

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.

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 victimhood, 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 argued 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.

