves, who were then employed in various supportive capacities in their community following training post-release. Their Republican past allows them to be trusted by, and understand the experiences of, the Republican ex-prisoners they support.

All participants were male and no further demographic information was recorded. The findings will not be generalisable to all professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners as they are based on the personal views and opinions of these 7 specific participants only. However, as mentioned above for Study 1, the research aimed for theory development and exploration rather than generalisability.

The sampling techniques utilised were purposive sampling and snowball sampling as in Study 1. Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants had sufficient experience of working with Republican ex-prisoners, but in different roles and capacities to incorporate a variety of perspectives. Snowball sampling was utilised to access relevant participants that might be unknown to the researcher yet relevant to the research focus. Although untrustworthiness was less of an issue than in Study 1, it was still beneficial to recruitment for existing participants to vouch for the trustworthiness of the project. Like in Study 1, sample bias from snowball sampling was unlikely as snowball chains in different occupations were followed simultaneously. Various known organisations supporting Republican ex-prisoners were successfully contacted, such as the Centre for Civic Dialogue and Development, Tar Abhaile, Tar Isteach, and the Belfast Unemployment Resource Centre. This included, but was not limited to, organisations providing emotional/psychological, financial, or spiritual/religious support, mediation, reintegration efforts, conflict resolution, advocacy, training, education, and employment or welfare advice. Known individuals who suited eligibility criteria were also directly contacted through e-mail. All interviewees were asked at the end of their interview whether they knew of anyone else that would be interested in participating, and this successfully resulting in further interviews taking place.

A request for interview was made following a description of the research, which included an attached information sheet summarising the research in greater detail (see Appendix C). Some participants requested phone calls prior to the interview where the researcher explained the research in greater detail.

Interviews for Study 2 were conducted from July 2021 until September 2021. As in Study 1, there were some challenges during the recruitment stage. The networking challenges related to having to conduct the interviews remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions applied to Study 2 as well, and 5 out of 7 interviews were conducted online. These challenges are outlined in greater detail in the section above, as well as the potential benefits to recruiting remotely. As in Study 1, in-person interviews followed government restrictions regarding COVID-19. These interviews took place at the locations where participants worked.

Recruitment was done during the summer of 2021, and therefore many potential participants were away on holiday which either delayed interviews or led to participants being too busy when they returned. It was also started halfway through the data collection process for Study 1, and therefore less time was available for recruiting this sample. Lastly, it is possible that some professionals did not wish to break confidentiality and did not feel comfortable discussing potential moral injury or trauma in Republican ex-prisoners they worked with.

Despite these challenges, data saturation was reached. Although Braun and Clarke (2021b) suggest against using the term data saturation given reflexive thematic analysis' subjectivity (see section 5.9), it is still used here at it is considered a useful concept to support the decision to end the data collection process. Similar arguments and perspectives were repeatedly brought up in the interviews, and there was a sufficient range of professions included in the sample to include a variety of experiences and perspectives. The impact of this on the results will be discussed in Chapter 8. Additionally, there are no rules for sample strategy or size in qualitative research and thematic analysis, and large sample sizes are not needed in research involving first-hand interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2021b; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Morrison, 2020; Patton, 2002). Rather, what is important is the richness of the interviews and that this meshes with the requirements of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). Small samples are also common in qualitative research on moral injury with individuals who have worked with potentially morally injured populations, such as health or religious professionals (e.g., Drescher et al., 2011; Haight et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b; Yeterian et al., 2019). Samples in these studies range from 4 to 26 participants.

5.5 Research process

The research process for both Study 1 and Study 2 were very similar, and any differences will be clarified. Further detail on recruitment and initial participant contact can be found in section 5.4, and processes to adhere to research ethics can be found in section 5.8.

At the start of the interview a summary of the topic was provided. For Study 1, this included a caveat that despite discussing moral injury and moral beliefs, no value judgments were being made nor was the morality of any involvement in the conflict being questioned. Rather, participants were told that the focus was on their own moral beliefs, perspectives, and experiences. This caveat was added in halfway through the interview process, as prior to this, some participants were noticeably defensive about their moral justifications for involvement. It is understandable that such feelings arose when the word "moral" was used in questions, especially in a population with prior involvement in non-state political violence, and therefore it was important that participants were made aware from the onset that they could speak freely and without fear of judgement. At times, interviewees were reminded of this caveat when potentially controversial questions were asked, such as those related to guilt or morality. These changes are in line with recommendations by Willig (2013), who warns interviewers to be wary of assumptions underpinning questions and to pay attention to interviewee responses to them. While it would be "naïve" to believe interviewees would view any outsider as impartial (Horgan, 2012, pp. 203–204), this did seem to have a positive impact and helped build trust and rapport, and participants often seemed less defensive and more open. Of course, it is possible that this was also influenced by increased practice in conducting interviews and improvement in active listening, which is especially important in research with actors of non-state political violence who self-defend their involvement as the "only way to be heard" (Dolnik, 2011, p. 27). In Study 2, the information prior to the interview included a more in-depth description and discussion of the concept of moral injury, to ensure their responses to questions would be as informed and relevant to the topic as possible.

During the interview, notes were occasionally taken, such as reminders for which questions to ask next/later, which had already been answered, or which to follow up or ask for elaboration on. Participants were never interrupted, even if they veered off-topic for extended periods of time. This was to ensure that they felt comfortable to respond in a manner they deemed relevant, even if such content was not included in the analysis. Silence during the interview was used as a catalyst to push the conversation forward and to prompt

the interviewees to reflect (McGrath et al., 2019). More detail on the interview questions can be found in section 5.6 and the questions for Study 1 and 2 can be found in Appendices A and B, respectively. Interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to nearly three hours. This depended on participant responses to the questions. Any final notes were written down after the interview, including observations and theoretical reflections.

Two participants were reinterviewed. One participant in Study 1 was reinterviewed to follow-up on and probe points made in the first interview and to ask new questions. The other participant was initially interviewed for Study 1 and reinterviewed for Study 2 to explore both his personal experiences as a Republican ex-prisoner, as well as to investigate his perspectives and experiences as a community worker. Reinterviewing also has further benefits in that it may dissipate the potential effects of the interview context on analysis and can build increased trust with the interviewee (Chernov Hwang, 2018; Morrison, 2020). This was found to be the case with both the reinterviewed participants. There was greater rapport in the reinterviews, and richer data and novel insights were obtained in the reinterview for Study 1. These novel insights were likely also related to the greater time for reflection.

The transcription was verbatim, meaning the written words are an exact replication of the audio-recorded words (McGrath et al., 2019; Poland, 1995). Longer pauses, inaudible phrases, and interruptions were indicated in the transcripts in brackets and shorter pauses were indicated by ellipses. Commas were included to indicate slight pauses with the intonation of continued speech. An example where this would be used is: "what I always say, is this." The transcripts were analysed with IPA in Study 1 and with thematic analysis in Study 2 (see section 5.9).

5.6 Interview questions

Study 1:

The interview questions were guided by the research questions outlined in section 5.2 (McGrath et al., 2019; Morrison, 2020), from the perspective of Republican ex-prisoners on their personal experiences. Interview questions were included on the nature of their involvement and how their moral beliefs related to the conflict were shaped, whether they experienced any morally injurious events, whether how they were impacted by these events and or the conflict in general, whether their moral beliefs related to involvement changed

over time, and how Republican ex-prisoners with psychological or emotional problems could be better supported. There were no direct questions on protective factors as it was deemed this would arise naturally from answers to questions about PMIEs and moral beliefs.

The questions and probes directly related to moral injury (Q4 & Q5) were based on a semi-structured interview schedule used in research with service members and veterans on experiences of traditional state military moral injury. It was developed as part of an international consortium aiming to design and validate a measure of traditional state military moral injury as an outcome (Yeterian et al., 2019), and was guided by theoretical models of PMIEs and their potential consequences (as outlined in Chapter 2). Small changes were made to the original questions and probes to make them relevant to Republican ex-prisoners, such as by changing "during your military service" to "when you were involved in the conflict". This ensured consistency with other research on moral injury, as the schedule has also been used in other recent studies on moral injury (Williamson et al., 2019a, 2019b). This was important given that no measure for moral injury was utilised, as explained in section 5.2, and because there is not yet consensus on the conceptualisation or definition of moral injury (see Chapter 2 for further discussion on this). The wording in these changes was carefully considered to maintain political sensitivity, as will be discussed further in section 5.7.

The remainder of the questions were original and focused on aspects directly relevant to the current research context, such as the Republican ex-prisoners' involvement in, and moral beliefs on, non-state political violence (Q1, Q2, Q3 & Q6). This allowed for an exploration of the occurrence of moral injury in this specific population and was related to the discussion on their moral beliefs in Chapter 1 and previous evidence of (moral) disillusionment as discussed in Chapter 4. The last two questions (Q7 & Q8) were also original and scoped whether there were psychological issues present in this population other than moral injury and how they could be supported. These questions aimed to explore further how involvement in non-state political violence psychologically affects its actors, given the limited existent research on this as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4. Q1 and Q2 provided information on the participants demographics and involvement in the conflict.

These original questions were designed in accordance with recommendations from Smith et al. (2009) and Willig (2013) for subsequent IPA analysis. Rather than being leading or closed, which may impact the validity and reliability of participant responses, questions were predominantly open-ended to encourage the participant to speak at length and share their

personal experiences and perspectives. Potential probes were included to prompt a more detailed or specific response, if needed. Some of the questions were narrative or descriptive (Q1, Q2, Q8, & Q9), whilst others were more analytical or evaluative (Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6 & Q7). The "easy" and more descriptive questions came first to make the interviewee comfortable and to familiarise them with the subject of the interview, and layman's language was used where possible (McGrath et al., 2019). The final question (Q9) provided an opportunity for the participant to discuss anything they believed to be relevant but not yet covered.

Some changes were made to the interview guide over time. Questions were adjusted following sample changes and reflection on whether initial interviewee responses indicated they understood the questions in the way intended (McGrath et al., 2019). Following the expansion of the sample from former PIRA members to all Republican ex-prisoners, any mention of the (Provisional) IRA in the questions was changed to "IRA/INLA/(armed) conflict" in Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6 and Q7 and/or their associated probes. In Q1 and Q8, the word "Troubles" was replaced with "conflict". This was done following advice from a gatekeeper and interviewee, who suggested against using the name "Troubles" as it minimises the impact and loss associated with this conflict.

Some probes were also added. Two probes were added to Q6 to gain further insight into whether participants felt disillusioned or guilt. These probes were more direct and helped focus participant answers on the topic of interest and built on previous evidence on disillusionment in actors of non-state political as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4. Probes were also added to Q5 and Q7 about sleep problems, impact on family members and children, and coping strategies. These were added following recommendations by a psychiatrist with extended experience in discussing similarly sensitive topics with Republican ex-prisoners and were perceived by him to be useful when ex-prisoners felt uncomfortable talking about the psychological impact the conflict had on themselves.

The order the questions were asked in, and which questions were asked or not, depended on the direction the participation took the interview. For example, in two cases participants were formerly in prison on remand not convicted. Therefore, the questions on membership and disengagement were not asked to prevent participants from discussing any unsolved illegal activity. This is in line with the discussion on participant ethics in section 5.8.

Study 2:

Study 2 interview questions were also guided by the research questions outlined in section 5.2 (McGrath et al., 2019; Morrison, 2020), from the perspective of professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners. Interview questions were included on the nature of their work with Republican ex-prisoners, how they believed Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs related to the conflict were shaped, whether/when moral injury was applicable and if they came across it in their work, how moral injury affected these individuals, and whether it was more or less likely to occur in this population compared to soldiers from traditional state militaries. Questions were also included that asked about moral disillusionment and other psychological/emotional problems in this population, and how Republican ex-prisoners could be best supported. There were no direct questions asking about protective factors as it was deemed this would arise naturally from answers to questions about moral injury and beliefs in this population and would also be indirectly addressed by the question on the difference of this population to soldiers from traditional state militaries.

Some of the questions and probes directly related to moral injury (Q3 & Q4) were inspired by the questions used in interviews with care providers on traditional state military moral injury (Yeterian et al., 2019). As in Study 1, this research was conducted as part of an international consortium aiming to create a measure of traditional state military moral injury. Although these questions asked about similar aspects of moral injury, the wording was original as 1) the full interview schedule was not available, 2) the questions had to be relevant to Republican ex-prisoners specifically, and 3) it allowed for greater consistency with the similarly phrased questions asked in Study 1. These questions were in line with the existent knowledge on types of PMIEs and ways that morally injured individuals are impacted by them, as described in detail in Chapter 2.

The remainder of the questions were original and focused on aspects directly relevant to the current research context. These were also consistent with questions asked in Study 1, such as those on Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs on the use of non-state political violence (Q2 & Q5), and whether there were any other psychological issues present and how these could be supported (Q7 & Q8). Again, as mentioned under the discussion of Study 2 in this section, these questions were in line with the literature summarised in Chapters 1, 3 and 4. Q6 was added to this schedule to further explore opinions on the difference between moral injury in this population and in traditional state militaries, after this having been brought up

on a few occasions by interviewees in Study 1. This would also provide greater insight into potential protective factors against moral injury in this population. Q1 provided information on the participant's occupation. Q9 provided an opportunity for the participant to discuss anything they believed to be relevant but not yet covered.

There are no specific recommendations for research questions in thematic analysis given its flexibility in methods of data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The questions were designed to avoid them being leading or closed, to probe detailed responses, and to ease and familiarise the participant into the topic, similarly to the question design in Study 1. Section 5.9 will emphasise how the analysis differentiated the studies. Although the concept of moral injury was explained in detail prior to the interview commencing, a second description was provided during the interview prior to the first question on moral injury. This was important as it was likely the participant did not have an in-depth understanding of this nascent concept. No changes were made to the interview guide during the data collection process of Study 2. Like Study 1, the order the questions were asked in depended on the direction the participants took the interview.

5.7 Limitations and challenges to the interviews

There are a variety of limitations to research based on interviews, which apply to both Studies 1 and 2. Lying is always a possibility and is especially flagged in research with actors of non-state political violence such as in Study 1 (Horgan, 2012; Khalil, 2019; McGlinchey, 2019; Speckhard, 2009; White, 2017). This is not relevant for the current research, as the focus in both studies was on participants' personal interpretations, reflections, and experiences rather than factual information or the "truth" of events (Altier et al., 2012; Crenshaw, 1990). This is also not pertinent in IPA research specifically, given the focus on participant interpretations (Morrison, 2020; Smith et al., 1999). It is possible that information was withheld, but the transcripts are deemed sufficiently detailed for analysis. Given that the Republican ex-prisoners have disengaged from violence for over 20 years, it is possible the Study 1 interviews may have been affected by hindsight or retrospective bias, changes in perspective, or memory loss (Altier et al., 2017; Horgan, 2012; Speckhard, 2009; White, 2017). However, it is expected that given their emotional intensity, PMIEs are likely salient in the

memory especially as they would continue to impact participants in the present day and therefore this is unlikely to have had a large impact on the data.

As a Dutch PhD student, the researcher was very aware of her status as an outsider in both studies. This is advantageous as it reduces risk of political bias or participant suspicion of ulterior albeit research-driven motives, and greater explanation was given by participants at times due to an assumption of lack of knowledge, thus allowing the participant to adopt the role of the "expert" (Feenan, 2002b; Horgan, 2008; Lynch & Joyce, 2018). However, this outsider-status may have negatively impacted recruitment, access, trust, and rapport, given a lack of existing networks and relationships (Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Reed, 2012), although the PhD supervisor and other academics were able to provide advice in establishing those. Being an 'outsider' in the Northern Ireland context also meant the researcher had to learn what language to use or avoid to maintain political sensitivity and rapport (Feenan, 2002a; Lynch & Joyce, 2018). At times, the researcher was advised on different language use by participants. Such advice was not given with hostility, however, but rather aimed to educate or help the researcher. The researcher was met with encouragement when revisions to language were made, and this helped build the participant-researcher relationship further. Therefore, these issues are seen as challenges in the research process, rather than limitations to the data, as they are deemed to have been effectively navigated through awareness, reflection, and effort at building rapport such as by taking a non-judgmental, sensitive, and respectful stance and providing an in-depth explanation of the focus of the research (Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Merriam, 2009).

Rapport and trust, both of which are especially important given the sensitivity of the topic (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Elmir et al., 2011), may also have been impacted by the fact that most of the interviews in both studies were conducted remotely (Lo Iacono et al., 2016; Meijer et al., 2021). This may have been more relevant for the phone interviews, which miss non-verbal behaviours. However, it was still possible to build both through frequent contact, introductory phone calls prior to interviews, and ice-breaker conversations before (and after) interviews. It has also been suggested that remote interviews are beneficial when asking sensitive questions, as interviewees may be less anxious about answering when the interviewer is not physically present (Bryman, 2016; Elmir et al., 2011).

Remote interviewing is unlikely to have had a large impact on the data given that there were no noticeable differences in the richness between the remote and in-person transcripts.

This is in line with findings of various studies on mode effects for telephone and face-to-face interviewing, which suggest concerns about data quality are not as great as sometimes assumed, and the lack of evidence that video calls significantly reduce the interviewer's capacity to secure rapport (Bryman, 2016). Three interviews were briefly interrupted by connection issues, but these did not significantly impact the flow of the interview or resulting transcripts. The fact that there were few difficulties associated with the remote interviews may also be a result of participants' greater familiarity with these technologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.8 Ethics

Study 1:

Ethical approval was reviewed and granted through Royal Holloway's University Research Ethics Committee. This was required given that the research involved participants who were potentially emotionally or legally vulnerable (i.e., Republican ex-prisoners), either before or because of participation in the study given their former engagement in illegal activities and the sensitive topic. For similar reasons, there were also potential emotional and physical risks to the researcher. The full submission to the committee can be found in Appendix D. It clearly outlined potential risks, how these were addressed at every stage of the research process, and evidence of similar research - either on the same topic with the same method in other contexts, or with a similar sample with the same method on a different topic - which has been carried out successfully without ethical problems arising. See the full submission (Appendix D) for lists of these example studies. They evidence that despite the risks, research on sensitive topics and with similar samples (i.e., Republican ex-prisoners) is possible and even common (Horgan, 2012). The submission was approved without need for revision.

To prevent and mitigate psychological risks to the participants, the safety, wellbeing, and requests of participants were taken into consideration at all stages. Throughout the process, a reflexive approach was taken, including the close monitoring of ethical decision making to avoid dilemmas from arising unexpectantly as much as possible.

Participants were briefed on the potentially sensitive content prior to the interview to obtain informed consent. An example of this is the information sheet provided to all participants and gatekeepers found in Appendix C. This included information on the topic, the

interview questions, the purpose, the process, the sources of funding, researcher background, and what would happen with the data. This was done for transparency and for participants to be aware on what participation entailed. Participants were reminded they could ask any questions before or during the interview.

Prior to the interview, a consent form was sent to the participants (see Appendix E). Participants were notified before and during the interview that the interview was recorded, that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they were able to refuse to answer any questions and withdraw before, during, or three months following the interview. They were reminded of this if they appeared distressed or uncomfortable during the interview. Although participants were given time to share their accounts and feelings, in two situations participants were not probed further when they appeared visibly upset as their needs always came first. Participants were followed up on in these situations to ensure they did not require further support or have any remaining questions, and still consented to their data being included. Prior experience, especially as a Witness Supporter in Glasgow Sheriff Court, helped the researcher handle these situations responsibly and confidently. No further ethical challenges related to participant vulnerability occurred and participants generally seemed comfortable to discuss these topics. Support services were linked, and appropriate follow-up structures were in place to provide adequate support for participants for if this had been required. Contact details and information was provided for local and community-based victim and survivors counselling groups, including those designed specifically for former political prisoners. These can be found on the debrief sheet in Appendix F which also summarised the research again.

Furthermore, the positive benefits of the research for the participant population could outweigh any potential emotional costs, recounting difficulties, or the potential for trauma to be re-ignited (Morrison et al., 2021). Moral injury has not been previously applied to this population, and little direct research has been conducted on the negative personal psychological repercussions of involvement in the conflict for Republican ex-prisoners. This research is therefore furthering the understanding of how to support and re-integrate these individuals. Whilst the individual participants may not benefit personally from the research, this increased knowledge may benefit those in the future and spread awareness of the issues they encountered. Additionally, the participants may have benefitted from the opportunity to discuss their experiences, with the interviews giving recognition to issues that may have

been previously neglected (Dolnik, 2013). In fact, Lundy and McGovern (2006) have noted that in their experience, participants in Northern Ireland wanted to engage in research despite associated emotional and psychological difficulties, as this allowed them to share their stories and raise awareness. Other researchers of sensitive topics have also found participants to feel sharing their stories to be cathartic (Elmir et al., 2011). Participants may also have felt this, especially as two participants specifically thanked the researcher for the opportunity.

It was unlikely that the participants became vulnerable from their participation in this study in relation to their history of engagement in illegal activity. Participants were prosecuted and disengaged from violence for over 20 years, and many were now involved in community work, transitional justice organisations, or even in government roles in Northern Ireland. Additionally, the research focused purely on the past and how activities they were known to have been involved in personally affected them. However, to prevent any legal issues from arising, participants were informed from the outset, and whilst providing consent, that if there was an issue of imminent risk to themselves or others, or if they discussed new criminal activity, this would have to be reported under UK legislation and they would forgo their right to confidentiality. This is because if new, unsolved, or planned activity is brought to light, anonymity and confidentiality could not be a guarantee and the researcher must inform the police (Morrison et al., 2021).

All identifiable aspects in the transcripts were anonymised, including names, ages, dates, locations, events, or other details unless relevant and not able to lead to the identification of the participant. For example, the event Bloody Sunday was never anonymised as it was commonly cited across the interviews in Study 1, experienced by many, and important to the analysis on the development of moral beliefs. Anonymised information is replaced with information in square brackets, either as "[anonymised]" or roughly described e.g., ["siblings"] and "[early 1970s]". In case participants wished to withdraw their data, the transcripts were given a unique, randomly generated number between 0 and 30 in Study 1 and 31 to 60 in Study 2 for the correct transcript to be identified for withdrawal. There were no requests for withdrawal. The participants were assigned random letters (A to K in Study 1 and Z to T in Study 2) in the analysis chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) for anonymisation purposes.

Zoom interviews were secure as participants needed a password and link to join the call, and then to be admitted by the researcher. The interviews were recorded with the permission of interviewees. The recordings and transcripts were securely stored on encrypted and password protected memory sticks, and recordings were deleted following transcription. Other than if internal university or external police enquiries took place (which did not), only the researcher and supervisor had access to the data. Consent forms were digitalised when the interviews were conducted in person, and all paper copies were destroyed. Digitalised consent forms were stored separately from the interview transcripts and recordings on a separate encrypted and password protected memory stick. In situations where participants were reluctant to sign a consent form due to this revealing their name and identity, oral informed consent was obtained at the start of the interview. Data was not transmitted or exchanged and was managed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Data will be retained for five years for publication and possible re-analyses.

Given that the researcher interviewed participants formerly engaged in illegal and potentially violent behaviour, it may be perceived that she could have been placed in physically vulnerably situations. This was unlikely to be and was not the case. Participants were no longer involved in illegal activity and had experience in being interviewed. Nevertheless, to guarantee safety, in-person interviews were conducted in public spaces during the daytime. The supervisor and a personal contact were made aware of when these interviews took place and where. No personal information was shared with participants.

To prevent and mitigate psychological risks to the researcher, given the emotionally difficult nature of the topic, breaks were taken between interviews and the transcription/analysis stages. These breaks allowed for distancing from the immediate emotional response to the interview, which also benefits analytical objectivity (Morrison, 2020). There was regular contact with the supervisor on this, and although it was not needed, the researcher felt comfortable approaching him about such issues if needed and it was reassuring to know this was possible. Emotions and feelings from during and after each interview were reflected on. The only times it was emotionally difficult to listen to participants' accounts were when there were visual descriptions of violence. In these situations, plenty of time was given for transcribing these sections to incorporate breaks. It was also difficult to know how best to react with facial expressions and body language, particularly to descriptions of violence participants perpetrated themselves and given that

the researcher was aware of her status as an 'outsider'. This is commonly reflected on by 'terrorism' researchers (e.g., Dolnik, 2013; Feenan, 2002; McGowan, 2020; Nilsson, 2018; Speckhard, 2009). It was found to be more difficult when interviews were not in-person, given that the 'human' element was removed. However, it became easier with practice and experience. Although conflict researchers also commonly reflect on the difficulty of emotional distancing and maintaining neutrality (e.g., Chaitin, 2003; Gallaher, 2009), perhaps especially when interviewing 'terrorist' actors given their (prior) involvement in violence or their extremist views (Morrison et al., 2021; Sluka, 2015), this was not found to be an issue. Perhaps this is due to previous experience of working closely with individuals in a high-secure psychiatric hospital who perpetrated violent crimes, and by focusing on maintaining a scientific mindset rather than moralizing about the content of the research (Lynch & Joyce, 2018) and empathic distance (Valentine, 2007).

As explained previously, the original ethics submission to the committee (Appendix D) was amended to allow for reinterviewing and extending the sample to all Republican ex-prisoners formerly imprisoned during the Northern Ireland conflict. This amendment was approved without need for revision. These amendments did not increase any risks to the researcher or participants, and there were no changes to the procedures or mitigations. Consent was obtained again when participants were reinterviewed.

Study 2:

The approved amendment of the original ethics submission to the committee (Appendix D) also allowed for a second participant group to be added to the study. Therefore, professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners were able to be interviewed. The procedures and mitigations were the same as outlined in the section above for Study 1, and there was no increased risk expected from interviewing this sample. There was no expectation that participants would disclose the identities of ex-prisoners, but they were asked to refrain from providing names or identifiable details to ensure anonymity. No ethical challenges, whether related to the participants or researcher, arose.

5.9 Data Analysis

Study 1: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA was utilised to qualitatively explore the research questions in the interview transcripts for Study 1. IPA is a form of analysis increasingly being used to analyse accounts of non-state political violence (Burgess et al., 2007; Ferguson et al., 2010, 2015; Ferguson & McAuley, 2020; Morrison, 2016, 2020). IPA has two complementary commitments: a phenomenological commitment to understand and voice concerns and claims of participants, and an interpretative requirement to contextualise and make sense of these concerns and claims from a psychological perspective (Larkin et al., 2006). Therefore, the participants' perspectives and experiences are at the forefront of the study (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith, 1996). The researcher then engages in a double hermeneutic, essentially "sense-making" of the participant's "sense-making" (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osburn, 2015).

IPA is commonly used when participants provide information on significant life experiences that had important implications for their identities and led to reflections, which IPA aims to engage with (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Howitt, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osburn, 2015). Relatedly, it is also designed to deal with emotionally charged, ambiguous topics (Morrison, 2020). It is therefore the most suitable analysis for Study 1, given the interviews' focus on how Republican ex-prisoners believe they were morally and psychologically affected by the conflict. This focus requires an in-depth examination of each individual case, which is in line with the approach suggested by IPA (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). It also requires consideration of the political and cultural context, which IPA's interpretative component encourages (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin et al., 2006). IPA also tends to examine similarities and differences between accounts (Howitt, 2013; Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osburn, 2015), which again is suitable to Study 1 as differences between individuals in their psychological coping and susceptibility to moral injury will be of interest. It is deemed especially useful in a study involving complexity or novelty (Smith & Osburn, 2015). Study 1 explored the complex phenomenon of morality and relevant emotional and social responses and is novel in that moral injury has not been investigated in this population previously.

Although IPA does not have a prescribed single method, guidelines on how to conduct IPA by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) and Smith and Osburn (2015) were followed. Each transcript was analysed individually to prevent the codes from one transcript determining the construction of themes in subsequent transcripts. Firstly, each transcript was read, and anything of interest or seemingly important to the participant was noted. Secondly, transcripts were annotated and coded. Thirdly, emergent themes were created, involving greater interpretation and analysis. The focus was on finding evidence either for, or against, moral injury. Other themes emerged from exploring how participants were more generally psychologically and morally affected by their involvement. Fourthly, preliminary theoretical and interpretative connections between themes were made, and some initial emergent themes were clustered into superordinate themes through abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualisation, numeration, and function (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). The transcripts were continuously checked and referenced to ensure the themes were grounded in the texts and experiences of the participants.

After each transcript was analysed individually through these four steps, overarching themes and patterns were identified across the transcripts. The purpose of these different stages and the evolution of the analysis is evidenced by the fact that the 53 total individual themes (Appendix G) were collated into 7 overarching themes (see Chapter 6). Links were subsequently made between the findings and the existing literature on moral injury in Chapter 8 to determine whether themes were produced that were relevant to the construct of moral injury. Given that the current sample size was large for IPA (see section 5.4), greater emphasis was placed on the overarching themes across cases, than discussing individual cases in detail (Smith et al., 2009). However, the individual particularities were in the forefront of creating these overarching themes in the first place.

In IPA, there is no certainty, objectivity, or prediction, and alternative interpretations are always possible (Willig, 2013). Additionally, the data is dependent on the participants' unique experiences and perspectives. The results from Study 1 in Chapter 6 therefore cannot be generalised to the wider population of Republican ex-prisoners. Instead, attempts were made at transferability whereby the contexts, participants, settings, and circumstances of the research were described in detail, allowing the reader to evaluate the potential of its application to other contexts or participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As IPA is unavoidably interpretative and subjective (Reid et al., 2005; Willig, 2013), validity may

be affected by the role and perspective of the researcher. Therefore, the researcher engaged in reflexivity and critically reflected on her role throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2013). Given the research interest in moral injury, the analytic process was taken in that particular direction, demonstrating how IPA produces a co-construction between participant and analyst rather than a definitive or objective account (Smith & Osburn, 2015; Willig, 2013). This does not necessarily bias the data, but helps understand the experiences of the interviewee in a different light (McGrath et al., 2019). Further evidence of reflexivity may be found in section 5.7. The analysis was checked by the supervisor to verify the credibility, coherence, and validity of interpretations and development of themes, especially in relation to the data and contexts (as reccomended by Smith et al., 2009).

Validity was further demonstrated by following Yardley's (2000) four quality principles. Firstly, the analysis was sensitive to the context, such as to the influence of participants' political beliefs and the sociocultural setting of the conflict on their moral beliefs. Recognition of the influence of the sample is reflected on in section 5.4 and Chapter 8. The researcher was also aware of the nascent state of research on moral injury, which may have affected interpretation. The social context of the relationship between the researcher and participants is reflected on in section 5.7. The analysis was sensitive to the data itself, as it was grounded in the verbatim quotes of participants. Secondly, the analysis was also rigorous in its prolonged engagement with the topic, thorough data collection resulting in completeness of interpretation and an adequate sample (see section 5.4), and depth of analysis which involved an empathetic exploration of participant perspectives together with consideration of existing literature. This development in rigour was aided by prior training and practice in IPA. Thirdly, verbatim quotes from the transcripts are included in Chapter 6 to support themes and to increase transparency. The process is also illustrated in Appendix G, where the individual transcript results can be found. These do not include the supportive quotes to reduce the length of this appendix. Further transparency on the process is evident throughout the current chapter. Lastly, the impact and importance of the research is clear in it being the first to apply moral injury to this population, which aided theoretical understanding on Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs and psychological wellbeing. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Study 2: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilised to qualitatively explore the research questions in the interview transcripts for Study 2. Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis should be considered an umbrella term for a number of approaches to analysing qualitative data which differ in their conceptualisations of themes, methods, and coding (Braun et al., 2018; Morrison, 2020). The current thematic analysis approach taken is reflexive thematic analysis, which embraces the subjective skills of the researcher and where no coding framework is used (Braun et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2021d). Specifically, experiential thematic analysis was utilised, which focuses on the participants' standpoint, and explores the truth(s) of their contextually situated experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2021c). This approach to thematic analysis was chosen as the interest was in the participants' personal views and opinions on moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners based on their experiences of working with this population.

Experiential/reflexive thematic analysis is different from IPA as it is interested in patterns apparent at the group level, rather than IPA's ideographic approach and focus on lived experiences and unique details within individual cases (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Smith & Osburn, 2015). While in IPA there is a detailed focus on each case before developing themes across cases, in reflexive thematic analysis the themes are developed across cases following the coding of the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). For Study 1, IPA was chosen as there was interest in close engagement with, and analytical depth, for each individual case, given the focus on Republican ex-prisoners' personal experiences of potential moral injury. But in Study 2 this was not necessary, as the interest was in the sample's professional opinions on the applicability of moral injury to this other population, rather than their unique lived experiences. Table 1 summarises the core differences between reflexive thematic analysis and IPA.

Table 1: Core differences between IPA and reflexive thematic analysis

	IPA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
Focus	Lived experiences and unique details within individual cases (ideographic approach)	Patterns at the group level
Process	Detailed focus on each individual case before theme development across cases	The entire data set is coded with themes developed across cases
Sample type	Well-suited to small sample sizes	Well-suited to heterogenous samples

Thematic analysis is also more applicable to heterogenous samples, such as when the aim is to capture diversity, and when there is an interest in how personal experiences are located within wider sociocultural contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). This was relevant to Study 2, which included a variety of professions within the sample, and which considered the influence of the moral and political context of Republicanism in Northern Ireland on (potential) expressions of moral injury. Although this process means that the voices of individual participants can get lost in larger datasets analysed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), this should not be relevant for the current study which only had a sample of 7 participants.

Although there is no prescribed single method for reflexive thematic analysis, the systematic, six-phased version by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted. Firstly, there was familiarisation with the transcripts, which were read and re-read with initial ideas being noted down. Secondly, initial codes were generated by interesting features of the data being coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. Interest was largely in evidence for or against moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. This could involve similarities and differences across the dataset, as well as unanticipated insights. Thirdly, the codes from across the cases were collated into potential broader themes with all data extracts relevant to each potential theme being gathered within the identified themes. The purpose of these different stages and the evolution of the analysis is evidenced by the fact that the 97 initial codes (Appendix H) were collated into 6 themes (see Chapter 7). Fourthly, the themes were reviewed and checked in relation to the code's extracts and the entire data set. Fifthly, the themes were

clearly defined, refined (both in terms of the specifics of each theme and the overall narrative of the analysis), and named. The content of the extracts was not just paraphrased, but rather the analysis identified what was of interest about them and why. Lastly, the analysis was written up and included extract examples to support the analysis, which was also related back to the research questions and relevant literature on moral injury. This may be found in Chapter 8.

Coding and theme development in reflexive thematic analysis are part of a subjective and interpretative process, where the researchers' assumptions, perspectives, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills shape the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Terry et al., 2017). Whilst knowledge cannot therefore be objective, quality-assurance strategies can strengthen the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). The criteria for "good thematic analysis" by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 98) for this were followed, such as by coding thoroughly and inclusively, and by reviewing and checking the themes closely with the data as well as against each other. Themes emerged from both depth of engagement and distancing, which allowed for reflection (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). Reflexivity is key to good quality analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021c). Therefore, as in Study 1, the researcher critically reflected on her role in the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2013), and further evidence of reflexivity may be found in section 5.7. As in Study 1, the analysis was checked by the supervisor to verify credibility, coherence and validity of interpretations and theme creation. Validity was further demonstrated by following Yardley's (2000) four quality principles. These are described further in this section for Study 1. Evidence of the analysis process may be found in Appendix H, which includes tables with initial codes and gradually developing themes across the dataset. The results cannot be generalised as it only included the opinions and perspectives of a small sample of professionals working with Republican ex-prisoners. Instead, attempts were made at transferability as outlined above for Study 1.

5.10 Chapter conclusion

This chapter justified why, and explained how, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Republican ex-prisoners in Study 1, and with professionals working with this population in Study 2. The importance of research ethics was dominant at all stages of the research given the sensitivity of the topic. The resulting interview transcripts were analysed with IPA for

Study 1, and reflexive thematic analysis in Study 2. This provided insights into moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners from both individual experiences, as well as into the population more generally from the perspectives of various professionals that support this population in different capacities. These insights included considerations on when moral injury may have occurred and how this impacted individuals and their involvement in the conflict, or when and why moral injury was not present. The findings can be found in the following two chapters, respectively, and include supportive evidence from quotes. The findings from these two studies will subsequently be discussed in relation to the relevant existing literature in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6. Study 1 Results (interviews with Republican ex-prisoners)

6.1 Introduction

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the 11 interviews with Republican ex-prisoners for Study 1 revealed seven themes. This analysis focuses on the lived experiences of the participants where relevant to moral injury. This chapter presents the overarching themes that emerged from the analysis (see Appendix G for the themes of each individual transcript). These themes evidence both experiences of moral injury and resilience, as well as other psychological challenges and how Republican ex-prisoners can best be supported in this.

The first theme is *factors shaping moral beliefs related to involvement*. These factors played a role in the development of the belief that Republican violence, and their involvement in it, was justified and moral. The specific factors are listed as subthemes and include experiences of state violence/discrimination, growing up in a conflict context, Republican family & social environment, and youth & moral disengagement. It is important to understand how these moral beliefs were shaped first, to then unpack potential moral conflicts between them and subsequent experiences in the conflict in later themes. The second theme is *moral challenges related to Republican violence*. It evidenced that there were incidents when victims were harmed unintentionally or accidentally that were not in line with the moral beliefs discussed in Theme 1. This theme also describes how several individuals experienced changes in their moral beliefs related to Republican violence over time and discusses one case of moral injury related to this violence in-depth. However, as explained in the third theme (*retention of Republican beliefs protecting against moral injury*), most interviewees were protected against this moral injury related to Republican violence as they continued to rationalise and view Republican violence as morally justified. The fourth theme is *experiences of betrayal*. This describes how feelings of betrayal were elicited by the peace process, by the negotiations during the Hunger Strike campaigns, and through personal experiences of arrest. For some, these experiences resulted in moral injury. It therefore illustrates that potential moral conflict should not only be viewed as arising from Republican violence as in Theme 2, but from betrayal by other Republicans as well.

Theme five is *other psychological challenges*, which describes potential sources of trauma other than moral injury. Whilst the previous themes demonstrated that moral injury was rare in this sample, other traumatic events were much more commonly cited. This theme's subthemes cover how individuals' lives were impacted by the conflict and these events. Theme six is *general resilience and coping* and reveals how despite being confronted with the many psychological challenges listed in theme five, individuals were mostly resilient and able to cope through a variety of methods. Lastly, theme seven is *support for Republican ex-prisoners*. This theme illustrates the need for greater psychological support for this population given the negative impact the moral and other psychological challenges evident from the previous themes had on their lives. It also expands on barriers to this support, as well as recommendations to improve help-seeking and accessibility. Table 2 presents an overview of these themes and their subthemes, as well as which interview transcripts contributed supportive evidence.

Table 2: Themes and subthemes identified through IPA of interview transcripts

Themes	Subthemes	Participants transcripts with supporting evidence
Factors shaping moral beliefs related to involvement		All (11 total)
	Witnessing and experiencing state violence and discrimination	All (11 total)
	Growing up in a conflict context	8 total: Participants A, B, D, F, G, H, I, J
	Republican family & social environment	7 total: Participants B, E, G, H, I, J, K
	Youth & moral disengagement	6 total: Participants A, E, F, G, I, J
Moral challenges related to Republican violence		9 total: Participants A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I, J
	"Mistakes" injuring or killing unintended victims	9 total: Participants A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I, K
	Changes in moral beliefs related to Republican violence	3 total: Participants B, E, G
	Moral injury related to Republican violence	5 total: Participants A, F, H, I, J
Retention of Republican beliefs protecting against moral injury		10 total: Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K
Experiences of betrayal		8 total: Participants B, C, D, E, F, G, H, K
	The betrayal of the peace process	4 total: Participants B, C, E, G
	The betrayal of the hunger strikers	5 total: Participants B, E, F, H, K
	Betrayal resulting in arrest	4 total: Participants C, D, F, H
Other psychological challenges		All (11 total)
	Psychological consequences of other trauma	5 total: Participants B, C, E, F, I
	Impact of the conflict on religion	4 total: Participants A, H, I, J
	Impact of the conflict on social relationships	9 total: Participants A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, J
General resilience and coping		All (11 total)
Support for Republican ex-prisoners		All (11 total)
	Barriers to support	9 total: Participants A, B, D, E, F, G, I, J, K
	Recommendations for support	9 total: Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

6.2 Theme 1: factors shaping moral beliefs related to involvement

To investigate moral conflict in Republican ex-prisoners, their moral beliefs related to their involvement in the conflict and the use of Republican violence must first be understood. Additionally, the specific factors contributing to these moral views should be examined to explore how they may have influenced any change or resilience in beliefs over time. Regarding Republican violence, all interviewees stated or implied that during the conflict they viewed it as morally justified. This perspective motivated their own personal involvement, which was viewed as the "right" thing to do. The strength of this belief is evident as their explanation of this violence was usually framed as it being necessary, creating a feeling of moral obligation for involvement:

> Extraordinary things were being done… at a time when it was considered vital to do it. That was attacking the state, and the state agencies, and the agents. (Participant D)

> I just saw it as something which, for me it was, something that I should do. (Participant A)

> I would've had a bigger moral dilemma had I had done nothing. (Participant E)

A variety of contextual and personal factors were suggested by interviewees to have shaped their moral beliefs related to involvement and Republican violence, which are described in the subthemes listed below.

Subtheme 1: witnessing and experiencing state violence and discrimination

All Republican ex-prisoners mentioned that their moral beliefs related to involvement were shaped through witnessing and experiencing state violence and discrimination. This factor was also where the greatest emphasis was placed upon. Many examples provided occurred when individuals were children or teenagers, and they ranged between local, lesser-known events (e.g., where relatives were killed or where they were beaten by soldiers themselves)

to more famous events (e.g., Bloody Sunday) to the more general context of this time (e.g., political discrimination of Catholics).

Had it been a state working for everybody... a lot of people wouldn't have partaken, like [anonymised], myself, other people who are lying dead in graveyards now. Wouldn't have partaken in the conflict. (Participant B)

We felt, at that stage, as second-class citizens. The state had been discriminatory against the... uhm we called it an apartheid state at that time. So the state, uhm... waged war on, on the Nationalist community and I think what you had was... internment, you had Bloody Sunday, you had... Ballymurphy shootings and... So therefore, in that context I got involved in, in, in the Republican struggle. (Participant C)

British soldiers went on to the land and killed [a relative] ... And that played a big part. And Bloody Sunday in 1972. It played probably the biggest part in my decision, like, in... I thought at that time, and I was only [a young child]. And I remember thinking at that time, well if they can do that, and then I was thinking that when I was old enough I would fight back against it. (Participant H)

These "immoral" state actions led the Republican ex-prisoners to feel retaliatory, "defensive" violence was needed and justified as non-violent routes were seen as unavailable:

I believed that we had, I had and we had, little alternative, we had no option. (Participant F)

Well, the challenge to the right and wrong, was the, the ignition point for me. ... It didn't look like the British were prepared to, prepared to tolerate political change. Which... I mean, this was about accessing votes, and housing. And employment. And, you know, they killed about two dozen people in the one, in two sessions. (Participant D)

Experiences of state violence following initial involvement strengthened or reaffirmed moral beliefs further and even led to Participant J becoming involved in the IRA again after a brief period of "pulling away" from the organisation.

> But as time went on my experiences of struggle, of imprisonment … hardened my real sense of the need for… uhm, political struggle. And indeed, for, for 30 years almost of armed struggle to end British rule in Ireland. (Participant K)

> But I uhm, I was in shock that, you know, I'd witnessed this terrible Army atrocity. And I thought 'fuck, what am I doing?' You know, 'what am I doing for my country, why have I been away from the IRA, what did I do?' (Participant J)

> If there ever was anything, which I don't think there was or, or somebody would try and tell me that occupying British soldiers, or serving members of the Crown forces, uhm does not deserve uh… the actions of the IRA against them. If that argument ever came up anywhere, very soon afterwards I have shown life examples of uh, of the fact that, that is, that's wrong. Because, they were always there to remind me. … So (laughs) they were never gonna let me forget how wrong, uh, they were. Right up until the very end. (Participant I)

These experiences were therefore powerful in shaping the belief that Republican violence was justified as a response to the perceived immoral state actions.

Subtheme 2: growing up in a conflict context

Other than experiencing specific state actions which were deemed immoral, the experience of growing up in a conflict context, especially with an extensive history of conflict, meant that violence was normalised and/or romanticised and seen as exciting. This also contributed to an interest in politics and history in several participants from childhood.

> I was always interested in reading and exploring what had happened. Very soon I had many heroes in my life … Current and figures of the past. I read about the B-Specials, about the Black and Tans. About how, I heard the songs about Irish

heroes who had died in the years gone by before, before you know, I was even born. You know, all that uh, shaped my, began shaping my political thinking and moral thinking. (Participant I)

We were a group of young teenagers who had been kinda raised on Irish history and the patriotism of the… paramilitary fighters from 1916 to 1921 who had fought for Irish freedom. So imbued with this… historical romance we [young teenagers] were witnessing British soldiers on the streets. (Participant J)

As a young kid then, I was, well I was down rioting, I was a young kid. As you did. … I seen beating people in the streets, the riots had started. The uh… it was just chaos. Just chaos. (Participant B)

This created an abnormal moral context where the boundaries between right and wrong were more blurred than in peaceful societies, and hence more complex to morally navigate.

… we became normalised, you know, and all this, these events, and it's only when they ended that I could give a chance to look back and go, 'well we weren't living in moral and normal times'. (Participant I)

But so the right from wrong would not be the "right and wrong" as you maybe would see it. … I didn't consider it wrong. But it was something which I wasn't used to doing (laughs). (Participant D)

And, I suppose, because of the nature of the society I grew up in… which meant then that it was… quite… natural in many ways to take the analysis that our only option was to use force, that it's justified, that it's justifiable. (Participant F)

Growing up in this conflict context therefore created unique moral views on morality of the use of violence, which would have been less likely if the interviewees had grown up in a more "normal", peaceful context.

Subtheme 3: Republican family & social environment

Other than growing up with direct experiences of violence and conflict, many participants were also raised in a community with a history and culture of Republicanism which influenced their views and involvement. As a result, seven participants mentioned social connections played a role in shaping their moral beliefs related to the conflict. As discussed in Chapter 1, moral beliefs are heavily influenced by one's social environment, and therefore it is not a surprise that this was cited by over half of participants as playing a role. Some individuals had families with a history of involvement in Republicanism or were involved in it or the civil rights movement at the time. This likely shaped their own political beliefs, and associated moral views, as Participant K directly suggested himself:

> I'm thinking back and I'm remembering as I say my, my family, my uh, my aunts and uncles being involved in civil rights. And from that point of view I think that even though I wouldn't be conscious of it, I think that I did develop a sense of… uhm… what was right and what was wrong. You know, a sense of social justice. (Participant K)

The influence of family ties in shaping Republican beliefs is also illustrated by the fact that Participant I mentioned he has passed his Republican beliefs on to his son.

> He's taken his political thoughts from uh, myself. He's very interested. He's doing, uh, what I do, I used to play in a Republican flute band. He's now doing the same. Uhm. He buys books, pictures of Republicans and activities and he keeps like a shrine of Republican memorabilia. Uhm. So, you can say that's… uh, transgenerational, uhm, I wouldn't call it transgenerational trauma but it's, it's transgenerational beliefs, at least, you know. (Participant I)

It must be caveated, however, that one individual stated his parents did not "instil" these beliefs, indicating that Republicanism in family members was not always an influencing factor in shaping their own beliefs, and it was other factors instead which took precedent:

I suppose me mother and father would've been political, like. Because very, most people were. Because they were seeing what was wrong, you know? But, it was never really… they never discussed it or brought us into it or, you know, instilled it in us. They didn't, you know. (Participant H)

Social connections in the community other than familial ties, such as friends or acquaintances involved in a Republican armed group, were also suggested by four individuals to play a role. This not only made it easier to join a group themselves, but a Republican social environment was also argued by Participants E and G to narrow one's social circles. This subsequently narrowed their perspectives, as it would surround them with distinct Republican "micronarratives", as Participant E put it.

And I think a lot of us brought up with Republican ideology and Republican rhetoric, we are sort of in a very narrow view of the world. (Participant E)

What you start doing is… you start becoming closer to those who were involved in the conflict with you. And those who were your friends, that bigger friend group, becomes smaller. You become, uh, because you want to be with people who, uh, are doing what you're doing. The way you're thinking. And even within that, you start to realise… those, what you might call people who will do it, and those who like to be around it. So you're, your group becomes even smaller again. (Participant G)

Therefore, it was not only personal experiences directly resulting from the conflict context at the time which influenced moral beliefs. Rather, social relationships played an important role as well, especially given the history and culture of Republicanism in this community.

Subtheme 4: youth & moral disengagement

Given that interviewees grew up in a conflict context, where interviewees directly witnessed state violence or discrimination and Republicanism was imbedded in their community, Republican violence was morally accepted at a young age and many of the ex-prisoners joined

a violent Republican organisation when they were very young. This youth was cited by six interviewees to have influenced the shaping of their beliefs related to violence at the time, as it meant moral views were more immature and simplistic, and as a result less empathetic.

> … things were seen in a different way from my young mind at that time. (Participant I)

> One of the reasons that men go to war is that they go when they're young and they don't have a great deal of empathy. (Participant E)

> I mean, when you're 17, 18, 19 years of age, when you're involved in conflict, you're absolutely right and everybody else is absolutely wrong. There's no grey areas. … when you did something that impacted on the enemy, there was no empathy. There was no understanding of their hurt and pain. … There was a sense of whatever they got, they deserved. And whatever we got, and even if you were an active Republican, and were killed, uh, that wasn't deserved. And uh… and you felt the hurt and pain. Right? But that's conflict, and that's where you get mentally within conflict. (Participant G)

This may indicate moral disengagement, as discussed in Chapter 1, which would have made it easier for participants to engage in violence without risk of guilt. Being young also made it easier to become involved in a practical sense, as it was less likely that other commitments or responsibilities had to be factored into their moral decision-making.

> … there was, in my personal circumstances I was [late teenage years] of age, I was unmarried, I hadn't a responsibility for a wife, partner, family, mortgage, I hadn't a, I wasn't in a well-paid… I was, I was employed but I was working for my father as an apprentice, so I wasn't in a terribly well, in other words, it was a relatively easy personal decision to take in terms of family responsibilities. (Participant F)

Therefore, as discussed in the previous subthemes, participants commonly experienced state violence or discrimination and grew up in a conflict context with a social tradition

of Republicanism. This made a violent response appear necessary, as well as normalised. These factors usually culminated into a perspective from an early age that Republican violence was moral. This youth appeared to make it easier for individuals to commit to the organisation, especially as it appears moral disengagement was more likely in youth – hence removing any further hesitation.

6.3 Theme 2: moral challenges related to Republican violence

Individuals participating in any conflict are bound to be confronted with moral challenges. As Participant H suggested, this may only become apparent post-conflict when they had the time and mental space to reflect on it:

> I think that generally anybody who came through the conflict, if it's, well… I would challenge anybody to say that they weren't challenged, you know, morally about what was happening. Because I think… we weren't, probably not at the time, I think… I think looking back now, people start, well I know I do, I think more about what happened, you know. But I think that at the time, when it was on, it was too, it was just in your face every day. You know? And I think people hadn't time to sit back and think about too much of what was happening. (Participant H)

And indeed, all except two interviewees referenced moral challenges they faced during their involvement and that violent Republican groups were responsible for some events which were not in line with their moral values. These were usually operations where "innocent civilians" were harmed. In some cases, this appears to have led to moral injury and/or moral disillusionment.

Subtheme 1: "mistakes" injuring or killing unintended victims

Unintended deaths or injuries, such as in "civilians", was considered the most morally challenging aspect of Republican violence. Nine out of eleven interviewees stated that they felt it was "wrong" when Republican actions resulted in this. This was because such "mistakes" were not in line with how they viewed the IRA or INLA's moral code or strategy

and should therefore have been prevented. As a result, these incidents clashed with their moral beliefs and resulted in strong emotions such as regret and anger in some individuals:

> And obviously things happened which you know, which didn't sit right with me. … things happened, which shouldn't have happened. People, people died in circumstances in which they shouldn't have died, attacks happened which weren't carried out properly. (Participant A)

> I know there was things that went wrong. The organisation we were involved with was involved in many… some big mistakes. And you know. And they were wrong. And shouldn't have happened. (Participant C)

> Now, bearing in mind that the IRA had made a lot of mistakes and a lot of people, known combatants, have been killed. And I, uh, felt great, uh, sadness and remorse, sometimes anger, at those events happening. Because people who weren't meant to get injured or die, uh, were injured and killed. (Participant I)

This discrepancy between such specific incidents and their moral beliefs is further illustrated by the fact that Participants A and F indicated they were relieved that they never took part in these operations:

> On far too many occasions [the IRA] planted bombs that were lethal, that killed civilians, that… a warning either wasn't given or the warning wasn't adequate, or a device went off prematurely. … Personally I wasn't involved in such operations. Fortunately, I suppose. Because it could've happened, I'm not saying that it wouldn't or that people can't make mistakes or that I couldn't have made a mistake. I just was fortunate that I didn't. (Participant F)

Participant H even claimed he felt guilt for and morally challenged by these incidents, despite not being involved himself. Again, this demonstrates the extent of how these events were misaligned with his moral values.

But there was things that happened, not so much that you would've been involved in yourself. But because you were involved in an organisation that was involved, you felt morally challenged about incidents and especially where civilians ended up being killed, like in accidents. You know, it was, I found it tough, anyway. (Participant H)

… you do feel guilty, you know that you were involved in an organisation that… has… whether it be accidentally or not, it makes no difference, it's the same result. (Participant H)

For Participant H and six other interviewees, while they presented this cognitive dissonance between their moral beliefs and these specific events caused by Republican violence, they did not demonstrate any evidence of moral injury or moral disillusionment. This is because they were not involved in them themselves and were able to morally rationalise these moral challenges which protected them from further moral conflict, as will be discussed in greater detail in Theme 3.

Subtheme 2: changes in moral beliefs related to Republican violence

Yet not all interviewees maintained their full moral commitment to Republican violence through rationalisation of any cognitive dissonance triggered by moral challenges. As will be evident in the next subtheme, one individual experienced related moral injury. This current subtheme will demonstrate how two interviewees changed some of their moral beliefs related to Republican violence over time following particular events or experiences. Firstly, while Participant E did not question particular IRA operations in the past, he has now changed his moral perceptions on them:

I look back and I think that… well, you know we could've done things a hell of a lot differently. I… but there were operations while I was in the IRA and operational in the IRA that I have come to regard as war crimes. But at the time I didn't regard them as war crimes and while I was not responsible for them, I didn't speak out against them and didn't think there was a great deal wrong with them. (Participant E)

This disillusionment was gradual, as he grew more critical of these incidents with age, time, and reflection aided by reading and philosophising:

> Well it came about uh… time. Age. … It also came about as a result of reflection. Wider reading. … the more you morally reflect and the more you debate and discuss things and the more you watch the activities that are happening in the day, uh, as carried out by armed Republican groups. (Participant E)

He not only grew morally disillusioned with these operations that he now sees as wrong or questionable, but he has since grown morally disillusioned with the use of Republican violence itself and labelled himself as "anti-war". The Omagh bomb was cited as being particularly influential in this change of perspective:

> I… so I have come over the years to reassess the use of political violence. … When I look at the, what we fought for, the violence and misery and hurt and harm that we inflicted, and what we achieved in uh, return for it, I don't think it was worth taking human life. (Participant E)

> But if you look at the Omagh bomb in 1998 I just felt that that was the point where Republicans should've abandoned the physical force tradition forever. It had become a scourge. (Participant E)

He did not wish to give the reason for his eventual disengagement from the IRA. There was also no evidence of moral injury related to this IRA violence in Participant E, as he was not personally involved in these incidents and did not appear psychologically or emotionally affected by them. Participant G was almost involved in an event that could have led to many casualties but was arrested before it could be carried out. He evidences some changes in moral perception as he now struggles to relate to how casually he viewed this at the time:

> But, I remember being excited. About the thought of doing that. And sometimes looking back, uh, as you get older, it's… it becomes problematic or difficult to

remember… your feelings, your emotions, and stuff like that at that time. Uh, sometimes I'm taken aback at how casual I was about what I was doing. And I am, as I say, I wasn't, 'no this is too much'. (Coughs). I, as a matter of fact, I was quite excited at the thought of killing all these people. So… I can now look back on that and find it a bit strange, uh, sometimes I wonder where that comes from now. (Participant G)

Further changes in perception were evident following an experience where he was confronted with the pain of families of British soldiers who were killed during the conflict. He found this experience emotionally draining and angering, as well as felt an "internal battle" when trying to comprehend why this was upsetting when he considered them to be "wrong". This experience, which challenged his moral beliefs, resulted in him recognising the need to acknowledge the human cost of conflict:

The next two days, two and a half days, whatever it was, was really difficult. Uh… emotionally draining. …. But I remember leaving [anonymised] angry. Angry enough I was even fucking punching the steering wheel at one stage. (Participant G)

I started to realise, I started to question about why I got upset. And what it was, I started to realise that for the first time in my life, that I genuinely seen, and I mean genuinely seen the hurt and pain that we had caused. I'd seen the hurt and pain we caused on TV, but they deserved it. Right? (Pause). But to come with it face to face, and I started to realise, that I got emotionally upset because, well, I didn't realise that right away, I remember thinking 'stop going there, leave that, don't go there, fuck this'. Uh… but I started to realise that there's a human cost to conflict. And… we need to deal with that human cost. In a non-political way. (Participant G)

As a result, these individuals were humanised when he was previously morally disengaged from such feelings (see theme 1, subtheme 4). But despite these emotions and changes in

perception, he likely did not experience moral injury as he did not feel any subsequent guilt or regret, and did not appear to grow disillusioned with the use of violence itself:

> But no guilt, wasn't… I was emotionally drained and emotionally upset. Just as a human. To see… how can you not? When you see, uh, people suffering. How can you not get emotionally drawn into it? But then, 'fair enough, fuck, maybe I shouldn't have done what I done and what…' , you know, no. There was none of that. (Participant G)

This example therefore indicates some of the complexity in separating the experience of moral injury from the experience of moral challenges. This complexity was also demonstrated in Participant B, who felt discomfort when confronted the consequences of his violence:

> I was charged with attempted murder of soldiers. And uh… I've read the depositions, depositions aren't nice, they're very… they would traumatise ye, reading them, yeah. The depositions, you couldn't read them. Physical injuries, and so on. (Participant B)

Yet, when asked whether this resulted in any feelings of guilt, he was adamant that this was not the case. Therefore, whilst the participants included in this subtheme may have altered some of their original views on Republican violence over time, they did not evidence related moral injury and continue to view the general armed struggle as justified (see Theme 3).

Subtheme 3: moral injury related to Republican violence

Whilst the individuals mentioned in subtheme 2 did not demonstrate clear evidence of moral injury, one other participant did. Participant J faced moral crises during the conflict leading to moral disillusionment, moral injury, and subsequent disengagement from the IRA. Several factors led to a gradual moral disillusionment with the IRA, which mostly happened in prison. Firstly, he disagreed with IRA actions seen as unacceptable morally to him, such as no-warning bombs and sectarian shootings of Protestants. Secondly, he studied human rights in prison and began to view the IRA as an assault on these. Thirdly, he studied religion, particularly the four gospels, and began to view himself as a sinner.

… it was a strange crisis of conscience for me, it was more about you know, the function of law, the functions of rights, you know. And how were we to paint ourselves as more heroic and more liberational, when we shot people dead without a trial? And we executed people that we forced to help us? Who were captured, or, or had weapons and explosives discovered? And you know, we would shoot down women. … And I thought there were elements within the IRA… that you know, I can't stomach. And there were no-warning bombs in London. And in England. You know, the Birmingham bombings, and other bombings, they were bombings with no warning effectively. And I didn't agree with this. And I even told the IRA back in time but I began feeling that my uhm, position was very difficult vis-à-vis armed struggle. (Participant J)

It's hard to… it's hard to just, you know, there's three pieces of cake. Which are you gonna choose? One was the civil rights slice of cake, one was the human rights, prisoners' rights issue. But the primary issue, I suppose for me was uhm, the gospels, finally decided me… (Participant J)

As a result of this moral disillusionment with the IRA, he believed Republicans should have pursued democratic means instead of violence. Participant J stated this moral disillusionment with the IRA contributed to a "crisis of conscience" or a "crisis on the mind". While he did not expand greatly on his emotions or psychological state at this time, he did express he felt especially guilty about the accidental injuries of his "innocent" victims of his bombs. He also claimed all he longed for was "peace of mind/conscience" and felt a strong need to repent or "cleanse" himself, revealing the extent of the cognitive dissonance between his moral beliefs and Republican involvement:

Thinking of my victims, I couldn't justify in my conscience the casual injuring of innocent people. You know, you know, that was the crisis really. (Participant J)

And I said to him one day, 'I want to repent my fucking IRA membership, I want to be cleansed of it in some scrupulous sense'. (Participant J)

And he said, you know, [sin is] visible also in human conscience where you've done something you know is wrong but you… don't immediately admit it and you have a crisis of conscience. And I thought, 'fuck, I have that just for the injuries I've caused innocent people'. … So I felt this concept of sin was embodied mostly in me. Of all the people I knew, I embodied these three signals of sin. And I thought, 'fuck, if only I could achieve peace of mind'. That's all I wanted, peace of conscience. I didn't care about the prison sentence, I didn't care about the years in prison, I didn't care about solitary confinement, I didn't care about being naked all day virtually in solitary in the winter. Uhm. Where it was freezing cold in the cell. I didn't care about any of that, I just longed for peace of mind. Which I probably more would describe as peace of conscience. (Participant J)

This guilt and psychological distress resulting from his moral conflictedness indicates he was likely suffering from moral injury at this time. Because of this moral injury and disillusionment, he disengaged from and critiqued the IRA publicly despite subsequent ostracization and threats. The strength of his disillusionment is demonstrated by his continuing moral critique, and by how he cannot understand how ex-prisoners do not share this view or experience of moral crisis:

… the IRA still hasn't recognised in any shape or form its assaults on civil rights and human rights in its campaign. (Participant J)

I feel it's extraordinary that people who have engaged in terrible human rights atrocities … how they can wall that off from their conscience. (Participant J)

However, Participant J does appear to have recovered from moral injury over time as he views himself as psychologically resilient and feels he has "repented":

And I said to him one day, 'I want to repent my fucking IRA membership, I want to be cleansed of it in some scrupulous sense'. And he said, 'confess your fucking sins'. (Laughs). So, I confessed my sins to this guy. And he said 'I absolve you in

the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. I thought 'oh fuck. This is the most freedom I've ever felt in my whole life'. But I got an amazing energy from it which was, propelled me to want to leave the IRA. … something happened in that moment where weirdly and strangely, the… crushing guilt I might have felt at that point was lifted in a second. (Participant J)

… But I was free in my conscience from the organisation. (Participant J)

This was accomplished through various reparative actions which released guilt, such as confessing his sins, apologising to victims, and supporting victims of the IRA:

My release came from admitting what I had done, and I'm confronting my victims in some way by apologising. (Participant J)

Whilst he views himself as generally psychologically resilient, the strong motivation to advocate for victims full-time voluntarily is argued by him to indicate some remaining psychological difficulties. This also suggests it is a moral motivation to "make up" for his prior actions that he now views as immoral, hence aiding the recovery of the moral injury.

But, my interest in justice for victims is probably the single most important sign that uhm, you know, I feel a responsibility to the past… (Participant J)

And I think, well I'm a little bit troubled because you know, I'm motivated to… do what I do. (Participant J)

Unlike Participant J, many of the individuals who claimed civilian injuries or deaths were "wrong" in subtheme 1 were not personally involved in these events. Four of these interviewees did suggest that psychological distress occurred, or may have occurred, in those who had partaken in them as a result:

Some people, uh, I've no doubt, suffer from, you know, the fact that they have, uh, injured or killed people. Because, it's not a thing that people will willingly want

to do. Uh, it's a very serious decision. And even although, they, they support the, the, you know the, reason for it, it may have been difficult for some people, and it may have caused them psychological illness. (Participant I)

I've met people, psychologically, the further you move away from conflict and people reflect on things that happened, you know, sometimes it's hard for them to start sort of, within their mind, justifying in some sense what they did or why they did it. ... But, certainly I know from talking to people in recent years, for some people you know, it had been a struggle in terms of, not being involved in the conflict, but in terms of what happened in certain instances in which the wrong people were killed or injured or whatever else and people haven't been able to deal with that themselves, you know? (Participant A)

These suggestions in combination with the clear example of moral injury in Participant J indicate perpetration-based moral injury is applicable to this community, and that individuals who were involved in incidents with civilian or unintended deaths are more at risk.

6.4 Theme 3: retention of Republican beliefs protecting against moral injury

Despite interviewees commonly citing in the previous theme that they experienced challenges to their moral beliefs related to the conflict or viewed particular events or operations by the IRA or INLA as "wrong", all individuals except for Participant J retained their belief that the armed struggle was morally justified to this day.

But certainly it terms of my role in it, in terms of morality of it, I mean, I'm still convinced that we were, we were right. (Participant A)

Do I see the conflict as right or wrong? (Pause). The conflict was right, for a purpose. For what it did. It was right. It was. We'd never, I'd never apologise for it. (Participant B)

This view was especially apparent in those who believe that current conditions have improved because of the conflict, hence providing a moral justification for involvement in it:

I saw armed conflict as part of a process … which given, give or take, yes it changed the dynamic within Northern Ireland. Did it do it to the full extent that I wished to see? Maybe not, but it certainly, it shifted the axis on which the state was based. And I still believe that without that, the axis wouldn't have been shifted. (Participant F)

Because at the end of the day I think, ehm… it's unfortunate that it took so long and that that it took the amount of years of conflict but that's, I think, when I look now, we're in a lot better place… (Participant H)

And you know, it might not be everybody's cup of tea. Uhm. But, I think lives are saved by lives that have been forfeited. (Participant I)

The retention of moral beliefs was achieved through rationalising immoral, or potentially morally injurious events, through a variety of ways. Some individuals were protected from moral injury and moral disillusionment as they were not involved in these events themselves. For example, Participant F held a leadership position and therefore was able to only partake in acts he believed to be morally justified:

…I felt that either it was justified, or I wouldn't have done it if I didn't believe that it was justified. And I wouldn't, because after a fairly short period of time I was given certain authority. With, over, a group of other volunteers. So I had responsibility for overseeing what they were doing. So it meant that I had the authority to either call for an operation or call an operation off. … I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been… reasonable in my opinion. I wouldn't have allowed it to happen had it not been reasonable in my opinion. (Participant F)

As a result of not being involved in morally questionable or unjustified acts themselves, there was no risk of guilt or damage to the interviewees' moral self-image. Furthermore, potentially

morally injurious events were morally rationalised, and cognitive dissonance was resolved, by viewing them as unintentional mistakes:

If somebody went out with the intention of doing something else and innocent people end up getting killed, then I think… there's something that allows you to say that was never intentional, you know? And, it mightn't, it doesn't change the, the outcome but I think it ehm… it helps you, it helps yourself to get over these things, you know? (Participant H)

I would argue, it wasn't deliberate, that they were accidents. But I mean then, then you would have to say, well if you plant a bomb, you have to protect, you have to be responsible for the consequences. I know that would be a moral argument. But I tended to see the point of view of the people that were doing it, that it was, that they didn't wish to do it, to inflict the, inflict the civilian casualties. … I tend to accept the… the, that it was an honest mistake made. (Participant F)

Participants also tended to separate the general Republican struggle from these "mistakes", preventing further moral questioning:

But uhm, you know I also understood that people were, being an IRA volunteer you knew the code you were supposed to, you should've been operating under. And you also understood that sometimes people didn't do, made mistakes and whatever else, so, you sort of I suppose, in terms of… within your own, sort of, moral framework you can sort of, you can justify things happened because you didn't see them as being part of a… I suppose, a moral pattern of things. Things went wrong at times, people died who shouldn't, or things happened which shouldn't have happened. But, they weren't a deliberate strategy of the Republican movement. (Participant A)

But, the general, you know, the raison d'être of the IRA, uh, for me, was sound. You know, there, there was a good, uh, reason for their existence and their

activities. And… barring all those mistakes, fatal injurious mistakes, that were made. (Participant I)

Furthermore, these morally questionable events were commonly considered to be an inevitable, if a regrettable, occurrence in a "war" context.

So… you know, you just have to put them down that they were dreadful mistakes. You know? Which happens if you look at any war, unfortunately. I think it's the innocent people that suffer the most, you know? … I think the IRA probably took a lot of precautions in not to harm, but ended up… well, no matter what you do! You're, there's always going to be mistakes, you know? (Participant H)

… people can, you know, be involved in the middle of stuff, they can justify things, they can sort of say these things happen in war you know? Innocents die, the wrong people die at times, things shouldn't happen but they do because of the war. (Participant A)

As a result, potentially morally injurious events were normalised in this abnormal moral context which again prevented further moral questioning of them. And lastly, these events were rationalised as participants commonly placed blame and responsibility on the state rather than on Republican groups who were seen as "defensive":

But the IRA campaign… whatever else it included. A large dimension of it was uh… armed resistance against British state terrorism. … I think that the whole… the whole range of British activity… is one that would suggest that the IRA… whatever culpability they did have and they bear some. They were not in it alone. (Participant E)

So… when we talk about my identity as a Republican I'm completely okay with the experience of struggle because it was created by the British. (Participant K)

Well… you probably rationalise it then and say, well, we didn't start the conflict, you know? It's, like… the conflict came to us. We didn't, you know, create the circumstances that led to the conflict. (Participant H)

As a result, a few individuals expressed continuing anger at the British state. Participant D also emphasised that while the British narrative describes the IRA's actions as immoral or "awful", he continues to view the general strategy, and himself as a former volunteer, as moral:

I think… when the word moral was being used, I feel I'm still a very moral person. Stuff which we did, you know, in this isolation could be looked on as horrendous but I mean… go tell, go talk to people in Iraq, and Iran, and Afghanistan… about war and morality. Who defines the awfulness of things? States tend to do and the media do. (Participant D)

This quote illustrates the subjectivity of morality, and how it is context dependent. This appears to be especially the case in conflict situations. The general retention of moral beliefs related to the Republican armed struggle was also demonstrated in some individuals who encountered changes in their moral perspective over time. As mentioned in theme 2, Participant G learned the need to recognise the human cost of conflict to all sides and struggles to relate to his past moral view on violence. However, he is unapologetic for the struggle and maintains the view that it was justified given the war context.

No. I will never apologise for the armed struggle. Or the road to it. Did we cause, did we do things that were wrong? Fucking right we did. Uh, maybe even too much. But, that's conflict. (Participant G)

Additionally, whilst Participant E grew disillusioned with the use of political violence, some of his moral beliefs were maintained. For example, he would not apologise for the IRA's role in the conflict and feels no guilt for his involvement:

… I refuse to make any political apology for being part of the IRA. I think when you make an apology alone you will be blamed alone so I don't think the IRA should be apologising for fighting a war… (Participant E)

Therefore, whilst some changes in perspective may have occurred, individuals mostly maintained their view on the Republican armed struggle. This insulated them against deeper moral conflict and moral injury such as in Participant J, as there is no moral injury if there is no conflict or cognitive dissonance between their beliefs and experiences. Interestingly, Participant D suggested that as he considered the British Army's justification for involvement in the conflict to be lacking in moral motivation, he believes moral injury is more applicable to, and psychological suffering more prevalent in, British soldiers:

… no injury to me and my morals. No I think I'm still quite a moral person and was. I was fighting in my own country against a foreign army. Full stop. So… I get what you're saying but I don't think it really should be applying to anti-state actors. … Their motivation would maybe indicate their moral stance on things. That's, you know, you're doing the thing for a wage or you're doing the thing at risk of your life and your family and your separation, in your own country. Yeah… it's not the same. (Participant D)

What were they fighting for? They had no idea. So… our logic and our participation and what we were doing were for totally different motivations from our enemy. And I think that is a major factor in the vast, vast majority of us. Just going back to our ordinary lives. Cos, you know, the war came to us in our streets. So I think our coping mechanism was our motivation. Ah sorry, our motivation for taking part was a major part of our coping mechanism. We were right. (Participant D)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Participant H:

But I would say… out of, I would say if you went into the British forces and eh, police and everything over here, I would say… I'd imagine that their problems were greater. Because, I think if, if… I still think there's a right and a wrong, and I

still think that if they look back at what they were involved in, it was more wrong

than, you know, but what the, what we were doing. Because they were the ones

that was in control… (Participant H)

This indicates a belief in these individuals that the 'moral superiority' of Republican groups protected members from moral injury. In contrast to this, Participant G emphasised that psychological suffering is possible in conflict regardless of how morally justified you are:

And, we all, those involved, as well, suffer. Probably the most righteous conflict

ever fought was the defeat of fascism in Europe. The Nazis. Yet, the Allied

soldiers… who landed in Normandy and fought through Europe… just because

they were right, you can't say they didn't suffer. Of course they did! …there's

psychological effects also to those who were involved in the conflict. No matter

how right you are. (Participant G)

This potential difference between Republicans and British soldiers in susceptibility to moral injury is explored further in Study 2. However, this suggestion and the various methods of rationalisation explored above clearly indicate that the maintenance of moral beliefs related to the struggle protected individuals from moral injury, as it allowed for the resolving of any moral conflict.

6.5 Theme 4: experiences of betrayal

Although Theme 3 evidenced that many of the interviewees mostly maintained their moral views on the struggle, not all interviewees were happy with the outcome of the conflict or retained their moral beliefs regarding the organisation they were involved given disillusionment with its leadership. For these individuals, leadership decisions related to the peace process and hunger strikes generated feelings of betrayal of varying strengths, ranging from anger to moral injury. Feelings of betrayal were also associated with some individuals' personal experiences of arrest, although this was largely morally rationalised. Eight out of eleven participants cited some form of betrayal related to their involvement.

Subtheme 1: the betrayal of the peace process

The first form of betrayal cited by interviewees was related to the peace process and Good Friday Agreement. This was mentioned by three individuals. For example, they believed that the leadership was "bought" and "built their careers" off the peace process:

> Well uhm, I did feel betrayed but I felt betrayed by the leadership of the IRA and the Republican movement. Uh… by their activities and that they began to use the actions that we had uh, deposited, on the Republican struggle and Republican advancement, layer by layer and they, that sediment formed into a fairly substantive block. And that block was used for completely different methods. Uh, people used it to build a career structure, rather than a political project, a radical political project, for which we felt we were involved in. And I felt that was a sense of betrayal. (Participant E)

This led to anger, disillusionment, and potential moral conflict, as they viewed what they "fought" for and what individuals "died for" was not what the leadership settled for:

> … the brave volunteers are now in the cemeteries. They aren't lying there for what's happened now. (Pause). They're not lying in the cemeteries, they didn't fight the struggle against the British Army, Special Services, the RUC, for what's happening now in Stormont. They didn't fight for that. And what you find is, is that those in power now have done very well for themselves. (Pause). They have done very very well for themselves. … It shows that during the struggle, that they were bought. And when you think that what they were bought… How many people during the struggle lost their lives when they were being bought? (Participant D)

> I come out of prison the second time totally disillusioned with everything. … I remember just shaking my head and thinking 'fuck, that was a waste of time'. And eh… you know, it's all over and the good guys lost. You know, we were fighting to get a united Ireland, I know no of Republican who went to their grave, or went to prison, for a reformed Stormont. (Participant G)

For Participant G, he also felt morally conflicted as he felt he was betraying these Republicans by engaging in post-conflict community work:

> And at times there, at the INLA plot, there's a lot of lads… in it that I know. And uh, there was a strong sense of betrayal. That I was betraying my dead friends. It was actually betraying myself, you know, by doing this sort of stuff. And uh… it, it was a difficult barrier to get over. Again, at a political level I could justify it easily. … So it didn't sit easy, talking with these guys, and knowing that some of them were in prison for… killing, just killing people because of their perceived religion. … And that was quite a big mental barrier to get over, in relation to working with these people. (Participant G)

This may have led to moral injury given the dissonance between his beliefs in the political justification for doing this work and his emotional connection to those who sacrificed their lives for the cause. These three participants also felt that those with alternative political views were abandoned, leading to further sentiments of betrayal and anger:

> [Anonymised] was left to be a drunk, in [anonymised]. Where was the help for him? [Anonymised] because his political thought was different. ... Don't tell me, I knew the man very very well, don't tell me that the man's off his cuckoo, and so on! I'm fucking sure he wasn't. Because he had a political thought that was different to what these boys are embarking upon now. (Participant B)

Participant E stated he felt the IRA leadership betrayed Republicans further when a dissident Republican was allegedly murdered by the IRA, which played a role in his disillusionment with the IRA and political violence:

> And I felt that the IRA killing of [anonymised] … I felt that that was a very, a great betrayal of Republicanism. That they were quite prepared to shoot a Republican in the street. And were not prepared to shoot Army or police side, and I didn't want any Army or police shot dead but I didn't want the Republican side shot dead

either. And again, I thought this was a move to help consolidate the political careers of people in the IRA Sinn Féin leadership and I felt betrayed and uh, let down by that. (Participant E)

Participant E also suggested other individual Republicans were betrayed and potentially morally injured through leadership decisions and the Good Friday Agreement, leading to post-conflict reflections on their involvement:

[Anonymised] for example, claimed to be deeply affected by activities of the IRA leaders, and encouraged her to become involved and she was only, as much she was an eager participant but she had serious qualms after when the people who sent her out to carry out what she considered to be some atrocities. … She, felt that the uh, those people who had ordered her, directly ordered her, were her commanders, were then denying their role in the IRA. Disassociating themselves from the IRA. And she felt absolutely betrayed by that. So, there was a I think, in her mind, there was a mixture of uh, things while she was proud of her IRA membership, she was also felt made to feel guilty by the, the disavowal of the IRA, by some of the… her leaders. So you can see how she was faced with a moral dilemma. (Participant E)

… he had serious qualms also, they were qualms about how they inflicted all this violence when it wasn't worth one single death at the end of it. Well, for what we settled for in the end. Which was an offer made in 1974. [Anonymised], there was, the shorthand version of the Good Friday Agreement was GFA, and [anonymised] used to say that meant "They Got Fuck-all", and so, I can see how moral dilemmas, they can insert themselves into people's consciousness. (Participant E)

This betrayal therefore appears to have psychologically and emotionally affected a number of Republican ex-prisoners in the community. This is also suggested by Participant C. Although he does not share these sentiments and strongly supports the Good Friday Agreement, he argued that those who do not and grew disillusioned were more likely to struggle with psychological difficulties and reintegration:

And this is where I make the difference, the differentiation between those who did get involved in the struggle, or the peace process, or what we would call the democratic and peaceful way forward. That didn't get involved in that. Often fell into… waste of life. Into drinking. Psychological problems. And, uh… addictions. … And if you look at it that way and then you become disillusioned. Disenchanted. Maybe a little bitter. Maybe even against your former colleagues. You might think that only for that I woulda been, my life would've been fine. (Participant C)

Whilst the participants did not expand further on the emotional and psychological consequences of this experience of betrayal, it does appear to increase risk of moral conflictedness as their original moral justification for their involvement, and associated losses, has been challenged to varying degrees. Therefore, although these statements alone cannot definitively support that moral injury was prevalent in some of these participants, or other Republicans, it does suggest that Republicans who felt betrayed by the peace process may be more at risk for moral injury.

Subtheme 2: the betrayal of the hunger strikers

Another form of betrayal by Republican leadership that was mentioned was related to the negotiations of the Hunger Strikes. Many interviewees stated they felt particularly emotionally and psychologically affected by the hunger strikes, and felt both grief as well as frustration due to the situation:

But I think it was the prolonged piece of distressing was during the hunger strikes. (Pause) And I was in the H-Blocks when ten of, when ten men died. Several of them I knew personally, I was personal friends with several of them. … And the thing was, what was so distressing was the length, the protracted period of time. Waiting, agonising, hoping that something would turn out, turn up that would help prevent them from going until the end. And it didn't, so. And I still find it quite difficult even to, to read about that period of time. (Participant F)

I mean, that would be a period that would be very, very difficult for Republicans who, not only were active on the ground but were… but who were in prison, and who were, I suppose, feeling the frustration of being in a position where there was very little you could do. And… we were clearly witnessing the hunger strikes. We were seeing one prisoner dying after another. People who were our friends and comrades and people who had gone through a very, very intense protest in the years leading up to the hunger strike. (Participant K)

However, two interviewees mentioned they believed the Republican leadership betrayed the hunger strikers by not settling for a deal which would have prevented further deaths:

And our movement found out that… uhm, the offer was on the table. And… really, [anonymised] should never have died. … [Anonymised] in a period of time, if [anonymised] had come out of hunger strike, if [anonymised], if they hadn't opposed themselves to… stop the hunger strike, [anonymised] would have gotten intervention. … And he didn't have a big holiday home in … or businesses or holidays homes abroad. (Participant B)

Whilst Participant B did not expand on how he felt about this much further, this quote reflects a similar sense of betrayal and perception of the leadership "selling out" at the cost of human lives as he expressed in relation to the peace process in subtheme 1. Participant E on the other hand felt morally injured by this betrayal, resulting in anger, strong emotions, some loss of trust, and a reassessment of the campaign:

That the greatest moral injury that I think… that I have experienced. As a result of the conflict. And what always feeds into how we reassess it and revaluate it. Is the manner in which the… six of the hunger strikers in the 1981 hunger strike who we were in the prison protest with… died needlessly. (Participant E)

And at the time we, we were always angry at the Brits that, who drove us… uh… very much kept us focused. But now we see that the Brits alone were not involved in it sorta. … This is a… an age-old question I imagine. And also an insoluble one.

How do you… get revolution without revolutionaries? They simply can't be trusted. (Participant E)

Strange how these things can sear under your consciousness. (Participant E)

He believed it was especially morally injuring given that it was a betrayal from his own "side" who he would have trusted. Although he also felt betrayed by the IRA leadership for "selling out" (see subtheme 1), this betrayal of the Hunger Strikers was considered more immoral, unforgiveable, and unjustifiable.

There's an awful lot that the other side will do to you during a conflict. But you expect it from the other side. You expect something very different from your own. And I think… I think if I had to describe one moral injury. That stands out more than anything else. It was that. … You expect this type of thing, you expect to be… undermined and shafted by your enemy. It should never happen within the people who are supposed to be on your own side. (Participant E)

And the impact and the betrayal as I regard, I tend not to use words like betrayal. Uh… but I mean in this case it very much was. Uh… you know. All the combatants I ever fought against. All the prison officers. All the… all the British Army. The people who tortured me in… the police stations, that would beat me anywhere. The people who… attacked me or assaulted me in the prison. I shake hands with them and say 'that's it'. That's in the past. Never [anonymised IRA leaders]. Because of what they did to those hunger strikers. The hunger strikers, I get very very emotive. Uh… section in our psyche. In my psyche. And I'm very unforgiving. I mean… I could shake the hands of [anonymised] … for having sold us out and down the river. On everything else. And say, well these things happen. There's winners and losers. The game is over. And you shake hands at the end of it. But not for that sorta dirty filthy tackle. I wouldn't shake hands with… those two. Don't think there's anybody else I wouldn't shake hands with. But those two… no. So I imagine what I consider in that context, that background, that has to be moral injury. (Participant E)

165

As a result of this, cognitive dissonance between his moral beliefs and the betrayal could not be resolved leading to moral injury. It is likely that in cases such as this where Republican ex-prisoners feel betrayed by other Republicans, there is a greater risk for moral injury in contrast to the violence they were involved in themselves. This is because these were risks they were more prepared for and expected, given that they volunteered their involvement and hence could morally prepare and subsequently rationalise such events. However, this would not have been the case for experiences of within-group betrayal. Therefore, betrayal-based moral injury is clearly a risk in this population, and perhaps more so than perpetration-based moral injury. The heightened risk of this type of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners is also explored further in Study 2.

Subtheme 3: betrayal resulting in arrest

The final example of betrayal prevalent in the interviewees arose from other Republicans acting as informers. This led some to lose trust:

> There was times that you felt that there was people that you would've trusted enough, and they ended up being, eh, working for the state. So yeah, there's no doubt that I would've felt… there were times that you would've felt betrayed by people that you would've thought were uhm, friends and comrades. … I probably would've let it, uhm… to not be as trustworthy of people, you know? You would've always been in the back of your head like, to… who am I talking to, you know? (Participant H)

For Participant F, informing resulted in his arrest. However, this betrayal, as well as so much else related to Republican violence, was morally rationalised as it was seen as part of the "war" context:

> Now, I have to, if you like, intellectually accept that someone must've… informed, the, either the RUC or the British Army. That was an act of treachery, and act of betrayal. … I know of others, there's been many acts of treachery. This is the nature, the nature of insurrectionary warfare. British intelligence is there to do a

job and they do it and… to do the job they have to have agents within the organisations. (Participant F)

This is the same argument that was applied when morally rationalising IRA "mistakes" in theme 3. Participant C was also able to rationalise an arguably immoral act (as it was later legally ruled as "unlawful" in a court case) perpetrated by the British Army resulting in his arrest. Again, this was through him accepting that these situations and events can happen in any war context:

I didn't see [the event as] morally wrong. It was a case of uh… you know, if you… we were on military operations, so were they. And therefore it was a military operation. And if you go out… and you're fighting in a war. One of the understandings is that you… maybe got shot dead or… that's, that's the reality of being involved in war. So therefore I had nothing personal about what happened. Participant C)

It's war, you could be betrayed but I think if you… go down that road then you become paranoid and you know. You accepted what had happened, and, and, and move on, and accept the situation. (Participant C)

Participant C began to demonstrate a similar argument as Participant C when discussing himself being "set-up" and betrayed when arrested, as he claimed he would have done the same himself. Yet, he was unable to use this argument to morally rationalise the situation as Participants F and C did, given that he felt it was the British state's responsibility to uphold the law:

That, I mean, they did probably if I was in charge of them, that's what I would've done too to take me off the street. So you know, fair's fair. But… they shouldn't have done it because they're the state and they're supposed to be upholders of the law. (Participant D)

While this led him to view the event as morally unjustified, it does not appear to have led to moral injury as there was less indication of moral outrage and unresolved cognitive dissonance as evident in the previous subthemes. Again, this demonstrates the complexity and in-group diversity of moral thinking evident throughout this chapter, and how differences in rationalisation of "immoral" events led to a spectrum of moral responses ranging from accepted or resolved moral conflict to moral injury.

6.6 Theme 5: other psychological challenges

Other than moral injury, all interviewees faced significant psychological challenges as a result of the conflict. Eight out of eleven interviewees directly experienced potentially traumatic events. This included witnessing scenes of extreme violence and grieving friends and family members who passed away during the conflict:

> … it was the horror of war. It was the horror of this type of warfare. Which was apparent to us all because we'd lost so many friends. ... I mean, it was just horrific. Even just looking at our own comrades it was horrific. And the suffering and pain of their families. (Participant J)

> I saw a young man of [anonymised], who was an IRA volunteer who died in an accidental explosion. And, his hands couldn't be joined together because, you know the way a corpse, a Catholic corpse will have his or her hands uh, joined, like that, with rosary beads? One of his hands was just a bandage there where it was a stump, where a grenade had exploded and blown of his hand. So, the other hand was just beside it, and that, that's a stark memory. (Participant I)

Imprisonment and interrogation experiences were also frequently cited, such as the severe prison conditions, the physical and psychological difficulties of the prison protests, and abuse by prison warders and the British Army:

> The forced washing was an act of criminality. It was an act of sexual abuse. It was an act of, uh, torture. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and those all. That's what the

screws did during their forced washing of ourselves on the Blanket. Hosing us down. ... When I went to [prison], snow up to the nose. No glass, no nothing in the windows. No nothing in the windows, just bars, just concrete bars separate. Three concrete bars, separate in the windows. Nothing else. And snow was up to the nose, as I said, it was a heavy snow. Uhm. I was given… a blanket. And a mattress. Which was an old worn mattress, you could see it was a… urinated on or whatever it was, so they just, they throwed it to you. ... If I was talking about emotionally, of how the Troubles affected me. (Pause). Having came through what I did, if you're talking about trauma. Prison was trauma. (Participant B)

The violence that we were experiencing was uh, uhm… the psychological violence as well was very, very intense. So I think from the point of view of any human being going through that, then certainly you would be affected. (Participant K)

As a result of these conditions, Participant D stated that he believed imprisonment was more negatively affecting to him and other Republicans than any other aspect of involvement:

… my imprisonment was probably, had the… greatest negative effect on me out of the conflict. Not the actions which I took. (Participant D)

The subthemes below will evidence how these traumatic events and the conflict in general impacted various aspects of Republican ex-prisoners' lives.

Subtheme 1: psychological consequences of other trauma

Given the traumatic nature of the experiences Republican ex-prisoners cited, these events commonly resulted in various long-lasting effects and emotional distress.

Probably somebody else could diagnose ye and say there was. But. Uhm. I'd say, there was. Some damage, you know. … I'd say if somebody had done a deep analysis on ye, they'd say, yeah there are scars there. (Participant C)

For example, some individuals such as Participant E experienced nightmares because of his imprisonment experiences during the conflict and his dissent post-conflict:

> I mean, I have a… sort of, I have recurring… I don't want to call them nightmares. Maybe that's what they are. But recurring bad dreams about being back in prison, serving another life sentence … Oh and I have a recurrent dream about … being kidnapped by the IRA. For all my dissent. Doesn't stop me sleeping. Doesn't stop me dissenting. (Participant E)

This stress is also suggested to have potentially manifested physically:

> I will be very emotional when I'm reminiscing and uhm… psychologically… I have a heart condition. ... But, I'm not a medical expert, I don't know if, uh, some psychological worries or whatever have brought about the heart attack. If, if that makes sense. (Participant I)

Furthermore, one Republican ex-prisoner stated that he has suffered from PTSD as a result of the conflict:

> I have suffered from PTSD. I have had people… killed three feet from me. Hit in the head. So I did. Right in front of me… with dead, blood pouring out of their heads. So I might have been, I mean, and uhm. People say 'do you not get flashbacks, from that?' (Sighs). Sometimes. (Participant B)

However, most individuals have displayed significant resilience despite these potentially traumatic experiences, which will be explored further in theme 6. A few individuals also acknowledged they found it difficult to reflect and understand how they may have been affected by these experiences. Whilst they tended to assume that they were affected in some way, they often suggested a professional clinician would be better placed in making such an evaluation:

I find it difficult to, to, uhm, to sort out or to find in my own mind how it has affected me. (Participant I)

I find it really hard to analyse my own psychological outlook. I mean I feel quite rational. Someone else, an expert, could take, could spend 20 minutes with me and say, that person should be better locked up in an institution (laughs). (Participant F)

Therefore, whilst some Republican ex-prisoners were clearly psychologically and emotionally affected by their experiences during the conflict, it may be more difficult to identify this impact on others who struggle to do so themselves. Issues in the identification of moral injury and psychological impact in this population is explored further in Study 2.

Subtheme 2: impact of the conflict on religion

Whilst the previous subtheme reveals that Republican ex-prisoners have been affected emotionally and psychologically to different degrees because of the conflict, other aspects of their lives have also been affected such their religious beliefs. Firstly, it is important to note that although some would view this as a religious conflict, many Republicans were not Catholic. This includes some of the current study's participants:

I don't have any religious beliefs. ... You know, there's five isms in Republicanism. That's what we always… taught and were taught. Nationalism. Socialism. Uhm… secularism. Separatism. And… non-sectarianism. Secularism. And out of them all, secularism would be the one that I would be most assertive on today. And it's not because of my Republicanism as such. It's uh… it's because… that's how I think about fucking people who mumble mumble jumbo. And tell us that the… their sky daddy is gonna save all the problems, you know? To me uh… I'm just hopelessly irreligious. (Participant E)

Nonetheless, four out of eleven interviewees cited some disillusionment and loss of faith in the Catholic Church during the conflict and underwent religious conflictedness (although their

faith in God was often maintained). For three individuals, this was due to clergy members condemning Republican violence:

But being involved and ending up in prison I probably lost, you know, completely lost faith in the Catholic church. Because of their attitude towards Republicans. You know? And I had many an argument with… priests, ehm, as regards to that. And them condemning us and saying we were morally wrong but wouldn't equate the same with the state. You know? So… that. I probably did, I lost faith in them. (Participant H)

I suppose that was one of the things that turned me against religion totally, was the sort of, acceptance about, by the Catholic hierarchy, by the institutions of the status quo as it was at that stage. That they would have sort of viewed the IRA conflict as, the IRA's activities as being, for them, being morally repugnant whereas British occupation wasn't viewed in the same light and to me it was, it was both sides of one coin. (Participant A)

This again demonstrates the strength of their moral beliefs in the justification of Republican violence, given that it overpowered their faith in the Catholic Church which they were brought up with, and surrounded by, from childhood. In direct contradiction to these sentiments, Participant J grew disillusioned and angry with clergy members in Northern Ireland supporting and siding with the IRA in recent times. He believes they should be speaking out against IRA "atrocities" and support victims instead:

And that's probably, if I think of an emotional response that most shocks me most nowadays is my response to them, is one with amazement, to the slight anger there, because I'm totally astonished that they uhm, so betrayed the church. Church leaders who help neither repent nor who condemned IRA violence 100%. And those who stood against the Enniskillen bombings, the La Mon bombings, the murders of the two IRA corporals in Belfast, these church men were the great leaders of our day. (Participant J)

This illustrates not only his disillusionment with those clergy members, but also the strength of his moral disillusionment with the IRA. It is also clear that although this was not a religious conflict, the above examples reveal how moral views on the use of Republican violence affected their relationship to the Church as an institution given its role in this community and the peace process.

Subtheme 3: impact of the conflict on social relationships

The conflict and altered moral views on Republican violence also had a notable impact on Republican ex-prisoners' social relationships. For example, Participant J's disillusionment with the IRA and clergy members, as discussed in the subtheme above, have affected his social relationships and resulted in a degree of social isolation:

> But you see, I find myself, one only, one on the very edge of society because of my past. And now I find myself, as a Christian, on the very edge of the Church because of my criticism of their rapport with the IRA. So, I do feel that, not that I'm worried about that, prison taught me to enjoy solitary confinement, so I'm never really fussed about that. But I always find myself, I think somebody described me many years back in prison as a poacher in the hedgerows of society. (Participant J)

Participant E and B also have alternative political beliefs to mainstream Republicanism in Northern Ireland today, which similarly affected their social relationships and resulted in some ostracization from Republicans. However, some relationships were also maintained and Participant E flagged his cross-community relationships actually improved:

> And this had a big impact on my friendships with people who I had previously been friends with within Sinn Féin and the IRA. And after that the, it spiralled downhill. We had a lot of troubles in Sinn Féin and the IRA, threats, intimidation… uh, attempts at bullying. None of it worked, we continued to speak out. But, it certainly had an impact on social relationships. Uhm… I, I, paradoxically, my relationship with the members of the Unionist community and Loyalist

community has improved over the years despite my Republicanisation. (Participant E)

Provisional members, they walk past me. Provisionals don't talk to me. (Pause). Am I worried? No. [Anonymised names], all them people. Wouldn't talk to ya! None of them would talk to ya. They were all on the Blanket at the same time as ya. But it's a city thing. If you go down, if I go down to… this is where the emotional part comes in. If I go down to [anonymised places]. Where you meet ex-Provisionals who come from [anonymised]. [Anonymised names]. Hugging ya, welcoming to see ya. But if you go to [anonymised] or go to [anonymised]. Those Provisionals won't look at ya, won't talk to ya. It's a city thing. (Participant B)

Yet the issue related to social relationships that was most frequently cited, by eight interviewees, was the impact the conflict had on their family. Several individuals stated that what they put their family through as a result of their involvement and/or imprisonment was what they felt most guilty about.

… when you're sort of sitting and reflecting on things you can certainly feel regret or guilt in the sense that, I mean, when you become involved as an IRA volunteer and you're active… you bring a lot of hardship. On your family. (Participant A)

… if somebody was to ask me what I feel worse about. It's probably the… horrendous time that I've put my mother through. Uh… now that I'm a parent myself. … And I suppose, maybe in a selfish manner, that's probably the biggest uh… the thing that I maybe regret most. (Participant E)

I regret the hurt and pain I brought to my mum and dad. (Participant G)

Often, individuals only realised this upon later reflection and with age. Relationships with partners and children were also affected such as through separation during imprisonment. For example, relationships were split up and children were subjected to traumatic experiences. This illustrates that not only the Republican ex-prisoners themselves were

affected by the conflict, but their family members were as well as therefore may also require further support.

> But a lot of times what you find is family life with ex-prisoners is very traumatised when they come out of jail. I mean I was [anonymised] years with my partner, and then it split. (Participant B)

> I was previously married and the marriage uh, then split up. I had a… There were attacks on the house. … my children, uh, were badly frightened and traumatised. (Participant I)

> There was a strain there, certainly, not seeing your child, and that was a big big miss. And it still is. You see that gap in your life and you miss your child growing up. … My marriage broke up and that was a direct result from imprisonment. But. Again. I wasn't the only one in that, uhm, happened to. So, you had to be strong. Get over all of those things. And… move on. Sometimes it wasn't easy. (Participant C)

As clear from Participant C's quote above, and the following quote from Participant D, this separation from their families also was very challenging to the Republican ex-prisoners themselves:

> Well, it had a major effect on me from the point of view of being separated from my family. And from the general… life which I was leading. … So you know, that was quite a loss (laughs). To my, I don't know. To my general wellbeing and stuff. Separation is a terrible thing… (Participant D)

Therefore, Republican ex-prisoners' social and family relationships have clearly been negatively affected by their experiences during the conflict in addition to different degrees of psychological, emotional, and religious impact. These needs require addressing and attention, which will be discussed further in theme 7.

6.7 Theme 6: general resilience and coping

Despite all interviewees having undergone potentially traumatic events, they were able to remain resilient to trauma and only one interviewee (Participant B) said he suffered from PTSD. This resilience was very apparent despite not being directly asked about in the interviews. Participants commonly stated that they did not suffer greatly psychologically and a few commented that they felt "lucky" to have survived:

> I don't feel that uhm, I carry much residue from my era of activism. (Participant D)

> I don't think I have been affected uh, or traumatised by it. (Participant E)

> … if you're asking me, do I think that I had any long-term… uhm, if these things had any long-term effect on me, then, I would probably say no… (Participant K)

> But I consider myself quite lucky to have… survived both physically and mentally. (Participant F)

> I was one of the lucky ones, you know? Because I don't. It didn't affect me any, that way. So, probably came out of it… pretty much intact as I'd say. Physically and emotionally. (Participant H)

However, a few individuals viewed resilience as not "breaking down":

> ... I have never had anything like a breakdown. (Participant I)

Therefore, their idea of psychological impact may be viewed more extremely and solely as psychological illness. General resilience may have helped protect against moral injury, although their Republican moral beliefs likely played a bigger role in this (see theme 3).

This general resilience was maintained through a variety of factors and methods of coping during the conflict and imprisonment, as well as post-conflict. It should be noted that a direct interview question on coping mechanisms was only added halfway through the interview

process, and therefore some participants may not have had the opportunity to share their views on this. Seven individuals commented on the fact that their Republican identity was maintained post-conflict, such as through work in the community. For Participant G, this work allows him to confront the consequences of the conflict rather than suppress them:

And I think my suffering is lighter, maybe because I… talk about it. And deal with it in an environment that… I didn't expect to be in by the way, I didn't expect to be doing this sort of shit. Uh… so I think maybe I'm dealing with it consciously. And I don't have to deal with is subconsciously. Maybe. (Participant G)

This political and/or community work also helped individuals by providing a purpose, and allowed them to view the peace process positively:

Whereas our guide was the struggle, was taking part, was meetings every… every day. Seeing what you were involved with in the past, this was… now… seeing that you were actually… progressing. (Participant C)

Not only the political situation was viewed positively, but five individuals also held a positive outlook on how the conflict affected themselves personally. For example, it was viewed to lead to new opportunities and personal growth:

… imprisonment has shown other sides of me, that I didn't think that I had. But possibly, my, my… activism in the 1970s also did that. I didn't… uhm… once I immersed myself into the political activism, I realised there was another side to me that you know, that I was able to take part in stuff that I never thought would ever come to my door. (Participant D)

Fighting for your community was a… was a, I think, a noble thing in the end. Where I often thought, if I hadn't gone to prison, I would've just worked me life in the [anonymised] industry until I was tired and retired. Uhm. And I do think I made a greater contribution to life… in the role that eventually happened, than if it hadn't happened. (Participant C)

So I suppose it, it has changed my life for the better … being a Republican uh, has, has kept me, uh, as a caring, a caring person. … it has changed me for the better. Or if I was always that type of person it has kept me as such. (Participant I)

Attitudes other than a positive outlook were also adopted by seven participants to cope and build resilience. For example, some individuals hardened their perspectives or emotionally detached:

… it maybe hardens, toughens one's outlook on life… (Participant F)

… You had to detach yourself a bit from it because you can't become, if you become constantly emotionally tied to it, you know, you're never going to cope with prison. So you have to detach yourself. … even though your family was very welcoming and all the rest, you still, you were still using the coping mechanisms you'd used for the previous 16 years in terms of, you know you're, you were remaining a bit detached from things, you weren't allowing yourself to be sort of emotionally invested in things. And stuff like that there. So, it took a number of years I would say, for that to sort of break down. Whereby you actually became functioning. Ehm. Emotionally. (Participant A)

Whilst there are potentially negative repercussions of such detached outlooks, as illustrated by Participant A's quote, it allowed them to get through emotionally challenging experiences. Another attitude that was adopted to cope was by focusing on the present day and "moving on":

Living in the present day. So if, you just get on with it. (Participant B)

… there is things there, and you just put them, you think about them for a while and then you just… put them back in the back of your head, like. (Participant H)

I picked up again with my family and friends, and just moved on. (Participant D)

I don't know, I think that I, like many others, you know, 'soldier on' as they say. (Participant I)

Again, while supressing these thoughts and emotions may potentially lead to negative outcomes, it was nonetheless argued to help individual cope and survive. These adopted attitudes may also evidence a "macho culture" and stigma in this community related to emotional or psychological struggles, which will be discussed further in Study 2 and theme 7. Simultaneously, these attitudes may have been developed over time following years of reflection and struggling with exceptionally challenging experiences because of the conflict context:

…we, I think, ended up as a large degree as people who were very, kind of… level-headed and sort of, emotionally in control … I'm not trying to put myself across as somebody who's, you know, emotionally tough or anything like that but I'm just saying that I think, you know, we have an understanding of what was going on about us and I think it helped us to survive. (Participant K)

Social support was also mentioned as a vital coping factor in seven participants, again both during the conflict and after. It helped individuals persevere rather than suffer in isolation, as well as aided reintegration post-release. Support came from other Republicans, friends, partners, and family.

I think that we have the support of family, of community, of comrades, that allows us to… go through these things and survive these things. (Participant K)

… there's a bond there. You know. Uhm. And it seems an unbreakable bond. You know, with friends and comrades and ex-prisoners and people who were involved in Republican politics. (Participant I)

Friends. I, courage is social. Courage is not a… infinite resource. It's a finite resource. And… you… your friends fuel you. Probably more than anything else. …

[His wife has] always been there. You see? We've always done this together. … I don't think it's made it easier but she's certainly made me much more robust. In terms of, you know, you know you've got that great support there. … I always want to see the shoulders of the giant whose shoulders they stand on. And I stand on my wife's shoulders anytime that I do manage to get my head above the parapet. (Participant E)

When I was released from prison I was in a very, you know, stable home environment I suppose in a sense. You know. So, I had that around me. I had a good family network around me. I had good stuff around me. (Participant A)

And lastly, hobbies and sports were mentioned by two participants as being helpful to cope with stress and distress.

You know, because hobbies are… they are, like uh, a sort of therapeutic, stress-relief type of, a sort of medicine I suppose. (Participant I)

This is recognised by political ex-prisoner organisations who encourage and aid Republican ex-prisoners in accessing hobbies and organise relevant events, leading to additional social benefits of these activities. These various coping techniques may therefore provide insight into how individuals struggling emotionally or psychologically can be supported further. They also illustrate how individuals were able to maintain resilience to moral injury or other trauma during and after the conflict.

6.8 Theme 7: support for Republican ex-prisoners

Despite the apparent resilience in this sample, the participants highlighted that psychological support is needed for Republican ex-prisoners in general. This is because they suggested a significant number of individuals in the community suffer from mental health problems, social isolation, trauma and/or depression. This was often argued to be related to their imprisonment and post-release challenges, and commonly led to individuals resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol.

So there's a lot of former Republicans... suffering more today than they did during the conflict. They're dealing with it in different ways. Sometimes it's just isolation. Sometimes it's alcohol, sometimes it's prescribed medication, sometimes it's illegal medication. (Participant G)

The ex-prisoner community suffers greatly from addiction, and from psychological problems and all, all sorts of issues. (Participant I)

Additionally, risks for intergenerational trauma were highlighted:

And you know, we still see this, you know... post-, PTSD coming down through the generations. We talk about uhm, intergenerational trauma and all these things. (Participant K)

I mean, you know those issues are out there and once they're within a family, and they're hidden within a family, they become intergenerational, and it goes down generations then and becomes a society issue for years to come. (Participant A)

Therefore, it is clear that further psychological support for this population is required.

Subtheme 1: barriers to support

Despite this evident need for support, various barriers to it exist and were discussed by nine participants. These barriers prevent Republican ex-prisoners from seeking or being able to obtain psychological support, and therefore require addressing. For example, four individuals mentioned discriminatory barriers with particular emphasis on the fact that British anti-terrorism legislation prevents a guarantee of confidentiality.

... the likes of ourselves couldn't go to counselling. Cause like yourself, you have a duty of care. So if I say something to you, you'd inform the police. And so on. So I can't go to counselling. (Participant B)

It has still got its anti-terrorist legislation. Right? And that is a major inhibitor for… our former activists seeking psychological assistance for whatever their issues are today but which possibly would stem back from their past. We can't go to a doctor, psychiatrist, counsellor… without the risk of them reporting anything which would be said to them. For which we could then subsequently be charged. That legislation is still there. So, those who do have difficulties which are pretty intense, can't seek assistance. Not from statutory agencies without risking imprisonment. So that's a major problem. (Participant D)

This results in additional sentiments that the British state is still "fighting" Republican ex-prisoners and is especially problematic given that there is already a lack of trust of the British state:

And so, it obviously becomes a massive problem for Republicans who start of from a position of not trusting the state in the first place. So they now see this process of counselling or therapy as being another way in which the state will, will attack Republicans. (Participant K)

Four other participants mentioned that there is a culture that prevents help-seeking. For example, it results in denial, a fear of displaying weakness, and a lack of discussion about these difficulties. This will be discussed further in Study 2.

… but if you were to try to tell them there's something wrong with them, they'd deny it. 'There's fuck all wrong with me'. (Participant G)

Because the problem we have in the Republican movement generally I suppose, and former political prisoners, people very much keep these things to themselves. And they're afraid, people think that if they speak about you know, feeling depressed or, feeling that they're having flashbacks to what happened, that they're showing some sort of weakness. (Participant A)

Participant F also commented on this culture being partly explained by stigma relating to psychological illness in Ireland, as well as having been created by an inability to display weakness during imprisonment out of self-defence against that weakness being exploited:

> But, it has led to a situation where a lot of, a number of people have found it difficult to… eh, express their feelings of stress. And there is, there has, and has been, maybe somewhat less now in Ireland, but for a long time in Ireland, there was a stigma attached to mental or psychological ailment. (Participant F)

Others suggested that Republican ex-prisoners feel morally superior and therefore are unlikely to seek out support:

> See we supress that because… one of the things that we, we… see being right? Then you don't suffer. Because everything we did is, is morally correct. Okay? So why would you suffer? I mean, you only suffer if you do something wrong. Right? And guilt kicks in and stuff. Well that's bullshit. (Participant G)

This sentiment may be used to encourage help-seeking by demonstrating that traditional state soldiers also seek psychological support:

> And it's been difficult, you know, because there's the old soldier type thing. Ex-prisoners in the community sort of, you know, 'I don't suffer, I'm not gonna need anything'. But uh, it's been explained to them that uh, the other side. People from the Crown forces and the prison service, who now consider themselves traumatised because of inflicting what has, what ex-prisoners have suffered. Uh, have availed of such services, and very much so. (Participant I)

This issue also ties into debates around victimhood, as illustrated by a quote from Participant A:

> … the unfortunate thing is, once political ex-prisoners start talking about things like this, they are immediately, uhm, explained to them with what happened to

the victims. You know what I mean? And then it becomes a battle about perpetrator and victim. Whereas, for many political ex-prisoners, I mean, myself included, I mean, we lost family members. So they're also victims … people who put political ex-prisoner against victim, perpetrator and victim, I mean, it's very disingenuous, it's also very harmful for people who are actually trying to deal with these issues. (Participant A)

This will be discussed further in Chapter 8 in relation to existing literature. The last barrier of support to dissident Republicans specifically was mentioned by Participant J, who claimed that such individuals had nowhere to turn for support out of fear of the IRA's reaction. He therefore viewed the situation bleakly:

There's nothing for them, really. Because they're trapped in isolation. What's for them is death. What's gonna happen is they are going to die at some point and that will be the easing of their situation. (Participant J)

However, this view was not shared by other participants who believed various methods of support would improve the psychological health of Republican ex-prisoners despite these barriers.

Subtheme 2: recommendations for support

Various recommendations were provided to increase accessibility in, and utilisation of, psychological support in this community. There was an emphasis that such support should be conducted within the community, and with individuals who are trusted. For example, the importance of existing Republican ex-prisoner groups being funded adequately was cited by five participants.

… I think, if they were properly funded to help, I think that's the way to go. And that would be, that if there was help needed, that you could go to them groups, cause you would feel… more secure in going and talking to somebody, from your own, you know, that would understand. You'd know that they would understand because they came through the same themselves. (Participant H)

If people go through the right, you know, the prisoner network. I know for a fact that there are people who are professionally trained. Some of them ex-prisoners themselves. That understand the prisoner. … So that professional help. I think that needs to be there. Uhm… and needs to continue. … But the funding I think was… European funding. Quite a lot of it was. And I don't know whether that's going to be cut or not. Now that the… this part has left the European Union. (Participant C)

As can be seen from Participant C's quote, there were some confusions and fears around EU funding given Brexit, which require clarification. These groups also more specifically provide confidential counselling which was frequently mentioned, such as by Participant B who commented on how he himself found that talking to a counsellor from a Republican ex-prisoner group was very helpful:

[Counsellor] has been a great help. … And I used to talk to [him], if things were happening. (Participant B)

Whilst the availability of this counselling was briefly mentioned and recommended by a few other participants, only Participant B stated he had made use of this himself. Six individuals highlighted the need for people to discuss and acknowledge these issues within the community itself. This serves both as a psychological release as well as raises awareness and reduces any culture barriers to help-seeking by recognising it as a common issue and that individuals are not alone in these feelings and experiences.

… I suppose, the general conversation among the former political prisoners and their families, to say that, you know, people have these feelings. People are feeling trauma and stuff like that there. And they don't realise it, they don't realise that they've been traumatised and their lives have been affected by it. But, people should actually be talking about it. (Participant A)

Sometimes just knowing there's other people… have done it as well. Is a psychological help. … I do believe that helps a lot. Just… someone who can walk around to your house and talk to them, you know, just sit around and talk to them about the fucking weather, even. Just there. It's not, we don't organise it, we don't plan it that way. … And you're just sitting talking, and before you know it, they could be talking about what was on their mind. You know, it's not planned, they don't even realise… or you don't even realise that maybe they had something on their mind, but it's just… talk. Talk shite, usually (laughs). But… it's a release valve there that helps. (Participant G)

And it's not a shame to talk. Talk! Talk about it. If you have a problem, don't shy away from talking. If you want to come to the street and talk to me, as a stranger, who'll just listen, I'll listen. (Participant B)

Addressing both the barriers and exploring these recommendations would support those Republican ex-prisoners who continue to struggle with various issues related to their experiences during the conflict and would reduce the risk of intergenerational trauma in this community. The next chapter discusses the results of interviews with practitioners with experience of supporting this population in a variety of ways, and therefore will provide further insight into this.

6.9 Conclusion

The analysis revealed each participant was unique in terms of their moral beliefs, experiences, degree of involvement, methods of moral rationalisation of events in the conflict, and psychosocial impact. All original moral beliefs related to Republican violence were largely influenced by their personal experiences of state violence/discrimination and the general conflict and social context they grew up in which led to violence being normalised, justified, and even seen as necessary. Rather than Republican violence being questioned, it more likely felt immoral not to become involved.

Following this initial shaping of beliefs, moral challenges were common especially when Republican actions led to unintended "civilian" deaths or injuries. For one interviewee,

this led to moral injury and complete moral disillusionment with the IRA. Only two other interviewees experienced some changes in their moral beliefs following such challenges, the confrontation with the effects of Republican violence, and/or reflection over time. However, they were not disillusioned with the armed struggle in general. This is in line with all the other interviewees, who were able to resolve any moral emotive response and cognitive dissonance and retained their perceptions on the moral justification for Republican violence and/or their own actions. For example, they were able to rationalise morally questionable events by viewing them as mistakes which may inevitably happen in a war context that was also not considered to be of their making, yet which was necessary to become involved in and led to comparatively positive outcomes for the Republican community. Importantly, these participants were also not directly involved in such events themselves. Therefore, these participants were protected from deeper moral conflict and moral injury.

It is important to note that Republican violence was not the only morally challenging event cited. Various experiences of betrayal within the organisation also led to loss of trust and anger, and a spectrum of moral conflict. In one case, there was clear moral injury arising from a feeling that the leadership betrayed Republicans during the Hunger Strike negotiations. This was considered impossible to justify or forgive. Although it is difficult to confidently identify other cases of betrayal-based moral injury in the current participants, the betrayal-related conflict present in this sample does indicate it is a risk for the general Republican ex-prisoner population. This is largely due to unexpected experiences of betrayal by their own "side" being more difficult to morally justify using the methods of rationalisation employed for moral challenges related Republican violence discussed above.

Participants were found to be remarkably resilient to not only moral injury but also to other psychological challenges and traumatic events they experienced, which they were able to cope with successfully. Nonetheless, there was evidence of trauma in some of these participants as well as the Republican ex-prisoner community in general, and therefore support is still required. This is due to experiences related to the conflict still having an impact on their emotional, psychological, religious, and social lives to this day, decades after the Good Friday Agreement. Significant barriers to this support and help-seeking remain in the community, and hence various recommendations for improvement in this were suggested. For example, confidential psychological support needs to be available from trusted sources such as ex-prisoner groups who require funding. Furthermore, stigma related to these issues

should be reduced, such as through open conversations about these topics within the community.

Despite the limited cases of moral injury in Study 1, there were two clear examples of betrayal- and perpetration-based moral injury. This indicates moral injury is present in this population. Additionally, this study presented extensive insight into the moral reasoning of Republican ex-prisoners, and how this protected them from experiencing moral injury. Further evidence for moral injury's existence in this population from Study 2 will be discussed in Chapter 7. Whilst some findings will align with the present study's, such as in relation to the shaping of their moral beliefs and experiences of betrayal, many other insights are novel. Additionally, both Study 2 and Chapter 8 include suggestions on why moral injury was rare in Study 1.

Chapter 7. Study 2 Results (interviews with individuals working with Republican ex-prisoners)

7.1 Introduction

During and after the conflict, support networks and community groups were put in place for Republican ex-prisoners seeking help. This included many initiatives, such as support for social and economic reintegration and counselling. The current study (Study 2) focuses on the perspectives of individuals involved in supporting the Republican ex-prisoner population through a variety of means. This included individuals who have worked with Republican ex-prisoners as community workers, priests, forensic psychiatrists, and counsellors. It allowed for an exploration of moral injury through a more general view of the Republican ex-prisoner population which was based on the perspectives of those who closely engaged and supported them in a variety of roles.

In this study, thematic analysis was conducted on seven interviews which led to the creation of six themes. Table 3 presents an overview of these themes and their subthemes, which will be covered in the rest of this chapter, as well as which transcripts contributed supportive evidence. These themes provide strong evidence for the applicability of moral injury in the eyes of Study 2 participants to Republican ex-prisoners. This contributed insights from this sample on when moral injury occurs in Republican ex-prisoners and how they are affected by such experiences. Other psychological challenges, and how Republican ex-prisoners may be best supported with these and/or moral injury was also discussed. The initial codes of these interviews may be found in Appendix H to illustrate the analysis process.

Study 1 conducted interviews with Republican ex-prisoners on their personal experiences and therefore used IPA. The interviews in Study 2 focused solely on its sample's perspectives on moral injury based on their work with Republican ex-prisoners. Given this focus on the second sample's perspectives and opinions rather than their lived experiences, thematic analysis was used in Study 2 instead to identify patterns within the interviews. Specifically, experiential thematic analysis was utilised to focus the participants' standpoints, and their contextually situated perspectives, on moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. While the presentation of the themes in Studies 1 and 2 look the same, the process as described in Chapter 5 is quite different. Nonetheless, these should not be seen as purely

separate studies. Rather, Study 2 informs and complements the findings on Study 1 by providing insight into moral injury in the general Republican ex-prisoner population. This will be apparent in Chapter 8 where the findings of both studies are discussed alongside one another.

Furthermore, five of the seven participants grew up in Republican communities before or during the conflict. Three of these participants were Republican ex-prisoners themselves and were employed in relevant supportive capacities in this community following training post-release. Although they at times touched on their own experiences as Republicans in the interviews, this was not included in this analysis as this was not the focus of Study 2. Again, this analysis focused solely on their perspectives on moral injury in the Republican ex-prisoner community based on their experiences as support providers to this community. The decision to exclude examples of their own lived experiences in Study 2 was also made for anonymity purposes and because no new insights were gained as they echoed experiences already covered in themes in Study 1. Additionally, for the purposes of reliability and validity, IPA would have been needed to be used again to appropriately compare these experiences and their subsequent analysis to that of Study 1 participants. As will be noted in Chapter 8 as well, this does mean that their perspectives on the experiences of other Republican ex-prisoners may be biased or viewed through the lens of their own beliefs and personal histories.

Table 3: Themes and subthemes identified through thematic analysis of interview transcripts

Themes	Subthemes	Participants transcripts with supporting evidence
Development of moral beliefs related to involvement		All (7 total)
	Experiences of conflict, state violence, and discrimination	All (7 total)
	Republican historical narrative and tradition	3 total: Participants Z, Y, V
	Youth and moral disengagement	3 total: Participants Y, W, V
	Catholic upbringing	2 total: Participants Z, W
Moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners		All (7 total)
	Risk and protective factors	All (7 total)
	Comparison to other groups in the conflict	All (7 total)
	Issues in identification	6 total: Participants Z, Y, W, V, U, T
Morally injurious experiences		All (7 total)
	Perpetration-based moral injury	6 total: Participants Z, X, W, V, U, T
	Betrayal-based moral injury	6 total: Participants Y, X, W, V, U, T
	Witnessing-based moral injury	4 total: Participants Z, X, V, T
	Other moral conflicts	5 total: Participants Y, X, V, U, T
Consequences of moral injury		All (7 total)
	Psychological and emotional impact	6 total: Participants Z, Y, X, W, V, T
	Impact on social relationships	5 total: Participants Z, X, W, V, T
	Impact on religion	3 total: Participants Z, W, T
	Disillusionment	5 total: Participants Z, Y, X, W, T
Other trauma in Republican ex-prisoners		6 total: Participants Y, X, W, V, U, T
Support for Republican ex-prisoners		All (7 total)
	Barriers to support and help-seeking	5 total: Participants X, W, V, U, T
	Recommendations for support	6 total: Participants Z, Y, W, V, U, T

7.2 Theme 1: development of moral beliefs related to involvement

All interviewees provided factors that they believed shaped Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs related to involvement in the conflict, and which led them to perceive this involvement as morally justified and necessary. There was variation in these factors, with some overlap. The influencing factors include experiences of conflict, state violence, and discrimination, a Republican traditional and historical narrative of injustice, youth and moral disengagement, and their Catholic upbringing. These are listed and discussed below as subthemes. They are all in line with the factors identified in Study 1, other than the influence of their Catholic upbringing. By demonstrating how these beliefs were formed, it will allow for an understanding of how they may have conflicted (or not) with potentially morally injurious experiences in later themes. For example, the factors provide scope for moral conflict in Republican ex-prisoners at later stages of the conflict, which is explored in Theme 3.

Subtheme 1: experiences of conflict, state violence, and discrimination

All interviewees suggested that personal experiences of the conflict, such as acts of state violence or discrimination, led many Republican ex-prisoners to see Republican violence as moral. This was because these experiences drew them into the conflict themselves and led them to feel that a violent response was needed.

> For the vast majority of people … would have seen themselves as responding to events. (Participant X)

> … what I do remember are vivid stories of individuals being… politicised. That is, you know, developing their political ideology and outlook, through really quite early childhood and family experiences. What was happening, what they saw and experienced, witnessed in their own communities. (Participant U)

Essentially, it was considered that immoral acts of other groups such as the British Army or police led them to perceive their own actions as moral.

So looking at other people's immorality in some respects made it, where people thought they had the moral high ground. (Participant X)

Republican violence was therefore seen as a necessary defensive response and the only option, which later developed into an offensive response.

… they felt that the whole system here was so unjust that violence was the only resort. (Participant Z)

… the main reason that people got involved. Uhm. In the beginning it had more to do with a defensive orientation. Cause of what was happening. … And it went almost from a some sort of like… a holding operation, to an offensive operation. (Participant V)

According to Participant W, this violent defensive response was believed to be in line with "just war" principles, and that the presence of the British forces in itself morally justified their response:

So they would've determined that… the presence of the British forces was a moral justification for the use of violence against the British forces. Because it was an imperialist power. And the Army was an agent of that power. That'd be the basic… moral foundation. (Participant W)

The interviewees commonly believed this view often originated as an initial emotive moral response to a sense of injustice, rather than a clear political rationalisation.

So that wasn't a clear political decision. It was… the moment. The feeling at the moment and they left and joined for an emotional… resistance to Bloody Sunday or what have ya to… and you had to… then, rationalise it afterwards. (Participant W)

And much of it was not about politics. It was about a gut reaction to the situation

that was happening in front of them for a number of years. (Participant V)

State actions and violence continued to reinforce these initial moral beliefs during the course of the conflict, such through the treatment of Republican prisoners:

When the people outside, and the people inside enduring it. You know, were

enduring that and seeing that it was happening. That… instead of, you know,

instead of trying to make people repent or whatever. Only made people… uh.

Rebel against it even more. (Participant T)

Given the emphasis of personal experiences of conflict, state violence, and/or discrimination by all participants in both studies, it can be assumed that this was the most important factor in leading individuals to see Republican violence as morally justified and even necessary.

Subtheme 2: Republican historical narrative and tradition

It was not only personal experiences of the recent conflict which shaped these moral views. Rather, three participants mentioned the contributing factor of Republican ex-prisoners having been commonly raised in Republican families and in a community with a historical narrative of injustice. As discussed in Chapter 2, social environments play an important role in shaping moral beliefs. In the current context, exposure to this Republican historical narrative and tradition of armed struggle in their families and communities therefore contributed, and acted as a foundation, to the shaping of the belief that violence was the only option to fight an "unjust system".

And then you had all the different things that came up in terms of tradition, and

past and things. People began to learn about history. (Participant V)

For those especially who would know their history. They would look into the

history here and they would see… as they would see it. They would see years and

years of injustice and discrimination. They would see a narrative of uhm… this

state's really, doesn't want us. (Participant Z)

You know, their families were Republican from the '40s … and the '60s campaign and stuff, you know. They're historically rooted in Irish Republicanism. (Participant Y)

This belief was therefore not only built on their personal experiences, but the experiences of their community historically as well. However, Participant Y mentioned that for most Republican ex-prisoners, personal experiences played a much greater role in their moral development.

I think the vast majority probably are people [who] didn't have any notion of Republicanism. Uhm. Didn't have family traditions, wasn't spoke about. But the… the situation that you find yourself within… (Participant Y)

It is therefore important to consider contributory factors to moral beliefs not in isolation, but collectively.

Subtheme 3: Youth and moral disengagement

The conflict created an abnormal moral context where children often experienced violence and riots, and which led to some individuals becoming morally disengaged from the use of violence. This conflict situation was seen as exciting and led to conflict and violence becoming normalised. With age, the situation was viewed more seriously, and involvement subsequently intensified.

It was horrific if you were old enough to have any more sense. … And as you get older then it becomes more serious. And… your involvement becomes more intense. And you see things that… you take away that, well, it's not so brilliant. (Participant Y)

According to Participant W, the excitement arising from this abnormal moral context resulted from a "macho culture":

Initially… it was an excitement around taking up the gun and… uh, getting involved in it. And, there's a… a local pride in uhm being one of the boys. In this case a macho culture, which has obviously developed uhm… there would've been a, a rush into the organisation. (Participant W)

In addition to growing up in this conflict context, Participant V suggested that young people also sought belonging and meaning. This may have made them more susceptible to viewing joining a violent Republican organisation as the right thing to do.

Young people. Why do young people join armies? (Pause). It's a combination of factors, obviously. A bit of excitement, etcetera etcetera. All of that. So a sense of injustice. A sense of… a gut reaction to what was happening on the streets. A sense of a… excitement for some people. A sense of maybe belonging to something. That had meaning for them. (Participant V)

According to Participant W, the abnormal moral context of the conflict led individuals to lowering their personal "moral compass" for them to engage in violence:

But generally speaking, there would have been a fair proportion of people that decided to… lower their moral compass if you like. Because this was a bigger issue than them. You know, that the issue was bigger than their personal viewpoint. … when they started… they had this… the cause was greater than the moral compass. (Participant W)

This changing in moral standards may indicate moral disengagement. Participant Y also revealed evidence of potential moral disengagement during the conflict, such as when deaths were celebrated:

And, some [Republicans] would celebrate and cheer whenever they heard, like a major event where the British soldiers were being killed or police officers. (Participant Y)

Therefore, there are clear examples of some individuals becoming morally disengaged from the use of violence partially because of the abnormal moral context they grew up in, leading to participation in Republican violence being seen as a moral action.

Subtheme 4: Catholic upbringing

Other than growing up in a conflict context, many Republican ex-prisoners also had a Catholic upbringing. This was mentioned by two participants as playing a separate influence on their moral beliefs. The emphasis on moral development in a Catholic upbringing, such as in Catholic schools and church, led to an exposure to a certain set of moral beliefs associated with the religion.

> … would've gone to Catholic schools. So, that certainly would've helped shape their, their position. They… would have maybe been growing into, growing up with families who would regularly have been going to mass. And so would've been hearing teaching from the Church. So that certainly would've played a part. (Participant Z)

> Most of them were Catholics. Not all of them. That would've influenced them in their basic moral outlook. (Participant W)

Participant Z also argued that Catholic anti-violence beliefs clashed with the Republican narrative of necessary violence, creating a possibility of moral conflict between these two belief systems. This is discussed further in Theme 2. In contrast, Participant W stated that the Just War principles Republican ex-prisoners believed to adhere to were actually in accordance with their Catholic beliefs:

> They would have recognised… uh, Just War. In accordance with the Catholic beliefs because uh, Catholics have a particular concept of a Just War. (Participant W)

He also believed that the moral thinking of some Republicans, particularly those in leadership positions, were influenced by Catholic priests during the conflict. This subsequent change in their perspective contributed to the peace process:

> But [Catholic priests] would have an influence on the thinking of the leaderships. As they talked things through. Because it's very hard to… block out… they… to block out from your thinking… the other's point of view. So if you're under any negotiations. Particularly in the initial stages with priests. … And once you see someone else's point of view… you begin to change your way of thinking. And that, that had a moral impact, certainly on leaderships. (Participant W)

Therefore, although there might be circumstantial differences in how Catholicism influenced the moral perspective of Republican ex-prisoners, it does appear to have played a role alongside the other three factors mentioned in the previous subthemes.

7.3 Theme 2: moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners

Participants were provided with the following definition of moral injury during the interview: "moral injury occurs when an individual perpetrates, hears about, or witnesses an act or event that conflicts with their personal moral beliefs. It can also occur when someone feels betrayed. It occurs when cognitive dissonance between this event and their own personal values is unresolved. Whilst it not categorised as a psychological illness, it commonly results in psychological distress, strong emotions, or impacts relationships". They were able to ask questions about the concept, commonly resulting in further explanation of the concept. All interviewees clearly stated and agreed that moral injury is applicable to, and experienced by, Republican ex-prisoners.

> As you have just defined it, absolutely. Without a shadow of a doubt. (Participant Z)

> Yes I've came across it in many ways. (Participant X)

… most people who come [location of support services] have… difficulties in one form or another. So all this stuff that you're looking for is gonna be in there. (Participant V)

Although some interviewees did not wish to predict its incidence in this population given that they were unsure, others believed it to be common. Specifically, Participant Z believes although it is widespread, it is not recognised as such. This is understandable given the novelty of moral injury as a concept in trauma research.

I don't know … I can only go by the people who… have those conversations with me. (Participant Y)

As I understand, what you explained to me as moral injury. I'd say it has to be widespread! I don't think there would be a recognition of that. I think… uhm… because of the fact that this does not seem to be a widely understood phenomenon. Uh. So I don't think it's something that's, that's been particularly at this stage recognised more generally. It's not part of an overall narrative. It seems like you're breaking new ground. (Participant Z)

Although all interviewees agreed on the applicability of the concept of moral injury to this population, there were differences in their insights into when and why it was present, or why not. This is illustrated in the subthemes below, which discuss its risk or protective factors and how this risk may have compared to other groups in the conflict. Additionally, various issues were raised that prevented participants from confidently identifying examples of moral injury. This theme therefore provides a general overview of participants' views on moral injury in this population, before this is unpacked in greater detail in subsequent themes.

Subtheme 1: risk and protective factors

All participants provided or implied various risk and protective factors for moral injury in this population. Firstly, Participant Z suggested Catholic beliefs in Republican ex-prisoners conflicted with the Republican belief in the necessity for armed struggle. This dissonance

therefore had to be rationalised, such as through discussions within the organisations. However, if it was not resolved then there would be a risk for moral conflict and moral injury.

> I can't see how in some ways, how those two positions could be reconciled. Without some form of internal dissonance. (Participant Z)

> So inevitably there was going to have to be a conflict between… uhm, their morals as they were being formed. Eh, but it's obviously very clear that people then… as they've gone through the situation. Looking at the situation. Becoming involved in the armed struggle. That then their, their, their views changed. In some ways. Or they had to, they had to find ways to mitigate those sorts of views. So inevitably there has to be some sort of internal conflict. … I think I have experienced from some that I've met. A sense of… they will have worked it out in their own minds how they will justify that. And maybe to some extent they may have been able to do that. (Participant Z)

This conflict between Catholic beliefs and the use of violence was evident in Participant J in Study 1. Participant V also suggested being Catholic could result in a greater risk for moral injury given the associated "predisposed" guilt and critique of Republican violence. This could therefore create conflict between moral beliefs. However, he stated most could reconcile this moral conflict given that some aspects of involvement, such as participation in the prison protests and hunger strikes, were experienced as spiritual in themselves. As a result, their involvement felt morally justified, whilst the conflicting religious narrative was experienced as more theoretical:

> The vast majority of Republican ex-prisoners are Catholics. So we're already… predisposed to guilt in the first place (laughs). … The Catholic Church has always been against… and preached against violence. … So, somebody who has very strong Catholic beliefs is always gonna be conflicted to some degree about what they're involved in. Where violence is concerned. (Participant V)

The vast majority of people can reconcile aspects of their religious beliefs with what's happened. … [Participating in prison protest] is a… almost a spiritual experience. Because your physicality is diminished and your emotional, your mental and your spiritual world opens up much more. Because that's what, that's where you have to live. And so those kinds of things… you can reconcile. Almost anything. In that situation. Cause when a priest talks to you about, or a minister talks to you about… it's theoretical. You're actually living the spiritual life already … When you're living in a very spiritualised situation, well, of course it's going to fit. And it's gonna feel right. (Participant V)

Participant Z also believed a greater direct involvement in the violence created a greater risk for moral injury, and that explosions were perceived as especially traumatic and therefore potentially more morally injurious when directly experienced as a witness or actor.

The more involved someone is in a particular… event. Or situation. I think inevitably then one takes a greater sense of responsibility for it or… it would have uhm… I think it stands to reason it would have a greater impact on him or her. (Participant Z)

So for example if they were involved in an operation which involved the likes of killing. Or bombing. And maybe in particular I would say the likes of explosions. (Participant Z)

Additionally, he and Participant X suggested that being directly confronted with the effects of Republican violence may also have increased risk for moral injury. This was also found in Study 1.

And I would wonder… uhm, what it must be like for them if they get a chance to listen… to people who had been directly affected. (Participant Z)

And perhaps when they move back into the area… where they came from. And perhaps some of their actions… had consequences in those areas. Then, they can

see… those consequences and perhaps the people who were damaged by those types of things. Or even the extent of families that were damaged by those actions. Still walking about the place. So that's a reminder and stuff. (Participant X)

Relatedly, Participant W believes the 1980s were a time for greater moral reflection and disillusionment, given the exposure to moral outrage in civilians. Other factors during this time period also contributed to this, such as a sentiment that the armed struggle was ineffective and an ageing process in volunteers resulting in an increased commitment to other responsibilities.

When it got dirty, as it always does in a war. Gets dirty. You have to do things. Plant bombs, kill people. You know? Then the moral outrage of others begins to hit you, when they see what is done and ye… so there is, there was… I'd say by the mid-80s a lot of the early volunteers… were… beginning to question. Was there any… reason to continue with the war? Because A, it wasn't working. And B, they were getting older. Family life… kids, married, etcetera. So you had all these things. And therefore they'd begin to have… to look at it perspectively, look at it differently, from a… a, I suppose a more moral viewpoint. (Participant W)

Additionally, he mentioned that feuds between Republican organisations and a change in culture such as influenced by the Feminist movement during this time period also contributed to this. However, other participants suggested that moral injury was more apparent post-conflict. This was a result of greater reflection over time, which was more likely to occur in relative peace, post-release, and when individuals were removed from their narrative-reinforcing Republican social circles.

… when you come out and get out of prison, and perhaps you move away from that sort of comfort zone. Where everybody is reinforcing each other. (Participant X)

It would've been a great, uhm… conflict. Particularly… in the… uh… post-peace, the post-war period. (Participant W)

But I think it's becoming more prevalent now. That people are starting to look at… uhm, that they, I suppose when they're sitting in their house and they're getting older, and you're not with your peers who you're saying, 'yeah brilliant, well done and fucking get into them' and all this here. When you're sitting in the house, 30, 40 years later and you're thinking… like, 'that was a bit horrific' or you know, the taking of or loss of life… was nothing to be going 'yes that's great' about and that sort of stuff. And they feel guilty about that… (Participant Y)

As a result, most Republican ex-prisoners were suggested by Participant W to engage in such reflection:

There were some individuals who will not… reflect or question. But they're few and far between now. I'd say that most… would have… 'what was it all about?' (Participant W)

Moral injury may also have become more apparent post-conflict given that greater moral reflection, conflict, and disillusionment were triggered by issues with reintegration post-release. Resulting moral injury is explored further in Theme 3. This risk can also be explained by the fact that they had little control over their post-release conditions and could attribute blame to others for this, whereas their own choices and actions during the conflict were more easily morally justified to themselves.

Like, other people can say that what they had done… that they were always right. And they blamed everybody else for the, the conditions that they would find themselves in when they got out of prison. (Participant X)

Several interviewees implied that individuals were protected from moral injury when they could rationalise and contextualise events and acts, therefore resolving any cognitive dissonance or moral conflict between those events or acts and their moral beliefs. Therefore,

moral conflict would not escalate into moral injury when individuals were able to view them as justified given their perceived necessity.

> They know that their actions… may have caused injury or even death. But … they know what the other side are capable of. And that that has to be resisted. To the point of injury or death. (Participant T)

> …but at the same time, that guilt is… is convoluted by the fact that they do very clearly still see themselves as members of the Republican movement. And see themselves as members of a guerrilla army. And there, therefore there is a very clear justification for their involvement in that conflict. And the outworkings of their involvement within that conflict. (Participant Y)

For example, events and actions were rationalised through viewing planned violence as having clear parameters and following Just War principles.

> And the other thing about it is that you had sort of a plan. But it was done within a structural response. And it was also, the parameters in many respects… were quite clear. It was a violent situation, therefore in many respects, violence in itself was seen as a… a legitimate way. (Participant X)

> Because they can always justify what they done is, because A, they were under orders. Two, it was a just-war. And three, the country was… the country was occupied as they saw it… and therefore they needed to resist. So they could justify it. Also! They felt they were operating against a… cruel, tortuous, authoritarian, eh, all of the names that you can give to a British occupation force, they could give it to them. And therefore that would justify… (Participant W)

Additionally, in cases where civilians were harmed or killed, some may have been able to resolve arising cognitive dissonance by attributing blame to the circumstances rather than themselves.

For example when an innocent person dies … of course people feel bad about that! But you're not always, you're not always left with a black or white, right or wrong choice. Sometimes you have to make decisions based on what you can best live with. And so in situations like that… people can reconcile that. Or some of those things. Not everybody. (Participant V)

Again, this protective rationalisation is in line with the protective factors identified in Study 1. Individuals were also able to protect themselves from moral injury and justify actions that conflicted with their moral beliefs by blaming or trusting the orders that were given by their leadership.

A lot of people could justify anything within the basis that they, they were acting on, under orders. Therefore, within, within what they seen as a just cause. … you're under the paramilitary organisation's military structure. When you're ordered to do something you want to do it. Irrespective of your own personal misgivings. You're expected to go and do it. (Participant X)

Many of the activists… didn't think through what they were doing. Until it was… obvious that it wasn't working. And even then they didn't take leadership off it. So that they, they said they'd look up to an individual or individuals. 'They're leaders, they're okay, they'll do it'. (Participant W)

As a result, Participant W suggested those in leadership positions had greater protection from perpetration-based moral injury, as they had greater control over the orders they placed. This is in line with Study 1, where Participant F held a leadership position and claimed this allowed him to only be involved in actions he believed to be morally justified. However, upon reflection over time, "foot soldiers" may subsequently have felt morally conflicted about what they were ordered to do, potentially also triggering a feeling of betrayal by those in leadership they had looked up to.

Others would've been, particularly those in a leadership position. Would have rationalised and uh, said, 'well it had to be done'. Even though they… may not

have liked what they had to do. But they could rationalise it. But for the ordinary

foot soldier. Who was told to go out and do something. It… could be difficult.

(Participant W)

Other participants also implied that there could be greater moral conflicts in Republican ex-prisoners when they had to act on an order that was not in line with their own moral perspective. There is therefore a strong indication that the position individuals had in the organisation's hierarchy influenced their risk for moral injury.

… the discomfort with having to abide by the authority of the organisation in these

decisions was, was hard. With regards to… uhm… with… carrying out paramilitary

offences. (Participant U)

Many of the factors listed above increased the potential for moral conflict, but individual differences in Republican ex-prisoners' abilities to morally rationalise such moral conflicts, or attribute blame to the context or others, influenced whether this would result in moral injury.

Subtheme 2: comparison to other groups in the conflict

Participants were directly asked to compare risk for moral injury between Republican ex-prisoners and members of traditional state militaries. Some participants also commented on its risk compared to Loyalist ex-prisoners. Whilst this provides further indication on potential risk or protective factors, and what is considered important for its occurrence, there was a great variety in opinions. For example, participants believed Republican ex-prisoners were similarly, more, or less likely to experience moral injury compared to these other groups. Three participants suggested there was a greater chance for morally injurious events to be experienced by Republican ex-prisoners compared to traditional state soldiers. Participant U put forward that there was more scope for moral injury in this population given that there was a greater risk for betrayal within the Republican organisations, as well as due to their system of discipline or punishment not being legally regulated, both of which could contribute to potentially morally injurious events.

You have… there's a very different approach to discipline. To punishment. Uhm. And to, and the problem of betrayal. Uhm. Is going to be of a very different order. … Now all that I suspect is likely I suspect to be much more… severe, arbitrary, potentially cruel. Then, you know, the procedures for military discipline in the armies that would be more legally regulated and… you're not going to have the same problem of disloyalty and informants and so on. … so you can see there's going to be, there's potential scope for… experiences of moral injury. In the paramilitaries. That wouldn't, are less likely to apply I think in others. (Participant U)

Participant Z believed that due to Republican ex-prisoners being more likely to have been raised as Catholic, there was a greater chance that this would create conflict between their Catholic beliefs and their beliefs in the justification of violence (see previous subtheme for further detail on this risk factor).

I would imagine, within the likes of say the state services. Say the likes of the Army, if people, there's much more, greater likelihood they're coming from maybe a secular education. Or a secular background. … But I suppose to some extent there would be, yeah, a very strong moral compass or a moral code or moral values within say the… the Catholic church. So I think from that point of view, it will be different and there would probably be a greater sense of moral injury. (Participant Z)

Additionally, Republican ex-prisoners differed from traditional state militaries and the police in that their moral beliefs were shaped by a historical narrative of injustice and need for violence. Hence, their motivations for volunteering differed (and are seen by some as "stronger") from those who were professionally employed in those other groups. Republicans therefore engaged in events which they would likely not have outside of the context of the recent conflict, yet which risked confrontation with moral conflict.

I would say it would be much more likely in Republican prisoners. Because uh… we're a volunteer army. You didn't join for, they didn't join for… training. You

didn't join to make a career. They joined because they saw… as a… defending their community. Defending their group. Opposing an occupying army. Various things. So therefore they were prepared to… to do things that they wouldn't in a normal society do. (Participant W)

Like, it was all excitement to [British soldiers]. … They hadn't a clue about the conflict in the North of Ireland. They didn't know why they were there … the difference is I suppose with our conflict is it's a volunteer. You opt into the conflict and you don't get paid for it and you do have an understanding of why… you're involved in the Republican armed struggle. (Participant Y)

So again, that sort of historical narrative I think would be at play as well. And, and certainly very different from those who would join the likes of say… the police, or the Army. (Participant Z)

Whilst greater moral motivation was also identified as a difference between these two groups in Study 1, there it was considered to put British soldiers at greater risk given that this "stronger" moral motivation would protect Republican ex-prisoners. This therefore conflicts with the opinions evidenced above. Participant X suggested moral injury is more common in Loyalist ex-prisoners. He believes this is due to Loyalists having less support in their communities, having "lost" greater power (whilst Republicans were more integrated in government and "gained" political power post-conflict), and due to potentially having felt failed by, and disillusioned with, the British government. There was therefore seen to be greater scope for a moral questioning of their involvement in Loyalists, given that they lost more than they gained from it.

Whenever [Republican ex-prisoners] come out, they were more… acceptable. And incorporated within… the local community structures and such, as such. In the, the like of Loyalism… and the Loyalist paramilitaries… it was the opposite. They were actually seen in some respects… that… uh… they didn't have the support of their community. There was a disengagement. … So… for Loyalist prisoners coming out… they're, they didn't have that same… 'oh, well done lads, you're a

part of it'. In fact, in some of them, they were ostracised on the basis… that, if you went to prison, it's because our police force, our army put you there. (Participant X)

They had total power for 50 years. Uh. They controlled the police, they controlled the judiciary. They controlled the sort of soft power of the Orange Order. Now all those institutions have either been drastically changed or taken away. People in Loyalist areas, in that respect, can only see… failure. … Not only have they lost… what they thought that they were fighting to defend. But now they've, to find out, not only that, but the very existence of Northern Ireland is under… threat. And therefore, also the fact that they feel is, that the people who've allowed this to happen. Especially the British government. So there's a disillusionment within that, as well. (Participant X)

Participant T also suggested he could think of more clear-cut examples of moral injury in traditional state soldiers and Loyalists:

I have in my work… come across veterans from some of the Loyalist groups and uh, British military. And uh. They… in some cases… the British military people… have turned you know, against the group, the Army that they were once in. … And they feel bad about uhm… acts that the British Army have perpetrated in this country. And there's no doubt about that. And it's more clear cut to me, than any other the other things that I've mentioned. (Participant T)

Some of my friends in the Loyalist ex-prisoners' community… have openly… uhm, stated. In front of… uh, large groups of people. That they regret having been involved. They will explain their reasons for being involved. Which are quite understandable. And. But they will express that, that they regret being involved. (Participant T)

Moral injury may also be easier to recognise in traditional state soldiers given their comparatively stronger support structure, whereas it may be more difficult for Republican ex-prisoners to know where to turn with these concerns.

> There is… more of a structure. Where people can quantify… and identify… the like of PTSD, you know? And… whereas in the like of… the like of paramilitary organisations, you don't have that… support structure in place. When you, when you are a member of it. But particularly if you… perhaps leave it. Because when you come out of prison you are no longer wanting to engage. And the other thing is that that structure has also changed. Cause the people who were… running the organisation… when you… were active, and then when you went into prison. Are no longer in place. (Participant X)

Two other participants indicated they believed moral injury not to be more or less likely in Republican ex-prisoners than in traditional state soldiers or the police. This is because moral conflicts can present in any conflict situation, as can a questioning for what the suffering was for in post-conflict contexts.

> The same as in the second World War, the same as in the first World War. Or any other conflict situation. To be able to reconcile, that these things happen… but it's not necessarily uhm… their fault. Or it doesn't… uh, make the war or the campaign or the conflict unjustifiable or illegitimate. ... You know, it's not about right or wrong. It's what you can best live with and what you come up with at the time that best fits the situation. So. People in the Republican movement, Republican ex-prisoners are exactly the same as everybody else. In relation to things like that. (Participant V)

> It's not unique, or, you know, it's not that Republicans have it more than anybody else. Soldiers come home and think, 'what the hell was all that for?' You know, American soldiers who, who witnessed their friends in Afghanistan… losing their lives. … And you know that it was for absolutely nothing. There was no justification

for it. No strategic value in it. No political direction for it. (Pause). Like, you're bound to have moral injury. (Participant Y)

So moral injury is… it affects everybody who's involved in conflict no matter where the conflict is, you know? (Participant Y)

There are therefore varied opinions on whether moral injury is more or less likely to occur in Republican ex-prisoners compared to other groups in the conflict, which depend on what participants perceived their moral beliefs and what they believed increased risk for moral injury.

Subtheme 3: issues in identification

Whilst moral injury was argued to be applicable to Republican ex-prisoners, six out of seven participants provided reasons as to why it is difficult to identify in this population. Some identification issues arise from the need for secrecy within these organisations, and because it has a culture of discipline and loyalty containing dissent. As a result, individuals with moral injury may be less likely to express their true beliefs or feelings.

How do you express disagreement in an organisation that is so… uhm, where, where the discipline of loyalty to the organisation is such a strong… uh, feature. … the expression of… dissent and regret was… was really difficult. And disapproved of. (Participant U)

And there's a sense of once you're into this organisation you're into it almost lock stock and barrel. And that's why again, I suppose, to go back to that... internal dissonance. Eh. One of the things that I would find is that so many of them are… very good at being on message. But I wonder just how really sincere conversations… if they were actually just to be completely open and honest, would it be a different matter? And I suspect at some level… it probably would. … But I suspect that it's so well contained. (Participant Z)

But if somebody in the IRA or the INLA or UVF killed somebody. They don't even let on to other people within the organisation. It's probably a select few who knows who actually did … any military piece of work. So. All this here will have been uh, will have been kept secret. If, if somebody were to break down. And claim that uh, 'oh, I'm feeling the way I am because I've killed people'. I'm sure that the people… who, who were in the organisation with him will take steps to… cocoon that feeling. So that it doesn't get out into the public domain. And maybe bring, uh… charges. (Participant T)

Individuals may also be less likely to be honest about their moral injury as they have been found to commonly deny such emotions to themselves and/or others. Part of this denial and lack of help-seeking can be explained by a culture where there is a reluctance to discuss feelings or admit suffering.

… it's one of those communities where people… uh. Are reluctant to divulge their true feelings. (Participant T)

But there's a large number of Republican prisoners who… have yet to come to terms with what they did. I think they're still in a denial conflict. Denial conflict. And reaching out, some of them obviously have reached out and come to terms with it. … I would say that there… is a reasonable number who are still not come to terms with… and are still living in the past and with the mentality of that of the past… (Participant W)

Some of them… (pause). Some of them, I suppose, uhm, become inward looking, inward focused, they don't talk. They're very silent. Uhm. They don't communicate to anybody else. (Participant Y)

Additionally, the conflict context was morally complex and there were individual differences in moral justifications and moral suffering which make labelling examples as moral injury difficult.

I think trying to define it in terms of any person, is a very difficult thing to do. Because what happens then, is it's almost like… you become a judge. Or a judicator in certain ways. That 'this is moral injury and that isn't'. Uh, and so that's why I don't like labels. Although… the labels are good to some extent. As it gives you something to work with. But it also confines the work that you can do and your understanding of it as well. … But when you're looking at this sort of thing, trying to tie it down. You know, into so many people did this, and so many people felt that and so and so. I find that difficult. (Participant V)

If uh, you know… if one feels morally injured. It's probably the most difficult community in which to… express it. It really is! (Laughs). And I'm only just realising how, how, how uhm. How… difficult it would be. You know, to point out one specific case. And stand over it and prove it. And say, that's how bad that person… you know, was affected. (Participant T)

Anything that I say, can actually be, as I say it I realise it can be disproved otherwise. Uhm. And… and I suppose. I'm throwing in the argument myself about why it might not be moral injury. (Participant T)

In fact, Participant T questioned all his potential examples of moral injury given that he could identify confounding factors. Examples of confounding factors in examples of moral injury can be found in Theme 3. As a result of this morally complex context and these individual differences, two participants suggested moral injury should be looked at more broadly in terms of its impact and causes, as its current categories for potentially morally injurious events are confining.

Yeah it's applicable across the board. For everybody. But I think it also needs to be looked at more broadly. And not just in terms of commission or omission, or witnessing, it's also how people are impacted by it. So it's people who have actually endured injury or endured some kind of treatment in some kind of way, that has inflicted moral injury on them. (Participant V)

> And I think myself, in some respects, the moral injury… uh, discussion. Should be seen as wider than just the impact on the person arising from the actions that they had taken. (Participant X)

Moral injury can therefore be challenging to identify in Republican ex-prisoners, and Chapter 8 will discuss how some of these listed issues may provide clarity on why moral injury was difficult to identify in Study 1.

7.4 Theme 3: morally injurious experiences

All participants provided examples of potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) they either came across in their work, or which they believed to be applicable to Republican ex-prisoners. There were differences in opinion between participants on which events were (more) likely to result in moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. These differing views were likely dependent on their personal views and the work they are involved in, as this will have influenced which Republican ex-prisoners they have supported, and for which needs. However, the consensus was that moral injury was often the result of a cognitive dissonance between their moral beliefs, and the methods used by themselves or others to achieve political aims.

> A sense of, 'okay, this was what I thought, or these are my moral views. And here's what I actually ended up doing.' And because of the huge discrepancy, the huge dissonance between the two. I think that's inevitably where it could happen. (Participant Z)

> I think it is likely to be because of… uhm, you know, the, the difficulties that will arise for some people in some circumstances and reconciling themselves to what they, what they do and what they see. And a mismatch between… uhm. Ideal goals and… process and methods. (Participant U)

In moral injury literature (see Chapter 2), PMIEs are commonly divided into "acts of personal responsibility" or "commission" and "acts of omission" or "where others are responsible".

There are also calls for "betrayal" as a third, separate category. These three types were all found to be present in this population and were referred to as perpetration-based moral injury, witnessing-based moral injury and betrayal-based moral injury as this best summarised the relevant PMIEs discussed. Additionally, unexpected examples of PMIEs that did not fit into these categories were cited. There were also examples of moral conflict without moral injury, as similarly found in Study 1. This theme therefore illustrates which specific events risked the moral injuries argued to be present in Theme 2, as well as how these events were influenced by the risk factors suggested in that theme.

Subtheme 1: perpetration-based moral injury

A common type of moral injury found in existing research is perpetration-based moral injury. Six participants suggested that moral injury was experienced in Republican ex-prisoners following acts of violence they were involved in or perpetrated themselves during the conflict. This was due to these events being perceived as traumatic and difficult to subsequently reconcile.

> And I know a lot of people committed a lot of, a lot of things that they deeply regretted. Because they caused death and… destruction and injury and damage to not only individuals but to communities and, and even to an extent towns and areas and the rest. You know? So they're having to live with that. (Participant X)

> I would argue that this has been traumatic, in some ways. How can it be anything else? Ehm… so I think inevitably for [perpetration-based moral injury], yeah, that would be the most… the most obvious one. (Participant Z)

Perpetration-based moral injury was also suggested to occur due to violence not being a natural or easy human reaction (see Chapter 1 for an explanation of this by Grossman). Additionally, Participant V caveated that subsequent moral injury is dependent on how reintegration post-release, as related difficulties may contribute to further moral conflict. This is expanded on in subtheme 4.

Logic, you know as human beings, when we have our own value system. When we actually inflict pain on another human being … Pain and trauma. Inevitably that's gonna be… uhm, of impact. (Participant Z)

That acts of violence, particularly where people are seriously injured or killed, is not something that comes naturally to human beings. … You know so it's something that goes against… uh, I suppose, people's natural instinct. And in fact, some of the more specialised army units have actually been trained… to counter that instinct in people. Now so, of course they would. And of course they would reflect on it. And a lot of that reflection will depend, as I says to you, in terms of killing and traumatised with the peace, with what happens subsequently. And on reflection. (Participant V)

Their original moral justifications for particularly morally questionable acts may grow especially difficult to maintain upon reflection over time. This is in line with Study 1, where moral injury was suggested to be a risk when acts did not follow Republican morality or Just War principles.

Also in the process of… reflecting. On, on the past. It's very difficult to… morally justify… tying uh, a working man. With a family. To the… the van of a… to a van. Putting a bomb in it. And instructing him to drive it to… uhm. An Army base and blow up that individual himself. Uh, at the time, he would've been seen as a collaborator. But I would imagine that when people reflected in the future, about that deed, those that were involved in it. They would have had a very difficult… uhm, process of, of, of justifying it. (Participant W)

As mentioned when discussing the theme of moral injury's risk and protective factors, this reflection may also be more difficult when they were removed from their Republican social circles and confronted with the repercussions of their violence on the local communities, leading to regret. Furthermore, as dissident Republican violence is ongoing in the form of "paramilitary-style attacks" or "human rights abuses", there is also a potential ongoing risk for moral injury in those who engage in Republican violence post-conflict. This may also be

due to the direct confrontation with the consequences of the pain inflicted on the victims, with little ability for the perpetrator to emotionally and physically distance from it:

> I have no doubt that some of those ones here, some of their fellow human beings scream or shout in pain that they have inflicted on them. It's bound to have an effect on their conscience. … inevitably in my mind they will have been damaged by it. There will be moral injury there. Has to be! Stands to reason. (Participant Z)

These attacks may be especially morally injurious when these attacks "went wrong" and victims passed away despite this not being the original intention of the perpetrator:

> But at times they've gone into arteries and there's times some of these things have gone wrong and there've been a number of people who've actually died because they, they were never right to go wrong but in terms of what they intended to do. (Participant Z)

Two specific examples of potential perpetration-based moral injury were provided by Participant T. One of these was a Republican ex-prisoner who, according to his family, felt guilt near the end of his life for his actions during the conflict:

> But the closest I came to it, one time, there was a man who was very ill. And he was an ex-prisoner. And I think, the belief was that he had, you know, taken part in the armed struggle and therefore, uhm, had… militarily injured or killed. But he was very ill in his final days. And his family … believed, assumed, supposed… or knew. That he felt bad about the lives that he had taken. And that maybe it would affect his passage through the afterlife. (Participant T)

This example also shows that there may be a sentiment of having "sinned" as he believed his passage in the afterlife could be affected by his actions. This is in line with the risk for moral conflict associated with Catholicism in Theme 2. Participant T also described how a few Republicans were argued to have psychological problems and potential moral injury leading them to hand themselves over to the police for actions they perpetrated during the conflict:

Where a, a man who was experiencing psychologically, psychological injury. Uh. Went and handed himself in… to the RUC barracks. And over a couple, a couple of people. Three people that I can think of. Uhm. Taking drink. Feeling not right in the head. Uh. Went and handed themselves into the RUC. And made statements incriminating themselves in events. Some which had brought about death. Uhm. As operations. And… they, they then, uhm. Fought a legal case. Saying that they weren't sound of mind at the time. (Participant T)

This illustrates the complexity and difficulty of identifying whether it was moral injury that led them to go to the police, or whether it was other factors instead. For example, one of these individuals is now involved with violent dissident Republican groups. This may either indicate he has no remorse or moral injury, or it could be, as has been suggested by Participant Z, that moral injury could influence individuals in becoming more involved in Republican violent activity in other to cope with cognitive dissonance.

It could be… that uh, he felt… morally injured by… uh, what he, what he did. Or what part he played. Or what he sympathised in. But now, just as a, a point of interest. He's involved, uhm, at least sympathetic with some of these dissident, splinter, mini groups. Who… would say that they are, you know, still carrying out an armed fight against the forces. And I think he may have been arrested since his release from jail. But. Uhm. If he was morally injured… he could've… availed of the peace process. And thrown himself into un-armed struggle. (Participant T)

I get the sense that someone would try to block it out of their minds and then go back again to some form of addiction or some form of very, very heavy involvement. As a way to deal with that. (Participant Z)

Therefore, although the event and conflict may differ per individual case, perpetration-based moral injury does appear to be present within this population.

Subtheme 2: betrayal-based moral injury

Another commonly referenced type of moral injury arises from experiencing an act of betrayal. Betrayal-based moral injury was suggested by six participants to affect Republican ex-prisoners. According to Participant W, this type of event was the most morally injurious as it is easier for individuals to find reasons to justify what they themselves did, whilst betrayal by those they trusted is less easy to accept. This sentiment was also expressed by Participant E in Study 1.

> The… the sense of betrayal is a big one. I personally would think that it's… that it means more to the ex-prisoner population in terms of how they would have felt, about betrayal rather than about what they had done. Because they can always justify what they done … but the sense of betrayal by their own. I think is much… worse. For them. And traumatised them. (Participant W)

The "betrayal" of the peace process was cited by four participants as being particularly morally injurious. This was also found in Study 1. There was a spectrum of responses in Republicans to the decisions made by Republican leadership during the peace process, but a number grew disillusioned given that their political aims were not achieved. This feeling of betrayal may therefore also evoke latent perpetration-based moral injury as their moral beliefs were subsequently in conflict with their actions during the conflict, which were no longer perceived as "worth it".

> The conflict ending, again, very, a big spectrum of some people … some who were… pretty, not content, but were, were really reconciled to a commitment to a peaceful future. … There were others who thought that… uhm… Sinn Féin had sold out. Uhm. That the losses and the deaths and… all the sacrifices arguably were not worth it. For what they settled for. So a big spectrum of, from being satisfied and pleased to really dissatisfied. … The question is… was it, was enough achieved? You know. Was everything that they and their families suffered… worth it for what, for where they ended up? And for some, the answer was clearly no. You know? And that was very hard for them to come to terms with. (Participant U)

And they feel deeply betrayed by the peace process. And they'll come in here and say, like, 'when I think of everything that I've done, everything that I've done to other people… and I sit and I think at the end of the day and I think what the fuck was it all for.' And it, and they feel really… lost and detached. From reality in many respects about… like, it didn't achieve what we were going out to try and achieve. And they need counselling to deal with that. (Participant Y)

For example, a lot of people who spent years in prison and came out… thought that the IRA had betrayed them. Because… they had uh… given a ceasefire and were now engaging with the enemy. … And then you had the other feeling as well, that when you got out. That all the things that you justified, that you thought justified, your view on your role in the armed struggle was no longer… at the same currency. (Participant X)

Other types of betrayal were also suggested to cause potential moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. Given that these organisations operated in a context where trust and loyalty was vital, individuals may have experienced moral injury when they felt betrayed by informants or agents. Again, this type of betrayal was also found in participants in Study 1.

And the whole, the whole problem of… deceit and disloyalty. In a setting where… uh, there's going to be huge concern about… uhm, people betraying secrets. Uhm. Being agents. Uhm. Uh. And that sort, that sort of thing. So the problem of trust is, is… or the discovery of a basis for mistrust. Is, is, is… going to cause it. (Participant U)

Participant T provided a specific example of an individual who felt betrayed, and potentially morally injured, through having been informed upon. As a result, the individual grew disillusioned and informed himself.

I am aware of… closely aware of an ex-prisoner who… uhm. When he was being interrogated. And ill-treated. His interrogators were able to, uhm… relate to him

things that he had been involved in. And he was perplexed as to how they would have known. And… uh. As he went on. He felt that his comrades had betrayed him. (Participant T)

Whilst he also subsequently apologised for the actions he perpetrated in a written statement, Participant T caveated that there is a chance that this confession was forced or would aid his legal case. Despite these difficulties in clear identification, the evidence from this example as well as the others listed above strongly indicate betrayal-based moral injury was present in this population.

Subtheme 3: witnessing-based moral injury

The third generally accepted categories of PMIEs in existing research is witnessing or omission-based moral injury. Of these three categories, this third type was the least referenced. In fact, Participant W believed it was the least applicable and common in Republican ex-prisoners.

I would say that the… the least… is that observing others doing deeds. (Participant W)

Nonetheless, four interviewees suggested Republican ex-prisoners were or could have been morally injured because of witnessing an event that conflicted with their moral beliefs, yet which they did not intervene in. For some, they may have believed such events were justifiable at the time, but then grew morally conflicted upon reflection at a later stage.

And there are obviously things that people… did or didn't do. That they feel bad about. And have witnessed. (Participant V)

I think I've picked up just from some of the different conversations that it does have an impact actually. Whilst they may not have been… directly involved. As a witness. Or maybe also in some ways giving information. That would allow… this particular event to take place. (Participant Z)

The other question is that, yes, you witness things that… things happened and perhaps you weren't responsible. For the action. But the fact was that you knew about it. Or else, for example, if you didn't know about it… and it happened. You actually find a way to justify it. Even though, later on, you didn't think it was justifiable. (Participant X)

Participant T suggested an example of potential disillusionment and witnessing-based moral injury. This was in an INLA member who witnessed the consequences of an explosion caused by the Provisional IRA which killed civilians. However, given the rivalry and feuding between the two organisations, he did caveat that it was very possible that this is where the anger originated from instead. This again illustrates the complexity of identifying clear examples of moral injury in this population given the numerous confounding factors.

And I remember speaking to a man who was working nearby when an explosion went off. And the explosion killed a number of uninvolved civilians. He was involved in helping uh, remove rubble to recover bodies. And he saw the devastation that a bomb could, could inflict. At that time. And he shouted, 'Provo bastards!' Now, in saying that, an INLA person might shout 'Provo bastards' anyway, because they don't see eye to eye. But on that occasion he shouted 'Provo bastards' after witnessing carnage. After… an IRA explosion which killed and injured a number of… non-military people who weren't involved. (Participant T)

Whilst witnessing-based moral injury may be the least referenced in this study, and therefore may be less common, it does appear to still be a risk for some individuals.

Subtheme 4: other moral conflicts

Two unexpected morally injurious events in Republican ex-prisoners were discussed, which do not fit in the three categories of PMIEs identified in the moral injury literature mentioned above. Participant X explained how Republican ex-prisoners' faced morally conflicting responsibilities post-release between their responsibilities of involvement with responsibilities towards their family:

The other thing about it is sometimes the moral injury could have been more latent. And in fact it only came whenever social and economic conditions and even the extended family responses to that. That the moral injury became apparent because you had a sense of… failure on the basis that you… uh… had… done your time in prison. You'd perhaps… identified with the cause, that you wanted to rejoin when you came out of prison. Or what happened with the like of, uhm, family pressures. You decided you were not going to join up with the struggle that you were part and parcel of. Therefore you were caught in the conflict between… what had happened, and who you were involved with. With, what was a response and impact upon the like of your families. (Participant X)

Strong guilt towards their families for how they were impacted by involvement was also found in multiple participants in Study 1 and raised by Participant U:

And I suppose what we saw with the, when we were talking to ex-prisoners about family relationships, the… the sense of… guilt and… uhm, real real regret and unhappiness about what families had experienced. (Participant U)

This conflict and moral injury was argued by Participant X to be worsened by the negative social and economic conditions that Republican ex-prisoners faced as a result of the conflict and imprisonment, and which negatively impacted their personal lives further. This was especially difficult to accept given that many Republican ex-prisoners would have romanticised their release.

And you find that things have changed. And while you in some respects think that you were coming out to be… as sort of a, a welcomed hero, you find out… that… the… normal stresses and strains of family life, economics, social, personal, and the rest, have maybe been foisted. And the question is, who do you blame? You know? And therefore, in many respects, people blamed themselves. (Participant X)

This led to disillusionment with their previous beliefs on involvement. Such disillusionment could then also escalate into the questioning of the morality of their previous actions (i.e., moral disillusionment), hence risking additional perpetration-based moral injury.

> And therefore what you had, you had almost like a, a double whammy of disengagement on both fronts. And therefore, that can reflect back, on the basis, people question the whole morality of their actions. (Participant X)

Relatedly, Participant V discussed in great depth that the British state's narrative and treatment of Republican ex-prisoners is morally injurious. For example, he expressed how Republican ex-prisoners struggled with "discriminatory" legislation post-conflict. A moral conflict may have therefore arisen between this legislation and the state's severely negative perception of their actions, with their own moral perspective on their involvement in the conflict. This risks a negative self-view and moral confusion.

> So just the Terrorism Act alone places a value judgment on people. To tell them, you're a perpetrator. You're not an actor. You're a perpetrator. And you've done something wrong. And you're not as morally justified… as anybody else. So that's a moral injury. Has to be! (Participant V)

> Or because of the media, the discourses in the media. That's also saying, 'but no. That can't be right'. So they become very conflicted. (Participant V)

One example of where this may have been particularly difficult is when prison officers received state pensions, whilst Republican ex-prisoners were barred from this yet may have been abused by some of those prison officers during the conflict:

> Now some of those prison officers that would've been eligible for that at the time… were prison officers who were in the H-Blocks … inflicted brutality and torture and… some really bad stuff. On prisoners. And yet they were paid off with a 120,000 pound and a 18,500 pound annual pension. Because of the Terrorism Act. Because of how we're… defined as criminals. The people who they

brutalised… find it very difficult to get jobs and have all sorts of restrictions in terms of their personal freedoms. Uhm. When they get out of prison as well as when they're in prison. So that is a moral injury. Because even though the people… uh… if you take out of the context everything that they were involved in, that's still a moral injury for a human being. For somebody to be rewarded after brutalising them in that fashion. (Participant V)

These examples indicate that the concept of moral injury should be viewed more broadly, as the current three categories may be too simplistic for abnormal moral contexts where moral decision-making is complex. This is further supported by the fact that some Republicans felt morally challenged and reluctant to use violence, but not morally injured as they were protected by being able to resolve cognitive dissonance through rationalisation (see Theme 2, subtheme 1). The fact that some individuals were morally challenged without moral injury was also found in Study 1.

Generally speaking, people that I know who have been to prison have been involved in the conflict and gone to jail for what they did. Do feel saddened and, and uh, sorry for families of people who have been accidentally injured. People who have been accidentally killed. And then sometimes, you know, enemy personnel. Who have been killed … people have realised from the beginning… that lives were gonna be wrecked. Through their actions. Sometimes their own lives. But. It felt it was necessary to take that risk. (Participant T)

Participant Y specified that Republican ex-prisoners often do not feel regret, but over time may feel moral conflict upon confrontation with the loss and effects of the conflict, which some need counselling for. Therefore, it may be that any moral disengagement in these individuals (which he implied occurred in Theme 1 Subtheme 3) was reversed.

And I think, as the peace process has moved on … they are thinking… uhm, in retrospect or in hindsight, 'the things that I'd done… I don't regret them or I'm not sorry for doing them in terms of being a volunteer'. In whatever movement. Because it's not just the IRA. But… 'but I do feel that there's a tragedy, there's a

loss there. And… I'm increasingly finding it difficult to cope with that'. And they need counselling in relation to those issues too. (Participant Y)

They went out and killed somebody for something, but as they get older they think there's something wrong… with the something. You know? They're starting to sort of question, 'why did we do it?' Uhm. And then that… I suppose, it, it takes away from the belief that the killing itself, uhm, or the incident whatever it is, served a wider political purpose. And now they feel that it didn't. But it doesn't, I don't think it troubles them in the sense that, 'God I wish I hadn't had done that'. It's a very strange concept. It's a, you know, even when I'm answering that to you I'm thinking… uhm. It's strange that you would feel… like there was no… purpose to that. But… you, you contextualise it in the sense that, but it happened then and then there was a purpose to it. (Participant Y)

The moral challenge arising from such realisations and guilt may thus be worsened by strong feelings of disillusionment and betrayal associated with the peace process as their political goals were not achieved, hence increasing the risk that these feelings escalate into moral injury when unresolved.

7.5 Theme 4: consequences of moral injury

All participants were asked about how the morally injurious events discussed in the previous theme impacted Republican ex-prisoners. They discussed emotional and psychological effects of moral injury, its impact on their social relationships and religious beliefs, and moral disillusionment with their organisations and/or the use of violence. These are discussed as subthemes below. Five interviewees stated that the impact of moral injury will be highly individualised given individual differences such as in their moral beliefs, which influence the interpretation and expression of impact of different PMIEs.

It depends on the individual. You know? (Pause). People have been in positions of making decisions… and once they made the decision, you either have to stick with that decision for the rest of your life… or do you suffer guilt and trauma?

Because… that may have led to an individual's death or something. So… that, that's, that depends on the individual. I don't think you can… make a general rule… (Participant W)

Additionally, three participants discussed the effects of trauma more generally rather than focusing on the outcome of moral injury specifically. As touched on previously, for Participant V this was because he does not like labels and finds the current concept of moral injury too confining. This view makes it difficult for him to distinguish when outcomes were caused by general trauma or by moral injury.

In terms of… a sense of guilt for example. Or a sense of guilt and shame. That goes along with trauma. So how do you, how do you distinguish between the two? You know, is it moral injury, or is it a result of trauma? It's not easy as such. (Participant V)

Participant U also found it difficult to distinguish the consequences of moral injury from the effects of other experiences of trauma, such as imprisonment.

It's difficult to disentangle I think… the experiences of personal conflict and disquiet… uhm… about… you know. The moral, moral distress about what they'd seen and done. Or about the decisions of their organisation. … But it's very difficult to disentangle that from the effects of… uhm. Being… in the criminal justice system. Being in prison. Being separated from families. (Participant U)

It is also important to note that other experiences of trauma likely impact and interact with the experience of moral injury:

Because if you come from a household where your father had alcohol problems. And didn't work. And the impact of that on the family. Where it's maybe something happened. Like your father was interned. … It's all of that. And how… uniquely that sort of, the creation, is worked out. In your head. To try and make meaning of it all. (Participant V)

Participant Z took a different perspective and believes the concept of moral injury encompasses all other effects of trauma he recognises in the community.

> If you hadn't introduced me to the concept of moral injury, I would've been talking about the likes of… of feelings of guilt… feelings, suicidal feelings, suicidal ideation, would've been aware of those who had taken their own lives over the years. And I certainly would've been talking to you about the likes of addiction. … I would've been talking about a variety of different things. I wouldn't have had the overall concept of moral injury, which in some ways is quite all-encompassing. (Participant Z)

Despite these differences in opinion regarding moral injury's relationship with other trauma, all participants agreed that moral injury had significant impact on some individuals.

Subtheme 1: psychological and emotional impact

Psychological effects and strong emotions over time were frequently mentioned when discussing moral injury's impact on Republican ex-prisoners. Feelings of shame, guilt, powerlessness, and anger were suggested. These emotions depended on the eliciting event. For example, guilt was associated with perpetration-based moral injury.

> There is a feeling of guilt. (Participant W)

> You know, in terms of 'why did I do that?' Or… 'why didn't I do such and such?' and so on. And it all feeds off… to some degree, a sense of shame and guilt. So the common response is… common characteristics of that uh… similar to addiction, is anger. Anger… guilt, anger and shame. (Participant V)

> I suppose also that sense of the powerlessness, ehm, maybe also. And I can see also afterwards a sense of shame, of guilt, or whatever that comes to be

associated with that. And I would suspect maybe as the time goes on… that… that becomes more and more reality for people. (Participant Z)

Moral injury was also argued to cause sleep problems and flashbacks.

Because I'm like to believe they have flashbacks. And I haven't talked about that for the likes of those with moral injury. Again, inevitably there's bound to be those sorts of things. As inevitably there's bound to be sleepless nights, wondering 'what in God's name did I do'? They mightn't necessarily say God. (Participant Z)

Some individuals were also suggested to feel lost or detached as a result of moral injury.

And it, and they feel really… lost and detached. From reality in many respects about… like, it didn't achieve what we were going out to try and achieve. (Participant Y)

Some of these emotions and feelings, however, were internalised or denied. This could result in moral injury being evident through alcohol or substance abuse instead, as this would allow individuals to block these emotions further.

Well I think myself that guilt and emotions, a lot of people internalise them. And therefore, in many respects, it's… for a number of people to realise… uh, after many years, that they still hadn't dealt with the consequences of their actions. (Participant X)

Some of them, I suppose, uhm, become inward looking, inward focused … Denial. (Participant Y)

I get the sense that someone would try to block it out of their minds and then go back again to some form of addiction or some form of very, very heavy involvement. As a way to deal with that. (Participant Z)

Uh… there'd be different manifestations of, of… how they felt. Whether it's through alcoholism, uh… domestic violence. Uh… drugs. Drug taking, etcetera. (Participant W)

Alternatively, it could manifest as physical ill-health instead.

Now I'm sure that, that a mental breakdown or a psychological injury can also manifest uhm, manifest itself in physical illness. … I think that… the uh… a combination of… uh… maybe, maybe moral injury as well as the effects of harsh imprisonment. Could bring on, or open the door for the hereditary family illness. (Participant T)

Moral injury was also suggested to impact Republican ex-prisoners' perceptions of their identity. For example, it could lead to a "contaminated" sense of identity leading to further shame, vulnerability, and self-loathing. Moral injury and other trauma could also evoke a darkened worldview.

It most certainly would have changed their identity. They will not be the same people that they were as they were, once they had emerged from that experience. (Participant Z)

Well the contaminated sense of identity is that sort of sense of… vulnerability and self-loathing. So self-loathing would involve shame. (Participant V)

So society is telling you you're different. In a very negative way. And so you're dealing with your own sort of sense of trying to make meaning of all the things that have happened in your life anyway. And then you have how society judges you. … All of those kinds of messages that you get… why wouldn't you have a darkened worldview? (Participant V)

All these emotional and psychological effects of moral injury are in line with the existing research on the consequences of moral injury and general trauma (as summarised in Chapter 2).

Subtheme 2: impact on social relationships

Moral injury not only impacted Republican ex-prisoners' personal emotions and psychology, but their social relationships as well. Five interviewees commented on this impact, and all agreed that family break-up and separation from partners were common.

> And the family breakdown, and again I want to come back to the family situation as well. I mean I think that's… I think you know, if you take a look at the statistics. The likes of addiction, family breakdown, etcetera. It would be much higher than in… that sort of section of our population than the likes of the general population. (Participant Z)

> I guess, many people who came through that, it's sort of, it's very evident, the sort of consequences of it. Such as alcoholism, such as family break-up. Perhaps moving away. (Participant X)

For example, Participant T stated that because of potential perpetration-based moral injury (see Theme 3, subtheme 1), one individual's relationship broke up. He also added that as his spouse felt morally opposed to Republican violence, she may have suffered from moral injury herself one she learned about his previous involvement.

> You know the relationship with the spouse. Or the partner. Uh. Broke up. Definitely the one who made the written confession. Uhm. But. Hmm. There was an element of… his spouse, his wife. Uh. Left him. Because he had been involved in… uh, Republican activities in the first place. She would have been not sympathetic at all with those activities. ... Even if she had discovered his activities and he didn't go to jail. She would have uh, she would have left him. Now she is part of the Republican, uh, ex-prisoners' community. Because her husband went to jail and her children, their children, are of a Republican ex-prisoner. You could

say that she was morally opposed. … you could look at that as a case of moral injury because of what she witnessed. (Participant T)

All five interviewees also suggested that some Republican ex-prisoners lost trust following morally injurious experiences, especially when these were betrayed-based.

I would say that there gradually would've been a distrust. That uh… within the organisations. Because of the… the use of informers. Gradually people would've… begun to question their comrades. To look at things differently. (Participant W)

You know, that… this man felt that he could not trust anybody around him. Uh. In Republican circles. And he did become… very suspicious. And, it, it, it kind of maintained. (Participant T)

As touched on in the previous subtheme, some individuals turned inwards, felt detached, or denied the negative emotions arising from moral injury. As a result, some individuals withdrew or isolated themselves and did not speak about these problems with anyone. This created further difficulties in maintaining relationships.

So relationships are difficult. Because, like addiction, trauma is really about disconnection. … disconnection means that you find it very difficult to make emotional connections with other human beings. And now especially if you've… you've a period of time where you've been, sort of, outside normal life. But the trauma also makes you want to, and shame. Makes you want to hide. Makes you want to stay safe. You have a sense of mistrust. And if you have a very negative self… sense of yourself. You know, you're always gonna feel as if you don't want to be too close to somebody. (Participant V)

They don't communicate with anybody, uhm. And they don't talk about it with their families either. Do you know what I mean? They don't talk to their, their partners or whatever about… the difficulties that they've had. (Participant Y)

This disconnection could also lead to loneliness:

> And loneliness. Cause there's that part of you that you sling over your shoulders
> so that you don't see it. So, it's a lonely place to be. (Participant V)

However, it is important to note that others did seek help, such as from other Republican ex-prisoners. This again indicates the individual differences in how moral injury is expressed and coped with.

> Others… do try and seek help and do recognise that they need that help. So it's
> that whole, I suppose… mixture of how people deal with trauma. … You deal with
> that by seeking help, counselling, support, talking about it… saying nothing,
> bottling it all up, thinking that you're okay, drug addiction, alcohol, gambling,
> whatever. (Participant Y)

> Sometimes groups of people who perhaps… through alcoholism, but even to an
> extent come from a similar type of background, would seek to engage with each
> other. Perhaps on the basis of reinforcement. Perhaps on the basis… that they
> realise that those people are the only people that could understand what they are
> going through. (Participant X)

These various impacts on social relationships and trust are also in line with existing research on moral injury (see Chapter 2).

Subtheme 3: impact on religion

Moral injury was also found to have a spiritual or religious impact. Whilst conflicting moral beliefs related to involvement and Catholicism may contribute to, or even cause, moral injury (see Theme 2, subtheme 1), moral injury was also suggested by three interviewees to impact Republican ex-prisoners' relationships with religion. Participant T suggested some morally injured Republican ex-prisoners may turn to religion and Catholic priests to cope with feelings of guilt and/or to resolve moral conflict.

There's a lot of people... who went to prison. And, uh. Turned to God. You know, joined a... uhm. A different church. Now it's, people call it born again Christians. Uh. I am aware of a... of people that did that and... I think that many of those cases are brought about by people either regretting their involvement... (Participant T)

I think that moral injury, as having been involved in violent military acts... then imprisonment. A time for reflection. Has changed people's religious beliefs. Uh. I may have read, you know in many years gone by, some of the stories of people who found God when they were in prison and repented for the things that they had been involved in. Uhm. So that. I think. Shows me the... you know, the moral injury changing a perspective on spiritualism and religion. (Participant T)

An example of a morally injured individual can be found in Study 1 (see Theme 2 subtheme 3). However, Participant W believes this is more likely to occur in Loyalist ex-prisoners and that moral injury impacted relationships with religion in few Republicans:

A few actually became religious. Certainly that was a... a thing on the Loyalist side. Many Loyalist prisoners... you know, saw the Lord and away they went. Few Republicans became, although a couple did, but not too many, actually rejected violence by taking up religious views. (Participant W)

Participant Z also believed that this was more common in Loyalist ex-prisoners, and that involvement with Republican violence had largely negative effects on their relationship to religion given that the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland commonly condemned such violence. However, he did believe it may have been possible that moral injury also positively influenced this relationship but knew little about it.

They would've stopped going to mass. They would've become... in many ways anti-Church. So it had a huge impact, certainly in terms of a relationship with the Church. Eh, what, whether that actually transferred into relationship with God and their spiritual belief, I don't know. But I suspect it probably did in some ways. (Participant Z)

Say particularly on the Loyalist side. I think a number of people actually there would be talking about coming to God or experiencing God. I… that would be common. In terms of Republicans… uhm… I haven't come across the same sort of conversion experience. I've certainly come across… some. Uh… now. And I don't know the story well enough. There was someone I talked to who had been involved. I'm trying to think had he been in prison or not. I can't remember. The finer details of that. Ehm… but certainly he's had a conversion experience. And now his faith is very important to him. I just don't know the story well enough to… to talk about the part of moral injury within it. (Participant Z)

Some of these above views are in line with existing moral injury research (see Chapter 2 and 4), but little is yet known on the relationship between moral injury and religion.

Subtheme 4: disillusionment

Whilst emotional, social, and spiritual effects of moral injury are frequently discussed in moral injury research, disillusionment is not as commonly examined as a morally injurious outcome. Some of this disillusionment in Republican ex-prisoners come about post-conflict and was commonly associated with betrayed-based moral injury caused by the peace process. This was also found in Study 1.

In terms of their disillusionment, yeah, absolutely, an awful lot are disillusioned. (Participant W)

Oh God yeah. I mean I think that that's the other side of it too. That you feel… that… you know, it goes hand in glove with 'what was all this for?' Or 'why did I do that? And what was the purpose for it?' (Participant Y)

People starting getting disillusionment around, and other people could… justify and say, 'okay, we'll move on'. And then to find out… that… after seven or eight or nine years in jail, you get out of prison. The whole thing has changed. It's all

moving towards politics. Your role in the armed struggle had been put onto the backburner. (Participant X)

Disillusionment also came about because of other types of betrayal-based moral injury, such as by the leadership or informers (see Theme 3, subtheme 2). As in Participant T's example, for some individuals this also led to disengagement.

They said they'd look up to an individual or individuals. 'They're leaders, they're okay, they'll do it'. And it's those individuals… went a different road or… and then they would get even more disillusioned. (Participant W)

No there are people uhm. Who… take part in armed conflict and then change their ways and become agents. For the enemy. Uh… like the fella who said that he felt betrayed. And then decided to do some betraying himself. Thinking that he would more or less retaliate. Because he didn't know who was… giving information about him. (Participant T)

This is in line with existing research on non-state political violence (see Chapters 3 and 4). Some individuals may also have grown morally disillusioned, and subsequently disengaged from their organisation, following perpetration-based moral injury. Again, this was found in Study 2 (see Theme 2, subtheme 3).

Certainly for some of them in the sense of, if there had been a sense of, 'oh my God, what did I do? Why did I do that?' And all, how conflicted, and certainly I can think of some who have… moved away from that. I would imagine probably their contact or their ongoing contact with those who were part of it and who were part of an armed group. I think that would have ceased. And they would begin new lives. (Participant Z)

At the end of it, that might be different. They might have a different view. Instead they might say, 'that was wrong'. (Participant W)

Participant Y stated that it was only a small number of individuals who grew morally disillusioned with the use of violence during the conflict. He is unsure whether this was due to them understanding that the suffering was not worth it before others did post-conflict, or whether it indicated they were less committed to the Republican moral justification in the first place:

> I think it probably happened to a lesser degree when the conflict was at its height. I think there was probably some people… who felt disillusioned by their involvement in armed conflict. Whenever the conflict was at its height. Maybe because they were never committed fully to it. Uhm. Or maybe they just… got a realisation quicker… (Participant Y)

Participant X stated, however, that disillusionment with the use of violence did not necessarily lead to personal forgiveness and hence such individuals likely remained morally injured.

> And the question about it is, whether that disillusionment, uh, uh… developed a sense of personal forgiveness? No. (Participant X)

Not all individuals necessarily became morally disillusioned, as Participant Z stated only a minority will have changed their views on the use of violence:

> I'm aware of some. (Pause). There are, but I have a sense that they're probably in the minority. Ehm… now whether for example there are others as well… who view it differently I don't know. I've certainly come across some who now view it in a different way. … And if for example, that some were prepared to say… 'yeah, I'm disillusioned with that'. Once they start pulling that thread, the whole garment wears out. (Participant Z)

This is in line with Study 1, where most participants maintained the view that Republican violence was morally justified. In fact, Participant U mentioned that political ex-prisoners were not required to renounce these moral beliefs in their sentencing reviews or express remorse, unlike "normal offenders":

For paramilitary offenses. That's wholly unrealistic, to expect that. But there is a problem. Because they're in a criminal justice system they are classified as offenders by the, and they are sentenced by the courts… all those kinds of expectations are still sort of there in the culture. … we just did not expect… people to… express remorse or… uhm, to disown the commitments they'd had in the past. That was not, that was not relevant. To… uhm, whether they should be released. What was sought was evidence of a commitment… not to go back to it in the future. It was a commitment to be safe in the future and not to return to… terrorism. Uhm. And of course, so you could have that. Without any expectations that you'd… uhm… renounce the belief that what you did was right. (Participant U)

This indicates the strength and importance of such moral beliefs to political ex-prisoners in this conflict. It also suggests that rather than becoming disillusioned with them, many ex-prisoners maintained these beliefs throughout and after the conflict. There is therefore a clear spectrum of moral beliefs in this community, where some remain morally committed to the Republican methods during or after the conflict whilst others have altered their views.

7.6 Theme 5: other trauma in Republican ex-prisoners

In line with Study 1, trauma other than moral injury was stated to be present in significant numbers of Republican ex-prisoners. This theme therefore described the potential sources of such trauma and how Republican ex-prisoners were impacted by them. Commonalities between the studies in this trauma's sources and effects will be discussed in Chapter 8.

… and the vast majority of ex-prisoners, and certainly the ones on the Blanket Protest, have all suffered trauma. (Participant V)

I mean, there are obviously, there were a lot of ex-prisoners who suffered trauma. Whether from the processes that they went through in prison. Or else through their involvement in the conflict. (Participant W)

Similarly to moral injury, it was emphasised that these experiences and consequences were individualised.

> The trauma… is, is strictly individualised. I think it is wrong to say it affects groups of people. It certainly does. But in the specifics, it has to be the individual. And the individual that works on it. You can't blanket and say all Republican prisoners were traumatised. Or not traumatised. (Participant W)

A variety of different experiences were named as being particularly traumatic for Republican ex-prisoners. Imprisonment experiences were most cited. This included prison conditions, participation in prison protests, and abuse.

> Well obviously, those on the Blanket. Uhm. Those that were tortured. There's huge, huge traumas. Uhm. For example… one ex-prisoner who was tortured for seven days can't stand loud music. He… goes out of the room. And comes. And that's just a manifestation of his problems. He may have others that he doesn't… that only his wife might know about. Uhm. There are many, many people like that. People that were on the Blanket for… a number of years. You know? Naked, smeared their prison cell. Those that were on Hunger Strike would have very many… uh, after-effects. Rewinding the tape in their head. Uhm. That, that's… that's one that comes up for a bit, I would say. (Participant W)

> Some people… will avail of counselling because they have been physically ill-treated. And even sexually violated. In prison. By prison guards. And that has a life-changing effect. (Participant T)

In cases where victims of abuse or state violence are still fighting for recognition, such as that the "Hooded Men", it was suggested that their healing processes are impacted:

> The Hooded Men in particular. You know, I mean, Jesus. They're, they've all sorts of traumas. All sorts. I haven't got it in me to explain them. You know, they…

they're still fighting after 50 years for recognising, for recognition that they were actually tortured. The British government doesn't accept it. The European Courts are… so it goes on and on for them. They, they can feel… through the process of fighting for justice that that in itself is part of a healing process. And the same goes for uhm… survivors and the victims of the Troubles. For example, Bloody Sunday or the Ballymurphy campaign. The pursuit of justice allows the survivors to… get some satisfaction. Because they've been traumatised all those years, not knowing what actually happened. Not knowing why… their, their partner, uncle or whatever was killed. And then finding out some… there's so much trauma out there. (Participant W)

As mentioned previously in Theme 3 (subtheme 4), post-release challenges were potentially morally injurious. When asked about other experiences of trauma, reintegration difficulties post-release was again noted as being particularly psychologically challenging. For example, this includes the impact it had on their employment, social exclusion, and being barred from pensions despite struggling with physical injuries.

Ex-prisoners, who have been in prison. Some of them for maybe for 20 years, more. Some of them in really horrendous situations. How do they make sense of that? In today's world? Uhm. When they have so many restrictions, so many… prejudices. So many limitations. And then on top of that, you know, 20 years later? What do you do with your life, if you've never had a job? (Participant V)

There were quite substantial consequences of … the long-term imprisonment that they experienced. Uhm. In terms of… loss of… career, employment, family life… damaged relationships that couldn't be repaired. Uhm. And then coming out… uhm. Without, without, or with limited skills. With, with all sorts of, difficulties of… uhm… uh, arising from having criminal records when it comes to getting work. Uhm. Uh… lack of pension entitlements. Uhm. A sense that, you know, when they go home to their communities, the communities have moved on and that they're, you know, that there may be a bit of a celebration and a party when they… come

out. But then, there's a kind of awkwardness. Because, uhm… I think some felt much more isolated in their communities than they expected. (Participant U)

Someone who was interned without trial, on suspicion of being involved. And even who has been… who has been or will be proven that they were held unlawfully. Because they spent that time in prison, they would still not be able to avail of that trauma or physical injury, uh, the victim's pension. … The other marginalisation that I explained at the very start, where ex-prisoners are discriminated against in employment. In travel. In insurance. In child adoption. (Participant T)

Additionally, the difficulty of navigating these stressors and responsibilities was likely worsened in ex-prisoners when they felt the "rewards" of their involvement were not there and instead they lost their status in the community:

And most of those communities… were… socially and economically… distressed. So when you come out, you found out that the rewards were… were not there. … And all of a sudden all these things start to hit you, responsibilities start to hit you. (Participant X)

In the nature of an army you're… used to… carrying out orders. Being recognised as somebody who's important in the community. And then all of a sudden you're an ex-prisoner, you're nobody. And you're old. And they've gotta come to terms with that. And that can be difficult, you know? (Participant W)

Lastly, grief and witnessing violence against comrades or friends was also mentioned as a common traumatic experience in Republican ex-prisoners.

And people who are close to ye, civilians around ye and friends get killed. … All of those things kind of have that mark on ye. The, they kinda leave that… that kinda sense of tragedy and loss is left on ye. (Participant Y)

He… it saddened him to the day he died. That he could see his two, uh, friends, falling and dying. In front of him. And that he wasn't able to pay his last respects at their funeral. Because he was lying in hospital seriously injured. Uh. And you know. I couldn't say what type of psychological injuries that actually was. But in the words of his family, 'my father had his demons until the day he died'. And that was haunted by the scene of his, of his two friends. Lying there. Their lifeblood flowing away. In front of him. (Participant T)

These various traumatic experiences were suggested to have a variety of social and psychological consequences. For example, it impacted their relationships and children. This could also subsequently result in substantial guilt in Republican ex-prisoners towards their families.

And it would make their relationships with their partners difficult. Uhm. Because… their partners could not, they hadn't been there. They couldn't understand. What living on the Blanket was, you know? (Participant W)

And I suppose what we saw with the, when we were talking to ex-prisoners about family relationships, the… the sense of… guilt and… uhm, real real regret and unhappiness about what families had experienced. The dislocation of relationships with children. Uhm. All those kinds of things that were consequent on being in prison. Uhm. That, that, those were causes of very considerable and longstanding distress in some cases. Uhm. You know, there were harms and losses that you couldn't put back. (Participant U)

Additionally, trauma in Republican ex-prisoners was frequently suggested to risk intergenerational trauma:

There's no doubt that their children, some of their children are adversely affected. And they have… I suppose, that inherited trauma. (Participant Y)

Because the families are living with people who have been… traumatised. Are also impacted through intergenerational trauma. So living with somebody who has an anger problem, or an alcohol problem, or a… a substance abuse problem. It impacts on the family. (Participant V)

Many psychological problems related to trauma were cited as being prevalent in Republican ex-prisoners. This includes alcohol or substance abuse, PTSD, depression, anxiety, suicide, a subsequent negative view of themselves and others, and a loss of meaning.

So I think, and some turned to alcohol. Uhm. So… so… there was a lot of depression, of unhappiness, of… uhm, ill-health. Of alcohol misuse. (Participant U)

Addiction is a very common outcome. Of trauma. Uhm. Depression, anxiety, addiction. Phobias. Uh… OCD. They're all very common outcomes of trauma. (Participant V)

It's a sense of, a darkened sense of themselves and their worldview. So they have very negative feelings about themselves, and they have very negative feelings and are mistrustful of everybody in the world, because how they look, they're hypervigilant. And they get a very darkened worldview. Cynical. Uhm. About everything else in life. And lose a sense of meaning as well. (Participant V)

There were three ex-Republican prisoners and at one stage, within the space of a month, committed suicide. One of whom actually burnt himself… to death. (Participant W)

However, four participants also mentioned that there was resilience in this population. Some ex-prisoners could effectively psychologically detach from their trauma and/or reflect on positive memories from the conflict.

I think the vast majority just… they compartmentalise things and just say… 'that was that. This, this is something else. This is a different life now. I'm fine with it, just get on with my life.' (Participant Y)

I hear stories from them. About their past involvement. But they, you know, they, they give account of it with a fondness and a staunchness and a defiance. (Participant T)

And since people came out of prison, some people have been okay in relation to having a productive and creative life. But that's in spite of what has happened to them, not instead of. (Participant V)

It is therefore important to emphasise that although significant trauma is present in this population, many Republican ex-prisoners were also able to cope well with the psychological pressures they faced during and after the conflict.

7.7 Theme 6: support for Republican ex-prisoners

The fact that moral injury as well as other trauma is experienced by this population, both with potential significant impact, indicates a strong need for support for these issues in this population. Therefore, all participants were asked how Republican ex-prisoners would be best supported and what potential barriers to help-seeking and the provision of support exist. These suggested barriers and types of support were based on the interviewees' experiences of working in their varied supportive capacities with this population, and they presented what they believed to be most important because of that work.

Subtheme 1: barriers to support and help-seeking

The interviewees shared some of the barriers they came across in their work with this community which prevented Republican ex-prisoners from getting or seeking support for psychological difficulties. The most cited barrier to help-seeking in Republican ex-prisoners was denial. This is worsened by guilt and a "macho-culture", as well as a lack of psychoeducation and awareness.

I know that people are out there suffering, but they just won't admit it. (Participant T)

But if they don't look for it… uhm. It's very difficult to get them to that stage. That's my own personal view based on experience. You can bring a horse to the water but you can't make it drink. You can provide a facility… and over the years we've… gone, provided facility for this that and the other. And it's not always taken up. Because… part, part, because of a macho culture. 'No I'll be okay', tough man, you know? Partially because of guilt, uhm… partially because of their own emotional inadequacies in some cases. (Participant W)

And that they don't recognise it for what it is. They recognise it as a character flaw or something. Along those lines. Something to do with themselves. Uhm. So what I would like to see is much more education around it. (Participant V)

As in Study 1, the Terrorism Act was also cited as a barrier, especially as the confidentiality requirement for health professionals prevents individuals from being able to discuss events that may involve illegality yet were traumatic. Help-seeking is argued to be further negatively impacted by the fact that this legislation conveys a value judgment.

Because if somebody walks in here, and I say to them, because of the Terrorism Act, anything you tell me, the same as you're saying, in terms of confidentiality, you can't talk about that. And I can't hear it. Because I have to report it. Then I'm telling that person right away that they've done something wrong. It's a value judgment before they even say anything. (Participant V)

And I have spoken to, I don't wanna go into the details, or give names or anything else. Of people in the health services… psychiatry… professional bodies… who all agree. That it's… it's a barrier. And who also agree… that they wouldn't apply it… if they were faced with it in the situation we're in. Uhm. But none of them will

speak up properly about it. Cause it would cost them their job. Uhm. So that needs to change. (Participant V)

Further, Participant U has experienced a lack of interest from the health and mental health services in learning about how this population requires further support:

I think we had real difficulty in getting a kind of… sense of… interest and commitment from… mental health services, health agencies… we wanted to get… uhm, you know, people from health policy. And who were responsible for commissioning and providing health services, just to come along and take an interest in what we were wanting to talk about. And they didn't. Weren't interested. (Participant U)

Given the complexity of the situation and the passage of time, Participant X believes it is too late for general support. Therefore, he suggested studies should be conducted on Republican ex-prisoners' behaviour and quality of life to learn what is most important to focus on and target.

I think it's a difficult situation now. Because most of the Republican ex-prisoners have been out of prison for a while. I think, I think the… whatever damage has been done to them has been done. But I think myself, what, effectively, it could and should be done, is that… I think there should be a… perhaps a wider study of the like of moral injury… but the question is, how did moral injury impact upon… the… behaviour and the quality of life that people actually have had since they got out? (Participant X)

The following subtheme addresses some of the important methods of support and aspects to target recommended by the interviewees, who have experience in supportive roles in this community. Some were more optimistic provided these recommendations were addressed.

Subtheme 2: recommendations for support

Various methods of support for moral injury and/or other psychological difficulties were recommended and influenced by what interviewees found to be important from their own experiences in working with this population. Psychological support such as in the form of counselling was recommended, especially by ex-prisoner organisations or others who they could trust and feel understood by.

> Ready access to… uhm… psychological and counselling services that they had confidence in and that understood their experience. (Participant U)

> Or go to counselling! You know, come to the likes of us and… uhm. We're lucky that we have qualified, trained counsellors. Who are also very… qualified at engaging with ex-Republicans. And talking to them about their past and stuff. Because obviously Republicans don't want to go to just anybody and talk about their past. It has to be… the people that they trust. (Participant Y)

Participant V specified that this counselling is beneficial when it focuses on reframing Republican ex-prisoners' narratives for more positive meaning-making and to increase focus on the present. He also emphasised the importance of helping them unpack and understand the impact of their trauma on their lives, and to provide them with psychological tools to cope with this. This also allows them to have their experiences validated.

> So it's about trying to reframe things for them. So they can make a much more positive meaning. In terms of their life's story, in terms of their life's narrative. (Participant V)

> And to help them to understand that the only thing that matters is what's happening today. … They need to understand that a lot of the things that they… are making their judgments of themselves and other things and other people is really down to trauma. And it's also a distorted worldview, as well. So you're trying to help them to live in today's world. (Participant V)

… helping people to learn tools. Like noticing. Not letting themselves judge themselves. (Participant V)

Talking about psychological struggles in general was also highlighted as important. This can be in the form of informal conversations with others in the community, such as by sharing experiences including positive memories from during the conflict.

Because talking about it can be therapy in itself. You know if you're talking to your partner or a friend or somebody you trust or whatever. (Participant Y)

Make those connections with those people and talk about, like, 'do you remember such and such, and how did that, and… how did that go?' … And that brings closure I think to a lot of the things that you do. But if you don't have that, if you don't engage in that, then where does it go? You know, where does it all go? (Participant Y)

The importance of discussing these experiences within the community was similarly highlighted in Study 1. Catholic priests were also found to be a source of support, and therefore a spiritual or religious element could also be beneficial to some Republican ex-prisoners.

I can remember… individuals talking about individual priests who visited. Uhm. And, and who could be a great source of support and comfort. (Participant U)

And spiritually. Cause to some extent, and that's probably… maybe the, the elephant in the room which has actually not been talked about at all. And I think it also impacts on, or it's also, you know the question of moral injury. Uhm. Really is very relevant there. … If that person actually got to the stage of realising 'oh my God, I'm, I really regret what I got involved in'. To be able to, if they had a faith, celebrate a sacrament of reconciliation. Which would actually then involve confessing what they have done. It could be enormously freeing for them. Uhm. But that's not really something that's out there at the moment. Because of the

damage of the relationships with the Church and with organised religion, and even in terms of relationship with God. (Participant Z)

Given the challenges of reintegration and marginalisation that were frequently mentioned in the interviews, the sources and issues of inequality should also be tackled. For example, "discriminatory" legislation was suggested to be removed and better state and social provision should be implemented to target poverty. This was also marked as important in Study 1.

We thought they needed much better, as it were… uhm… social and state provision. I mean you know the, the… poverty and old age that they looked, as it looked many of them were going to be facing. Was a real problem for the future. (Participant U)

And I think that… the marginalisation of Republican ex-prisoners. And Loyalist ex-prisoners! And combatants. Should be strongly opposed. … the appeal of all the legislation which prevents political ex-prisoners from availing of those resources, uh… would help. I think. And… to allow ex-prisoners to have full citizenship. And I think that's a, I'd make that point very strongly. (Participant T)

As also touched on in Study 1, other activities provided by ex-prisoner groups such as funding for training courses and hobbies, or organised activities such as breathing exercises and yoga, were also argued by Participant T to be both psychologically beneficial as well as to reduce social isolation.

These were people who suffered during the, the protest years. On the Blanket Protest and the No-Wash Protest. They openly expressed… that [breathing exercises] helped them a lot. … And you know, what's allowed for an ex-prisoner to combat social isolation is very… subdued. You know, for example we can get some very good waterproof coat and very strong boots, to go walking. Some materials to… you know, for hobbies. … And, facilities for taking courses. You know, like educational or training courses to help employability. (Participant T)

Funding in the Republican ex-prisoner community was also marked as crucial, both for community work as well as mental health support. For example, greater funding for members of the Republican ex-prisoner community to receive training in mental health would also allow for greater support to be provided by individuals who are trusted.

> There's never enough funding to… you know to fight the daily battles that [ex-prisoner groups] need to fight. Uhm. And… you know. We could be doing with a lot more resources and a lot more help. … The… Good Friday Agreement, written in stone I believe. Has said it would do everything that it, you know, in its power to help ex-prisoners. And the ex-prisoners' community. But that has all been clawed back. And we're left to fend for ourselves. (Participant T)

> The other thing for me is also, uhm… money is, it sounds, it doesn't sound like a good thing to be talking about. When you're talking about people and their mental health. But it's so important. Because… training. For people. In… ex-prisoners. People from the community and so on. It's so important. … There's lots of very capable people. They can't, they can't, uh, pay for the training that's necessary or the education that's necessary to do it. (Participant V)

However, such funding would need to come from trusted sources rather than from the state, highlighting the importance of EU funding being maintained in the context of Brexit.

> But… even then when the state provides facilities, it's the British state so there's a reluctance to engage. Even, uhm… in terms of funding for… uhm… activities which reintegrate… Republican prisoners into wider society. Many of them reject taking any funding that comes directly from the British government. … That's why the Europeans are well looked after, well looked at from the… Republican point of view. Because they did a lot of the peace work. In terms of funding. That wouldn't have been accepted from the British government, you know? (Participant W)

Therefore, there were both novel recommendations for support, as well as emphases on continued attention and funding for issues and community work which have been supporting this population ever since the Good Friday Agreement was signed.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided further insight into moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners through interviewing individuals working with them in various roles. Their views provided an overview on the general Republican ex-prisoner population, thereby building on Study 1's focus on ex-prisoners' personal, individual experiences.

Study 2 provided strong supportive evidence that moral injury is applicable to Republican ex-prisoners. Although challenges in its identification were cited, such as denial and the moral complexity of the context, all participants agreed that moral injury is experienced by this population because of their involvement in the conflict. Interviewees had varied opinions on when ex-prisoners were at risk for moral injury, both regarding the event-type and specific risk factors. This often depended on how participants perceived Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs and rationalisations. However, these differences did indicate that several potential sources risked moral injury in all groups involved in this abnormal moral context. Individuals were most commonly suggested to be at risk when they had greater direct involvement in violence and confrontation with its effects or when they felt betrayed by the peace process, resulting in their involvement not being perceived as "worth it", especially if struggling with reintegration difficulties. These moral challenges were particularly apparent post-conflict and post-release. In both these sources of moral injury, their original moral beliefs regarding Republican violence were challenged. However, many other Republican ex-prisoners were able to maintain these moral beliefs and remain resilient and protected from moral injury when morally complex events were contextualised and rationalised.

A variety of consequences of moral injury were suggested, including emotional, psychological, social, religious, and related disillusionment. These were highly individualised but had a serious impact on their perceptions of themselves, others, and/or their worldview. Significant psychological challenges other than moral injury were also discussed, largely related to post-release reintegration difficulties and imprisonment trauma. As serious barriers

to help-seeking and psychological support exist, recommendations were also made on how Republican ex-prisoners could be better supported with the various psychological and moral challenges discussed in this chapter. How these results are both similar to, and differ with, the findings from Study 1, as well as relate to existing literature on both moral injury and non-state political violence, will be discussed in the following chapter. The impact and relevance of these points will also be covered in this concluding chapter.

Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusions

I would've had a bigger moral dilemma had I had done nothing. (Participant E)

No. I will never apologise for the Armed Struggle. Or the road to it. Did we cause, did we do things that were wrong? Fucking right we did. Uh, maybe even too much. But, that's conflict. (Participant G)

As I understand, what you explained to me as moral injury. I'd say it has to be widespread! I don't think there would be a recognition of that. I think... uhm... because of the fact that this does not seem to be a widely understood phenomenon. Uh. So I don't think it's something that's, that's been particularly at this stage recognised more generally. It's not part of an overall narrative. It seems like you're breaking new ground. (Participant Z)

8.1 Introduction

The present research was comprised of two studies. In Study 1 Republican ex-prisoners were interviewed on their personal experiences relevant to moral injury. In Study 2 participants were interviewed for their perspectives on moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners, based on their experiences of working with this population in a supportive role. While there were some similarities and differences between these results, as will be clarified throughout this chapter, they should not be seen as purely separate studies. Rather, these different samples inform and complement each other on morally injurious experiences in this context. Therefore, the findings of both will be discussed alongside each other in this chapter.

Both studies provide evidence that moral injury was/is experienced by some Republican ex-prisoners. First, it is important to understand how Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs related to involvement in Republican violence was shaped, to then unpack how these beliefs may or may not have clashed with specific events. Both studies found that Republican ex-prisoners believed their involvement in the conflict to be morally justified and necessary. This belief was argued by participants in both samples to be shaped by experiences of state violence and discrimination, growing up in a conflict context, and their Republican

social environment. Following this understanding of their moral perspectives, the three research questions below could be addressed:

1) Have Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury as a result of their involvement in the conflict?
2) If so, what are the morally injurious experiences, and how did they impact Republican ex-prisoners and their involvement in the conflict?
3) If not, are there protective factors that prevent Republican ex-prisoners from being affected by potentially morally injurious experiences? Are there other ways they have been affected psychologically by experiences during this time?

All participants in Study 2 believed moral injury to be applicable to Republican ex-prisoners because of their experiences during the conflict. In Study 1, two participants experienced moral injury themselves and there was further indication of risk in others. The potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) that were suggested and/or experienced included predictable events in line with existing moral injury literature (i.e., perpetration-based, betrayal-based, witnessing-based), as well as unexpected, novel PMIEs. These were related to the post-conflict context and conflicting personal responsibilities or views. These PMIEs are summarised in section 8.3, whilst the next section (8.4) focuses on how these events and subsequent moral injury impacted Republican ex-prisoners. Moral injury resulted in various psychological, emotional, and social consequences. It also influenced the religious beliefs in some individuals, but there were mixed findings on whether this was a positive or negative influence on the relationship. Lastly, moral injury was found to contribute to disillusionment with the use of violence and/or the Republican leadership. From both studies it appears disillusionment may have contributed to decisions to disengage in some Republican ex-prisoners, but that this was not common. These different morally injurious outcomes were highly individualised and difficult to distinguish from other trauma.

Most participants in Study 1 did not experience moral injury. Although they were confronted with moral conflicts, such as related to Republican "mistakes" resulting in unintended deaths, they were protected from moral injury by resolving such conflict through the moral rationalisation and contextualisation of such events. This was argued and exemplified in both studies and allowed Republican ex-prisoners to (largely) maintain their

moral views on Armed Republicanism. Furthermore, they were not involved in these events themselves and considered all their targets "legitimate". Other risk and protective factors were identified in both studies through the comparison of moral injury risk in Republican ex-prisoners to other populations, such as members of traditional state militaries.

Therefore, as illustrated by the opening quotes to this chapter, there was resilience to moral injury due the strength of their moral beliefs related to Republican violence, but also scope for moral conflict and injury in others. Although there was strong evidence in both studies for general psychological resilience in Republican ex-prisoners, there were also suggestions of significant trauma in this population. Again, this trauma caused emotional, psychological, and social harm in some individuals. This still requires attention and support. This chapter will summarise these findings in greater detail and in relation to existing research. The limitations of the current research, its implications, and suggested future research will also be discussed.

8.2 Findings in relation to existing research on morality

To unpack whether specific experiences conflicted with Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs and led to moral injury, it is important to first understand what these beliefs were and how they were shaped. This is because the development of moral injury assumes a moral code or system of personal morality that might be violated, and understanding moral beliefs provides clues about what is harmed in moral injury (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021a; Farnsworth et al., 2014; Litz & Kerig, 2019). Both Studies 1 and 2 found that Republican ex-prisoners viewed Republican violence as morally justified and necessary. This is in line with the Provisional IRA "Green Book", which argued that that the pervasive injustices the Irish people were subjected to provided moral grounds for their war against British occupational forces (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable). Republicans have also publicly stated their violence to be necessary, and efficacious (Bowyer Bell, 1992; Shanahan, 2009). This conviction is also in line with existing theories and research arguing that actors of non-state political violence view their motives and actions as moral and even obligatory (Atran, 2011, 2016; Bouhana, 2019; Bouhana & Wikström, 2010, 2011; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Ginges et al., 2011; Ginges & Atran, 2009; Taylor & Quayle, 1994). Similar factors were suggested in both Studies 1 and 2 to have shaped this moral view.

Firstly, all participants emphasised that experiences of state violence and/or discrimination played a role in shaping as well as maintaining this moral view. Defensive "moral" violence in response to the "immorality" of the state was seen to be the only, necessary option. This sentiment been extensively identified in literature on the Northern Ireland conflict (e.g., Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Brewer, 2021; Ferguson et al., 2010; Ferguson & McAuley, 2019; Hamber, 2005; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished; Moxon-Browne, 1981; O'Keefe, 2017; Shanahan, 2009; Sluka, 1988; White, 1989, 2000). Existing research on general non-state political violence has also discussed this link between grievances and threats to the ingroup with the motivation for retaliatory violence (Gill & Horgan, 2013; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008, 2017; O'Gorman & Silke, 2015; Reeve, 2017, 2019), and that groups form their moral norms in reaction to the morality of the outgroup or outside context's morality (Sprinzak, 1990; Taylor & Louis, 2004). However, it should be noted that attributing blame to the state may also aid Republicans in gaining support or be applied with hindsight to reduce responsibility and guilt (Horgan, 2014; Rapoport, 1990).

In Study 2, this initial moral response was often seen to be emotive rather than a reasoned political decision. This resonates with literature on moral psychology, where moral emotions are seen to be directly translated into moral judgments, motivations, and behaviour (including potential violence), and are shaped by experiences and in response to "transgressive" acts (Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Seiler et al., 2010). Borum (2011b, 2014) has also suggested moral emotions act as a driving force for retributive violence which can be experienced as a moral imperative. Interestingly, exposure to sensitizing incidents (e.g., victimization) which provoke emotions such as guilt and shame has been found to risk moral injury and the adoption of radical beliefs, suggesting that moral injury may be a useful way to understand the radicalisation process (Williamson et al., 2021). Further research could therefore explore whether some of these experiences of state violence/discrimination were morally injurious and therefore influenced decisions to become involved in violent Republicanism. If so, this would imply that processes that help recovery for moral injury may also prevent individuals becoming committed to violent ideologies (Williamson et al., 2021).

The moral development of young people exposed to intense levels of political violence, such as in Northern Ireland, has previously been found to be delayed (Ferguson, 2009; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996). Both current studies also found that growing up in a conflict

context influenced Republican ex-prisoners' moral development and led to the normalisation, desensitization, or even romanticisation of violence. This moral context has previously been argued to be defined through experiences of day-to-day conflict and referred to as "abnormal", leading to individuals engaging in violence they would not have otherwise (Ferguson et al., 2010; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). Habituation to violence in Northern Irish communities has also previously been suggested (Hamber, 2005; Horgan, 2005; Murphy & Lloyd, 2007; Sarma, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012; Toner, 1994). As Bouhana and Wikström (2019; 2010, 2011) have argued that "terrorist's" personal moral perceptions interplay with their moral context, this therefore influenced some individuals' decisions to become involved.

Growing up in this abnormal moral context also contributed to cases of moral disengagement. For example, individuals in Study 1 claimed to have had less empathy when they first became involved, and participants in Study 2 suggested some Republican ex-prisoners evidenced dehumanisation during the conflict and had to "lower" their moral compass to fight. This was necessary to overcome natural human instincts to avoid killing and self-condemnation or guilt (Bandura, 1990, 2002, 2016; Grossman, 2009). Therefore, whilst Republican ex-prisoners viewed Republican violence as justified, techniques of moral disengagement likely facilitated them to engage in the violence. However, this was not successfully navigated in all Republican ex-prisoners as will be discussed in the following section.

The third factor shaping the moral beliefs in Republican ex-prisoners discussed in both Studies 1 and 2 was the history and culture of Republicanism in their social environment. A militant nationalist or physical force tradition was "deeply rooted" in Republican communities, with ancestors often being honoured for their participation in historic struggles (Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Hayes & McAllister, 2001; Hewitt, 1990; Victoroff, 2005). Some ex-prisoners therefore had ties to the tradition of Armed Struggle in their families, exposing them to a historical narrative of injustice with Republican violence considered an acceptable, and even vital, response. It also contributed further to violence being romanticised and seen as exciting. The role of this lineage and early socialisation has been established in previous research on the conflict (e.g., Alderdice, 2007, 2009; Ferguson & McAuley, 2019, 2021; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished; Morrison, 2016; Taylor, 1988; White, 1988).

As discussed in Chapter 1, morality evolved for social purposes and therefore it follows that these social conditions had a large influence on the development of moral beliefs. Whilst humans have innate moral foundations, children learn to apply and revise these within a particular culture (Haidt, 2003). Social groups have created moral value systems and guidelines, such as those related to Republicanism, which are passed onto members through socialization and subsequently inform the behavioural regulation of individuals (Ellemers et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2018; Molendijk, 2018a; Saucier, 2018). This third factor is therefore in line with morality literature. Existent research on non-state political violence has also found that actors' related values are bound to a group's identity, and that they feel an individual moral obligation to fight which was collectively defined (Atran, 2011, 2016; Githens-Mazer, 2009).

Relatedly, some participants in Study 1 suggested that friends were also involved and that their social circles led to an exposure to micronarratives and a narrowing of their perspective in relation to the use of Republican violence. This narrowing occurred as members of groups employing non-state political violence are usually socially isolated from alternative moralities (Ferguson & McAuley, 2019, 2020; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; Moghaddam, 2005; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished), and through deindividuation where individual moral restraint can be weakened once involved (Dworetzky, 1991; Horgan, 2014; Taylor, 1988). This allows these groups to function, as social cohesion has been found to sustain engagement (Ferguson & McAuley, 2020), and is vital to compel individuals to kill and die for their moral beliefs in both members of traditional and non-traditional state armies (Ginges & Atran, 2011; Grossman, 2009; MacManus, 2003). It is important to emphasise that the influencing factors outlined in the current research should be viewed alongside each other rather than individually, as previous research has shown that exposure to violence in combination with wider social factors can lead individuals to join violent Republican groups (Ferguson & Burgess, 2008; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished).

Additionally, a Catholic upbringing was suggested to play a role in the shaping of Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs in Study 2. Not all Republicans were Catholic, and some lost their beliefs during the conflict following the condemnation of Republican violence by clergy members. Yet for those who were raised Catholic, this had a separate influence on the development of their general moral beliefs and interacted with their views on violence. A Catholic upbringing and its taboo of violence has been found to have prevented individuals

from embracing non-state political violence in Northern Ireland and Spain, for example (Alonso, 2021). As Republican violence was considered in line with Just War doctrine (Shanahan, 2009), one Study 2 participant suggested these principles were viewed in accordance with Catholic beliefs. However, others may have encountered moral conflict between both sets of moral beliefs, as will be discussed in the following section.

The factors identified in the current research not only illustrate how Republican ex-prisoners came to see Republican violence as moral, but also emphasises the subjectivity of morality and differences between groups depending on exposure to contextual and personal experiences. Whilst moral diversity is widespread given morality's complexity and social relativity (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Haidt, 2007, 2013), this may be especially apparent in conflict where moral boundaries are less evident and where groups fight and die for their views. The in-group diversity of Republican ex-prisoners will be evident in the following section, where the strength of these moral beliefs either resulted in individuals being protected from moral injury or were questioned in response to later experiences, thereby generating moral conflict.

8.3 Findings in relation to existing research on morally injurious events

The current research supports the application of moral injury to Republican ex-prisoners. Moral injury occurs when a moral transgression has taken place which an individual cannot accommodate into their pre-existing moral schemas and is at odds with their core ethical and moral beliefs (Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Litz, 2012). The individual can perpetrate, witness, learn about, fail to prevent, or feel betrayed by this transgression (Litz et al., 2009; Schorr et al., 2018; Shay, 2014). The individual must appraise the event as violating moral beliefs and may either feel a sense of personal agency about its occurrence or a desire to see the violation punished or rectified (Currier et al., 2021). The current research investigated potentially morally injurious experiences (PMIEs) in Republican ex-prisoners, and when related moral conflict and cognitive dissonance was unresolved and led to moral injury. Study 1 evidenced two out of eleven participants experiences moral injury and provided further indication of risk, and all participants in Study 2 agreed on its incidence in this population. The remainder of this section's subsections will discuss which PMIEs were experienced or suggested that fit this definition, as well as related factors that moderated the association between exposure

to PMIEs and moral injury in this population as little is still known about moral injury's risk factors (Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2019).

8.3.1 Perpetration-based moral conflict

Litz et al. (2009) extended the concept of moral injury to perpetrators. This has since become accepted in the literature. Participants in Study 2 suggested moral injury could have arisen in Republican ex-prisoners who perpetrated or were involved in acts of violence, given their "traumatic" nature and as inflicting violence is not "natural" or "easy" for humans. It should be noted that moral emotions in moral injury can be healthy and normative responses to PMIEs (Farnsworth et al., 2017), as would be the case for incidents involving the deaths of civilians.

Perpetration-based PMIEs were suggested to result in moral injury when actions were not in line with Republican morality. For example, whilst most of the participants in Study 1 were not at risk for this as they perceived their targets as "legitimate", they knew of other Republican ex-prisoners who were greatly affected by involvement in "mistakes" where unintended victims were killed or injured. These "mistakes" still meet the criteria for a PMIE as this includes accidental harm (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Schorr et al., 2018) and PMIEs identified in traditional state militaries have included incidents involving civilians or where military rules of engagement were violated (Drescher et al., 2011; Litz et al., 2009; Schorr et al., 2018; Wisco et al., 2017; Yeterian et al., 2019). There was one clear case of moral injury in Study 1 where participant J grew completely morally disillusioned with the use of violence. This was following "unacceptable" IRA actions and personal guilt for his own "accidental" victims, as well as reflection upon studying human rights and religious texts. He was shocked by the injuring of his unintended victims, which supports the vulnerability factor for moral injury of unpreparedness for the consequences of one's decisions (Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). This participant saw himself as a "sinner", similarly to another ex-prisoner mentioned in Study 2 who was nearing the end of his life. This negative self-view suggests deep moral conflict over involvement in the conflict. Similar cases of perpetration-based moral injury were found in preliminary autobiography-based research on this topic (Bont, 2020, 2021), and similar experiences of guilt and regret were alluded to in research on actors of non-state political violence (e.g., Burgess et al., 2007; Corner & Gill, 2019; Ferguson et al., 2010; Ferguson & McAuley, 2020; Hamber, 2005; Horgan, 2009; Taylor, 2000).

Study 2 found this type of moral injury may have especially common post-conflict and post-release. This context enabled further reflection once removed from Republican social circles which reinforced the narrative of the morality of violence, especially if they themselves struggled with reintegration. Studies on moral injury have found that although moral violations are recognised in the moment, it can lie dormant and occur following periods of reflection or upon separation from a military context or culture (Currier et al., 2015; Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Schorr et al., 2018). Furthermore, the post-conflict and post-release context was argued to have resulted in confrontation with the repercussion the violence had on their community (and its potential moral outrage), leading to regret in some. Confrontations with the reality of their organisation's violence has previously been identified as leading to disillusionment and guilt in actors of non-state political violence (Altier et al., 2014; Bjørgo, 2011; Bont, 2020, 2021; Chernov Hwang, 2015; Corner & Gill, 2019; Horgan, 2009; Horgan et al., 2017; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Simi et al., 2019). In Study 1, a participant experienced strong emotions and anger when confronted with the pain of families of British soldiers. Whilst he did not appear to have moral injury as he felt no regret or guilt, this made him aware of the need to recognise the human cost on all sides of the conflict and no longer recognised his previous casual attitude regarding violence and death. He therefore appeared to have reversed any internal processes of moral disengagement following this experience or initial cognitive opening (Fink & Hearne, 2008), as it could no longer be reconciled with the dehumanisation of the outgroup (Busher et al., 2018).

Relatedly, previous research and Study 2 participants suggested that more active roles and combat/atrocity exposure increase risk for moral injury (Bryan et al., 2014; Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Litz et al., 2009; Papazoglou et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018; Stein et al., 2012; Wisco et al., 2017). As a result, Study 2 participants argued individuals in leadership positions were less at risk for moral injury than ordinary foot soldiers given a physical distance from the human suffering in operations. In fact, a participant in Study 1 who held a leadership position claimed that given the control he had, he was able to engage and order only acts that he perceived as in line with his moral views. Whilst foot soldiers may be able to psychologically protect themselves temporarily by shifting blame on those orders (Horgan, 2014; Kelman, 1973), this was not always maintained over time and therefore led to potential conflict and feelings of betrayal towards leadership

they trusted. This is a start in addressing continued gaps in knowledge on how mental wellbeing is affected by different roles and responsibilities within organisations employing non-state political violence (Altier et al., 2020; Corner & Gill, 2019), and how leadership malpractice may contribute to moral injury (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015).

A Study 2 participant also suggested that the ongoing "paramilitary-style attacks" or "human rights abuses" in Northern Ireland may risk moral injury in their perpetrators, given the potential for unintended deaths and the close confrontation to the suffering inflicted. PMIEs found in police may support this further, such as those involving exposure to atrocities and death, having to apply (lethal) force, and having to make decisions that turn out to be morally detrimental (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018).

Moral stressors have been suggested to lie on a continuum, ranging from reversible and benign moral challenges to severe and persistent moral injury depending on the severity of emotional and psychological impact (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash, 2019; Yeterian et al., 2019). Most Republican ex-prisoners in Study 1 felt conflicted about certain events their organisation was involved in that did not align with their moral values, especially when "mistakes" harmed unintended victims. This was also not in line with the Republican operational ethics, as the IRA similarly perceived this as morally wrong and because support would be lost if "acceptable" limits of the campaign were exceeded (Bloom & Horgan, 2008; Horgan, 2014; Silke, 1998; Sluka, 1989). This has previously been suggested to risk moral conflict and disillusionment in actors of non-state political violence (Bont, 2020, 2021; Chernov Hwang, 2015, 2018; Jacobson, 2010; Kahil et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Morrison, 2010; Neumann, 2015; Reinares, 2011; Simi et al., 2019; van der Heide & Huurman, 2016). For some participants, these events generated feelings of anger or even guilt, which are emotions that inform individuals of moral transgressions (Ellemers et al., 2019; Haidt, 2013; Tangney et al., 2007) yet which are not in themselves not pathological (Farnsworth et al., 2017). Such moral conflictedness has previously been identified in former paramilitary members in the conflict (e.g., Jamieson et al., 2010).

Participants in Study 1 further evidenced moral conflict through admitting relief for not having been involved in such acts. Yet, this lack of involvement and distance also protected them from becoming morally injured. For example, one participant grew morally disillusioned with Republican leadership and the use of political violence over time, and with

age and reflection. This resonates with suggestions that moral injury in military personnel can cause disenchantment with previously held values and an army's morality (Molendijk et al., 2018). Yet, he was not greatly emotionally affected by such events due to this lack of personal involvement, continues to maintain his general moral views on initial Republican involvement in the conflict, and would "not apologise for it". This maintenance of the general moral beliefs regarding the Armed Struggle, separate from the questioning of individual events, was found in all participants other than morally injured Participant J mentioned previously in this section (who had been directly involved in events that injured unintended victims and experienced complete moral disillusionment with the IRA).

The moral conflict identified in Study 1 participants did not appear to have a significant impact on their lives and did not cause moral injury as they were able to resolve cognitive dissonance through various methods of rationalisation and contextualisation (Drescher et al., 2011). Individuals exposed to PMIEs have previously reported experiencing no subsequent psychological change or even positive changes, emphasising the importance of meaning-making post-PMIE (Williamson et al., 2021; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). Self-integration of moral injury in personal schemas and adaptive sense-making has previously been suggested to be a potential key process in coping following PMIEs (Ferrajão & Oliveira, 2016; Williamson et al., 2021). The current participants were able to rationalise moral conflict through: 1) blaming circumstances and the British state and feeling morally superior to their outgroups, 2) viewing the conflict as having led to an improvement in conditions, 3) separating "mistakes" from the general Struggle's operational ethics which held "clear parameters", and 4) viewing "mistakes" as inevitable in conflict. Claims to moral superiority and displacement of responsibility have previously been identified as features of "terrorist" activity, and have been suggested to resolve actors' cognitive dissonance (e.g., Bandura, 1990; Horgan, 2014; Moghaddam, 2005; Taylor, 1988; Tugwell, 1982). Taylor (1991) has also stated that for "terrorists", moral consistency becomes subservient to the attainment of objectives, and apologies by these actors stress the rightness of their cause despite "some unfortunate mistake, rather than a genuine expression of sympathy with the bereaved" (p. 52). These rationalisations have also previously been noted in research on the conflict (Brewer, 2021; Burgess et al., 2007; Ferguson et al., 2014; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996; Frampton, 2022; White, 2017), are in line with theories on morality and moral violence (Ellemers, 2018; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Haidt, 2013; Smith, 2004), and support the need for a context-sensitive

approach to the study of moral injury (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Kinghorn, 2012; Molendijk, 2018a, 2019; Molendijk et al., 2022). This allowed them to maintain their ideological commitment to the Republican cause, which has previously been found to play a positive moderating role on psychosocial wellbeing in Northern Ireland (Ferguson et al., 2014; Ferguson & McKeown, 2016).

This protection from moral injury through rationalisation and contextualisation also provides further evidence that they view(ed) their actions as moral (as discussed in the previous section), which is resistant to change and allowed them to engage in violence in the first place without guilt (Borum, 2011, 2014; Horgan, 2014). Although the rationalisations employed closely mirror mechanisms of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1990, 2016), it therefore may be the case that moral disengagement protects individuals from questioning the justification of their violent methods in pursuit of moral causes. Therefore, a key finding and point across this thesis is that whilst most participants in Study 1 experienced automatic, evaluative, and reflective moral intuitions and emotions about "immoral" Republican acts, moral reasoning allowed them to resolve these and maintain their Republican moral beliefs (Ellemers et al., 2019; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2007, 2013; Seiler et al., 2010). This maintained adherence to Republicanism despite moral conflict was also found in a preliminary study of moral injury in this population (Bont, 2020, 2021), and is in line with findings on traditional state militaries where guilt can be present despite the continued justification of actions and underlying rationale given the context (Schorr et al., 2018; Stein et al., 2012). The presence of "resolved" moral conflictedness in Study 1 therefore demonstrates the complexity of moral perception, supports a continuum of moral conflict (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash, 2019), and demonstrates how individuals can have conflicting moral values and commitments (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018).

This research evidenced heterogeneities in the individual moral beliefs of Republican ex-prisoners related to the use of violence. There was evidence of perpetration-based moral injury, violence-related moral conflict with subsequence changes in moral perception in some individuals, as well as common resilience in the moral beliefs related to Republican violence. Insight was also gained on risk and protective factors for moral injury, contributing to the moral injury literature as little is still known about what moderates the association between exposure to PMIEs and morally injurious outcomes (Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2019).

8.3.2 Betrayal-based moral conflict

Given the Republican ex-prisoners' involvement in violence, it was assumed that this would be the greatest source of moral injury in this population. Instead, both studies placed great emphasis on betrayal-based moral conflict. As morality evolved to promote cooperation within groups (Decety & Wheatley, 2015; Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2013), individuals are sensitive to in-group transgressions such as betrayal. Shay's (2014, p. 182) refined conceptualisation of moral injury notes that it occurs when there has been a betrayal of "what's right" (such as by a person in legitimate authority) in a high stake situation. All three examples of betrayal-based PMIEs listed in this section fit this conceptualisation, though participants did not necessarily all suffer from moral injury following exposure. Previous qualitative research has identified betrayal, such as by trusted others, leaders or systems, as PMIEs (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Schorr et al., 2018). Whilst betrayal-based moral injury is not commonly identified as a separate type of PMIE alongside actions of commission or omission, Bryan et al. (2016)'s analyses of large clinical and nonclinical military samples supported that it should be considered a separate category.

The great emphasis in both studies on betrayal-based moral conflict is likely a result of Republican ex-prisoners having expected, and been able to prepare, for any moral challenges related to violence. These organisations depended on loyalty and secrecy (Taylor, 1988), and therefore members were unprepared for betrayal by those they trusted. The unexpected nature of such betrayal would also be more difficult to rationalise, as it is easier for individuals to justify actions or decisions they themselves were involved in by attributing blame to situational factors, whilst internal (e.g., "immoral") characteristics of others are usually blamed if they commit those transgressions (Heider, 1958). Therefore, this population appears to have been at greater risk for betrayal-based moral injury rather than perpetration-based moral injury. Both studies indicated there was a spectrum of response to a variety of experiences of betrayal.

Both studies reported that Republican ex-prisoners felt betrayed by informers and agents within the organisation. While this was suggested to result in moral injury in Study 2, participants in Study 1 were able to mostly rationalise this betrayal by attributing it as being inevitable in a "war" context despite this having led to some of their arrests. Further research should therefore be conducted on this PMIE.

The most cited source of betrayal-based moral conflict or injury was related to the peace process. Both studies demonstrated that some Republican ex-prisoners felt that the Republican leadership "sold out", and that what was settled for meant their political aims were not achieved and hence their involvement was "not worth it". Essentially, some individuals felt that this was not what Republicans fought and died for. Previous studies on this population have noted similar feelings of betrayal related to the peace process and increased politicisation of the movement, and what some argue as the compromising of Republican principles (Bradley & Feeney, 2011; McGlinchey, 2019; Moloney, 2011; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). Such betrayal-based moral injury (as well as the continuing lack of employment and socio-economic inequalities in particular areas) may also be exploited by violent dissident Republican groups in recruitment today who "promote themselves as being the only ones willing to continue to 'take the fight to the British'" as they are still blamed for continuing social-deprivation (Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished, p. 21).

Study 2 suggested that this sentiment may also cause reflections on their personal involvement and potential perpetration-based moral conflictedness. The UK's leading veteran mental health charity (Combat Stress, n.d.) has stated there is currently concern that some Afghanistan veterans who now view the conflict as futile are at similar risk for this moral injury. Some Study 1 participants noted that they also felt that those with alternative political views were abandoned, and felt moral conflict themselves because of this "betrayal" but did not discuss the impact this had on their lives enough to confidently identify whether this led to moral injury. However, both studies do indicate that those who felt they "lost" following the peace process may be more at risk for moral injury. Research on non-state political violence has extensively suggested that actors can become disillusioned with their leaders or the organisational strategy (Altier et al., 2014, 2017; Barrelle, 2015; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2014; Webber & Kruglanski, 2018), indicating that this may be a PMIE across different contexts of non-state political violence.

The hunger strike campaigns of the early 1980s were found in both studies to be an emotive subject and was even described by a Study 2 participant as a "spiritual experience". In Study 1, the second Hunger Strike was suggested to have involved betrayal as the leadership did not settle for a deal which would have prevented further deaths. For one participant, this led to moral injury and was seen as unforgiveable and unjustifiable. He was therefore not able to resolve the cognitive dissonance between his moral views and this

event. This was previously found to be a source of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners who were involved in the campaigns (Bont, 2020, 2021). A study interviewing clinicians working with U.S. service members and veterans found one of the most common other-based PMIEs was seeing others harmed as a result of decisions made or not made by someone else (Yeterian et al., 2019), which would describe this betrayal. As the participant was not involved in the hunger strikes himself, this is a risk in this population even without direct participation. This PMIE may fit into a betrayal-based type of moral injury yet is a unique experience for Republican ex-prisoners.

8.3.3 Other PMIEs

PMIEs other than those related to perpetration or betrayal were also found in Study 2. Witnessing or omission-based moral injury was the least cited type of PMIE, despite being commonly discussed in existent moral injury research such as when others cause harm to civilians (e.g., Griffin et al., 2019; Jordan et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash et al., 2013; Schorr et al., 2018). Yet, it was still suggested that Republican ex-prisoners may have been morally injured when immoral events happened during the conflict and they did not intervene. This is in line with previously proposed PMIEs caused by lack of reporting of unethical behaviour (Papazoglou, Blumberg, Kamkar, et al., 2020; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017).

There were also other sources of moral injury suggested in Study 2. These did not fit neatly into the three categories of PMIEs previously identified in the moral injury literature (i.e., omission-based, commission-based, and betrayal). This supports calls for greater refinement on the conceptualisation of moral injury. There is still little clarity on what events constitute as morally injurious with no consensus on criteria for the necessary elements of PMIEs, risking reliability (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021c; Griffin et al., 2019; Held, Klassen, Zalta, et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019).

Firstly, the conflicting moral responsibilities between their involvement and to their family was suggested to cause moral injury. This experience is supported by the fact that in both studies, significant guilt was frequently mentioned following realisations of the impact their involvement had on their family. As moral injury has previously been found to arise from cognitive dissonance between competing or contradicting moral beliefs as well as moral incongruences between military and civilian values and identities (Drescher & Farnsworth,

2021; Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020), this therefore may be a PMIE. This moral conflict was argued to be worsened following social and economic challenges post-release, as some Republican ex-prisoners lost their previous status in the community and gained little reward for their previous involvement. Supporting this further, a positive outlook on the outcome of the conflict and continued involvement in political or community work was found to create resilience to psychological distress in Study 1. This adds to an existing identified vulnerability factor for moral injury; perceived lack of support from command or loved ones (Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Ferrajão & Oliveira, 2016; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Houtsma et al., 2017; McCormack & Riley, 2016; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020).

It was suggested by participant X in Study 2 that Loyalist ex-prisoners may be at greater risk for this PMIE as they were said to have lost greater power following the conflict and subsequently may have felt more disillusioned and failed by the British state. For example, the stigmatisation of Loyalist ex-prisoners within their communities contrasts with the greater integration and role Republican ex-prisoners have had in community politics (Shirlow et al., 2005). This also ties into the PMIE of betrayal related to the peace process mentioned in the previous subsection, especially as some Loyalist ex-prisoners have previously expressed unhappiness when their organisations were moving towards the peace process (Ferguson, 2016). They were also argued to have less community support. Community support and involvement in post-conflict community work was found in the present study to contribute to psychological resilience in Republican ex-prisoners. Community bonding and social cohesion has also previously been suggested as a strong cause of resilience in Northern Irish communities during the conflict (Curran, 1988; Lyons, 1971; Muldoon, 2004; Muldoon & Downes, 2007). If individuals experienced a loss of such cohesion and support post-conflict, this may have put such Loyalist ex-prisoners further at risk for moral conflict post-release.

To view violence as moral, the socioecological contexts actors find themselves in should condone it and perceive it as justified (Fiske & Rai, 2015). Zefferman and Matthew (2020) have previously suggested that signals from small-scale communities commending what combatants have done can reduce the likelihood of moral injury. A minority of Catholic communities supported or sympathised with violent Republican organisations as a result of the state's policies and violence (Hayes & McAllister, 2001, 2005; Moxon-Browne, 1981b;

O'Keefe, 2017). Morrison and Bouhana (Unpublished) state that in some Republican communities (such as in North and West Belfast), the Republican movement was involved in every aspect of community life and was/is considered an integral part of it. Resultingly, it was argued that there were limited opportunities of exposure to alternative perspectives outside of this moral and social ecology. This environment may therefore protect Republican ex-prisoners from moral reflection and subsequent conflict, as they are less likely to be challenged about their moral decisions and views. If there is indeed less community support or cohesion in Loyalist communities, then Loyalist ex-prisoners may be at a greater risk. However, this requires further research on moral injury in Loyalist ex-prisoners and the influence of social support on moral injury, about which little is still known (Williamson et al., 2021).

Also related to the post-conflict context, Republican ex-prisoners were suggested in Study 2 to be at risk for moral injury due to the British state's negative narrative and treatment of Republican ex-prisoners. This conflicted with their own moral perspective and was therefore argued to cause moral confusion and a negative self-view. This aligns with existing moral injury research on traditional state militaries, where political decision-making or framing and social stigmatization have been argued to increase the risk for moral injury, as this influences the way veterans experience their deployment and homecoming and can exacerbate guilt, shame, or a sense of societal estrangement (Ferrajão & Oliveira, 2016; Haight, Sugrue, Calhoun, et al., 2017; Houtsma et al., 2017; Jones, 2018b; Molendijk, 2018a, 2019; Molendijk et al., 2022; Scandlyn & Hautzinger, 2015; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). This has previously been cited as a barrier to reintegration and 'healing' in former political prisoners in Northern Ireland, as negative emotions can be intensified by the complex modes of social rejection they may encounter (McEvoy et al., 2004b; Shirlow, 2001).

Lastly, moral injury was suggested to potentially arise following a moral conflict between Catholic and Republican moral beliefs, given the condemnation of the use of violence by the Catholic Church. This would only apply to those Republican ex-prisoners who were raised as Catholic and remained religious. As mentioned in subsection 1, Participant J experienced this and subsequently viewed himself as a "sinner" given his engagement in Republican violence. Again, as moral injury has previously been found to arise from cognitive dissonance between competing or contradicting moral beliefs (Molendijk, 2018b; Molendijk et al., 2018; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020), and as

associations have been found between state military veteran experiences of moral injury and religious struggles (Currier, Foster, et al., 2019; Lancaster & Miller, 2020; Williamson et al., 2021), this therefore may also be a PMIE. However, this PMIE as well and the others mentioned in this subsection require further research to understand how Republican ex-prisoners have been impacted by these PMIEs to establish whether they did indeed cause moral injury. They do, however, support the expansion of the concept of moral injury by including a greater social and context-sensitive approach to its study (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Kinghorn, 2012; Molendijk, 2018a, 2019; Molendijk et al., 2022).

8.3.4 Comparison to traditional state soldiers

Given that moral injury research has been predominantly conducted on traditional state military personnel and veterans, participants in Study 2 were asked how moral injury risk in Republican ex-prisoners compared to risk in traditional soldiers. Suggestions on this comparison were also made by Study 1 participants of their own volition. This provides further insight into moral injury's risk factors. It should be noted that given the context, it was mostly British state soldiers who were discussed in these comparisons.

In study 2, it was argued that moral injury was easier to identify in state soldiers given the support structure in place for state militaries. In a study on moral injury in the police, a failure of an organisation to recognise, anticipate, and actively mitigate emotional challenges was identified as a risk factor for moral injury (McCormack & Riley, 2016). Therefore, a lack of a clear support structure could have increased the risk for moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. It was also suggested that the unique increased risk for betrayal by informers, and unregulated system of punishment, provided scope for moral injury that is not typically present in traditional state militaries. These facets of the organisation are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, and are in line with within-rank violence having been identified as a contextual factor in moral injury (Drescher et al., 2011; Schorr et al., 2018). Other PMIEs unique to the Republican ex-prisoner population previously mentioned in the subsections, such as societal stigma, conflicting Catholic beliefs, and feelings of betrayal related to the hunger strikes, also may have put Republican ex-prisoners at a unique, greater risk for moral injury.

Participants in both studies also commented on the "lack of moral motivation" that British soldiers had. This was because these soldiers were in a paid occupation, whereas Republican

ex-prisoners were volunteers and were instead morally motivated to defend and protect their communities when the conflict "came to them" (see similar moral claims in Brewer, 2021). Therefore, their identity and morals were viewed to be more closely intertwined with their reasons for fighting (Atran, 2011, 2016), whilst generally speaking traditional state armies lack such explicit ideological commitment (Taylor, 1991). Therefore, one Study 1 participant was of the strong belief that Republicans were less at risk for moral injury, as there would be less moral conflict. This resonates with findings by Hecker et al. (2013) that associations between perpetrating violence and PTSD were not found in voluntary combatants. As the IRA Green Book (Irish Republican Army, Print date unavailable, pp. 8–9) reveals there was a requirement of "strong" convictions to become an IRA volunteer and "confidence to kill someone without hesitation and without regret", the requirement of this protective moral conviction prior to acceptance into the organisation could mean that this population is less at risk for moral injury at a group-level.

It should be caveated, however, that this view may be biased as groups tend to be blinded to the moralities of other groups, devalue their opponents, and claim moral superiority over them (Ellemers, 2018; Haidt, 2013; Smith, 2004). Additionally, in Study 2 it was suggested that this Republican moral motivation may have increased the risk for moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners, as without it individuals would not have engaged in the conflict and therefore would not have been exposed to PMIEs. Ferguson et al. (2010)'s study on former paramilitary members in Northern Ireland similarly revealed that the "abnormality" of Northern Ireland led to "normal" people committing acts they would not have otherwise. The voluntary nature could also have led to greater reflection on their motivation, whereas there may have been less questioning of this in traditional state militaries where violence is generally legal and seen as legitimate (Taylor, 1991). It is therefore likely dependent on the individual whether this "superior" moral motivation increased or decreased risk for moral injury.

Other participants in both studies emphasised that psychological suffering, and questioning of what the suffering was for, occurs in any conflict context. Therefore, the risk for moral conflict is present for anyone involved in conflict. These varied perspectives suggest that further research comparing moral injury in different populations and contexts would help elucidate its risk factors. It also evidences the necessity of understanding an individual's personal moral beliefs to explore related risk for moral injury.

8.4 Findings in relation to existing research on moral injury's impact

The impact PMIEs had, or were suggested to have, on Republican ex-prisoners provided further evidence for the applicability of moral injury to this population, as this aligned with research on morally injurious outcomes. This impact depended on how the individual appraised the event and attempted to find meaning to what happened (Williamson et al., 2021). However, it was difficult to disentangle the effects of moral injury from the effects of other sources of potential trauma they were exposed to (see section 8.5). Additionally, it is difficult to separate the concepts of PTSD and moral injury, as they may be co-morbid and share features and symptoms (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz & Kerig, 2019). PMIEs have also been associated with other mental health problems and debilitating outcomes (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Griffin et al., 2019; Maguen & Litz, 2012). Therefore, only the symptoms that were directly linked to moral injury in the interviews will be discussed. In Study 1, only two clear cases of moral injury were identified, and those participants did not expand greatly on their impact. Therefore, whilst they will be referred to where applicable, this section will largely present results from Study 2 unless stated otherwise.

Moral emotions such as guilt, shame, powerlessness, avoidance, detachment, and anger were suggested to be present in some Republican ex-prisoners following exposure to PMIEs. Sleep problems, flashbacks, alcohol or substance abuse, and a negative view of the self and the world were also cited. All these effects have previously been identified as morally injurious outcomes (e.g., Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2015, 2018; Currier, McDermott, et al., 2019; Drescher et al., 2011; Held et al., 2019; Held, Klassen, Zou, et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen et al., 2021; Maguen & Litz, 2012; Molendijk, 2018b; Williamson et al., 2021; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020; Yeterian et al., 2019) and in existing research on actors of non-state political violence (e.g., Bont, 2020, 2021; Brewer, 2021; Chernov Hwang, 2015; Corner & Gill, 2019; Ferguson et al., 2010; Hamber, 2005; Horgan, 2009; Horgan et al., 2017; Jamieson et al., 2010; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Shirlow, 2001; Simi et al., 2019). In Study 1's betrayal-based case of moral injury, the participant experienced strong emotions such as anger and nightmares. In the perpetration-based example of moral injury in Study 1, the participant felt guilt and psychological distress. This supports that the type of PMIE influences the outcome of moral injury, as acts of commission have previously been found to be associated with guilt whilst other-related events have been associated with anger and

resentment for example (Litz et al., 2018; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Stein et al., 2012). The participant with perpetration-based moral injury also engaged in reparative actions to cope, and seemingly recovered. Reparative actions have previously been identified as a common response to moral injury, and are argued to have a therapeutic role (Held et al., 2019; Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009).

Moral injury can lead to interpersonal difficulties, such as withdrawal and hostility, and therefore impacts relationships (e.g., Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2018; Farnsworth et al., 2017b; Griffin et al., 2019; Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2021; Yeterian et al., 2019). This can be a response in individuals struggling with guilt and shame, which can motivate self-isolation (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz et al., 2009), or following other-based PMIEs to further protect themselves (Yeterian et al., 2019). Furthermore, moral injury can impact trust (Currier et al., 2018; Jinkerson, 2016; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Molendijk, 2018b; Shay, 2003, 2014; Yeterian et al., 2019), as it leads to altered, negative cognitions about themselves, others, or the world (Drescher et al., 2011; Held, Klassen, Zou, et al., 2017; Litz et al., 2009; Molendijk, 2018a; Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Williamson et al., 2021). The current study also suggested that moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners led individuals to lose trust, socially isolate or withdraw, and separate from their partners.

Additionally, the spirituality and faith of morally injured individuals can be impacted (Currier, Carroll, et al., 2021; Drescher & Foy, 2008; Farnsworth et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Williamson et al., 2019b; Yeterian et al., 2019) However, the evidence of this is limited and mixed, with some studies finding that PMIEs in U.S. military personnel/veterans was associated with religious struggles or loss of faith whilst others found a buffering effect of religiosity against the development of moral injury (Williamson et al., 2021). In the current study, the impact moral injury was suggested to have on religious beliefs was also mixed. Some participants claimed it did not have an effect or a negative one given earlier disillusionment with the Catholic Church for its condemnation of Republican violence. Nonetheless, there were also suggestions religion may have been turned to for coping with moral injury, although participants implied this may be a more common trend in Loyalist communities. Religious conversion has previously been found to be a rare occurrence in individual voluntary disengagements from non-state political violence, although it played a powerful role in the exit decision when it was present (Altier et al., 2017). This was clearly

found in the perpetration-based case of moral injury in Study 1, where the participant coped with his moral injury through leaving the IRA, studying religion, and "repenting" his "sins". As he framed a lot of his moral thinking and reflection in religious terms, the links between religion and moral injury should continue to be explored further and may aid in supporting some morally injured individuals.

Previous evidence linked moral injury and moral disillusionment which led to disengagement in some Republican ex-prisoners (Bont, 2020, 2021), and experiences of disillusionment or individual disengagement in actors of non-state political violence (e.g., Altier et al., 2014, 2017; Barrelle, 2015; Bjørgo, 2011; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Busher et al., 2018; Chernov Hwang, 2015; Ferguson, 2016; Ferguson et al., 2015; Horgan, 2009; Reinares, 2011; Simi et al., 2019; Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020) parallel suggestions that moral injury can cause disenchantment with values or organisations perceived as to blame for the PMIE (Farnsworth, 2021; Molendijk et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2021). Therefore, it was expected that further evidence would be found on this potential relationship in the current study. And indeed, moral disillusionment was suggested to occur with the use of violence following perpetration-based moral injury which sometimes motivated disengagement (but not in large numbers). Disillusionment with the organisation or leadership was also suggested to occur following betrayal-based PMIEs, which may then lead to greater reflection and subsequent moral disillusionment with violence. Both these types of disillusionment were argued to be especially common in the post-conflict context, and both were respectively found in the two cases of moral injury in Study 1. Therefore, although the discussion on the impact of moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners was limited, the effects that were suggested aligned with existing research on moral injury thereby providing further evidence on its incidence in this population.

8.5 Findings in relation to existing research on other trauma

Republican ex-prisoners were suggested in both studies to struggle with various other psychological challenges and sources of trauma related to their imprisonment experiences (e.g., prison conditions, protests, and abuse), reintegration difficulties post-release, and grief. This contributes to significant mental health problems in some individuals, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Future research on moral injury in this population should

take this into account, as when it arises in conjunction with other mental illnesses it may contribute to their development, make such illnesses worse, or inhibit natural recovery processes (Bryan et al., 2018; Currier et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2018). Individuals may also have a subsequent negative view of themselves and the world, and resort to negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol or substance abuse. Some republican ex-prisoners' relationships (e.g., with partners or children) were also impacted as a result, and some suffer from social isolation. Importantly, these issues were also frequently emphasised to risk intergenerational trauma in the Republican ex-prisoner community. These findings complement existing research and reports on this population (e.g., Brewer, 2021; Burgess et al., 2007; Deery et al., 2017; Ferguson et al., 2010; Hamber, 2005; Jamieson et al., 2010; Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; McEvoy et al., 2004; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). As will be discussed further in section 8.7, these issues therefore continue to require addressing with further psycho-social support to Republican ex-prisoners and their families, yet remain commonly overlooked aspects of the conflict (Burgess et al., 2007; Ferguson et al., 2010; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). This may be because they themselves, as well as others in the community, view them as "not real" or "lesser" victims given that their experiences were a direct consequence of the choice to become involved in the conflict (Ferguson et al., 2010).

However, existing research has also conveyed the psychological resilience of this population despite these psychological challenges (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015; White, 2017). Significant resilience and coping were also evidenced in Study 1, with participants feeling lucky to have physically and psychologically "survived" and was similarly suggested to be present in Study 2. Coping methods that helped build this resilience during and after the conflict included social support, psychological detachment, the adoption of a positive outlook, and engagement in community/political work post-conflict to provide meaning and help maintain a positive perspective. This type of community involvement post-conflict is common in former political prisoners in Northern Ireland, as many engage in work including restorative justice projects, peace-building efforts, and ex-prisoner support services (Brewer, 2021; Ferguson et al., 2015; Joyce & Lynch, 2017; McEvoy & Shirlow, 2009; Shirlow et al., 2005). This is largely through self-help initiatives and allows them to maintain their collective post-imprisonment identity whilst contributing to the community and "giving back" (Dwyer & Maruna, 2011; Ferguson et al., 2015; Joyce & Lynch,

2017). How the continued needs of the Republican ex-prisoner community and their methods of coping relate to suggestions for support in the community will be addressed in section 8.7.

8.6 Limitations of current research

It can be interpreted that there were limitations which impacted on the findings of both studies. Many of these have been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 but will be briefly reiterated here where relevant to the interpretation of the findings. Given the high incidence of other traumatic experiences and psychological challenges Republican ex-prisoners commonly faced, as described in the previous section, it is difficult to disentangle the psychological effects of moral injury from other potential mental health problems such as PTSD. This is also due to PMIEs being associated with PTSD and other mental health problems or debilitating outcomes (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Jinkerson, 2016; Maguen & Litz, 2012). As a result of this and lack of prior knowledge of moral injury, participants in both studies often outlined the impact of trauma related to involvement in general rather than of moral injury specifically. Therefore, whilst outcomes specific to moral injury were found, confidently attributing psychological, emotional, or social effects directly to moral injury was more difficult than identifying PMIEs in this population and this should be explored further in future research (see section 8.7). This is especially important as PMIE exposure should not be conflated with morally injurious outcomes, as exposure does not ensure moral injury (Farnsworth et al., 2017; Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Griffin et al., 2019).

Study 1 participants also did not greatly expand on how they were personally affected by the conflict and/or moral injury when asked about this. Some participants suggested themselves that they found this difficult to reflect on. Underreporting of trauma may also have occurred because of suggested coping mechanisms they employed such as emotional detachment and hardening. Furthermore, denial was suggested to be present in the community in Study 2 due to a culture of continuing reluctance to admit suffering or discuss feelings. Ferguson et al. (2010) found similar denial and depreciation of trauma in their interviews on victimhood in Northern Ireland, partly due to admittance being seen as a "sign of weakness". Denial may be especially common in individuals with moral injury, who might have avoided relevant topics out of guilt or shame (Baumeister et al., 1994; Litz et al., 2009; Tangney et al., 2007; Williamson et al., 2021). Participants may therefore have downplayed

these effects. This should be considered when providing this population with psychological support. It was therefore beneficial to gain further insight into such impact from Study 2 participants such as counsellors. Future research with family members of Republican ex-prisoners may be helpful to explore this topic further, as partners and family members have previously been found to indicate higher and more frequent rates of psychological trauma and symptoms than Republican ex-prisoners themselves (McEvoy et al., 2004).

The fact that this research took place in a post-conflict setting, with actors of non-state political violence, means that the findings may have been influenced by lying, self-presentation concerns, hindsight or retrospective bias, changes in perspective, or a desire to promote a sense of victimhood or ethical code to legitimise their violence (Altier et al., 2017; Bloom & Horgan, 2008; Dolnik, 2011; Horgan, 2012, 2014; Khalil, 2019; Lynch & Joyce, 2018; McGlinchey, 2019; Rapoport, 1990; Smyth, 1998; Speckhard, 2009; Taylor, 1988; White, 2017). However, the focus in both studies was on participants' personal interpretations and experiences rather than the "truth" of events (Altier et al., 2012; Crenshaw, 1990). The research also allowed for consistent themes to arise across cases and sample groups which dissipates this issue of trustworthiness. Furthermore, the significant impact moral injury has on individuals means they would likely continue to affect ex-prisoners and remain salient in their memory years later, meaning that Study 1 participants would still be able to describe these experiences and Study 2 participants would recognise moral injury in the community. Partly due to anonymity precautions, other factors were not examined or accounted for which may have influenced risk for moral injury, such as their length and time of involvement, organisation, current political beliefs, length of imprisonment, pre-existing individual risk factors for the development of mental illness, their specific role in the organisation, where they were from, and their current role in the community. This should be explored further in future research.

Regarding further specific limitations to Study 1, the most notable limitation was that treatment-seeking groups could not be recruited from such as in existing research on moral injury in traditional state soldiers and veterans (e.g., Currier, McCormick, et al., 2015; Held et al., 2019; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2019b). This, in combination with the fact that gatekeepers often protect ex-prisoners who are most vulnerable, may have made it harder to identify moral injury in the sample. The sample may have been biased by the fact that they were willing to participate in qualitative interviewing and available for recruitment in the first

place. For example, all except one maintained beliefs that the Armed Struggle was morally justified. It may therefore be possible that Republican ex-prisoners with greater psychological disengagement, or who are no longer active members in the Republican community through political or community work, may be even more at risk for moral injury as they would be more likely to have experienced moral conflict. Given that the participants also mostly felt their targets were legitimate, and commonly cited feeling "lucky" not to have been involved in events with unintended victims, they were not all exposed to a commonly suggested PMIE. In some participants, there was a sense that they felt the need to defend their moral views especially as they would not agree with their image as portrayed by public or political opponents (Brewer, 2021). Whilst this may increase their motivation to defend their actions than members of traditional state militaries, Nash et al. (2013) has previously stated that service members can also conflate PMIEs with moral wrongdoing and that the term "moral injury" can evoke negative judgments and emotions. This defensiveness therefore may have affected what they were willing to divulge on this topic. Additionally, experiences may not have been shared given the nature of secrecy, discipline, and loyalty of the organisation to contain dissent, as identified as an issue in the identification of moral injury in Study 2. Participants were also not able to talk about events they were not convicted for, meaning potentially relevant information on PMIEs (especially perpetration-based) may have been withheld by some individuals. Those who were undergoing counselling also could not, or chose not to, participate in the research. Yet, the fact that moral injury was identified despite these sample limitations strengthens the conclusion on its incidence in this population. Additionally, whilst these factors may have impacted the findings of Study 1, the insights provided by Study 2 participants on the general Republican ex-prisoner population will have dissipated some of these drawbacks for the research findings in their entirety.

Regarding Study 2, participants' views on Republican ex-prisoners' moral beliefs and type of moral injuries may have been influenced by own experiences, moral beliefs, and most notably their role in the community. This is because their occupation would influence what type or Republican ex-prisoner they would support, and for what reason. Additionally, some participants were Republican ex-prisoners themselves, who now engage in various community work yet whose opinions and perspectives may have been affected by their own experiences. This bias was partially dissipated by interviewing individuals in a variety of different roles and backgrounds. Some Study 2 participants mentioned themselves they

found it difficult to confidently identify examples of moral injury given the moral complexity of the conflict, individual differences between Republican ex-prisoners, and confounding factors (e.g., legal processes). Without direct access to these example cases of PMIEs and moral injury provided in Study 2, it is difficult to establish whether these individuals did in fact suffer from moral injury with certainty. Therefore, these suggestions should be viewed as preliminary.

Additionally, no clinical interviews or evaluations took place in either study. This research was theory-building, and therefore this was not an essential element. Whilst efforts were made to enhance validity (see Chapter 5), the small, male-only sample sizes and the subjective and interpretative natures of the qualitative analyses on individual views and experiences meant that the findings are not generalisable to the Republican ex-prisoner community as a whole nor to other contexts or groups that employ non-state political violence. Instead of aiming for generalisability, the interviews allowed for exploratory, bottom-up research, and theory development (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Nilsson, 2018). This was the most suitable method as moral injury had not been applied to this population previously, and at present there is no gold-standard measure or empirical consensus on moral injury's conceptualisation or outcomes (Griffin et al., 2019; Koenig et al., 2019; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Richardson et al., 2020). Bigger samples using an anonymous, validated, and reliable measure of moral injury (that is not specific to traditional state soldiers or veterans) would increase generalisability and triangulate the current findings.

All the limitations noted in this section should therefore be considered when interpreting the conclusions and implications summarised in the following section. For further discussion on methodological limitations related to sample size, the data collection process, and interpretative phenomenological and thematic analysis, see Chapter 5. Whilst these limitations do not minimise or take away from the findings, it does mean that these are not generalisable and that further investigation into this topic needed. These limitations should therefore be seen as opportunities for further research. The next section will include suggestions for such future research in greater detail.

8.7 Contribution to knowledge, implications, and future research

This research contributed to the moral injury literature by evidencing the concept's incidence in actors non-state political violence, specifically Republican ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland. This has extended its applicability to a novel population. The research method's qualitative approach focused on both individual experiences and perceptions on the Republican ex-prisoner community in general, and therefore allowed for an in-depth exploration of moral injury in that population from which new PMIEs and risk/protective factors were identified. This research also provided further insight into how moral injury and trauma continues to impact this population, adding to existing research on the psychological consequences of the conflict on Republican ex-prisoners and involvement in non-state political violence in general, as well as how their moral beliefs related to Republican violence changed over time or not. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this section, this holds implications for psychologically supporting and reintegrating Republican ex-prisoners.

The current research emphasised that Republican ex-prisoners viewed their involvement in the conflict, Republican violence, and the Armed Struggle as morally justified. This supports theories which put forward to engagement in (non-state political) violence as moral (e.g., Atran, 2011; Bouhana, 2019; Bouhana & Wikström, 2010; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Ginges & Atran, 2009). However, as there was also evidence of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1990, 2016), further research is needed to distinguish those processes from "moral violence" (Borum, 2011). This is outside of the current scope of this thesis, but as evidence was found for both, it is likely they interact. Some participants changed their moral beliefs in part or entirely over time, such as following exposure to moral injury or moral conflict, whilst others were protected from moral injury through their moral beliefs and rationalisations of PMIEs. Investigating moral injury in non-state political violence is therefore useful as it provides insight into actors' moral beliefs, such as when they perceive certain instances of violent action as moral.

This also highlights the importance of understanding morality and moral reasoning when studying moral injury in any population, as these beliefs serve as either risk or protective factors depending on the susceptibility to change. Furthermore, given that moral injury is based on an individual's personal experiences, it is important to consider their perspectives of themselves and their motivations which subsequently shape those experiences. This adds to debates on the conceptualisation of moral injury, where this moral

dimension is still often ignored despite that understanding morality and moral emotions can provide clues about what is harmed in moral injury (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Litz & Kerig, 2019). It also supports arguments that there is a need for a context-sensitive and social-functional perspective on moral injury (Farnsworth, 2019; Farnsworth et al., 2014, 2017, 2019; Molendijk, 2018a, 2019; Molendijk et al., 2022; Nieuwsma et al., 2015), rather than a psychiatric or medical one (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash, 2019; Nash, Carper, et al., 2013). For example, moral conflict arising in Republican ex-prisoners from the deaths of unintended victims is not pathological or distorted, but healthy moral reasoning or confusion (Farnsworth et al., 2017, 2019; Molendijk, 2018a). Additionally, this would provide further insight into the spiritual, existential, political, societal, and organisational dimensions of moral injury (Molendijk et al., 2022).

Given that moral injury research has predominantly focused on traditional state military contexts, studies outside this context have been recommended (Griffin et al., 2019). This research supports the application of moral injury to non-legal and non-state political violence. It should therefore be explored further in other contexts of non-state political violence. In Northern Ireland specifically, it should also be examined in Loyalist ex-prisoners given the risk for moral injury in this population discussed in section 8.3.3. Conducting research on these other populations would both aid understanding of how involvement in non-state political violence psychologically affects its actors, but as the present research has demonstrated, it also provides insight into novel PMIEs and the risk and protective factors for moral injury. Further insight on this could be obtained through comparative research on moral injury between traditional state militaries and groups employing non-traditional state violence. As outlined in section 8.3.4, there were preliminary suggestions on whether Republican ex-prisoners were at a greater risk for moral injury compared to traditional militaries or not, with their differing "moral motivations" being highlighted in particular. Although these suggested differences require direct research, they provide interesting questions and perspectives on the risk for moral injury in different contexts.

The present research also adds to research on the trauma of perpetrating violence, supporting that criteria for traumatic stressors should explicitly reference this as a source of trauma for individuals other than traditional military personnel (Farnsworth et al., 2017; MacNair, 2002b). However, greater research with Republican ex-prisoners who were directly involved in such events is needed as most of the current participants viewed their targets as

"legitimate". Furthermore, other PMIEs related to perpetrating Republican violence require investigation, such as past or present involvement in vigilantism or "paramilitary-style attacks" (see Chapter 4).

Moral injury literature often presents two categories of PMIEs; acts of personal responsibility or commission, and acts of omission or where others are responsible (Griffin et al., 2019; Jordan et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash et al., 2013; Schorr et al., 2018). The current research found extensive evidence for betrayal-based moral injury, and therefore supports calls for betrayal being a third, separate type of PMIE (Bryan et al., 2016). As much of this betrayal-based moral conflict was associated with unhappiness regarding the peace process, risk for moral injury associated with the perceptions on the outcome of conflicts should also be further explored in either traditional or non-traditional actors of political violence.

While these types of moral injury have previously been identified, novel PMIEs were also suggested in this study. These arose from conflict between Republican ex-prisoners' responsibilities of involvement in the conflict and their responsibilities towards their families, their religious beliefs, or the British state's narrative. Whilst these specific PMIEs may not be relevant to other populations, further research should therefore be conducted on how conflicting moral responsibilities and views may cause moral injury
(Molendijk, 2018b; Schorr et al., 2018; Williamson, Murphy, Stevelink, et al., 2020). Again, this also emphasises the importance of first understanding the moral beliefs individuals (initially) hold. Additionally, this indicates that a broader view of moral injury with a focus on its impact may be required, as its current categories are confining. This could aid conceptualisation efforts, given that current definitions lack empirical support which challenges communication, generalisability, and reliability (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021c; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Richardson et al., 2020), and there is still disagreement, little clarity, and no consensus criteria for PMIEs (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021c; Griffin et al., 2019; Held, Klassen, Zalta, et al., 2017; Litz & Kerig, 2019). Clear cases of moral injury in this research were rare, yet it identified numerous cases of (resolved) moral conflict. Greater insight, which would further aid moral injury's conceptualisation, is therefore also required on distinguishing moral injury from resolvable moral conflict (Litz & Kerig, 2019; Nash, 2019). This requires further exploration on potential protective factors. For example, community support was highlighted as influential in the present study and may influence the negative or positive appraisal of the

PMIE, which has previously been suggested to be important (Held et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2021). Exploration on potential protective factors for moral injury may also elucidate further on the high rates of general psychological resilience found in in Republican ex-prisoners specifically, despite the numerous psychological challenges and sources of trauma they were exposed to. Again, this resilience requires direct exploration as it was evident not only in the current research but emerged in previous research as well (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015; White, 2017).

Most notably, further research is required on how Republican ex-prisoners were impacted by PMIEs. As mentioned in the previous section, the findings on this in the current study was limited and therefore a study is required on what aspects of their lives have been impacted and how this is best targeted. This could incorporate clinical interviews or an anonymous, outcome-based questionnaire for moral injury. However, as outlined in Chapter 5, psychometric development of this is ongoing and no gold-standard measure exists at the present (Currier et al., 2018; Koenig, Ames, et al., 2018; Koenig et al., 2019; Litz & Kerig, 2019; Yeterian et al., 2019). Additionally, there is still no agreement on the boundary conditions of moral injury, yet a measure will need to include all unique symptoms and factors resulting from exposure to PMIEs (Yeterian et al., 2019).

Further elucidation on the potential relationships between moral injury and religious beliefs and disillusionment in Republican ex-prisoners is also required. Regarding disillusionment, preliminary research on this topic looking at IRA autobiographies found that all morally injured individuals also evidenced moral disillusionment, with some subsequently disengaging from the IRA (Bont, 2020, 2021). As a result, the current research aimed to explore this further. Whilst there was some evidence and suggestion of moral disillusionment following moral injury in the current research, there was only one individual with perpetration-based moral injury in Study 1 who was also completely disillusioned with the IRA and the use of violence. Research should therefore elucidate whether moral injury can cause disillusionment, or whether disillusionment serves as a PMIE, and how both may contribute to individual disengagement. As research on other contexts of non-state political violence has also alluded to moral disillusionment (e.g., Chernov Hwang, 2015; Horgan, 2009; Jacobson, 2010; Kahil et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2019; Neumann, 2015; Reinares, 2011; Simi et al., 2019; van der Heide & Huurman, 2016), this potential link between moral injury, disillusionment, and disengagement should be further examined in those contexts as well.

The link between betrayal-based moral injury leading to organisational disillusionment was more apparent in the present research, but as this occurred post-conflict when most Republican ex-prisoners had already collectively disengaged, further research on this would help clarify whether can serve as a contributing factor to individual disengagement. Understanding these processes are important to predict whether individuals will re-engage, and may aid knowledge on how to deter individuals from becoming involved in non-state political violence in the first place (Altier et al., 2017; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan & Altier, 2012). Additionally, continued insight into when disillusionment occurs is valuable as rehabilitation programs continue to struggle with identifying successful ways to facilitate it (Webber et al., 2020), and as those who are morally injured and disillusioned may be especially open to engagement with reintegration and disengagement programs.

The present research has also contributed to existing literature evidencing the need and recommendations for further support for Republican ex-prisoners (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2010; Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow & Hughes, 2015). As evident from the interviews, this is still required for moral injury as well as other psychological or socioeconomic challenges. General trauma screening for political prisoners in any context may be beneficial, with potential follow-up and tailored support. This is important not only for the individuals themselves but also for their families, community development, and transitional progress (Shirlow & Hughes, 2015), especially given the risk of intergenerational trauma as emphasised by the interviewees.

For moral injury specifically, existing literature on treating moral injury could be beneficial, although significant limitations to this research remains. There is currently no validated or manualized treatment approach for moral injury and treatments for PTSD do not adequately address all of the symptoms present in those with moral injury (Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Burkman, 2013; Williamson et al., 2019a; Williamson, Murphy, & Greenberg, 2020). This is due to PTSD treatments being chiefly based on fear conditioning and the extinction model (Drescher et al., 2011). In addition, guilt and shame in moral injury are often not a result of distorted thinking. Rather, these judgments about transgressions may be quite appropriate and need to be addressed accordingly (Gray et al., 2012; Litz et al., 2009; Molendijk et al., 2016). Proponents of nearly every psychotherapeutic intervention for moral injury have demonstrated statistically significant reductions in symptoms over the course of treatment to justify their approach, however, adequately powered randomized controlled

trials are still needed to establish clinical significance (Griffin et al., 2019). Naturally, greater consensus on the definition of moral injury and PMIEs is required for targeting treatment. This includes the establishment of what thresholds of distress merit clinical intervention. However, some of these emerging therapies may be particularly well suited for former actors of non-state political violence. For example, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy appears to be helpful for moral injury. It encourages psychological and behavioural flexibility, aids clients in approaching their pain, targets their avoidance of internal experiences, and helps the redefining of moral values (Farnsworth et al., 2017, 2019; Nieuwsma et al., 2015). It has also been suggested to be helpful in reintegrating individuals who have disengaged from violent extremism (Horgan et al., 2017).

Treatment for moral injury would have to be tailored to Republican ex-prisoners specifically, and providers would require new, well-elaborated tools for conceptualising and intervening with these morally complex issues (Drescher & Farnsworth, 2021). Clinical treatment targeting moral emotions and cognitive restructuring in moral injury may also be beneficial in disengagement and deradicalization efforts, such as by incorporating the provision of alternative nonviolent options (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Gray et al., 2012; Williamson et al., 2021). Hopefully, evidence of the applicability of moral injury to non-traditional state military populations with a history of violence, such as Republican ex-prisoners, may compel society to acknowledge their humanity and need for access to evidence-based mental health support (Currier, Drescher, et al., 2021b). However, it should be noted that such treatment may alternatively not be perceived as ethical, as it would seemingly excuse immoral behaviour and it is unclear how treatment would affect risk of future engagement in violence (Litz et al., 2009; MacNair, 2002b).

A holistic approach was also suggested to be beneficial in treating moral injury. This could involve reparative actions (e.g., apologising, "giving back" though community work), as prosocial action tendencies are common following guilt or shame and aim to reduce internal conflict (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Litz et al., 2009). Although unlikely to fully alleviate the associated outcomes, such actions have been identified as a common response to moral injury and may have a therapeutic role by restoring the sufferer's self-esteem, adaptively respond to moral emotions, reconnecting them with their moral values, and encouraging self-forgiveness (Held et al., 2019; Jones, 2018a; Litz et al., 2009; Purcell et al., 2016; Tangney et al., 2016). It was also frequently found in the previous analysis of IRA autobiographies (Bont,

2020, 2021). Engaging in reparative actions appears to have aided Participant J from Study 1. Of course, this would only be relevant for cases of moral injury where the individual themselves was involved in the transgression. However, others may benefit from continuing to be politically engaged in the community in a non-violent role. This motivation was common in the present research, as well as in former political prisoners in Northern Ireland in general, as discussed in section 8.5.

Furthermore, interviewees in the present study and existing research have commented on the importance of tackling continuing socioeconomic issues and "discriminatory" legislation or the "exclusionary stigma" of their "criminal" status (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Dwyer & Maruna, 2011; Jamieson et al., 2010; McEvoy et al., 2004b; Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished; Shirlow, 2001; Shirlow et al., 2005). This is a further barrier to reintegration and 'healing' (McEvoy et al., 2004a), as their negative emotions can be intensified by the complex modes of social rejection they may encounter (Shirlow, 2001). Additionally, a sense of belonging and harmonious engagement with wider society is important for sustained disengagement from violence (Barrelle, 2015). There should therefore be a strengthening of forward-looking aspirational narratives and inward investment to address continuing social deprivation in particular areas, all of which should be led by those communities themselves to tackle what they believe to be appropriate, trusted, and required (Morrison & Bouhana, Unpublished). Supplementing these approaches with activities such as experience sharing may also provide closure and enhance reintegration or reconciliation (Ferguson et al., 2010; Hamber & Wilson, 2003; Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; Shirlow et al., 2005). This may additionally provide understanding of alternative perspectives on all sides, rehumanise ex-prisoners, and help heal moral injury related to the state's narrative in Republican ex-prisoners. Lastly, Republican ex-prisoners sharing their traumatic experiences can dispel romanticism surrounding the conflict and illustrate its realities to deter young people from becoming involved in the present day (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2009; Horgan & Altier, 2012; Joyce & Lynch, 2017; Shirlow et al., 2005)

A holistic approach may also include a supportive religious dimension for those so inclined, as suggested in Study 2 and existing literature on moral injury (e.g. Hodgson & Carey, 2017; Kinghorn, 2012; Koenig et al., 2019; Koenig, Youssef, et al., 2018; Worthington & Langberg, 2012). Again, this also helped Participant J cope with his moral injury. For example, religion can help political ex-prisoners with issues of guilt, as it enables reconciliation,

forgiveness, and empathy (Brewer et al., 2013). Nieuwsma et al. (2021) suggest engagement with spiritual care providers in collaboration with mental health professionals may help those religiously/spiritually inclined to understand their struggles using multiple perspectives, including the offer of a spiritual "moral authority" which psychologists tend to avoid. They argue such support would address some of the major barriers to treatment (e.g., stigma, provider availability, treatment acceptability or approachability). These barriers are relevant to all support-seekers, but as will be discussed shortly, they particularly apply to Republican ex-prisoners. In addition, Nieuwsma et al. (2021) commented on how morally injured veterans may perceive a contradiction between their belief systems and behaviours, and struggle to engage in practices that restore the relationship with community and/or a higher power. This serves as a barrier to healing and should be explored with a spiritual care provider to help develop flexibility in beliefs and engage in behaviour that facilitate reconnection. Therefore, the moral conflict between Catholic and Republican beliefs discussed in section 8.3.3 may be resolved through this type of support.

The present study identified significant barriers to help-seeking and providing psychological support to Republican ex-prisoners. Such issues include a lack of trust and psychoeducation, stigma or a "macho" culture resulting in denial or fears of displaying weakness, lack of guaranteed confidentiality, feelings of moral superiority or, conversely, guilt. These are in line with prior studies on Republican ex-prisoners (Deery & Barnes, 2017; Jamieson et al., 2010; Jamieson & Grounds, 2002; Shirlow, 2001). The confidentiality legislation preventing access to support may be particularly problematic, considering their most troubling memories are often those which pose the largest difficulty in relation to disclosure (Jamieson et al., 2010). Therefore, it was recommended that psychological support should be provided in the community by those who are trusted and understand the Republican ex-prisoners' experiences without fear of judgment, with a clarification on what remains confidential where specialist services are required. This is critical because to prevent exacerbation of moral injury, support providers must suspend judgment, but not engagement, with the moral and ethical questions related to the experiences as well as be aware of their own values and judgments (Litz et al., 2009; Purcell et al., 2016, 2018). Counsellors in ex-prisoner groups are well placed to do for this but may require education and training in moral injury. They also require continued funding from trusted sources. This is also important for the other activities they provide, which encourage cross-community

interactions and relieves social isolation and therefore tackles the social embeddedness and implications of moral injury, and subsequent importance for social support (Farnsworth et al., 2014; Griffin et al., 2019; Litz et al., 2009). Informal conversations within the community were also recommended by interviewees, as this allows for release, builds awareness, and helps individuals recognise they are not alone in struggling with these issues. This has previously been recommended for morally injured state military personnel and veterans (Held et al., 2019; Purcell et al., 2016). It is also crucial to break the cycle social withdrawal, where individuals may withdraw out of shame or guilt, but as a result lose supportive interactions that may have disconfirmed negative self-appraisals (Litz et al., 2009). Similarly, peer counselling may also be appropriate for this sharing of experiences and understanding (Jamieson et al., 2010). However, it should be noted that support should also be available outside of Republican communities for those ex-prisoners who do not wish to, or are fearful of, discussing these issues with other Republican ex-prisoners.

All these considerations are also important for other contexts of non-state political violence to create environments that make it easier for individuals to leave violence behind (Jensen et al., 2020). For example, existing research has demonstrated that several programs have provided psychological interventions or counselling with some success (Gill & Corner, 2017; Rabasa et al., 2010; Yakeley & Taylor, 2017). However, few existing interventions incorporating counselling for trauma have been independently evaluated and therefore little is still known about their effectiveness (Marsden, 2018). As few participants in Study 1 changed their moral beliefs related to the Armed Struggle and/or Republican violence, this resistance to change should be also considered in disengagement and deradicalization efforts (Borum, 2011).

Therefore, this research has indicated that exploring moral injury in a novel context and population has yielded insights which may aid conceptualisation of moral injury. Furthermore, given the numerous implications outlined in this section (whether for reintegration, treatment, or understanding moral reasoning related to the use of violence), further investigation of moral injury and trauma in actors of non-state political violence is highly recommended.

8.8 Conclusions

This research explored moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners. Specifically, it examined when it occurred, how this impacted individuals, and how others were protected from moral injury. This was to build understanding on moral injury as a concept by extending it to a novel population, as well as to investigate further how Republican ex-prisoners were affected by their involvement in the conflict.

The thesis included an extensive literature review to provide background information on relevant topics given the interdisciplinary nature of the research, and importantly, to make a case for the applicability of moral injury to Republican ex-prisoners. Firstly, background information was provided on morality and the moral beliefs of Republican ex-prisoners to then unpack how these may have conflicted with experiences during the conflict. Existing research on moral injury as a concept was also summarised. From this, previous literature and case examples from other contexts of non-state political violence generally, and Republican violence specifically, were discussed in light of risk factors previously identified in moral injury research and to present evidence alluding to its occurrence in these populations. This set the stage to then research its existence directly in Republican ex-prisoners.

Interviews were conducted with Republican ex-prisoners as well as with individuals in supportive roles working with this population. This obtained insights from direct, personal experiences as well as perspectives on the general population. The interviews with Republican ex-prisoners found some evidence for moral injury but highlighted the resilience to moral injury in this population given the strength of their moral beliefs related to Republican violence and due to moral conflicts being commonly rationalised. The interviews with individuals in supportive capacities evidenced strong support for moral injury in the Republican ex-prisoner population as well as greater insight into when and how this affects individuals. Expected PMIEs were identified in both studies, as well as novel moral conflicts and risk factors for moral injury. The continued need for psychological support for a variety of sources of trauma and psychosocial needs was also emphasised by both samples. Whilst methodological limitations were identified, and despite the need for further research especially related to morally injurious outcomes in Republican ex-prisoners, this research therefore evidences the applicability of moral injury in this population.

This not only helps identify new areas where Republican ex-prisoners continue to need support and attention, but also provides insight on their moral beliefs related to the use of

violence. These findings emphasise the importance of considering the individualised nature of these experiences: some Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury and moral disillusionment, others were entirely resilient and maintained all their original beliefs, whilst many Republican ex-prisoners were somewhere in between with some changes in their beliefs following moral conflicts that were largely morally rationalised. This implies the need to first understand an individuals' moral beliefs and its changes or resilience over time when investigating their experiences of moral conflict, especially in morally complex contexts such as conflict settings. As novel PMIEs and risk factors were identified, this research has contributed insights to the conceptualisation of moral injury. It therefore advocates for further explorative research on moral injury in other unexplored populations – whether within Northern Ireland or in other contexts of non-state political violence.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide Study 1

Interview Questions

(For Republican Ex-Prisoners)

1) Introductions (tell me a bit about yourself, tell me a bit about your experiences during the conflict – what stands out? When did you become involved? Age?)

2) Questions about involvement (What did your involvement entail? At what capacity were you involved? When and why did you leave the IRA/INLA?)

3) Could you tell me about how your moral beliefs related to involvement in this armed conflict were shaped? What (else) contributed to these moral beliefs?

4) When you were involved in the IRA/INLA/conflict, did you ever experience an event that was a serious challenge to your sense of right or wrong? Could you please describe this experience?

   Probes:

   - *(If having trouble choosing a single event, ask them to consider choosing the event that they have been having the most upsetting or unwanted thoughts about recently)*
     - *This could have been an experience where you thought you yourself or other Republican ex-prisoners had failed to fulfil a responsibility or done something that you personally felt was ethically or morally wrong.*
     - *This could also have been an event where you felt betrayed.*
       - *Such as by those in leadership or other ex-prisoners?*
   - Which of these/What would you report as the most difficult or distressing experience from your time during the conflict that still affects you currently?

- *To describe the event:*
    - *How were you involved?*
    - *How did you feel or how do you remember feeling during the event?*
    - *What was the worst part of this event?*

5) How have you been affected by that experience, and how has it changed your life?

Probes: (For example, how were you affected…)

- *Emotionally or psychologically (how do you feel now when thinking about this event? How do you react when you are reminded of the experience (your thoughts and feelings)? Do you have any problems sleeping?)*
- *Socially (how has it/post-release impacted your relationships with your family (for example, romantic partners or children) – any impact on them? How has it affected your relationships with friends or other ex-prisoners? How has it affected your trust in other people?)*
- *Spiritually (how has it changed your spiritual or religious beliefs? How has it changed the way you make sense of life and its meaning?)*
- *Identity changes (how has it changed how you see yourself?)*

6) Have any specific incidents caused you to reflect on or change your perceptions on the morality of being involved in armed conflict? If so, please describe this experience. This could be the incident you discussed earlier.

Probes:

- *Looking back, how did this event change your understanding of right and wrong or affect the principles that guide your life?*
- *How did this experience affect your involvement in the IRA/INLA/conflict?*
- *Have any (other) specific incidents led to feelings of disillusionment with the IRA/INLA as an organisation?*
- *Have any specific incidents you were involved with or witnessed led to feelings of guilt?*

7) Were there any (other) psychological or emotional consequences that you or other Republican ex-prisoners have experienced as a result of involvement in the conflict?

- What are or were your strategies for coping with and getting through psychological pressures (either prison or during the conflict in general)?
  - Do you continue to use these strategies?
- Prison?

8) What do you think would help support Republican ex-prisoners with psychological or emotional problems that are related to their experiences during the conflict?

9) Is there anything else you would like to add or talk about in relation to this interview's topic?

Appendix B: Interview Guide Study 2

Interview Questions:

(For Individuals Working With Republican Ex-Prisoners)

10) Introductions (tell me a bit about yourself, and about your work with republican ex-prisoners)

11) What do you believe shaped the moral beliefs related to involvement in this conflict for Republican ex-prisoners? What (else) contributed to these moral beliefs?

12) Reminder: Moral injury occurs when an individual perpetrates, hears about, or witnesses an act or event that conflicts with their personal moral beliefs. It can also occur when someone feels betrayed. Common effects of moral injury include feelings of guilt, shame, psychological distress, loss of trust, loss of relationships, and existential problems.

Do you believe the concept of moral injury is applicable to Republican ex-prisoners, and do you believe any ex-prisoners you have worked with have experienced it? Why or why not?
- If yes: how common do you believe moral injury is in this population?
- If yes: morally injurious events can be divided into 3 types of events – the first being where the individual perpetrates or fails to prevent the event themselves, the second being where the individual witnesses an event perpetrated or failed to prevent by someone else, and lastly an event where they feel betrayed.
  - From your experience, which of these do you believe is most applicable to republican ex-prisoners and why? Have they experienced any of the other types of events?
  - From your experience, which of these do you believe is the most distressing for republican ex-prisoners?
- *If no: go to question 5*

13) How do you believe ex-prisoners you worked with have been affected by morally injurious experiences, and how has it changed their life?

Probes: (For example, do you know how were they were affected…)

- *Emotionally or psychologically (how do they think and feel about that event now? Do they evidence any experiences of guilt? How distressing do you believe it is or was for them?)*
- *Socially (how has it affected their relationships with family, friends, romantic partners and/or other former Republican prisoners? How has it affected their trust in other people?)*
- *Spiritually (how has it changed their spiritual or religious beliefs? How has it changed the way they make sense of life and its meaning?)*
- *Identity changes (how has it changed how they see themselves or their worldview?)*

14) Have any ex-prisoners you worked with experienced specific incidents that caused them to reflect on or change their perceptions on the morality of being involved in the conflict? If so, please describe this experience.

Probes:

- *Do you think this experience affected their involvement in the armed conflict?*
- *Do you believe this (or any other specific incidents) led to feelings of disillusionment with the use of violence?*

15) Do you believe moral injury is more or less likely to occur in Republican ex-prisoners in comparison to soldiers from traditional state militaries? Why?

16) Are you aware of any psychological or emotional consequences other than moral injury that Republican ex-prisoners have experienced as a result of involvement in the conflict? What has had the biggest impact on them?

17) What do you think would help support republican ex-prisoners with psychological or emotional problems that are related to their experiences during the conflict?

18) Is there anything else you would like to mention or talk about in relation to this interview's topic?

Appendix C: Information Sheets

Study 1:

Information Sheet

Royal Holloway, University of London
Department of Law and Criminology
School of Law
Egham Hill, Egham TW20 OEX

Study: Investigating the Occurrence of Moral Injury in Republican Ex-Prisoners

PhD Researcher: Eke Bont (eke.bont.2019@live.rhul.ac.uk)
PhD Supervisor: Dr. John F. Morrison (john.morrison@rhul.ac.uk)

- Details of study and aims:

  This research is for a PhD dissertation. The project is interested in understanding how experiences during the conflict have psychologically affected Republican ex-prisoners. Specifically, the interviews will investigate whether ex-prisoners have had experiences of moral injury. Moral injury is a concept that has been predominantly studied in traditional state military personnel. It arises when an individual perpetrates or witnesses a perceived moral transgression. This may result in long-lasting psychological and social effects. Studying the occurrence of moral injury will provide greater insight into how some Republican ex-prisoners may have been affected psychologically by their experiences during the conflict, as well as whether this influenced their involvement in the conflict. It is important to understand whether some ex-prisoners may have experienced moral injury, as if this is the case this should be recognized as individuals may require support for it.

  Due to the nature of the topic, please be aware that some interview questions may be psychologically distressing or sensitive. Questions will be about whether you experienced any morally injurious events (i.e., events that involved perceived moral transgressions), whether and how you were psychologically affected by your involvement in the conflict, and whether your moral beliefs or views on the use of non-state political violence changed or not due to these events.

- What the study will involve:
  This study will involve a semi-structured interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will take place either in person, on the phone, or through online video-calling. This will depend on the situation surrounding COVID-19. If conducted

in person, government recommendations regarding COVID-19 will be followed. The location will be agreed with the participant ahead of time. The interview will be audio-recorded and will subsequently be transcribed by the researcher. Following transcription, this recording will be deleted.

- Participation is entirely voluntary.

- You may decide not to answer any question if you prefer not to. You may withdraw at any time (before, during, or after the study) without giving a reason. You may withdraw temporarily or permanently. You will be able to withdraw your data within the three months following the interview. Withdrawing will have no adverse consequences. You will be given a unique number at the beginning of the recording of the interview which will be noted on the transcript. This will allow the researcher to identify which anonymised transcript to withdraw if necessary. You may also request the full transcript of the interview.

- Participation is anonymous and confidential (only seen by myself and my supervisor). Your identity will be protected and no written information that could lead to you being identified will be included in any report. Any identifiable details in the transcript will be anonymized.

  Please be aware that if you discuss any new, unsolved, or planned criminal activity then your anonymity and confidentiality cannot be a guarantee because the researcher would be obliged to inform the police under current government legislation.

  However, no questions will be asked about this type of activity as this is not the purpose or focus of the interview.

- Data usage and storage:
  The data produced by the interview will be stored and protected in secure university servers and file stores. Other than in circumstances where unsolved or planned criminal activity is revealed, only the supervisor and the researcher will have access to this data. Your consent form will be digitalised, and the paper copy will be destroyed. Consent forms will be stored separately from the interview transcripts on an encrypted and password protected device. Data will not be transmitted or exchanged.

  Data will be retained for five years for publication and possible re-analyses.

- Direct quotations from the interview may be used in the PhD dissertation submission and in any subsequent publications that derive from this research. The research findings may also be shared in relevant conferences.

- Funding information: The PhD was funded by two scholarships.

1) A Royal Holloway University studentship from the School of Law. Please see the following link for further information if interested: https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/law/news/funded-doctoral-scholarships-in-lawcriminologysociologypsychologysocial-work-in-the-school-of-law-at-royal-holloway-university-of-london/
2) A scholarship from a charity in the Netherlands; "Het Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds". This scholarship was made for Dutch students studying abroad. Please see the following link for further information if interested (please note the website is in Dutch so it will require a translation): https://www.cultuurfonds.nl/cultuurfondsbeurzen#687

- Researcher information:
  Eke Bont is a Dutch PhD student at Royal Holloway University of London (Department of Law and Criminology). She has a background in psychology but is currently pursuing a PhD in criminology. Her supervisor is Dr. John F. Morrison.

- You may contact the researcher or the PhD supervisor if you have a question or a complaint.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please sign the consent form.

NB: You may retain this information sheet for reference and contact us with any queries.

Information Sheet

Royal Holloway, University of London
Department of Law and Criminology
School of Law
Egham Hill, Egham TW20 OEX

Study: Investigating the Occurrence of Moral Injury in Republican Ex-Prisoners

PhD Researcher: Eke Bont (eke.bont.2019@live.rhul.ac.uk)
PhD Supervisor: Dr. John F. Morrison (john.morrison@rhul.ac.uk)

- Details of study and aims:

  This research is for a PhD dissertation. The project is interested in understanding how experiences during the conflict have psychologically affected Republican ex-prisoners. Specifically, the interviews will investigate whether you believe any ex-prisoners you have worked with have had experiences of moral injury. Moral injury is a concept that has been predominantly studied in traditional state military personnel. It arises when an individual perpetrates or witnesses a perceived moral transgression. This may result in long-lasting psychological, emotional, and social effects. Studying the occurrence of moral injury will provide greater insight into how some Republican ex-prisoners may have been affected psychologically by their experiences during the conflict, as well as whether this influenced their involvement in the conflict. It is important to understand whether some ex-prisoners may have experienced moral injury, as if this is the case this should be recognized as individuals may require support for it.

  Questions will be about whether you believe any ex-prisoners you have worked with have experienced any morally injurious events (i.e., events that involved perceived moral transgressions), whether and how they were psychologically affected by their involvement in the conflict, and whether you believe their moral beliefs or views on the use of non-state political violence changed or not due to these events. Due to the nature of the topic, please be aware that some interview questions may be psychologically distressing or sensitive.

- What the study will involve:
  This study will involve a semi-structured interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will take place either in person, on the phone, or through online video-calling. This will depend on the situation surrounding COVID-19. If conducted in person, government recommendations regarding COVID-19 will be followed. The

location will be agreed with the participant ahead of time. The interview will be audio-recorded and will subsequently be transcribed by the researcher. Following transcription, this recording will be deleted.

- Participation is entirely voluntary.

- You may decide not to answer any question if you prefer not to. You may withdraw at any time (before, during, or after the study) without giving a reason. You may withdraw temporarily or permanently. You will be able to withdraw your data within the three months following the interview. Withdrawing will have no adverse consequences. You will be given a unique number at the beginning of the recording of the interview which will be noted on the transcript. This will allow the researcher to identify which anonymised transcript to withdraw if necessary. You may also request the full transcript of the interview.

- Participation is anonymous and confidential (only seen by myself and my supervisor). Any identifiable details in the transcript will be anonymized.

  Please be aware that if you discuss any new, unsolved, or planned criminal activity then your anonymity and confidentiality cannot be a guarantee because the researcher would be obliged to inform the police under current government legislation.

  However, no questions will be asked about this type of activity as this is not the purpose or focus of the interview.

- Data usage and storage:
  The data produced by the interview will be stored and protected in secure university servers and file stores. Other than in circumstances where unsolved or planned criminal activity is revealed, only the supervisor and the researcher will have access to this data. Your consent form will be digitalised, and the paper copy will be destroyed. Consent forms will be stored separately from the interview transcripts on an encrypted and password protected device. Data will not be transmitted or exchanged.

  Data will be retained for five years for publication and possible re-analyses.

- Direct quotations from the interview may be used in the PhD dissertation submission and in any subsequent publications that derive from this research. The research findings may also be shared in relevant conferences.

- Funding information: The PhD was funded by two scholarships.

  3) A Royal Holloway University studentship from the School of Law. Please see the following link for further information if interested:

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/law/news/funded-doctoral-scholarships-in-lawcriminologysociologypsychologysocial-work-in-the-school-of-law-at-royal-holloway-university-of-london/

4) A scholarship from a charity in the Netherlands; "Het Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds". This scholarship was made for Dutch students studying abroad. Please see the following link for further information if interested (please note the website is in Dutch so it will require a translation): https://www.cultuurfonds.nl/cultuurfondsbeurzen#687

- Researcher information:
  Eke Bont is a Dutch PhD student at Royal Holloway University of London (Department of Law and Criminology). She has a background in psychology but is currently pursuing a PhD in criminology. Her supervisor is Dr. John F. Morrison.

- You may contact the researcher or the PhD supervisor if you have a question or a complaint.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please sign the consent form.

NB: You may retain this information sheet for reference and contact us with any queries.

Appendix D: Ethics Committee Submission and Request for Amendment

Ethics Review Details

You have chosen to submit your project to the REC for review.	
Name:	Bont, Eke (2019)
Email:	PHTL003@live.rhul.ac.uk
Title of research project or grant:	Moral injury in former Provisional IRA members
Project type:	Royal Holloway postgraduate research project/grant
Department:	Law
Academic supervisor:	John F. Morrison
Email address of Academic Supervisor:	john.morrison@rhul.ac.uk
Funding Body Category:	Other
Funding Body:	RHUL studentship and Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds beurs (from the Netherlands)
Start date:	01/09/2020
End date:	01/09/2022

Research question summary:
This project will investigate the incidence of moral injury in former Provisional IRA members in Northern Ireland. Moral injury has been predominantly studied in state military populations and arises when an individual perpetrates or witnesses a perceived moral transgression, which may result in long-lasting psychological problems. Investigating its incidence in former IRA members will provide greater insight into how some individuals are psychologically affected by their involvement in non-state political violence. Limited direct research has been conducted on this topic, despite it holding important implications for the rehabilitation and reintegration of such individuals. The study will also allow for a better understanding of the moral beliefs and justifications behind non-state political violence. For example, morally injurious experiences may have caused individuals to change their moral beliefs or even disengage from the IRA. As moral injury has never been investigated in actors of non-state political violence, it will also further the conceptual understanding of moral injury.

I have previously written a chapter and an article (in press) where I found preliminary evidence for moral injury in autobiographies written by former IRA members. This PhD research will therefore explore this in greater depth by investigating its applicability through direct interviews. Academic interviews with former actors of political violence, and from the Provisional IRA specifically, are more common than one might expect. This will be discussed in greater detail in the section "Risks to participants". Please also see a reference list within this section that provides examples of such research.

The research questions of the project are: "does moral injury apply to former political paramilitaries and politically active actors, specifically the Provisional IRA? If so, how did this impact their involvement with the Provisional IRA?". A document with the questions for the semi- structured interviews has been attached separately to this application.

Research method summary:
The research will consist of semi-structured interviews with former Provisional IRA members. Interviews are required for this research as they allow for a detailed exploration of their personal experiences and perspectives. Semi-structured interviews additionally permit greater flexibility in phrasing questions which, if moral injury were found in participants, would allow further investigation into the implications of this on the individual's former involvement with violence. The interviews will take place either in person, on the phone, or through online video- calling. This will largely be dependent on the situation surrounding COVID-19. If conducted in person, the government guidelines regarding COVID-19 will be closely monitored and followed. For example, the interviews will involve social distancing. The interview transcripts will be analysed through interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Participants will be former political prisoners in Northern Ireland who are disengaged from the Provisional IRA. Sampling will employ a snowballing technique and will initially start by contacting local groups for former political prisoners in Northern Ireland, such as Coiste Na Nlarchimí (see https://www.communityni.org/organisation/coiste-na-niarchimi). Coiste have research protocols for interviews and will serve as a gatekeeper to participant access. This form of research methodology has been used on this very population previously, as can be seen from the reference list of example studies in the section 'Risks to participants'. The majority of these studies also gained initial access through Coiste and used semi-structured interviews. Other relevant participants will be interviewed if recruitment difficulties arise, such as local community workers, support or social workers, mental health specialists, and academics. These participants will also be covered by

the consent, anonymisation, and data storage procedures outlined in the sections below.

Risks to participants

Does your research involve any of the below? Children (under the age of 16),
No

Participants with cognitive or physical impairment that may render them unable to give informed consent, No

Participants who may be vulnerable for personal, emotional, psychological or other reasons, Yes

Participants who may become vulnerable as a result of the conduct of the study (e.g. because it raises sensitive issues) or as a result of what is revealed in the study (e.g. criminal behaviour, or behaviour which is culturally or socially questionable),
Yes

Participants in unequal power relations (e.g. groups that you teach or work with, in which participants may feel coerced or unable to withdraw),
No

Participants who are likely to suffer negative consequences if identified (e.g. professional censure, exposure to stigma or abuse, damage to professional or social standing),
Yes

Details,
Despite common assumptions that interviewing former terrorists cannot or should not be done, such interviews for academic purposes are more prevalent and frequent than might be expected (Horgan, 2012). The Provisional IRA specifically is a movement whose members have regularly engaged with many academic researchers, both during the years of its campaigns and especially in the years since then (Horgan, 2008). To evidence this, please see the reference list at the end of this section for some example publications which included interviews with former political prisoners and former IRA members in Northern Ireland. This list is by no means all-encompassing. In fact, it only includes a few example publications of different researchers to illustrate how common it is for such interviews to successfully take place. The majority of these studies used similar research methodology as the current study. For example, the majority of the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and also used the organisation Coiste to gain access to their interviewees as they are the main source and gatekeeper for participant recruitment in this population. Dr John F. Morrison is one of the academics listed that was able to do this successfully and is the PhD supervisor of the current research project. In addition, interviews take place between academics and those formerly engaged in illegal activity across the field of criminology. Even beyond terrorism research such interviews are therefore not outside of the norm. Examples of qualitative research with populations formerly engaged in illegal activity include recent publications by academics in the Royal Holloway Department of Law and Criminology (e.g. Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2020; Mehay, Meek & Ogden, 2019; Woods et al., 2020).

The participants in the current study could be emotionally and psychologically vulnerable given that their history of involvement with the Provisional IRA may have involved traumatic or distressing experiences. This potential vulnerability may be exacerbated by the current research project, as the focus is on understanding how participants were psychologically and morally affected by this involvement. There is therefore a risk that the interviews will raise sensitive issues, which could result in the participants becoming more vulnerable or distressed. Various protections will be put in place to mitigate this issue and minimize this risk. Firstly, there will be complete transparency on the topic of the research, allowing participants to be made aware on the potentially sensitive content in order for informed consent to take place. To

build trust and to ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the research project, they will be briefed on the topic (including a summary of the concept of moral injury), the topic of the questions, procedure, purpose, sources of funding, researchers' background, as well as what will happen with the data (e.g. that it might be published). This is covered in the information sheet attached separately to this application. This briefing will allow for clarity and for participants to be aware of what type of study they are participating in. Participants will additionally be made aware that they may withdraw at any moment (before, during or after the interview, either temporarily or permanently) within the three months following the interview. In order for participants to be able to withdraw their data, they will be given a unique number at the beginning of the interview which will be noted on the transcript. This will allow the researcher to identify which anonymised transcript to withdraw if necessary. Participants will also be made aware that they have the right to refuse to answer any questions. Participants will be reminded of this if they appear visibly distressed during the conduct of the interview. Participants will therefore be notified of the control they hold over the process. Furthermore, support services will be linked, and appropriate follow-up structures will be in place to provide adequate support for the participants if required. Contact details and information will be provided for local and community-based victim and survivors counselling groups, including those designed specifically for former political prisoners. These can be found on the debrief sheet attached separately to this application.

The current study will apply the concept of moral injury to the Provisional IRA. This concept arose from military psychiatry and has been extensively studied in research with military personnel. Such research frequently involves the use of self-report questionnaires (e.g. Bryan et al., 2016; Houtsma et al., 2017; Jordan et al., 2017; Koenig et al., 2020) as well as qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups. A list of qualitative studies exploring moral injury with military personnel and veterans can be found below. This list only provides a few examples and does not include all of the qualitative studies with veterans/military personnel on moral injury. The questions in these studies focused on the morally injurious events, and/or on the impact of moral injury and its symptoms on the participants' lives. These studies therefore employed similar methodological approaches to the current study and asked similarly sensitive questions to emotionally vulnerable populations

with a known history of traumatic experiences. Yet, this research was carried out successfully and has greatly aided the understanding of moral injury in these populations.

Whilst all of the studies noted having obtained ethical approval and informed consent, some studies provided greater information on their ethical procedures in relation to the potentially distressing questions being asked. The participants in the Schorr et al. (2018) study were contacted within two days after participating to assess for any adverse effects, and no significant adverse effects were reported by any of the participants. The participants in the Ferrajão and Oliveria (2016) study were invited to move on to another topic if demonstrating serious distress and had the possibility to contact a therapist if emotional issues arose following the interview. Similarly, Currier et al. (2015)'s interviewers would shift questions or not probe deeper into instances where participants were becoming unduly distressed. Lastly, Held et al. (2019) reported no adverse events occurred during the interviews. In fact, none of the studies mentioned any adverse events having arisen. Therefore, moral injury can be successfully investigated in qualitative research providing that adequate precautions are put in place.

The topic of the questions in the current study will only differ from those in the studies listed when relating to the context or the participants' perceptions on the morality of the IRA's campaign. In fact, the current study's questions largely drew from an interview schedule used in research with military personnel to examine experiences of moral injury. This interview schedule was developed as part of an international consortium aiming to design and validate a measure of military moral injury (Yeterian et al., 2019). Other studies have also already used this interview schedule (e.g. Williamson, Greenberg & Murphy 2019a; 2019b). A list of the questions for the current study has been attached separately to this application.

Similarly sensitive topics have also been previously discussed in interviews with former political prisoners in Northern Ireland. For example, please see the publications in the list below by McEvoy, Shirlow and McElrath (2004) and Jamieson, Shirlow & Grounds (2010). These two studies asked former political prisoners about how their psychological and emotional wellbeing was affected by their imprisonment experiences. These interviews were successfully carried out and no ethical issues were reported in the publications.

Furthermore, the positive benefits of the research for the participant population outweigh the potential emotional costs, recounting difficulties, or the potential for re-igniting trauma. Moral injury has not previously been applied to this population, and little direct research has been conducted on the negative personal psychological repercussions of involvement in the Provisional IRA. Therefore, this research would be valuable to further the understanding of how to support and re-integrate these individuals. Whilst the individual participants may

not benefit personally from the research, this increased knowledge will hopefully benefit those in the future as well as spread awareness of the issues they encountered. Additionally, the participants may benefit from the opportunity to discuss their experiences, with the interviews giving recognition to issues that may have previously been neglected (Dolnik, 2013). In fact, Lundy and McGovern (2006) have noted that in their experience, participants in Northern Ireland wanted to engage in research despite associated emotional and psychological difficulties, as this allowed them to share their stories and raise awareness.

It is unlikely that the participants will become vulnerable from their participation in this study in relation to their history of engagement in illegal activity. The participants in this study will have been prosecuted and disengaged from violence for over 20 years, and many will now be involved in community work, transitional justice organisations, or even in government roles in Northern Ireland. There is therefore little risk of future criminality, although it should be noted that if participants do discuss new criminal activity then the researcher would have to report this under UK counter-terrorism legislation. This is because if new, unsolved, or planned activity is brought to light, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be a guarantee and the researcher is obliged to inform the police (Morrison & Silke, in press). This has previously been an issue in academic research with former IRA members, such as in the case of the Boston College Belfast Project (Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Morrison & Silke, in press). The participants in the current study will be made aware from the outset, and whilst providing consent, that they forgo their right to confidentiality if providing information on planned or unsolved criminal activity. However, the current research will purely focus on the past and how activities they have been known to have been involved in personally affected them.

The safety, wellbeing, and requests of participants will be taken into consideration at all stages. To further ensure participant safety and wellbeing, all identifiable aspects of the research will be anonymised. This process will not just involve anonymising the participant's name, but will include the anonymisation of any identifiable individuals, locations, events, or details unless relevant. This anonymization is also important as the identification of participants risks them facing potential stigmatization given their prior involvement in political violence. If any other information may compromise the safety of the participant, then relevant sections will be omitted. This would only be done following consultation with the PhD supervisor. Throughout the research process a reflexive approach will be taken, including the close monitoring in regard to ethical decision making in order to avoid ethical dilemmas from arising unexpectedly as much as possible.

List of example publications including interviews with former members of the Irish Republican movement and former political prisoners in Northern Ireland:

Burgess, M., Ferguson, N., & Hollywood, I. (2007). Rebels' perspectives of the legacy of past violence and of the current peace in post- agreement Northern Ireland: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. Political Psychology, 28(1), 69-88.

Ferguson, N., Burgess, M., & Hollywood, I. (2010). Who are the victims? Victimhood experiences in post agreement Northern Ireland. Political Psychology, 31(6), 857-886.

Ferguson, N., & McAuley (2020). Staying engaged in terrorism: Narrative accounts of sustaining participation in violent extremism. Frontiers in Psychology, 11.

Horgan, J. (2009). Walking away from terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon?; New York, NY: Routledge.

Jamieson, R., Shirlow, P., & Grounds, A. (2010). Ageing and Social Exclusion among Former Politically Motivated Prisoners in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. Belfast: Changing Age Partnership.

McEvoy, K., Shirlow, P., & McElrath, K. (2004). Resistance, transition and exclusion: Politically motivated ex-prisoners and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland. Terrorism and Political Violence, 16(3), 646–670.

Morrison, J. F. (2015). The Origins and Rise of Dissident Irish Republicanism: The Role and Impact of Organizational Splits. London; Bloomsbury Publishing.

Morrison, J. F. (2016). Trust in me: Allegiance choices in a post-split terrorist movement. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 28, 47–56.

Taylor, P. (1998). Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein. London; Bloomsbury Publishing.

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Lynch, O., & Joyce, C. (2018). Applying Psychology: The Case of Terrorism and Political Violence. Wiley-Blackwell.

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Design and Data

Does your study include any of the following?

Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and/or informed consent at the time?, No

Is there a risk that participants may be or become identifiable?, Yes

Is pain or discomfort likely to result from the study?, No

Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?,
Yes

Does this research require approval from the NHS?, No

If so what is the NHS Approval number,

Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?,
No

Will human tissue including blood, saliva, urine, faeces, sperm or eggs be collected or used in the project?, No

Will the research involve the use of administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?, No

Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?, No

Is there a risk that any of the material, data, or outcomes to be used in this study has been derived from ethically-unsound procedures?, No

Details,
As discussed in much greater depth in the previous section, the interview questions may induce psychological stress or anxiety as they raise sensitive issues. These questions will focus on how participants were psychologically affected by their involvement, including asking after potentially traumatic events to understand whether they experienced moral injury. The previous section outlined various ways that this impact will be mitigated. Participants will be made aware of the content of the study to obtain informed consent, and of the fact that they may withdraw at any time within the three months following the interview. Participants will also be provided with contact details and information of relevant support services afterwards. The previous section also argued that such sensitive topics have previously been successfully discussed in interviews with the target population, and that the benefits of the study outweigh the potential risks of the study reigniting psychological distress in participants.

Whilst all identifiable details will be anonymised, there is a risk that participants may become identifiable if they discuss new, unsolved, or planned illegal activity as this would have to be reported under UK counter-terrorism legislation. However, as discussed in greater depth in the previous section, this is unlikely to occur in the current research project. Participants will have been prosecuted and disengaged from violence for many years, and the questions will not focus on unsolved or future crime. Nevertheless, participants will be made aware of this risk from the outset.

The data produced by the research project will be securely stored. It will be protected in secure university servers and file stores. The data will be stored on university servers as this allows the ethics officers of Royal Holloway University access to the data in the case that any internal university or external police enquiries take place (Oversight of Security-Sensitive Research Material in UK Universities, 2019). Other than in those special circumstances, only the researcher and supervisor(s) will have access to the data. This will also prevent the researcher from coming under potential police suspicion as it will evidence that the information is being used for academic purposes only. Consent forms will be digitalised, and all paper copies will be destroyed. Consent forms will then be stored separately from the interview transcripts on an encrypted and password protected device. Data will not be transmitted or exchanged. Data will be managed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Data will be retained for five years for publication and possible re-analyses.

References:

Oversight of security-sensitive research material in UK Universities. (2019). Universities UK.

Risks to the Environment / Society

Will the conduct of the research pose risks to the environment, site, society, or artifacts?, No

Will the research be undertaken on private or government property without permission?, No

Will geological or sedimentological samples be removed without permission?, No

Will cultural or archaeological artifacts be removed without permission?, No

Details, N/A

Risks to Researchers/Institution

Does your research present any of the following risks to researchers or to the institution?

Is there a possibility that the researcher could be placed in a vulnerable situation either emotionally or physically (e.g. by being alone with vulnerable, or potentially aggressive participants, by entering an unsafe environment, or by working in countries in which there is unrest)?, Yes

Is the topic of the research sensitive or controversial such that the researcher could be ethically or legally compromised (e.g. as a result of disclosures made during the research)?,
No

Will the research involve the investigation or observation of illegal practices, or the participation in illegal practices?, Yes

Could any aspects of the research mean that the University has failed in its duty to care for researchers, participants, or the environment / society?,
No

Is there any reputational risk concerning the source of your funding?, No

Is there any other ethical issue that may arise during the conduct of this study that could bring the institution into disrepute?, No

Details,
Given that the researcher will interview participants who were formerly engaged in illegal and potentially violent behaviour, it may be perceived that she will be placed in a physically vulnerable situation. However, this is very unlikely to be the case. Most importantly, the people that will be interviewed in the current study are no longer involved in criminal activity. Rather, many of them are now involved in community work, transitional justice organisations, or even in government roles in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, as discussed previously, interviewing terrorists is more common than might be expected and the Provisional IRA specifically is a movement whose (former) members have regularly engaged with researchers (Horgan, 2008; 2012). John Horgan has extensive experience interviewing IRA members and reflected that he received little intimidation. Rather, "the most disconcerting incident" during the research for his PhD was being overtly

chastised by some members of the Irish police force (Horgan, 2008, p.90). Hoffman (2006, p.XV) similarly reflected on his experiences; "I have been studying terrorists and terrorism for more than twenty years. Yet I am still always struck by how disturbingly 'normal' most terrorists seem when one actually sits down and talks to them. Rather than the wild-eyed fanatics or crazed killers that we have been conditioned to expect, many are in fact highly articulate and extremely thoughtful individuals for whom terrorism is (or was) an entirely rational choice, often reluctantly embraced and then only after considerable reflection and debate."

Nevertheless, there are appreciable concerns about personal risk in any field setting that involves examining sensitive topics (Horgan, 2012). To mitigate any potential risks the interviews will be conducted in a public space during the daytime. The researcher will refuse to meet in any remote, non-public areas. Prior to an interview or meeting commencing, the PhD supervisor will be notified of the location and of the estimated start and end times. No personal information will be shared with participants other than the researcher's name, research institution, university e-mail, and details of prior research experience. The researcher will be trained for the interviews by the PhD supervisor, Dr. John F. Morrison, who has experience in conducting interviews with the target population. Further, the researcher has prior experience of working closely with individuals who have perpetrated violent crimes as a patient activity supporter in a high-secure psychiatric hospital. However, the researcher may be placed in an emotionally vulnerable situation given that the research topic is of an emotionally difficult nature. Therefore, the researcher will take breaks after each interview, and between interviews and the transcription/analysis steps. There will also be regular contact with the PhD supervisor about this. The researcher has discussed this with the PhD supervisor previously and would feel comfortable approaching him about this if required. The researcher will also reach out for further support if necessary, such as by contacting services provided by the university.

As discussed more extensively in previous sections, the research will involve the investigation of previous illegal practices. However, this will be a history of previous illegal activity as participants will be former political prisoners and former Provisional IRA members. The interview questions will also focus on how participants were affected by this activity, rather than on the details of the activities or events. Participants will be made aware from the onset that if any unsolved, new, or planned illegal activity is mentioned, the researcher is obliged under UK counter-terrorism legislation to report this.

References:

Hoffman, B. (2006). Inside terrorism (Rev. and expanded ed). Columbia University Press.

Horgan, J. (2008). Interviewing Terrorists. In H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke, & B. Ganor (Eds.), Terrorism Informatics (Vol. 18, pp. 73–99). Springer US.

Horgan, J. (2012). Interviewing the terrorists: Reflections on fieldwork and implications for psychological research. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 4(3), 195–211.

Declaration
By submitting this form, I declare that the questions above have been answered truthfully and to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I take full responsibility for these responses. I undertake to observe ethical principles throughout the research project and to report any changes that affect the ethics of the project to the University Research Ethics Committee for review.

Certificate produced for user ID, PHTL003

Date:	29/09/2020 14:09
Signed by:	Bont, Eke (2019)
Digital Signature:	Eke Bont
Certificate dated:	29/09/2020
Files uploaded:	Information Sheet.docx Consent Form.docx Debrief Sheet.docx Questions.docx

Amendment request form

Name: Eke Bont **Department:** Law & Criminology
Project ID: application ID 2201 **School**: Law and Social Sciences
Project Title: Moral Injury in Republican Ex-Prisoners from the Northern Ireland Conflict (note: previously "moral injury in former Provisional IRA members" – see details about this amendment below)

Amendment request:

☐Extension request
☐Change in team members
☒Change to participant groups
☐Change to research methods
☐Change to research summary
☒Change to data collection
☒Change to participant documents (e.g. recruitment documents, information sheet, consent form or debrief form)
Other Click here to enter text.

Details of Amendment:

(List each proposed change and its reference in the original application)
Amendment 1) Changing participant group to include all Republican ex-prisoners formerly imprisoned during the Northern Ireland Conflict. Whilst the previous application referenced to participants as "former political prisoners in Northern Ireland who are disengaged from the Provisional IRA", this amendment will include former political prisoners in Northern Ireland disengaged from any violent Republican organisation active during this conflict (such as the Official IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army).

Amendment 2) Changing participant group to include not only Republican ex-prisoners, but also professionals who work with ex-prisoners. This would include priests, youth and community workers, psychiatrists, counsellors, etc. Whilst suggested in the previous application ("other relevant participants will be interviewed if recruitment difficulties arise, such as local community workers, support or social workers, mental health specialists, and academics"), they were not yet explicitly named as a participant group.

Amendment 3) Participants will be able to be re-interviewed. This was not previously stated in the original application.

Please provide an explanation for the requested amendment:

Amendment 1) The broadening of participants to political ex-prisoners from any violent Republican organisation active at that time will allow greater access to interviewees in order to gain a more representative perspective on this population's experiences and potential experiences of moral injury. There are no ideological or operational differences between these groups that would increase any potential risk to themselves or the researcher or that suggest any increased vulnerability. The recruitment methods and data collection procedures (including mitigations for ethical purposes) will remain unchanged other than expansion to Republican ex-prisoners in general (not only former Provisional IRA members), and the justifications for carrying out this research still apply.

Amendment 2) The broadening of participants to include individuals who work closely with ex-prisoners will not only grant access to more interviewees but may also provide novel insights into this topic. Whilst trust and rapport can be difficult to establish between a PhD researcher and political ex-prisoners, especially about sensitive issues and when conducting interviews online or via the phone, it is more likely that ex-prisoners may discuss potential trauma over time with these professionals in various capacities. There is no expectation that these professionals will disclose the identities of ex-prisoners, but interviewees will be asked to refrain from providing specific details about ex-prisoners to ensure confidentiality. The same confidentiality and anonymity principles from the original application will apply, and there is no increased risk expected from interviewing these professionals (either to themselves, the researcher, or the ex-prisoner community). Additionally, the participant recruitment and data collection procedures will remain largely the same. Known professionals in these communities will be contacted directly or through local charities. The only changes in the procedure will be to the questions asked (see details about interview questions below).

Amendment 3) Being able to reinterview participants will allow for the researcher to obtain richer data from the interviewees. For example, this will allow for questions to be asked again or which were not asked previously and will allow for points to be probed further. Reinterviewing also has benefits in that it may dissipate the potential effects of the interview context on analysis and can build increased trust with the interviewee (Chernov Hwang, 2018; Morrison, 2020). For example, if the researcher is able to conduct face-to-face interviews following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions at a later stage in the PhD, reinterviewing participants in person may dissipate any potential negative effects related to online or phone interviewing (e.g., less rapport and trust). If a participant agrees to being reinterviewed, consent would be obtained again for this second interview and there would be no changes to the procedures outlined in the original submission.

References:
Chernov Hwang, J. (2018). *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*.

   Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501710841

Automatic citation updates are disabled. To see the bibliography, click Refresh in the Zotero tab.

Additional information:
(Please list and attach tracked copies of amended documents)
Amendment 1) Please see "Information sheet", "Consent form", and "Debrief sheet" attached. As can be seen from the tracked changes, the forms have been amended to change any mention of the "Provisional IRA" to "Republican ex-prisoners".

Amendment 2) The forms (from amendment 1) have been updated to be tailored to individuals working with Republican ex-prisoners (rather than ex-prisoners themselves). Please see "Information sheet (professionals)", "Consent form (professionals)", and "Debrief sheet (professionals)" attached. The questions from the original application have been revised for interviewees who work with ex-prisoners and have been attached (see "Questions (professionals)". They are based on the original questions for ex-prisoners and

have also been similarly inspired by an interview schedule used in research on moral injury in former military personnel (Yeterian et al., 2019).

Amendment 3) No revision to documents required for this amendment.

Reference:

Yeterian, J. D., Berke, D. S., Carney, J. R., McIntyre-Smith, A., St. Cyr, K., King, L., Kline, N. K., Phelps, A., Litz, B. T., & Members of the Moral Injury Outcomes Project Consortium. (2019). Defining and measuring moral injury: Rationale, design, and preliminary findings from the moral injury outcome scale consortium. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 32(3), 363–372.

Signed Eke Bont   **Date:** 14/04/2021

Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent Form

Study: Investigating the Occurrence of Moral Injury in Republican Ex-Prisoners
Researcher: Eke Bont (eke.bont.2019@live.rhul.ac.uk)

It is important that you read, understand and complete this consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate. Please tick the box to indicate your consent and sign at the end of the form if you are happy to take part and to indicate your full and informed consent.

	Agree
I have read and understood the information sheet about this study	
The researcher has discussed the project and consent form, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have received satisfactory answers to any questions	
I understand the nature of the study and that questions may be asked that are sensitive or distressing	
I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time (within the 3 months after the interview), without giving a reason, and that this would have no adverse consequences	
I understand that I may decide not to answer any question if I prefer not to	
I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded, and that this will be transcribed. I understand that this recording will be deleted after transcription	
I agree for my direct quotations to be used in this PhD dissertation submission and any subsequent publications deriving from this research	
I understand that my data will be securely stored and protected, and that only the supervisor and researcher will have access to this data	
I understand that data will be retained for 5 years for publication and possible re-analyses	
I understand this consent form will be stored separately on an encrypted and password protected device	
I understand that the data will be treated with strict confidentiality. I understand that my identity will be protected and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report	
I understand that if I discuss any new, unsolved, or planned criminal activity then my anonymity and confidentiality cannot be a guarantee because the researcher would be obliged to inform the police under current government legislation	
I understand that I may contact the researcher with any questions about the study, and I have been provided with the contact details of the researcher	

I understand that this project is not affiliated with any government, law enforcement or prison service and all information will be used only for a PhD dissertation or future academic publication	

Signed……………………….
Name ……………………….
Date …………………………

Appendix F: Debrief Sheet

![Royal Holloway University of London logo]

Debrief

Thank you for your participation.

This study aimed to examine whether Republican ex-prisoners experienced moral injury, and how this influenced their involvement in the conflict. This provides further insight into how ex-prisoners were psychologically affected during the conflict. The findings of this study and direct quotations taken from the interviews may be used in future publications. Please let the researcher know if you would like to be sent any publications that derive from this research.

Please be aware that you are still able to withdraw your data if you wish to do so. You will be able to withdraw your data within the three months following the interview. You will have been given a unique number at the beginning of the interview which will be noted on the transcript. This will allow the researcher to identify which anonymised transcript to withdraw if necessary. You may also request the full transcript of the interview.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:
- The researcher, Eke Bont (eke.bont.2019@live.rhul.ac.uk)
- Or the PhD supervisor, Dr. John F. Morrison (john.morrison@rhul.ac.uk)

Given that the topic of the questions may have been sensitive or distressing, please find the contact details and information of support services and relevant groups below. They will be able to help and support you in various ways if you wish to reach out.

1) Coiste na nIarchimí

   An umbrella organisation of the former republican political prisoner network throughout Ireland that can help you connect to local groups. It provides various services to republican ex-prisoners and their families including practical advice, emotional and self-help support, and group interactions.
   - E-mail: info@coiste.com or michael@coiste.com
   - Phone: 02890200770
   - Address: 10 Beechmount Avenue, Belfast BT12 7NA

2) Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI)

   CRJI provides a safe and confidential community service which is available to all. CRJI's trained staff and practitioners are impartial and their role is to provide a safe and structured format that brings local people together to enable them to resolve issues that affect their quality of life. They provide a range of accredited services to local

communities including advice services, intervention services, victim support services, and mediation services. CRJI has offices in multiple locations in Belfast, as well as in Derry and Newry.

- Website: https://www.crjireland.org/
- Online contact form: https://www.crjireland.org/contact-us
- E-mail: crji@crjireland.org
- Phone: 02890301521
- Address: 105 Andersonstown Road, Belfast BT11 9BS

3) WAVE trauma centre

WAVE provides services and support to those bereaved or psychologically/physically injured as a result of the conflict. They provide services through Northern Ireland, in the south of Ireland and in Great Britain. The team can also refer out to other centres and services as required.

- Website: https://wavetraumacentre.org.uk/
- Online contact form: https://wavetraumacentre.org.uk/connect/contact-us/
- Phone: 02890779922
- Address: 5 Chichester Park South, Antrim Road, Belfast BT155DW.

4) Cúnamh

Cúnamh is a community-led mental health project in Derry that provides support for the emotional and psychological impact which the conflict has had on individual and community well-being.

- Website: https://cunamh.org/
- Online contact form: https://cunamh.org/contact-us/
- Phone: 02871288868
- Email: info@cunamh.org
- Address: 171 Sunbeam Terrace, Bishop Street, Derry, BT48 6UJ

5) Two other websites to find mental health support in your area:

Mindingyourhead.info is a website that provides information about the issues that affect mental health and mental wellbeing. The link below will provide you with a directory for services in Northern Ireland that offer advice and support for a range of issues that can impact your mental health.
Website: https://www.mindingyourhead.info/services

This second link is from the Northern Irish government website and will help you locate a variety of services in your area that provide help and support for mental health difficulties.
Website: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-support

Appendix G: Study 1 Individual Themes IPA

Results Transcript A

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral justifications		Armed conflict seen as the moral/right thing to do to this day.
	Factors shaping moral justification	Influenced by witnessing events/personal experiences, felt an obligation, political interest since childhood.
	Events where civilians died seen as "wrong" and "accidents"	Given the IRA "code", these events were mistakes. Although these should've and could've been prevented, it was not seen as a deliberate strategy and tactics were differentiated from the overall cause. Gave Enniskillen as an example. Did not personally affect him as he was not involved. But for others who were it did, especially over time.
	Context of "war"	This context justified "mistakes" to himself and others, as it was "inevitable" such things happened. However, remained sensitive to the victims.
Republican identity		This identity remains very important to him and overrode his sense of victimhood and his religious beliefs. It likely protected himself against trauma and moral injury (as it fed into his moral justification) and helped him cope with prison. It is maintained although there have been some perspective changes with age.
Positive outlook		Tries to view the conflict positively, as it was seen as inevitable and led to an improvement in conditions for future generations. Again, it may have protected him against moral injury and other trauma by contributing to resilience.
Psychological difficulties		Other than moral injury.
	Guilt towards family	Guilt towards how his decisions related to involvement impacted his family, but this guilt is overridden by his positivity (see theme "positive outlook").
	Grief	Relating to loss of friends and family in conflict. Contributed to desire to become involved (see subtheme "factors shaping moral justification").
	Difficulties imprisonment	Difficulties with this himself and others. To cope with this himself he learned to detach in prison which was difficult to stop when released.

	and post-release	Others suffered more post-release, which his support system protected him against.
Support need for ex-prisoners		Needed given mental health problems in the community, and to avoid intergenerational trauma.
	Need to talk	There needs to be recognition of psychological problems existing, and conversations about this, within the community. However, there are barriers to this such as a macho culture and the debate around victimhood.
	Support services	Need to be trusted and need financing.

Results Transcript B

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Trauma		Trauma other than moral injury e.g., PTSD. Sees himself as a victim of the conflict as a result.
	Prison trauma	Arising from the Blanket/Dirty Protests, torture/abuse within prisons as a result of participation, and the general conditions of the prison.
	Experiences of violence	Experienced multiple threats on his life and directly witnessed civilians being murdered in front of him. These experiences were largely when he was younger and prior to his involvement (see moral justification subtheme "contributing factors")
	Grief/loss	Loss and grief about friends who were volunteers and who died as a result of the conflict.
Betrayal within community		Led to potential moral injury. Resulting in issues with the legacy of the conflict.
	Related to post-conflict political situation	Feels as though those in power were bought and abandoned ex-prisoners with alternative political views. Feels that the GFA was not what many volunteers died for.
	Related to prison protests	Irritated by other Blanketmen who lie about their experiences and glorify the protests. Feelings of betrayal related to the Hunger Strike negotiations.
Moral justification		Related to his personal involvement.
	Moral conviction	Perceived his actions as justified and "right", and claims he feels no guilt. Acknowledges "innocent" people died but so did volunteers

		(which was perceived as similarly wrong) and blames the state as a result.
	Contributing factors	Grew up in the context of conflict and witnessed violence at a young age. Grandfather was murdered by the UVF. Strong Republicanism in family but also diversity (leading to an anti-sectarianism attitude). Interested in politics since youth.
	Difficulty of confrontation with consequences of his violent actions	Does not like to read the depositions of his trial and the descriptions of the injuries he inflicted which was "not nice". This is despite his moral conviction that what he did was "right" and his claims that he feels no guilt for his actions (see subtheme moral conviction) – demonstrating the complexity of ex-prisoner moral beliefs related to involvement. Difficulty of his family being affected by his involvement (the impact on his children and he split with his partner).
Coping methods		Comradery with other prisoners whilst on the Blanket Protest. Speaking to a counsellor in the Republican ex-prisoner community. "Moving on with life" and "living in the present" attitude. Being able to psychologically detach. Community work (which perhaps helps him cope with underlying guilt as he argued shows he is a "good person").
Psychological difficulties in other ex-prisoners		Related to post-release. Issues in seeking help/accessing support due to confidentiality obligations. He encouraged other prisoners to talk about these issues within the community.

Results Transcript C

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Morality of involvement		Strong belief in the morality of involvement in conflict, which built psychological resilience.
	Defending community	Given the discrimination and actions by the state, he believed Republican violence was justified and led to his involvement from a young age.
	Discipline of organisation	He perceived the IRA as a "well-disciplined military organisation", hence further morally justifying its existence. However, he

		acknowledged "mistakes" were made which were wrong, and which further motivated his commitment to the peace process.
	Protecting against moral injury	His strong beliefs in the moral justification of the IRA's actions protected him and led to psychological resilience despite experiencing a potentially traumatic event/witnessing a PMIE and was betrayed. This was because he justified the British army's actions given the "war" context (which is a similar justification he provided to "mistakes" made by the IRA – see subtheme 'discipline of organisation'). These justifications also resulted in a lack of guilt, and he emphasised his choice in becoming involved, therefore accepting the associated risks. However, the PMIE did result in disillusionment with his religious faith (note: though perhaps not directly causing this, more that it was a realisation).
Coping strategies		Other than his beliefs in the moral justification of involvement. These strategies interacted with each other to build resilience to negative psychological effects associated with involvement.
	Involvement in politics	Helped provide him with purpose and see the outcome of the conflict and peace process positively and keep up motivation. Helped him build social connections.
	Social connections	Within the Republican community. These provided support and the shared experience enabled him not to feel alone and cope with imprisonment.
	Psychological attitudes	Adopted a positive outlook, which allowed him to see how he grew as a person and what was gained from his involvement in the conflict. By mentally preparing for/expecting/accepting the pressures related to involvement, he coped when it was ongoing.
	Hobbies	Other than political involvement, activities such as sports are argued to help himself and others post-release in a similar fashion to those in/coming out of social isolation due to COVID-19.
Trauma in other ex-prisoners		Psychological difficulties coping during imprisonment and post-release, although there was also some resilience.

	Lack of coping strategies	Ex-prisoners who adopted a negative outlook on life post-release, or who were not involved in the "Struggle" and politics after the peace process, are argued to be more likely to adopt psychological difficulties. This emphasises the importance he placed on his coping strategies (see theme 'coping strategies') which are in direct contrast to these explanations.
	Support	Support to ex-prisoners should be provided within the Republican community, whether through professional psychological support or self-help groups. Funding was the main issue highlighted.
Psychological pressures		Although resilient to trauma, he acknowledged the difficulties and distress caused by the psychological pressures related to involvement and he would never want to go back to that situation. For example, he mentioned the impact on his family (divorce and separation from child whilst imprisoned), general stress and difficult experiences, and the challenge of the length of the conflict. He appears somewhat uncertain about how he was affected, and that if diagnosed by a professional they would find "scars" or "damage" (note: indicating lack of self-awareness of impact?/doesn't want to expand?)

Results Transcript D

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral justification protecting against moral injury		His strong beliefs in the moral justification of his involvement and the need for the IRA's actions built resilience, and prevented him from questioning the morality of his actions/dissonance between his moral beliefs and actions – therefore protecting him from moral injury.
	Involvement was vital	He believed his actions and involvement were morally justified given that there was a need for them due to British state violence and discrimination (i.e., their 'immorality') and that there was no alternative option. This was exemplified by his belief that they

		were now in a better situation. He emphasised his political awareness at this time, which was shaped by the global political context (e.g., decolonisation), further suggesting his belief in the legitimacy of his decisions and perspective.
	Complexity of moral context	Given the abnormal context of the conflict, what is "right" and "wrong" was blurred, and he believed may be difficult for outsiders to understand as what was "right" may seem "wrong".
	Moral self-image	Strong belief (to the point of defensiveness) in how own moral compass and him being a "good person", further highlighting the strength of his moral beliefs and his perspective that his actions were justified and vital.
	Comparison to moral injury risk in British army	He argued the British army was more at risk for moral injury and struggle more psychologically due to their lack of a strong moral justification/motivation for their actions (e.g., did it for a wage, were not in their own "streets", etc.), therefore emphasising how he believed the moral 'superiority' of the IRA protected volunteers from moral injury.
General resilience		Does not consider himself very badly affected and relatively speaking did not suffer greatly. He believes he adjusted and reintegrated well. He focused on the positive aspects of his experiences, such as his personal growth and political development.
General trauma and psychological challenges		Other than moral injury.
	Personal difficulties	Prison was seen as the most difficult. Difficulty of family separation and leading a "double" life (balancing identities as volunteer and outside life). Felt betrayed and "set-up" by the British state when imprisoned. Although he could rationalise this somewhat given the context and that he would do the same, he felt this was immoral given their responsibility to uphold the law (potential moral injury?). Emphasised it was these experiences that had the biggest negative effect on his rather than the actions he took (see theme "moral justification...").

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
	Psychological issues in the Republican ex-prisoner community	E.g., general loss as a result of the conflict, difficulties coping in prison, relationships breaking-up, social isolation, negative coping methods (alcohol and drug abuse), and challenges in adjusting post-conflict (perhaps to the point of individuals returning to violence). He argued these issues were not as a result of their activism, but due to imprisonment experiences.
Barriers to support		Need for changing legislation to resolve issues of confidentiality obligations preventing ex-prisoners from seeking support, and a need for funding. He argued these barriers indicate the British state is still "fighting" them.

Results Transcript E

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Changes in moral beliefs		Whilst some moral beliefs were maintained, there were also significant changes in perspective over time.
	Moral beliefs during the conflict	He felt the IRA was morally justified given British state violence (and the need to resist this), a narrowing view (caused by being raised in a Republican community, micro-narratives in the social environment, and a hardening in response to experiencing further state violence) and the lack of empathy as a young person creating an "immature" view. As a result, he felt no guilt or moral conflict relating to his involvement and it would have felt more "wrong" to do nothing. Although some actions (that he was not involved in) were considering questionable at the time and which should have been "conducted better" (e.g., where children were killed), he "let the IRA off the hook" as he allowed certain measures of error and blamed the British. Therefore, these events did not prevent him from joining the IRA.
	Gradual changes with age, time, and reflection	With reflection (aided by reading and philosophising), ageing (leading to greater empathy) and time (e.g., after prison), he began to see some IRA actions as more

		questionable and he became more critical. For example, he recognised some actions as "war crimes" and began to see violence as "futile/not worth it" as there were better ways to address the situation. Particular events such as the Omagh bomb also led him to become disillusioned with the use of physical force, and led to the opinion that it should never be used again and he became "anti-war".
	Maintenance of beliefs	However, despite these changes in perspective over time, he still maintains some original moral beliefs. For example, he does not feel guilt/shame/regret (rather, a "sense of responsibility"), he won't apologise (as they should not be blamed alone), believed the conflict was difficult to avoid given the circumstances, and kept a negative view of the British.
Betrayal by leadership		Felt betrayed, and morally injured, by the leadership's various actions and decisions, and became very critical of them and Sinn Féin.
	Moral injury from the betrayal of the hunger strikers	He believes the hunger strikers were betrayed and died "needlessly" due to leadership choices. This led to strong emotions and anger. He believes this is unforgiveable (more so than them "selling out", see subtheme below), especially as this was coming from "their side". This led to a loss of trust and a reassessment of the campaign.
	Betrayal related to the Good Friday Agreement	He felt disillusioned and betrayed by the leadership for using the GFA and the IRA's actions to build their careers. He sees the GFA as a defeat and as a result something which was not worth taking human life for.
	Betrayal of dissident Republicans	The murder of a dissident Republican following the GFA felt deeply immoral and played a role in him becoming disillusioned with the use of violence.
Impact of dissent		His life was negatively impacted by dissenting in a variety of ways e.g., affected his social relationships and resulted in social isolation (although his cross-community relationships improved), and faced bullying and intimidation. He also

	experiences nightmares of being kidnapped by the IRA for his dissent.
Other negative impacts resulting from involvement	He faced potentially traumatic events in prison and when interrogated, such as being physically abused. As a result, he still has nightmares of being back in prison but does not believe he was traumatised (see theme "coping and resilience"). He also feels guilt/regret from the difficulties he put his mother through.
Coping and resilience	He coped and built resilience to the pressures of involvement and as an active dissenter through his social relationships (he maintained some close friendships from his involvement), notably coping through his relationship with his partner. He adopted a hardened attitude where he believes it is important to "just deal with it" and "move on". He also philosophises and adopted a sceptical view e.g., on human nature and its potential for violence. He does not believe himself to be traumatised by his experiences (in fact, rather potentially to have a physically healthier lifestyle due to imprisonment) and does not feel anger towards those who mistreated him personally.
Moral dilemmas in other volunteers	He mentioned other individuals who may have felt morally injured or morally conflicted because of their actions and the betrayal of the leadership, leading to reflections on their involvement.
Supporting ex-prisoners	He believed what would help support Republican ex-prisoners struggling psychologically would be counselling, reintegration, greater honesty, cross-community work, and the removal of discriminatory barriers to reintegration. However, he recognises that this would be difficult from the point of view of IRA victims.

Results Transcript F

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral beliefs protecting against moral injury		His belief in the moral justification of the IRA protected him from moral injury as there

		were no moral conflicts as a result. These moral beliefs are maintained to this day.
	General circumstances shaping moral beliefs related to the conflict	He believed the IRA to be justified due to political circumstances at the time (e.g., the discrimination of the community) and as they were defending the community (at least originally). He also commented on this being needed and "reasonable" as they were unable to change these conditions legally.
	Personal factors shaping moral beliefs related to involvement	As a member of the community and following personal experiences of the "immorality" of the state (e.g., experiencing torture by those responsible to upkeep the law), he believed his involvement in the IRA and the IRA itself to be justified. He also commented on his involvement being made easier as he had no responsibilities when he was young and first became involvement. His experiences also lead him to maintain scepticism of the British army's present actions.
	Beliefs regarding IRA "mistakes"	Despite considering the IRA to be morally justified, he does admit "mistakes" where civilians were killed happened. However, these did not risk moral injury as he himself was not involved in such events (and he believed the actions he was involved in were justified and within his control), the IRA tried to prevent such incidents, and such incidents can happen in a "war" context. He also mentioned that in instances where members acted out of "personal vendettas", these would be wrong as they lack a moral justification, but he can only assume they happened.
Political disillusionment		Whilst not morally disillusioned with the IRA nor disagreeing with the ending of the armed campaign, he grew politically disillusioned with (and disengaged from) the IRA due to political disagreements when they decided to enter parliament, e.g., he saw them as reformist rather than transformative and left-wing. He also cited general organisational differences.
General trauma		Other than moral injury, as these experiences did not incite moral conflicts.
	Traumatic events	He encountered some potentially traumatic events such as he was likely personally

		betrayed when he was arrested, he was tortured, his siblings were killed in the conflict (grief/loss), and he found the hunger strikes very distressing (and does so to this day), especially given their prolonged nature.
	Effects and resilience	Whilst his experiences had some negative effects on his life, he was generally resilient. He commented on how his involvement placed stress on his family, but also brought them closer. His experiences hardened his outlook on life, but this attitude may also have protected him and made him focus on moving on from the past and recognising these events can happen in "wars". He stated he thinks he was "lucky" to have survived, but finds it hard to assess/reflect on how he was psychologically affected.
Trauma in other individuals		He commented on trauma in others who suffer significantly, and often resort to alcohol for self-medication. He is not sure whether this is due to moral conflictedness or due to the more general pressures of involvement. He suggested the main barriers to help-seeking are hardened attitudes (originally adopted in prison for self-defence and to prevent seeming weak to authorities), leading to difficulties in expressing these issues, and general stigma. Therefore, there is a need for greater acknowledgement of these problems in the community.

Results Transcript G

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral beliefs related to involvement		Shaped by various factors e.g., growing up in a conflict environment at a young age, the excitement of involvement as a teenager, the justification to retaliate against state violence, hearing about the hunger strikes, and familial involvement. He emphasised that this was a voluntary personal choice, and how he felt consumed by it during the conflict itself. Part of this was explained by the narrowing of his social circle when involved. He was politicised when in prison. These strong moral beliefs are maintained despite

		acknowledgement that mistakes were made, and despite some changes in perspective.
Changes in perception		Over time he developed some changes in perspective related to the conflict. However, his general moral beliefs were maintained.
	Loss of excitement and moral disengagement	Whilst he once felt excited to kill military targets (e.g., in a no-warning bomb which was prevented), and was morally disengaged from the impact this would have on human lives, with age he recognised this thinking was too simplistic. He now finds this attitude and lack of empathy difficult to remember/relate to.
	Need for acknowledgement of human cost	He believes there needs to be a recognition of the human cost of conflict to all political sides, and that this is important in the post-conflict context to allow individuals to be open to other perspectives. This perspective change was learned through his experiences in engaging in post-conflict work (e.g., that only defending personal moral views does not work and should be separated) and through being confronted with the human cost to families of British soldiers himself (see subtheme "confrontation with impact of violence"). He emphasised this human cost and suffering is a consequence to anyone involved in conflict, regardless of how "right" they were.
Potential moral injury		He experienced potentially morally injurious events despite maintaining belief in the moral justification of his involvement.
	Betrayal of the peace process	He feels disillusioned and that they lost. As a result, he views the conflict as a waste of time as he was not involved (and "Republicans didn't die") for this outcome. May be linked to personal feelings of regret (see theme "other difficulties").
	Guilt for "betraying" friends	Felt guilt and a sense of betraying his friends who passed away by engaging in community work with Loyalists and British soldiers. May have led to moral injury given the dissonance between his beliefs in the

		political justification for doing this work and his emotional connection to those who sacrificed their lives for the cause.
	Confrontation with the impact of violence	He was confronted with the loss and pain that relatives of British soldiers felt during an event in a peace centre. This led him to recognise the human cost of conflict in person for the first time (see subtheme "need for acknowledgement of human cost"). This resulted in feelings of anger at the organisation and found it "very difficult/draining emotionally". Although he stated he did not feel guilt or regret for his actions, he could relate to their feelings. He felt an "internal battle" (cognitive dissonance) between trying to understand why he was upset when "they were wrong".
Other psychological difficulties		Such as "selfish" regrets related to personal losses and the impact his involvement had on his family, anger at the British legal system and "peace experts" offering easy solutions despite little personal experience of conflict, and difficulties reintegrating post-release.
Coping		He copes with psychological challenges related to involvement through his community work.
Trauma in the Republican community		Trauma is argued to be expressed in different ways (e.g., isolation/addiction) and is worsened with age and reflection. He argued it is largely caused by imprisonment experiences. He explained that this trauma is often denied by ex-prisoners given their feelings of moral superiority. He expressed a need for casual inter-community conversation about this for individuals to share experiences (i.e., not feel alone) and to ensure there is a shared understanding. He warned that individuals should be careful not to interfere with trauma, as it could be worsened.

Results Transcript H

Note: not convicted so limited on what he could speak about

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Shaping of moral beliefs		Rather than Republicanism being instilled by his family, his beliefs were shaped through witnessing state violence and discrimination as a child and teenager. His beliefs related to involvement were shaped by growing up in a context where he would hear about both violence in his local area (including a murder of his own relative) as well as more famous events such as Bloody Sunday (which made him want to "fight back" when he would be old enough). Additionally, he knew other people locally who became involved.
Moral challenges		He believes everyone involved in the conflict was morally challenged. He believes this is especially the case when you look back, compared to when you were in the middle of the conflict where it was hard to have the mental space/time to reflect.
	Civilian casualties	He believes the injuring/killing of civilians (e.g., Enniskillen) was morally wrong and cannot be justified. Although he was not involved in such incidents himself, it resulted in feelings of guilt for being part of the organisation causing these incidents.
	Protective moral justification	However, he did not feel disillusioned or deeply conflicted with the IRA's use of violence (other than considering other means near the end of the conflict) as he rationalised these incidents, which protected him from moral injury. For example, he still believes violence was the only way to fight oppression. He also emphasised civilian casualties were 'mistakes' and not intentional, and that they could happen in any war context. He suggested it would be considered much more immoral if it had been intentional, and therefore believes British soldiers/police may have struggled more psychologically as they were less justified in their actions and had greater control.
Loss of faith in the Catholic Church		He lost his faith in the Catholic Church as he disagreed with their attitude towards Republicans. This was also triggered through an argument he had with a priest about the use of violence by the IRA and the state.
Other emotionally challenging experiences		There were a number of events and experiences that were emotionally challenging and

	potentially traumatic, although they did not result in any moral conflictedness. For example, a relative was murdered by soldiers when he was a child (and he saw the crime scene afterwards), being rearrested and in prison again at an older age (resulting in some questioning of his involvement), being in prison during the hunger strikes, lost trust and felt betrayed by informers/state agents who he considered his friends/comrades, reflecting on what his family went through, and experiences (still) of grief/loss of life caused by the conflict. He finds these experiences difficult to talk about.
Resilience	Despite the challenges he encountered, and finding some of these emotionally difficult, he considers himself "lucky" not to have been very badly psychologically or emotionally affected. Some factors which helped build resilience were his faith in the cause (see subtheme "protective moral justification"), that he felt supported by other ex-prisoners in prison (who helped reassure each other), being young and less reflective, have a supportive family, adopting an attitude of supressing doubts and thoughts and focusing on underlying motivations instead. He still maintains a positive view where he believes they are now in a better place because of the conflict.
Trauma in other Republican ex-prisoners	He commented on how everyone in Northern Ireland was affected by the conflict, and that some ex-prisoners suffer from depression and drinking problems. He also believes some individuals were involved in "things they couldn't handle", and felt disillusioned and guilty (i.e., moral injury). He believes this occurred when individuals lost sight of why they became involved (one of his own protective factors). Ex-prisoners are suggested by him to be best supported through ex-prisoner groups, as this allows for trust and for individuals to feel understood. However, these groups need funding to maintain their provision of support.

Results Transcript I

Note: not convicted so limited on what he could speak about

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral beliefs related to the conflict		Growing up in the conflict (i.e., an abnormal moral context) motivated involvement and political interest from an early age, as well as led to a normalisation/romantisation of Republicanism (which has been passed down to his own child). He evidenced some moral confusion/recognition of complexity when he was a child (e.g., parents supporting both IRA and peace). Witnessed much 'immoral' state violence (e.g., Bloody Sunday) as a child (may have resulted in trauma – see subtheme "traumatic events"), leading to a view that the IRA was "right" in "defending" the community. In fact, it may be that moral injury was caused by witnessing such 'immoral' violence and that it was this moral injury which contributed to his involvement/support. Despite acknowledgement of IRA "accidents" and unease with some of their actions, he maintains his moral beliefs as he sees the positive impact it had. This moral belief is also maintained by regular reminders and memories of state violence. He supports the peace process, and sees himself as moral.
Negative effects of the conflict		General trauma, not specifically moral injury
	Traumatic events	He experienced and witnessed numerous events that were likely traumatic and has a lasting impact e.g., family member dying in prison without early release/sympathy from authorities, deaths of friends/community members, witnessing severe injuries of civilians (e.g., shootings), and being assaulted by the Army. These events may have contributed to his moral beliefs related to the conflict (see theme "moral beliefs…").
	Psychological/emotional effects	He has "stark" memories of traumatic events and occasional nightmares, as well as strong emotions of sadness and grief. His stress is suggested to have manifested into physical ill health. He sees himself as generally resilient ("no breakdown") but finds it difficult to understand how he was psychologically affected.

	Impact on social relationships	He recognises the stress and the negative impact his involvement in the conflict had on his family e.g., mother's health, trauma in children, break-up of a relationship.
	Religious disillusionment	He grew disillusioned with the Church due to the clashing of his moral beliefs related to the IRA and their condemnation of it (rather than of the Army). This may have contributed to an increase in desire to support the IRA (see theme "moral beliefs…"). However, he separated and maintained his faith in God and sees himself as a "selfish Christian" (for resorting to his faith when in "dire straits").
	Coping	He copes with these effects through Republican activism and community work, activities such as hobbies and breathing exercises, his social relationships within the community, by adopting a positive attitude (focusing on the positive impact of the conflict on his life) and an attitude of "getting/moving on" with life.
Potential moral injury and trauma in the community		He discussed general psychological problems and addiction in the community. He believes/"doesn't doubt" there is potential moral injury/guilt in Republican ex-prisoners for their actions, some of which may have led individuals to turn to religion. However, he has not come across this himself. Trauma is also present in the community due to imprisonment experiences. He mentioned various ways that community groups provide services to, and support, Republican ex-prisoners with these issues. However, there is still a macho culture which is a barrier to help-seeking. This is helped somewhat by demonstrating that traditional state soldiers also seek support.

Results Transcript J

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Factors shaping motivation to join the IRA		Such as youth, being raised on/the romanticisation of Republicanism (i.e., to defend the community), witnessing state violence and having friendships/connections in the IRA and in the community. State violence, such as being beaten by soldiers himself and

			witnessing Bloody Sunday, also reaffirmed his moral beliefs related to involvement and led him to rejoin it.
Organisational disillusionment			When he was still in the IRA, he grew disillusioned with individuals in the organisation and with its strategy, which he saw as going nowhere and led to too much loss of life (of victims and volunteers).
Moral crises			Moral crises over time leading to moral disillusionment, moral injury, and disengagement from the IRA. He is now, as a result, very critical of the IRA and appears to have recovered from moral injury.
		Moral disillusionment	Several factors led to a gradual moral disillusionment with the IRA, which mostly happened in prison. Firstly, he disagreed with IRA actions seen as unacceptable morally, such as no-warning bombs and sectarian shootings of Protestants (which the IRA "lied" about). Secondly, he studied human rights in prison and began to view the IRA's actions as assaults on these. And thirdly, he studied religion, particularly the four gospels, and began to view himself as a sinner. As a result of this disillusionment, he believed Republicans should've pursued democratic means instead.
		Potential moral injury	Becoming disillusioned with the IRA morally and seeing their acts as "assaults" on human rights, contributed to a "crisis of conscience" or a "crisis of the mind". He felt especially guilty about the accidental injuries of unintended/"innocent" victims of his bombs. All he longed for at that time was "peace of mind/conscience" and felt a need to repent as he viewed himself as a sinner.
		Disengagement from, and critique of, the IRA	Because of these moral crises, he disengaged from and critiqued the IRA publicly. This led to him becoming ostracised and threatened by the IRA in prison. He continues to see them as "human rights abusers" and remains angry that this is not acknowledged in Northern Ireland, leading to victims being ignored. He feels alone in this sentiment and finds it astonishing how other ex-prisoners do not have a similar "crisis of conscience".

	Recovering from moral injury	Other than disengaging from the IRA, various reparative actions helped him recover from moral injury e.g., confessing his sins (which released guilt), writing letters of apology to his victims (although he continued to distinguish the "innocent" victims, indicating some original moral beliefs may have been maintained), time (loss of emotive aspect), charity work, and supporting/advocating for victims and against the IRA (which he does fulltime without getting paid, and which he felt a strong responsibility for). Feeling a motivation/responsibility to do this work suggests to him he is "a bit troubled", although he views himself as generally psychologically resilient (no one noticed anything/never needed psychological support/was able to work and study and maintain a happy relationship). He feels he has "repented".
Moral anger at Catholic clergy		From a personal bad experience with a priest, and through investigation of other clergy members, he is angry at how they side with the IRA and do not speak out against their "atrocities". He believes they should be siding with and supporting/acknowledging victims instead. He actively speaks out against this yet feels alone in doing so.
Other psychological challenges from involvement		Separate from moral challenges, he also experienced other potentially traumatic events. For example, the loss/grief of friends (leading to him temporarily pulling away from the IRA), witnessing trauma (e.g., Bloody Sunday), being abused and threatened by prison officers, being attacked by the press, and being ostracised. However, he appears to have been resilient against these experiences and does not believe he has psychological problems as a result (see subtheme "recovering from moral injury").
Trauma and disillusionment in other ex-prisoners		He mentioned how other ex-prisoners were also disillusioned with the IRA and suffered similar "crises of conscience". One ex-prisoner was mentioned in particular, with potential moral injury (a "troubled conscience") and PTSD. This individual has also become disillusioned with the IRA, but this results in difficulties seeking help/knowing where to go

Results Transcript K

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Exploratory Comments
Moral beliefs related to involvement		How his moral beliefs related to involvement were shaped, how morality was considered/debated within the IRA, and how these beliefs led to no moral conflicts. His moral beliefs (such as that the Armed Struggle was necessary and was "created by the British") are maintained to this day.
	Shaping of moral beliefs	His family was involved in the civil rights campaign which allowed him to develop a sense of "social justice". What he witnessed through growing up in the conflict context at a young age (e.g., witnessing/hearing about state violence such as Bloody Sunday) led to a sense of discrimination. As a result, he perceived the Armed Struggle to be necessary. His beliefs were further "hardened" by his imprisonment experiences.
	Morality within Republican movement	He mentioned some moral discussions took place in the IRA, such as when individuals moved from Fianna Éireann to the IRA where young individuals could end up taking part in operations where people were killed, and how this might affect such individuals. Views on morality within the IRA were also affected by the "hypocrisy" of those criticising its violence, such as the British Army and the Catholic Church.
	No moral conflicts	He claimed he encountered no moral conflicts or challenges throughout his involvement, although he did acknowledge that some things happened that "shouldn't have happened". However, he never grew morally disillusioned and believed the IRA to be morally justified.
Emotional resilience		Despite encountering a variety of difficult and distressing experiences, which affected

		him emotionally, he believes he did not suffer any long-term effects and that his life was not greatly affected by them.
	Emotionally challenging experiences	He experienced various potentially traumatic and difficult experiences, some of which emotionally affected him. For example, he mentioned the hunger strikes (leading to feelings of frustration and grief/loss), Loyalist attacks on offices, conditions in prison and violence/brutality of prison warders whilst on protests, feelings of betrayal when people left the IRA/protests, and how supporting others affected by the conflict was "emotionally draining".
	Factors contributing to resilience	Various factors contributed to his resilience to trauma, most notably his Republicanism and political involvement (including after the conflict) which provided him with an ability to rationalise events and move on (especially with age). He also mentioned that social support of others within the community helped, and that these experiences were normalised leading to emotional control and viewing them "pragmatically".
Barriers to psychological support in community		He acknowledged that there is trauma prevalent in the community, leading to issues of intergenerational trauma. However, ex-prisoners are argued to have difficulties in accessing psychological support due to trust and confidentiality issues related to legislation. This is argued to be a consequence of the legacy of the conflict, where the British still view them as "wrong" leading to these processes not being "value-free". Therefore, he believes that the Republican perspective needs to be understood.

Appendix H: Study 2 Initial Codes Thematic Analysis (prior to theme development)

Transcript	Code	Notes
Z	Catholic upbringing	There is an emphasis on moral development in a Catholic upbringing (both by school and Church) leading to an exposure to a certain set of moral beliefs associated with the religion
	Republican community	Exposure to Republican moral beliefs where violence was seen as the only option to fight an "unjust system" in their historical narrative of injustice
	Moral injury in population	Moral injury argued to be experienced in this community. Widespread but not recognised as such. Little known about betrayal, but other two types seen as applicable.
	Moral conflict between Catholic and Republican upbringing.	The Republican belief in the need for violence conflicts with the Catholic moral belief system. This dissonance had to be rationalised (e.g., by discussions in the organisations), but if this is not resolved then there is risk for conflict and moral injury (e.g., moral injury Participant J in study 1). This conflict also makes moral injury more likely in Republican ex-prisoners than in traditional state soldiers.
	Moral injury through perpetration of violence	Some individuals argued to be morally injured through their perpetration of violence. The more one is involved with this, the more one is at risk. This is also likely a risk in more recent paramilitary-style attacks/human rights abuses.
	Moral injury through witnessing violence	Witnessing violence or being indirectly involved in it also creates risk for moral injury.
	Explosions	Explosions perceived as especially traumatic and could therefore be potentially morally injurious whether through witnessing or perpetrating. This is likely given the difficulty of the confrontation with the effects of violence.
	Issues in identification	Moral injury can be hard to identify as the containment of dissent within these

		organisations resulting in less honesty on their beliefs and the impact the conflict had on them. As a result of this, the impact and effects of it are affected and come out as addiction of family breakdown instead.
	Psychological and emotional impact	Potential effects of moral injury he identified include feelings of powerlessness/shame/guilt (especially over time), sleep problems, alcoholism/addiction, and flashbacks. These effects may be blocked out/supressed resulting in further problems. Perception of personal identity may be affected. Encompass all other trauma he recognises in community.
	Impact on relationships	Negative impact on social relationships e.g., family breakdown. Trust affected.
	Impact on religion	Largely negative effects on religious beliefs and relationship with the Church, although moral injury could also have some positive effects on it when utilised to resolve conflict.
	Disillusionment	A minority will have changed their views on the use of violence and have become disillusioned or disengaged.
	Support needed	Support for these individuals can be psychological e.g., ex-prisoner organisations. A holistic approach could also be taken which would include spiritual/religious support (although there is the barrier of the damaged relationship with the Church.
Y	Influence of Republican families and community	Influence of the social environment with a tradition of Republicanism contributed to involvement being perceived as moral for some.
	Experiences of conflict	Experiences of conflict (both particular events and riots) resulting in an abnormal moral context influencing views on it being seen as moral and necessary. As a child, this led to violence being seen as exciting and normalised. However, with age it was viewed more seriously.
	Moral disengagement	Some individuals evidenced moral disengagement during the conflict (e.g., celebrating deaths - dehumanisation) whilst others did not.

		Moral injury in population	Applicable but unsure of how common. More apparent in relative peace. Argued to be present in any conflict situation, hence not necessarily more/less prevalent than in traditional state soldiers (however, does state that British soldiers had less of a moral motivation than Republican volunteers).
		Betrayal of the peace process	Moral injury present in some individuals (especially dissenting Republicans) given they felt betrayed by the peace process. This led to a questioning of what the suffering was for given that political purpose not achieved. This is also argued to be prevalent in traditional state soldiers.
		Moral conflictedness over time	Although individuals often to do not regret their actions, there is some moral conflict and guilt that arose from realising the effects and loss caused by the conflict (reversing of moral disengagement?) and individuals may need counselling for this. Hence, there is an eventual conflict between their motivation/belief in the morality of involvement vs. this realisation and guilt demonstrating the complexity of the moral context. This is linked to, and worsened by, the "betrayal" of the peace process, as political goals were not achieved. This sentiment therefore risks further moral injury. Alternatively, it could be somewhat resolved when rationalised and contextualised.
		Psychological and emotional impact	Individual differences in impact and how they "deal with it". Feelings of being lost/detached. Alcoholism and addiction. Some seek help whereas others are in denial or isolate themselves and do not speak about it.
		Disillusionment	Some, especially post-conflict, grew disillusioned with the use of violence. A small number of individuals developed this during the conflict, but he is unsure of whether this indicates they were less committed (i.e., believed less in the moral justification) or whether they understood the suffering was not worth it before others did.

		Impact on family	Risks of intergenerational trauma to children of Republican ex-prisoners. Relationships and children affected by aggression and addiction issues.
		Issues related to denial	Problems arise when Republican ex-prisoners do not talk about their issues and when they block out feelings/deny them. This leads to aggression, which then influences their family relationships.
		Resilience	However, there is also a lot of resilience in the community and some individuals have been able to psychologically detach.
		Counselling	Counselling, such as provided by ex-prisoner/community groups, would help. This would also aid to develop a survivor mentality rather than a victimhood one, which was highlighted as important.
		Talking	Talking to those in the community and those they trust or who share experiences helps. This can be informal such as though reflecting on positive memories during the conflict.
X		Experiences of violence and discrimination	Involvement was perceived as moral given need for defence against violent experiences and discrimination (i.e. immorality of other groups)
		Moral injury in population	Moral injury was applicable and he has come across it. It is more clear post-release. However, according to him it should be viewed more broadly regarding its impact and causes.
		Conflicting responsibilities	The moral motivation and feeling of responsibility for involvement morally conflicts in some individuals with the impact their involvement had on the family (and their response to it), including/worsened by the negative social and economic conditions that are a consequence of it and imprisonment. This resulted in a sense of failure and guilt. This negative eventual outcome for their personal lives, and issues in reintegration, led to disillusionment and potential questioning of the morality of their actions/involvement. This is especially difficult, as whilst they could justify their actions they blamed others for the post-release conditions.

		Betrayal of the peace process	Disillusionment and latent moral injury can be revealed as a result of questioning the peace process and whether involvement was worth it.
		Moral conflict through perpetration of violence	Perpetration-based moral injury in some when removed from the narrative-reinforcing Republican social circle and when confronted with its consequences. This can lead to regret. Some individuals were morally protected from this by being able to rationalise/justify actions e.g., viewing actions as planned, with clear parameters and orders given. However, this could also change over time. For example, some individuals could no longer blame the orders they were given.
		Moral injury in other groups from the conflict	While there is likely a similar impact of moral injury in Republicans as in traditional state soldiers, it is easier to identify in state soldiers given their support structure. Additionally, it is easier to recognise in either side nowadays given psychoeduction and awareness. However, moral injury is suggested to be more common in Loyalists given that there was/is less support in their community, they lost greater power (e.g., Republicans more integrated in government and gained power), and because they may have felt failed by, and grew disillusioned with, the British government.
		Psychological and emotional impact	Such as guilt, internalised emotions/denial and turning inwards, and alcoholism.
		Impact on social relationships	Moral injury could lead to family break-up, loss of trust, individuals moving away from the community. Some may seek out other Republican ex-prisoners to engage with who would understand with and perhaps for some reinforcement.
		Disillusionment with the use of violence	Although some are argued to have grown disillusioned with the use of violence due to moral injury, this is argued not to lead to personal forgiveness (i.e., remain morally injured).
		Impact of imprisonment on lives	Face(d) social exclusion post-release. They struggled with post-release financial and social responsibilities /difficulties and

		accepting that involvement led to little reward. This is argued to be the biggest issue. They struggled to reintegrate and know where to fit in both the family and within the organisation post-release. Imprisonment led to a loss of social relationships in prison (given different context from outside world) and marriages breaking down. There were individual differences in dealing with prison, resulting in psychological problems in some.
	Issue of support	Given complexity of situation and how much time has gone by, he believes it is too late for support. Therefore, a study should be conducted on their behaviour and quality of life to know what is most important to target.
W	Catholic upbringing	Moral beliefs were shaped by Catholic upbringing.
	Just war beliefs	Moral beliefs were influenced by just-war principles in accordance with their Catholic beliefs. Involvement was considered to be justified in this way by the British presence.
	Experiences of violence	An emotive moral response to particular events and violence was common.
	Cultural factors	A combination of a macho culture and abnormal moral context caused by the conflict led to excitement (especially in youth) and they "lowered their moral compass" to fight.
	Moral injury in population	Moral injury perceived as applicable, especially post-conflict.
	Betrayal of the peace process	The biggest cause of moral injury is argued to be the feeling of betrayal associated with the peace process, as their aims were not achieved. Argued to be the most morally injurious.
	Perpetration-based moral injury	Specific events that were perpetrated by themselves were considered as immoral and hard to justify following later reflection. This is more morally injurious than witnessing/placing orders.
	Protective and risk factors	Foot soldiers were more at risk for perpetration-based moral injury than those in a leadership position who placed orders given that they had less control and hence could find actions more difficult to

		rationalise. While they may not have reflected on this at the time given that they would follow and look up to leadership, they did later leading to a feeling of betrayal. However, betrayal from the peace process considered to be the biggest cause for moral injury as such orders could still protect them, they could justify their actions through just war and a need to resist, and as the betrayal was done by their own side. However, there are individual differences as well but only a minority were completely protected by complete rationalisation and inflexibility and a lack of reflection.
	Moral conflict in the 1980s	The 1980s were considered a time for much greater moral reflection/disillusionment. This was caused by seeing moral outrage by civilians, feeling that the Armed Struggle wasn't working, ageing and a commitment to other responsibilities, Republican feuds, and a change in culture such as influenced by the feminist movement.
	Comparison to traditional state soldiers	Believes moral injury is a greater risk for Republicans as they had a greater moral motivation and volunteered their involvement which they perceived as necessary. They were therefore engaged in events that they would not have outside of conflict (whereas this is not necessarily the case for traditional soldiers) risking moral conflict. (Note: as this moral motivation has been cited as a differentiating factor by different participants, it clearly plays a role in moral injury but their perspective on the outcome may influence whether it protected them more than state soldiers or placed them at a greater risk, i.e., if the outcome is considered a loss then there is a greater chance for moral injury as goals not realised despite these sacrifices).
	Individual differences	Individual differences in consequences of moral injury caused by individual differences in moral beliefs and their development.
	Psychological and emotional impact	Such as alcoholism/drug abuse (to block emotions), shame and guilt, suicide.

		Impact on social relationships	Such as impact on family, domestic violence, distrust in community (caused by informers).
		Impact on religion	Whilst Loyalists were more likely to have moral injury impact their relationship with religion, a few Republicans did. Some of their moral beliefs may have been influenced by priests during the conflict, especially in individuals with leadership positions.
		Sources of other trauma	Such as prison experiences and conditions, Blanket Protest and hunger strikes, and torture. Some victims and cases such as of the Hooded Men's healing processes are affected by the fact that they are still fighting for recognition.
		Consequences of other trauma	Again, this is very individualised. Example consequences include suicide, PTSD, impact on their relationships with their partners, identity issues post-conflict, physical/health issues. There is also some resilience.
		Recommendations for support	Psychological help provided by community/Republican ex-prisoner organisations such as his own.
		Barriers to support	Such as denial, living in the past, and a lack of help-seeking given guilt and macho culture. Funding is also a problem given a lack of trust in that which is provided by the state, highlighting the importance of EU funding.
V		Response to experiences of violence	A defensive, emotive moral reaction was developed in response to events/origins of the conflict (which then developed into an offensive operation).
		Youth	Young people developed these moral beliefs given greater likelihood of abuse by police and army creating a sense of injustice as well as excitement. Additionally, young people more likely to seek belonging and meaning.
		Tradition of Republicanism	The history and tradition of Republicanism in the community was a factor in their development of moral beliefs.
		Moral injury in population	Argued to be experienced by anyone who experiences trauma which was the vast majority of Republican ex-prisoners. All three types were applicable. However, the

		experience is individualised hence it is difficult to define/label given the complexity of the moral context. Believes moral injury should be looked at more broadly as it is currently confining e.g., what it means in terms of applying it to their lives.
	Perpetration-based moral injury	At risk for perpetration-based moral injury as violence is not easy nor a natural human reaction. As a result, there will be moral reflection (and potential moral conflict) after but that reflection depends on what happens after e.g., issues with reintegration.
	Post-conflict moral injury	State narrative and treatment of Republican ex-prisoners was argued to be morally injurious. For example, their barriers to reintegration/inequality vs. treatment of prison officers such as their pension who may have been abusive.
	Witnessing-based moral injury	Described a personal experience of moral injury/moral conflict he had himself from something he witnessed/omission-based moral injury.
	Risk and protective factors	May be less likely to have moral injury when involved in acts (such as bombings) yourself as one is more likely to resolve cognitive dissonance through attributing/rationalising the immoral act to the circumstances (although some cannot reconcile it in this way leading to moral injury) i.e., attribution theory. This is the case in any conflict for any type of soldiers. Being Catholic may put one at greater risk given feeling of judgment and ingrained guilt and hence conflict between beliefs. However, most could reconcile this conflict as some aspects of involvement were experienced as spiritual e.g., the Hunger Strikes. This made it reconcilable as the Church speech is simply theoretical, whereas the spiritual experience leads to a feeling of it being moral.
	Psychological and emotional impact	Such as guilt and shame (but hard to distinguish whether caused by moral injury or other trauma), a contaminated sense of identity (leading to vulnerability, shame,

		and self-loathing), a darkened worldview, anger.	
	Impact on social relationships	Moral injury impacted relationship given disconnection, shame leading to withdrawal, and mistrust. Lack of trust triggered by darkened worldview. Some loneliness.	
	Consequences of trauma other than moral injury	All possible outcomes of trauma such as addiction/OCD/phobias/anxiety/depression, a negative view of themselves and others (mistrust), loss of meaning. Coercive captivity/imprisonment led to a contaminated sense of identity (vulnerability and self-loathing). Also some resilience.	
	Intergenerational trauma	Family is also impacted by trauma and there is an issue of intergenerational trauma which requires further research.	
	Recommendations for support	Need psychological work such as reframing their narratives for more positive meanings and to live in the present, and to help them unpack and understand the impact of their trauma on their lives and provide them with psychological tools. Need to have their experiences validated. Need to speak to others they feel comfortable with, that would understand them, and who they trust. This can be strangers or those with similar experiences. More groupwork would also be beneficial to this. Greater funding in community is needed, including for conferences and training in mental health.	
	Barriers to support	Denial and lack of awareness (need more education). Terrorism Act is problematic given confidentiality problem as well as that it conveys a value judgment.	
U	Experiences of violence	Experience of violence in their community led to them feeling a need to respond and view this as morally justified.	
	Moral injury in population	Moral injury seen as applicable and useful. Often arising from a difficulty in reconciling the dissonance between their goals with the process/methods of achieving those.	
	Betrayal-based moral injury	Given the context where trust and loyalty was vital, there was a risk moral injury when secrets were betrayed or in cases of agents. Betrayal-based moral injury could	

		also occur from the decisions related to the peace process (big spectrum of response to this, some did not see it as worth it).
	Perpetration-based moral injury	Moral injury could occur when individuals could not reconcile the conflict between orders given and their own perspective (issues in hierarchy-structure). However, this was not discussed to him in greater detail. This may have been especially difficult if felt betrayed by the peace process as it would not have been worth it.
	Comparison to traditional state soldiers	Some scope for moral injury in Republican ex-prisoners that are not present in traditional state militaries such as a greater risk of betrayal, and a less legally regulated system of discipline/punishment.
	Issue in identifying moral injury in this population	Given the discipline and loyalty within Republican organisations, and a strong culture of abiding authority, this leads to a difficulty in expressing dissent and potential moral injury.
	Issue in identifying effects of moral injury in this population	Difficult to disentangle consequences of moral injury from effects of other experiences of trauma e.g., imprisonment.
	Consequences of imprisonment	Substantial effects of long-term imprisonment such as on their career/employment/family/relationships. Reintegration problems. Felt socially isolated. As a result, alcohol abuse/depression/ill health.
	Impact on family	Commonly felt guilt towards family who were impacted by their involvement.
	Recommendations for support	Better social and state provision that targets poverty. Psychological support and counselling by those they trust and who understand their experiences. Priests also found to be a source of support/comfort.
	Barriers to support	He experienced a lack of interest from mental health services and health services.
T	Experiences of violence and injustice	Moral beliefs influenced by an emotive reaction to violent experiences of British state/oppression/injustice. This led to a feeling of an armed response being necessary and justified.
	Treatment of prisoners	Increased beliefs in the morality of the Armed Struggle.

	Moral injury in population	Moral injury seen as applicable. All three types are potentially present in population. However, the moral complexity of the context, as well as individual differences in moral justifications and moral suffering from involvement, make labelling examples as moral injury difficult. For example, perpetration-based moral injury could be mediated by subsequent abuse in prison. As a result, all potential sources and examples of moral injury were also questioned and confounding factors were identified (demonstrating the awareness of the abnormal moral context as a member of the community himself).
	Betrayal-based moral injury	One individual felt betrayed and potentially morally injured by having been informed upon. This led to disillusionment. He also subsequently apologised for the actions he perpetrated, although there is the chance that this confession was forced.
	Perpetration-based moral injury	A few individuals were argued to have psychological (and potential moral) injuries leading to them handing themselves over to the police for actions they perpetrated after a night of drinking. However, they then claimed they were not sound of mind at the time. Additionally, one of these individuals is now involved with violent dissident Republican groups (which either indicates there was no moral injury, or that moral injury lead to greater involvement to cope).
	Moral challenges of violence	There is general empathy/sympathy/sadness in the community for families of those who were accidentally killed or where "enemy personnel were killed". There was a reluctance to use violence yet usually there would be no moral injury as it could be justified as necessary. Therefore, whilst morally challenging any cognitive dissonance could be resolved. This further demonstrates the moral complexity in navigating decisions in this abnormal moral context.
	Witnessing-based moral injury	One INLA member may have been morally injured or disillusioned by an explosion

		caused by Provisionals which killed civilians. However, there is the caveat of the rivalry/feuds between the two organisations.
	Issues in identification of moral injury	Moral injury may also be harder to identify given the culture where there is a reluctance to discuss one's true feelings, and there is much secrecy given the risk of charges.
	Moral injury in other groups from the conflict	More clear-cut examples of moral injury found in traditional state soldiers and Loyalists.
	Psychological and emotional consequences	Such as a "mental breakdown", and psychological illness that manifests as physical illness.
	Impact on social relationships	Such as loss of trust. In the case of the betrayal-based PMIE, there was mistrust, he became an informed himself and he moved away afterwards (socially isolated himself from the community). In the perpetration-based PMIE, his relationship broke-up. He suggested that in that case, his ex-partner may have suffered from indirect moral injury as a result of his actions which she did not consider moral.
	Impact on religion	Some morally injured individuals are suggested to turn to religion and priests out of guilt.
	Sources of other trauma	Such as physical/sexual abuse in prison (intrusive searches), torture during interrogations and harassment, injuries yet being barred from pensions, grief, witnessing violence to comrades/friends, prison protests.
	Effects of other trauma	Such as PTSD, latent trauma, suicide, intergenerational trauma, drug/alcohol abuse, and social isolation. However, there is also resilience and reflection on fond memories of the conflict.
	Intergenerational trauma	Suggested there are risks for intergenerational trauma in this population.
	Recommendations of support	Barriers and marginalisation should be reduced e.g., to travel/employment/child adoption/insurance/pension i.e., "discriminatory" legislation should be removed. Activities provided by ex-prisoner groups (e.g., yoga/breathing

		exercises/support for hobbies/training or courses for employability) are argued to be beneficial, also to reduce social isolation. Psychological support should be provided. Cross-community work, in which ex-prisoner groups play a big role, are argued to be very important for peacebuilding and should receive greater funding and government support.
	Barriers to support	Reduction in funding and many ex-prisoners will not admit that they are suffering.