Community, 'Truth-telling' and Conflict Resolution

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A Critical Evaluation of the Role of Community-based 'Truth-telling' Processes for Post-conflict Transition: A Case Study of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project

A Research Report submitted to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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Contents

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Introduction

The Ardoyne Commemoration Project

The Ardoyne Commemoration Project was formed in 1998. It was a community-based group that set out to remember the lives of 99 people from the mainly nationalist/republican Ardoyne area of North Belfast who died as a result of the conflict. It did so by collating, editing and publishing the testimonies of around 300 relatives, friends and eyewitnesses. The result was a book, *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, published in 2002.[1]

As an area Ardoyne witnessed amongst the highest levels of conflict-related deaths. The Cost of the Troubles Survey showed that North Belfast (BT14 & BT15) has been the site of some of the 'most sustained and intensive sectarian killing'.[2] More than 20% of all conflict-related deaths have taken place within a single square mile in North Belfast. The various parties to the conflict between 1969 and 1998 killed a total of 99 people from Ardoyne.[3] Of these 50 were killed by loyalists, 26 by members of the security forces (British army and RUC), 9 by the IRA, 3 by the INLA and 1 by the Official IRA. 6 more were members of the IRA killed inadvertently while on active service, 1 died accidentally and in 3 cases it is unclear who was responsible. For an area with a population of 7,500 the overall total of 99 conflict-related victims represents over 10 times the average Northern Ireland 'troubles' related death rate. In addition, close to 35% of the male population have been political prisoners over the past 30 years of conflict.[4]

The researchers were closely involved in the work of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project throughout. They were members of its committee and (with others) acted as interviewers, editors and authors. Following the publication of *Ardoyne: the Untold Truth* they began to consider two questions. First, does such work do any good, either for the individuals and families who participated or on a wider social and political level? Second, were there any lessons learnt in carrying out the Ardoyne Project that could benefit other communities who might want to undertake similar work? These were the two primary reasons driving the current research.

Assessing 'Truth-telling'

There was also a wider context that impacted on the current research. First, the growing debate on what forms of 'truth-telling' (if any) would be best suited to promoting positive and progressive post-conflict transition in Northern Ireland. Second, what lessons might be learnt from the international experience of 'truth-telling' mechanisms. It has increasingly been argued that Northern Ireland needs to set up some form of 'truth-telling' process in order to deal with the past. This was recently highlighted by the announcement of consultations on a proposed peace commission by the Minister of State Paul Murphy MP.[5] Many claims have been made about the potentially beneficial consequences of such 'truth-telling' processes.

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[1] Ardoyne Commemoration Project (2002) *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications.
[2] Fay, Marie-Therese, Morrissey, Mike & Smyth, Marie (1999) *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs*, London, Pluto.
[3] This is the figure of those Ardoyne victims that the ACP was able to identify and may not be definitive.
[4] AYPF (1998) *Ardoyne Youth Providers Forum: Strategy Document*, Belfast.
[5] *Irish Times*, 2nd June 2004.

However, to date, limited empirical research has been carried out on their possible benefits or drawbacks. That which has been done has tended to focus upon formal or state-led initiatives and specific target groups (victims groups/ ex-combatants). Nevertheless, there is evidence (not least through the personal contact and research carried out by the authors in Guatemala, South Africa and Chile) that countries, which have undergone such processes, are not necessarily content with all aspects of their conduct or outcome.

It was within this context that we were keen to learn more about the experiences, both positive and negative, of the individuals and groups who were involved with the Ardoyne Commemoration Project and also to gain an insight into how it was perceived within wider nationalist and unionist communities. This research therefore set out to explore and critically assess what impact the work of the ACP had both within and outside of the community. A series of interviews were carried out during a 12 month period with a number of key target groups. These included; 30 relatives who had provided their testimonies to the ACP, 4 people who worked on the project, 6 representatives of a range of groups and bodies within Ardoyne, 6 representatives of community, human rights and victims' groups from the wider nationalist community and the same from the unionist community.[6] The interviewees were asked to give their views on a number of issues; how they felt the project had gone about its work, how it impacted upon them and those they knew, what contribution similar projects might make to other communities or the wider task of post-conflict transition and what principles and practices they believed should underpin any such initiatives. Their responses are the basis for the findings of this report. The hope is that this analysis of the work of the ACP can provide broader insights into the role that community-based 'truth-telling' in general might play in post-conflict transition.

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[6] Almost all of the Unionist interviewees asked to remain anonymous and not to have their interviews recorded. Consequently there are far fewer direct quotes in the section of the report that examines Unionist responses and every effort has been made not to disclose sources as requested.

Executive Summary

1. The Research: Context and Rationale

1.1 There is a growing debate on what form of 'truth-telling' process (if any) would be best suited to promoting post-conflict transition and peace building in Northern Ireland. 'Truth-telling' processes are routinely promoted as an important tool in, or aspect of, conflict resolution and transitional justice in countries emerging from war and political violence worldwide. In theory such processes can be formal (state-led) or informal (community-led). In practice they tend to be highly centralised official mechanisms. Many claims have been made about the positive benefits of engaging in such a process. It has been said that they promote individual and collective healing, closure and reconciliation. Despite their popularity there is limited evidence about the tangible benefits and ambiguity over what they deliver. The empirical evidence that does exist tends to focus exclusively on state-led 'truth-telling' processes and specific target groups. The current research seeks to address this shortfall in knowledge by critically analysing the work of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, a community-based 'truth-telling' process in Northern Ireland.

1.2 Ardoyne is a socially disadvantaged nationalist working class community in North Belfast with a population of approximately 7,500. It has witnessed amongst the highest levels of violence and fatalities of the recent political conflict. In the wake of the cease-fires and the Good Friday Agreement an opportunity emerged for reflection on how best to deal with the legacy of the past. In 1998 the Ardoyne Commemoration Project responded to the space created by the 'peace process', and took advantage of the period of reflection, to initiate what developed into a community driven 'truth-telling' process. There was no blueprint for this type of project locally or internationally. Over a 4-year period the ACP collated and edited over 300 interviews, testimonies and eyewitness accounts of relatives and friends of the 99 conflict-related deaths in the Ardoyne community. The key principles cited as underpinning the project were community participation, local control/ownership and inclusivity. In 2002 the work of the ACP culminated in the publication of a 543-page book entitled *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, containing the testimonies and six historical chapters contextualising the conflict.

1.3 By using the ACP 'truth telling' process as a case study, the current research critically examines the impact, value and role that community-based processes may (or may not) play in peace building, transitional justice and post-conflict resolution.

2. The Research: Aims, Rationale and Methodology

2.1 The aims of the current research were:

- To critically analyse the methodology and processes of the ACP.
- To critically analyse the perceived impact and value of engaging in the ACP 'truth telling' process for participants (relatives, friends, eyewitnesses). This involves examining outcomes with regard to

healing, closure, reconciliation, conflict resolution and the positive /negative aspects of engaging in the process.

- To critically analyse the impact and perceived value of the ACP 'truth - telling' initiative on the wider Ardoyne community.
- To critically analyse the impact and perceived value of the ACP 'truth- telling' initiative outside the Ardoyne community within the broader nationalist and unionist communities.
- To critically analyse the ways in which community 'truth-telling' processes may or may not contribute to conflict resolution and inter/intra-community reconciliation.
- To critically explore any methodological issues arising from the processes adopted by the ACP, for example; community participation, interview schedule, the use of 'insider' researchers, editorial control, 'handing back' stage, confidentiality, trust & other ethical considerations.

2.2   The research is qualitative, based mainly on a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews that explore the views of those who participated in the process, particularly the bereaved, and the wider Ardoyne community. The research then examines how the project was received beyond the confines of Ardoyne and critically analyses the perceived value of the ACP within the broader nationalist and unionist communities. The rationale for the current research is therefore based on the assumption that those people interviewed have important and legitimate views and perspectives on the subject matter.

2.3   To this end a series of interviews were carried out between May 2003 and March 2004 with a number of key target groups. Interviews were carried out with the following respondent groups:

- 30 individuals that participated in the ACP process (including bereaved, friends and eyewitnesses).
- 2 individuals who either chose not to participate or were unintentionally excluded from the process (victims' relatives).
- 6 people from the Ardoyne community who were not directly involved in the project (including members of community organisations, victims' groups, truth & justice campaigning groups, religious and political leaders).
- 4 ACP project volunteers.
- 6 nationalist representatives of community/victims' groups outside Ardoyne.
- 6 unionist representatives of community/victims' groups and others.

2.4   In addition, by way of introduction, this report gives a very brief overview of the international context regarding transitional justice and 'truth-telling'. This is followed by a discussion of past policies and developments that have influenced the debate on victims' issues and 'truth-telling' in Northern Ireland. It then presents information gathered from the interviews and critically examines the research findings.

3. The Findings: An Overview

The key findings of the research were as follows:

3.1 Acknowledgement and Recognition

For almost all the respondents in the present study the main value in the work of the ACP was that it afforded them recognition. Key themes emerging included the importance of providing a space for the individual's story and of having previously excluded or marginalised voices recorded, documented and put into public discourse. In general it was felt that there was a lack of public recognition of what the participants, their families and community, had endured. This clearly added to their grief and sense of isolation. Recognition was also closely linked to acknowledgement and accountability and the equality of victimhood. The restoration of dignity, through recognition and acknowledgement in *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, particularly to the families of alleged informers, was undoubtedly and overwhelmingly a welcome outcome of the project. The relatives of victims of state violence were also afforded the opportunity to challenge what they perceived as the 'denial of truth' in official accounts. Whereas the ACP was credited with helping to restore a level of recognition for such families, this has remained an unresolved issue according to respondents due to lack of acknowledgement and accountability on the part of the state. This tended to reflect a key limitation of 'storytelling'. For many respondents it was important to recognise the inter-relationship between recognition with a need for acknowledgement, accountability and the delivery of justice in relation to loss.

3.2 Therapeutic or Non-therapeutic Nature of the Process

The therapeutic value or otherwise of the process generated significant conflicting and contradictory responses. There was clearly evidence that 'speaking out' had a therapeutic value for respondents in general. For some healing and closure were closely inter-related to issues of recognition, justice and accountability. It was clear that giving testimony was an emotional experience for many of the respondents but, on the other hand, most saw this as a necessary and important thing to do. According to a number of respondents they found the interview process therapeutic. It was important that someone was listening and that a 'space was found' to talk about personal and traumatic events. This was often difficult to do even within families. Other respondents spoke of the healing process as a result of seeing their story in print. For many respondents the launch was also an important collective community event that performed a healing and therapeutic role. For most there was, quite simply, no closure, just learning to live with the grief and loss. Others described it as a stepping-stone and a life-long process. At the same time a minority of those who had participated in the work of the ACP felt that it was harmful to 're-open old wounds'. For such respondents it was seen as better to 'let things lie' and rely, rather, on coping strategies that had been developed over time. In contrast the majority of respondents felt that the only way to deal with the past and 'move on' at the individual and community level was to 'open old wounds'. This also raises ethical questions about conducting such work and concerns about the detrimental effects of revisiting such events and the possible risk of causing secondary traumatisation.

3.3 Inclusivity

There was almost universal agreement that any 'truth-telling' process, community-based or otherwise, had to be as inclusive as possible. For people within Ardoyne and the broader nationalist community inclusivity had two particular dimensions. First, many saw this as a way of tackling what they viewed as a prevailing society-wide 'hierarchy of victimhood' that denied equality to the victims of state violence in particular. Second, for many the inclusion of families of alleged informers was regarded as of the utmost importance. What was striking was that many other relatives (including, for example, those of republican combatants) saw this as an immensely significant step. Arguments for inclusivity on a society-wide basis were usually founded upon the principle of equality and the needs for a victim-centred approach to 'truth-telling'. Exactly the same perspective, it was suggested, had therefore to be applied within the community.

For unionist respondents the principle of inclusiveness was also seen as key. However, they pointed to some difficulties and limitations of the project in this regard. Chief amongst these was the angry reaction to what was seen as the exclusion of Ardoyne unionist experiences. It was further pointed out that, apart from dealing with those Ardoyne residents killed by republicans, the project did not discuss the deaths of others killed by people from Ardoyne. That was never its intent and may also have been impossible for it to do, but this highlights the fact that there are other relatives and victims' stories, of those from outside Ardoyne, that are also part of the Ardoyne story. These are realities that need to be addressed. Unionist respondents also drew attention to the extent to which the issue of inclusivity was a far greater problem within their own community than it was for nationalists. Many mainly-unionist victims' groups continue to emphasise a distinction between what they refer to as 'innocent' and 'non-innocent' victims, by which they mean those killed by 'terrorists' and those who were not. Establishing inclusive community-based work in unionist areas would have to contend with this additional and deep-seated issue.

3.4 Participation, Ownership and Control

Without doubt community participation stood out as the single most important aspect of the ACP process for the majority of participants and indeed the wider community. Without exception respondents strongly endorsed the method of 'handing back' the edited version of their testimonies for comment and change and the sense of control this afforded. Overwhelmingly, respondents were of the opinion that handing over editorial control in this manner had created a sense of individual and collective ownership. This was regarded as a fundamental strength and positive outcome of the project. Some respondents felt that through engaging in the process 'they had regained control' in a much broader sense too and this had renewed their self-confidence. What was often seen as the negative label of victimhood was challenged. In turn, this helped recast relatives in the role of pro-active agents of change and not 'helpless', 'passive' and 'powerless' victims. This sense of being pro-active resonated throughout many interviews.

Respondents also stressed the importance of people who were from and trusted by the community to carry out such work. The advantages of an outsider's critical distance were (according to the overwhelming majority of respondents) far outweighed by the disadvantages of their potential lack of

understanding and the silences produced by suspicion of them. That said the closeness of the 'insider' to the subject matter is also an issue with which to contend. Being able to see the world from the interviewee's point of view can also produce an inability or unwillingness to contest or argue against what is said. It is therefore imperative that those involved in such work are conscious of this tension and are fully reflective in their practice throughout.

The full implications of using 'insiders' to conduct interviews should be balanced against the possible negative impacts. Given the community-based nature of the project and the sensitive issues involved, the use of 'insiders' might just as conceivably lead to guarded and partial accounts. Who carries out the work, and how they are seen locally, will affect the way people interact with it. The flipside of trust in one context is suspicion in another. This is particularly so if people feel that their testimonies are going to be used for a political purpose with which they do not agree. There was evidence to indicate a number of respondents were, at least initially if not throughout the duration of the process, cautious about the political orientation of the project. This was related to a number of factors and can be linked in some ways to community divisions.

For many of the respondents (nationalist and unionist) there were lessons to be drawn from the work of the ACP for other, wider 'truth-telling' initiatives. These included, for example, the principle of inclusiveness and equality and the importance of designing structures that could deliver a real sense of participation and ownership for victims. Any 'truth-telling' mechanism should therefore consider ways in which community frameworks and perspectives could be interwoven into its working methods and structures.

3.5   Truth and Justice

The relationship between 'truth-telling' and justice was also to the fore in the minds of many interviewees. Views were highly diverse on this issue, not least in terms of what the idea of justice itself meant. For many participants there was a sense in which the recognition derived from their involvement in the project was itself a (sufficient) form of justice. For others this was very far from the case and they saw a need for legal and judicial avenues to be pursued as thoroughly as possible. Some respondents believed that community-based 'truth-telling' mechanisms should be seen as complimentary to judicial mechanisms. They were seen as a framework within which certain ends of transitional justice might be achieved. By their nature the adversarial character of courts or inquiries were seen as places that often failed to provide relatives with a socially or psychologically satisfying place to bear witness. Community projects like the ACP might be one way of successfully meeting such ends of historical justice. Yet they are also clearly limited in being unable to uncover previously unknown information from outside agencies, obtaining some form of official recognition or recompense, or in pursuing accountability. For these respondents 'truth-telling' may be a part of, but it cannot be seen as a substitute for, seeking justice. For others still, and most apparent amongst unionist respondents, the whole area of 'truth and justice' was one they entered into with a great deal of suspicion and/or trepidation. There were numerous possible reasons or explanations provided for this but what was clear was that views here again diverged sharply from the majority of nationalist interviewees. It would appear from the research that there is a danger that the debate and initiatives on 'truth-telling'

may come to be seen as a solely nationalist agenda. This may already have occurred.

3.6   Inter and Intra Community Tensions

Views on the significance of the work of the ACP for inter-community relations differed widely. The impact of divergent experiences and outlooks were most evident here. Within Ardoyne and the wider nationalist community the issue of community relations was either not a central priority or an approach to the issues under discussion that they problematised as driven by a 'two traditions' perspective. That said, there was general agreement amongst these groups of respondents the model employed by the ACP was something that other communities might usefully follow and that this could make a very positive contribution to inter-community dialogue.

Unionist respondents were far more divided in their views. Some saw the work of the project as offering real potential for enhancing cross-community relations. On the other hand, however, there were some with far more critical opinions. Some saw *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* as having a potentially damaging impact on conflict resolution strategies because it was more likely to create, rather than diminish tensions and bi-polar social and political perspectives. This was also linked to what were seen as deep-seated and difficult divisions within unionist working class areas.

In contrast one of the most frequently mentioned positive outcomes of the ACP according to participants was the role it played in intra-community conflict resolution. Ardoyne is not a homogenous community and there are very real and longstanding divisions, some of which are a by-product of the political conflict. There were 13 people in the area killed by republicans; a number were alleged informers. Such intra-community dynamics meant that 'truth-telling' was a sensitive and controversial issue. The project was credited with providing mechanisms and creating the time and space to help resolve a number of such issues related to intra-community violence. The most important outcome for most respondents was that it created a process to deal with such difficult issues. It was further suggested that the project played a role at a number of different levels in promoting conflict resolution. These included stimulating individual self-reflection and a shifting of long held viewpoints. It also opened a space for community dialogue and debate that has borne longer-term positive results. In particular the mending of a longstanding rift between church and republicans was attributed in no small way to the project. In general respondents were of the opinion that a major strength of the ACP was that it helped push the boundaries and made inroads into the prevailing 'culture of silence' on previously 'taboo' subjects. The outcome was that all combatants to the conflict were accountable. Closely associated with this was the view that this had created a new confidence and willingness to 'speak out' about difficult issues.

3.7   Single Identity Work

The ACP included victims from unionist and nationalist backgrounds in its work. However, in the main, it was a single identity project. This reflected the reality of the area's make-up. This research project indicates that there are sound arguments for engaging in single identity work. The issues of access and trust are paramount here. Any project that sets itself up as 'inter-community' will already be perceived as coming from a particular perspective

of the conflict (a 'two traditions' model). Many people appeared highly sceptical of this model because it excludes the role of the British state and its agents, whom they perceive as having been key players in the conflict. If there are problems about self-censorship that arise from a project rooted in the community then these can often be magnified many times over by work that situates itself outside and/or between communities. Perhaps the most overlooked benefit of a single identity approach is that it provides the space for internal divisions that are a legacy of the conflict to be addressed. The experience of the ACP and the evidence of this assessment suggest that addressing such issues can make a far greater contribution to post-conflict transition than is often assumed. A cross-community framework is likely to create defensiveness and reticence to examine such questions.

There are also problems inherent in single identity work. If it provides avenues of contact and trust within a community it can also set limits to the same beyond it. This certainly impacted upon the work of the ACP, as clearly illustrated by the criticisms from unionists regarding the non-inclusion of unionist ex-Ardoyne residents. Creating the space for an internal dialogue is important but there are some who fear that it may lead to the re-assertion rather than the diminution of division. The experience of those involved in the ACP would seem to suggest that achieving recognition in this way could allow for a greater spirit of generosity to flourish. This may, in other words, be seen as a stage in a wider and longer- term process rather than the end in itself. There may therefore be a need to devise a process that enshrines the strengths and benefits of community-orientated single identity work but which also allows for this to be combined with parallel processes taking place elsewhere. Real, honest, meaningful (if difficult) dialogue may be better achieved in this way.

While recognising the strengths of single identity community work there is therefore also a pressing need to ensure that a 'zero-sum' game does not emerge, or become accentuated, on such matters. Developing a framework of parallel or diverse community-based mechanisms may be one way of addressing this issue. The difficulty that must be faced, however, is that there may be little desire for (if not an outright hostility to) 'truth-telling' in certain communities.

3.8   Expectations

Of all the lessons to emerge from the work of the ACP the clearest may be the need to ensure that the expectations of relatives and victims are not raised beyond what can realistically be delivered. Time and again in their responses participants emphasised that they had understood the purpose (and therefore also the limits) of what the project was setting out to do. However, this did not mean that participants did not construct expectations. This appeared to be confined to a few respondents. The main expectations were that 'something would follow', that a forum might have been organised to bring participants together to explore their thoughts and experiences as to what step, if any, should be taken next. A small number also commented that they thought there would be an apology from the republican movement. But, in general, participants were clear that the purpose of the project was to collect their testimonies and publish the book. Much of whatever satisfaction they subsequently felt was a direct result of the fact that they felt the project did what it said it would, no more and no less. There can be few greater mistakes to make when dealing with the highly sensitive, personal and

emotive issues that community-based 'truth-telling' involves than to raise expectations that cannot, in the end, be met.

4.   Recommendations

This section outlines a number of recommendations.

4.1   Recognition, Acknowledgement and Accountability

- We recommend the setting up of an initiative that facilitates community based 'truth-telling' processes. To this end we would suggest the publication of a 'user friendly' step-by-step guide booklet for communities interested in initiating such a process. There are communities currently involved in similar type work but lack the necessary skills, information and resources to undertake an ACP type process.

- We would stress that such work not be seen as a substitute for other, broader initiatives aimed at delivering acknowledgement, accountability, truth and justice. Parallel processes should also therefore be available for all those aggrieved who wish to pursue such avenues of redress.

- We further recommend that in any 'truth-telling' process (community or particularly if state-led) all organisations and institutions (British and Irish states, republican and loyalists) should publicly acknowledge and take responsibility for their role in the conflict.

4.2   Inclusivity

- We recommend that the principles of inclusivity and equality of victimhood should underpin all 'truth-telling' initiatives (whether community or state-led).

4.3   Participation and Local Ownership

- The principles of community participation and local ownership and control should underpin the initiation, design and delivery of 'truth-telling' processes. Any 'truth-telling' process (community or otherwise) should genuinely attempt to establish ways in which community frameworks and perspectives could be interwoven into its working methods and structures so that a real sense of participation, ownership and a victim centred approach can be achieved.

4.4   Inter and Intra Community Tensions and Single Identity Work

- There is a need to recognise that intra as well as inter community tensions and divisions deriving from the conflict need to be addressed as part of conflict resolution and peace building. It follows that consideration should be given to promotion of 'single identity' work as a necessary and viable approach to 'truth-telling'. The experience of those involved in the ACP would seem to suggest that achieving recognition in this way could allow for a greater spirit of generosity to flourish. This may, in other words,

be seen as a stage in a wider and longer term process rather than solely an end in itself.

- We further recommend a process that enshrines the strengths and benefits of community-orientated single identity work but which also allow for this to be combined with parallel processes. These would allow for the sharing of information, and experiences, between specific projects and communities.

- Given the significant reservations expressed by unionist respondents towards 'truth-telling' initiatives we would recommend that further research on such attitudes be carried out. This should be designed to enable a more fully inclusive public debate on such issues.

- An additional recommendation is that a 'two traditions' approach should not be advocated as a viable model for 'truth-telling' (whether community or state-led). As stated above, all organisations and institutions should publicly acknowledge and take responsibility for their role in the conflict.

4.5 Therapeutic Value

- We recommend that any community seeking to undertake such a process ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place before embarking on the project. This should be designed to safeguard interviewees/ participants and staff/volunteers from any negative/ traumatic or detrimental effects flowing from engagement in the project. It is important that support networks and services also have a strong community based focus.

4.6 Transparency

- Transparency and openness should be a feature of 'truth-telling' processes in order to avoid raising expectations and causing further hurt to victims. Participants should be told what to expect from the process at the outset and be kept informed of developments as far as possible throughout the process.

A1. Transitional Justice: The International Context

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This section will give a very brief overview of some of the ways in which countries emerging from political conflict worldwide have attempted to 'deal with their past'. In particular it focuses on formal 'truth-telling' as a means of addressing unresolved issues and as a tool in post-conflict transition.

1.1.2 In many countries emerging from political violence there are continuing difficulties and perceived injustices stemming from a breakdown in the rule of law during conflict. A growing number of academics, practitioners and policy makers are of the opinion that merely drawing a line under the past is not a viable option for such countries. As Neil Kritz, has argued, 'at the dawn of the 21st century, it is increasingly recognised that societies that refuse to address the painful legacy of past abuses do so at their peril'.[1] Citing the disastrous example of the former Yugoslavia, he suggests that failing to clarify the events of the past can only lead to a process of destructive myth making. Such myths, in turn, 'become the progenitors of deadly antagonism for the next generation'.[2] As a result of such thinking 'dealing with the past' is now routinely part of peace negotiations worldwide.

1.1.3 Logically, however, if one accepts the view that transitional societies need to address the past, the question then arises regarding the best method to achieve this. A variety of mechanisms or approaches have been developed. Such mechanisms constitute the means of implementing transitional justice principles in practice. Broadly speaking they can be characterised as a difference between 'retributive' or 'restorative' justice. The dilemma facing new leaders is whether or not such action (or inaction) is beneficial to transition and conflict resolution. The following is a brief summary of some of the main options available.

1.2 Choosing to 'Forget'

1.2.1 Transitional societies can forget everything either by enacting an amnesty or by doing nothing. There may be political considerations and pragmatic reasons for this course of action. It may be felt that prosecutions could destabilise a fragile peace and reconciliation process. In such circumstances stability and the balance of power are a key priority. From this perspective the best way to rebuild and reconcile the nation is to leave the past behind by means of an amnesty. Most Latin American countries throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and Spain in the 1970s, opted against trials in view of such perceived dangers. The exception was Argentina which (after pressure from the military) terminated a programme of prosecutions that had resulted a year earlier in the conviction and sentencing of five junta leaders. More than fifteen years later victims, and authorities, in Argentina and Chile are pursuing new ways to bypass legal constraints in order to initiate prosecutions against the military.[3]

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[1] Kritz, N (2002), 'Where we are and how we got there: An overview of developments in the search for justice and reconciliation', in A.H. Henkin (ed), *The Legacy of Abuse: Confronting the Past, Facing the Future*, Conference Report, www.aspeninstitute.org, p.1
[2] *Ibid*
[3] *Ibid*, p. 32

1.2.2   The above examples show that the demand for justice and acknowledgement of past wrongdoing is enduring and countries have been forced to revisit and 'deal with their past'. A further example of the quest for 'truth' (re) emerging in a country after decades of 'silence' is Spain. There, a campaign has recently emerged to locate and exhume the bodies of the 'disappeared' during the Franco era. Perhaps the passage of time is a key issue and factor to consider when dealing with the past.

1.3   Choosing to Prosecute

1.3.1   Alternatively transitional societies can choose to prosecute everyone implicated or adopt a policy of selective prosecutions (in national, international or 'mixed' courts). There are strong arguments for and against prosecutions.[4] Those in favour maintain that there is a moral obligation to punish a wrongdoer. Moreover the growth of the human rights movement and developments in international human rights law has created greater pressure and placed obligations and standards on transitional societies to confront their past through criminal trials and accountability.

1.3.2   It is argued that prosecutions are essential in order to demonstrate that a culture of impunity is being replaced with a culture of accountability. This offers the best way to draw a line between the old regime and new government and will give a sense of security and redress to victims. Only trials can lead to a full recognition of the worth and dignity of victims and act as a deterrent against future abuses. Therefore, according to this perspective, even a limited number of notable convictions can have a significant moral and symbolic impact.

1.3.4   Greece is an important landmark in the annals of accountability. Following the downfall of the military junta in 1973 over 100,000 individuals were purged from the military and government and some 400 members of the police and army were prosecuted for torture. Nearly twenty years after the conviction of junta leaders plans to release them from prison still prompted huge protests. [5]

1.3.5   On the other hand the value of prosecutions as a tool of transition has been questioned.[6] There is the opinion that prosecutions will not achieve the extensive moral, legal and political ends desired. Indeed prosecutions could be used to cover up conspiracy by the state. Other measures designed to reform the military, police, and judicial system may contribute more to transition than the punishment of the prior regime. As stated above, there may be political and pragmatic considerations guiding the pursuit of justice and the fear that prosecutions could increase the risk of a backlash, military coup, destabilise a fragile peace or ruin a reconciliation process. From this

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[4] Huyse, L. (2003), 'Justice', in D. Bloomfield, (ed), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, International, IDEA; F.D. Orenticher, (1991), 'Settling Accounts: The Duty to Prosecute Human Rights Violations of a Prior Regime', *Yale Law Journal*, 100, pp. 2537-2615.
[5] Kritz, N. (ed) (1995), *Transitional Justice, How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. 2*, United States Institute of Peace, p. xxxii; A. H. Henkin (ed) (2002), *The Legacy of Abuse: Confronting the Past, Facing the Future*.
[6] Bloomfield, D. (ed) (2003), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*; Henkin, A.H. (ed) (2002), *The Legacy of Abuse: Confronting the Past, Facing the Future*, p. 32.

perspective the best way to rebuild and reconcile the nation is to leave the past behind by means of an amnesty.

1.3.6   It is further argued that societies emerging from conflict are likely to have a weak infrastructure and criminal justice system that limits the capability of new leaders to deliver adequate justice. Conflicts often involve large sections of the population. In such circumstances the dilemma is how far to cast the net and what the result will have on governance. In Rwanda the government was faced with the overwhelming task of attempting to process more than 100,000 cases as a result of genocide. Such a volume would take decades to process and has already resulted in unacceptable delays. As a result a new village-level system called 'gacaca', loosely based on an indigenous model of traditional justice is dealing with the outstanding cases.[7]

1.3.7   Other shortcomings of retributive justice to consider are that trials tend to ignore or sideline the real feelings and needs of victims. A courtroom may be a hostile environment for victims resulting in renewed trauma. The lack of proof, passage of time and/or legal loopholes can serve to re-victimise victims. What is more, trials identify individual guilt, and are usually unable to establish the broader patterns or policies and practices of repression. They recognise criminal guilt, not political or moral responsibility and accountability. Thus trials can be symbolically counterproductive to the extent that they allow a complicit society to blame everything on a few 'bad apples'

1.3.8   It is clear from the above discussion that there may be obstacles and risks involved in the pursuit of criminal justice in transitional societies. In response to such issues, it is increasingly being argued by theorists, policy makers and practitioners that retributive measures must be seen as part of an integrated package of mechanisms, and a more 'holistic' approach, to dealing with the legacy of the past.

1.4 Engaging in Formal 'Truth-Telling'

1.4.1   Societies emerging from conflict can seek to address their past by choosing non-criminal sanctions (such as 'purge' programmes), truth commissions and victim reparation policies.[8]

1.4.2   Historical accounting by means of 'truth-telling' is regarded as an important tool in the management of conflict resolution. In theory 'truth-telling' can be formal (state-led) or informal (community-led or interest group) initiatives. The trend internationally has been for highly centralised official processes.   At the heart of 'truth-telling' is a restorative rather than a retributive conception of justice. Rather than being focused primarily on confronting or holding accountable the predecessor regime a restorative model aims to incorporate a diverse range of values, including 'peace', 'stability' and 'nation-building'.[9] They are concerned with a form of future-focused justice that attempts to 'reconcile' the three points of the rights abuse paradigm: victim, perpetrator and bystander.

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[7]   Bloomfield, D. (ed) (2003), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*; Kritz, N. (2002) in A. H. Henkin (ed) *The Legacy of Abuse: Confronting the Past, Facing the Future*
[8] Freeman, M. and Hayner, P. (2003), 'Truth-Telling', in D. Bloomfield (ed), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*.
[9] Teitel, R. (2003), 'Transitional Justice Genealogy', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 69, p.16.

1.4.3   The tendency to include 'truth-telling' as a key component of post-conflict transition developed particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. At least 25 official 'truth-telling' processes have been established in various countries on almost every continent between 1974 and 2001.[10] There are currently truth commissions taking place in societies as diverse as Peru, Sierra Leone and East Timor. These formal 'truth-telling' processes have been (and continue to be) very different in their terms of reference, remit, structure, and investigative and judicial powers. Nevertheless invariably they are 'top-down' and highly centralized and they have tended to share (in varying degrees) certain underlying principles and goals. These have included: the reform of state and judicial institutions and practices, the inculcation of a human rights culture, the prosecution of perpetrators of past human rights violations, reparations, the promotion of 'individual, communal and national reconciliation', the opportunity for personal and collective psychological 'catharsis' and the creation of a shared public memory or history of the past.[11] The appeal of the model is its ability to offer a broader historical perspective rather than focusing on individual accountability.

1.4.4   However, the circumstances within which different formal truth-telling processes have taken shape dramatically impact upon their character.[12] The critical variable has been the extent of ongoing influence of the pre-existing regime. In general, the greater the continuity of power maintained by state agencies, the more limited the 'truth-telling' process. This has often involved a less than satisfactory 'trade-off' of the (not necessarily mutually conducive) ends of 'truth', 'justice' and 'reconciliation'.

1.5   Pros and Cons of 'Truth-Telling'

1.5.1   Despite the popularity of 'truth-telling' processes there is limited evidence about the tangible benefits and ambiguity over what they can actually deliver. The empirical evidence that does exist tends to focus exclusively on *state-led* initiatives and specific target groups. Nevertheless there have been many claims made about their potential beneficial consequences.

1.5.2   'Truth-telling', it has been suggested, might 'heal the nation', or allow society to work through a violent past aiding 'closure', 'healing', 'reconciliation', post-conflict reconstruction and nation building. An element in this is the promise to disclose 'the truth' about past abuses and reveal why such abuses occurred. By giving victims and survivors a role in telling their story of past abuses it is claimed this can achieve catharsis, the 'restoration of dignity', acknowledgement and the possibility for a society to learn from its past.[13]

1.5.3   There may have been instances where formal 'truth-telling' has been critical in 'giving voice' to victims, unearthed past abuses, brought perpetrators to

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[10] Hayner, P. (2001), *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*, Routledge; Freeman. M. and Hayner, P. (2003), 'Truth-Telling', in D. Bloomfield (ed), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*.
[11] Dyzenhaus, D. (2000) 'Justifying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 8:4, pp. 470-496.
[12] Arnson, Cynthia J. (1999), *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington; Seils, Paul F. (2002) 'Reconciliation in Guatemala: the role of intelligent justice', *Race and Class*, 44:1, pp. 33-59.
[13] Freeman, M. and Hayner, P. (2003), 'Truth-Telling', in D. Bloomfield (ed), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*.

justice and promoted real progressive social change. Nevertheless, there is evidence that countries, which have undergone such processes, are not necessarily happy with all aspects of their conduct or outcome. [14]

1.5.4   In particular the 'top-down' centralised nature of truth processes has led some to argue that the interests of victims can, at times, be marginalised. According to Hamber, greater focus upon reconciliation ends has often lent itself to a diminution of the place of victims and despite their claim to be victim-centred, truth processes are the least focused on the actual victims of human rights violations.[15] The result of such 'trade-offs' has been great disappointment and disillusionment on the part of victims. This is not to suggest that truth processes have no value. What it does is challenge claims by academics, policy makers and practitioners that such initiatives are 'victim-centred' or victim orientated.

1.5.5   A further aspect of such processes is the way in which the community dimension of conflict is often neglected. This is particularly problematic in relation to those marginalised communities that have been most affected by conflict, and whose experiences and attitudes should therefore be addressed as a crucial element in transition. For example, despite the best efforts of many community and victims' groups, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been criticised for placing the macro-societal-wide agenda of 'consensus-building' above the needs of individual victims.[16] Some have gone as far as to suggest that at its worst institutionalised 'truth-telling' may allow for little more than the management and incorporation of memory, a 'useful marketing tool' for the state.[17]

1.5.6   There are other mechanisms that could be used to address the past but were not discussed here. The above is simply meant as an overview of some of the ways in which the past has been dealt with internationally and a brief discussion of a number of criticisms. It is intended to provide a context for understanding the development of the current research project. Given the limited knowledge about the tangible outcome of 'truth-telling' in the wider context, this research set out to explore and critically assess what impact the work of the ACP had both within and outside of the community. It is envisaged that the findings of this report will contribute to an understanding of the benefits of community-based 'truth-telling' and this in turn will help fill the existing knowledge gap on the role and value of 'truth-telling' processes in general. The next section examines the Northern Ireland context and what helped shape the development of the ACP.

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[14] Cuevas, V.E. and Ortiz Rojas, M.L. (2002), *Comparative Study of Truth Commissions in Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala and South Africa from the Perspective of Victims, their Relatives, Human Rights Organizations and Experts*, Corporacion de Promocion y Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo (CODEPU), Chile.

[15] Hamber, B. (2003), 'Rights and Reasons: Challenges for Truth Recovery in South Africa and Northern Ireland', *Fordham International Law Journal*, 26:4, pp. 1074-1094.

[16] van der Merwe, H (1999), *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Analysis of Competing Strategies and Conceptualisations*, PhD thesis, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, South Africa.

[17] Stanley, E. (2002) 'What next? The aftermath of organised truth telling', *Race and Class*, 44: 1, pp. 1-15.

A.2 The Context II: Victims' Issues and 'Truth-telling': The Northern Ireland Context

This section will briefly outline some of the main developments that have influenced the debate on victims' issues and 'truth-telling' in Northern Ireland in recent years. This is the context within which the Ardoyne Commemoration Project emerged and conducted its community-based approach to victims' issues and 'truth-telling'.

Two main areas have been identified:
- Policy-making
- Civil society and victims' groups

2.1. Policy-making, Victims' Issues and 'Truth-telling'

Victims' issues have emerged as a greater priority of the political and policy agenda since the development of the peace process and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Since then there have been a number of policy initiatives and statements on victims and 'truth-telling' issues emanating from public and statutory bodies. These provide an important context for understanding the debate on community-based approaches to 'truth-telling'. Some also impacted (indirectly) on the formation and development of the ACP. They include:

2.1.1 **The Good Friday Agreement (GFA)**: Although, significantly, it did not outline any specific mechanism for dealing with the past the GFA signed in April 1998 contained a series of broad principles and policy goals for dealing with the rights and issues facing conflict victims. These included the recognition that victims 'had a right to remember [as part of the] wider promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society'.[18] The Agreement also noted that a 'necessary element of reconciliation' was the need to 'acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence'. The historic nature of the GFA established a new social and political context that was important for the creation of the ACP.

2.1.2 **The Bloomfield Report**: The GFA had been preceded by the appointment in October 1997 of retired civil servant Sir Kenneth Bloomfield as a Victims Commissioner by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam. As outlined in his report *We Will Remember Them* (published in May 1998) Bloomfield's remit was to 'examine the feasibility of providing greater recognition for those who have become victims'.[19] The report recognised that there might be a 'cathartic effect of putting one's experience on record' and examined a number of suggestions for 'non-physical memorial schemes'.[20] Bloomfield also recommended the 'creation of an appropriate record and archive [as] part of any wider memorial plans'.[21] Several aspects of the Bloomfield report were highly contentious and impacted directly on the development of community-based approaches to 'the truth' and the ACP.

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[18] *Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations, April 10, 1998.*
[19] Bloomfield, Sir K. (1997) *We will Remember Them: Report of the Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner*, Belfast, NIO.
[20] *Ibid*, p. 19.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 41.

These included the limited treatment given to 'truth and justice' issues, the non-discussion of state killings and nationalist perceptions that it re-asserted a 'hierarchy of victimhood'. The document also focused primarily on service-led victims concerns. The Government accepted the report's recommendations in full.[22]

2.1.3 **The Victims Liaison Unit (NIO)**: Along with the VU (OFMDFM) (see 2.1.4 below) the VLU (NIO) is one of two main government agencies charged with overseeing the development of policy on victims' issues. The VLU has responsibility for implementing the Bloomfield findings and overall responsibility for government funding for the full range of victims' schemes and programmes. To date this has amounted to approximately £20m. The majority of this funding has been directed toward practical and support services. This has been channelled through charitable and statutory bodies such as the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (see 2.1.5 below). In 2003 the Minister with responsibility for Victims (Angela Smyth MP) also initiated a public consultation process to explore attitudes to the way forward on victims' issues.

2.1.4 **The Victims Unit (OFMDFM)**: In 2002 the VU (OFMDFM) was given responsibility for the co-ordination of victims-related policies across devolved government departments and the management of funding for victims' measures under the European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE II). In the same year it also published a key policy document, *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve* outlining its victims' strategy up to 2004.[23] *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve* defined a victim as 'the surviving physically and psychologically injured of violent, conflict-related incidents and those close relatives or partners who care for them, *along with those close relatives who mourn their dead* [our italics]'.[24] It also set out the core values that should underpin the victims' strategy, these were; 'victim-centred', 'equitable', 'inclusive', 'focused' and 'integrated'.[25] The main focus of this document, as its full title suggests, was in the delivery of 'practical help and services' to conflict victims. Given its political sensitivity discussion of truth and justice issues was deferred to the Healing Through Remembering Project (see 2.2.2. below).[26] The report noted that 'certain organisations and some victims' groups have also begun to examine how individual or collective stories might be recorded'. However, it argued that the 'area of storytelling' (defined as 'allowing people the chance to have their individual story listened to and/or recorded') was 'linked [to] the issues of 'truth and justice'. It therefore deferred any further comment on 'story-telling' until after publication of the Healing Through Remembering Report.

2.1.5 **Funding and Public Bodies:** A number of other public and statutory bodies have been involved in developing public policy on victims' issues. Several of these have been primarily concerned with the management of victim-related public funding. These have included, for example;

[22] Northern Ireland Office Online, http://www.nio.gov.uk/issues/victims.htm, accessed 10.01.04.
[23] Victims Unit (OFMDFM) (2002) *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve: Delivering Practical Help and Services to Victims of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, OFMDFM/VU.
[24] *Ibid*, p.1.
[25] *Ibid*, pp. 1-2.
[26] *Ibid*. p. 16.

- **The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund (NIMF)**: The NIMF was set up in the wake of the Bloomfield Report as an independent charity. As well as undertaking fundraising activities it has been responsible for managing around £7m of government funding dedicated to victims' needs. The primary focus of the Memorial Fund is to provide 'help and support in a practical and meaningful way [to] those who have suffered injury or bereavement' as a result of the conflict. [27] 'Truth-telling' projects have not featured as part of the concern of the NIMF.
- **The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland**: Formerly the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, the remit of the Community Foundation includes the management of the Victims' Core Funding Scheme designed to meet the core costs of Victim/Survivor groups provided through the VLU (NIO). The first round of this funding amounted to £3.1m. The Community Foundation aims to promote cross-community partnerships and models of best practice amongst victims' organisations. The primary focus of its work has also been upon the delivery of practical needs-based services. [28]
- **The Community Relations Council (CRC)**: The CRC has also developed responsibility for the management of funding under the Peace II Programme that impact upon victim-orientated activities, including the current research.

2.1.6 **The Human Rights Commission**: In June 2003 the Human Rights Commission published a comprehensive report *Human Rights and Victims of Violence*.[29] This followed discussions with a range of victims' organisations as part of the wider consultation on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The report proposed that victims' rights must be an integral part of any plan for the future of Northern Ireland.[30] It set out the views of the victims' groups and individuals consulted on a range of issues and also detailed current international standards concerning the rights of victims'. The report focused on the right of victims to 'recognition and truth', 'justice and information', 'assistance, compensation and restitution' and 'protection, equality and restitution'. It noted in particular that the question of 'recognition' was not primarily a legal but a 'social, cultural and political matter'. Recognition should not solely be accorded through the criminal justice process but via 'general acknowledgement by the whole of society'. The report found that a 'truth-telling' process might be a way forward on this agenda but offered no specific recommendations for the form such a mechanism might take.

2.1.7 **Recent Statement by Public Officials**: There have been a number of recent interventions into the debate on 'dealing with the past' from several senior public officials. These include:
- **The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)**, Sir Hugh Orde. Throughout the last year Hugh Orde has made several public statements in support of a 'truth-telling' process.[31] He has recently

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[27] http://www.nio.gov.uk/pdf/nimf1.pdf, accessed 15.02.04.
[28] Community Foundation (2003) *A Summary of Good Practice among Victims' and Survivors' groups*, Belfast, CFNI, Community Foundation (2003) *Shaping Our Future: Victims and Survivors on the Move*, Belfast, CFNI.
[29] Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2003) *Human Rights and Victims of Violence*, Belfast, NIHRC.
[30] *Ibid.* 7.
[31] See for example, Report of a Speech by Hugh Order to the Alliance Party Annual Conference, 15th March 2004,

called for the creation of a 'victim-centred' mechanism with an 'international dimension' based around three strands, one of which would be designed to promote conciliation through 'storytelling'. Orde has also endorsed an inclusive approach that would not be based upon a 'hierarchy of victimhood'.

- **The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Policing Board**, Professor Des Rea and Denis Bradley respectively, have publicly supported Hugh Orde's position on 'truth' recovery mechanisms.

2.1.8 **Judicial Processes and Public Inquiries**: As was argued in *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve* 'story-telling' is closely interlinked with 'truth and justice' issues. It is not surprising therefore that ongoing judicial processes, investigations and the demand for future inquiries have been critical factors framing the debate and shaping attitudes on 'truth-telling' processes. These have included;

- **The Saville Inquiry**: Lord Justice Saville's inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday has caused much controversy but undoubtedly represented a major shift in the legal and political context within which mechanisms for 'dealing with the past' were discussed. It has recently completed its public hearings and is due to publish its report within the next year.
- **The Stevens Inquiry**: The third inquiry undertaken by Sir John Stevens, Chief Constable of the London Metropolitan Police, into allegations of collusion between armed non-state groups and state intelligence and security forces. Its findings were partially published in April 2003 and supported the contention that collusion had been widespread and resulted in a number of deaths.
- **The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Article Two Judgements**: In 2002 the ECHR issued judgements in regard to four cases where state agencies were either directly involved or where there were allegations of collusion with loyalist paramilitary groups.
- **The Cory Report**: Resulted from the inquiry conducted by retired Canadian Supreme Court judge Peter Cory into allegations of collusion in the deaths of the human rights lawyers Rosemary Nelson and Pat Finucane and also Robert Hamill and the loyalist paramilitary Billy Wright. On 1st April this year the Cory Inquiry found that there was evidence of collusion in all four cases and therefore recommended that four separate public inquiries should be established. The announcement of an inquiry into the case of Pat Finucane was delayed until September 2004 following the conclusion of a court case. The family of Pat Finucane have expressed great concern that the terms of the inquiry may still be insufficient to ensure full, public disclosure and accountability.

2.1.9 **Consultations on a 'Truth Process'**: In the wake of the Cory Report the Minster for State Paul Murphy announced the instigation of a consultation process on 'truth' recovery mechanisms. He argued that 'the only way we can put the past behind us in Northern Ireland is by seeking to establish the truth… we need to find a way of remembering the past'. This was endorsed by the Prime Minister Tony Blair who stated 'I do not know whether necessarily a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the right way to do it but I think there needs to be some way of trying to… allow people to express their grief, their pain and their anger'.[32]

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[32] *Guardian*, April 3rd 2004.

2.2. Civil Society, Victims' Groups and 'Truth-telling'

There has also been a highly active debate on victims' issues and approaches to 'truth-telling' taking place at the level of civil society and community organisations. By their nature developments in this sphere were often a more direct and significant influence on the ACP than official policy-making.

2.2.1 **Political Parties**: Mechanisms for 'dealing with the past' were not a major priority for any of the main political parties during the talks that led up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. However, some have made recent significant statements on 'truth recovery' processes. These include:

- **Sinn Fein**: In October 2003 Sinn Fein published a consultation paper on 'Truth'. Its proposals were recently outlined by Phillip McGuigan, the party's spokesperson on 'truth recovery' who said Sinn Fein was 'not attached to any particular model of 'truth recovery' [but that] any process should be victim-centred, and to ensure impartiality, has to be independent and international'.[33]
- **Ulster Unionist Party**: The UUP has said relatively little on the debate over the development of a truth process in Northern Ireland. The party leader, David Trimble, recently commented sceptically on the prospects for instituting a South African-style truth commission because there was 'one party and some individuals' who had not shown a 'willingness to tell the truth'.[34]
- **Social Democratic and Labour Party**: In February 2004 Mark Durkan, the leader of the SDLP called for the establishment of a victims' forum as a 'key step in developing a victim-survivor centred approach to 'truth' and remembrance'.[35]
- **Democratic Unionist Party**: Unionist parties have tended to prioritise a service-led and needs-based approach. This was reflected in the DUP policy paper published in 2003 *A Voice for Victims: The Democratic Unionist Party's Policy on Innocent Victims of Terrorism*.[36] The DUP opposes the creation of a truth commission, calls for the continued investigation of 'unsolved murders' and the appointment of a Victims' Commissioner. Emphasis is placed upon funding for victims' groups and compensation claims. They are also seeking a re-definition of the broad, inclusive *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve* definition of a victim arguing that it 'alienates many victims [of 'terrorism']'.
- **Alliance Party**: The Alliance party passed a motion at its recent 2004 party conference calling on the government to 'establish a [victim-led] taskforce to determine the most appropriate means… on how best to deal with the past'.

2.2.2 **Healing Through Remembering Project**: The HTRP was set up in 2000 to 'identify and document possible mechanisms and realisable options for

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[33] Sinn Fein (2003) *Truth: A Consultation* Paper, Belfast, Sinn Fein, Phillip McGuigan, Speech to Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, 28th February 2004, http://www.sinnfein.ie/gaelic/news/detail/3610 accessed 29/02/04.
[34] David Trimble, 21st June 2004, www.uup.org/newsroom. accessed 21/07/04.
[35] Mark Durkan, 20th February 2004, http://www.icDerry.com, accessed 22/02/04.
[36] Democratic Unionist Party (2003) *A Voice for Victims: The Democratic Unionist Party's Policy on Innocent Victims of Terrorism*, Belfast, DUP.

healing through remembering for those affected by the conflict'.[37] It received 108 submissions and made 7 key recommendations in a report published in June 2002. These included the development of a 'storytelling process known as Testimony', that would be designed to collect 'stories and narratives from all who wish to tell of their experiences'. Such initiatives would be carried out by 'those already undertaking this type of work and by community groups through a flexible but standard method'. The aim would be to create an 'archive housing stories of the past and serving as a vehicle to learn lessons for the future'.[38] A series of steps were also laid out to move forward on this and the other six identified key areas. The Victims Unit (OFMDFM) key policy document *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve* deferred discussion of 'truth and justice' and storytelling issues until after publication of the HTRP report. It is therefore likely that the next generation of victims' policies (due to be developed from 2004 onward) will incorporate the HTRP recommendations on these issues.

2.2.3 **Victims' Groups and Organisations**
There has been a significant increase in the number and activities of victims' groups and organisations in recent years. Several have also undertaken projects or adopted policy positions with regard to 'truth' recovery mechanisms. The list given below is by no means exhaustive but indicates the tenor of the debate on 'truth-telling' amongst various victims groups. All of those listed (except the BST) are also in receipt of monies from the Victims' Group Core Funding programme managed by the CRC for 2003-2005:

- **The Aisling Centre**: The Aisling Centre was founded in Enniskillen in 1990 as a 'neutral location' to generate 'healing and growth'. It is essentially concerned with providing therapeutic and counselling services.[39]
- **The Bloody Sunday Trust (BST)**: Developed out of the relatives' campaign for a second inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday the BST was set up in 1997 to 'commemorate the events of Bloody Sunday' as a 'community-based education and history organisation'. It established a centre that would provide counselling and services for relatives and witnesses and act as an exhibition and media space throughout the duration of the Saville Inquiry. The long-term aim of the BST is to 'give recognition and respect to the memories and experiences of the local community' by creating a Bogside History Centre.[40]
- **Cúnamh**: based in Derry Cúnamh is a community-led mental health project founded in 1997. While its primary focus is on providing therapeutic and counselling support Cúnamh has also initiated Na Cuimhneacháin (the 'Creative Remembering') Project. This includes an oral history element, recording and publishing (on the internet and in edited form in the local *Derry News*) 'memories of the troubles'. Storytelling is viewed as a necessary part of a 'genuine healing process' at both the individual and collective levels. 'Collating past experiences', Cúnamh argues, is a means to pursue 'acknowledgement' and of 'transforming knowledge into positive learning opportunities'.[41]

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[37] Healing Through Remembering (2002) *The Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project*, Belfast, HTRP, p. iii.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 41.
[39] www.aislingcentre.com.
[40] www.bloodysundaytrust.org
[41] www.cunamh.org

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- **Families Achieving Change Together (FACT)**: Originally formed in 1998 and called Families Against Crime by Terrorism, FACT changed its name in August 2003 to 'reflect how we as a group have grown and changed'. However, its primary focus continues to be with what it terms 'innocent victims'. Amongst its goals is for members to 'produce a booklet relating their stories, feelings and emotions'. It would have two main aims; to ensure that 'their loved ones [would not be] classed as just another statistic' and 'as a means of therapy for many members'.[42]
- **Families Acting for Innocent Victims (FAIR)**: FAIR was set up in South Armagh in 1998 as a support group for 'victims marginalised by the peace process'. It now claims a membership of over 600 members and has links to several other like-minded victims groups' (such as SAVER/NAVER and South Down Action for Healing Wounds). FAIR rejects the 'inclusive definition' of victims and has declared its opposition to a 'truth commission'. Its aims are to amongst other things 'create a permanent remembrance' of South Armagh victims of 'terrorism' by allowing members to 'tell our stories and ensure that lessons can be learnt'. It wants to establish a 'living memorial centre' that would include 'a visual and audio area where people can almost relive the incidents'.[43]
- **Fear Encouraged Abandoning Roots (FEAR)**: FEAR was established in 1996 and is based in Enniskillen. It describes itself as a 'mutual support group seeking to deal with issues affecting victims of terrorist violence, such as recognition and justice'. It has a primarily service and needs-based approach.
- **Fírinne**: Based in Lisnaskea Fírinne was set up in 1998 to 'support the relatives of the victims of state violence' in Fermanagh. One of its key aims has been to provide a 'documentation service' so that 'people's stories of state violence may be recorded for posterity'. In 2002 the group published a small booklet *The Untold Truth* featuring the stories of 10 Fermanagh families 'whose lives have been affected by state violence'.
- **Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation (NICTT)**: based in Omagh the NICTT was set up as a charitable trust in 2002. Funded by the NIO it has a therapeutic focus and is designed to 'make the treatments for trauma available to people who have been affected by the civil violence in Northern Ireland'.[44]
- **Relatives for Justice (RFJ)**: Based in Belfast with a number of branches throughout Northern Ireland RFJ was formed in 1991 to campaign on behalf of the 'families of victims of state violence'. It continues to have a strong campaigning ethos on issues such as collusion, shoot-to-kill policies and the use of plastic bullets. It combines this with the provision of counselling and support services. Amongst its goals RFJ documents the experiences of individual victims of state violence, some of which are accessible as sound archives. It also initiated a 'Remembering Quilt' Project in 2001 so that relatives could 'remember their loved ones in a creative and positive way'. RFJ was also instrumental in the creation of Eolas (see 2.2.6. below).[45]
- **Survivors of Trauma**: Based in North Belfast Survivors of Trauma was set up to provide support and counselling for conflict-related victims and relatives in the area. Many of its members were directly involved in giving testimony for the Ardoyne Commemoration Project. Along with RFJ

[42] www.factni.co.uk
[43] www.victims.org
[44] www.nictt.org
[45] www.relativesforjustice.com

Survivors of Trauma was also an important place of contact and was recommended as a source of counselling support for relatives who had given their testimony by members of the ACP.

- **WAVE**: Probably the largest victims support organisation with several branches located in different parts of Northern Ireland and an estimated 1200 members. It places 'inclusion' at the centre of its mission statement. In a response to the Human Rights Commission consultation on a Bill of Rights WAVE members argued that the holding of a truth commission 'could help in [a] healing process' but that there was a need for 'further exploration' of the issue as Northern Ireland was probably 'not yet ready for a truth commission'. Any 'truth' recovery process, it was argued, should also handle storytelling 'with care and sensitivity' to avoid victims becoming 'further traumatised in the process'.[46]

- **Victims and Survivors Trust (VAST)**: In its mission statement VAST argues that it aims to support conflict-related trauma sufferers develop 'coping mechanisms' to assist them 'in their transition from being victims to becoming survivors'. As part of this goal they also seek to 'provide mechanisms to enable victims and survivors to tell their story and to rebuild their self-esteem and identity'.[47]

2.2.4 Oral History Projects

There have also been a number of oral history initiatives undertaken whose focus has been either solely or largely on the experiences of victims. These have included:

- **An Crann**: An Crann ('The Tree') was an arts-based project that sought to employ workshops to allow victims to express themselves in visual, musical, plastic and oral arts. It had a strong emphasis upon storytelling and recorded and archived victims' memories. It completed its work in 2000 and, amongst other things, published *Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles* a collection of some of the narratives that had been gathered.[48]

- **Duchas**: The Duchas Living History Project was set up by the Falls Community Council in 1998. It is designed to 'collect and present a historical record of life in nationalist West Belfast' for people 'who don't have access to official and establishment versions of history'. Its ultimate aim is to establish a centre where visitors might 'access the history of West Belfast told by its people'. This work is seen as 'highly relevant to victim and survivor research'.

- **Legacy**: Legacy was a BBC Radio Ulster project established to 'document the experiences of people affected by the Troubles'. Throughout 1999, at 8.58.am each morning, it broadcast brief interviews recorded with victims.

2.2.5 Research and Publications

There have been a number of research initiatives and publications produced on victim's issues. However, the most comprehensive and influential have included:

- **Cost of the Troubles Survey (COTTS)**: The COTTS was set up in the wake of the 1994 ceasefires to provide evidence on the nature, scale and experience of conflict-related bereavement and injury. Members of INCORE, University of Ulster carried out the work. Its main findings were published in two works, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs*

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[46] www.wavetc.clara.net
[47] www.victimsandsurvivorstrust.com
[48] An Crann (2000) *Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles*, Belfast, Lagan Press.

13

(1999) and *Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles* (2000).[49] The latter contained the transcripts from interviews conducted with around 30 people, many of them relatives and victims.

- **Lost Lives**: *Lost Lives* was a book published in 1999 that detailed the circumstances surrounding the deaths of each of the individual fatal victims of the conflict.[50] Compiled by journalists it relied in the main upon contemporary newspaper accounts of events.
- **Democratic Dialogue**: Democratic Dialogue is a think tank that has developed an interest in victims' issues since 2000. It has published several reports on victim-related matters including, for example, *Recognition and Reckoning* (2003).[51] This was the result of a round table discussion with representatives of various victims' groups and organisations on the VU (OFMDFM) document *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve*. A key theme to emerge was the need for recognition through a range of different possible mechanisms, including 'truth' recovery and story-telling processes.
- **Unfinished Business**: *Unfinished Business* (2000) was a study undertaken by Professor Bill Rolston of campaigns organised by relatives, victims' groups and human rights organisations on 'truth and justice' issues.[52] It contains the transcripts of interviews conducted by the author.

2.2.6　**The Eolas Consultation Initiative**: Eolas ('Information') is a loose group of nationalist/republican victim and other community-based groups that includes the Ardoyne Commemoration Project. It launched a community consultation process with the publication of *Truth and Justice: A Discussion Document* in September 2003.[53] It is primarily concerned with examining possible formal 'truth-telling' processes. Its broad recommendations emphasise that any process should be 'international', 'independent', 'community-orientated', 'victim-centred', have both an 'individual' and an 'institutional' focus and be 'non-punitive' and 'non-judicial'. This consultation initiative has sought to garner opinions and stimulate debate within (principally though not exclusively) the nationalist community on 'truth-telling' and victims' issues.

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[49] Fay, Marie-Therese, Morrissey, Mike & Smyth, Marie (1999) *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs*, London, Pluto; Smyth, Marie & Fay, Marie-Therese (2000) *Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles: Public Conflict, Private Loss*, London, Pluto.

[50] McKitterick, David, Kelters, Seamus, Feeney, Brian & Thornton, Chris (1999) *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, London, Mainstream Publishing.

[51] www.democraticdialogue.org

[52] Rolston, Bill (2000) *Unfinished Business: State Killings and the Quest for Truth*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications.

[53] Eolas (2004) *Truth and Justice: A Discussion Document*, Belfast, Eolas.

(1999) and *Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles* (2000).[49] The latter contained the transcripts from interviews conducted with around 30 people, many of them relatives and victims.

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[50] McKitterick, David, Kelters, Seamus, Feeney, Brian & Thornton, Chris (1999) *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, London, Mainstream Publishing.

[51] www.democraticdialogue.org

[52] Rolston, Bill (2000) *Unfinished Business: State Killings and the Quest for Truth*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications.

[53] Eolas (2004) *Truth and Justice: A Discussion Document*, Belfast, Eolas.

14

A.3 The Ardoyne Commemoration Project

3.1. Formation of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project

3.1.1. The ACP was formed in the wake of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in April 1998. There were two main reasons for this.

3.1.2. First, the terms of the GFA led to the emergence of a politically charged 'victims' agenda'. A number of newly formed victims' groups (i.e. FACT and FAIR) campaigned against the provisions within the GFA that dealt with the early release of prisoners on the basis of the rights of 'innocent' victims. At the same time, the appointment of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield as the victims' commissioner and the fact that responsibility for victims' issues was given to the Minister for Armed Forces were seen by many nationalists (and some of those involved in the ACP) as instituting a 'hierarchy of victimhood'.

3.1.3. Second, the signing of the GFA signalled an apparent end to the conflict and offered an opportunity for reflection on past events and loss. The political considerations outlined above were undoubtedly secondary to this desire to 'remember the dead'. This was the primary and over-riding reason why the ACP was created.

3.1.4. As a result, in August 1998 a number of relatives, community activists and interested individuals within Ardoyne met to discuss ways in which they might commemorate those from the area killed as a result of the conflict. A number of options were considered including a physical memorial. After a series of meetings it was decided to do so through a book that would contain the memories of the families of the dead.

3.2. Structure, Methodology and Ethos of the ACP

3.2.1. **The Committee**: A Committee of eight people (later reduced to five), with a chairperson and treasurer was established. The committee provided the organisational framework for the day-to-day running of the project. The members of the committee were also those most active in carrying out the work. However, a wider network of a dozen or more people provided support, advice, time and energy at various stages.

3.2.2. **Local Control and Participation**: All except one of the committee members were from Ardoyne. This strong local basis and orientation was always seen as the single most important principle underpinning the work of the project. Community participation was regarded as central for both practical and philosophical/ethical reasons.

3.2.3. In practical terms the grassroots nature of the project was seen as crucial in order to gain trust, enable access and establish an empathetic relationship with the interviewees. This was seen as particularly important because of the deep-seated distrust of 'outsiders' resulting from the long years of conflict and surveillance and previous experience of state agencies and the media.

3.2.4. However, the emphasis on local control and participation was also seen as central to the ethos of the project. The ACP saw itself as providing a means for individuals and community to express itself and to place previously

unrecorded experiences into the public domain. Local control was therefore seen as an absolute requirement for this to be achieved.

3.2.5. During all stages of the project, the ACP made every effort to seek the views, opinions and the participation of the wider community. This process was designed to ensure that the community in effect took 'ownership' and control of the design, research process, editing, return phase and production of the book.

3.2.6. **Defining the Victims**: The first task facing the project was to establish the parameters of who would be included. Given that it was designed primarily as an act of commemoration for the community it was decided that the book would include all those people killed as a result of the conflict who had either been born or lived a substantial period of their lives in Ardoyne.

3.2.7. The emphasis was therefore not on the status of the victim (i.e. combatant or non-combatant) or on the agency responsible for the death (i.e. state or non-state) but that the person killed was seen as a member of the community.

3.2.8. This raised a further issue about the boundaries of what constituted 'the community'. This was defined in geographical terms. The boundaries for inclusion were based upon the geographical limits of Ardoyne as they are understood within the local community. This area is bounded on one side by the Crumlin Road, Alliance Avenue on another and the Ardoyne Road on a third. It therefore did not take in adjacent predominantly nationalist (i.e. the Marrowbone/ Oldpark area) or predominantly unionist (i.e. Glenbryn) areas.

3.2.9. **Inclusivity**: Alongside local participation and control, inclusivity was seen as a key principle of the project's ethos. The definition of a victim arrived at for the book meant that some people who were killed in Ardoyne but were not from Ardoyne (i.e. members of the security forces, non-Ardoyne civilians) were not included. On the other hand all Ardoyne residents who could be identified as such, whether nationalist or unionist, killed by the British army, loyalist or republican organisations were included, as were people from Ardoyne who were killed somewhere else.

3.2.10. Members of the project regarded this as an inclusive approach to 'truth-telling' in that it did not preclude anyone on the basis of their ethnic/religious identity, political affiliation and/or status as a victim.

3.2.11. **Establishing the Database of Victims and Interviewees**: No definitive list of the victims existed. A range of sources was used to establish such a database including local monuments, books and pamphlets. Of great importance was information that came from local residents, particularly with regard to residents who had moved out of the area and subsequently been killed. The list of victims rose from an initial 75 to 99 as the research uncovered more names.

3.2.12. The project then established a list of potential interviewees. This was a highly laborious task and involved far more time and work than originally envisaged. The database had to be regularly updated and keeping on top of the information required constant care and attention. This emphasises the need to develop good systems of contact and data management when undertaking a project of this nature. There are also ethical issues to consider (including,

16

for example, the personal security of participants) when collating and storing such data

3.2.13. The list of interviewees was arrived at in consultation with the families, usually the spouse, parent and/or other close relative of the victim. It was decided that, if possible, three people would be interviewed in each victim's case. These would include as a norm, the closest relative/s (i.e. spouse, parent or sibling), a near friend or neighbour and/or anyone who had been an eyewitness to the events of the death. Ultimately around 300 people were interviewed for the project.

3.2.14. **Conducting the Interviews**: A question schedule for the interviews was drawn up and discussed by all the members of the project. The schedule was semi-structured and allowed for a great deal of flexibility in order to be responsive to the interviewee. However, certain broad categories and concerns were identified. These included: the victim's personal details (date and place of birth, where they lived, how many and who was in their family, what school attended, employment history), a personal portrait of the victim (respondents were asked particularly for any memorable stories they had), the circumstances of the death, the response of state agencies and others after the death and the long term impact of the death on themselves and family members.

3.2.15. The project team drew up a document outlining some guidelines for conducting interviews. This addressed some general ethical and practical issues to be considered by interviewers before, during and after the interview. These included; disclosure, timing and setting, background research, familiarity with recording equipment (pre-interview), question schedule, interviewer position, question areas (during the interview) and interviewee and interviewer support, the 'return phase', recording, filing and archiving (after the interview).

3.2.16. However, it is important to stress that ethical and other issues encountered in the interview process were dealt with through practice and discussion amongst the project members. Local knowledge, insights into the values and attitudes of the community and more than a fair dose of common sense and 'common decency' were crucial in making these ethical and practical decisions. This was part and parcel of the community-based character of the project.

3.2.17. The interviews, conducted over a 3-4 year period, were all carried out by members of the project in a location of the interviewee's own choosing, usually their home. Most interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 1½ hours. They were all recorded, initially on tape and later on mini-discs.

3.2.18. Contact was made with the interviewee, usually in person, prior to the interview. The nature and purpose of the project was discussed at this initial meeting and the interviewee was given an overview of what sort of questions would be asked. They were then asked if they were willing to be involved. If so, a time and place for the interview to be carried out was agreed.

3.2.19. Usually the interviews were conducted with one person at a time, although some relatives gave their testimonies together. While this made the transcription and editing of the transcript difficult at times, the needs of the interviewee were always given priority. Even when giving an individual

testimony it was not unusual for the interviewee to be accompanied by a friend or relative as they talked. This was invariably an important form of emotional support for the interviewee.

3.2.20. The way in which the testimony interviews were carried out evolved over time. There were undoubtedly mistakes made, particularly in the early stages and generally these were the result of a lack of experience. Virtually all of the interviewers were local people who had not been involved in this kind of work before and there was a steep learning curve. However, the disadvantages arising from a lack of experience need to be set against the great value that comes from the work being undertaken by people from the community. In addition, in the course of carrying out the work important skills were developed.

3.2.21. **Post-Interview Support**: Not surprisingly the interviews were often a highly emotional and sometimes disturbing experience for both the interviewee and the interviewer. It became clear that there was a need to build in some form of follow-up support in the wake of the interview. Contact was made with certain victims' and survivors' groups (Survivors of Trauma and Relatives for Justice) and their details were made available. In retrospect this aspect of the work probably should have been made more of a priority. However, it is worth noting that many interviewees also preferred to rely on family and friends than non-official or organised forms of therapeutic support.

3.2.22. The work also had a significant emotional impact on those involved in conducting the interviews and transcribing and editing the testimonies. Again this became more evident as the work progressed. For many of those involved in the project it became an all-consuming part of their lives. By and large project members relied on discussions with one another to provide support. Again, this was an area that, in hindsight, could have been given more thought and consideration.

3.2.23. **Editing and the 'Handing Back' of Testimonies**: The recording of the interview was transcribed by a member of the project team. This transcript was then edited. This process was designed to re-structure the words of the interviewee into a more focused and readable narrative. It was a time-consuming process that also required employing skills appropriate to the task. This work was undertaken by the academic members of the project team.

3.2.24. The initial edited version was then handed back to the interviewee who was given a completely free hand to alter their testimony in any way they saw fit. This was to ensure that what went into the book was precisely what they wished. If there were substantial changes to be made the re-edited transcript would be returned for a second time, although this only occurred on a few occasions. During the 'handing back' of the transcript a member of the project would be available to discuss the contents of the testimony. Most interviewees made minor changes to the text although in a number of instances a major rewrite of the testimony was required.

3.2.25. This handing back phase was regarded as a key element of the working process of the project, ensuring that interviewees had a sense of control and ownership. It was, however, extremely time-consuming and undoubtedly added a considerable workload to the project.

3.2.26. Participants who provided testimony were also given pre-publication access to the edited versions of all the interviews carried out with other family members, friends and eyewitnesses for the relevant case study. Although the general rule was that changes could only be made to one's own testimony participants were told that any inaccuracies or issues of concern raised by the content of other testimonies should be brought to the attention of the ACP.

3.2.27. **Establishing Contacts, Providing Information**: Providing the full case to the family of the victim helped ensure that any problems or issues could be resolved prior to publication. Given the highly personal and sensitive nature of the work this was crucial. It also allowed families to see any information or detail they had not previously been aware of in other testimonies. At times disputes and differences of opinion arose. It was therefore necessary for the project to provide points of contact to resolve such problems.

3.2.28 There were also occasions when people sought information from other groups or organisations in relation to the death, such as the republican movement. An important part of the work of the project was in providing conduits of contact and information in such circumstances. Clearly this was a highly delicate and sensitive process and one that could only occur because of the locally-based character of the project.

3.2.29 **Other Sources of Information**: In certain cases no interviewees were available. There were two occasions when this occurred due to family members being unwilling to provide testimony. In a number of others, despite an exhaustive search no family members, friends or neighbours were found. In these circumstances the project team tried to collate information about the victim and their death from other sources. These included newspaper accounts, coroner's reports and other published sources. Such additional sources were also employed to support certain cases where interviewees were available but where the circumstances of the death were still unclear.

3.2.30 **History Chapters as Context**: At an early stage of the project it was decided to include a series of history chapters. The individual cases and interviews form the core of the book but there was also a feeling that these needed to be placed into a collective context and set against the backdrop of wider social and political developments.

3.2.31 A series of oral history interviews were also carried out with local people for the history chapters. They focused on the wider impact of the conflict on the area rather than individual cases. This was combined with the collation of material from a range of other sources including; newspapers, official reports and previously published pamphlets, books, articles and coroners reports.

3.2.32 A series of key phases and events were then identified and these provided the structure of the chapters. The brief circumstances of each of the Ardoyne deaths were woven into this narrative, along with substantial quotes taken from the oral history interviews.

3.2.33 **Funding**: Initially there was a great reluctance of those who set the project up to seek external funding. This was because of a distrust of funding bodies and fears that they might impose conditions that would affect the way the project was carried out. People were also very concerned about mixing up financial matters with such a sensitive subject and were deeply conscious of community attitudes in this regard. In the end, however, it became clear that

some financial support was needed to allow people to devote the time and energy needed to carry out the work successfully, as well as the purchase of essential equipment (i.e. for recording interviews).

3.2.34 **Support and Scale**: The project involved far more work than anyone originally envisaged and lasted for four years rather than the original estimate of 18 months. The sheer scale of how much information, material and planning that the project involved was entirely unforeseen. This necessitated putting into place clear lines of responsibility and systems of recording and tracking the cases, interviews and transcripts.

3.3. Ardoyne: The Untold Truth

3.3.1. **The Book**: The result of the work was the production of a book, *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*. It was published in 2002 by a local publishing house (Beyond the Pale Publications), which also helped ensure that control over the design, structure and layout of the book remained primarily in the hands of the project. That said, the advice and experience of publishers was extremely useful in resolving a number of pre-publication issues.

3.3.2. The book is over 500 pages and 350,000 words in length. Its sheer size may often be off-putting for the reader. However, the aim of the project was to capture the life as well as the death of the victim in the words of their loved ones. This takes up a great deal of time and space. The process of putting the book together was as important, if not more so, than the outcome. Similarly the book was made, in the first instance, for the participants themselves. Maintaining high production values of the book was seen as an integral part of paying respect to the dead.

3.3.3. The book was also non-profit making. When first launched copies were sold at cost price and made available through the local parish chapel (Holy Cross). Subsequent money made from its sale was used to subsidise providing one free hardback copies to each of the families. Small donations were also made to local community groups and organisations. The remainder was used to fund the production of a video of the launch of the book, free copies of which were be given to each of the families involved.

3.3.4. **The Launch**: The book was launched on the 15th August 2002, the 33rd anniversary of the deaths of Ardoyne's first conflict victims. The launch took place in a local club and all of the participants and families were invited to attend. Around 300 people were there for what became in itself a memorial for the dead. A number of speakers were invited including the ex-Taioseach Albert Reynolds, Mayor of Belfast Alex Maskey and the screenwriter of *Sunday*, Jimmy McGovern.

3.3.5. Two moments from the launch stood out. Referring to the treatment of the funeral of a local IRA volunteer in 1987, a local rector Fr Aidan Troy, publicly apologised to the family for the actions of the Catholic Church at that time. Shortly after the chairperson of the project, himself an ex-prisoner, called upon the republican movement to help in the process of bringing 'truth' and acknowledgement to the relatives of victims on an inclusive and equal basis.

3.3.6. The launch was an emotionally charged event for all concerned and signalled the formal end of the project. Since then the book has sold roughly 6,000

copies in Ardoyne, Belfast, Ireland and much further afield, including USA, Australia, Chile, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Mexico and South Africa.

B. The Current Research: Methodology

This section will outline the aims, objectives and methodology of the present study.

1.1. Aims and Objectives

The current research had 4 aims and objectives. They were:

1.1.1. To provide insights into the methodology and processes adopted by the Ardoyne Commemoration Project

1.1.2. To examine the positive and negative implications and impact of engaging in such community-based 'truth-telling' processes for peace building, conflict resolution and intra/inter community relations in Northern Ireland.

1.1.3. To critically evaluate the impact and perceived value of the ACP 'truth-telling' initiative on five groups of respondents;
   - Participants in the project
   - Members of the project
   - The wider Ardoyne community
   - Representatives of mainly nationalist community/victims' groups outside Ardoyne
   - Representatives of mainly unionist community/victims' groups outside Ardoyne

1.1.4. To examine the work of the ACP within the context of international and national 'truth-telling' initiatives

1.2. Research Process

The research was qualitative in character, based mainly on a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These provided the primary material for the production of this report.

1.2.1. **Interviews**: Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. They were conducted in a location of the interviewees choosing (usually at home or place of work). Interviewees were given prior notice of the purpose and question schedule for the proposed interview. Most interviews were recorded (on mini-disc) although in certain circumstances (see 1.2.4. below) notes were taken and written up afterwards. The researchers also carried out most of the interviews, although research assistants conducted a number. The interviews were carried out between May 2003 and March 2004.

1.2.2. **Interviewees**: There were five main respondent groups:
   - **Relatives/Participants in the project**: 30 individuals who had participated in the project by providing their testimonies were interviewed. They were selected in the first instance as a representative cross-section of the 300 people who had been involved in the project. A number of variables were considered to ensure that the respondent group is both valid and representative including: agent responsible for death; status of victim; date and circumstances of death; gender and age of respondent; extent and nature of the impact

of the death on respondent. The in-depth knowledge of the interviewees developed during the long-term and direct involvement with the ACP was called upon to ensure a representative sample, permit access and the consideration of ethical and methodological issues in the conduct of the project. The research was also specifically designed to provide for the inclusion of interviewees who may have had little opportunity in the past to voice their experiences or who expressed unhappiness with its outcome. Interviews were therefore carried out with 2 people who had not given testimony either through choice (in one case) or because they had not been contacted by the project. The researchers also relied on their contacts in local community and victims' organisations. Advertisements were placed in the local media (including local newspaper, community newsletter and church bulletin) to invite any other comments or responses to the work of the ACP. The interviews addressed the experience and impact of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project on the respondents. These interviews were conducted throughout the research period.

- **Members of the Project**: The second group of interviewees (4) were people involved in conducting the research undertaken by the Ardoyne Commemoration Project. Almost all of these respondents were also members of the Ardoyne community with little or no prior experience of carrying out such work. The interviews examined the development of research skills and experiences amongst the respondents. They also explored the impact of conducting the research on these interviewees.

- **The wider Ardoyne community**: In order to assess wider attitudes to the work of the project 6 individuals representative of various local groups and organisations were interviewed. This included members of different community groups and social institutions (i.e. Catholic Church). These respondents were selected as reflecting different social/political sections of the local community. Most of these interviews were carried out in the early stages of the project.

- **Representatives of mainly nationalist community/victims' groups from outside Ardoyne**: 6 members of community/victims' groups representing people from mainly nationalist communities were interviewed. These included members of human rights organisations, victims' organisations and community activists. Half were from different parts of Belfast and the rest from other parts of the North. These interviews were conducted between August and December 2003.

- **Representatives of mainly unionist community/victims' groups outside Ardoyne**: 6 members of community/victims' groups representing people from mainly unionist communities were interviewed. These included members of victims' organisations and community activists. The majority of these interviews were carried out in the latter stages of the project, although ongoing contact had been made from the initial phase. Given the local orientation of the project it was decided that there should be a concentration on reactions within the neighbouring protestant/unionist communities. Therefore a number of community representatives were included from the Greater Shankill area. It also became evident during the conduct of the research that there was a need to interview people who had been from Ardoyne/Oldpark area but who had to move to other parts of the city

as a result of intimidation and/or heightened levels of community tension.

1.2.3. **Interview Question Schedule**: The interview schedule differed slightly for each of the respondent groups but followed a general pattern. The areas covered included:
   - Personal experience of the ACP. This was directed at those involved in the project. Issues addressed included: pre-interview contact, conduct of the interview and post-interview support.
   - Personal response to the book and the launch. Awareness of the response within the community/ies
   - Issues arising from single identity work and the role of insiders/outsiders in community-based 'truth-telling'
   - Perceived impact upon community relations
   - Perceived role of community-based 'truth-telling' on conflict resolution and transition
   - Understanding of general attitudes to 'truth and justice' issues

1.2.4. **Interviews, Anonymity and Ethical concerns**: A number of ethical and practical concerns influenced the way in which the interviews were carried out including:
   - **Anonymity**: To facilitate potentially critical responses from all of the respondent groups it was decided that the anonymity of the interviewees would be maintained. This proved to be particularly significant in regard to the respondents from mainly unionist groups and/or areas.
   - **Recording Interviews**: While the majority of the interviews were recorded some were not. In a few instances interviewees who had provided testimonies to the ACP preferred not to be recorded. However, the vast majority of these and respondents from mainly nationalist groups/ communities were happy to be recorded. This was not the case for members of mainly unionist groups/communities. The great sensitivity in discussing the issues covered in the research was clear from initial contacts and this was accentuated by the changing political environment (i.e. Assembly elections in November 2003). In order to make these interviewees feel more comfortable and in direct response to specific requests, it was therefore agreed not to record these interviews. Findings from these interviews are therefore based on notes taken and written up after the interview was completed. As a result these findings contain fewer direct quotes.
   - **Research Assistants**: A number of the interviews were carried out by research assistants. There were several reasons for this. The main researchers were closely identified with the project. There was therefore a concern that this might influence findings. To see if this was the case the research assistants were employed to observe whether there was a significant difference in responses. While this did not generally seem to be so it may be significant that a number of these interviewees sought assurance of members of the project as to the credentials of the research assistants.

1.2.5. **Archival Research**: The research also involved the collation and analysis of documentary and archival materials dealing with other relevant information. This included material detailing different international models of 'truth-telling' in promotion of reconciliation and post-conflict transition and the compilation

of any comparable evaluations of community-based 'truth-telling' processes. It also involved the collation and analysis of material detailing the policies and strategies developed in relation to the provision of services for victims and relatives bereaved by the conflict within Northern Ireland.

C. The Current Research: The Findings

C.1 Responses from ACP Participants, Project Members and Representatives of the Ardoyne Community

1.1 Introduction: The Dialogue Within

1.1.1 This chapter outlines and provides insights into experiences of participating in the ACP 'truth-telling' process and the ways in which it affected and impacted upon individuals, their families and the wider Ardoyne community. Various international studies have suggested beneficial consequences of engaging in 'truth-telling' processes[54]. Despite the recent popularity of such approaches theorists and practitioners are increasingly acknowledging there is limited empirical research on their impact and benefits. Concerns have been raised that such measures are routinely implemented in transitional societies without adequate knowledge of their effect or value on victims, perpetrators or society as a whole and that there is a real dearth of any serious empirical research to inform such processes.[55]

1.1.2 This chapter seeks to assist our understanding of the impact (both positive and negative), role and benefits of such a process at the individual and community level. The general discourse on conflict resolution and peace building points to the need for a set of processes operating at different social levels. The ACP model represents a 'bottom-up' community participatory approach. This research seeks to generate important knowledge on the ways in which community-based 'truth-telling' processes may, or may not, offer a viable mechanism for 'dealing with the past' and contribute to broader peace building and conflict resolution measures.

1.1.3. **Participants' Perspectives**: The Ardoyne Commemoration Project (ACP) was set up to document and to 'give voice' to the experiences of relatives and friends of victims of the conflict in the Ardoyne community. Because of the ongoing nature of the conflict, victims' names and the traumatic circumstances of their death were often forgotten or overshadowed by further tragedy and loss. As mentioned previously, recent government policy documents have acknowledged that victims of the conflict had 'a right to remember' as a necessary element of reconciliation [56] and 'the diversity of victims' experience, culture and lifestyles must be recognised and respected'.[57] The aim of the ACP was to place previously unheard experiences of victimhood and conflict bereavement into the public sphere and to contextualise the circumstances of their death.

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[54] See for example, Hayner, P. (2000) *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*, London, Routledge; Henkin, A.H. (ed) (1998) *The Legacy of Abuse: Confronting the Past, Facing the Future*; Kritz, N. (ed) (1995), *Transitional Justice, How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*; Siegel, R.L. (1998), 'Transitional Justice: A Decade of Debate and Experience', *Human Rights Quarterly* 20, pp.438-439.
[55] AAAS and CSVR (2002), *Empirical Research Methodologies of Transitional Justice Mechanism Conference Report*, Stellenbosch, South Africa, p. 1.
[56] *Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations* April 10th 1998.
[57] Victims Unit, OFMDFM (2002) *Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve.*

1.1.4   This chapter examines the views and perceptions of the following sample:

- 30 individuals that participated in the ACP 'truth-telling' process (including bereaved, friends, eyewitnesses & others were interviewed).
- 2 individuals who either chose not to participate or were unintentionally excluded from the process (victim's relatives).
- 6 local people from the Ardoyne community not directly involved in the project (including members of community organisations, victims' groups, truth & justice campaigning groups, religious and political leaders, 'ordinary people').
- 4 ACP project volunteers.

The findings from these groups of respondents are presented together in order to provide an overview of perspectives from within the Ardoyne community.

1.2   Bearing Witness, Telling 'Truth'

1.2.1   For many relatives the denial of 'truth' and an enduring sense of injustice was a key factor spurring them to participate in the project and 'tell their truth'. This desire or need to provide testimony has connotations that go beyond merely 'telling one's story' and may be better described as 'bearing witness'.[58] Many participants expressed this in terms similar to those described elsewhere, where speaking of the past becomes a form of 'doing justice'.[59] In these circumstances 'truth' is used to denounce or challenge a perceived injustice and to set aright an official account. As two respondents explained:

> At the end of the day you wanted the truth of what did happen to your loved ones to come out, and I thought it was a perfect opportunity to give an interview. Everyone in my family that was interviewed felt that same way. That it was time the truth was told, you know, to get it across.

> I suppose there are certain circumstances where people who have never ever had the opportunity for truth or justice, whether it's through the courts or any other means, well, it's their opportunity to get it down on paper and have other people read about it.

1.2.2   What is apparent from many of the interviews was that some relatives had never been told 'the truth' about the circumstances of the death of their loved one. Added to this, important events and key details about certain killings had never been acknowledged or indeed collated by official discourse. These untold events, and the perceived injustice, have remained unresolved and a focus of deeply held grievance. Uncovering the 'truth', clarifying events and public acknowledgement of wrongdoing were seen as an essential part of the 'healing' process and a step towards 'closure' for a number of interviewees. Here's how the following respondents put it:

> I think one of the difficulties in any conflict is that if you are going to have any deep healing you have to get some expression of truth even if it is only my truth. It doesn't have to be your truth. It doesn't have to be a shared truth. But before I can actually be healed I have to feel that

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[58] Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (1998) *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London.
[59] Yudice, G. (1996) 'Testimonio and Postmodernism' in G. Gugelberger (ed) *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, Duke University Press, London.

somebody's heard my story and if they haven't heard my story then I'm not open to letting it go.

Like Bloody Sunday, I mean for all them years the Brits said it didn't happen, that they were all gunmen. Like the Springhill massacre, it's the same sort of story. They are saying that the people were lookouts for the gunmen and looked up to them, even though there were priests murdered, and there were children murdered here. They've just tainted everybody, and that is what they put out in the media, and that's what the world believes. And I think it's up to us to sort of trap the argument, to pull that down and to pull the screen down. You know, I don't think it's going to be easy, but I think it needs to be done for people to be able to move on.

1.2.3 Many relatives have a deep and fundamental need to know 'the truth' irrespective if the death was the result of state, loyalist or republican actions. It is also clear that, for some participants, being given the space to tell 'their truth' was itself a form of justice. Here's how the following interviewees put it:

Some [relatives] see their justice as somehow somebody coming along at some stage and telling the truth. But also other people see their justice as them being given the space to tell their story, that's their justice. So there is different levels, I think when you talk to so many different families and victims they have a different thing about justice but generally it is around truth-telling.

Surprisingly for a lot of the people conflict resolution comes out of the fact that they were able to tell their version of the truth and that's their conflict resolution. You know that's their inner sort of thing - well there's closure there now.

I think you are going to find lots of people very happy with what's there [in the book]. To say my son's story has been told and I'm happy with that. At least it will be there for people to look at and know the truth, their truth.

1.2.4 There was a sense for many respondents that participating in the ACP had a positive impact on relatives because it enabled them to challenge what they perceived as the 'denial of truth'. Such a process, it has been suggested, may assist in 'restoring dignity' because it 'seeks to give the victim a full role in the telling of the story of a past of gross violations'.[60] Certainly the issue of restoring dignity arose in many of the interviews. It was also frequently remarked, although with a somewhat different meaning, that 'the dignity of the people who had suffered had shone through in the book'.

1.2.5 For a very small number of interviewees the question of establishing 'the truth' appeared to be less important. For at least one relative there was also a sense of cynicism about the value of 'truth' and whether or not some protagonists to the conflict could ever disclose it:

It's like the whole thing around this peace, the South African stuff, the truth commissions, people are saying well sure if you find out what's the

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[60] Dyzenhaus, D. (2000) 'Justifying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 8:4, pp.470-496.

point, so what? So what if the Brits say 'yes we did it'. We know they did it, so what? It wouldn't make any difference to me whether they said 'yes', or 'I'm sorry', or whatever, because you would never believe them… And I would say there's a load of people would say, 'I don't want truth, I want revenge'.

1.2.6 A very large number of interviewees talked about the important role the process had played in 'setting the record straight' and putting on record 'what really happened'. Many spoke of the grief caused by sections of the media due to their insensitive and often inaccurate reporting of events. Compounding this, some respondents felt that not all victims were treated and represented fairly by sections of the media. A number of individuals recalled how hurt they had been when they had read previous publications on 'the troubles'. This was, at least partly, because the authors had printed incorrect details concerning their loved one, without consent, causing families further hurt and distress. As the following quotes explain, participating in the ACP gave them the opportunity to tell their version of events and was regarded by many as an opportunity for ordinary people to 'write back'.

A particular author had written a book in which he spoke of the killing of my father, but the author had never spoken to anyone in the family or verified anything. The information he published was in fact incorrect. He talked about my father being hit with a volley [of shots] and quite a few other personal things about our family that are totally incorrect as well. So I thought that maybe with a book like this it would maybe help to correct the balance.

Other books that you've bought, I've read most of the books, and you knew that they didn't get it direct from the families, they picked it out of paper clippings. But they (ACP) went and interviewed the families, you know what I mean, and they got the truth.

I felt angry and annoyed that here we had a publication, 'Lost Lives', that possibly was going to go down as the definitive book in relation to how people died and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. I looked over a number of cases that I knew personally, the families that I knew, the victims that I knew, the circumstances that I knew through my own experience and they were wrong. ….they didn't go near the families, they didn't check with the families, a lot of their stuff was taken straight out of papers, straight from news reels, second hand sources and stuff like that.

Here we have so much untruth, so many lies whether it be deliberate or whether it be just laziness or complacency or whatever. It didn't really matter what the excuse was but here they had so many lies about good people who had died in certain circumstances and people were never going to know the truth, other than maybe the families. You were saying something has to be done; this can't go unchallenged.

1.2.7 The above quotes illustrate the importance of giving ordinary people the opportunity to challenge what they perceive as inaccurate accounts of the past. Indeed, many respondents stated that their reason for wanting to take part in the ACP was precisely because of the way they were treated by sections of the media and the perceived censorship of events over the years. Here are some typical responses:

All that crap that has been written for thirty years, you know, about 'he was a terrorist' or 'she was a terrorist' or 'he deserved or she deserved it' or whatever the case may be. This was an opportunity for people, particularly the families, to say that I am happy that I've done this [participated] and I'm happy that this story is finally being told and listened to and that it's out there competing with all this crap that's been written.

To me I think it was basically to put it all down on record because nobody ever told the truth about what happened here. Most people who came in to tell a story about Ardoyne only came in to tell this sensational story about violence or about the IRA or about whatever. But this was a way to make sure that ordinary people got their side of the story. I think that was demonstrated because each death no matter who it was, was included. You [ACP] interviewed people who knew a different side to the person other than what the BBC said.

The story, it's coming from the ordinary man and woman on the street and it's their story and their telling it how it was and it's not coming from any biased reporter or other group.

1.2.8 Such sentiments suggest that participating in the ACP process was in some sense 'empowering' because it gave control over what was written about victims to their relatives and friends. These voices and their experiences had previously been ignored or excluded. To many it meant that their version of history was out there competing with other versions of events. For many interviewees this helped redress the balance and the negative image sometimes constructed of their community.

1.2.9 A key impetus behind the desire to 'bear witness' for many interviewees was to ensure that younger and future generations would be able to read what happened to the people in Ardoyne from the community's perspective. According to the following respondent:

It's done something for everybody. Everybody got something out of it and even with my kids... we tend to forget that my kids wouldn't have known a lot of the people. That generation gap has now been filled.

1.2.10 As a result, the recovery of historical memory and ordinary peoples' participation in writing 'their own history' was seen as one of the most important aspects of the work of the project. Almost all of the interviewees expressed this view, that 'telling their story' really mattered to them. Notably many argued that the importance of this was in the fact that they had narrated their own story, as opposed to someone else telling it for them. Equally significant to many relatives was the fact that their loved one was no longer simply a statistic and that the book brought the person 'back to life' by telling something of their character and life:

I think the success of the book was that it allowed people's own voices to tell the story. That's where everybody could identify with it because it was very much their story, it wasn't somebody else's telling it. It was how they felt and saw things, and it worked for them, and people became real again. They no longer were just a statistic or a name on a wall, and it brought people to life again.

This is really giving a voice to people who haven't been heard before so that's where the big difference was. You had a table of events in Lost Lives which only re-quoted whatever was said at the time... But in this book it gave a voice and it was the genuine voice. This is adding something. It was the truth of people who were there, who were involved with it and who felt loss. So it was a totally different context, a far more important book and you would wish that every community was able to repeat it.

1.3 Recognition and Acknowledgement

1.3.1 Many of the respondents expressed the view that recalling traumatic memories was an emotional and sometimes difficult process for them and their families to undertake. Most of the bereaved had never spoken publicly about the death of their loved one and the personal cost to their family, friends and community. Their stories had been essentially private and unspoken. Despite the difficulty in recounting these traumatic experiences it was generally viewed as an important and necessary thing to do in order to have it recorded, documented and put into the public arena. A key issue raised by participants was that until then no one had taken the time to listen to their experiences and acknowledge their loved one. In effect their accounts had been bypassed, overlooked or ignored. A valuable outcome of the project was therefore the at least partial public recognition and acknowledgement it gave not only to the victims but their relatives. The following quotes reflect such views:

> *My husband is dead, what, 21 years and nobody has ever come to ask us anything at all about it. So it was to let the rest of the world see and that this was how much we had been through in the Troubles. And at least it's there; it's in print. Books are going to last for years and they are going to be there well after the people are gone.*

> *I thought that it was important that my side of the story about what happened to my late husband was down on paper, and that is what actually developed out of the book.*

> *I didn't find any healing in it what so ever. As I say, I found it more upsetting but worthwhile because you knew your story was going to be told. It will help in some way later on, maybe in the future.*

1.3.3 Indeed, the most frequently cited strength of the book was that it provided recognition. The idea of acknowledgement is often discussed in terms of the state and a broadly defined civil society. While such macro contexts were undoubtedly important here what was very noticeable was the importance of acknowledgement at other, more localised levels. A process of acknowledgement within the Ardoyne community itself was a highly significant feature of the work of the project for many, particularly given the prevalence of certain internal tensions and divisions (see 2.5 below).

1.3.4 In similar vein for some individuals it was immensely important that other members of both their immediate and extended family (and particularly children and grandchildren) were able to read and understand something of the circumstances of what had happened. Such harrowing events were often not shared or articulated by survivors and relatives, particularly by those that had

witnessed the killing of a loved one. The therapeutic value of this sharing of information, particularly within families, was raised by many of the interviewees:

> *I only had the two brothers, the one that was killed and my other brother. And it [the interview] was the only time I ever heard him speaking about it [the killing]. Now, he didn't want to do the interview and we sort of persuaded him into doing it because he knew him more as, not a brother, but as a friend I'd say. He told us wee things about him… But that was the first time he had ever spoken about him and that was important. I found out a lot about my brother through the interview and I think it was good for us, for him to talk.*

> *Do you know what really sort of got me… it just shows you… although we were the same family and had the same father killed my sister sees it completely different to me, which I thought was good because she said things that I didn't know, and I said things that she didn't know. So as I say, it took the book to bring it out, she would never talk to me about it. I think an awful lot of families do that.*

> *At the time, well, whenever I was doing my bit for the book it sort of helped me along trying to accept what had happened, you know. And by me telling my side of the story… Other people were afraid to ask me what happened, when he was killed… so when they read it they couldn't believe it, what I'd actually seen or witnessed, you know.*

1.3.5   Closely tied to the question of recognition was the desire for remembrance. Again this was a primary factor motivating individuals to participate in the project. Giving testimony was regarded as a beneficial thing to do, not necessarily because the experience was therapeutic or cathartic, but because it brought a tangible outcome. That is, 'a human face' was put on statistics and the community would 'collectively remember'. This sentiment is illustrated in the following quotes:

> *It was those little stories about the person… you know that this person wasn't just dead. And that's the difference. You see, you get that Lost Lives book that's basically a statistician's dream but you know very little about the people involved and again that's what came through and I think that's what resonates throughout the whole book.*

> *A lot of people have died and because it covered such a span of years, thirty years, a lot of people had forgotten about a lot of other people that had died. It was very, very important that Ardoyne as a community didn't forget all those people who had died as a direct result of the conflict and not only for Ardoyne as a community but also for the families.*

> *I said to myself… 'How are we going to be remembered in ten years time or twenty years time in relation to the conflict over the past thirty years'? You know are we going to be completely written out? Is somebody going to write a book somewhere about the conflict and you are not going to hear about the like of some of these victims and what happened and all the other people who died?*

32

1.4 Was the Process Therapeutic?

1.4.1 There has been a considerable amount written on the possible therapeutic value of participating in 'truth telling' processes. Clearly this is a highly sensitive area given that such work is not only dealing with the experience of violent bereavement but also raises critical questions over the conduct of all combatants in the conflict. The aim of the ACP was also to try and tell something of the life, as well as the circumstances of the death, of the victim. This obviously invited people to speak of memories that they may often have suppressed or found little opportunity to discuss openly in the past. In addition, what came more to the fore as the project developed was the experiences of the relatives and friends of the victims in the aftermath of their loss.

1.4.2 There is always the danger that 'stirring up' memories and strong emotions could have a negative and traumatic effect on those giving their intimate testimonies. It is clear that giving testimony was an emotional and traumatic experience for some. At the same time, and as earlier discussed, it was regarded by most as a necessary thing to do. As the following quotes indicate, the topic of closure provoked some fairly blunt and conflicting responses:

> *What's closure? What, you don't talk about it anymore? No there's no such thing as closure. Closure is a nice way of society saying, "for fuck sake dry your eyes and go on", that's what closure is. Closure is not about you, closure is about everybody else, that's what closure is about. For you it's about learning to live with a new situation and dreaming about the past. Closure is definitely someone else's agenda because how can you close on something that's in your head. How can you ever forget your brother or your mother or father or your sister? You can never forget about them and they will always be who they were and they will always be them…that's not closure it's learning to live with it and learning to live in a manner that's good for your health rather than being unhealthy, always being depressed about what happened.*

> *I wouldn't say it leads to complete closure but I don't think you could ask for any more. How close to closure can you get out of the book to be honest with you? No it's not closure for me… it's not closure… that book won't close it for people. A while back I had to go and get my head straight, get my head fixed, and then the book came out. That was another stepping stone for me and it's still not one hundred per cent but I'm a lot happier now than what I was before the book was written, and I'm sure there is a lot of people the same. So I think it worked for me and I'm sure it's worked for other people… It's all been a stepping stone for me. Hopefully one day there will be a closure to it.*

1.4.3 Some respondents clearly found the interview process helpful and therapeutic. It was important to some respondents that they have a stranger to talk to and someone to 'simply listen'. This echoes the point made earlier, that some relatives find it difficult to talk to each other about their traumatic experiences. Here's what the following respondents had to say:

> *After the interview I felt sad. Just very sad. But glad that I'd done it because it's a thing that happened and my family all know that happened and it was nice just to get to sit and talk about it, you know, I don't really discuss it much with my family or my children because you*

find that your own family hurt as much as you do, so it's nice to talk to a stranger about it.

I think telling the story is a bit of counselling. A big part of counselling is actually telling your story and listening skills. So if somebody is listening attentively to a person telling their story and they thought that it was the first time this person was really talking… there's empathy there. Then that's counselling in itself.

1.4.4   It was felt that sharing similar stories was positive and helpful to relatives; that such a process had practical benefits for other victims' relatives who had experienced similar loss. Such sentiments are reflected in the following quotes:

Death in general is bad but death by murder and the way some people died was quite horrific. For us as a family, who are non-political, we were just trying to retell a story of how our family was coping with the situation and what we were dealing with on that day. Maybe that would help other people who were going through the same sort of stuff, to recognise the same things.

I found reading some of the stories, you say to yourself, 'God you are still bad. But when you read some of the stories, some people really have suffered… [there have been] multiple deaths in one family… and you wonder how they are actually coping with it.

1.4.5   Other respondents linked the idea of a healing process not only to the moment of giving their testimony but also to the end product; the book itself:

I think it's a good thing, it heals you, for want of a better word, when you see it down in writing. Knowing that other people are going to read it and know the things had happened really.

1.4.6   For a number of relatives and others the launch was an important collective community event that performed a healing or therapeutic role. As one interviewee recalls:

I will never forget the launch. I had zero expectations of the launch affecting me….it was one of the most extraordinary nights because the reaction was just so incredible. I mean there was just incredible sort of energy… the whole place was just packed. I just heard story, after story, after story that night. But there was something there that night that was just extraordinary, so to me the launch almost became like part of the story. But the launch wasn't just an event to say well how do you get the book out there, this was far more significant, there were people who travelled to be there, there were people who wanted to meet Albert Reynolds, there were people who wanted to meet each other. And so to me the launch was… like in religious terms it was like a religious experience, it wasn't just a launch. It seemed to unleash a whole energy. I felt that night that the amount of energy in the room was just incredible.

1.4.7   There was a very small number of individuals who were inadvertently excluded, either because they were not contactable at the time, or their names were simply not given by relatives, or friends, as a person to be interviewed. In emotional terms this clearly had a detrimental effect:

34

It was a friend who comes from Ardoyne that told me about it [the book] and I asked her could I have a loan of it, and she did, and that's how I knew anything about it. Well I read the part about [blank] and it did me an awful lot of harm. The fact that... well it brought all the memories back and the fact that I wasn't even consulted about the book and didn't know anything about it. I felt so left out and hurt. So I gave the book back and I was sorry that I had got a loan of it... I would have participated; I would have yes, for [blank's] sake, not for mine but for his sake. You know I just felt I didn't even exist, and I thought maybe it was because I didn't come from Ardoyne that I wasn't to be part of it. That's the way it felt.

1.4.8 The above quote illustrates that great care should be taken when identifying potential interviewees. It was suggested that perhaps a way round this would be to publicise widely and invite people to volunteer themselves or suggests others as participants.

1.4.9 There were a number of people critical of the possible 'therapeutic' claims of 'truth-telling'. A key issue raised was that it was harmful to 'reopen old wounds', and, better to 'let sleeping dogs lie'. The reason for this reticence was linked to a variety of factors, including the impact on community relations (see 2.6 below). Some respondents also questioned the therapeutic value of such a process and disputed the 'healing' potential in telling one's story. The following quotes typify such viewpoints:

There are people who say that's a good thing [telling your story], I don't know who in the hell ever worked that out. You know therapeutically it's supposed to be good. I don't think so... is it? Well I don't like feeling like that, put it like that. I mean if I had a choice to have loads of situations where you don't sit and feel like that, then I would choose for those situations rather than to be sitting going: 'Oh shit, how do I deal with this'? So if you were looking at it like that, then it's a bad thing to do. I mean, I wouldn't choose to live like that. Why would you whenever normally, and throughout your life, you just worked out other strategies to make sure to cope with that, so you have coped... We don't know if it is a good thing or not. We haven't played the whole thing through to the end, so you don't know until the end, and then you might come back and go, 'Shit I shouldn't have done all that'.

It set off a whole series of other things people probably didn't think about, once you start talking about emotions as opposed to rational stuff... The way we work things out is quite rational and then whenever you do things that unlock all those emotions it can sometimes be very, very difficult. I think that was demonstrated on the day of the launch. I suppose we should have had counsellors and all that type of thing there to say to people, 'by the way this is what is going to happen here'. It was like going to a wake. It was worse than going to a wake it was like going to the funeral. If someone had asked me a question on that night I would have started crying. Everybody was looking at each other going 'Oh God'. It was like letting the genie out of the bottle.

35

1.4.10 A particular concern for a small number of respondents was that 'delving too deeply' into the past could lead to painful self-reflection and perhaps a re-evaluation of ones own role in the conflict. Here's how two interviewees put it:

> I think it [the book] makes you be not so flippant about violence. All of us would have accepted… nobody would talk like that now. I think it made you actually look at it [the conflict] and go,'shit, were we all part of that'? How did we all get talked into that'? While all this idealism and all might be great, nobody actually showed you that book first and then said, 'Now'?

> People who inflict find it hard to read about people who have been inflicted on if you know what I mean… That's the main thing, you always have to believe what you're doing is right, and what you did was right, and I think maybe participating in the book, or whatever, could have put a few doubts on that, and I'm being honest with you that's the last thing that anybody wants is doubts.

1.4.11 Despite the above comments the same individuals saw the value in 'truth-telling' processes on a wider social level and in particular the positive contribution to intra- community conflict resolution.

1.4.12 Indeed it was particularly noticeable that the topic of the therapeutic value of 'truth-telling', more than any other, produced conflicting, contradictory remarks. Over the breadth of interviews conducted it was clear not only that opinion was divided on the therapeutic benefits of engaging in community 'truth-telling' but that people were divided on it in themselves. On numerous occasions respondents changed their mind at different stages of the interview. Here are a few examples to illustrate the point:

> I'm sure there are people there who felt very hollow when it [the book] came out. I'm still at a loss as to how this has moved it on for me… [And later] Well now I can put this to bed, and at least there's testimony there of who he was, and what it was, and what happened to him, and thank God it's been done and I'm really glad of that.

> Obviously it can be quite emotional [doing the interview] because it just opens up not one thing, it opens up a range of things and it does leave you susceptible to thinking about other things and getting into it… all sorts of things that you have to start considering and I just didn't want to do it. Sometimes you just want to close these things off [And later] I think one of the most beneficial things out of it all has been the process that was there. I think that the launch, the whole day in the hall, and what came out of it… I think the Father Troy thing [apology] that came out of it, that whole process has been a healing thing. There's such a demand for people wanting it… and it created a huge buzz and people talked about it. I think all that was very beneficial and I think the whole process it went through has been of the bigger benefit.

1.4.13 Other respondents noted the great problems and difficulties with 're-opening old wounds', but felt that it was necessary to deal with the past in order to 'move on':

> Well the only way to cure a wound is to open it up. That's the way I look at it. If you just keep burying it you're kidding yourself. I was lucky

enough in the long run that I was able to deal with it earlier; but I would say people know they haven't dealt with it; and then if they feel they are able to talk about it, they are actually curing themselves. They are getting it out instead of bottling it up, they are getting it out of themselves. So I think it would work that way for everybody.

You know sometimes it [telling ones story] is good in one way but it is also not good. That's the reality. For loads of people it will have reopened wounds... which is difficult. But then sometimes maybe that's what's needed to bring closure to them. If something really hard has happened to you it's going to open up a wound again and you are going to have to deal with it... but I mean that's the only way I suppose you recover when it opens up the wound and you think positively and then move on from it.

Some people maybe have buried their emotions and you have opened up a can of worms basically by re-telling the whole story, but for some people maybe that needed to be told. For some people maybe they haven't been healed, maybe they haven't been able to move on, and maybe by telling their story for the first time, maybe they have never told it before, that has helped in the healing process. I think the healing process to be honest with you is a lifetime.

1.4.14 There can be little doubt that being interviewed about sensitive and traumatic events in their lives was clearly an emotional and difficult experience for many people. This was particularly evident in those cases where individuals had a relative or someone very close to them killed:

> *After the interview I felt drained, emotionally drained. I felt like that for days after. Because you are actually going back to years ago and sitting deliberately thinking of your loved one, and what their character was, and everything about them. And then in the middle of that you know they're gone... I actually even took the route that the funeral went on the day that we buried them, and there were bombs all over this place and trying to get them buried... It took me down that road again.*

> *You're casting your mind back to very unhappy times. Happy times at first because you are explaining the character of your brother and what he was like and what he was like as a big brother and born into a big family... and then the reality of them being murdered on you and the cruel nature of it. I felt terrible for days after it to be quite honest with you, I did.*

> *Everybody wants the truth to be told, but there's some people that delve into it so much it starts to do their head in, you know. One man actually says to me, 'I just want to dig a hole and bury it all', because it's still too hard to handle for people. Because you're talking about years ago, to some people that sounds like a lifetime, but if it has come to your door, and its your brother or sister, or mother or father, it never goes away, obviously. And, to me, some people prefer to let go and get on with your life the best way you can. You know just bury it in a big hole.*

1.4.15 Taking account of the possible detrimental effects of re-visiting such events and the potential of secondary traumatisation raises profound ethical questions and concerns for any project taking on such work.

1.4.16 Some respondents felt there was a gender dimension to 'telling one's story' and that it was more difficult for men 'to talk'.

> *I think men tend to put a seal on it to a certain degree and they have a harder time dealing with it. I think women in general can talk much more openly about their issues. They have always been like that. For men I think we find it more difficult to because we see it as a sign of weakness to divulge too much about our feelings, like we're too soft.*

> *It challenges even gender things because most men don't want to cry, so you'll stand there and you'll bite your lip, and you'll go, 'I hope somebody phones me here so I can get out of this because I can't handle this'. Right, so there's a whole crisis that is going on even inside... I don't know if it is a good thing or not.*

1.4.17 Because of the varied and conflicting accounts in relation to this theme the researchers explored the topic in depth with several individuals who work with victims, have a caring or counselling role, or pastoral responsibilities in the community. Their jobs brought them into daily contact with a wide range of residents. Amongst such respondents the general consensus was that it was a good thing for individuals to be able to talk. An important factor was that the interviewers were trusted people from within the community who had experienced similar events and could empathise with relatives. Here's what one of them had to say:

> *I didn't hear anyone saying that they tore their hearts asunder and then they [ACP] left us high and dry. I think there was an awful lot of healing done by people one to the other. You know, like to like, almost instead of professional to client. I think it was in the talking and in the exchange. I think an awful lot of healing took place that way; that people had, as it were, somebody to say, to 'do you know I feel exactly the same'... And that was good, I thought, because people did talk and that doesn't always happen.*

1.4.18 Not only was the giving of testimony a cause for concern, quite a few interviewees expressed the view that they found the book too traumatic to actually read. This appeared to be related to the closeness of the subject matter to relatives' own experiences. Again, the potential problem of re-traumatisation has to be kept in mind here. The following is a not untypical response:

> *I have read very little of the book and deliberately have read very little of the book. It just depressed me and I just didn't want to read it. I read a few things. I didn't even go to the ones that I knew because... I remember one night I read it and I didn't want to read it any more, and I put it to one side and I haven't read it. Now I've read the preface and all those things. I haven't went into the stories, so I haven't done all that in any great depth. For me maybe it's because there's a personal part. It opens up all sorts of things that you have to start considering and I just didn't want to do it.*

1.4.19 All that said, most of the interviewees also talked about the benefits of the project for the community in general. There were a number of aspects to this. It was said that the process played a positive role in creating space for the

community to come together collectively to grieve and to demonstrate support for relatives who had experienced feelings of isolation over the years. The following quotes typify such viewpoints:

> *Through my own personal experience, when I have talked to people who have went through the grief process, they find when people stop talking to them about their loss it isolates them. They feel excluded and they feel that they [the dead] were only a name to everybody else. Like 'they were real to me and was I the only person that loved and felt this loss because other people don't want to talk about it now'. I think by doing the book you are showing people that they did mean something that there was a great genuine sharing of the grief. We can never share it the way a family shares it but in the community sense that this community did care and there is great evidence that this community does have that feeling. So it did all of those things, and I think it's a helpful process.*

> *The book had a massive impact. There is a new confidence, particularly in the people who had someone killed...they now recognise that it isn't just them who feel this, that there is nobody alone. That it was a shared grief, a shared emotion for everybody.*

1.4.20 In similar vein the work of the project was regarded as an important step in helping the community come to terms with over three decades of political violence and loss:

> *The community cried for days and weeks afterwards [book launch]. I was talking to a couple of friends and they were at a christening, and they all started talking about the book, and they said that they were all crying their eyes out because they had known so many people who had died, and they hadn't realised the impact it had had on their lives until they'd just seen it in front of them in book form.*

1.4.21 In addition, respondents commented that networks of support had been renewed or developed, within and between families, as a direct consequence of the project. On at least three occasions, that we know of, eyewitnesses made personal contact with relatives to share, for the first time, information about events leading up to the death of a loved one. Although the incident took place many years before the information was still welcomed by the families. This sharing of information was important to families because it enabled them to piece together events that took place prior to the death. It is clear from interviews that in many instances relatives knew very little about the circumstances of the death. This is probably due to the trauma and confusion in the circumstances of that time. A surprising number had never spoken to eyewitnesses or individuals who had been with their loved ones when they died. Consequently such information was never shared or disclosed to many relatives. The bringing to light of such sensitive information was said to be extremely important to relatives and regarded as a positive outcome of the project.

1.4.22 The type of collective support described above was, for some members of the ACP, a desired outcome and rationale for setting up the project in the first place. As a founding member of the group explained:

I always thought that it would be a great sort of bond for all the families involved. You know that they weren't alone in their suffering, which can happen I think. And I think that was borne out by the testimonies. That people feel somehow that they were alone even though they were in the midst of three thousand other deaths throughout the six counties. [It was important to find out] that there were other people who were going through the exact same emotions, the exact same feelings. So I felt that it was very, very important for the families of those who died.

1.5 Dealing Intra-Community Tensions

1.5.1 Clarifying the circumstances of deaths by a wide range of agents to the conflict can address issues of division not only between but also within particular communities. As discussed more fully below, the question of inclusivity was a key, and (certainly initially) fraught, issue for the ACP. Respondents were at pains to point out that Ardoyne is not a homogenous community. There exist fairly typical community divisions caused by disputes within and between families and personal grievances of a longstanding nature. There are also more complex intra-community divisions that are a consequence of the conflict and how it was played out in the local community. Those most frequently cited by respondents were the tensions between republicans and 'the Church', and to a lesser extent disputes within and between 'factions' of the republican movement. It is perhaps worth giving some brief background information in order to contextualise the discussion that follows.

1.5.2 During the late 1970s and 1980s community development issues sparked bitter divisions within the Ardoyne community. On the one hand local republicans felt they were deliberately excluded from many community groups and forums. They also viewed the channelling of public funding through church organisations as part of a British state 'pacification' strategy; the church being regarded as a 'safe pair of hands'. On the other hand non-republicans and in the main church-led bodies were suspicious of republican intent and that resources should not be used for political purposes. This situation and the perceived alignments created tensions, disputes and bitter divisions that resonate in the community to this day. Here's how one respondent put it:

People describe Ardoyne as a republican or nationalist community... There are people in Ardoyne who are not nationalist, never mind republican. We are not a catholic community. The number of practising Catholics is probably twenty odd per cent at the best. It's a divided community, with different opinions... there's divisions there that aren't healed yet. But you have got all these kind of labels stuck on to a community, so you need to come away from that. We are all these different individuals, we share common things at different times, but not always.

There's a lot of struggles going on and has been a lot of struggles going on within Ardoyne for the last thirty years. There's more than one war going on in Ardoyne.

Undertaking the sensitive work carried out by the ACP was fraught with difficulties given such disharmony within the community.

1.5.3   But perhaps the greatest hurdle for the ACP, and one of the most difficult issues to grapple with, was the legacy of intra-community violence. A number of conflict-related deaths involved individuals within the Ardoyne community being held responsible for killing members of their own community. Thirteen local people were killed by various republican organisations. In a number of these cases outstanding issues remained and relatives sought explanation of events and circumstances surrounding these deaths. When, for example, the issue of including alleged informers in the book was first raised it provoked heated discussion and emotional debate within the ACP. According to respondents, this had to be handled with great sensitivity as it had the potential to split the committee and jeopardise the project. Working through such issues became a learning process in itself, as the following committee member explains:

> First of all a major challenge was sorting out who actually were the victims because within republican areas, you had people for instance who were shot by the IRA as informers and that was an issue because some people were saying there is no way we are acknowledging this person because this person was an informer… So you were faced with this type of challenge… And you began to realise that this isn't going to be easy… You knew there was a tricky road ahead and that you needed to sort of go through this. You needed to argue it out, you needed to listen to the arguments, you needed to debate it and discuss it, you needed to keep an open mind as much as possible. Even though sometimes you disagreed with something… at a later stage you were able to come back to it with a fresh mind after listening to someone's point of view, or somebody else's argument, you were able to have, I suppose you might call it, the maturity to change your own mind and say well alright even though I argued against this at the last meeting, or thought at the time it was wrong thinking about it, they're right.

1.5.4   Intra-community dynamics made the question of inclusivity and 'truth-telling' a sensitive and controversial issue. These were among the most difficult cases the project encountered and the importance of establishing trust was key to the management of the project. Here's how one respondent put it:

> Some of them [the cases] were very, very tricky. Very, very delicate and very tricky. But I suppose the key to it all was being sensitive, trying to understand where people were coming from, and trying to, in your own head, thrash out a path that allowed that particular family member, or somebody else on the other side, if you want to call it, of that dispute, to come with you on that path without compromising their position. So it was like walking on eggshells at times, and as I say the whole thing was about maintaining dignity and maintaining respect and trust. It was very, very important you got the trust of the people very, very important. If you hadn't had the trust of the people that you were interviewing the project was going nowhere.

1.5.5   It is clear that the subject matter was challenging for the ACP. For some participants it stirred painful memories. For others it provoked much soul searching and self-reflection. Although not fully aware of its significance at the time, the project volunteers were engaging in a process of community conflict resolution. As the group 'matured' it became apparent that this was in fact the essence of the project. The following quote from one of the founding members of the project provides some insight into this process:

You had to be strong enough to go through all the disagreements and arguments and not take it personally. No matter what is said between individuals at any given time during any particular meeting you are able to walk away and say well don't take that personal, that is part of this whole process of trying to get this to work; and sometimes you had to work on things...I mean that was the strategy developed with all the families you were talking to... What's the problem, what's the obstacle, right let's get round it. And sometimes you had to do that internally as well within the whole structure that you set up yourself.... But you began to realise that the strength of the project was actually going to be the things you thought were the weaknesses. You know the things you were scared of, the things that you were scared to handle, and scared to touch, and scared to deal with, actually became your strengths.

1.5.6   Most respondents talked about the value of the actual process. They remarked upon the ways in which the ACP made space for all of the voices to be heard and that it directly addressed issues of division within the community by opening up avenues of understanding through clarification of past events and the voicing of previously unheard experiences of loss. According to many respondents, therefore, amongst the most valuable outcomes of the ACP was providing the basis for a local mechanism to advance intra-community conflict resolution.

I think the most beneficial thing out of the project, out of it all, has been the process... it began a process... and there's a way to deal with things. That might not have happened. If we actually talk about things, you can challenge people and you can make them accountable and I think the most beneficial thing that it did is it did that.

The project started so many processes from when it first began... All the discussions that went on, and the way that all the problems had to be ironed out, and then the actual launch of it, and there's still an ongoing process. You are still talking about an ongoing process

1.5.7   The above quotes suggest that the ACP played a key role at a number of different levels in promoting conflict resolution. Respondents shed further light on the specifics of that process. They suggested that it stimulated individual self-reflection and initiated a shifting of long held positions and viewpoints, as the following quotes illustrate:

You understand again, you relive some of the suffering again and that's the only way you can say it. I think it's good. I think that's part of maybe learning to move on. Particularly I found it good for me because if we are to take advantage of whatever political progress has been made it's about learning not to repeat the mistakes.

It even highlighted that there were divisions that our community make between the republican dead and the dead. All those things then became more acute and people were looking at it and saying maybe it's not right to do things the way we traditionally did things... but that challenges you inside your head...

1.5.8   Numerous respondents were also of the opinion that the process opened up a space for community dialogue and debate. Such positive outcomes were not confined to the immediate aftermath of the book but appear to have had a longer-term impact. Some eighteen months after the book was launched a number of positive spin-offs were said to have emerged. These included a thawing of long-standing community divisions that facilitated previously opposed individuals and groups coming together, for the first time in several decades, to discuss community matters. The following quote from a community activist provides an insight into such processes:

> *There are a number of things that we are all involved in now; I'm not saying they wouldn't have happened, but I think it [the project] has made it much easier to do these things. Issues have been dealt with that we haven't had to deal with. Issues have been brought out in the open and have been addressed in some way. Maybe not all of them have been resolved. But there are things if the project hadn't happened, could be an open sore now. I mean we are involved with people from the church, and people from other organisations, that have been sort of diametrically opposed to the other, that are coming now and trying to sit down in dialogue and discuss what the past thirty years means to us. There is acknowledgement that everybody is answerable to things, and everybody has things that they shouldn't have done, and I'm not sure if it [the project] started that process, but it clearly brought it out into the open.*

1.5.9   Almost without exception respondents suggested that the mending of divisions between church and local republicans was a positive outcome of the book. According to respondents, a key moment was on the night of the book launch when the Rector of Holy Cross chapel publicly apologised to a well known republican family for the way in which the church had conducted events surrounding the burial of their loved one. This was regarded as a highly significant event and a symbolic step towards mending the longstanding church and republican rift. It struck a cord with those we interviewed. Perhaps it is worth quoting at length the Rector's reflections on the event because it gives an insight into the specifics of the case and the impact it generated:

> *It was one of those absolutely providential moments. I had the book the day before and I knew in launching the book that you have to refer to something in the book and I was reading through as I say, glancing, just scanning at that stage the stories and I found that passage in the Marley story, where Mrs Marley described the reception of the body at the church, the lack of light, the lack of candles and then that incredible sentence, "I heard afterwards, the priest didn't even want us there". I just thought to myself that's printed and that's truth, and that can't be changed, you can't turn the clock back, but it can't be left hanging there… that's part of our history, that's part of our story and address that.*
>
> *But that seemed to me to encapsulate an area of life that was very, very sad, that not only had you the death of a person, not only had you three days in which they weren't even allowed to be buried… What really saddened me was that there weren't voices strong enough in the church to stand out in the middle of the road and say I'm demanding that this man be buried on the day his family want him buried, and for that I felt I had to apologise. It has received severe*

criticism from some people particularly clergy. But the vast majority of people, 99% of it, have been extremely positive. I still get people coming up to me about it. I think there is a bigger issue. This wasn't a criticism of an individual priest, or this wasn't a criticism of an individual community, or the individual bishop, or anybody, what I was saying is the church failed. Some people say if the book did nothing else it occasioned that and that's enough.

1.5.10 A further, frequently mentioned, significant moment relating to the launch, was the ACP public statement that unambiguously addressed the issue of accountability and, in particular, the role of republican movement in bringing 'truth' and acknowledgement to relatives of victims. As one respondent recalls:

I think it was very important on the night of the launch...it wouldn't have been right not to acknowledge the fact that republicans, particularly the IRA, had been responsible for a number of deaths... there was discrepancies there, and there was problems there, and that needed to be aired. It's difficult but it needed to be done, that's my opinion. But those things are difficult for republicans... you don't want to be alienating people... particularly when you are in a republican stronghold and maybe people haven't come through the same sort of internal process that you have done in your own head... You know I looked across that room that night and I guessed there were people there who were probably members of the IRA, there was other people there who maybe used to be members of the IRA, there was people there who were supporters of the IRA... But I think in doing that sort of thing that it helps the process on. It helps people, even if it encourages people to question certain things.

1.5.11 According to respondents these events, and the process in general, were helping to push the boundaries on a number of previously 'taboo' or highly sensitive subjects. As the following interviewee put it:

Through the whole informer thing, the book actually liberated people's thoughts because you were quite happy that they were there and that they were able to cry and do all the things and have all that support. Because it was as if whenever it actually happened to them, while people would have sympathised or empathised with them nobody ever showed it here but secretly they did. ...when somebody was killed...you know their brothers and their sisters and their ma and their da and even most of the time you knew the person who got killed... So it was good because there was that healing process that has to happen in the district.

I think it was very therapeutic for a lot of people because...you know not every case was cut and dried; there were some very sensitive cases where it was a death within the community, by people within the community and the therapeutic nature of that, in bringing it forward and being able to talk was enormous.

1.5.12 Closely associated with this was the view that it had created a new confidence and willingness to speak publicly about difficult issues. The following quotes are typical of such sentiments:

People are now standing up and able to speak publicly about death, people who probably hadn't been able to speak about it before, particularly things that happened within the community, that space was opened up.

I think the book has more effect than telling the story. It has given people maybe a confidence to go forward to look at other things and if it's doing that it's doing a good job.

I think it began a process and people did stand up and say 'Well, hang on a wee second this is what happened to me'. So that thing might not have happened. You went through this whole process and thought that there's a way to deal with things. If we actually talk about things you can challenge people and you can make them accountable. And I think that was one of the first things that did that. It was, 'everyone is accountable here'... and it needs to be everybody.

I was glad the like of [Ardoyne relative], who lost his relative very early in the conflict, was able to get up and talk at the conference. He said it was the first time he has ever actually spoke publicly about the controversy over the death; and I don't think that would have happened unless the book had happened and gave them that kind of confidence.

1.5.13 At the same time there is now a growing recognition that every party to the conflict should be made accountable. Here is how one interviewee described it:

One of the things that came across is that everyone is answerable in this. I'm not here to attack the Brits only, or anybody else only. We all have a case to answer. And therefore now in other types of forums you know people might be freer to challenge and say, 'what about such and such that did that? We all have things that need to be resolved here'. So I think that is a very important part of the project.

1.5.14 Similarly, according to respondents the project provided those most marginalised by the conflict within the community a vehicle to address longstanding issues of hurt.

If the British Army kill you, or the RUC kill you, technically there is a public route where you can go through and challenge that... People would question how good that route is but there was something there. There was something tangible; you could go to court, or the European Court of Human Rights and different places. But when the IRA kill somebody there is no real route as such....and it's hard for people... But I think in doing that sort of thing [the book] it helps the process on. It helps people, even if it encourages people to question certain things. I just think that it is a combination of all those things that pushes the thing out... the republicans that I know by and large would say you are one hundred per cent right. These are issues that need to be addressed and we need to address them.

1.5.15 From the above discussion it is clear that respondents were of the opinion that one of the major strengths of the project was that it played a significant role in conflict resolution at a number of different levels within the Ardoyne community. Overall this was regarded as a positive outcome and an important contribution to peace building and dealing with the past. Addressing such intra-community

tensions, it was felt, was often ignored in the 'typical conflict resolution initiatives' that tend to focus exclusively on cross-community relations.

1.5.16 It is also true to say that for a number of respondents there were issues around the perceived political slant of the book. This was related to a number of factors and can be linked in some ways to the community divisions discussed earlier. The concerns expressed were mainly related to the perceived political affiliation of the individuals involved in the ACP (and therefore by definition the project) and distrust of the wider political process. Either way, for some respondents the project aroused considerable suspicions and prompted a 'cautious welcome' from others. As the following quotes indicate, there were concerns about the underlying political motives of the project. This in turn fed into unease about being 'used in some bigger political game plan'.

> *A question that people would ask is why now, why? It seems to be like somebody had given permission for it to happen. You know in the not so long distant past these things wouldn't have been talked about. Why now? So that would sort of add fuel to the fire if you like, the feeling that there's something political behind this. So they would ask why now, what's the difference, is there some sort of statement getting made here and that wee bit of leverage to make the statement?*

> *I suppose after what everybody has come through in Ardoyne they are entitled to be suspicious. All the false dawns and hopes and promises that people have made that turned to mush. So people I think don't expect too much of other people, and people expect to be… for want of a better word 'fucked' by other people… 'here's somebody who wants to fuck me over but at least they are asking me first'. Do you know what I mean, there's a game in that; that they ask… And if it doesn't happen, then maybe you're pleasantly surprised and think isn't that nice.*

> *And there would have been suspicion that this is a potential card that could be played down the line. This is the worry. Basically, you know, a trade off. You don't talk about this; we don't talk about that. People are very suspicious.*

> *No I think it's a… coming together of events more than anything else. I mean you had all these announcements and then there's certain things happened, and certain people took up certain positions within the community, and they seemed to be delivering a different role to what you perceived them to be doing. You look at people and say can they really ride two horses, and that's said about me as well. It's said about everyone. I know him, I remember him when he had no arse in his trousers and now he's standing with a suit on. People are like that. It's people themselves, peoples' own perceptions.*

1.5.17 To some degree suspicion of a hidden political agenda was, for some respondents, linked to the perceived political affiliation of certain members (and by implication the whole) of ACP:

> *There were two people that said that the reason why they didn't want [to participate] was because they definitely thought it was a political connection. They had fallen out with that political connection, if you know what I mean, and I could see the reason why. I said no it's not political.*

I mean, we're just a really divided society, and a really divided community. It's just that our community is so close-knit… there are people who like and people who dislike. If there's somebody on, say, that committee who were doing that project, and you knew there was maybe a dislike somewhere, you become very distrusting. It's just human nature…

The reality is …. you also have to balance out who went and asked what, and who did they go and ask and how they were perceived. So it's how they went and asked, or how comfortable people felt in giving the responses that they felt they wanted to give.

1.5.18 For some individuals the book launch confirmed suspicions about the political slant of the project. Here's how a few respondents saw it:

My son went to the launch. He wasn't happy and when I heard about it, I wasn't happy either, it was too politically orientated. It should have been done more in a community-based manner. That was one of the reasons I didn't go, I was dubious about the situation, about what would happen. My son went because a friend of his also was there and he felt a bit more comfortable going with his friend. But when he got there and saw Albert Reynolds and the various other…. political representatives – and it was very much one [sided] well, Sinn Fein, aligned, as far as he was concerned.

[At the launch]…when you think about the top table the people who were signing the books… why they were signing the books nobody knows. Were they asked to sign…? Well people obviously asked them I didn't see them grabbing peoples' books out of their hands and signing them. Did people think that's what had to happen? Again I don't know but for those who were suspicious that confirmed it. For those who weren't suspicious they were happy to see it you know, and you have to accept that both those sections of our community were there and both of them were either being aggrieved or being elated. So in this bracket if you like, in this victim's survivors bracket, those who have been affected in this way… you can't please all the people all the time.

There was that very clear presence from a particular constituency. For those who believed it was some sort of a political game being played or some sort of a …now it's all about a political springboard for us into a political dimension. I think some people felt that they were being used again… So there's a bone of contention right away between the community ownership and the individual ownership of the event. The community ownership is very hard to please; it's blood lust and bitterness.

1.6 Dealing Inter-Community Tensions

1.6.1 With regards to inter-community division there are those who would argue 'truth-telling' processes are merely raking up the past and adding to tension and division. In order to move on we need to draw a line under the past and 'forgive and forget'. In general, this was not the opinion of the majority of

respondents interviewed. In contrast, it was felt that the past needed to be addressed in order for 'society to move on'. Here's how the following respondents explained it:

If we are to really move forward and this surely is what the peace process is about, there has to be an admission that not every thing you did was done right. Not every side had all the truth, all the angels weren't on the nationalist side say, all the devils weren't on the loyalist side. But where we had right on our side it has to be told and where we were wrong we have to admit it. Now that's very difficult, it's much easier to say, well listen it's better to say nothing and move on from here. Well if the whole community is ready to do that I have no desire to rake the past believe me. I mean it's as tough or as simple as that. So I would be very happy to hear people saying yes you raked over it, there seemed to be blame because of the telling of the story, well yes that's what the telling of the story does, and if we are able to cope with that then I think we've done a good job. I don't know if there is an alternative.

It's in everybody's interest that there is political stability created. That there's some sort of political solution created to ensure, or to try and ensure that the killings cease, and that if you do deal with it, the roots of political violence whether it be from the British State, or whether it be from anybody else, that if you deal with that, and you confront that, and you create a solution around that, then you are creating a future for you yourself and for your children and for your children's children.

1.6.2   Although, respondents felt there was a need to deal with the past, the way in which this could be achieved, apart from engaging in similar community projects, seemed unclear to many. A comparison was frequently made with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the unsuitability of such a process for Ireland. This usually developed into a discussion about the danger in raising expectations.

1.6.3   Respondents were asked if they thought the work undertaken by the ACP could damage community relations. As the following quotes show, this question produced, in the main, a sense of frustration:

Why would you even mention cross community? Why would you not just see the people in the book as people who have been hurt and they have a story to tell? Why would you bring that up? Obviously because it fits your agenda and if it doesn't fit your agenda that story is coming out because it doesn't fit the story that you have been peddling. It also fits your agenda of them being in a pigeonhole – 'this is the way that they all think anyway'. So why would you not just open up the book and say look at the way those people were hurt?

When you attribute something to someone, their supporters or people think that's criticism, it isn't very welcome and what they do is put the barriers up so all the rest of the information doesn't go through. I have told my story many times. But when I attribute it to one section of the community or the other, the other section of the community put barriers up because they thought you were attacking them. You are not allowed to talk about some things because if you say it you are [seen to be] attacking. You are not allowed to say the UDA killed, or

the UVF killed, or the IRA killed, or the Brits killed, or the Peelers killed, or whoever killed. You are not allowed to say that because there is support for that general consensus of political persuasion in the arena. So they don't want to listen to it, so they put the barriers up. They miss the whole thrust of what you are trying to say and the whole thrust is... you see it's much of a much-ness, death is much of a much-ness.

If you had written that book and never called it, 'Ardoyne, The Untold Truth', and just called it 'The Untold Truth', and put no attribution down to the people it was about, they would read it differently. The person who turned round and said, 'Well, look you haven't even included', would have read the paragraphs or the pages about the inclusion of the people who he thought was excluded.

Read the story as a story, don't read it as 'fuck, they're all taigs in there or they're all republicans or they're all loyalists or they're all Brits'. Read it as a human being. Once you read it as a human then all the human emotions will come out. But what I do know is that people who have similar backgrounds have this empathy with each other and once they throw away the politics of it all...you know whatever it is, the bit that sort of divides you and the bit that unites you, that there is somebody belonging to you has been taken away and the things that you had, they are all bits that unite you. And though you never agree with them politically there is some empathy there of the heart, and once that happens that's one of the barriers getting pulled down. But they have to hear it, they have to read it, and they have to read it in a way that's not - look sure they're only getting at us...they can't do that. Once you do that then you are beat I suppose.

It's about one community... That's the reality of it. It's about one community and that's what it is. It's a community telling a story in a way... If you are telling a story about here, it's about here, and that's what it's about. You know if somebody else wants to do a similar process somewhere else and it's beneficial to them fair play to them let them do it. Let them work away. I think this is for here and it helped.

1.6.4 There was a general consensus that the community relations drive to 'continually seek balance' was in many respects a 'naïve concept'. A number of respondents remarked that they found 'the two tribes' analysis frustrating and 'simply an inaccurate analysis of the conflict'. It was repeatedly said that the sensitive nature of community 'truth-telling' within a divided society actually determined the most appropriate approach, and for many respondents that was single identity work. It was further suggested that 'the time is not right', 'communities would have their guards up' and a cross-community approach was in many ways not conducive to genuine 'truth-telling'. Here's how two respondents saw it:

In my opinion in trying to accommodate... and this is what I think happens with all the cross community stuff, is that in order to try and create this sort of 'look at us we are brilliant some of my best friends are Protestants' type of thing, or 'some of my best friends are Catholics', you lose out on the truth. The truth is the first victim in that

whole thing. Whereas I think you should never lose sight of the fact that what you are trying to establish here is the truth and everything else is a by-product of that. So I don't think it would work.

I don't agree with that whole balancing act. The story was quite clear. It says this is all we are looking at - just people who were residents of Ardoyne. If one hundred people died who were residents of Ardoyne then that's the story. So, do we need one hundred Protestants now? That's crap.

1.6.5   Nevertheless, there was a very strong opinion that similar projects could be beneficial in various communities whatever the religious or political affiliation. The perceived benefits were that it might encourage community self-reflection and examination and that such a process could possibly lead to acknowledgment and taking responsibility for their 'role in the past'. The following quotes are typical responses:

I definitely think I would like to lift a book from people in Glenbryn and read it. I wouldn't be scared to read that. I wouldn't be scared, from anywhere, Shankill Road, I wouldn't be scared to read it. The only way you are ever going to resolve this is… people aren't going to talk but if they are reading books they might learn something out of books without directly talking to people. I know plenty of them were killed as well, went through the same thing as us, and I think the more books that are done in areas the better.

You know from the person who says 'we have been suffering for eight hundred years' to the person saying 'it's those Fenians down there'; if people are able to tell 'the other side' of that story in their community, or with help from our community because of our strength in having achieved this, then that would be a marvellous thing. If there was even a smaller version in another community that was in some sense affected by this… I think it's important to allow people, even if it's only sort of to half justify why I reacted badly to you- but it's a step in the right direction. If we could get a story told, and even if we could swap each other's books, we might eventually get somewhere but I think it's terribly important that the story be told.

I do think it has a role to play [in conflict resolution] and I would love to see it being read by people in the loyalist community and I would love to get their comments. After reading our book, if we read their books, would we have a greater understanding of them? The whole thing of walk a mile in my shoes, it does have some truth there and if they would read the story from our perspective and open their minds to it… now maybe they won't, but maybe some will, and it's worthwhile for that, in trying to give people a different outlook and trying to say to people is that what you thought at the time. I haven't read Chris Ryder's book on the RUC and I probably will… I think it's worthwhile understanding the experience of another community and I think that tells a great story of what this community came through, and if it affects them, if it has any impact on them, I think it will be positive.

If people had read that book particularly in the twenty-six counties they would have a greater understanding of why people here believe things

that they believe and that's what it's all about: trying to inform and educate.

1.7 The Value of Inclusiveness

1.7.1 For a number of interviewees the question of equality of victims had become a highly contentious issue. A number of respondents were critical of the 'victim's agenda' and felt that it had been manipulated by some politicians for broader political purposes. A key issue raised was the emergence of a 'hierarchy of victims'; the implication that there was a distinction that needed to be made between deserving and un-deserving cases. Many participants in the project saw nationalists (particularly those killed by the state) positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy, or that, their loved ones were not regarded as victims at all. This is how one relative put it:

> *The relatives and families of people killed by the state have been excluded and marginalised... And the Bloomfield Report came about...and it was an opportunity to address on a parity basis, an equal basis, the hurts and pains of everyone, indeed reflect on the conflict. But that didn't happen. What he did was he further sowed the seeds, led the foundations for the perpetuation of the myth that the Loyalists and Republicans were the bad guys, but basically it was Republicans and, you know, the security forces were there trying to hold the line...And I think that he should've bridged the gap, he should've set the level playing field and tried to do that. Instead he just fell into that orgy of exclusion and marginalisation.*

1.7.2 It is clear some relatives felt frustrated, angered and dis-empowered by what they perceived as a process of exclusion and marginalisation. A key strength of the ACP, for those individuals, was that it offered the opportunity and 'empowered' them to express their views and challenge the 'hierarchy of victimhood'. This is how one interviewee saw it:

> *The bottom line basically was that everybody who died as a direct result of the present conflict was a victim. It shouldn't matter whether it was the person who was shot dead as an IRA informer, or the person who happened to be shot dead in crossfire by the IRA, or the one that the British soldier killed, or the RUC killed, or the loyalists killed, every single one of them was a victim.*

1.7.3 For virtually all interviewees the ACP was addressing and challenging the issue of equality of victimhood *within* the Ardoyne community. The project was seen as inclusive because all of those people from Ardoyne who had been killed as a result of the conflict were included.

1.7.4 Almost all interviewees made reference to the inclusion of individuals killed by republicans and in particular those killed as alleged informers. This was regarded as a major strength of the project, 'very progressive' and 'a positive step towards mending old wounds'. Such views are reflected in the following quote:

> *I was worried that the book may have been seeking to excuse or apologise for certain actions, or whitewash certain things. It didn't and*

again it's great testimony to the book that it sought to honestly tell all the stories for good or for bad.

1.7.5 There were a number of interviewees that felt there had been 'silences' within a community like Ardoyne. For years there has been a reticence to discuss fully and publicly certain events and issues that have touched on many aspects of the conflict. In many respects this, it was said, was borne out of a 'secrecy is survival' mentality, the result of decades of surveillance. Many respondents felt that the project had helped break down this 'culture of silence' and challenged the hierarchy of victims that had developed within the community. And as discussed later, in a number of instances the project provided a mechanism for such information to be disclosed and shared. There was a general feeling that the ACP had established a significant measure of 'truth' regarding such local issues. As the following interviewees explained:

They [relatives] talk about justice in terms of, well I mean it's not that you are looking people to go to jail for the rest of their lives, but you are looking people to tell the truth and admit what they done... And, well I think in some cases, yes, that did happen [in the book], there's no doubt about that, it did happen. It happened internally with a lot of stuff. But there's a lot of the other stuff that involved British soldiers responsible for killing people, and RUC responsible for killing people, and the collusion stuff, obviously people haven't got the truth there but that's what they are looking, that's what they see as their justice.

There are tremendously expensive tribunals both North and South of the border where you have a huge correct legal procedure but maybe a very guarded telling of the truth... You could have a sort of Saville enquiry time for the pain here in North Belfast, in Ardoyne, and you could have people coming in from the legal, social, psychiatric, and we could have a massive investigation, and at the end of it I'm not sure we would have done any more than the book done.

1.7.6 The inclusive nature of the book and the importance of acknowledging all of the community's victims equally, were overwhelmingly regarded as positive outcomes of the book. Many felt that it made an important contribution to building intra-community relations. The following quotes are typical of responses:

What seemed to me to be a huge part was that unblocking almost of a whole emotion of a community, and giving the community a voice, and as it were almost defining the community without barriers; which I thought was terribly important. It didn't say in the book that this is for people who were shot by a, b or c - no... these were people who died, whether they got shot or blown up by whoever; it was to tell their story.

So not only did it [the book] document the fact that somebody died as a direct result of the conflict but it also acknowledged the family as well. No matter what anybody did, guilty or not guilty, or no matter what reasons they did it for, their families are still there, and their families need community support and community acknowledgement.

What's good about the book is that you had republicans and you had civilians. There has been hundreds of things written in commemoration of republican volunteers who have died, and I think the good thing

about the book was it got the whole Ardoyne as one, and the people who had civilians that were killed, I think it gave them that wee bit of respect. They were able to tell their story, it wasn't just republicans telling the story.

1.7.7   As members of the ACP committee explained, the question of inclusivity was not without its problems. The legacy of political violence in a small close-knit community like Ardoyne, and the nuances of the divisions that resulted, presented the ACP with a number of unforeseen difficulties. Members of the committee who were interviewed talked frankly about the problems they encountered and how they navigated a number of highly sensitive and controversial issues. This question was also seen very differently by representatives of the unionist community (see B.2.4 below).

1.8   Participation, Ownership and Single Identity

1.8.1   Without doubt community participation and local ownership stood out as important aspects of the ACP process for a large number of participants and, indeed, the representatives of the wider community. On the whole respondents felt that the sensitivities of the project necessitated the use of insiders and individuals that were respected and rooted in the community. In an area that has experienced decades of surveillance and what is regarded as less than accurate reporting on the community, distrust of outsiders 'who ask questions' is a reality. For respondents this was closely associated with the issue of access and trust. As one member of the ACP explained, 'if we didn't have the trust of the people we were interviewing, the project wasn't going anywhere'. The rooted-ness of the project was, unequivocally, looked upon as the key to the project. The following quotes are worth citing at length because they give an insight into the process:

> *If somebody had sat down who's an outsider and asked 'what have you got to say', you might have been very guarded. There's this thing about how more relaxed you are with someone you know, and at the same time you could be actually uptight with someone you know because you don't want to say in front of this person. There's pros and cons to all those. I'm just glad that the person I spoke to was someone I felt comfortable enough with to say what I felt. All I can say and this is clearly my experience, I would have felt more comfortable sitting down and talking to someone who, and I didn't know [blank] particularly well, I knew she was somebody from my own community. I knew right away that there were things I wouldn't have to explain that she would understand some of the things I was saying. I would have been pretty guarded in what I said if it had been an outsider and it also meant that I would have had to explain myself. You know I mightn't want to get into all that.*

> *Well I suppose people still censor themselves because people don't feel safe in their community yet. But you still have to have your baggage. You still have to come along and say 'I'm so-and-so, you know my ma, or you know my granny, or you know my aunt'. So our area works different from most other areas in that it is all to do with kinship and all those things. If your family aren't from here then you'll never find out anything. That's the way it is... It's deep rooted and the*

book explains all that. So it's a different way of unlocking that, but I think you got the key of it right because it was people from here…

Oh definitely, people felt more comfortable with them because they are from their own community and felt they knew the people's suffering and knew most of the victims themselves.

1.8.2 As mentioned earlier [see section 2.7], the reverse of this is that the use of insiders could have led to more guarded responses and hindered inclusion of particular issues and events. However, as one respondent reflected:

Could the group or the project have done anything different? I don't believe so. I think no matter who you would have got, there would have been criticism. And whether it was people from outside the area…it would have been don't talk to them you don't know who you're talking to, or people from inside the area, so you can't win. It's with us, or against us, sort of style, and people decide whether you are with them or against them.

1.8.3 A further aspect of participation that was frequently mentioned was the importance of having editorial control over testimonies. Without exception respondents strongly endorsed the method of 'handing back' and the sense of control this allowed.

The good thing about the project was it was the first time that people were asked. They had control and they were able to say what they wanted, and when the testimonies were given back… I know from my neighbours that people said, 'I don't want that in and it doesn't read the way I meant it'. So they took it out and that was giving them back control and they were happy enough with that. So in a way it helped them to describe who they are and what their feelings might have been at that time. So that was good in that aspect definitely.

The fact it was done like that… the like of my participation in it… I thought I was given an opportunity to review what I had said in the interviews, make any editorial changes on my own comments was a very… I wish in all the other interviews that I've given I had the same rights but it's the first time it's ever happened. I think it's a very good process and obviously good practice.

1.8.4 It was pointed out by some respondents that the flip side of this could be that given the close knit nature of the community and the fact that participants were aware their testimonies would be shown to other participants in their case, it is quite possible this led to self-censorship and caution and therefore partial accounts.

1.8.5 Despite the 'safeguard' of editorial control, at least one individual expressed strong misgivings about giving their testimony and a few individuals talked about 'unspoken' pressure and self-censorship. The reasons for these misgivings appeared to have been linked to a number of things, in particular concern about the 'private' becoming 'public'. The respondent spoke of the very personal nature of his story and the intimate memories shared. On reflection, 'opening-up' made him feel vulnerable and anxious that his testimony might expose him to public ridicule. It is perhaps worth mentioning that his published testimony was in no way controversial but the circumstances surrounding the

death of his loved one were. The following abstract from the respondent's interview is interesting because it raises a number of issues. In particular it reveals feelings of insecurity that were not necessarily articulated, or picked up on, during the interview and/or the 'handing back' process. There may have been some underlying concerns about perceived community divisions. Whatever the circumstances, it is clear that the individual felt threatened about articulating certain personal details. The following quote speaks for itself:

> *I feel that the book kind of left you. You laid yourself bare and open to criticism because you were talking about your private life with somebody and other people would read it and go 'what a load of crap', and you just don't need that. I think that some kind of memorial or something in the form where people were recognised and invited, and basically made a fuss of. You know, maybe that kind of thing rather than where you had to tell your innermost feelings to have your loved ones recognised... There's the remembrance quilt that is going about, now that's an excellent idea because that's a persons own personal thing but with no words to it. Nobody can read between the lines, nobody can put anybody down for it. There's a big thing about telling your story, but not everybody wants to tell their story.*

1.8.6   In spite of such reservations the respondent concluded that the book was a good thing because it provided an opportunity for recognition:

> *But the book is a good thing, I mean; it was all my kids were ever going to get... and the launch. Because they are never going to get anything else, any other kind of recognition. So in that respect, yes, the book was good. But just for me personally, because I've had an awful lot of trauma... it just left me feeling very vulnerable. I just felt, 'have I done the right thing?' I felt very vulnerable afterwards because I didn't know what was going to come out of it, even though I was going to read the transcript.*

1.8.7   The above case illustrates that careful consideration must be given to the way in which very sensitive cases are processed. It also raises questions about the 'embeddedness' of the project and the reliance on 'insiders'. Several respondents had critically reflected on this aspect of the project and they were of the opinion that it might have been problematic for some individuals. This is how the following individuals explained it:

> *Did people open the door fully and if not why not...? What might have been some of the barriers for people not opening those doors fully, I think, may be about how they perceived some of the people who were doing the questioning. That would have been a barrier to how far they were going to let people in, and also answering in a manner that they thought the interviewer wanted them to answer. Say for example.... you belong to an organisation that's been responsible for... whatever, and I don't want to get on the wrong side of you, because I know you have got that sort of power, so I start talking to you in a way that's conducive to the discussion... So people are always screening, they are always watching.*

> *Everybody likes pigeonholing other people. That way they feel comfortable because everything is in its place. Something that's not in its place you are not too happy with it. So if somebody came up, say*

yourself, came up to my door, rapped the door, and I knew you, and I said 'there's Joe Bloggs he's been working in this area, he thinks a particular way, he drinks with certain people, he does all that there'. It's very dependent on who the person is who's asking you what sort of answers that you are going to give.

1.8.8   Another respondent was of the opinion that within families there may also be a number of issues at play that could determine who actually gets to speak on behalf of a family, and perhaps what they can or cannot say.

There are families and different things are at play.   Who is the strongest in the family, who's the most talkative, who sets the agenda for the family? I'm not talking... I don't think you should talk and that's it over... So lots of things at play, and lots of layers of stuff, and lots of screening and everything else.

1.8.9   The above quotes raise a number of ethical and methodological issues. In particular, the full implications of using 'insiders' to conduct interviews should be balanced against the possible negative impacts. It needs to be kept in mind that the community-based nature of the project, the sensitive issues involved, and the way in which people's testimonies were shown to other participants as part of the 'hand back' process, might just as plausibly have led to guarded and partial accounts.

1.8.10 It was suggested that perhaps different routes (i.e. e-mail) could be made available to participants to give their testimonies. A list of project volunteers, and contact addresses, could also be made available to participants. This would mean that participants had a choice of interviewer ('insider or outsider'). The same respondent remarked that participants might not feel confident or comfortable about raising certain issues, and that, 'involvement does not necessarily mean people are comfortable being involved'. Some individuals might feel 'pressure to do your bit' or run the risk of appearing 'not to care enough to give testimony'.

1.8.11 While bearing in mind the above points, overwhelmingly, it was suggested that participation in the process, and in particular editorial control, created a sense of ownership at the individual and community level. According to many of the respondents the end product (the book) became a symbol of community pride. This point is reflected in the quotes below:

Lots of peoples' houses in Ardoyne will have a big painting of the Ardoyne Church. Most of them don't go to the chapel but they have to have the church on the wall. Why? Because it symbolises something and the book has now become a symbol of something. You know it's a symbol of people in Ardoyne doing their own thing, saying their own thing... people have bought into it.

For the first few weeks that the book was published that was the whole topic of conversation no matter where you went, even on the road. People were coming in 'have you read the book?' and 'Is there any books left?' and they were running to the monastery and the monastery had actually run out of the books and had to bring more in. I think it had a big impact on the community.

I was fascinated at the size of the book and how much was in it and how detailed it was. I'd thought they're doing a book and we'd get a wee paperback thing, you know what I mean? I was really surprised when I saw it and how professional, that's the word, it was. It made you feel proud, not proud that you are in it, but you know what I mean, that somebody from your own community did that.

You'd be in a house and they would say, 'do you know Jimmy so and so' and I would say 'I don't think so'. 'Well do you know in the book'… and they didn't have to say what book. In the book… and they would define the person with the relationship to somebody in the book. That was interesting to me…

1.8.12 The sense of pride was also reflected for some interviewees in the amount of books that were sent overseas to relatives and friends. As the following quote describes:

I work in the post office and the amount of books that was posted overseas! Australia, Canada, America, everywhere, England, hundreds of books went. When I seen the amount of people that posted books away to foreign countries, you know what I mean, worldwide the book is going to be recognised.

1.8.13 A number of respondents remarked that the community was 'worn out' from years of political violence, demonisation by sections of the media, and recently sectarianism that had 'sunk to new lows'. The area was, in addition, undergoing internal social problems that had left the community feeling depleted and uncertain about the future. In this context the book was seen as a constructive thing that generated a positive image of the community. Several made the point that the book, and its launch, had rekindled a positive sense of collective identity. The following quote puts it succinctly:

It had a massive impact and it gripped everybody in the area and there're very few things that do that. You can think back to maybe five or six things in your life that had the same kind of impact. When internment happened the whole community was affected. The most recent thing probably apart from the book was the Holy Cross [school] issue. It brought people together… they all kind of way came round and said this [the book] is very, very good. It had that effect.

1.8.14 It appears from the research that participation and editorial control did create a sense of individual and collective ownership of the book. For many this was regarded as a fundamental strength and positive outcome of the project. Some respondents felt that, through engaging in the process, they had also 'regained control' in a much broader context and that this may also have contributed to a greater sense of self-confidence. In turn, the responses suggest that the experience of participating in the project was a means to 'shake off' what they perceived as the negative label of victim-hood that personified 'helplessness, passiveness and powerlessness'. Providing testimony was seen as a way of being pro-active in many interviews. It may also have contributed something to a more positive sense of self, at both an individual and community level.

C.2 Responses of Wider Nationalist Community Representatives

A total of 6 people representative of various nationalist/republican victims' groups, community organisations and human rights NGOs were interviewed. Responses from these interviewees were overwhelmingly positive. Most had been aware of the work as it was ongoing and some had provided advice and support in a range of ways during its progress. This context may have been reflected in their attitudes. Similarly, many would have endorsed the general outlook and issues raised by the project. Nevertheless, it was clear that all these respondents viewed the ACP in a highly favourable and positive light.

2.1. Writing History, Establishing Truth

2.1.1. For all the nationalist/republican respondents the core value of the work of the ACP was that it offered a platform for people to air their experiences publicly. One respondent felt that 'writing history' had two key dimensions. The story of Ardoyne was one that 'needed to be told for the benefit of history and for the benefit of the people involved'. This might best be understood as a collective and an individual value of 'truth-telling'.

2.1.2. The first of these elements was a theme taken up by another interviewee. The book, it was suggested, was a 'valuable document' because it 'documents the truth of the people from Ardoyne. It is their truth'. The usefulness of interviewing several people in relation to each case was noted as a particular strength because it 'produced a valuable record that puts the lives of the people into the context of what happened to the community as a whole'.

2.1.3 One interviewee regarded placing events and experiences 'on record' in this way as helping to make up for an absence of such perspectives in other histories of the conflict. 'This is the sort of history', it was argued, 'that has not happened anywhere else. There are libraries full of books that have never told the story of what happened to people in this community'.

2.1.4 This was linked by another respondent to the problem of official accounts that failed to take such voices into account. 'These experiences', it was suggested, 'have never appeared in official records'. Redressing that absence was particularly important for what were described as 'status-less people', by which was meant the large number of victims of state and loyalist violence (in the 1970s in particular) who were 'all but forgotten'. Gaining access to the voices and experiences of their relatives, this interviewee felt, could allow for a more inclusive history of the conflict to be written in the future.

2.1.5 Another interviewee from a victims' group believed that by 'creating a means for people to speak out in a way that had not been allowed before' the project was 'challenging censorship'. This was taken up by a community representative who described Ardoyne as a place that 'many people were not interested in' and that had been subjected to 'vilification' in the media and elsewhere. Such negative images of Ardoyne, it was argued, made it even

more significant for 'people to express themselves in their own words. That was very important'.

2.1.6   Part of the process of 'moving the telling of history forward', suggested one person, was to ensure that 'communities have the chance to recapture their history'. This would have two main effects. First, it meant that 'things will be there 'in black and white when it comes to the whole of the history of the conflict being told'. Second, it gave people a sense of place in society as a whole as they could feel that 'their voices and experiences were not to be ignored'.

2.1.7   For one respondent the strength of the work 'as history' was in recording and placing the lives of ordinary people, as well as the circumstances of their death. For this interviewee the book was 'vitally important in bringing back ordinary working class punters doing ordinary working class things twenty or thirty years later. It was their ordinariness that had shown through'. He stressed several times that what was 'very, very useful' was that the testimonies 'brought the picture of the person back to life, reviving their personalities'. It made the reader realise 'here was this person and they had a job, and a family, or they were a great football player'. It was this aspect of the work that the interviewee found 'made me want to pick up the book more and more'.

2.1.8.   Another argued that a 'great benefit of the project' was that it was 'really important in recovering historical memory and telling factually what had happened to people'. Again it was felt that this was a way of 'writing history', providing 'an historical outline for people' that was 'exactly the sort of thing that is required for the future'.

2.1.9   One respondent (who had personal experience of losing a loved one) saw 'establishing truth' as of great importance at an individual level. The book was seen as a way of 'clarifying events' and 'pulling together information' that could help 'establish the facts of the final moments of a loved one's death. That is very, very important for families'. Again the value of interviewing several people in each case was stressed. As was the inclusion of eyewitnesses whose 'information may not have been passed on before, or been seen as important'. Relatives often relied upon 'snippets of information' which created a 'mysterious lapse of time' concerning the final moments leading up to the death. This, it was argued, 'could be very debilitating' and so discovering any information about these moments could help 'bring about closure for many. Just to know now what happened'.

2.1.10. Such 'history writing' was also seen as a value for people trying to understand contemporary social issues and problems. One community activist felt that it had provided a valuable insight into 'better understanding the legacy of the conflict'. As a result it was possible to 'contextualise some of the problems we see now; problems in families, in relationships, or dependency on prescription drugs. It contextualises all that'.

2.2   Partiality and a 'Community Truth'

2.2.1   All of these respondents felt that the term 'truth' was not only right but also necessary to describe the contents of the book. Two main lines of argument

were put forward to support this position. That it dealt with facts and/or that 'truth' is never wholly objective anyway.

2.2.2   One community activist felt people in the book were 'talking about facts that had not been talked about before'. These 'facts' were that 'people had been killed', that there was 'culpability involved in those killings' and that the 'administration of justice failed and was seen to fail'. The interviewee argued that 'short of digging people up' those who wanted to deny these facts would never be satisfied and questioned their motivation for wanting to 'deny people the word truth'.

2.2.3. Another respondent felt that there was sometimes a problem with the word 'truth' because 'it is a big word with a lot of connotations attached to it'. Experience-based 'truth' was often subjective because 'many people might go through exactly the same events but have very different experiences and so they will have a different truth'. The result was that 'there is no objective truth on issues like these'. At the same time, however, the same interviewee also felt that the project and the book were very much concerned with 'facts, verifiable things that happened to people and which have never been officially recognised'. In these terms, it was felt, the book was dealing with events and experiences that 'could not be denied'.

2.2.4. One interviewee felt that 'telling this community truth' did mean that it was therefore a story told by people 'from their own perspective'. However, it was argued that 'you are entitled to tell your own story from your own perspective'. It was also suggested that if such a viewpoint 'challenged British and loyalist perspectives on Ardoyne then it has a right to challenge people to respond to it'. This might become part of a wider process in which 'people on the Shankill Road, or wherever [should] take the book away and come back with something that is their view of what happened in Ardoyne'. However, this was seen primarily as a means by which other communities would come to understand issues of culpability and responsibility. This was exemplified by one respondent who asked, 'How would they explain the Shankill Butchers?'

2.3   The Impact of 'Speaking Out' and 'Being Heard'

2.3.1. For most if not all of the respondents the main value of the work of the ACP was in the benefit that they believed 'speaking out' would have for participants. There were a number of aspects to this.

2.3.2   It was extremely important, argued one respondent, that such work 'was sensitive to the needs of individuals and families'. The best way this could be achieved, it was suggested, was to 'give dead people and their families a voice'.

2.3.3   The question of sensitivity around 'giving voice' was linked to the need for such work to be 'community-based'. It was 'important for the welfare of the families', it was argued, that the community was 'so closely involved'. The value of this for relatives is that 'they can see that the community they grew up in is taking responsibility for history'. Another interviewee argued that 'it would have meant a lot to people that their community was there and doing something like this'.

60

2.3.4. The inter-connection between the therapeutic benefit of 'speaking out' as an individual and a wider community experience was a key theme for another interviewee. What mattered was not only that individuals were able to speak but also that 'they were able to put their experiences into a collective context. The book was able to show shared features and patterns in the deaths and what relatives went through'. This, it was argued, could 'help end a feeling of isolation that people would have and it lent credibility to what they were saying'. The individual experience expressed in speaking achieved a level of wider, collective affirmation and recognition. 'At a personal level', the respondent argued, 'it would contribute to healing and at a local community level as well'.

2.3.5. The potential negative emotional impact of giving testimony was also discussed by a number of respondents. One noted the need for 'clear channels of therapeutic support to be provided'. Having some knowledge of the workings of the project this commentator emphasised the positive role that community-orientated victims' organisations (such as Relatives for Justice and Survivors of Trauma) had played in this regard. At the same time community participation was itself seen as a highly beneficial form of therapeutic support: 'what was also important was that there was a community spirit there, people were supporting each other. Families were being supported because they were able to participate'.

2.3.6 One interviewee felt that it was important not to separate out the 'therapeutic' dimension of 'speaking out' from the question of justice. 'The core issue is the loss', it was argued, 'and in order to be really therapeutic there is a need to deliver accountability and justice in relation to that loss'. This was illustrated by using the analogy of 'cutting off an arm from a body and trying to cure it in isolation'. Another respondent echoed this sentiment in arguing that 'things would not go away until the injustice itself had been addressed'.

2.3.7 Another interviewee, with personal experience of losing a loved one, also felt it was important to recognise the therapeutic limits of 'storytelling'. He argued that it was difficult to generalise what impact such a process would have on different individuals because 'being a victim of violence is a very peculiar thing to yourself'. There could be a great benefit for many engaging in a collective process because 'you can only liberate yourself from what you are living with but you do not do that on your own, but along with listening to what others are doing'. It was felt that the Ardoyne project 'surely worked for quite a number of people' because it will have helped 'purge the past'. However, he advised anyone undertaking such work to understand that 'there is no single question and no single answer. It will work for some but not for others'.

2.3.8 A respondent active in the community sector also drew attention to the importance of 'recognition' and that this comes in a range of forms, arenas and contexts. 'There is a great value in something being put on paper', it was suggested, and 'it is about recognition'. Again it was noted that 'for some people that might open up old wounds', but for others it would be 'immensely important to get recognition in that way'.

61

2.4 Inclusivity, the Hierarchy of Victimhood and Intra-Community Division

2.4.1. All of the interviewees discussed the issue of 'inclusivity' in the project in some depth. This was perceived by this group of respondents as an absolutely critical area of concern. All of them drew particular attention to the inclusion of those people killed as (alleged) informers in the list of victims and regarded affording their families an opportunity to speak as one of the most important features of the work. They also all felt that these issues drew attention to the problem of overcoming divisions within communities as well as between them. A totally inclusive approach was seen as the only way of confronting such issues.

2.4.2. For one interviewee the 'inclusion of informers [was] one of the really interesting things, an important step'. He argued that for a 'post-conflict scenario' to work it was necessary to 'bring closure to these relatives quite as much as anyone else'. He made a point of stating that he was a 'former republican activist' who believed that 'there has not been enough work done for such families'. It was important to remember, he added, that 'their [informers and alleged informers] families are still members of our communities and live in our areas. They need to be made to feel as welcome as any former prisoner or IRA man'. The respondent felt that the Ardoyne book had 'dealt with this issue in a very, very sensitive way. It was really inclusive, that was excellent'.

2.4.3. For another respondent this was also linked to the problem of an 'internal or alternative hierarchy of victimhood'. It was argued that there had always been such a 'hierarchy' and that the 'families of nationalists killed by the security forces are at the bottom of that ladder'. However, for the families of people killed as informers the situation was worse as 'they are not even on the ladder'. It was necessary to address this problem and such 'truth-telling' processes were seen as 'one way of doing so'.

2.4.4 Dealing with 'difficult issues', such as the deaths of alleged informers was seen by a community activist as 'incredibly important [because] otherwise you would have been censoring the truth, part of the community'. Taking on such questions was also regarded as a 'sign of confidence' because it meant that people recognised that 'the mistakes that have been made are not threatening anymore'.

2.4.5. A human rights activist who works specifically on victims' issues also felt that it was 'a brave and bold thing to include all those killed'. He felt that the project had been 'balanced, reflective and fair in its treatment of all the cases' and that this was 'imperative'. Such an inclusive strategy was also regarded as something that should be followed by other communities; 'it was done right and it is a template for the way that these things need to be dealt with in the future'.

2.5 Community Relations and the 'Can of Worms'

2.5.1. The interviewees were all asked whether or not the kind of work undertaken by the ACP could damage relations between communities by focusing attention on divisive issues of the past. None felt that this was the case but all

believed that it was necessary for such projects to be conducted in various communities of whatever denomination, ethos or political affiliation.

2.5.2. One interviewee, who has had direct experience of losing a relative, felt that the 'whole issue of moving on is a big issue', but believed it was impossible to do so unless the events of the past were brought to light. While recognising the logic of those who advocate otherwise he felt that it was 'just clearly wrong' to suggest that 'we cannot delve into such issues'. For people who have 'lost a loved one', it was argued, 'it is very difficult if not impossible to agree with the sentiment "forgive and forget"'.

2.5.3. The particular circumstances of North Belfast were seen by another commentator as requiring a more open approach to the past for the sake of inter-community relations. For this respondent it was the sectarianism that he saw as an intrinsic element of loyalism that had allowed 'catholics to be regarded as dispensable and killable things'. It was therefore necessary to record the 'randomness of people being attacked and killed in Ardoyne'. This was also linked to contemporary conditions as the interviewee felt that 'those attitudes are still there'. To 'de-sectarianise politics in the North', it was suggested, 'there is need to expose the way of thinking that sees catholics as killable things'.

2.5.4. Another interviewee felt that the 'can of worms argument' was driven by an 'incorrect understanding of what would benefit community relations. 'Sometimes you have to get through the idea that it is just down to perceptions and that the "two sides" are both right and wrong'. There was much criticism of what was seen as a 'community relations outlook' that sought 'balance' rather than 'truth'. The point of 'truth-telling', it was argued, was not to achieve 'balance' but to 'be honest'. The 'only real way to move forward', the respondent suggested, was to achieve 'real balance by dealing with the real issues of the past and everyone taking responsibility for them'.

2.5.5. There was clearly a high level of distrust and suspicion concerning the political motivation of those who opposed 'truth-telling' on community relations grounds. For one it was described as 'coded rubbish coming from people who do not want to face up to reality because they don't know where to go in the future'. Again the thrust of this respondent's argument was that the only way to 'unravel division' was to 'face up to the reality of the past [otherwise] we are doomed to face the same problems again'.

2.5.6 All of the interviewees felt that grassroots community-based 'truth-telling' was something that therefore needed to be undertaken by unionist communities as well as in nationalist areas. One stressed that it was 'very important that this sort of work is carried out in Rathcoole, East Belfast, the Shankill or wherever'. However, the desire for such projects to be created was always accompanied by a doubt as to whether or not this was feasible. The overwhelming explanation for this was that such work would create more difficult social and political consequences for unionist communities than nationalist. For example, one respondent said that the real question was 'why is it not being done?' The answer, according to the interviewee, was that 'the truth is far more difficult there. It would mean confronting political masters and looking at why loyalist paramilitaries acted in the way they did. There are more difficult truths to come out'.

2.6 Single Identity, Insiders and Outsiders

2.6.1 Two issues that aroused fulsome responses from all the interviewees was the value or otherwise of 'single identity' work and the respective roles of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in carrying it out. All were in agreement that community-based work of this highly sensitive nature could only meaningfully be carried out on a 'single identity' basis. Similarly, all felt it was imperative that people trusted by, and rooted in, the particular community conducted such projects.

2.6.2 For one interviewee both the purpose and the practicalities of such work necessitated a single identity focus. He suggested that 'to take the telling of the story outside Ardoyne [would] weaken what it was trying to do'. It was necessary to speak 'from where people are' in order for them to 'tell their own story'. It was also argued that to try 'in one fell swoop' to take on 'all the work involved in telling one community story' and then to do so with another was 'a nigh on impossible thing for people to expect'.

2.6.3 Another interviewee asked why there was always an expectation that there were 'two sides' and criticised the 'community relations model' that always sees things in that way. Single identity work had to be done because 'it takes a particular community and looks at it in an in-depth way. That makes what was experienced far, far clearer'.

2.6.4 Carrying out single identity projects was 'simply a recognition of reality', suggested a community activist. This was supported by another who argued that 'we live in single identity communities and let's not pretend otherwise'. The important thing for this respondent was that single identity work needed to be replicated in different communities: 'this is a model that can be used anywhere, by any community, it shows how to go about things for anyone'.

2.6.5 Another respondent noted the impact of the specific tensions and division in North Belfast. This was linked directly to the necessity of 'insider' researchers undertaking the work. Echoing a sentiment expressed in similar vein by all these interviewees one argued that for an 'outsider' to take on such a project was 'absolutely crazy'. His argument was that such work had happened in the past but that 'it was very much to the detriment of the people from the community involved in it'. There were 'great sensitivities involved' in tackling such issues and 'only a nucleus of people from a similar background or experience could understand that'.

2.6.6 One respondent reacted angrily to the suggestion that the 'critical distance' of an outside researcher might be required for such stories to be told properly. It was argued that 'if people cannot tell their own stories then who can? It is arrogant to say that people are too involved and that they cannot have distance'. The advantages of the 'insider' carrying out this work were in 'being able to see the impact of events and experiences'. Another took up this point and suggested that because 'you are dealing with some of the worst things that happened, at the core of the conflict [then] someone who parachutes in cannot understand that'.

2.6.7 One interviewee stressed that 'outsiders can have a role in providing information and support, but the key issue is local control'. The benefits of such a project all flowed from 'ensuring that whatever decisions have to be

taken have come from people themselves'. A representative of a victims' group emphasised the same point. The 'local nature of the project' was a 'wonderful template' that could be summed up in one word, 'ownership'. Whatever good had come out of the work, it was argued, was because 'families owned the project. Participation was the key'. Returning their testimonies back to participants prior to publication was seen by another as 'making sure that they felt control and had control. That was important'.

2.6.8   This theme was expressed in similar terms by another respondent who felt that the problem with work undertaken by outsiders lay precisely in the lack of 'representation and ownership for ordinary people'. The result did a 'great disservice to people in the community' who, in addition, 'would not engage'.

2.6.9   A community worker also noted the potential impact of 'non-engagement with outsiders'. The problem, she suggested, was that 'people would be more guarded with a stranger'. At the same time she also felt that there was a need to be conscious of the 'things that are assumed' by being an insider. This was meant in the sense of 'not recording things' because they are 'taken as read' by both interviewer and interviewee. People engaging in community-based 'truth-telling' need to be aware that 'what they assume sometimes also needs to be recorded'.

2.7   Emotional Impact on the Reader

2.7.1   A number of the respondents spoke of their own personal emotional responses to the work of the project and the impact the book may have upon the reader. Several described the book as 'heavy going' and 'very moving'. People also spoke of feeling a range of responses to the work including 'guilt', 'despondency' and 'admiration' for the relatives. One suggested that it made a reader consider the 'enormous capacity of people to survive'. Another talked of feeling 'voyeuristic' at times and that while he enjoyed reading about the life of a particular person he then felt 'awkward' because 'you know where it was all going to end'.

2.7.2   One respondent had discussed reading the book with several other people and suggested that this emotional reaction was typical. There appeared to be a high level of identification with the contents of the cases and a sense of sharing in the stories at an emotional level. Several of the respondents also made a point of saying that (as one person put it) 'it made you think how courageous people were to have gone through those experiences again for the sake of the book'.

2.8   Paths to 'Truth and Justice'

2.8.1   The relationship between community-based 'truth-telling' and other mechanisms of 'truth' recovery was commented on positively by all of the respondents interviewed. Most of the respondents were themselves involved at a grassroots community level in campaign work and/or victims' issues and they therefore clearly identified with the ethos of the project. As noted above, the general political orientation of the work would also have been one with which most if not all of the respondents shared an affinity.

2.8.2   One interviewee compared the aims and approach of the project with other 'truth and justice' campaigns and the Bloody Sunday Inquiry in particular.

Both were driven by a 'need for closure and to get access to basic information'. Both also addressed questions 'around the negation of the due process of law'.

2.8.3   This commentator was a supporter of judicial processes as a means of pursuing justice. However, discussing the project also gave rise to comments on the potentially negative impact on relatives and witnesses of giving evidence to 'inquisitorial fact-finding' inquiries. 'There is a coldness about such processes' it was argued, that contrasted to mechanisms where people might 'volunteer what they want to say and go away feeling better in some way, purged or liberated'. The Bloody Sunday Inquiry was a 'definitive event' that might see the uncovering of much of 'the truth' but it was likely to bring 'closure to some but not for others'. The key goal that any process had to deliver, it was suggested, was 'acknowledgement and recognition from the highest levels'.

2.8.4.   This was also linked to wider political developments and the importance of the peace as offering a 'breathing space to consider what had happened'. One interviewee felt that the project had made 'an important contribution to wider processes of truth and justice'. This was partly expressing a general sense of pessimism about the tenor of debate on 'truth and justice' issues. The main doubt this interviewee had was that 'real accountability' was not going to be achievable because the 'big player, the state' would not own up to what it had done. In such circumstances 'giving testimony might be the best we can get'. This was also linked to a distrust of large-scale state-centred 'truth' recovery mechanisms. Citing examples such as South Africa and the 'slaughter of the Mayan people of Guatemala' the interviewee questioned whether 'truth' processes had done much 'for people on the ground'.

2.8.5   More positively the same respondent felt that community-based projects 'may be the way forward on recognition'. This was because 'once they are given the testimonies are there, they will not go away'. They key thing again was that 'local people need to have control over it. That is imperative'.

2.8.6.   For two other interviewees some of the principles that they believed underpinned the Ardoyne project were those needed for wider 'truth' processes to take on board. For one it was 'political generosity'. The problem with the debate on 'truth and justice' was that 'too many people are still defending too much ground'. As long as the society was in 'contested terrain' then the attempt to establish a 'historical narrative' would be 'contested terrain too'.

2.8.7   For another respondent the primary lesson was 'inclusivity'. There was a need to 'excavate and archive' the past in order to build a 'society based on equality and human rights'. Undertaking community-based 'truth-telling' on the basis of 'inclusivity' was an 'important contribution to that end'. Not dealing with the past, it was argued, would mean that people 'stood back and admired the veneer of peace without scratching the surface beneath'.

C.3 Responses of Wider Unionist Community Representatives

A total of 6 interviews were carried out with representatives of various mainly unionist victims' and community groups. At the outset most of the interviewees made it clear that they did not want to be recorded and wished to remain anonymous. On several occasions this promoted unsolicited and frank discussion about why they felt this was necessary. These pre-interview conversations offer revealing insights about current dynamics within unionism, and loyalist communities in particular, however for ethical reasons we cannot discuss the content. The reality is that Belfast is a small place and even a very general discussion has the potential to reveal enough clues that could inadvertently reveal identities. What we can say is the topic of 'truth-telling' is sensitive, and regarded by many within the unionist community as a republican agenda. This led some interviewees' to feel that it would be problematic for them to be seen even discussing the issue with the researchers. They felt this might be perceived by some within their community as 'engaging in the debate', 'giving credence to the republican agenda' and 'another step to far'.[61] For other interviewees, particularly those connected with cross-community work, there appeared to be uneasiness (whether founded or unfounded) about publicly criticising aspects of the project. For these reasons most of the unionist interviewees were not recorded. Detailed notes were taken by both researchers and written up immediately after the interviews. Consequently there are fewer direct quotes than in previous sections.

3.1 Community 'Truth-telling' and the Problem with Partiality

3.1.1 For a number of respondents the claim made in the title of the book to tell the 'untold truth' formed a core part of their concerns. In several interviews it was an issue that arose almost immediately and discussion of it was often highly charged. Most of the interviewees felt that the 'truth' being told in the book was intrinsically 'partial', both in the sense that it was 'biased and unfair' and 'not total and complete'.

3.1.2 For example, one local community activist argued that there was no such thing as 'truth'. To illustrate the point he cited the example of a road accident, the 'facts' of which might at first appear obvious but which would invariably be seen subjectively and differently by anyone who witnessed it. This was used as a metaphor for the conflict and the way that people in Ardoyne had witnessed not the 'truth' but merely their view of it. However, his criticism went further in two ways.

3.1.3 First, he suggested that the book was 'unfair' because it was full of 'half-truths' and that 'some of those who gave interviews must have been aware of that'. This criticism was mainly directed at the oral history chapters rather than relatives' testimonies. It was linked to a suggestion that the book was part of a wider 'republican revisionism', and an attempt to re-write the history of the conflict. Recounting conversations he had with others another interviewee suggested that the history chapters were a form of 'republican propaganda'.

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[61] This is not to suggest that there is no dialogue within unionism/loyalism or engagement with nationalists/republicans on the issue of 'truth-telling' and justice.

3.1.4 It was clear that respondents were far less willing to criticise the testimonies in the same way. This may simply be because the history sections were seen as distinct in tone, content and intent from the testimonies. However, it may also be that the less personal nature of the history chapters (telling the story of a community experience rather than a particular victim) also opened them up to this response.

3.1.5 The other main criticism about the 'partiality' of the book was that it was 'incomplete'. In this sense it was challenged for not including the 'whole story' of what had happened in Ardoyne and, more pertinently, to all Ardoyne people.

3.2 The Unionists of Ardoyne

3.2.1 There were two aspects to the issue over partiality and the 'whole of Ardoyne'. First, the geographical extent of what constitutes Ardoyne and whether or not it should have included neighbouring (predominantly unionist) areas such as Glenbryn. Glenbryn is a small working class area (with a population of approximately 1,500 people) that is sometimes referred to as 'upper Ardoyne'. Indeed discussions focussed on whether or not the title 'upper Ardoyne' was of long and common usage or of relatively recent origin. In contrast to people within Ardoyne (who literally never use or even recognise it) those interviewed from unionist communities did see 'upper Ardoyne' as a relevant term. For example, a number of respondents pointed to the existence of the Glenbryn-based 'Ardoyne flute band' as evidence.

3.2.2 That said there was some sense that the title had come to greater prominence (certainly to greater political significance) in the last few years, linked to rising interface tensions and violence surrounding the Holy Cross blockade. As far as the work of the ACP was concerned the absence of 'upper Ardoyne' from the geographical remit of the book was seen by some as a limit to the project's claim of 'inclusivity'.

3.2.3 The debate over 'upper Ardoyne' was, though, only a minor point of discussion. A far more important criticism of the project was the absence of other Ardoyne unionist voices. This referred to those unionist former residents of Ardoyne who had either left or been forced to leave as a result of the conflict.

3.2.4 It might be useful to provide some background detail at this point in order to contextualise this discussion. Ardoyne always had a majority nationalist population but up until the late 1960s and early 1970s a significant number of unionists also lived there, mostly in the streets in 'old Ardoyne' that led onto the Crumlin Road and three streets (Velsheda Park, Cranbrook and Farringdon Gardens) in Glenard located in the north west of the district. However, from 1969 onward this unionist population moved out of the area. This was either the result of direct intimidation, a growing sense of insecurity or through exchanging homes with the large number of nationalist families looking to move into Ardoyne for their own safety; part of the mass population movement that characterised Belfast in this period. In Ardoyne this culminated in the events of the morning of the introduction of internment, 9th August 1971. As the tension, violence and number of causalities in the area reached previously unseen levels the unionist residents of Velsheda,

Cranbrook and Farringdon moved out en masse and 194 vacated houses were burnt out as they left.

3.2.5 These events clearly left an indelible mark and were still a focus of deeply felt grievance reflected in the comments of a number of the interviewees. This was particularly the case for one respondent, whose family had been forced to flee from the nearby Marrowbone/ Oldpark area on the same day.

3.2.6 It also became evident during the research process that the absence of the voices and experiences of these unionist former Ardoyne residents was one of the most contentious aspects of the project for people in neighbouring unionist areas. While it was recognised that the project had included a Protestant woman killed on the morning of 9th August the wider context and experience of Ardoyne unionists was seen to be all but absent. It was in this sense, it was suggested, that the 'whole story' had not been told.

3.2.7 This issue also led to meetings initiated by two of the interviewees with a wider group of community representatives and unionist former Ardoyne residents. The focus of these discussions was whether or not some sort of future work or publication that would place these 'excluded voices' in the public domain was either feasible of desirable. Although the researchers were not present it appears that a great deal of anger and antagonism toward the book was expressed at this meeting. This also led to some difficulties in developing the research in the short to medium term.

3.2.8 What also became clear is that many of these former residents still very much identified themselves as 'Ardoyne people' and resented the idea that their identity had in some sense been taken from them. This may also have fed into the debate surrounding the geographical limits of the project. Three of the interviewees noted that many former residents had moved to nearby areas such as Glenbryn, or 'upper Ardoyne'.

3.3 Community 'Truth-telling' and the Strength of Partiality

3.3.1 Despite these comments on partiality the same respondents also recognised important strengths in community-based 'truth-telling' work. The sternest critic of what was seen as the exclusion of Ardoyne unionist voices still argued that there might be a need for local communities to tell their stories. The problem, he felt, is that such a process is always framed as necessarily ending in 'agreement'. Rather, it was argued, such work should be seen as a series of 'conversations' within and between communities that might lead to understanding but that 'understanding does not mean agreement'.

3.3.2 For other respondents the need for local community work was even clearer. Single-identity projects were 'a necessity' for one, though they might best be seen as a forerunner to a longer term, gradual process of interchange and dialogue. Another interviewee, with former links to loyalist groups, went even further. He declared he was 'totally against' any organised 'top-down TRC-style' truth commission because it 'would not be able to get to the truth'. This was largely on the grounds that those groups and individuals who would need to be involved in order 'to get answers' [particularly loyalist paramilitaries] would be unlikely to do so. In addition he feared that any formal process would simply become another site of political and inter-communal competition.

3.3.3   Community-based projects, on the other hand, were viewed as the way to get to 'different truths'. The very partiality and subjectivity of this work was in fact seen as its greatest strength, giving an insight into experiences and points of view that were often excluded. It is something he felt that other communities should undertake because it allowed people 'to speak from where they are coming from'.

3.3.4   In addition, it was argued that this was less likely to entrench attitudes in the future. Rather it would lead to an 'empathetic understanding' of what had happened to people. This might be a difficult process, as discussion of reactions within neighbouring communities in North Belfast revealed. But again it was suggested that such single-identity work was the only way to 'open up a space for dialogue' that was meaningful because it reflected the views that people held rather than simply those that people wanted them to hold. In turn it could lead, at a later stage, to 'cross-community work' that was not practicable at present.

3.4   Internal Dialogue, Internal Division

3.4.1   Despite such positive attitudes to community-based 'truth-telling' the ability to carry out such work in unionist areas was regarded as a much more difficult proposition. A key problem was that of divisions within unionist communities.

3.4.2   The role that the project had played in opening up a space for internal dialogue within the Ardoyne community was a topic of much discussion in these interviews. While seeing the value of this almost all the respondents believed that undertaking something similar in their own communities would be much more fraught because divisions were far more acute. This was due to a number of reasons.

3.4.3   For some any discussion of 'truth' and justice issues was likely to leave then open to accusations of 'moving too close to a republican agenda'. This was linked to the rise of Anti-Agreement unionism, making many feel vulnerable and exposed in adopting public positions on contentious issues.

3.4.4   Certain areas of concern, such as any discussion of collusion and its repercussions, were seen as raising extremely difficult problems. This was not only because it was a 'republican issue' but that it could also open up questions and issues within loyalist areas that would be very painful and potentially divisive.

3.4.5   The legacy of loyalist feuds was also seen as problematic in this regard. It was felt that issues 'could spill over' and engender dissension and conflict far more than was seen to be the case in nationalist/republican communities.

3.4.6   Internal divisions were also seen as likely to impact on the ability of victims' groups and organisations to work together and for any project dealing with victims to be genuinely inclusive.

3.5   Hierarchies and Inclusivity

3.5.1   Whatever the criticisms of inclusivity of alternative unionist experiences in the Ardoyne project something that was seen as a strength was the ability to include all the area's victims, whoever they were or were killed by.

3.5.1   Related to this a number of respondents argued that there was a greater willingness to accept republican combatants as 'victims' in nationalist communities than there was to view even loyalist paramilitaries as such within the broad spectrum of unionism.

3.5.2   The Ardoyne Project originated, in part, to challenge what was seen as an emerging 'hierarchy of victimhood'; the distinction made by some victims' groups between 'innocent victims' (killed by 'terrorists') and everyone else. Many of those involved in the project saw nationalist victims (and particularly those killed by the state) as having been placed on the lower rungs of the victim ladder.

3.5.3   Significantly a number of the interviewees felt that a 'hierarchy of victimhood' also existed within the unionist community itself. That most of the respondents were either ex-prisoners and/or came from areas where their friends, neighbours and possibly relatives had been involved in paramilitary groups clearly impacted upon these findings.

3.5.4   This issue illustrates the sensitivities surrounding intra as well as inter-community 'truth-telling' processes.

3.5.5   For one respondent the definition of 'innocent' victims excluded the relatives and friends of victims associated with loyalist paramilitary organisations. This brought back memories of the experience of loyalist prisoners, and particularly their wives and families, being marginalised and poorly treated throughout the conflict. The interviewee felt that there was an unhelpful distinction made within the unionist community between 'respectable' (meaning security forces) and 'non-respectable' (paramilitary) victims. While recognising that some victims may have been 'bad lads' it was felt that this should have no bearing on the way in which relatives were viewed and treated.

3.5.6   This divide within the unionist community was contrasted with what was seen as a far less problematic attitude toward republican combatant dead within the nationalist community. The respondent insisted on a number of occasions that any testimonial work undertaken in unionist areas would have to be fully inclusive. In an area like the Shankill, it was suggested, any other approach would 'simply do more harm than good'.

3.5.7   Another interviewee argued that many victims' groups organised in unionist areas only recognised and acknowledged ex-service victims and their families. It was suggested that this significantly affected the whole way that victims' issues were looked at and talked about.

3.5.8   However, this respondent was still uncomfortable with the idea that 'all victims were equal'. By this he meant that there was a need to distinguish between all those who had made an active decision to 'place themselves in danger' (meaning all state and non-state combatants) and the 'poor Joe who was not

a member of anything'. Nevertheless, it was felt that this should not impact on the treatment of relatives, 'who are and should be equal'.

3.5.9 This distinction between 'combatant' and non-combatant' dead was taken up by another interviewee. He suggested that there was a 'level of denial' taking place amongst republicans if they did not see a difference between those who died on active service and those who did not. There should not be talk of 'murder', he argued, when it involved the death of people who 'knew and accepted that they were taking risks'.

3.5.10 It is perhaps worth noting that both these respondents had past or present links to loyalist political groups. They were also echoing sentiments that were expressed by a number of ex-republican activists in the book and during the current research.

3.6 'Opening the Can of Worms': Trauma and Telling

3.6.1 Divisions within the unionist community meant for some that problems would be created by 'looking into issues that were better left alone'. This was also linked to fears about the possible're-traumatising' effect' of 'story-telling'.

3.6.2 This was a particular concern for one interviewee who deals at a community level with trauma and victim issues. While seeing the usefulness of some forms of story-telling this respondent felt that there was a danger of taking someone back through the traumatic events of their loved one's death. This, it was suggested, meant that 'an action replay is caused in people's minds and I don't think it is worth it'.

3.6.3 A focus on the therapeutic value of recording stories and memories of a victim's life, rather than their death, was seen as potentially more beneficial. This was linked to concerns for the welfare of the children of victims. Indeed, on a wider social level the same interviewee felt that the whole debate on 'dealing with the past' might be in danger of diverting attention away from problems facing the next generation and obscuring the view of the future. 'If you dig too deeply into the past', it was argued, 'you may find it [the future] runs past our ankles without us even noticing it'.

3.6.4 Formal or legal 'truth-telling' processes were viewed as particularly problematic in terms of their possible're-traumatising' effect. Legal cases, it was suggested, are 'hurting people as much as they are helping'. This was linked to a tension between the judicial and therapeutic purposes of any truth-telling process. 'I don't believe in the legal thing', this interviewee argued, 'you can't find truth there [because] there is no truth to be had. It is just about memory recall'.

3.6.5 Another respondent believed that a nationalist/republican focus on victims and truth reflected a cultural difference between the two communities in the way they dealt with trauma issues. It was suggested that there was a 'level of denial' in the 'self-representation' of a victim status to be found in areas like Ardoyne. This, it was argued, was the product of a 'culture of victimhood' that was also evident in debates around other social, economic and political issues. It seemed that what was being proposed was a portrait of a community that had a tendency to feel sorry for itself.

3.6.6 In contrast, the interviewee suggested, people in areas like the Shankill 'just want to get on with things' and saw little or no 'therapeutic' or 'psychological' value in telling their story. Citing examples of conversations with unionist former Ardoyne residents it was argued that they saw no point in re-visiting events in the past that they had come to terms with in their own way and in their own time.

3.6.7 Despite these arguments concerning the belief that people had 'moved on' what was also apparent in a number of the interviewees was the level of emotion engendered by examining such issues. Even when the discussion was focusing on events depicted in the Ardoyne book on a number of occasions it became clear that various interviewees were re-living deeply powerful and possibly distressing memories of their own. Certain events were recalled with an emotionally charged vividness and clarity.

3.6.8 This was particularly so, for example, in one interview where the respondent described how his family had been burnt out in 1971. Directly mirroring experiences recorded by the project an acute sense of betrayal and displacement was evident in the memory of neighbours who 'stood around and watched'. Echoed too was the impact of the destruction of a home and the loss of irreplaceable and highly personal objects, particularly family photographs. The closeness of the subject matter of the book to the life experiences of such interviewees clearly impacted upon their reactions.

3.6.9 The interviewee involved in trauma counselling had organised a meeting with a number of victims and relatives from her area to discuss their views of the book. Some of these relatives had lost loved ones in actions carried out by people from Ardoyne in which one of the Ardoyne victims had themselves been killed. While the report of this meeting produced a generally positive response to the work of the project it was also clear that reading the book had been the occasion of a difficult, possibly traumatic re-visiting of difficult circumstances for these relatives.

3.6.10 The complexity of people's individual responses was highlighted by the interviewee as they 'established their own boundaries as to what they could deal with'. This was exemplified in the way that some relatives were prepared to read certain testimonies which touched on their own loss but found it too difficult to read others. The nature of these responses emphasised the acute sensitivity required for those working in this area.

3.6.11 Another noticeable feature of many of these interviews was the lack of discussion of the actual content of the Ardoyne testimonies themselves. There was a recognition that the stories reflected real grief and pain, that relatives had gone through terrible experiences and had a right to talk about them. However, in sharp contrast to the responses from nationalist interviewees where they often formed the main point of conversation, the substance of the cases was barely touched upon. Nor was there any real mention, discussion or acknowledgement of the role that members of the unionist community had in those events. Rather, people were far more likely to talk about their own experiences in return. This may have been the means by which people talked about the experiences contained in the book.

3.7 Community Relations

3.7.1 A major area of concern for this set of interviews was the possible impact of such projects on community relations. Opinions in this area were varied and intensely expressed. While there were some positive responses the general tone was negative.

3.7.2 At one extreme was the comment of an interviewee in an initial meeting who suggested that 'if you are talking about community relations, then this book has shattered them'. This was in part because the book was seen as only giving a very particular point of view. Similarly, it was felt that there had been far too little mention of the violence that people from Ardoyne had perpetrated on others. For this interviewee the result was that the book might only reinforce rather than breakdown entrenched community attitudes.

3.7.3 In similar vein another community activist argued that the type of work produced by the Ardoyne project, far from aiding in a process of conflict resolution might in fact contribute to the continuation of tension. He suggested that it could generate a great sense of grievance amongst young loyalists who could then channel that reaction into a justification of violence against nationalists in the future.

3.7.4 The representative of the community sector argued that such 'truth-telling' work was a necessary step for community relations because it could help produce 'acknowledgement' but also asked 'at what point does single identity re-iteration of what happened become truth'? Memories and experiences had also to be opened up to re-appraisal and unless there was a 'parallel process' undertaken in both communities the danger was that such work could become part of a 'zero-sum game'. In such a scenario the sense that there existed an 'uneven playing field' could produce 'feelings of resentment' within the unionist community. In order to counteract such a possibility it was suggested that there was a need for policies to be developed that could support and facilitate parallel projects.

3.7.5 However, the complexity of responses was reflected in the fact that the same interviewee who felt that community relations had been 'shattered' by what the book contained also felt that this sort of work was necessary. In addition he felt that the model pursued by the project was a sound one and it was the sort of thing that he might like to see undertaken in unionist areas.

3.7.6 One interviewee went further in suggesting that community relations could only be helped by this kind of work. It was argued that any 'truth-telling' process had to genuinely reflect the 'truth as it is seen' from particular areas. This might be a difficult process, but anything else was merely 'covering up the cracks'.

3.7.7 For another respondent, however, the key message and greatest strength of the book were the commonalties of experiences that it recorded. 'That book', it was argued, 'could have been about the Shankill, it could have been about anywhere. Everything that runs through that book runs through the Shankill'. For this commentator the exploration and publication of common experiences of working class communities, of women and of victims' relatives could have a very positive impact on community relations because it would humanise and 'make real' what had happened to other people.

3.8 Unionist Attitudes to 'Truth and Justice' Issues

3.8.1 From an early stage in the interviewing process it became clear that the attitudes of unionist respondents towards truth and justice issues in general (as well as the Ardoyne book) differed in significant ways from their nationalist counterparts. By and large the debate on 'truth and justice' was *not seen as a major political priority*. Certainly for some respondents it was an area that they thought was increasingly important, although they also tended to feel that this view was not one widely shared within their community. Even those who wanted to see a community-based 'truth-telling' project happen in their own areas felt that there might be great reluctance to engage in such work. In order to contextualise reactions to the Ardoyne project the researchers felt it was important to explore why this was the case.

3.8.2 One respondent argued that it would be difficult to carry out something like the Ardoyne project in his area because of the *limits of community development and infrastructure*. A number of reasons were given for this. People in unionist areas were more likely to adopt an individualist rather than a collective response to problems. They would not 'come out on the street unless something was happening at their door'. This was contrasted with attitudes and structures within the nationalist community. Nationalists, it was suggested, had become used to organising themselves on a community basis during 30 years of conflict and in the years before. Some of the social problems facing certain unionist working class areas (such as growing social deprivation, depopulation and low educational attainment) were also seen as leading to a 'lack of confidence'. This produced an 'inarticulacy' that could impact on the feasibility of organising community-based projects in these areas. Individualism was seen by some as part and parcel of a specifically Protestant and/or Ulster cultural milieu. This was also linked to a 'lack of leadership' and a 'culture of deference' within unionist working class areas that prevented them looking to themselves to resolve social and political problems.

3.8.3 It should be added that at least one interviewee disagreed strongly that unionist communities suffered from 'inarticulacy' either because of cultural or structural factors. However, for this respondent the key issue was the *relationship of unionists to the state*. This argument had a number of elements. First, dealing with the past would require facing up to the history of the state and of discrimination 'not only against Catholics but also against the Protestant working class'. There was therefore a 'sense of guilt' at not having confronted these problems before and the result was a 'denial of the past'. The alternative was to go on defending the state rather than confront such guilt and denial. In the end, it was suggested, 'we cannot rock the boat because it is our boat'.

3.8.4 This was linked to a critical view of the *current direction being taken in unionist politics* described as 'back to the future' and a 'battening down of hatches'. For this interviewee collectively challenging the state on the past was therefore deeply problematic because it would 'be like challenging yourself'. 'Individual' responses to particular issues (such as the Billy Wright case) were 'permissible' because it could be seen as a 'family matter', but anything else was difficult to deal with. Another interviewee echoed these sentiments when he suggested that anything to do with 'truth-telling' was a

problem because 'you still have a reticence to criticise the state'. Despite the fact that relations with state agencies (particularly the PSNI) were often very poor in unionist working class areas people 'still have in the back of their mind that they are British'. So, for example, when issues such as collusion were raised there was a reticence to see these as anything other than part of a wider attack on all aspects of the state's existence.

3.8.5   Indeed the sense that truth and justice issues were a *'republican agenda'* was a theme taken up by a number of interviewees. A representative of the community sector argued that unionists tended to see 'an inquiry, or a truth approach for republican areas as yet another string to the bow of republicanism to attack the state. So to take up issues against the state means they would be just acting as tail enders to the republicans'. It was further suggested that distrust of republicans in this regard was partly because of their failure to deliver for the Families of the Disappeared.

3.8.6   In more general terms the fact that republicans had taken up the human rights agenda 'if only latterly' has led to a shift on all aspects of this debate towards a *'win-lose scenario'* where it [human rights] is seen as a republican win'. An 'automatic rejection' of a 'rights' agenda, it was argued, was likely to be the result. In similar vein another interviewee argued that the divisiveness of the current political environment made anyone exploring truth and human rights issues open to the accusation of being 'too close to the enemy'. Taking up the agenda of post-conflict 'truth-telling', suggested another, could be seen to be taking up the issues of those opposed to the state and that there was a sense that 'an ulterior motive' was never far away.

3.8.7   While one commentator noted that allegations of ongoing IRA activity in terms of 'spying and targeting' was a barrier to progress far more attention was given to the problems created by inter-loyalist feuding. This meant that, for some, it was *still too early to engage in 'truth-telling'*. There was a 'can of worms' that might be better left unopened because violence was recent and continuing. 'Do we really want to know', it was asked, 'whether your neighbour was an informer? Or that someone who killed someone close to you lives a few doors away?' This it was felt might create repercussions for the future with fear of another feud never far from some people's minds. 'The Shankill is still reeling from all the duping that went on', declared one interviewee, 'Do we really want to find out things that will only make things worse?'

3.8.8   Some also argued that victims and members of the unionist community were more interested in *practical matters*, the desire to 'simply move on and get on with things', than nationalists. There was more that an echo here of the painting of some dubious ethnic portraits of the 'two sides'. However, there is some correspondence to the 'practical focus' of many mainly unionist victims groups as noted by the representative of the community sector. Their activities, it was suggested, tend to be centred on service-led issues such as computer classes and compensation. Whether this is due to 'cultural differences' or some of the structural issues of relations with the state discussed above is an area that would need far more comprehensive analysis.

3.8.9   There was also a sense that any issues dealing with *the relationship between the past and future* were seen problematically by many within the unionist community. One interviewee spoke of his sense of 'despair' at the decidedly downbeat atmosphere that currently seemed to prevail in many quarters. The

representative of the community sector argued that many within the unionist community felt that 'the media is against them' because 'they were always being seen as the perpetrators'. As a result there was little sense in taking part in 'truth-telling' because no one is interested in listening to them anyway'. Apprehension about the future made accepting the failings of the past (which any 'truth-telling' process would invariably involve) all the more difficult to deal with.

3.8.10 For the interviewee from the unionist community most supportive of taking this agenda forward this unwillingness to deal with the past was, in part at least, a consequence of its virtual *absence during the peace talks process*. 'We did not really think it would be so much of an issue as it has become,' he argued, ' [but] on reflection we were just sticking plasters on wounds'.

3.8.11 For this interviewee at least the time had come to deal with those wounds more thoroughly by adopting a local 'truth-telling' approach. After the interview the respondent wrote the following and asked that it could be included in full in the report:

> *There is a need for recognition that truth is a multi-faceted thing, highly subjective and needs to be recognised and accepted as such. Indeed the hope that a community may benefit from telling its story is based on the very fact that they got to tell it from their perspective. It is not a highly legalistic and forensic exercise but a community based platform whereby people can tell their story from their perspective and express their pain in the safety of familiar surroundings and with the support of their own people. Other traumatised communities could benefit from similar initiatives.*

D   Summary and Conclusions

This section of the report summarises the main conclusions of the research. It is worth pointing out that the results represent the views of people at a particular moment in time. It is difficult to assess the impact of the ongoing political situation and how this might have influenced views.

1.   Recognition

1.1   It has been well documented that how victims of conflict are remembered can be a divisive issue.[62] An integral but slightly more complex aspect of remembrance is recognition. For almost all the interviewees in the present study who had participated in the work of the ACP the main value of the project was that it afforded recognition to those who had given their testimony. More than any other this issue resonated throughout the interviews and was clearly of tremendous significance to the bereaved and others.

1.2   What is also apparent from the interviews is that recognition is multi-layered. For most interviewees it had a number of different and overlapping aspects that included the individual, family, wider community, specific groups and the state. It has been pointed out that a sense of victimhood often stems from memories of unacknowledged or un-reconciled historic losses. [63] Lack of recognition clearly produced a sense of powerlessness for many of the interviewees. To be able to address or challenge this state of powerlessness was highly significant to respondents. In many ways this was achieved through engaging in the project and involved a number of issues that included the following.

1.3   Clearly of importance was 'giving voice' and documenting previously excluded or marginalised voices. The value and symbolism in giving individuals the opportunity to 'tell their story' should not be underestimated. A separate but related issue raised by interviewees was that 'a human face' was put on statistics. It was important to interviewees who had participated in the project that the victim was no longer simply a statistic. The book it was said brought the person 'back to life' by telling something about the life of the person and not just their death. It was repeatedly pointed out that until then they had never been offered the opportunity to speak publicly about such issues. It was significant to interviewees to have their accounts recorded, documented and put into public discourse. In general it was felt that there was a lack of public recognition of what they, their families and community, had endured. This clearly added to their grief and sense of isolation. The project enabled interviewees to challenge this state of affairs. Participation in the process 'empowered' them to contest or set aright official, media and academic accounts of the past and place their own version of events and experiences into the public domain.

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[62] See for example, Cairns, E. and Mallet, J. (2001) *Who are the Victims?: Self-assessed Victimhood and the Northern Irish Conflict*, NIO Research & Statistical Series, Report 7; Rolston, B. (2000) *Unfinished Business: The Quest for Truth, Beyond the Pale*; Lundy, P. and McGovern, M. (2001) 'The Politics of Memory in Post-Conflict N. Ireland', *Peace Review*, 13:1, pp. 27-34.

[63] Montville, J.V. (1993), *The Healing Function in Political Conflict Resolution. Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice, Integration and Application*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

1.4   Recognition was also closely linked to acknowledgement and accountability and the equality of victimhood. This was most notable in those cases that involved intra-community violence. The restoration of dignity, through recognition and acknowledgement in the book, particularly to the families of alleged informers, was undoubtedly and overwhelmingly a welcome outcome of the project. The relatives of victims of state violence were also afforded the opportunity to challenge what they perceived as the 'denial of truth' in official accounts. Whereas the ACP was credited with helping to restore a level of recognition for such families, this has remained an unresolved issue according to interviewees due to lack of acknowledgement and accountability on the part of the state. This was without question an outstanding issue for those interviewees.

1.5   This indicates the limitations of 'storytelling'. For such respondents it was important to recognise the inter-relationship between recognition with a need for acknowledgement and/or accountability and delivery of justice in relation to loss.

1.6   At the same time, it would also appear that participation in the project was in many ways a liberating experience for most of those who had been involved in the project. In general, recognition was described as something that is not merely given or conferred. Because recognition can be denied it can therefore also involve being pro-active and 'taking' or 'making' recognition happen. This does not, however, extend to acknowledgement, which is more closely linked to accountability. For many interviewees this appeared to have implications at two different levels. First, it was linked to how they perceived themselves, and their community (powerless/passivity versus pro-active/agency). Second, it was related to how others both within and outside the community viewed the status of victims and their relatives.

1.7   A conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that a valuable outcome of the project was, therefore, the public recognition and acknowledgement it gave not only the victims but also their relatives. It was equally important that recognition extended to the wider community. As a result of engaging in the project participants regained a sense of control. The negative label of victim-hood, that to many personified 'helplessness, passiveness and powerlessness', was challenged. This feeling of being more proactive and becoming 'agents of change' appeared to promote a more positive sense of self and community. However, at another level the issue of recognition was for a number of interviewees closely tied to the bigger question of accountability and justice in relation to loss. It is apparent from the research that recognition is not only a key issue but that it also arises in a range of forms, arenas and contexts.

2.   Contesting History

2.1   Participants in the project were generally of the opinion that it had played an important role in 'setting the record straight' and putting on record 'what had really happened'. A significant number of respondents who had been involved in the ACP had very negative experiences at the hands of the media. According to some it had often been a demeaning and depressing experience. Again, this compounded feelings of grief and reinforced a sense of powerlessness. Added to this numerous interviewees were of the opinion

that not all victims were treated and represented equally by the media and in official and academic accounts of the conflict. The project therefore provided participants a platform to air their version of events publicly. This was closely tied to what was regarded by many as an inaccurate reporting of events and in many instances misinformation and disinformation. It was further generally felt that a negative image of an entire community had been constructed over the years. More often than not, it was agued certain incidents had not been properly investigated, by journalists and state officials, and inaccurate or untrue stories had been published. This had left a scar on the memory of many respondents. The book was therefore an opportunity to tell 'their truth' and air their views. This 'reclaiming' of history was clearly seen by participants in the project as 'giving them back' a sense of control and restoring dignity.

2.2 Participants felt that giving ordinary people the chance to place events and experiences 'on record' was helping to rebalance other accounts of histories of the conflict. This writing of history from the community's perspective, without censorship and control, was regarded as a more inclusive approach. In many senses it was challenging what many perceived as censorship and partial accounts. It was described on several occasions in terms of 'recapturing their history'. The importance of recovering memory, and the documentation of it, was in general regarded as an important and worthwhile thing to do. The fact that it was carried out by people from the community meant that for many it created a sense of ownership and pride in the final product. Such 'history writing' was also seen as a valuable record of contemporary social issues and problems. As a number of interviewees commented, it put on record the legacy of the conflict and contextualised multiple deaths in the community. Again this is tied to issues of recognition and the therapeutic benefits of 'speaking out'. Indeed, numerous interviewees who had given their testimony to the ACP talked about being 'given their place' and a sense of their experiences being validated.

2.3 As discussed elsewhere, for those interviewees who came from mainly unionist communities the partiality of such accounts was, however, regarded as deeply problematic.

3. Spaces of Community

3.1 There is evidence to suggest that the project played a therapeutic or supportive role at the community level. There are a number of aspects to this. Many interviewees repeatedly talked about the importance of sharing information, between and indeed within families and the wider community. For a large number of respondents it was important that they learnt about the circumstances of the death of their loved one. Numerous interviewees who had provided testimony to the project explained that they knew very little about the circumstances and time leading up to the death. Survivors and eyewitnesses were too traumatised at the time to talk, or relatives did not feel it appropriate to ask questions in such circumstances. Relatives often relied upon 'snippets of information' that had created a sense of loss of time. This was debilitating for a number of respondents and was compounded by the chaos and pandemonium of the time. In many cases what happened was such information simply did not get shared. After the event, and time had passed, 'the space to talk was lost'. As a consequence things were left unspoken. Many Ardoyne interviewees were of the opinion that the project

created a mechanism and space for the community to share such information. In general this was regarded as a positive outcome of the project and therapeutic for families and the wider community in general. It was clear from the research that the ability to be able to piece together such sensitive information was of the utmost importance to relatives despite the passage of time. There was a feeling that discovering any information about such moments could help bring about closure for some.

3.2 At another level respondents indicated that the project played a positive role in creating the time and space for the community to come together collectively to demonstrate support for relatives, many of whom had experienced isolation over the years. It was very important for families to have that sense of collective support and to feel that they were not alone in their grieving. This also helped the community 'come to terms' and 'make sense of' over three decades of political violence and loss. Ardoyne interviewees talked about networks of support that had been renewed or developed within and between families. This was important because they had shared similar experiences and there was a feeling of common understanding. Participation was regarded itself as a highly beneficial form of therapeutic support: people were supporting each other. Families were being supported because they could participate.

4. Constraints of Community

4.1 Alongside the advantages that may flow from adopting a grassroots, community-orientated approach to 'truth-telling' it is also important to recognise some potential limitations and disadvantages. A diversity of opinions, networks and political perspectives exist within as well as between communities. Such intra-community difference and division (itself often a product of conflict) can undoubtedly impact on the form and nature of community-based truth projects. Who carries out the work, and how they are seen locally, will affect the way people interact with it. The flipside of trust in one context is suspicion in another. This is particularly so if people feel that their testimonies are going to be used for a political purpose with which they do not agree.

4.2 A number of steps can be taken to try to ameliorate this problem. These include:
  • Establishing as broad a base of involvement within the project as possible in order to reflect its diversity.
  • Giving careful consideration to which members of the project team are best suited to act as primary points of contact and/or to carry out certain aspects of the work with different people.
  • Ensuring that the ethos, aims and methods adopted are ones with which most people will be comfortable.
  • Providing people with as much information about the project as possible and emphasising the level of ownership and control people will have over their own involvement.
  • Different routes (e.g. email) could be made available to participants to give their testimonies.
  • A list of project volunteers, and contact addresses, could also be made available to participants. This would mean that participants had a choice of interviewer (insider or outsider).

3.9 There was evidence of other ways in which the context of community may have acted as a constraint on some people. Some felt there was a moral pressure to consent to give testimonies. This was not so much due to any specific action taken by members of the project but rather a sense that not speaking would be seen locally as not caring about, or paying respect to, the dead. As a result some participants may also have opened up personal memories and experiences to public view that they later regretted. This may have been a minority experience, and happened in spite of the great lengths to which the project went in order to ensure participant control, but it nevertheless needs to be given careful consideration. There is a need to keep such questions in mind when devising the way in which people are approached and give their consent to being involved in the work.

4.4 Personal testimonies are not only the product of individual experiences but also of already existing collective telling of the past. There are certain ways in which events that happened within and to the community have been interpreted, understood and spoken of that influence the way people remember themselves and what they went through. It is important to understand that such communal narratives can impact on the stories people tell about themselves, the explanations they give for what occurred and the structure of the story through which they reflect upon their experiences. This may often be a relatively benign influence and also reflects the importance of the collective as means of seeing how people live. However, it may also mean that some things remain unsay-able because they lie outside what have become internalised as the norms of communal narratives. As a result, and while it is difficult to quantify, self-censorship can still therefore be an issue for work rooted in the community, as it undoubtedly is for work that is not.

4.5 There was evidence to indicate a number of respondents who had given their testimony to the ACP were, at least initially if not throughout the duration of the process, cautious or concerned about the political orientation of the project. This was related to a number of factors and can be linked in some ways to the community divisions. The concerns were mainly related to the perceived political affiliation of the individuals involved in the ACP (and therefore by definition the project) and distrust that they might be being used in some 'bigger political game plan'. There was also some disquiet expressed about the perceived politicisation of the book launch. These are criticisms that reaffirm the highly sensitive nature of such a project and emphasises that much thought needs to be given to any guest speakers or high profile persons from particular parties or group, playing a key public role in events. This is in order to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding around the issue of perceived 'political control' or influence.

5.   Inclusivity and its Limits

5.1 As far as the interviewees involved in the current research were concerned there was almost universal agreement that any 'truth-telling' process, community-based or otherwise, had to be as inclusive as possible. Interviewees in all of the target groups emphasised this point and saw inclusion as a key principle, though sometimes with a different focus in mind. Generally interviewees' emphasised that relatives should be treated equally, whatever the status of the victim or the circumstances of their death. There were certain caveats to this, such as the sense for some that victims who were also combatants could not be seen in entirely the same light as those

who were not. However, even for those who held this point of view there was broad agreement that this should not impact upon the manner in which their families should be treated or heard.

5.2. For people within Ardoyne and the broader nationalist community inclusivity had two particular dimensions. First, many saw this as a way of tackling what they viewed as a prevailing society-wide hierarchy of victimhood that denied equality to the victims of state violence in particular. Second, for many the inclusion of families of alleged informers was regarded of the utmost importance. What was striking was that many other relatives (including, for example, those of republican combatants) saw this as an immensely significant step. It clearly made many feel more comfortable about having expressed their own feelings and experiences. In many ways these two elements may be closely interlinked. Arguments for inclusivity on a society-wide basis were usually founded upon the principle of equality and the needs for a victim-centred approach to 'truth-telling'. Exactly the same perspective had, therefore to be applied within the community. In addition, many were deeply conscious of how damaging divisions within the community had been and the inclusion of all relatives was emblematic of the need to move beyond them.

5.3 For unionist interviewees the principle of inclusiveness was also seen as key. However, they also pointed to some problems and limits of the project in this regard. Chief amongst these was the angry reaction to what was seen as the exclusion of Ardoyne unionist experiences. This was clearly a major issue. It also flowed directly from what, in other ways, was a positive aspect of the project; its single identity focus and strong localised base. Any wider framework for community-based 'truth-telling' would have to be conscious throughout of this contradiction. It also emphasises the need to support a process of parallel projects.

5.4 Unionist interviewees also drew attention to the extent to which the issue of inclusivity was a far greater problem within their own community than it was for nationalists. The wider political environment and the debate on victims' issues were clearly highly relevant here. Many mainly-unionist victims' groups continue to emphasise a distinction between what they refer to as 'innocent' and 'non-innocent' victims, by which they mean those killed by 'terrorists' and those who were not. It was significant to find that this was a problem for many community representatives from working class unionist areas as it was for nationalists. That this denied equality to many of 'their own' was obviously an issue. It also means, however, that establishing inclusive community-based work in unionist areas would have to contend with this additional and deep-seated question.

5.5 The limits of inclusivity were also established by the boundaries of community. Of its nature the ACP was a 'truth-telling' initiative that sought to give space for people from that community to speak about what had happened to them. However, apart from dealing with those Ardoyne residents killed by republicans it did not therefore discuss the deaths of others killed by people from Ardoyne. That was never its intent and may also have been impossible for it to do. But it does highlight the fact that there are other relatives' and victims' stories, of those from outside Ardoyne, that are also part of the Ardoyne story. These are realities that will have to be faced up to. It also emphasises the need to see such work as part of a continuum of 'truth-telling', community dialogue and a wider process of conflict transformation.

6.   Participation and Ownership

6.1   There was a general consensus that community participation and ownership was a key and positive feature of the ACP process. This was closely linked to issues of access and trust. Without exception respondents who had participated in the project were keen to point out that the method of 'handing back' was reassuring because it meant they had control over what would eventually be published. This aspect of the ACP process undoubtedly added years to the duration of the project. It was, however, regarded by the committee as essential because it underpinned the key principles of the project. Given participants' previous bad experiences with sections of the media, having editorial control was important. Amongst other things it helped build trust and encouraged those initially reluctant to participate.

6.2   From the responses it is clear, that editorial control created a sense of individual and collective ownership. This was regarded as a significant and positive outcome of the project. Most interviewees who had given their testimony to the ACP felt that through engaging in the process 'they had regained control' in a much broader sense too and this had renewed their self-confidence. Many relatives spoke of gaining a positive sense of being pro-active, and thereby challenging the negative label of 'helpless' or 'powerless' victimhood.

7.   Single Identity Work and the 'Insider' Researcher

7.1   The ACP was a single identity project. This was largely determined by its remit and the geographical boundaries of the project. According to most nationalist interviewees (both within and outside Ardoyne) 'single identity' work was a realistic way to do the project. The ACP did include victims from unionist and nationalist backgrounds in its work. However, according to many unionist interviewees there were significant shortfalls with this approach and the non-inclusion of unionist ex-Ardoyne residents was cited as a glaring omission.

7.2   Perhaps the most overlooked benefit of single identity work is that it provides the space for internal divisions that are a legacy of the conflict to be addressed. The concentration on inter-community relations often means that intra-community issues are given a low priority. There is clear evidence from the research that creating the space for internal dialogue is important and may make a far greater contribution to post-conflict transition than is often assumed.

7.3   The question of trust and access was clearly an important issue to be considered. In areas that have experienced years of conflict and surveillance there is a great deal of suspicion and distrust of people coming from the outside asking questions and seeking to represent their views. By and large it was stressed the importance of people who were from and trusted by the community to carry out such work. The advantages of an outsider's critical distance were (according to the overwhelming majority of interviewees) outweighed by the disadvantages of their potential lack of understanding and guarded responses they would invariably produce. That said, the closeness of the 'insider' and their shared life experiences might produce an inability to possibly 'see' or achieve critical distance. An equally important issue to consider is that given the community-based nature of the project and the

sensitive issues involved, the use of 'insiders' might just as conceivably lead to guarded and partial accounts. It is therefore imperative that those involved in such work are conscious of such tensions and put in place mechanisms that encourage fully reflective practice throughout.

7.4   There are those who fear that 'single identity' work could lead to further polarisation of positions. However, if there are problems about self-censorship that arise from a project rooted in the community, the reality is that, doing cross-community 'truth-telling' work is likely to trigger even greater suspicion and reticence to examine such questions. A conclusion from the research is that the ACP was a learning process in itself and may have encouraged a greater spirit of generosity to develop. It was credited with promoting reflection and internal dialogue that helped challenge and breakdown longstanding and entrenched positions.

7.5   Rather than being seen as an end in itself such initiatives should be seen as a stage in a wider and longer-term process. There may also be need for a process that incorporates the strengths and benefits of community-orientated 'single identity' work but which also allows for this to be combined with parallel processes taking place elsewhere. This might create the space for more frank and reflective discussion to emerge.

8.   Community 'Truth-telling' and Community Relations

8.1   There were some highly divergent views on the relevance and impact of the work of the ACP for inter-community relations. Nowhere were differences of experience and perspective more apparent than on this question. For many within Ardoyne and the wider nationalist community the whole question of community relations was either of secondary importance or a model of analysis that they found highly problematic. However, generally speaking, they also felt that the template of the project's work could only benefit inter-community dialogue and saw it as something that other communities should also undertake.

8.2   Opinions were far more divided amongst unionist respondents. Some viewed the work of the project as likely to have a positive and favourable effect on community relations. However, others were far more critical. In certain cases the book was seen as potentially damaging and, far from contributing to conflict resolution, was more likely to inflame passions and re-affirm fixed positions. This issue reflects an inherent contradiction of single-identity community-based work. Providing the opportunity to 'give voice' to a particular community places views and opinions into the public domain that will run directly contrary to those deeply held by others. The angry reaction of some (particularly in neighbouring areas), to what was seen as the partiality of the project, is rooted in this fact. People in these communities were also intimately involved in the events the book described and discussed, if viewing them from another place. It may therefore be that the lack of space to express their understanding of that (in this sense shared) history contributed to their response. This should be combined with the general view that single identity community-based 'truth-telling' was not, in itself, the problem and something they thought would be desirable (if difficult) to carry out in their own areas.

8.3   The danger may lie in the debate and initiatives on 'truth-telling' coming to be seen as a solely nationalist agenda. This is clearly already happening. In such circumstances the possibilities of building on the 'commonalities' of (for example working class) experiences as well as differences may be lost. While recognising the strengths of single identity community work there is therefore also a pressing need to ensure that a 'zero-sum' game does not emerge, or become accentuated, on such matters. Developing a framework of parallel or diverse community-based mechanisms may be one way of addressing this issue. The difficulty that must be faced, however, is that there may be little desire for (if not an outright hostility to) 'truth-telling' in certain communities. This may act as a major barrier to progress in this area. At the same time trying to impose such a process (as opposed to facilitating its emergence from below) may do little more than foster a sense that this is not, after all, about community-based initiatives at all. However, despite these dilemmas, this should not prevent support from being provided for any community that does seek to undertake such an initiative.

9.   'Truth and Justice'

9.1   For many of the respondents there were lessons to be drawn from the work of the ACP for other, wider 'truth-telling' initiatives. It was clear that for some (including virtually all the unionist community representatives) there was a high degree of scepticism of formal, institutionalised 'top-down' truth recovery processes. This may reflect the fact that most of those interviewed were from the community sector and so their general outlook and work practices would tend toward a grassroots focus. However, even those who saw some need for a society-wide 'truth-telling' mechanism highlighted certain principles and practices that they regarded as of great importance. These included, for example, the principle of inclusiveness and equality and the importance of designing structures that could deliver a real sense of participation and ownership for victims. Seeing through and beyond the individual experience to be able to reflect a community context was also seen as significant. Providing a space for the individual's story mattered immensely. But what also counted was the mutual support and (as one interviewee put it) the ending of isolation that seemed to derive from the confirmation of one's experiences in the words of another. The context of community was an important place where this was able to take place. It was important in providing structures of trust, access and networks of communication and support. Any 'truth-telling' mechanism should therefore consider ways in which community frameworks and perspectives could be interwoven into its working methods and structures.

9.2   The relationship between 'truth-telling' and justice was also to the fore in the minds of many interviewees. Views were highly diverse on this issue, not least in terms of what the idea of justice itself meant. For many participants there was a sense in which the recognition derived from their involvement in the project was itself a (sufficient) form of justice. For others this was very far from the case and they saw a need for legal and judicial avenues to be pursued as thoroughly as possible. Some interviewees believed that community-based 'truth-telling' mechanisms should be seen as complimentary to judicial mechanisms. However there are clearly limits to such processes. They are unable to uncover previously unknown information from outside agencies, obtain some form of official recognition or recompense, or in pursue accountability. Therefore, 'truth-telling' may be a

part of, but it cannot be seen as a substitute for, seeking justice for some individuals.

9.3   For others still, and most apparent amongst unionist interviewees, the whole area of truth and justice was one they entered into with a great deal of suspicion and/or trepidation. There were numerous possible reasons or explanations provided for this but what was clear was that views here again diverged sharply from the majority of nationalist interviewees.

10.   Letting Sleeping Dogs Lie?

10.1   Although not a majority opinion in the responses from participants there were some (mostly unionist) interviewees who questioned whether a community-based (or any other form) of 'truth-telling' process was either needed or desirable. This was often expressed as wanting to 'let sleeping dogs lie'. 'Digging up the past', it was argued, would do little to assuage the problems facing either victims or the rest of society. In addition, such interviewees suggested, it might also create more problems for the future in terms of the psychological effects on individuals and re-igniting tensions within and between communities. Again, this was most apparent in unionist responses and related to what were seen as the more problematic divisions existing in unionist working class areas in particular.

10.2   However, for many, failing to engage in truth recovery was not really an option. There may have been many criticisms levelled at specific models, structures or approaches to 'truth-telling'. Yet the majority of respondents clearly felt that not talking about the past would not mean that the problematic legacies of conflict would go away. Sleeping dogs would, in other words, not lie. The focus was therefore very much on what principles, mechanisms and goals would be best suited to ensure that the process contributed to post-conflict transition in a positive and progressive way.

11.   Healing and Closure

11.1   One of the most difficult themes to pin down because it produced such conflicting and contradictory responses was the therapeutic value or otherwise of community 'truth-telling'. There was clearly evidence that being able to talk about experiences and loss had a therapeutic value for many respondents. It was important to individuals that someone was taking time to listen. The sharing of similar stories was also regarded as positive and helpful to relatives. The key here appears to be that a 'space' was created that enabled relatives to talk if they so wished. Conversely, there is the danger that recalling memories of traumatic events could have a negative effect on those participating. It is clear that it was an emotional experience for many of the interviewees who had provided testimony to the ACP. Yet many expressed the view that it was a necessary and important thing to do. Others talked about the importance of seeing their story in print and how the launch was a highly significant collective 'healing' event. However, for most there was no closure, just learning to live with the grief and loss. Others described it as a stepping-stone and a life-long process. For some respondents healing and closure were closely interrelated to issues of recognition, justice and accountability.

11.3 That said, there were a number of interviewees who felt that it was harmful to 'reopen old wounds', and that the 'healing' potential of 'truth-telling' was extremely limited. According to these respondents it was better to 'let things lie' because (in the case of those who had themselves lost a loved one) they had developed their own coping strategies or simply preferred to 'bury the past'. There was concern that 'truth-telling' could lead to painful self-reflection of 'one's role in the conflict'. Despite such comments, individuals saw value in such self-reflection, particularly for conflict resolution and to ensure that 'the same mistakes didn't happen again'. There were, however, conflicting and sometimes muddled views on the issue of 'healing' and 'closure'.

12. Resolving Conflict

12.1 There is recognition of the difficulty in determining whether or not this type of conflict resolution intervention has been effective and what its contribution to the broader goal of peace may be. Probably the most frequently cited positive outcome of the ACP was the role it played in intra-community conflict resolution. Ardoyne is not a homogenous community and there are very real and longstanding divisions, some of which are a by-product of the political conflict. There were 13 people in the area killed by republicans; a number were alleged informers. Such intra-community dynamics meant that 'truth-telling' was a sensitive and controversial issue. The project was credited with providing mechanisms and creating the time and space to help resolve a number of such issues related to intra-community violence. This was seen as a highly important outcome for many Ardoyne-based interviewees.

12.2 It was further suggested that the project played a role at a number of different levels in promoting conflict resolution. These included stimulating individual self-reflection and a shifting of long held viewpoints. Secondly it opened a space for community dialogue and debate that has borne longer-term positive results. In particular the mending of a longstanding rift between church and republicans was attributed in no small way to the project.

12.3 In general, many interviewees were of the opinion that a major strength of the ACP was that it helped push the boundaries and made inroads into the prevailing 'culture of silence' on previously 'taboo' subjects. The outcome was that there was a recognition all combatants to the conflict should be accountable. Closely associated with this was the view that this had created a new confidence and willingness to 'speak out' about difficult issues. Several interviewees felt a key outcome of the project was that it provided those individuals and families perhaps most ostracised or marginalised by the conflict 'a way back into the community'. The process had provided a vehicle to address longstanding issues of hurt and exclusion.

12.4 The role of the ACP in intra-community conflict resolution was therefore generally regarded as an important contribution to peace building and dealing with the past. Addressing such community level tensions it was said was often missing from 'the typical top down' conflict resolution measures. This was not however a universally held view. Many unionist respondents in particular expressed considerable concern about the possible impact of aspects of this type of work on inter-community relations. Most, at the time however supported the general thrust and purpose of such initiatives.

13. Expectations

13.1   An important lesson from the work of the ACP is the need to ensure that the expectations of relatives and victims are not raised beyond what can realistically be delivered. In general, participants were clear that the purpose of the ACP was to collect their testimonies and publish the book. Much of whatever satisfaction they subsequently felt was a direct result of the fact that they believed the project did what it said it would. In order not to raise expectations it is crucial from the outset to fully inform participants about the nature and expected outcomes of the project. Throughout the process participants should be kept as far as possible fully informed about developments. Transparency and openness should therefore be key features of 'truth-telling' processes whether community or state led.