

# **Community, 'Truth-telling' *and* Conflict Resolution**

**Dr Patricia Lundy  
(University of Ulster)  
&  
Dr Mark McGovern  
(Edge Hill College of HE)**

**January 2005**

**Community, 'Truth-telling'  
and  
Conflict Resolution**

**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

**Dr Patricia Lundy**  
(University of Ulster, Jordanstown)  
&  
**Dr Mark McGovern**  
(Edge Hill College of HE, Ormskirk, Lancashire)

**January 2005**

Research Funded by the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern  
Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2000-2004:  
Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace (Peace II)

# Contents

	Page
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	i
<b>Introduction</b>	v-vi
<b>Executive Summary &amp; Recommendations</b>	vi-xv
<b>A. The Context</b>	
A.1. 'Dealing With the Past': The International Context	1-5
A.2. Victims' Issues and 'Truth-telling': The Northern Ireland Context	6-14
A.3. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project	15-20
<b>B. The Research: Methodology</b>	22-25
<b>C. The Research: The Findings</b>	26-76
C.1. <i>Responses of Participants &amp; Ardoyne Community</i>	26-57
1.1 Introduction: 'The Dialogue Within'	26-27
1.2 Bearing Witness, Telling 'Truth'	27-31
1.3 Recognition and Acknowledgement	31-32
1.4 Therapeutic Value	33-40
1.5 Intra-Community Tensions	40-47
1.6 Inter-Community Tensions	47-51
1.7 Inclusiveness	51-53
1.8 Participation, Ownership and Single Identity	53-57
C.2. <i>Responses of Wider Nationalist Community</i>	58-66
2.1 Writing History, Establishing Truth	58-59
2.2 Partiality and a 'Community Truth'	59-60
2.3 'Speaking Out' and 'Being Heard'	60-61
2.4 Inclusivity, Hierarchy of Victimhood and Intra-Community Division	61-62
2.5 Community Relations and the 'Can of Worms'	62-63
2.6 Single Identity, Insiders and Outsiders	63-65
2.7 Emotional Impact on the Reader	65
2.8 Paths to 'Truth and Justice'	65-66
C.3. <i>Responses of Wider Unionist Community</i>	67-77
3.1 'Truth-Telling': The Problem with Partiality	67-68
3.2 The Unionists of Ardoyne	68-69
3.3 'Truth-Telling': The Strength of Partiality	69-70
3.4 Internal Dialogue, Internal Division	70
3.5 Hierarchies and Inclusivity	71-72

3.6	Trauma and Telling	72-73
3.7	Community Relations	74
3.8	Unionist Attitudes	75-77

**D Summary and Conclusions**

C.1	Summary and Conclusions	78-89
-----	-------------------------	-------

## Acknowledgements

A range of individuals representatives of organisations were interviewed as part of this research project. There are too many to name separately but we would like to express our gratitude to those who participated and for the time they so freely gave. For some individuals, in particular relatives and friends of victims, it was a difficult process to revisit and reflect on their feelings and perceptions of the work of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project. Without their participation, and those of others, the research would not have been possible. We are especially grateful to the following individuals for their ongoing help and support - Tom Holland and Claire Hackett.

In addition, we would like to thank the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Peace II) for funding the research project. In particular we appreciate the help and support given by Libby Smit.

We believe that the report is a frank attempt to critically analyse the Ardoyne Commemoration Project and present the views and concerns that have been raised by all those involved.

Needless to say, the content of this report is our responsibility and does not necessarily reflect the views of CRC or the opinions of those listed above.

Dr Patricia Lundy  
University of Ulster

Dr Mark McGovern  
Edge Hill College of HE

January 2005

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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'.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> Many claims have been made about the potentially beneficial consequences of such 'truth-telling' processes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ardoyne Commemoration Project (2002) *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Fay, Marie-Therese, Morrissey, Mike & Smyth, Marie (1999) *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs*, London, Pluto.

<sup>3</sup> This is the figure of those Ardoyne victims that the ACP was able to identify and may not be definitive.

<sup>4</sup> AYPF (1998) *Ardoyne Youth Providers Forum: Strategy Document*, Belfast.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.

**Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern**  
**October 2004**

---

<sup>6</sup> 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.