BETWEEN BOTTOM UP AND TOP DOWN:
THE TRUTH-RECOVERY DEBATE IN NORTHERN IRELAND
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SIT IRELAND, SPRING 2007
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Section One – Introduction

After studying international conflict resolution for two and a half years at Bennington College in the United States, my academic understanding of conflict resolution far outweighed my practical understanding. While I knew this would pose a problem one day when I tried to work in the field, I also knew that even during my studies it would be impossible to know if I was dedicated to my work unless I left Vermont for actual field work. This realization led me to the School for International Training's peace and conflict studies program in Ireland. Here I would gain first hand experience of conflict transformation and reconciliation, both long-term interests of mine.

This paper is the final result of my Independent Study Project, a month long research period following three months of study and travel through the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. For three weeks in April 2007 I interned in Belfast with Healing Through Remembering (HTR), a non-governmental organization exploring the question of how Northern Ireland should 'deal with the past' in attempts to build a more positive future. I first encountered HTR in early March on my first visit to Belfast. My fellow classmates and I were tasked with examining five options for truth-recovery for Northern Ireland and brainstorming the possible strengths and weaknesses of each model. My brief time at HTR left an impression on me. I wondered how this difficult task of examining the past was occurring on a broader scale in the region, what impact it would have on society, and how it related to other countries faced with similar transitions.

This interest in HTR and truth-recovery brewed over weeks of study until my initial project proposal was due in late March, as winter slowly turned into spring.

Wondering what I would choose for in-depth independent research, my thoughts turned to the words of T.S. Eliot: "April is the cruelest month." With spring comes the painful experience of transition and birth. I was reminded of the daunting questions posed at our meeting with HTR. Realizing that April was the month chosen by HTR to conduct public discussions about truth-recovery for Northern Ireland, it seemed all too obvious that this was the perfect time to investigate the topic further by observing those meetings and interviewing involved individuals.

My research found that while the goal of HTR is to have an open and inclusive public discussion about truth-recovery, leading to a highly consensual decision on how best to deal with the past, there are several impediments to holding productive conversations around this topic. The first difficulty is in engaging the average man or woman in Northern Ireland who feels unaffected by the conflict and individuals (particularly loyalists) who are fearful of contributing to the debate. Amongst those who are attending meetings on truth-recovery, a lack of shared definitions for common words like 'justice' and great distrust prevent involved parties from actually addressing the five models proposed by HTR. A lack of trust and education about truth-recovery often results in individuals speaking about the "worst case scenario" of addressing the past. If a discussion does progress towards examining bottom up versus top down truth-recovery approaches, the majority of the conversation revolves around the pivotal question of whether the process is meant to contribute to individual or societal healing.

As this paper hopefully unearths, the transition from a violent past into a peaceful one is pockmarked with great anxieties, difficult questions, and uncomfortable truths. At

the same time, and surely as Healing Through Remembering would like to highlight,

positive outcomes can exist at the end of a successful (albeit difficult) transition.

Section Two – Methodology

<u>Project Development</u>

As stated in the introduction, the seeds of this project were planted several weeks before the Independent Study Project period when I lived in Belfast. My time there revealed that many people in Northern Ireland are wondering, "where do we go from here?" Nearly a decade after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and on the verge of an operational Northern Ireland Assembly, this is an understandable question. It was during this time that I also visited the offices of Healing Through Remembering and was introduced to their conflict transformation work.

I began my internship with a fair amount of background knowledge on truth-recovery attempts and reconciliation processes. At Bennington I studied the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC) at great lengths along with a few other truth commissions around the globe. I also researched reconciliation attempts in Northern Ireland, mainly through the works of Democratic Dialogue, a think tank located in Belfast. This knowledge gave me an advantage as I started my research and most likely aided me in securing an internship with HTR in the first place.

<u>HTR Internship</u>

HTR is comprised of five sub groups: Living Memorial Museum; Day of Reflection; Commemoration; Storytelling; and Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement. While I was assigned to work for the Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement sub group my work in the office ended up broader than the specific sub groups work. The limited

length of my internship and the sensitive nature of the topic meant that I could not join the sub groups private meetings. My three weeks at HTR were therefore most often spent assisting with research tasks such as reading and categorizing newspaper clippings on the five sub group topics. This task provided me with an indispensable knowledge of the context of HTR's work.

Although the newspaper clippings could have been accessed without HTR's help, I gained a different kind of knowledge that is mainly unquantifiable. As I became a familiar face around the office, conversations about truth-recovery, reconciliation, and the overall work of HTR sparked during unexpected moments like lunch or travel time. Although these moments of insight may not be directly referred to in this paper, they allowed me to either confirm or question conclusions drawn through out my research. Overall my internship provided me with a locus for my research.

Written Sources

There are several written documents used through out my research that warrant mention. First, HTR's own *Making Peace With The Past* report served as the basis for public meetings on truth-recovery options, and therefore also served as a basis for this paper. The comprehensive overview of truth-recovery initiatives in other countries as well as a thorough discussion of each model proposed for Northern Ireland was a strong foundation for both my internship and other readings.

This paper cites three documents from Dr. Patricia Lundy of the University of Ulster and Dr. Mark McGovern of Edge Hill University. The first, "Community, 'Truth-Telling' and Conflict Resolution" is an analysis of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project,

a community-based truth-recovery process in the majority Catholic area of Belfast. This paper served as a written source of public opinion on the community-based approach to truth-recovery. Lundy and McGovern also surveyed public opinion on a top down approach, resulting in "Attitudes Towards a Truth Commission for Northern Ireland." The statistical analyses included in this document provided a concrete, quantifiable understanding of public opinion on this model of truth-recovery. The last article by Lundy and McGovern, yet to be published, is "A Trojan Horse?: Trust and Unionist Attitudes to Truth Recovery Processes in Northern Ireland" was extremely helpful in giving form to the section "Trust Concerns" in this paper. For a more theoretical discussion on that concern I used a chapter by Mica Estrada-Hollenbeck on trust issues in ethnic conflicts in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence* by Mohammed Abu – Nimer.

In providing an organizational structure to the multiple truths that people allude to when talking about truth-recovery, Bill Rolston's paper "Dealing With The Past: Pro-State Paramilitaries, Truth and Transition in Northern Ireland" in Human Rights Quarterly was greatly helpful in giving form to a rather amorphous public debate. This article also gave voice to the many loyalist paramilitary members skeptical of a truth-recovery process. Alongside these main texts, resources found at the Linen Hall Library and the collection of resources at HTR were used to give context and analysis to the public discussions I attended. Please see the bibliography for a full listing of these sources. While I did a substantial a
mount of reading on the philosophical, theoretical, and practical debates surrounding truth-recovery options for Northern Ireland, my interest during the project turned to the *public debate* unfolding in the region. I was most interested in exploring who is involved

in discussions on truth-recovery and what these individuals are saying about the issue. This paper therefore borrows people's own words quite often, as they best speak for themselves. The two methods used for obtaining this primary source information are detailed below.

Interviews

Four formal interviews were conducted during my research period. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and are transcribed in the appendix to this paper. Two of the interviews are not transcribed in full but all omitted sections are briefly summarized instead. The first interviewee was Dr. Patricia Lundy at the University of Ulster. She has been heavily involved in discussions on truth recovery as a member of the HTR sub group, a community member who helped organize the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, and as a professor of sociology. I chose this interview to primarily gain insight into the significance of community-based approaches to truth-recovery.

My second interview was with Dr. Dominic Bryan of the Institute of Irish Studies. I had met with Dr. Bryan twice during my first visit to Belfast and was impressed by his candid discussions about the conflict. As an anthropologist, a member of another HTR sub group, and a member of Democratic Dialogue (which has written extensively on reconciliation), Dr. Bryan provided an informed opinion of the truth-recovery debate that focused on the cultural aspects of truth-recovery.

My third interview was with Kate Turner, project coordinator for HTR. Ms. Turner is essentially the woman behind the scenes at HTR and oversees the work of all

the sub groups. I sought her opinion on HTR's role in the debate and where the debate may go from here. These were topics that I had heard discussed around the office but by interviewing Ms. Turner I had an official source to quote.

My last interview was with William Frazer of Families Advocating for Innocent Relatives (FAIR). I interviewed Mr. Frazer at the suggestion of my advisor Bill Rolston who interviewed him for his own research purposes. Mr. Frazer represents a sector of society that is quite adversarial to the idea of truth-recovery, providing me with insight into a portion of the community that would not attend the HTR public meetings. The usefulness of this interview is hopefully apparent in the body of this paper.

While I would have ideally interviewed more people, particularly Paul O'Connor at the Pat Finucane Centre and Alan McBride of WAVE, schedule clashes prevented this from happening. Alongside the formal interviews I had significant interactions with several individuals, although these were not interviews in the strictest sense. Alan Wardle, a sub group member who works for Shankill Stress and Trauma, spent four hours of travel time with me to a partnership meeting in Navan, Co. Meath, discussing this topic the entire time. I also spoke with Mr. Wardle at the Queens University partnership meeting. Elaine Dunne, communications officer for HTR, also took time during several lunches and car rides to answer my questions about HTR public relations. Finally, I had dinner with Hazlett Lynch of West Tyrone Voice before the Meath Peace Group meeting in Navan. This was my first encounter with an individual quite outspoken about his preference for 'justice' over 'truth-recovery.' In many ways this dinner conversation prepared me for my interview with William Frazer. I appreciate all of these individuals taking the time to speak with me at length.

<u>Meetings</u>

In April HTR held a number of public and partnership meetings to discuss the five proposed models for truth-recovery that were published in the recent report *Making Peace With The Past.* I was able to observe four of these meetings. Two meetings, the Lisburn and Lurgan meetings, were 'public meetings' meaning that anyone from those communities could attend. The meetings were advertised through newspapers, radio, and flyers. The other two meetings were 'partnership meetings' with specific organizations or bodies interested in the report. The ones I attended were with the Meath Peace Group in the Republic and with Queens University students. For each meeting observations and direct quotes were kept in a journal then later expanded upon.

The Lisburn meeting was held on April 17 at the Island Centre. This was a small meeting with only three members of the public present. One man worked for the city council, and the other two people were a married couple. The woman said that she was "just interested" when she saw a flyer. Her husband said he was dragged along. Three members of the sub group were present: Mike Ritchie, director of Coiste na nlarchimi, an organization for former Republican prisoners; Emily Brough, manager of the Student Diversity Programme for NUS-USI; and Dawn Purvis of the Progressive Unionist Party. The discussion at this meeting mainly revolved around community concerns that neither the general public nor politicians are interested enough in truth-recovery processes to make a formal process possible.

The second meeting attended was a Meath Peace Group partnership meeting at St. Columban's College in Navan, Co. Meath. The 8:00 pm discussion followed a 6:00 pm

dinner, which is where I first met Hazlett Lynch. The meeting was designed to allow

HTR to present its five models then hear responses from Hazlett Lynch of West Tyrone

Voice and Margaret Urwin of Justice for the Forgotten. While the response from Hazlett

Lynch was strongly adversarial to HTR's work, Margaret Urwin said the individuals of

Justice for the Forgotten favored the possibility of a truth-recovery process. Feedback

from the approximately 45 individuals in the audience was just as diverse. Two men

associating themselves with West Tyrone Voice said that they were adamantly opposed

to truth-recovery as long at the conflict was still ongoing, while other members of the

audience praised the suggestion of truth-recovery. One man ended the public responses

by saying "Blessed are the peacemakers."

The Lurgan public meeting was as skimpily attended as the Lisburn meeting on

April 24 at the Lurgan Town Hall, with only two individuals from the public showing up.

The gentleman who attended worked in the victims' sector, while the woman said that

she was interested in hearing more about the topic. Representing HTR was Kate Turner;

Pat Conway, Director of Services with the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and

Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO); and Andrew Rawding, a former British Army

Officer. This discussion largely focused on the issue of amnesty, with the man from the

victims sector staunchly opposed to the idea.

The last meeting attended was a partnership meeting with Queens University on

April 26 in the student union. There were approximately 20 students and one professor in

attendance. Alan Wardle and Emily Brough were representing HTR. This was a highly

dynamic meeting, with many issues touch on including costs, generational differences in

Northern Ireland, the inclusion of immigrants, the role of media, and cross-community relations.

Not only were these meetings the focus of my research paper, they personally affected me as well. Although I cannot name them individually, the individuals who spoke aloud at these meetings made this paper possible. The vast majority of observations in this paper come from those late evening meetings, as well as the interviews mentioned above.

"Outsider" Status

In both interviews and meetings I needed to be careful of my "outsider" status. I have never lived in Northern Ireland nor was I ever affected by the Troubles. Sensitive issues would often arise in meetings regarding personal loss and tragedy. Because of this I was often afraid of giving away my American identity, in fear that this would somehow make people more hesitant about sharing their thoughts. In the more intimate meetings where there were less than ten individuals present, I was sure to fully explain that the intentions of my research was to gain understanding by listening to the public's thoughts. I was also cautious to explain this when speaking with individuals who I suspected as having negative opinions of HTR. I hoped they could still candidly speak to me about the organization's work without fear that I would be offended or aggressive in return. Although I was an intern with the organization, I was first and foremost a research student and tried to act as a "blank state" as much as possible.

Advisor

Lastly, this paper was made possible with the help of Bill Rolston at the University of Ulster, who acted as a reference point on numerous occasions and advised me at every stage of my research. Without his support this project would severely lack merit and integrity.

Section Three – Research

Preface

While calls for "truth" and "justice" are far from new in Northern Ireland, the public debate over options for truth-recovery is still taking shape. Since 2004 the non-governmental organization, Healing Through Remembering (HTR), has sought to change the debate on truth recovery into a more structured, less redundant conversation than what has occurred in the previous decade. By offering five models of truth-recovery processes for the public to discuss at a series of public and partnership meetings through out Northern Ireland, HTR has attempted to conduct a public consultation on this element of conflict transformation. Although this outreach has given a large portion of the public an organizing principle to base their discussions off of, the debate retains its original complexity and slightly amorphous nature. This paper seeks to briefly discuss the current context of the debate in Northern Ireland, highlight the main issues talked about in the two most mentioned models of truth-recovery (a community-based bottom up approach and a top down truth commission), then address the two primary factors of vocabulary and trust that are hindering the debate. The paper will conclude with remarks on how HTR has thus far attempted to redress these issues and where the debate may go from here.

Before launching into the body of the paper, it is important to mention that this paper is an attempt to highlight the tensions and points of contention within the public debate. By no means will it capture the breadth and depth of the entire discussion revolving around truth-recovery options, as that may well be as diverse as the individuals discussing it. The debate is dominated by individual and collective confusion. Overall,

people expressed a desire to move forward by addressing the past. They also expressed extreme uncertainty and hesitation. Almost no one was immune to this. Not a single person interviewed in the research process was able to give a definitive opinion on the topic and many, including academics in the area, often spoke about personally vascillating between some (if not all) of the models. Although this paper attempts to make order out of the confusion, at points this seems impossible if one wants to genuinely reflect the public debate that is occurring.

Context of the Debate

"Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in April 1998, signaling the end of 30 years of armed conflict, there has been an ongoing (if generally mooted) debate in Northern Ireland on how to deal with the legacy of the past."
– Dr. Patricia Lundy and Dr. Mark McGovern

Current Status of Truth-Recovery

The Good Friday Agreement marked a transition point for Northern Ireland. Emerging from more than 30 years of violent conflict, Northern Ireland was faced with the difficult task of transforming the conflict over its constitutional status into a peaceful one. The Good Friday Agreement contained several measures intended to address past consequences of the conflict, including but not limited to the release of paramilitary prisoners, the provision of services to victims, and reform of the policing service (McEvoy, 41). Parallel to these provisions to address the past was the Bloomfield Report on victims' needs that, while stopping short of giving specific recommendations for a truth-recovery process for Northern Ireland, stated "the possibility of benefiting from some form of Truth and Reconciliation Commission at some stage should not be overlooked" (McEvoy, 60). Almost ten years since the signing of the Agreement and the

publishing of the Bloomfield report, there has been little governmental action on the topic of a formal truth-recovery process.

Due to the lack of political movement towards a formal truth-recovery process, the numerous inquiries and legal actions that began long before the Good Friday Agreement have continued in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. These actions include, and are by no means limited to, inquiries into particular events such as the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday, public calls for inquiries into incidents of state collusion such as the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane, and the work of the Historical Enquiries Team to address unresolved murders from the conflict. Alongside these legal attempts to deal with the past there have been several community-based projects such as the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, formed in 1998 to remember the lives of the 99 community members of Ardoyne who died due to the conflict (Lundy and McGovern 2005, v). Each of these projects and inquiries intend to recover truth from the past, primarily "truth" that is forensic or narrative in nature (Rolston, 2006).

The Development of Healing Through Remembering

This current piecemeal approach to truth-recovery has caused some concern among both academics and conflict resolution practitioners in Northern Ireland. In *Making Peace With The Past*, the report published by HTR on the topic of truth-recovery, the provisions set out by the Good Friday Agreement are criticized for not addressing the consequences of the past in an "entirely holistic fashion" (McEvoy, 41). Similarly, Dr. Lundy, academic at the University of Ulster and member of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, believes the current status of truth-recovery is "chipping away"

at the social fabric, potentially having a destabilizing effect on the peace process (Lundy interview). Essentially the current truth-recovery approach has been unable to deliver "restorative truth" (truth leading to reconciliation) and "social truth" that addresses the macro issues of nature, causes, and extent of human rights violations (Rolston, 2006). While the debate around the purported need or attainability of these two truths will be discussed in future sections, it is primarily these two forms of truth (out of the four forms utilized by the SATRC) that some fear have not been addressed by current truth-recovery processes.

Concerns like these resulted in the publication of *All Truth Is Bitter* in 2000, following the visit of Dr. Alex Boraine, former Deputy Chair of the SATRC, recommending exercises to "explore and debate ways of examining the past and remembering so as to build a better future" (Healing Through Remembering, 2002). From this report the board of HTR formed, eventually leading to the creation of a Truth Recovery and Acknowledgment sub committee in 2004 (McEvoy, vii). The goal of HTR is to assist society in its "need to grasp the opportunity of remembering in a constructive way, to enable us to move into a new future built on a shared acknowledgement of our conflicted past" (Healing Through Remembering 2002, vii). The sub group on truth-recovery was left with the difficult task of exploring truth-recovery options for Northern Ireland beyond the current piecemeal approach.

It is important to note that the members of HTR are not the only organization addressing the issue of a formal truth-recovery process. Within the republican/nationalist community Eolas ("information" in Irish) published a consultation paper on truth and justice in 2003, outlining three models for truth-recovery that were seen as acceptable to

participants in their three day residential (Eolas, 3). In a similar fashion, Epic produced a slimmer document "Truth Recovery: A Contribution from Within Loyalism" describing loyalist hesitations to participating in such a process (Epic, 4). As an umbrella organization, HTR has attempted to incorporate the opinions expressed in these documents along with many more voices across Northern Ireland in both its report *Making Peace With The Past* and subgroup meetings on truth-recovery options. The five models developed were: "Drawing A Line Under The Past;" "Internal Organizational Investigations;" "Community-Based Bottom Up Truth Recovery;" "A Truth-Recovery Commission;" and "A Commission of Historical Clarification." At the time of this writing, the sub group is finishing its last public consultation on these models and will regroup in the near future to analyze its findings from the public meetings.

International Influences

While the debate over truth-recovery in Northern Ireland has been influenced by the needs of victims, the belief that healing requires revisiting the past, and a desire to "learn lessons about the past in order to guard against future conflict" (McEvoy, ix), the topic of truth-recovery has also taken center stage in the past two decades. Within those two decades there has been a "phenomenal growth in the utilisation of different models of "truth commissions," with over 25 formal processes around the globe (McEvoy, 18). Human rights advocates have also begun to set a precedent for the "right to truth." Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the InterAmerican Commission have all recognized an "international 'right to truth'" (McEvoy, 10-11). Both the growth in

truth commissions worldwide and the human rights argument has given proponents of a truth-recovery process (truth-commission or otherwise) international standing.

Despite numerous truth commissions having taken place in the last twenty years, the SATRC has by far had the most influence on the public debate in Northern Ireland. Dr. Alex Boraine's visit from South Africa was instrumental in the formation of HTR and many conflict resolution practitioners have traveled to South Africa to learn from their post-conflict transition. William Frazer of FAIR noted this trend, saying with a bit of frustration, "there's a path from here to South Africa that you could nearly follow with your eyes closed because there have been that many over" (Frazer interview). Even though HTR has benefited from the knowledge of South African experts, there is a concern that the amount of media footage about South Africa has given the public a misguided understanding of truth-recovery. In every public meeting attended during this research, the BBC program "Facing The Truth" with Archbishop Desmond Tutu was mentioned by an audience member during the discussion. This concerns Kate Turner, Project Coordinator for HTR, who says the sub group's main role in the debate has stayed the same from its inception, "which was unpack the debate from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission – yes or no" (Turner interview). Many people in the public have a "myth of what the TRC did" (Turner interview), contributing to unrealistic expectations for any similar process in Northern Ireland.

Players In The Debate

"Is there general interest or pressure by society at large? Is it really society that's going to say we want this?" – Woman at Lisburn public meeting

The terms "bottom up" and "top down" truth recovery necessitate an understanding of who comprises the "bottom" and "top" that would run the respective processes. Due to the difficulties of identifying and engaging the individuals at the "bottom," and the hesitancy of many political players at the "top" to move forward on the issue, the debate is actually occurring in the middle section of society. This section seeks to identify why the "bottom" and "top" are largely missing from the conversation and who exactly the groups/individuals in the middle are.

Bottom Up: Engaging The Average Person in Northern Ireland

In 2006 Dr. Lundy and Dr. McGovern conducted a survey across Northern Ireland on the attitudes towards a truth commission for the region. This research found that "people, it seems, generally want to know the truth about the conflict, they just don't wholly agree on how to get it" (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 6). While a slight majority of people said they would be in favor of a truth commission, they were also more likely to agree with truth-recovery approaches they were more familiar with (such as investigations and prosecutions). Even when considering approaches they are more familiar with, though, people approach the issue with a great deal of skepticism and pessimism (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 15). People seem to want a truth-recovery process, even though they have little faith that it would achieve its aim to "get at the truth" (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 8). Overall, a majority of people in each party expressed a desire for a truth commission, however this was less likely amongst unionist supporters than their nationalist counterparts (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 26).

Between the major political parties (Sinn Fein, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Alliance Party, Democratic Unionist Party, and Ulster Unionist Party), there was some significant difference between unionists and SDLP, Sinn Fein, or Alliance voters on the topic of punishment for criminal offences. DUP voters saw prosecution as a major priority of a truth-commission (second only to 'getting at the truth'), whereas only a small majority of SDLP, Sinn Fein and Alliance voters saw this as a priority (Lundy and McGovern 2006, 8). This finding highlights different conceptions of 'justice,' which will be addressed later in this paper.

Despite the difference of opinion about the potentially retributive aims of a truth commission, there was a consensus amongst most people that 'healing,' 'reconciliation,' and 'drawing a line under the past' were preferred aims for a truth commission (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 8). The primary goal of a truth commission amongst all party voters, however, was to 'get at the truth.'

Lundy and McGovern encourage caution amongst proponents of truth commissions, even though a slight majority of people said they would support one if it were to occur. There seems to be a limited knowledge of what a truth commission does. Three out of four respondents said they had never heard of a truth commission occurring anywhere else in the world. Of those who had, over 9 out of 10 of those respondents had heard of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Lundy and McGovern 2006, 23). The authors suggest lack of knowledge about truth commissions may be why people said they would prefer other forms of truth recovery, like inquiries, before picking a truth commission.

Alongside the important question of how well informed the general public is about truth-recovery processes, is the question of how well engaged they are with the discussion. There is a difficulty in getting people to participate in a discussion that they know little about. HTR has been conducting two kinds of meetings this year – public meetings, aimed at getting the average person on the street involved in the discussion, and partnership meetings, aimed at particular organizations such as victims groups or former prisoner groups. While the partnership meetings usually bring in an audience of 20 or more people, the public meetings bring in an audience of less than 5. When asked what was creating this difference, Kate Turner gave two hypotheses:

> We don't know what's going on with the public meetings. I suppose all we can do is make guesses. Some of them are based on what people have said to us, so for example some of the partnership meetings have happened because people have seen and said 'we saw you were coming to… and some of our members were interested in going but they didn't want to go because they didn't know who else would be there or they weren't sure who you were or… so we were wondering if you would come and talk to the group.' We know that some people aren't coming because they are concerned about those issues. Somebody else suggested to us, something that I hadn't thought through, was that they've seen the information, they read through the stuff in the press release, and they talked to people who said "oh yeah, we know people who are involved and it's a diverse group and they are what they say they are" so they felt like "well that's alright, I don't need to go along and challenge those people because what people are telling me is that they're okay. (Turner interview)

HTR fears that even the people attending the public meetings are people who are fairly knowledgeable about issues of truth and justice, leaving a whole constituency behind the faces of public meetings who remain uneducated or uninterested in the topic. The people who are attending the public meetings, therefore, give a slightly biased view in favor of the community-based bottom up approach because "the nature of the people who are going to come to public events like that, what they like is the bottom up approach" (Turner interview).

There is also a segment of society unsure of their place in a truth-recovery process with reservations about joining the debate. At the Queens University partnership meeting

a male student articulated these concerns asking, "what legitimacy do we have in commenting as young students who didn't experience this?" An Indian student asked a similar question about the role of immigrants in Northern Ireland, while also suggesting that maybe immigrants could be brought into the process in a neutral role. She feared, however, that a prolonged focus on the binary nature of the conflict would alienate new immigrants.

Top Down: Political Will

Politicians have gone little further than stating a general preference or disdain towards a formal truth-recovery process, most often stating that a more thorough discussion of the topic should happen in the future. Between the two main nationalist and unionist sides, political opinion in favor or against largely reflects the basic positions of their constituents as articulated in the above section.

Within the republican/nationalist movement there is a willingness amongst Sinn Fein and SDLP leaders to have "some form of organized truth recovery process," although the parties have been hardly more specific than that statement. In a speech by North Antrim MLA Philip McGuigan it was stated that:

> Sinn Fein isn't being prescriptive in this regard. We don't have a blueprint, nor are we attached to any particular model of truth recovery. Any process should be victim-centred and, to ensure impartiality, has to be independent and international. It should have national reconciliation at its core and should be informed by humility, generosity and a desire to learn the lessons of the past. (Motions 76 and 78)

SDLP has been a bit more proactive towards the topic, having called for the establishment of a Truth and Survivors Forum, which would be tasked with designing a truth and remembrance process (McEvoy, 6).

The DUP has voiced strong opposition to the creation of a truth commission and has called for a continued police investigation of 'unresolved murders' (Lundy and McGovern 2006, 20). When the Chairman of the Policing Board, Des Rea, showed support of a truth-recovery process, Ian Paisley Jr. responded by saying that his comments were "outrageous" and showed Des Rea's lack of "confidence in the police to capture the perpetrators of 30 years of violence" (McEvoy, 7). The UUP's comments have been a bit more measured, saying they would discuss the topic internally. At a public meeting in Lisburn an audience member asked the sub group what the political parties were saying about the possibility of a truth recovery. Dawn Purvis, a member of the sub group, said that while the group had spoken with politicians that meeting was highly confidential. She continued, however, to say that the political split was "as you would expect, with the exception of my party [the PUP]", who is in support of such a process.

The most supportive of all parties appears to be the Alliance Party, which called on the government to establish a victim-led taskforce to determine "the most appropriate means on how best to deal with the past." In May 2004 the then Secretary of State Paul Murphy said that he would embark on a series of discussions about dealing with the past, however less than a year later the government declared there was "insufficient consensus on the question on how to take truth recovery forward and that the political timing was not right." (Lundy & McGovern 2006, 20)

The question of timing, surely influencing most if not all of the political players, will be interesting to observe in the following few months as Stormont sits again. While it is impossible to know for certain if truth-recovery will become a priority issue for the

new government, some suspect that it will all depend on the abilities of the grassroots to set the agenda:

> I think it will become an issue because I think NGOs will make it an issue. And that's what happens in society. It's usually the victim's groups and human rights organizations that push these kinds of issues. If you look at Peru, for example, it was a very strong civil society that pushed for a truth commission. So they will push it to the top of agenda. (Lundy interview)

At the current stage of the debate, it is precisely the victims groups, human rights organizations, and community workers who are engaging in the discussion in Northern Ireland. The debate about "bottom up" versus "top down" is currently a conversation that the middle ground is largely having alone.

The Middle Ground: "Truth" in Truth-Recovery

At each public and partnership meeting a member of the HTR subgroup is sure to use the subgroup as a live example of the seemingly impossible; the coming together of diverse sectors of the middle ground for safe but difficult discussions. While there are some top players (such as Dawn Purvis) participating in the HTR work, it is mainly comprised of the "middle ground." These individuals represent sectors of the community that were involved in the conflict, but are not the decision makers. Nor are they the average man or woman on the street, given their status as prominent members of civil society. A look at the sub group serves as an example of the kind of bodies that are represented in the HTR debates: Pat Finucane Centre, Relatives for Justice, PSNI, WAVE Trauma Centre, Dominican theologians, etc. According to Kate Turner HTR has been incredibly successful in engaging the groups comprising the middle ground, if not in full debates then at least in minimal communications, confidently saying, "there absolutely aren't any groups that aren't talking to us" (Turner interview).

The diversity of the groups around the table means that there is a broad range of interests in a truth-recovery process, and therefore a broad range of desired outcomes. These interests can be organized in terms of the four "truths" outlined by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

(1) Factual or forensic truth: the familiar legal or scientific notion of bringing to light factual, corroborative "evidence".
(2) Personal or narrative truth: the individual truths of victims and perpetrators, attaching value to oral tradition and story-telling and linking the role of such narrative truth to healing.
(3) Social truth: established through interaction, discussion, and debate, social truth acknowledges the importance of transparency and participation and affirms the dignity of human beings.
(4) Healing and restorative truth: framing or understanding the narratives of the past in such a way that they are directed towards goals of self-healing, reconciliation, and reparation – a process which requires acknowledgement that everyone's suffering was real and worthy of attention (McEvoy, 19)

"Forensic truth" is desired by those who are looking for particular details about an incident like an unresolved murder. Families of the disappeared, for example, may care more to know the specifics about their loved ones death rather than the larger social causes of the conflict. Forensic truth is seen as a "micro-truth," a way of looking at the conflict on a small scale. "Narrative truth" occurs in processes like the Arodyne Commemoration Project, where members of society (or a particular community, in this example) are given a forum to tell their particular story. In doing so, they may feel validated knowing that their story has been heard or feel there is therapeutic value in 'speaking out' (Lundy and McGovern 2005, x). Others advocate "narrative truth" for its apparent simplicity. A student at Queens University expressed concern over society becoming "bogged down in truth recovery" after already being "bogged down in 30 years of civil war and the 10 years being bogged down in setting up a government" and suggested an easier alternative would be storytelling.

"Social truth," quite different from forensic truth, seeks to establish a "macro-truth" about the conflict. This is arguably what a truth-commission can achieve that other

forms of truth-recovery cannot (Rolston 2006, 675). Even for advocates of strong community-based processes like the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, the appeal of "social truth" stands out:

> Another thing about a truth commission, a top down truth commission, and the role it plays in conflict transformation is it looks at the bigger picture. It looks at the causes, it looks at the consequences. Patterns, you know the context, it looks at that whole bigger picture. So for me it gives you that broader narrative that you can help clarify, sort of a historical clarification, I would say. So it kind of narrows the myths and the half truths and the half lies, perhaps, that are existing in a society. So for me truth commission does that. That's one thing it definitely does. (Lundy interview)

"Restorative truth" is where reconciliation or societal healing comes into the picture. This was a large focus of the SATRC, valued enough that it carried equal weight in the title of the commission as "truth" did. People concerned about community relations and the resolution of conflict are often proponents of this form of truth.

According to the Healing Through Remembering report in 2002, the specific purposes of a truth recovery process would be to: promote reconciliation, peace and healing; and to reduce tensions resulting from past violence; clarify and acknowledge as much unresolved truth about the past as possible; respond to the needs and interests of victims; contribute to justice in a broad sense; and possibly ensure accountability and responsibility for past actions from organisations and institutions—and possibly from individuals; identify the responsibilities of States, of republican and loyalist organisations, and of other institutions and organisations for the violence of the past; and make recommendations for change that will reduce the likelihood of future conflict. (HTR 2002, 51).

While this is an idealistic description of a truth-recovery process, many fear (as the Lundy and McGovern study of attitudes towards a truth commission show) that not

all of these aims are attainable in one single process. People tend to speak about each process in terms of the cost/benefits of each:

> Processes clearly have costs. And I don't think you can pick a process that doesn't have any costs. There are a whole range of different ones that have been tried around the world, although the South Africa one gets the most publicity. There are many different ones that have been tried. And I suppose for me the debate becomes weighing up the costs and benefits and knowing that in any process you have you are going to have people who are not going to benefit and may in fact be worst off at the end of the process. So very broadly that is the way I would see it. Having said all of that, the other thing is to say that to do nothing also carries costs. And that's the real difficult thing, to sit still and say "these are real difficult to do, we'll do nothing" is also a decision that carries costs. (Bryan interview)

The following sections discuss the two primary models for bottom up and top down approaches and the strengths/weaknesses of each as they relate to the above forms of truth. The sections will also highlight the major practical or theoretical concerns that the public focused on in the meetings attended during this research.

Two Main Models: Bottom Up and Top Down

"A lot of the debate ends up being around the two… bottom up and top down truth commissions. Not necessarily because that's what people want but because that's an easier space to have the discussion about what's possible, around something that seems a bit more familiar." – Kate Turner

Bottom Up: Community Based

The bottom up model is the community-based approach to truth-recovery. Its origins are at the grassroots level, with the input of former combatants, victims, witnesses, and possibly security services and intelligence services at the local level. These individuals give testimony to a range of localized community hearings (occurring as a parallel process across Northern Ireland and potentially other jurisdictions). Each community hearing produces a report about its findings, which then feeds into an oversight body that would produce a final synthesized report. A common example of this approach is the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, which resulted in the book *Ardoyne:*

The Untold Truth. Several other communities around Northern Ireland are attempting to replicate the project, including New Lodge Six (Lundy interview).

The strengths identified by HTR for a bottom up process are that it could include a broad notion of community (possibly even challenging ordinary notions of community), ownership over the project would belong to local people resulting in a sense of legitimacy, and the process would depend upon important local networks and relationships. Communities would have to develop their resources and capacities to undertake such a large task, which could also result in the healing of community tensions and rifts. (McEvoy, 79)

These strengths were confirmed by research on the affects of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, finding that "without doubt, community participation stood out as the single most important aspect of the ACP process for the majority of participants" (Lundy and McGovern 2005, xi). The inclusion of "narrative truth" was extremely important for participants who appreciated having the ability to tell their own story. Many found this helped to restore their dignity since it recorded, documented, and put into public discourse the voices of those who felt marginalized. While this recording of stories could be possible in a top down approach as well, it is the ownership of the process that truly stands out:

> What makes it different to top down? It is truly initiated, designed, delivered by local people. I mean, I'm from Ardoyne myself, that's where my family lives, that's where I was born. That's where I belong, I would say. So it was all local people that were involved… there were no officials, you know, from government, there were no other NGOS, I mean we did seek advice from NGOs on different aspects of the project but it was truly owned and shaped by the people within that community. They decided what way things went. And my view on it is that it couldn't have been carried out any other way. (Lundy interview)

Potential weaknesses, or costs, of such a process is that it could allow for institutional and security force denial. As one of the sub group members explained in the

Lisburn public meeting, "institutions can easily say 'we aren't part of the community, we aren't a community' and distance themselves from the process." If this is the case then individuals seeking answers from the government, churches, media, etc. could be left with their questions unanswered.

Another cost of a community-based project could be its limited "restorative truth." Because Northern Ireland is largely comprised of single identity neighborhoods and communities, the process would also predominantly be single identity work. This would limit the interactions between republican/nationalist and loyalist/unionist communities, making little headway towards reconciliation of those relationships. This single-identity issue emerges as a primary theoretical debate about community-based work. The question essentially boils down to this: what needs more work, intra-community or inter-community relationships?

Single identity work has the potential of creating further distrust or division of communities. One possibility is that any report submitted by a single identity community would be immediately dismissed by the other community, suspicious of the assertions and claims made in the report. It is argued, however, that it may be worth the risk when considering the possible benefits for the community:

> A single identity project is quite often frowned upon I think because people feel it reinforces certain things. But my argument would be I think you have to get your own house in order, I think you have to deal with things within your own community – deal with our legacy of the conflict. And that aspect is quite often ignored in a lot of work on truth recovery. (Lundy interview)

The appropriateness of single identity work is an issue of timing for many. Some think it is too soon to force cross-community dialogue over such sensitive questions as unresolved murders (Lundy interview), while others think that the peace process has moved beyond single identity work:

So I think we're beyond the point … now I think the Ardoyne project was good at so many levels, if for just the ability to put itself together and do it. I thought it was a tremendous piece of work in many ways. I'm not sure that we're not beyond just doing little projects in little areas… But it may be the time that if you were to repeat that project now, maybe the time has come to include the soldiers and their families. (Bryan interview)

There is also an important issue of quality control between the communities. Each community would need the manpower, financial resources, drive, and experience to produce community hearings and a report that actually result in the recovery of truth. While this is largely a practical question that has not yet come to dominate the debate, it does raise an important question about differences between the republican/nationalist and loyalist/unionist communities. The term "community" will be discussed in a later section, however it is important to note that substantial debate exists over the capacities and resources of each community.

Many people at the public and partnership meetings embrace the notion of "ownership" over a process, fearful or distrustful of any process that may be imposed upon them. At the same time, a process that is owned by local communities means that they effectively only have access to the knowledge and people within their community. This greatly limits the kind of information they can obtain. The most abundant source of information communities have is their own people and the amount of information they uncover largely depends on how well they can work the social networks within that community. In the Ardoyne example the process unfolded like this:

So in our own project in Ardoyne we, I would argue, were able to resolve a number of unresolved issues. We did get to issues connected to republicanism because we had, let's say, lines of communication with the republican movement. We were able to clarify certain things. Mrs. Johnson says that her son was killed as an informer, she thinks he wasn't. How can you get some information that will help, you know, settle some of the things, the questions, that this family has. Perhaps an issue around where his body is, where he was taken or was he tortured. Whatever. There's a whole series of issues. Some of them aren't in the book. And what we tried to do was have a mediation kind of role where either we could bring those people together to talk things through or we could bring the information to those particular families. (Lundy interview)

This poses a problem for communities. On one hand, a positive outcome of the process is the healing of fractures within the community, however the success of the project (in terms of 'getting at the truth') depends on there being limited fractures within the community in the first place or the involvement of individuals who can work around those divisions. Access to official documents poses another challenge for community-based processes, however that will be included in the discussion of access to information in the next section on a top-down truth commission.

Community-based processes are successful in forming micro-truths and narrative truths of conflict. The individual questions people want answered are more likely to be answered in a smaller scale process than a truth commission where "they only select a number of cases to illustrate certain things. So there may be 7,000 people who give testimony, but out of that 7,000 there may be only 50 cases that are looked at. So what can you achieve?" (Lundy interview) For families or victims that are seeking answers to specific questions, a truth commission may leave them with many of those questions still unanswered. They would most likely be provided with a forum for telling their story and asking their questions,

> But will they get those wee questions answered? You know some of the questions people have, some would think, were quite unimportant really. You know, quite minor things, but they are huge obviously if you have someone who was killed. So those kinds of unanswered questions may not be answered for the mass of those families who would be involved in a truth commission. I don't think most people realize that. (Lundy Interview)

For both a bottom up community-based process and a top-down truth commission, people repeatedly mention the importance of giving people realistic expectations. If people do not realize that they may not get all of their answers questioned, in either process, it is

possible that a process meant to heal could leave people in a state of disappointment or anger.

Top Down: Truth Commission

Truth Commissions, rather than working from the bottom up, tend to be highly centralized institutional mechanisms that receive their mandate from state, quasi-state, or supra-state structures. While a commission may be independent from the government, it comes into being through legislation put forward by the government. The model used in the Northern Ireland discussions has a commission comprised of either entirely international, or a mixture of international and local, individuals of good standing. The commission, possibly after consulting with the community, would hold a series of public hearings on emergent themes relevant to the conflict. The commission could have adequate powers to compel witnesses, subpoena documents, grant amnesties, etc. in order to adequately recover the 'truth.' All relevant parties, including victims, perpetrators, and institutions, would report to the commission, which would then issue a report detailing its findings and include recommendations for how to correct past injustices and move forward into the future. (McEvoy, 98 – 100).

A truth commission stands out from the rest of the models because it is an institutional tool, complete with the powers that a government has that communities do not. It could be more inclusive, more thorough in its investigations, and cover a broader range of incidents than a community-based process. Because of this, the use of a truth commission may signify serious societal intent to address the past. The final report would be treated as a "definitive and authoritative source of historical record" that could "set the

record straight" on past injustices and violations (McEvoy, 85). While many people associate the phrase "truth commission" with reconciliation, most likely because of the global coverage of the SATRC, it is unclear to what extent reconciliation is an outcome of a truth commission. Nonetheless, the public hearings could include cross-community contact or the final report could give recommendations as to how further good relations between the communities in Northern Ireland. This is another area, however, that must be treated delicately and people must be well informed about what they can expect, particularly considering the varying understandings of "reconciliation" (to be discussed in a section below).

One of the drawbacks of a truth commission is the difficulty in garnering public support and confidence in the mechanism. This is particularly true in Northern Ireland, where there hasn't been a significant change in government since the Troubles. The British and Irish governments, both suspected of collusion and other major human rights violations, would be the "top" that people are expected to put their faith into. The Pat Finucane Centre, despite their calls for a full public independent inquiry into the death of the late Pat Finucane, are skeptical of the likelihood of getting real answers from any institution connected to these governments: "One thing is for certain. It would be naïve in the extreme to suggest that the security services would co-operate with a truth commission" (Pat Finucane Centre website, "The Law As A Weapon"). Along with governmental institutions, there is a substantial debate around how best to compel participation of victims and ex-combatants. While this remains a question for the community-based approach too, the possibility of granting amnesty or recommending prosecution as the commission's carrot and stick is quite contested.

The issue of amnesty dominated both the Lisburn and Lurgan public meetings. This is an issue too complex to detail in this paper, however the main argument against amnesty is that it will not provide justice for victims, at least in the sense of retributive justice. The pro-amnesty argument was that it is extremely unlikely that anyone will be prosecuted under the criminal justice system, so compelling ex-combatants to tell the truth is better than no truth or justice at all. On both sides of the camps there were individuals who mentioned that most people have already escaped prison time due to the "On The Runs" legislation in Northern Ireland anyway.

Alongside numerous practical concerns about truth commissions, including the amount of resources it would require, length in time, potentially legalistic and adversarial nature of it, many of the same concerns emerged as in the community-based discussions. People wondered whether the timing was right for such a mechanism and what sort of information could the commission uncover.

Political generosity and will would be needed for a truth commission to take form in Northern Ireland. This question of timing, whether there is enough will amongst politicians, is particularly interesting right now given the new power-sharing agreement between the DUP and Sinn Fein. Some members of the sub group, such as Alan Wardle of Shankill Stress and Trauma, view the new government as the ultimate sign that there is goodwill amongst the parties and an eagerness to move beyond the Troubles. He also told the Queens University students that the subgroup discovered, in its investigations of truth commissions around the world, that "any engagement in truth recovery processes has led to greater political generosity." This optimism, however, does not seem to be shared by all of the public. At the Meath Peace Group meeting a man loudly scoffed at Wardle's

claim that there has recently been political generosity among the parties. Similarly a student at Queens University nodded vigorously when a member of the subgroup said there was a fear that a truth commission could result in "political football." This lack of faith in the political parties to cooperate, combined with the fear that a truth commission would genuinely be kept independent of the governments, are talked about further in a section on the role of trust in the public debate.

While it is most often taken as fact that a truth commission would have access to more information than a community-based approach, there are some who raise important questions about this assumption. After mentioning the "downside" of community-based approaches not having access to official documents, Dr. Lundy qualified her statement by saying:

> But some truth commissions don't get access to official documents. You know, many truth commissions that you heard of… before they even started, the military or police or whoever actually destroying the information? (Lundy interview).

Unlike community-based approaches, however, a truth commission is less likely to investigate individual incidents during the Troubles because it is seeking a "macro-truth" that 'allows for an inclusivity of experience and understanding as to why particular incidents occurred rather than examining individual cases in individual ways" (Eolas, 10). By acknowledging the major forces and trends during the Troubles, it is hoped that society can move forward with conflict transformation. Although some of the inquiries and legal investigations may still occur, it is hoped the commission would "set the record straight" enough to ease the individual demands for truth. In doing so, the commission helps the society heal as a whole:

> I think it's very important in terms of moving conflict along. It's drawing a line at least partially in terms of the past. I mean if you take the case of the north and you have the Ombudsman's report and the historical enquiries team, you've got all the inquiries, you've got all the campaigns, you've got all the local groups taking things forward. You've got all these things chipping away…

in terms of conflict transformation the role of the truth commission plays is it tries to put all of that together in one particular mechanism that looks at and establishes: was their collusion? Was their shoot to kill? Was their ethnic cleansing? And will give that authoritative account and because it is by an international panel – should be by an international panel – it kind of minimizes all those kinds of arguments. (Lundy interview)

While this is a strength of a truth commission, the question of how much can an individual's and society's needs both be met is a difficult one. The primary question in the debate between bottom up and top down approaches is "is the process about the individuals and their healing, or is the process about society and it's healing?" (Bryan interview).

The Wound Metaphor

"Many wounds are still too raw…"- Contributor to Ardoyne Commemoration Project Research

Before addressing two main impediments to the discussion on truth-recovery options for Northern Ireland, it is important to note the individuals who think that both of these processes are dangerous precisely because they revisit the past. When people speak about healing, either individual or societal healing, the most common metaphor to emerge is that of a wound. The past, and the truth of what happened in the past, is referred to in one of two ways: either as an open wound that needs treatment and cleansing or as a closed or scabbed wound that could (but should not) be re-opened. The wound metaphor is most often used by those who oppose a truth-recovery process.

In the Ardoyne Commemoration Project a small minority of participants felt "that it was harmful to 're-open' old wounds" (Lundy and McGovern 2005, x). In the loyalist contribution to the truth-recovery debate, it was stated that this is not the right time to address the past because wounds are still too raw:

In this kind of unstable, unsettled political context, a "truth process" that attempts to open up old wounds runs a real risk of re-igniting violent conflict instead of helping society to move beyond

the Troubles. Many wounds are still too raw, many people's buttons are still too easily pressed for a "truth process" to have a realistic chance of succeeding. (Epic, 6)

And yet others recognize that revisiting old hurts and 're-opening old wounds' would be a difficult process, but viewed it as necessary, as if re-opening them will finally allow them to heal properly:

> You know sometimes it [telling one's story] is good in one way but it is also not good. That's the reality. For loads of people it would have re-opened old 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 you move on from it. (quoted in Lundy and McGovern 2005, 37)

The metaphor of an "old wound" can mean drastically different things for individuals engaging in this debate. For some, it is something that desperately needs cleaning while for others it only needs to be left alone. The following section will explore how this is common in the Northern Ireland debate on truth-recovery, where repeatedly a common phrase or metaphor has very different connotations for individuals. This use of a common vocabulary, but with a lack of shared meaning, is one of the two main obstacles in discussions about truth-recovery.

Slippery Terminology

"One thing we've learned in this process is that language is very important and perceptions are too" – Alan Wardle, Queens University Meeting

" I mean, an organization that talks about 'the conflict in and about Northern Ireland,' we spent months agreeing about how to talk about that." – Kate Turner

Making Peace With The Past begins with a list of terms and agreed upon definitions used through out the report and by the HTR sub group members. These 'neutral' terms must be used in any of HTR's publications and by any spokesperson for the organization, while individuals on the subgroup are free to use the terms that best suit

them (Turner interview). Before being able to engage in serious, productive dialogue with one another, the sub group members had to give language "considerable thought" (McEvoy, 2). When observing both the public and partnership meetings it is clear why this would have been an issue for the sub group in two ways. First, a lack of politically sensitive language can shut down communication between individuals. Secondly, and what this paper is concerned with, is the use of broad catch phrases and metaphors that give the impression that people are speaking on the same topic when in actuality their definitions of the words differ. Some of the problematic terms and their various connotations are described below.

<u>Victim – Centred</u>

A common claim among truth-recovery proponents is that any process should and will be victim-centered. This has emerged as a major concern after reports that "the South African Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town found 50-60% of those who testified before the SATRC suffered difficulties after the hearing or regretted taking part " (McEvoy, 25). In order to ensure this does not occur in Northern Ireland, assurances have been given that proper support services will be in place for victims who testify. *Making Peace With The Past* states that any truth-recovery process would "take seriously the needs of victims from all sections of the community" (McEvoy, viii). Likewise, the Eolas document on truth-recovery said, "any truth recovery process must be victim-centered and victim-led" (Eolas, 17). While nearly everyone in the public debates said that a process must be victim-centered, there were varying degrees of inclusivity when people said "victim" or "victimhood."

Hazlett Lynch of West Tyrone Voice, an 'innocent victims group' in County Tyrone, posed the questions at the Meath Peace Group meeting of "Who is a victim? What or who caused their victimhood?" He then criticized HTR for "uncritically" accepting the definition of victims as "all of those killed or injured physically or psychologically during the conflict" (McEvoy, 3). For Lynch, the proper name for victimhood in Northern Ireland is terrorism, meaning that the only victims of the Troubles were those individuals killed by terrorists. This is one form of the hierarchy of victimhood that is prevalent in Northern Ireland society. Willy Frazer of FAIR shares a similar conception of 'innocent victims' as Lynch. When asked to define a 'non-innocent victim' Frazer replied:

> Well a non-innocent victim to me is someone who believes they have the right to kill people in the name of some particular cause, whether that be a United Ireland or… they believe they have the right to retaliate or attack. I don't classify them as innocent. They made up their own mind to take those actions. (Frazer interview)

Another form of this hierarchy was seen during the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, where "considerable debate emerged as to the definition of "victim" and, in particular, whether the project should include ex-state agents and informers" (McEvoy, 65). The implication of the hierarchies in both unionist and nationalist communities is that there were deserving and un-deserving cases. In Ardoyne, the only way for the project to move on was for the members "to debate all of those issues, to see that a victim is a victim is a victim. So all of those issues are important issues about equality" (Lundy interview).

Are death, injury or loss of a loved one the only causes of victimhood? The Eolas document states two very different definitions. For some participants "the effect of imprisonment should form part of any inclusive definition of victimhood" (Eolas, 17), while for others "victim-centered" meant "focusing more on death and injury rather than

structural inequality" (Eolas, 22). Some people recognize the common use of this term but feel that it is a claim with no precise meaning:

> I think it's a word that is thrown about and I think there are a lot of claims made about truth commissions which, quite frankly, I don't think are justified in terms of the claims that they make. (Lundy interview)

Instead, people's exact needs and wants should be specified rather than assuming a "victim-centered" approach will lead to a unspecified set of services for an unnamed set of individuals.

Reconciliation

It has been said that one of the major problems with the SATRC, along with a number of other truth commissions, was its failure to clearly define "reconciliation." Any process that makes "reconciliation" an end goal without clearly defining it will clearly have difficulties in its work. This problem could quite possibly occur in Northern Ireland too, given the contested meaning of the term in this region. For some community leaders, faith leaders, and activists it is a "common sense term" that speaks to the need in a divided society for "individuals and communities to reconcile a tragic history and alternative political aspirations in a small geographical space." (McEvoy, 85). This "common sense" term, however, is not as widely accepted as these individuals may like to think.

Particular confusion exists over what reconciliation includes or requires as a process. Epic notes that if reconciliation requires loyalist ex-prisoners/ex-combatants to "stand up and say that they are sorry, then there is little chance of success" (Epic, 9). In doing so, apologizing (and therefore reconciling) would mean the rejection of the political cause that loyalists fought for. Others, such as Lynch, insist that

acknowledgment is the key prerequisite to reconciliation. "Until there is a proper acknowledgment of what happened in the process, any attempt at reconciliation is a non-starter," he told the audience at the Meath Peace Group meting.

Loyalists, along with a number of republicans, also view 'reconciliation' as a suspicious term that is either assimilationist or integrationist (McEvoy, 86). This fear comes from the belief that reconciliation means coming to a shared narrative of the conflict, requiring one or both sides to abandon their own historical narrative and therefore justifications for fighting. Dr. Dominic Bryan points out, however, that while a shared narrative may not be possible the two sides can come together on other points, which may have a reconciling effect:

> I think if you don't share a same narrative of who was to blame and those sorts of things, you can share a same narrative about it was a terrible conflict, it was wrong, and we don't want to go back there. So I do think… it's not as if there aren't narratives there that can't be shared. I'm just not so sure that the historical one can. (Bryan interview)

In a publication by Democratic Dialogue, Hamber & Kelly concluded that reconciliation should be best viewed as a voluntary process that involves addressing conflictual and fractured relations through a number of practical interwoven strands. These include developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society; acknowledging and dealing with the past; building positive relationships; ensuring cultural and attitudinal change; and making substantial social, economic and political change (Hamber & Kelly, 7).

The belief that reconciliation would be an end result of a truth-recovery process is also problematic. The SATRC "has also been criticised for exaggerating its potential to contribute to "healing' and 'closure'" (McEvoy, 86). A professor at the Queens University meeting criticized the use of the term "closure" as if it is "something tangible

that is being denied to you, as if otherwise you could go to a store and pick it off the shelf." In response to these criticisms, Desmond Tutu himself has responded by clarifying that

> the act which brought us into being is entitled 'The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act.' It is the *promotion* not the *achievement* of reconciliation. THe TRC can only make a contribution. Reconciliation is going to be a long process and it is a national project.
> (Tutu, 25)

Likewise, it has been suggested that while truth recovery processes may be one mechanism that contributes to reconciliation, it is ultimately a "long term goal which will be reached through a number of mechanisms" (Rolston, 2006). Again, the issue of being honest with the public about what is realistic in a truth-recovery process emerges.

Justice

In the public debate on truth-recovery people often demand that "justice" is "done or "served." The kind of justice (restorative or retributive) and what counts as sufficient justice differs greatly amongst the people calling for its implementation. For many people, there is a recognition that

> At the heart of truth-telling is a restorative rather than retributive conception of justice. Restorative model aims to incorporate diverse values such as 'peace,' 'stability,' and 'nation-building'.
> (Lundy and McGovern 2005, 3)

People call for restorative justice measures sometimes out of a belief in its benefits for both individual and society, while others recognize that perhaps retributive justice is impossible after 30 years of conflict while restorative justice is still attainable. Pat Conway, an HTR subgroup member, advocated this latter view at the Meath Peace Group meeting when he stated, "if the existing process [the criminal justice system] could deliver, we wouldn't be sitting here right now."

For some individuals, though, abandoning the concept of retributive justice and the use of the criminal justice system is morally wrong. For Frazer, the only form of real justice is that of the criminal justice system. To switch to a restorative justice model to address crimes during the Troubles is the equivalent to turning on/off justice all together. He explains that

> …justice has to be seen to be done. Because if you don't, where in history do   you   record   that justice stopped and started again? When did democracy stop in Northern Ireland and when did it start again? You can't just stop and start it again for any particular notion or for certain sections of relations. (Frazer interview)

When asked specifically what justice meant to him, Frazer referred to the United States model of justice, then gave his personal preference that retributive justice be pursued to the furthest degree possible against "terrorists:"

> If you're asking me what is justice, I would say what is justice in your country? But at the same time we're prepared to let that go as far as what we're actually entitled to finish, as far as someone going to jail for life, or be executed or whatever. Personally as far as I'm concerned I don't know why we don't all shoot them, but I'm old enough to realize that's not going to happen. There's no way if we were going to demand that, there's no way we're going to go anywhere.
> (Frazer interview)

For others, however, justice can be found in other ways than through traditional retributive methods. Margaret Urwin of Justice For The Forgotten, a justice group for the relatives and victims of those in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, prefers 'truth' before 'justice'. Her and members of her organization "are not looking for, at this stage, retribution" but simply the "truth" about the causes of the bombings (Meath Peace Group Meeting). The exposure of the truth is sufficient justice for some. Desmond Tutu spoke about "justice in the public humiliation" of perpetrators and criminals (D. Tutu, public presentation, September 29, 1998). For some participants in the Ardoyne Commemoration Project the "sufficient form of justice" was the public recognition of the victim, not the offender (Lundy and McGovern 2005). These versions of justice that are

associated with acknowledgement could easily be achieved in a community-based approach, whereas the persecution of offenders could not.

There is possibly a tension between the exposure of truth or dogged pursuit of justice and the maintaining of community relations. If it is true (as some suspect) that truth about the past may be damaging to cross-community relations or the fabric of society, then justice may have to win over good relations or vice versa. Dr. Bryan identifies this tension in two major players in the debate on truth-recovery:

> And without stereotyping the two groups of people too much, you've got your human rights groups who tend to be very keen on legally based processes to recover justice. Then you've got another set of people who I think you would call the conflict resolvers. Now sometimes, very often, obviously, the conflict resolvers believe in human rights and the human rights people… but just leaving them as two separate camps for the time being, and I could name them, there are some times that conflict resolvers feel that human rights activists will push for justice even if it potentially could disrupt and make conflict worst.
> (Bryan interview)

Given the varying perceptions of justice within Northern Ireland, it seems highly unlikely that one process alone will satisfy everyone's individual need for justice. As in the case of South Africa, it is likely that no matter what approach of truth-recovery is eventually chosen, individuals will continue to pursue justice as they see appropriate.

Community

Calls for a bottom up approach for truth-recovery are formed on the assumption that communities are tangible, identifiable aspects of Northern Ireland culture capable of undertaking a process like truth-recovery. Examples like Ardoyne, and newer attempts in New Lodge, show that this is indeed the case. There is a question, though, if the term "community" can be applied on an equal basis throughout Northern Ireland. Does community mean the same thing to Loyalists as it does to Republicans, or Protestants as it does Catholics?

As previously mentioned, Alan Wardle said at the Meath Peace Group meeting that there are significant capacity differences between the Republican and Loyalist communities. While for him this may have been merely a difference in resources or funding, for others it is a difference embedded in the very nature of being loyalist or republican. Dr. Lundy explains this theory:

> In terms of differences in community, the argument is that Catholics/Nationalists are better organized. In many ways that has to do with the relationship to the state in the past, because if you do not recognize the state, if you do not see the legitimacy in the state, you are not going to interact with them or the agencies or whatever. So you will turn in on yourself and you will develop those skills and organizations to deal with those issues. You will build that within your own community. Whereas, the argument is, the unionist community is much more individualistic – it has to do with the Protestant religion, a individualistic way of doing things. (Lundy interview)

While this theory is far from universally accepted, it does explain why some loyalists could reject the prospect of any community-based approach as a nationalist or Catholic way of approaching the past.

There are also challenges to the favorable connotation of "community" when talking about community-based projects. While advocates of such an approach, such as Dr. Lundy, admit there are internal tensions within communities, they are also a site of belonging and accessibility. Others seem less optimistic about the nature of communities in Northern Ireland:

> I'm not comfortable with ones [truth-recovery approaches] where the boundaries within certain communities are clear. There are too many controlling figures and gate keepers around communities… let me put it this way, communities are as much a part of the problem as they are a part of the solution. They are not lovely warm cozy things here where everyone feels comfortable… The word community in Northern Ireland is not a sweet lovely rosy "well don't we all feel safe". It's a controlling one with power and one that restricts peoples freedoms.
> (Bryan interview)

Acknowledging the tensions, differences, and faults of a community may actually be one arena where truth-recovery is beneficial. Quite often loyalist and republican communities are spoken about as if they were impenetrable, completely cohesive blocks. Truth-

recovery that exposes the insides of these communities may demythologize each community:

> People have different truths. But these processes are about revealing those different truths. Of course it does, I mean the thing that strikes me about some of these [truth recovery processes], is that it often reveals – and maybe this is a healthy thing – inadequacies and tensions within all communities. (Bryan interview)

Another question about the term 'community' is what precisely constitutes a community in Northern Ireland? In Ardoyne it was decided that the community project "decided it should include all of the residents of Ardoyne and people who had lived at one point in Ardoyne" (Lundy interview). Consequently this meant that soldiers who were shot in Ardoyne were excluded from the project (Bryan interview). The insider/outsider dynamics created by community boundaries are discussed further in the next section.

Insider/Outsider

Insiders and outsiders, particularly when used to describe who the investigators should be, are perceived as providing for different benefits in a truth-recovery process. Outsiders are assumed to be neutral or non-partial, at the very least far less biased than any insider could be. At the same time an outsider is precisely that – an "outsider" to the conflict, someone who most likely lacks understanding of the conflict and trust of the individuals participating in the conflict. Insiders, on the other hand, are either seen as the ideal people to gather personal stories or immediately assumed as being too close to the conflict to have any unique insights.

Similar to the question of what constitutes a community, where is the insider/outsider boundary drawn when choosing the individuals conducting a truth-recovery process? Involvement in the conflict could be as specific as those people or

governments who had a direct involvement in the conflict or as broad as to say that no Americans can sit on an international panel because of the United States' peripheral role in both the peace process and IRA operations. Another question in the insider/outsider dynamic is what jurisdictions does a truth-recovery process include? Justice for the Forgotten insists that any process must include the whole island, however whether any other jurisdictions should also participate is far from decided. Sinn Fein, for example, submitted a report in 1995 to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the apartheid government's sale of weapons to loyalist paramilitaries ("ARMSCOR Report To Go To South African Cabinet" 1995). Would this mean that South Africa would conversely contribute to a Northern Ireland commission on this same topic?

The majority of people seem to call for a truth-recovery process, at least a truth commission, run by an international panel. These calls assume that an international person will be fully independent from government, institutional, or community influence (Eolas, 22). Some qualify that these international individuals must have some knowledge of truth-recovery processes (Eolas, 23), as to ensure that they are not completely outside the scope of understanding. Given the involvement of international actors in nearly all other aspect of Northern Ireland's peace process, it may be difficult to "envisage a successful truth-recovery process in Northern Ireland that did not have significant international input" (McEvoy & Morrison 2003). Again, the controlling nature of communities is used as a reason for outsider oversight:

> I feel that whatever happens you always need some sort of outside overview, you need someone coming in who won't necessarily be taken in by the controlling nature of some of the community boundaries. So even those local ones – communities control people. Never think they're these wonderful things. There are people who don't speak out about the rules of this, about that, because they're shit scared. Because there are people within these communities who have control and power. 30 years taught us that. So you got to be very, very, careful about those sort of processes and it may need some sort of outside overview. (Bryan interview)

On the other hand, while an outsider may be helpful in ensuring the full independence of the process, it may be difficult to avoid them being treated as an outsider. This may be acceptable in a truth commission where members of the panel would have limited interaction with locals, but in a community-based approach the involvement of an outsider (as was considered in the Ardoyne Commemoration Project) could impede on the quality of information obtained by the panel or interviewer:

> Because if you know the history of that particular community, a very small close knit community, tight community, where… it really was a matter of survival. Survival. Because you just didn't just talk, you didn't talk about things. So there were silences around many things. So an outsider coming in to do a piece of research on the conflict, on your memory, on your experiences of the conflict, and asking these people to tell the truth. "C'mon, really tell us what happened here." And these were local Republicans who would talk about some of the deaths, so an outsider could never have done that, it had to be a local person with local knowledge, with respect from the local community…
>
> I don't think outsiders would of got in. If you tried to set up a project like that, you say I'm Suzanne from whatever community or England or America… people would be polite but you would not get an insight into those stories. (Lundy interview)

One of the models in the Eolas document attempted to address this issue by suggesting that there could be a series of investigative units, with each unit responsible for liaising with one specific combatant groups (although this could also extend to any one sector of Northern Ireland society, not just combatants). The investigative unit would eventually build a relationship with the group and establish a rapport, leading to the development of greater trust and continuity of contact with the commission. (Eolas, 27)

This suggestion by Eolas highlights the second impediment in the debate on truth-recovery options for Northern Ireland, which is the lack of trust amongst almost all sectors of society. The trust dilemma, leading to the domination of fear or "worst case scenarios" in the debate, is outlined in the next section.

Trust Concerns: Inter-Community, Intra-Community and Governmental

"The issue of trust is paramount." – *Dr. Patricia Lundy*
"To share testimony is to exchange trust. Beyond this we cannot go." – *Paul Ricoeur*

When one gives testimony, one is essentially asking the listener or receiver of that testimony to treat what is saying as true. The testimony need not be "the truth" but at least treated as "a truth" for the giver of testimony. The relationship between giver and receiver of testimony, because of its dependency on trustworthiness, is critical for any truth-recovery process. This relationship is the "point at which the tension between confidence and suspicion enters" the arena of truth-telling (Lundy & McGovern 2007, 10). The lack of trust existing between communities, within some communities, and for both the Irish and British governments creates a social space for post-conflict transformation dominated by suspicion and skepticism.

The issue of trust has dominated both the Northern Ireland conflict and peace process. It has been argued that due to the conflict management strategies employed (perhaps necessarily) to reach the Good Friday Agreement the peace process was built upon "'constructive ambiguity'; the co-ordination of apparently irreconcilable statements and contradictory reading of developments directed toward difference (ethnically defined) public audiences" (Lundy & McGovern 2007, 13). This 'constructive ambiguity' fed distrust that had long had its roots in longer-term divisions, separations, and the consequences of the conflict itself (Lundy & McGovern 2007, 21). What is important to note here is that the Good Friday Agreement did little to provide trust between the conflict parties, possibly contributing to distrust in the language of politics itself. This has serious implications for any attempt at a truth-recovery process as a lack of trust makes parties unwilling to participate in, and sometimes even engage in dialogue about, such a process.

<u>Inter-Community</u>

The most vocalized distrust is that of the "other" community. There is a serious amount of distrust in the unionist community over the possible hidden agenda and motives for republicans in a truth-recovery process. Calls for a truth-recovery process on the republican side have been met with claims from loyalists and unionists that such a process would be a republican "Trojan horse," "republican revisionism" or "republican propaganda" (Lundy & McGovern 2005, 61). Republicans are sometimes viewed as inherently deceitful or dishonest, especially by those who associate republicanism with terrorist activities. At the Meath Peace Group meeting a man associating himself with West Tyrone voice stood up and said, "I have never yet seen a terrorist who has told the truth." This comment followed the heels of a rhetorical question, "how can those who have ever taken a Republican oath be trusted to tell the truth?" posed by Lynch of West Tyrone Voice. To overcome this dilemma Lynch suggested that the "sincerity of republican activists should be tested to tell the whole truth first," before unionists or the government reveal any information. The question remaining, of course, is whether or not Lynch and others would believe republicans even if they were to fully disclose their information. After thirty years of conflict, with the deterioration of documents and deaths of individuals, one also has to wonder if the "whole truth" is an obtainable goal.

While no republicans or nationalists were as vocal about their inter-community distrust, it would be naïve to assume that distrust of unionism does not exist. The difference may only be that of prevalence and depth. There is also the possibility that one side, while eager to engage in truth-recovery, is afraid to step forward or disclose

information out of the fear that the other side will not cooperate. Mica Estrada-Hollenbeck at Harvard University employs the game theory or "prisoner's dilemma" schematic to ethnic conflict (Abu-Nimer, 70). The "worst case scenario" for any side is to cooperate when the other side competes, leaving the cooperating side exposed and insecure. Both sides, therefore, in assuming the worst about the others intentions chooses to compete rather than cooperate.

Intra-Community

Within loyalist communities the continued presence of paramilitaries and violence has generated great distrust of the 'self' in conjunction with fear of the 'other.' The ugly aspects of community life, as vocalized by Dr. Bryan in the above sections, are most clearly seen in loyalist distrust of fellow loyalists. Less cohesive than republican communities, the violent feuds between loyalist paramilitary groups have left many in those communities afraid that 're-opening old wounds' or 'unleashing a can of worms' would only deepen the community divisions. This fear is best articulated in the Epic document:

> If someone was to make a public statement about his or her past activities there will be no place to hide. Not only will that person face high risks in terms of personal safety, but his or her family will also be endangered. (Epic, 6)

Claims by loyalists that the conflict is not yet over, often assumed to be about inter-community conflict, are actually alluding to intra-loyalist violence. The threat was perceived by some as so strong that they were reluctant to even talk anonymously to researchers about the Ardoyne Commemoration Project as an example of truth-recovery. For these individuals even discussing the issue meant some would perceive them as 'engaging in the debate,' 'giving credence to the republican agenda,' and going 'another

step to far' (Lundy & McGovern 2005, 67). Considering the physical threat close to home, combined with the belief that loyalists have nothing to profit from a 'republican Trojan horse' process, it is hardly surprising that loyalists continuously ask "where is the benefit for loyalists?'

The State

Despite their suspicions of one another, republicans and loyalists have a shared distrust of the British state. While distrust of the state is a large part of the republican identity, recent reports of collusion and the state's resistance to disclosing information about these matters has led many republicans to believe the state will never participate in truth-recovery. Others fear that while the state may participate in a process, they would then attempt to use it to manage or control the truth:

> If a few years ago you were asking me the same questions you're asking me now, I would say "absolutely no way." No way would I support a truth commission because I would feel it would be used by the state to manage the truth. Now I still feel that could be a possibility, I mean the state has all the control here, they have the documents, they have the information that we want to gain access to. (Lundy interview)

A similar view was voiced at the Eolas residential, stating the participants were "mostly suspicious of the intentions of the British state" (Eolas, 12). Suspicions in republican communities were fueled by the British Inquiries Act of 2005, which gave Ministers the ability to control the appointment and dismissal of an inquiry panel; set the temporal and substantive terms of inquiry; control inquiry funding; and control access to evidence and dissemination of inquiry findings (or omission of evidence from a final report) (McEvoy, 45). The distrust created by this Act went so far as to encourage the Pat Finucane Centre to seek assistance from the US House of Representatives in overturning it (HR 740).

Unionists have also expressed distrust in the British government, usually in relation to a feeling of betrayal on part of the State, who loyalists claim they defended for 30 years. Many loyalists feel their loyalty has been unreciprocated, whereas republicans have benefited greatly in the post-Agreement years.

> And they've been let down. Now they died for their belief. Now if we ignore that fact, they died for nothing and all the stuff we went through for 30 years meant nothing. Basically we would have been safer going out ourselves and lifting the gun ourselves and killing on our own. (Frazer interview)

Some loyalists are also suspicious of what is viewed as Britain's "sudden interest" in truth-recovery. It is seen as a "public relations exercise without any real commitment, a convenient, pragmatic alternative to a costly series of tribunals, or as a way to avoid their own involvement in the conflict (Epic, 10). This distrust of state intentions could be highly problematic for a top down commission. Without faith in the government's willingness to allow for a fully independent commission it is likely that both distrustful republicans and loyalists will dismiss a final report as government influenced.

'Do Gooders'

While Kate Turner of HTR claims that there are no groups in Northern Ireland not talking with the sub group, this should not be misinterpreted as every group trusting or cooperating with HTR. Although it is difficult to gauge the extent of distrust or distaste for the organization (for the obvious reason that these people would be unlikely to attend the meetings sponsored by HTR), there were a few people who voiced this opinion. For them HTR is little more than a group of middle ground community workers out of touch with the victims or ordinary people in society. Sub group members were dismissed as 'do gooders' and not representative of society.

The Meath Peace Group invited Hazlett Lynch of West Tyrone Voice to respond

to HTR's public presentation of *Making Peace With The Past*. In his response he specifically referred to Kate Turner, project coordinator for the organization, as a 'do gooder.' He said that the "real agenda" of HTR was not reconciliation but forcing people to forget the past in order to give the perception that the conflict was solved. For Lynch this feeds into the "lucrative reconciliation business" that HTR is a part of. The fact that the report repeatedly states truth-recovery is neither about forgetting the past or forcing reconciliation mattered very little to Lynch. Again, the dichotomy between what individuals/groups say and their (hidden) intentions dominated the discussion. Willy Frazer of FAIR used the same phrase to describe HTR:

> Because, and I don't mean this as disrespect to Healing Through Remembering, there are a few victims there, but the majority is what we would just call 'do gooders'. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way but that's how we view it. And when I say 'do gooder' I mean people who want to be seen as coming up with a solution for Northern Ireland. The people who say 'well, you must forgive and forget, you know' (Frazer interview)

When asked why he chose to sit out of the debate rather than participate and represent the interests of his constituents, Frazer responded:

> I went to this Healing Through Remembering. And I've listened. I've gone a few times and I listened to them but whenever we started to put pressure to them they actually become aggressive towards what we were saying. So, you know, and this is what another person said to me, they don't want to hear what we have to say because it doesn't fit in with their agenda. (Frazer interview)

Lynch, while agreeing to talk with HTR at the Meath Peace Group, chooses not to participate in the general discussion about truth-recovery options because he views it as morally unacceptable. The report, he remarked at the meeting, is a "profound insult to the memories of our dead family members." Such a remark, if embraced by a wide portion of society, could have damaging repercussions for the public debate on truth-recovery. If it is true that there is "a moral impetus for creativity in considering the practical and political implications of public hearings" in order to best serve victims and society as a

whole (McEvoy, 25), then the unsuppressed brainstorming of options in public debate is necessary. If a report that attempts to facilitate precisely that, a safe discussion around options for Northern Ireland, is viewed as "a profound insult" then all open and creative discussion risks being silenced.

<u>"Working Trust"</u>

It may be years, perhaps decades, down the road before inter- and intra-community trust is abundant in Northern Ireland. Expecting a dramatic increase in trust within a short time span is highly unrealistic. This is precisely why the building of both peace and reconciliation is a long process. To move forward with a truth-recovery process for Northern Ireland, or to at least move forward to a more inclusive debate about the options, a "working trust" rather than abundant trust is needed. Working trust is defined as "a trust sufficient to allow them [the parties] to proceed with the coalition work of joint analysis, interactive problem solving, and planning implementation" (Abu-Nimer, 69). This trust is often established for highly pragmatic or strategic reasons rather than sentimental ones.

While even this level of trust is difficult to achieve in ethnic conflicts, it has occurred at many points during the Northern Ireland peace process. The continuation of ceasefires and the new power-sharing agreement may add to the feeling of a "working trust" in the area. As for the truth-recovery discussion, HTR uses itself as an example of "working trust." At every meeting attended during this research at least one subgroup member referred to the mere existence of HTR, an organization full of diverse individuals, as evidence that working trust is achievable. Kate Turner explains that, if

nothing else, the public meetings have at least opened up the public's eyes to the possibility of ending sectarian divisions:

> particularly a few months ago when there was a feeling that we weren't going to get anywhere politically, you know, sometimes it felt like part of what we were doing here was just about making people feel better [laughing] so they can see that this is actually possible, you know? (Turner interview)

While the HTR subgroup has made significant strides in building trust and a shared understanding of vocabulary since its inception two years ago, the public meetings held by HTR do not achieve this. People will not overcome the two main impediments to productive dialogue in a two-hour meeting at the town hall. Herein lies the difficulty with the format of HTR's public meetings. Although the aim of the meetings is to "change the debate" on truth-recovery, this has little chance of occurring unless a working trust is established amongst the participants first.

Interestingly, if enough working trust can be secured to move forward with a largely consensual truth-recovery process for Northern Ireland, the process may in return build even more trust amongst the major players. When asked about the importance of trust in such a process, Dr Bryan responded:

> There are relationships… in some cases it has been negative… but there are relationships building here, alright. So trust is at the very core of it and if there is anything good to come out of these things it may not be truth, you might be right. If this is what you're getting at, it may be more trust than truth. It may be the fact that people feel that relationships have been built out it. That people are trying to do their best, that people are making an effort, that there is a degree of honesty coming out. And maybe the outcome that is more interesting is trust than truth. You know, now, because in a way I always feel that when a story is realized about the state doing something, it has two effects on you: one is that I can't believe the state did that, that's terrible. On the other hand that the very fact that is comes out and reveals itself is quite a good process. You sort of think "well actually, it has rectified itself, it has righted itself. (Bryan interview)

Fear, however, makes it extremely difficult for people to take chances with a process like truth-recovery. Many people seem caught in the "worst case scenario" mentality and are less likely to discuss the possible benefits of truth-recovery in public meetings. Some of those fears are talked about in the following section.

Fear of the Unknown: Focusing on the "Worst Case Scenario"

"The difficulty in some sort of process like that is that you don't always know what the costs are because you don't know what the truth is... you don't know what will be revealed, and therefore it's very difficult to predict where it might leave you in the end of it. As I said on the whole I think it's probably a very good thing but on the whole it's a very dangerous game." – Dominic Bryan

The feeling of nervousness, uncertainty, and discomfort in many of the public meetings was palpable. While the subgroup often felt comfortable making jokes with one another or about the models (giving them nicknames like the "all singing, all dancing, Truth Commission), audience members were far less willing to openly embrace the material. The majority of conversations revolved around the downsides of truth-recovery than its strengths.

Fear of Exacerbating the Conflict

The loyalist fear that truth-recovery could contribute to community tensions was already discussed in the section on intra-community trust. However, it is a key dilemma in engaging the loyalist side in the debate and should be emphasized that this is a very real fear for individuals living in those communities. Some loyalists fear that revisiting the past would only expose youth to the ugly truth of the Troubles and "runs the risk of indoctrinating a more "militant" younger generation with hatred and providing justification for continuing conflict" (Epic, 6). It has also been acknowledged that 'naming names' in any process could have a "considerable social and political effect, perhaps exacerbating divisions and polarization" (McEvoy, 17). In Guatemala, truth-recovery processes did become physically dangerous for participants (McEvoy, 35). Much of this depends on exactly what "truths" are unearthed during the process, giving

credence to the above quote by Dominic Bryan. Because people are unsure what may be discovered in a truth-recovery process, they are unsure of what the consequences of that process would be.

Fear of a Failed Attempt

Given the level of distrust already in Northern Ireland, an unsuccessful attempt at truth-recovery could leave many people disenchanted with post-conflict society building all together. The "manifest inadequacies" of the original Widgery Tribunal for Bloody Sunday are "a textbook example of how a discredited truth-recovery mechanism which fails to command the confidence of those most affected by the events may not only fail to contribute to the healing of those victims affected but may actually exacerbate their hurt" (McEvoy, 43). While there is the tension mentioned towards the beginning of the paper about the healing of individuals versus the healing of society, a discredited truth-recovery process would fail to heal both.

Fear of Losing or Challenging Self - Identity

For loyalists, a truth-recovery process that challenges the state is particularly problematic because it is viewed as a direct challenge to self-identity. As one loyalist says, "we cannot rock the boat because it is our boat." For both communities, there is a fear that 'truth' and 'justice' will challenge important historical narratives that form the bedrock of each communities' identity. Within loyalism this is the belief that "republican culpability for 'terrorism' explains all" while for republicans it is the belief that

responsibility was in the hands of the discriminatory, colonial state. (Lundy & McGovern 2007, 31)

Some victim groups also fear that they will lose their status of victimhood if responsibility for the conflict moves beyond the "terrorism." For Lynch a truth-recovery process is "about air brushing terrorists out of the picture" and "making people responsible for their own murders."

While not everyone shares these fears, the people who voice them tend to be some of the louder voices in the crowd. Before moving forward to discuss the practical issues surrounding truth-recovery options, these fears must be addressed and acknowledged. Creating discussion around these fears, rather than letting them prevent open discussion, may lead to more inclusive community discussions and ultimately more productive ones.

The Future Of The Debate

"We're not the same as South Africa, we're not the same as Guatemala or Sierra Leone. We are the North of Ireland. I think that we need to start putting our stamp in shaping a process that suits us." – Dr. Patricia Lundy

Where does the debate go from here? While there are clearly those who have chosen to not participate in the discussion on truth-recovery and remain adamantly opposed to the debate, exploration of truth-recovery options is occurring nonetheless. For some individuals, it is the moment they have long been waiting for. An 88 year old man shakily stood up in the Meath Peace Group audience and, while he was fearful because the conflict was still close to him ("the gun is still to me head"), he declared the discussion on truth-recovery was "the best thing that has ever happened." As research on

attitudes towards truth-recovery support, the majority of individuals reside in the middle of these two camps. People are favorable of the idea of truth-recovery but largely hesitant, possibly confused, and distrustful.

At the time of this writing, the HTR subgroup is conducting its last scheduled public consultation. At this critical juncture it will decide how to proceed. When it meets again it is possible that the members will find legitimacy in their work and take a mandate from their public consultations to move forward with a truth-recovery process. This could mean formally proposing a truth commission to the British and Irish governments or developing plans for a series of community-based processes. Most likely plans for a truth recovery process would take shape in one of two ways. The first option is that a bottom up process (or several community-based processes) will occur parallel to a top down process. This would recognize that each approach delivers a different "truth" outcome; bottom up processes deliver micro truths while a top down approach tackles the macro truth. This model has been feasible in other countries:

> In both Guatemala and Rwanda the emergence of community-based structures (focused at least in part upon truth recovery) occurred in a context where there were similar questions of either political will or capacity for traditional "top- down" structures to deliver. Both, however, have operated more or less in tandem with such top-down processes. (McEvoy, 36)

Another option is to have a top down approach that is significantly shaped by communities, combining the ownership of a local process with the powers of a commission. This would essentially give a bottom up aspect to a top down approach:

> I would say what really, perhaps, is the way forward is to try and shape or influence a truth commission so that is have a much more bottom up approach to it. That it involves communities much more in terms of the shaping of it, its   mandate, how it's carried out. I mean, why can't you involve NGOs in the collecting of statements and organizing certain aspects of a truth commission. (Lundy interview)

Both models would require creative thinking that breaks away from the standard models used in the HTR meetings.

If the subgroup goes forward with either developing new models for public discussion or proposing a model for implementation, it is important that the subgroup continues their community-relations work. If HTR is successful in thoroughly engaging the public at all stages of the development process, Northern Ireland could become an unprecedented case in conflict transformation. Brandon Hamber, consultant for HTR and an international conflict transformation expert, said at the launch of *Making Peace With The Past:*

> The process of developing this report has been truly unique. Nowhere else in the world has civil society, never mind a group as diverse as this, taken such a substantial lead in developing options on issues of truth recovery and transitional justice for their specific context.

The following is a list of suggestions for HTR on how to continue to continue to engage the public in this development process:

- Hold longer public events to give interested individuals a chance to more thoroughly discuss the issues of truth-recovery. During this time individuals can begin to develop a shared language and working trust of one another. These events could be similar to the Eolas or Epic residentials, or take place as a retreat at Corrymeela.

- Disperse HTR publications (whenever possible) several days before a public consultation meeting occurs. When the Lisburn audience was asked for their thoughts on the five options, a woman replied, "well, I can't really say because I haven't read through the report yet." The section on shared terminology may also make community discussions more productive.

- Find creative ways to educate the public about truth-recovery options and HTR's work. As Dr. Lundy asked, " would you leave your house on a Wed or Fri at 7:00 to go down to the town hall for a meeting on truth recovery?" Creating

information tables or discussion times at larger events where people are already a captive audience may work.

- Keep in mind that Northern Ireland is no longer a binary-society but has a growing immigrant population. An Indian student at Queens University asked what her role in a truth-recovery process could be. This question should be further explored by the subgroup.

The importance of engaging as many individuals as possible during the development stages of a truth-recovery process cannot be stressed enough. If Dr. Bryan is correct in saying that, "processes clearly have costs… to sit still and say "these are real difficult to do, we'll do nothing" is also a decision that carries costs," a successful truth-recovery process will seek the maximum political and public consensus. Not everyone will agree with the process that emerges, but at least through a thorough public debate and information campaign individuals will have realistic expectations about the costs and benefits.

Section Four – Conclusion

The truth-recovery debate in Northern Ireland is a rather amorphous, confusing discussion. At times it is difficult to understand exactly how one individual defines 'justice,' 'truth,' or feels about a formal process, let alone gauge broader societal opinion. What can be concluded is that while many people seem eager to revisit the past, there is much skepticism about the ability of a process to deliver the truth. People are also torn between the two main bottom up and top down approaches, unsure whether individual healing or societal healing should be the focus.

There is also a significant segment of the population not partaking in this discussion. Some choose not to participate out of fear and distrust. Others, often dubbed "apathetic," view themselves as uninvolved in the conflict or excluded from the discussion because of age or ethnicity. If HTR's goal is to hold inclusive grassroots discussions on designing a truth-recovery process, then these individuals pose a problem for the organization.

The process of researching such a sensitive, emotive topic was an eye-opening experience. I started this project as an advocate for truth commissions. I currently stand unsure of my opinion, similar to many individuals in Northern Ireland. There are costs and benefits to all of these processes, but most importantly there are individuals who feel like their lives are completely invested in truth and justice issues. Some have spent decades seeking the truth about their loved one's murder. Others have spent just as long seeking prosecution. Still, others fear that their lives will end if the truths are revealed. I would be oversimplifying my experience to say that these discussions have humbled me. I encourage interested individuals to look at the interviews included in the Appendix. As

said in my methodology, people speak best for themselves. While I attempted to do justice to the excerpts used through the body of this paper, they were exactly that: excerpts. There is great context to these quotes and the interviews are well worth a full read.

I remain deeply impressed with Healing Through Remembering as an organization, precisely for the fact that it attempts to be as humane as possible in its work. There were moments during my internship where I considered changing my project topic to an examination of the values imbedded in the everyday office work at HTR. Regardless of people's opinions on truth-recovery or the execution of HTR's projects, the staff has attempted to build an organization that is aware and responsive to the needs of the public.

I came to Northern Ireland seeking first hand experience in conflict transformation. I have now had that exposure, as limited as it may have been. This project has fed my interest in peace and reconciliation studies and I intend to pursue these studies further. In the meantime I will keep my eye on the truth-recovery debate in Northern Ireland. It promises to be an interesting one.

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