

RECONCILIATION AS A DIRTY WORD: CONFLICT, COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy
and Kirsten McConnachie

*"I am not really interested in reconciliation. It is a term that has been so used and abused; it's a dirty word as far as I am concerned."*¹

The comment above emerged in fieldwork undertaken by one of the authors on the role of ex-combatants in the peace process in Northern Ireland. At first glance, it appeared somewhat paradoxical. The individual concerned, a former Irish Republican Army (IRA) activist, has been involved in reconciliation work for almost ten years: finding alternatives to violent punishments against anti-social offenders and reconciling these individuals with their victims and communities as well as cross community work with Loyalist activists.² Despite this involvement in challenging and practical aspects of reconciliation, this man and many of his Republican and Loyalist counterparts are deeply suspicious of the term. This paper explores that disconnect.

We are conscious of the rich academic literature on the subject.³ While that literature informs our analysis, we focus in particular on the context-specific historical meaning of the term reconciliation in Northern Ireland. We are especially interested in the ways in which that historical meaning has implications for how we educate our children about reconciliation. As is detailed below, the educational context is arguably the key site in Northern Ireland where the local variant of reconciliation has been a consistent feature for almost three decades. We will argue below that, despite that prominence, this approach has largely failed to deliver on its promises.

Pointing to the failure of reconciliation in Northern Ireland may appear somewhat counterintuitive. Following a near thirty-year conflict, the successful negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has seen the Irish peace process widely lauded as an example of successful reconciliation between previously sworn enemies.⁴ Of course, the achievement of sustained devolution of political power to the local assembly has subsequently proved elusive.⁵ That said, the fact that the IRA has decommissioned its weapons and formally "gone out of business," that Loyalist

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

paramilitaries appear to be in serious dialogue to undertake a similar process and that the numbers of British troops deployed has been massively reduced and the focus of the police redirected largely to “ordinary decent crime” means that levels of political violence have dramatically reduced. Much of that has arguably been achieved without recourse to the predominant notion of reconciliation in the jurisdiction.

Therefore, this paper examines the notion of reconciliation in a context where many of those who have arguably done some of the heaviest lifting in reconciliation work on the ground have serious misgivings about the term; where the primary site in which it has been systemically applied (the education system) has yet to provide substantial evidence of success; and where a successful peace process has been achieved, which effectively sidelined a significant reconciliation industry.

We contend that this is due largely to the historical framing of reconciliation in Northern Ireland as “community relations.” We argue that such a framing has seen the development of a complex but powerful hegemonic understanding of the notion of reconciliation as being synonymous with better community relations between the two principal religious blocs—Catholics and Protestants. Obviously, few in Northern Ireland would contest that improving relations between Catholics and Protestants is self-evidently a good thing. However, we will argue that the outworking of this particular understanding of reconciliation explains its contested nature. We examine various elements of this hegemony, which correspond broadly and with some overlap to actual periods of the Northern Ireland conflict, including “Emergence, Adoption and State Indifference 1969-1974,” “Consolidation and Societal Believerism 1974-1985,” “Maturation and Academic Complicity 1981-1994” and “Decline and Reinvention 1994-2006.” The paper concludes by suggesting an alternative framework to the community relations paradigm that should inform contemporary attempts to better educate our young people about reconciliation and what it means to be a citizen in a transforming polity. Before exploring these paradigms, it might be useful to offer a very brief and inevitably simplified overview of the key elements to the conflict, which inform the subsequent discussion.

BACKGROUND TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT

The Northern Ireland conflict saw over 3,700 people killed and tens of thousands of people injured over almost three decades of political violence. In a small population of just over 1.6 million people, huge numbers of working class families and communities in particular were directly affected by violence.⁶ Political violence came from three broad sources—Republican groupings (the best known of which is the Irish Republican Army), Loyalist groupings (the best known of which are the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force) and various state agencies including the British army and the local police formerly known as the Royal Ulster Constabulary.⁷ The non-state actors were responsible for almost 90 percent of

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

all fatalities. As well as these more militant versions of differing ideologies, each of the three broad constituencies is represented by various political parties drawn primarily from the different political/religious blocs as well as a range of either Conservative or Labour-led British governments over the thirty years of violence. It was these different political parties (including the political wings of both militant Republicanism and Loyalism), which together with a number of other smaller parties and the British and Irish governments that completed the tortuous negotiations which led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.⁸

A plethora of opposing perspectives have been offered on the nature of the conflict. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary sum up these various explanations by grouping them into either exogenous or endogenous variants. Exogenous explanations variously focus on the role of the British government, the Irish government, or Marxist interpretations of the role of capitalism in instigating and sustaining the conflict. The much more common endogenous explanations tend to emphasize the nature of internal communal division, primarily between the Catholic and Protestant communities.⁹ This "internal-conflict interpretation," which emerged in the early 1970s, is widely discussed in the relevant literature produced by academics, government policy, and civil society.¹⁰ It is an approach which views the problems of Northern Ireland as lying largely within the existence of these two separate communities with differing religious and cultural identities and competing national aspirations.¹¹ The "two-traditions," or perhaps more pejoratively "two-tribes," paradigm was, arguably until the current peace process, the dominant construct for not only framing an analysis of the *nature* of the conflict for much of its history, but also of what was required to achieve its *resolution* through *reconciliation* between those warring traditions.¹²

Few would contest that improving relations between Catholics and Protestants is a good thing.

The process through which this framework came to dominate much of the public discourses concerning both the conflict and notions of reconciliation in Northern Ireland is discussed at length below. Before examining the detail of that process, we wish to enter one important caveat. It has been argued persuasively elsewhere that, security policy aside, the actions of successive British governments towards Northern Ireland has been characterized by the absence of a coherent overarching conflict management strategy.¹³ From such a perspective, attributing the successful dominance of the community relations notion of reconciliation solely to the capacity of the British state to deny its culpability in the conflict is both simplistic and instrumentalist.¹⁴ Rather, we would argue that it is a classic case study of the emergence, sustenance and reshaping of a hegemonic understanding of the causes of political violence and what was required to resolve that violence.¹⁵ We will contend

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

that the production of this hegemonic understanding has seen the views of the most powerful actor in the conflict (the British state) replicated, reproduced or repackaged in a complex dialectic involving successive British governments, Unionist politicians, senior civil servants, as well academic and influential commentators in civil society. While this hegemony has certainly not gone unchallenged, and indeed we would argue that the Good Friday Agreement itself can be viewed as a decisive break with the paradigm, it has shown a remarkable resilience despite its lack of analytical rigor or evident utility as a basis for peacemaking praxis.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AS RECONCILIATION

The term “community relations” appeared in the early 1960s in Britain in the context of addressing issues of racial disharmony, with an aim to integrate minority groups swiftly into the wider community.¹⁶ As is detailed below, it was subsequently incorporated into the language of government policy at different junctures in Northern Ireland and while it is difficult to locate a precise definition,¹⁷ the concept at its inception broadly referred to strategies which could be employed to address both the conflict and the divided nature of this society, with poor community relations defined in terms of sectarianism, prejudice, hostility and segregation.¹⁸ More recently the term has been associated with the conjoined concepts of equity, diversity and interdependence.¹⁹ Regardless of the guises the term community relations has adopted over the last four decades, it has always remained firmly ensconced within the lexicon of reconciliation to the extent that the two are virtually synonymous in many quarters in Northern Ireland.²⁰

EMERGENCE, ADOPTION AND STATE INDIFFERENCE, 1969 TO 1974

The first variant of the community relations paradigm can be traced to the increased involvement of the British government in the affairs of Northern Ireland from the late 1960s onwards. Following the partition of Ireland in 1921 and the creation of the Northern Ireland state—famously described by one of its former Prime Ministers as “a protestant parliament for a protestant people”²¹—a constitutional practice emerged wherein the affairs of Northern Ireland were by and large not discussed at Westminster.²² With little effective redress in London, permanently excluded from political power in Northern Ireland and subject to widespread discrimination in jobs, housing and other aspects of civic life, much of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland historically looked South towards reunification as their deliverance.²³ In 1968, drawing upon the American experience in particular, Catholic/Nationalist frustration at their systemic discrimination and exclusion from the Unionist dominated Northern Irish state began to express itself through massive civil rights demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience.²⁴

Predictably, these demonstrations provoked a hostile reaction from sections of

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

the police and the Protestant community.²⁵ A severe security clampdown and the use of the police to break up demonstrations worsened already precarious relations between the Catholic community and the Protestant dominated policing structures.²⁶ In August 1969, as the violence and rioting escalated, and the police had obviously lost control of the security situation, the British Army was dispatched by London to play a peacekeeping role.²⁷ However, a range of factors including the army's colonial training, the symbolic presence of British troops on Irish soil and a view among some Republicans that Unionist intransigence would inevitably require a resort to armed violence, saw a resurgence of the IRA as they began to attack troops, police and civilian targets.²⁸ In 1972, the Unionist-dominated devolved Northern Ireland government was suspended and direct rule imposed from London.²⁹ With Loyalist groups also engaged in attacks against Catholic civilians, Republicans and occasional targets in the Irish Republic, the broad contours of the conflict that were to dominate for the next quarter century were clear.

Much of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland historically looked South towards reunification as their deliverance.

From the early days of the conflict, the British government and more liberal elements of the Unionist political establishment appeared at least to understand the need to secure Catholic allegiance to the Northern Ireland state.³⁰ Measures were put in place to "create a place for Irish culture within a reformed Northern Ireland in which the two communities were reconciled."³¹ From the outset, it is clear that the impetus behind such measures was at least in part an attempt to secure the loyalty of moderate Catholic/Nationalist opinion and thus marginalize support for the IRA and other extreme forms of Republicanism.³² Two acts of parliament were passed in quick succession in an effort to address the public manifestations of communal division, one of which established a Community Relations Commission in 1969 alongside a Ministry to oversee its work within the Unionist government of the time.³³ In practice, the work of the Commission involved support (financial and otherwise) for cross-community contact initiatives alongside community development strategies, intended to raise the self-confidence of the two main communities with a view to encouraging them into increased contact.³⁴

What is interesting for current purposes is the fact that while the community relations aspects of the 1969 liberal unionist manifesto were subsequently enacted, other commitments on human rights and equality were not. For example, Unionist Prime Minister Terence O'Neill in the same 1969 document acknowledged "the right of all citizens to equal terms under the law, to full equality in the enjoyment of health, education and other social benefits and to the protection of authority against every kind of injustice." The Fair Employment Act, which was the first meaningful

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

effort to outlaw discrimination on the basis of religion was not introduced until 1976, and then under a Direct Rule British administration.³⁵ Indeed, Unionist politicians (until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement itself) had quite a consistent record of opposition to much of the significant human rights or equality reform introduced for almost a quarter of a century.³⁶ From its inception, particularly to the more progressive elements of Unionism, community relations was arguably always a softer and more palatable alternative to rights discourse with its inevitable critique of the state.

At a political level, the British government invested considerable efforts in establishing a devolved power-sharing executive wherein the main constitutional political parties of the time would agree to share power in the government of Northern Ireland.³⁷ This short-lived initiative, which also included for the first time a consultative role for the government of the Republic of Ireland in the affairs of the North,³⁸ collapsed after only five months following sustained pressure from Unionist and Loyalist opponents led by Ian Paisley.³⁹ What is perhaps most interesting for this paper is that the tangible evidence of a reconciliation strategy through community relations was abandoned, ironically almost as soon as the power-sharing executive was established. In April 1974, Ivan Cooper, then Minister for Community Relations within the power-sharing executive, announced that the Community Relations Commission, which was to oversee much of the real work of reconciliation, was to be dissolved.⁴⁰ This move raised little apparent objections from the British government. At an official level it was reasoned that the existence of a power-sharing executive obviated the need for such a commission. However, it has been argued cogently elsewhere that the decision was also informed by concern within the Ministry of Community Relations surrounding the community development aspect of the Commission's work.⁴¹ As Gallagher suggests:

It seems clear that politicians were suspicious of the community development strategy being promoted by the Community Relations Commission not least because a strengthened voluntary sector could provide an alternative basis for community leadership.⁴²

One month later the power-sharing executive collapsed, direct rule by Britain was reestablished and the Commission and Ministry for Community Relations were no longer in existence. Responsibility for community relations policy was then transferred to the Department of Education who were charged with formulating and sponsoring policies for the improvement of community relations in Northern Ireland and subsequently local district councils were tasked with similarly supporting community development initiatives including groups taking a community relations

focus.⁴³ In reality, this dispersion of the responsibility for developing a community relations strategy resulted in a decrease in any government led activity in relation to promoting reconciliation.⁴⁴ As such, the imposition of direct rule brought to an end the ascendancy of the community relations paradigm, which subsequently lay dormant for over a decade.⁴⁵

A number of themes emerge from this period that continued to permeate the ensuing construction of the community relations paradigm. First, the origins of an expressed commitment to reconciliation came from the British government and the progressive elements of the Unionist political establishment. Its origins lay in the view that such measures were necessary to enlist Catholic allegiance to a reformed state and thus undercut support for more militant Republicanism who viewed the Northern state as irreformable. Second, while such advocates for reconciliation within government and elsewhere were able to countenance improved community relations as a means to reconciliation, there was certainly much less enthusiasm (particularly from political Unionism) for more substantive equality or human rights provisions. Third, as Gallagher has argued, the formulation of reconciliation through community relations appeared from its inception to include a suspicion of local grass roots organizations and their ability to provide leadership in ways which might not necessarily be easily dominated by politicians or government officials. Fourth, it appears that once the British government was left in the position of directly managing the conflict, their interest in community relations as reconciliation waned. As such, it could be suggested that, from the outset, the community relations paradigm provided a useful fallback position in the absence of a specific conflict management strategy. Finally, at its genesis, the paradigm was coupled to an arguably unrealistic expectation that it could address the issue of societal division between the two main communities and to an uncritical view of the axiomatic legitimacy of the state.

CONSOLIDATION AND SOCIETAL “BELIEVERISM,” 1974 TO 1981

Following the collapse of the power-sharing executive all of the protagonists to the Northern Ireland conflict appeared to settle down to the reality that each was facing a “long war.”⁴⁶ While the conflict continued to be presented by successive governments as an internal problem benignly refereed by the British state,⁴⁷ this period saw both Labour and Conservative administrations pursue a more militaristic solution to the Northern Ireland problem.⁴⁸ As Merlyn Rees, former Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland reflected, “security policy came top of the agenda.”⁴⁹ A series of strategies initiated by Labour were continued by Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government, which came to power in 1979. Summarizing for the sake of brevity, Criminalisation, Normalisation and Ulsterisation were policies which sought respectively to deny the political nature of paramilitary activity and to treat it as criminal; to create a new consensus around social problems and the pro-

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

gression towards a more normal society; and to replace British soldiers with the police and locally recruited regiment of the Ulster Defence Regiment to handle the security situation.⁵⁰ A key element of the normalization policy necessitated a much gentler approach to matters of the economy in Northern Ireland. Against a backdrop of drastic cuts in such expenditure in Britain, the Thatcher administration continued the previous Labour policy of generous socioeconomic provision in Northern Ireland. However, as Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey note, this policy was based “not merely on the need to make up for the backlog of neglect under Unionist administrations but also in the belief that deprivation and despair are important recruiting factors for paramilitaries.”⁵¹

Throughout this period there was a marked decrease in the use of the language of reconciliation in government policy. Neither Labour nor Conservative administrations appeared to have any developed, systemic or explicit policy on community relations. In the absence of any real governmental commitment during this period what has been described as “the strongest thread in the continuity of community relations work” could be found in the efforts of inter-church and inter-community reconciliation groups.⁵² The Peace People, whose high profile peace rallies in 1976 ultimately resulted in two of its founders being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, provided the most public representation of this type of endeavor. Central to the philosophy of this organization was a community-based approach to reconciliation that would “ensure that non-violent people take and maintain a grip on life within their own areas, slowly but surely, so that the sources of violence are steadily eradicated.”⁵³ In order to achieve this, they advocated a strategy for peace based on individual commitment to works of peaceful community development, small local units or cells holding social evenings and increased mobility between such groups. The stated objective was that:

The process of helping the Northern Irish people to get to know each other which began with the mass rallies [would] continue in this way, week in week out, until the summer [of 1977], by which time it [would] almost be a way of life.⁵⁴

While the simplicity of the message captured the imagination of the general public, a language infused with terms such as courage, dedication and genuine love and the assertion that they were the only hope left in the face of failed conventional political, constitutional and military policies, betrayed an implicit conviction that an end to the conflict could only be achieved through individual acts of reconciliation.⁵⁵ Despite their vehement protests to the contrary, Republicans persistently accused the Peace People of a much more vocal opposition to paramilitary violence (and IRA violence in particular) than to the violence of the state.⁵⁶ Moreover, the certainty of the language adopted by this movement, and other similar organizations of the time, possessed something of an evangelical fervor, arguably creating condi-

tions where any overt assertion of a political identity other than that of the “middle ground” could be deemed counterproductive to peace and reconciliation. Their occasional grandiose claims about their impact, strategy to supplant “normal party politics,” political naïveté, and their internal splits all ultimately meant that the movement “trailed off into posthumous fame and strategic futility.”⁵⁷

In some senses, such a fate was arguably inevitable in a context where none of the military actors appeared in any sense “ripe” for genuine engagement in conflict transformation.⁵⁸ The huge public demonstrations against violence appeared to have little effect on the actions of the paramilitaries or the state security forces. The rallies also had little apparent impact in encouraging the government towards a more energetic community relations policy. The riots and other public demonstrations of societal division had, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, stirred government commitment towards the development of a community relations policy. Mass displays of public unity in 1976 and 1977 towards an admittedly vague notion of reconciliation appear to have been viewed primarily in government circles as a mechanism for embarrassing the paramilitaries and did little to dent government emphasis on a security resolution of the conflict.⁵⁹

The absence of community relations in government policy during this period reveals as much about the nature of the paradigm and its construction as does its presence in the preceding phase. First, it serves to underline the case that when specific policy agendas were being pursued by government, the community relations paradigm was disregarded, despite huge public support for initiatives such as the peace rallies. Second, token nods from government towards the work of inter-church and inter-community groups resonated more with expressed policy to isolate extremists from their own communities than with a specific commitment to reconciliation. Third, a new dimension was added to the construction of the paradigm: its consolidation within the belief system of many members of civil society within Northern Ireland. Images of mass mobilization for peace coupled with international recognition endorsed the faith of those engaged in community relations activities and their conviction that reconciliation could only be achieved through the building of a middle ground divorced from the politics of the extreme. As such when the government once more adopted the paradigm as a fall back position in the late 1980s a reservoir of believerism in significant sections of society remained.

MATURATION AND ACADEMIC COMPLICITY, 1981 TO 1994

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, politics in Northern Ireland was largely dominated by events in the prisons, in particular the dirty protests and hunger strikes by Republican prisoners in asserting their status as political prisoners.⁶⁰ Following the election of hunger strike leader Bobby Sands from his cell, Republicanism developed a dual strategy of armed and political struggle and the IRA's political wing Sinn Féin

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

emerged as a force. The turmoil created by these and related events has been credited with the gradual recognition in government circles that some focus on reconciliation work could not be divorced from the needs of security. As the former Conservative Secretary of State, Jim Prior, suggests:

It was not simply that I wanted in the aftermath of the hunger strike to focus the political debate on how to build long term bridges between the two communities. There was also a short term security imperative. Dealing with terrorists depends on co-operation from the community and by late 1981 the Nationalist people were in no mood to co-operate. There was a flood of support for more extreme attitudes. I had to win back the support for moderation.⁶¹

Throughout the 1980s, the spikes in government interest in the community relations paradigm can be linked with public manifestations of societal division. For example, the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, which afforded the Irish government a consultative role in the affairs of the North, produced a fierce Unionist backlash with street demonstrations, riots, strikes and resulting sectarian attacks.⁶² Ongoing terrorist atrocities such as the IRA's Enniskillen Remembrance Day bomb that killed eleven civilians ensured that Northern Ireland continued to present on the international stage as a deeply divided community. Lengthy internal discussions in government eventually led to a re-adoption of the language of community relations in policy and in legislation and to the reestablishment of a tangible community relations infrastructure. The visible manifestations of the government's newfound commitment to community relations began in 1987 with the establishing of a Central Community Relations Unit within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Subsequently, this established the Community Relations Council in 1990, an independent body tasked with promoting better community relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and, equally, to promote recognition of cultural diversity.⁶³ By 1992, explicit references were once again being made to community relations in policy and in legislation using a language immersed in the need to encourage contact between the two main communities, promote tolerance and pursue equality of opportunity.⁶⁴

Several political factors are routinely attributed with having provided this sea change in government policy, which "saw the return of community relations as a priority issue for policy-makers."⁶⁵ First, as evidenced by the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement itself, it is argued persuasively that much of British government policy was driven by the need to respond to the electoral rise of Sinn Féin through the promotion of more moderate expressions of nationalism.⁶⁶ Second, that one of the influences of the Dublin government through the Anglo-Irish framework was to encourage a greater interest in improving reconciliation between the two communities.⁶⁷ Third, that the government was also under considerable pressure internationally to

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

respond to allegations of continued discrimination against Catholics, particularly in the United States where the MacBride Campaign to insist on fair employment guarantees from American companies who were investing in Northern Ireland was a source of considerable political embarrassment.⁶⁸ As noted above, historically greater emphasis on community relations has been the preferred option of both Unionist and British governments under pressure to introduce substantive equality reform.⁶⁹

Aside from these political factors, an emerging academic discourse during the 1980s provided a much-needed theoretical basis for the construction of the community relations paradigm. While several alternative theoretical perspectives have emerged and been variously utilized by supporters of the community relations paradigm, early formulations were heavily influenced by ideas borrowed from social psychology, in particular social identity

theory which attempts to understand the psychological basis of inter-group conflict and discrimination.⁷⁰ Put simply, this theory suggests that individuals categorize their social world in order to reduce the complexity of their environment. This

in turn leads to an identification or association with “in-groups,” within which similarities are stressed, and conversely an accentuation of the differences between these groups and other “out-groups,” to which they do not belong. In order to achieve a positive self-identity, individuals therefore have to ensure that their in-group is favorably compared with the out-group. The appeal of this theory to advocates of the community relations paradigm in Northern Ireland is obvious. It was unsurprising therefore, that this approach was commended for its potential contribution to a “better understanding of the conflict” and to providing “insights into improving methods to promote reconciliation and peace.”⁷¹

Notwithstanding the criticism of the theory’s application to Northern Ireland below, its rejection of the notion that terrorism was based on individual pathology and its appeal for recognition of other factors such as religion, history, demography, politics and economics undoubtedly contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the nature of the conflict.⁷² However, despite assisting the shift towards an acceptance of competing national aspirations as a reason for the conflict, this theoretical perspective offered little to challenge its representation as an internecine dispute. Rather it confirmed the primacy of the internal conflict model. As we have suggested above, in its crudest application, it left the community relations paradigm open to the following criticism:

It emphasized “two traditions” in an apparently faultless symmetry which ignores the power structures which emerged historically in Ireland and are in existence currently. History, colonialism, inequality, sectarian-

The spikes in government interest in the community relations paradigm can be linked with public manifestations of societal division.

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

ism are reduced to relatively simplistic explanations which rest on social psychology, post-modernist discourse and wishful thinking.⁷³

DECLINE AND REINVENTION, 1994 TO 2006

The complex dynamics which led to the IRA and Loyalist ceasefires in 1994 and the conclusion of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 are well beyond the scope of this paper.⁷⁴ Certainly the agreement was symbolic of varying degrees of commendable political leadership by those who signed it as well as a technically brilliant feat of political science and constitutional lawmaking.⁷⁵ It has been famously described by the former Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon as “Sunningdale for slow learners.”⁷⁶ This reference was to the failed 1973 to 1974 power-sharing agreement discussed above which contained a number of features similar to the 1998 Agreement including a power-sharing executive, limited cross-border cooperation and the establishment of considerable human rights and non-discrimination protections. However, such a description of the Good Friday Accord does not do justice to its complexity for a number of reasons.

First, the agreement also included mechanisms for the release of politically-motivated prisoners within two years, substantial reform of the police and criminal justice system, a process for demilitarization and the normalization of security and the parallel decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. The nature of its provisions, as well as its complex political and constitutional architecture, was such that the agreement also contained the template for a much more ambitious project of genuine and comprehensive conflict transformation.⁷⁷ As has been argued elsewhere, the amalgam of these features may be viewed as a tacit acknowledgement by the state (and most of the signatories) of the political character of the conflict and of state’s role as a protagonist in that conflict.⁷⁸ Such an acknowledgement was a world away from the outlook of those who framed the Sunningdale Accord.⁷⁹

Second, as was outlined above, the Sunningdale process reflected a policy mindset that sought to reestablish normal constitutional politics in Northern Ireland, build the center ground and politically marginalize, and then contain, the paramilitaries via an effective security policy. One of the principal features of the Good Friday Agreement, however, was the clear desire of its architects to bring the bulk of extremist opinion inside the process. Admittedly, this was an endeavor facilitated in 1998 by the presence of organized political parties representative of Republicanism and Loyalism—respectively Sinn Féin and both the Progressive Unionist Party and the now defunct Ulster Democratic Party.⁸⁰ Such parties had no electoral mandate in 1973. As an influential special advisor to the former Irish Foreign Minister noted at a delicate stage in the process, the political talks were “not worth a penny candle” without Sinn Féin.⁸¹ Similarly, with regard to the Loyalists, the electoral system that

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

preceded the Good Friday negotiations was specifically designed to ensure that despite their very small percentage of the vote, they too would be guaranteed a seat at the negotiations table.⁸²

An additional feature, as one analyst has noted, is that the term “community relations” was “refreshingly” absent from the both the peace negotiations and the resulting Good Friday Agreement.⁸³ This absence right from the early days of the negotiations led another prominent commentator to bemoan, “It has become fashionable to decry the efforts of moderates in Northern Ireland, in favour of a focus on the Nationalists (including Unionist) extremes.”⁸⁴ Although many of those who have long been involved in working in the community relations sector in the jurisdiction supported the Agreement with varying degrees of enthusiasm (and indeed

were involved in the Yes Campaign in the referendum which followed the accord),⁸⁵ their unease at what they regard as the “privileging” of the extremes has become increasingly vocal.⁸⁶ In effect, what arguably occurred during and immediately after the negotiations concerning Northern Ireland is that the highest levels of the British and

Irish governments took direct stewardship over the process in pursuit of an all encompassing deal and largely bypassed those who had worked in the reconciliation/community relations sector for years. At one level, such an approach could be described as a classic elites-driven pursuit of the political deal with little heed for those with a professional interest in reconciliation. At another level however, it arguably exposed the fact that much of what passed for reconciliation work under the community relations rubric was largely irrelevant to addressing core causes of the conflict.⁸⁷

This sense of having been politically bypassed by the peace process and agreement has seen a number of efforts to reclaim the middle ground which have resulted in an often confusing and contradictory reinvention of the concept of community relations. First, attempts to align the concepts of community relations, equality and human rights have served to highlight tensions between these ideas. For example, while human rights and the promotion of equality are portrayed as “an integral part of overall action to promote better relations within the Northern Ireland community,”⁸⁸ the chief executive officer of the Community Relations Council appears to anticipate the day when equality legislation and human rights protection can be abolished.⁸⁹ As such, the central tenets of the Good Friday Agreement, human rights and equality, have been utilized as a progressive value base for community relations concurrent with a reluctance to endorse the teeth of substantive legislative provisions: a position somewhat resonant with that of liberal unionism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The fact that much of the current human rights legislation is based

Much of what passed for reconciliation work under the community relations rubric was irrelevant to addressing core causes of the conflict.

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

upon binding international legal standards, which cannot simply be abolished, appears also to have been omitted from this analysis.⁹⁰

Second, there has been, somewhat ironically, a distancing of the middle ground from the two-tribes construct from which it had emanated, resulting in a repackag-

The community relations paradigm has been forced to retreat backwards onto the uncertain terrain of multiple identities.

ing of the community relations paradigm as “good relations.”⁹¹ It is reasoned that this is to provide space for the recognition of more complex notions of identity within the two main communities and the growing number of ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.⁹²

While in fact there has been an increase in

the number of ethnic groups—undoubtedly encouraged by the cessation of the conflict—the overall percentage of these diverse identities remains extremely small.⁹³ Hence, the distancing can be attributed more to the community relations critique of the Good Friday Agreement—in particular, the fact that its consociational nature has essentialized those who are perceived to be within the two main communities. What has arguably occurred is a reaction to the broadening of the political tent that brought the more extreme political representatives of the two communities to the heart of the peace negotiations and the resulting agreement. The community relations paradigm has been forced to retreat backwards onto the uncertain post-modern terrain of multiple identities. While there is an understandable unease at being labeled either Protestant/Catholic or Unionist/Nationalist—designations that are clearly crucial for equality monitoring purposes—this discomfort has been translated into an implicit antipathy towards expressions of identity deemed to be associated with the extremes of political opinion or national aspirations. It is interesting to note that the ascendancy of multiple identities has paralleled a rise in a much more confident Nationalist community in Northern Ireland.⁹⁴ As in other contexts, when conditions are created where minority groups become more assertive about their identity through their language, culture, sport and so forth, elements of a majority community or dominant group fall back on the multi-layers and the complexity of their own.⁹⁵

Third, new theoretical perspectives have been appropriated in order to secure academic credibility for the reinvention of community relations, as evidenced by the most recent addition of the idea of social capital to the presentation of the paradigm.⁹⁶ The simplicity of a message which, as Field suggests, can be summed up as “relationships matter” has obvious appeal for those engaged in reconciliation activity in Northern Ireland.⁹⁷ Moreover, Putnam’s distinction between bonding social capital as a “sociological super-glue” between members of homogeneous groups and bridging social capital as a “sociological WD-40” provides an irresistible language for a new framing of community relations.⁹⁸ For example, those within the two main traditions have been accused of “often ruthlessly promot[ing] internal bonding and

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

set[ting] it against all bridging”⁹⁹ with community relations strategy described as advancing “the growth of critical bridging and linking social capital which are the *sine qua non* of a sustainable society and economy.”¹⁰⁰ In addition, couching community relations in the terms of social capital has the added advantage of attracting policymakers “anxious for quick-fix solutions to long-term structural problems.”¹⁰¹ Social capital also has the added advantage of having a strong resonance with the expressed position of the current British Labour administration.¹⁰²

General criticisms of social capital theory offer further insight into why such a theory should appeal to the middle ground in Northern Ireland. These include inter alia that there is a considerable conceptual stretch involved in transforming social capital as an individual asset into a community characteristic. The theory ignores the role played by other factors such as past political struggles in increasing civic-ness. It at best diminishes and at worst ignores the role of community leadership in accumulating social capital, and it fails to take into account the role of the state preferring instead to focus on horizontal relationships between communities.¹⁰³ Hence, while the adoption of this new theoretical perspective has modified the language used in the presentation of the community relations paradigm, it remains founded upon the notion that the perpetuation of societal division in Northern Ireland is due to individual prejudice manifest at an intergroup level between the two main communities. This has been further endorsed by the latest outworking of these ideas in government policy, “A Shared Future.” Although this policy has a stated aim of establishing over time “a society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence,” it is premised upon the assertion that current problems in Northern Ireland are a result not of inequality, which it argues has been addressed, but a culture of intolerance.¹⁰⁴ However, as a recent report into equality in Northern Ireland highlights, significant imbalances in the public and private sector workforces between Catholics and Protestants remain, and Catholics continue to have lower levels of employment, lower levels of economic activity and a higher proportion of Catholics live in workless households.¹⁰⁵ In short, structural inequality remains and cannot be ameliorated through improved community relations alone.

EDUCATION FOR POST CONFLICT CITIZENSHIP

As indicated earlier in this paper, throughout the last three decades education has been arguably the key sector for a persistent commitment in policy and practice to the promotion of community relations.¹⁰⁶ Of course, efforts to promote social cohesion through education are a common feature of many jurisdictions.¹⁰⁷ Education as a primary agent of socialization has been afforded, in general, significant status with respect to the transmission of societal norms and values to the next generation.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, since the end of the late 19th century, mass education systems have sought to contribute to the unification of nations through, for exam-

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

ple, the dissemination of traditions and the construction of notions of citizenship.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in conflict-affected societies there is an expectation that educational policy will not only seek to address the impact of the conflict on children's lives but also

Education has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the legacy of the past is addressed.

attend to an understanding of the nature of conflict and assist in its resolution.¹¹⁰ In particular, in transitional contexts, where processes of denial of the past can entrench the reasons for the conflict and result in it reappearing in future generations, education has a crucial role to play

in reconciliation and in ensuring that the legacy of the past is addressed.¹¹¹

Educational responses to the conflict in Northern Ireland have centered on curriculum initiatives and a range of projects premised upon increasing contact between the two main communities.¹¹² Early responses focused on the latter in a direct attempt to address the de facto segregated nature of Northern Ireland's education system—where over 94 percent of children attend schools which are almost exclusively Catholic or exclusively Protestant—which it has been claimed was, at least in part, responsible for embedding division in society.¹¹³ These initiatives have developed from pioneering work by individuals in the mid-1970s through to governmental endorsement and financing in the late 1980s.¹¹⁴ Despite some examples of good practice, however, the programs have had limited success due to vague notions of reconciliation, as expressed through the community relations paradigm, resulting in children viewing the programs as little more than trips out of school and reporting little opportunity to mix with their peers from the “other side.”¹¹⁵

The most prominent cross-community contact initiative has been the emergence of Integrated Education, schools specifically planned to educate children from the two main communities (and other traditions) together. This structural response began in 1981 with the opening of the first integrated school by parents committed to the notion of shared education and was eventually endorsed in government in the late 1980s.¹¹⁶ Claims, reminiscent of those made by community relations activists during the late 1970s, have been made as to the accomplishments of these schools: their contribution to forgiveness and the reduction of intolerance, the development of social cohesion and more recently to the building of social capital.¹¹⁷ However, it is generally accepted that, to date, empirical evidence of their long-term success is at best inconclusive.¹¹⁸ Several in-depth qualitative studies of the schools provide a much more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of integration in practice and point towards reasons for the arguable failure of this twenty-five year experiment in contact: a lack of a shared understanding of the terminology of tolerance and reconciliation; a resistance to tackling issues relating to identity and difference in the classroom; an assumption that the “integrated” ethos of the school will somehow be absorbed by the children without any direct strategy being employed on behalf of

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

the school.¹¹⁹ Much of this can be attributed to the “culture of silence”¹²⁰ that exists in Northern Ireland surrounding issues of identity or to flaws inherent in the contact hypothesis—the theoretical construct which has informed most of this work.¹²¹ However, the failure of increased contact in education, in its various guises, to make significant in-roads into producing genuine reconciliation equally points towards the fundamental flaws in the community relations paradigm outlined above.

More troubling are indications that a wholesale and uncritical acceptance of the paradigm, as has been the case in education, has the potential to result in more assimilationist outcomes. For example, in one of the studies mentioned above, Donnelly noted that the minority Catholic group of children within one integrated school played down their identity while the majority Protestant group were more inclined to be assertive in the expression of their cultural identity.¹²² While Donnelly does not infer “assimilation” from this data, we would contend that it nonetheless indicates a tendency towards it, particularly if this pattern is replicated across other integrated schools. Furthermore, recent research,

Schools are failing to create a climate in which children develop tolerance for the rights of the “other.”

which revealed that children who attended an integrated school are more likely than those who went to religiously segregated schools to identify themselves as “Northern Irish,” rather than “British” or “Irish,” has been hailed as an indication of the success of integrated schools in reducing sectarianism.¹²³ However, the reality is that for many Nationalists the term “Northern Irish” is not neutral—it is in effect a liberal Unionist construct which accepts the legitimacy of the notion of Northern Ireland as a state. The fact is that all the major political parties in Northern Ireland appear relatively untroubled about presenting their respective national identities as either British or Irish.¹²⁴ This suggests that rather than reducing sectarianism, these schools are failing to create a climate in which children are encouraged to feel comfortable in their respective identity and in developing attitudes of tolerance and respect for the rights of the “other” based upon such self-confidence. Rather, the emphasis seems to be upon constructing new *identikit* citizens who are, in the classroom at least, immune from the influences of the real world in which they live.

The lack of success of the paradigm in contact programs is mirrored in the failure of curriculum initiatives specifically designed to promote positive community relations. In the late 1980s, a statutory “Common Curriculum” was introduced into all schools in Northern Ireland, a key component of which was Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU)—a program based on community relations principles.¹²⁵ While EMU has been given international recognition for its success in “peacebuilding,”¹²⁶ the consensus in Northern Ireland is that it failed to deliver on its promises.¹²⁷ In addition to the usual suspects of failed curriculum initiatives forwarded to excuse its

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

lack of impact (such as lack of training, resources, etc.), it has also been criticized for its failure to deal with the political nature of the conflict and to engage with more critical issues such as human rights and equality.¹²⁸ As such, when the curriculum was reviewed in the late 1990s it became apparent that there was a need to include, in addition to EMU, a broader program for citizenship education.¹²⁹ This program, which will become statutory in 2007, takes as its core the principles of human rights and, despite its continual presentation in educational literature as the latest (re)invention of “community relations,” presents an opportunity to develop an alternative paradigm. Its strong focus on human rights and equality, the presentation of social responsibility as role for not only the individual and society but also for the government and an emphasis on encouraging the participation of young people in the lives of their communities provide the foundations for a thicker and more critical understanding of what it means to be a citizen in a transforming polity.¹³⁰ However, a range of factors militate against its potential success. For example, certain elements of the curriculum, crucial to its critical edge, were removed just prior to the program receiving statutory status. Most significantly, these included references to government accountability to protect human rights. At the same time, the term “promoting community relations,” which had been absent, was made compulsory.¹³¹ This arguable hijacking of the initiative by the community relations paradigm to once again soften the edges of a potentially more substantive discourse will have, no doubt, repercussions on its operation in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this paper, we noted that many Republican and Loyalist ex-combatants now involved in difficult areas of grassroots community based reconciliation express serious reservations about the utility of this term. As explained above, Republicans, like many others, equate reconciliation with the community relations paradigm. They view the latter as a strategy employed and supported by the British government to promote a “two-tribes” view of the conflict, wherein inter-community divisions are stressed at the expense of an acknowledgment of the role of the British state.¹³² Former Loyalist combatants also harbor considerable misgivings about the paradigm. They express concerns that it represents an attempt to dilute or indeed problematize aspects of their Protestant/Unionist culture so that Protestant sectarianism becomes defined as *the* key impediment to peacemaking. They also characterize it as an approach to reconciliation that is anti-working class Loyalist, anti-ex-combatant, weak on rights’ protections and again, geared towards creating an imagined “middle ground.”¹³³ As will be evident from the preceding discussion, we share many of the criticisms expressed by both these sets of ex-combatants.

We would also argue that it is the best of these ex-combatants who have shown real leadership in attempting to transform cultures of violence in Northern

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

Ireland.¹³⁴ Some of these men and women have been at the forefront of taking forward the most difficult issues of the peace process including working on interface violence at flashpoint areas; negotiations concerning contentious parades; the decommissioning of paramilitaries weapons; engagement with the victims of political violence and other ex-combatants; and promoting and encouraging the emerging debate on truth recovery in the jurisdiction.¹³⁵ It is precisely because of their violent past, as having fought on behalf of those communities, that they have the credibility to engage in such real reconciliation work in the working class areas in which it is most needed. It is also they who have arguably taken the greatest risks in the peacemaking process, many of them explicitly on the basis that they do not want the next generation to go through what they experienced.¹³⁶

Citizenship education offers a more grounded understanding of the meaning of reconciliation to the next generation.

The reality is that for the many children who live in the areas where a reemergence of violent conflict would be most likely to occur, a middle ground free of sectarianism or intolerance is a world away from their lived reality. As was noted above, even some of its strongest advocates acknowledge that thirty years of different types of community relations-style reconciliatory education has largely failed to deliver on its promises. We contend that the developments within citizenship education present an opportunity for presenting a more grounded understanding of the meaning of reconciliation to the next generation. Education has much to learn from the substantive reconciliation work carried out by ex-combatants in the community. Such work has been characterized by a number of features. First, the intersection between Republican and Loyalist ex-combatants is not based upon any false representations of friendship but rather an acknowledgement of the need to respect the rights of the other. While this does not magically resolve conflict, it does provide a real discourse in which to frame it. Second, such interactions are not premised upon the need to deny or dilute political identity or to pay lip-service to some artificial middle ground. Rather it is premised upon the capacity of those who are confident in their own identity to engage with former enemies. Third, such interactions are built around how to resolve real issues such as marching or rioting rather than ill-focused explorations of prejudice reduction. Fourth, both Loyalist and Republican ex-combatants are acutely aware of the power of the state, of the role and responsibilities of the state as a protagonist and of the need for effective mechanisms to ensure state accountability. These are the building blocks of real reconciliation. This is how we transform reconciliation from a “dirty word” into a new language of “political generosity.”¹³⁷ 

NOTES

1 Interview with Irish Republican Army activist, 17 September 2005.

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

² For a review of this style of ex-combatant led peacemaking work see Kieran McEvoy, "Beyond the Metaphor: Political Violence, Human Rights and 'New' Peacemaking Criminology," *Theoretical Criminology* 7, no. 3 (2003): 319-346; Kieran McEvoy and Anna Eriksson, "Restorative Justice In Transition: Ownership, Leadership and 'Bottom Up' Human Rights," in *Handbook on Restorative Justice*, ed. Dennis Sullivan and Larry Tift (London: Routledge, 2006).

³ See John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation In Divided Societies* (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1997); Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance And Forgiveness After Genocide And Massive Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Andrew Rigby, *Justice And Reconciliation After The Violence* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001); David Bloomfield, ed., *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2003); Brandon Hamber & Grainne Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland* Report 18, (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, 2005); Lorna McGregor, "Reconciliation, I Know it When I see It," *Contemporary Justice Review* 9, no. 2 (2006): 152-177.

⁴ See George Mitchell, *Making Peace* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵ See Gordon Anthony and John Morison, "Here, There, and (Maybe) Here Again: The Story of Law-making for Post-1998 Northern Ireland," in *Devolution, Law-Making and the Constitution*, ed. Robert Hazell and Richard Rawlings (Exeter: Imprint Academic 2005).

⁶ See David McKittrick et al: *Lost Lives: The Stories Of The Men, Women And Children Who Died As A Result Of The Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Mainstream, 1999).

⁷ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA* (London: Macmillan, 2003); Jim Cusack and Henry McDonald, *UVF* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1997); Jim Cusack and Henry McDonald, *The UDA: Inside the Heart of Loyalist Terror* (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2004); Fionnuala Ni Aolain, *The Politics of Force: Conflict Management and State Violence in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000).

⁸ Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen, eds., *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (2nd ed.) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). The only major political party not present during the negotiations was the Democratic Unionist Party led by Ian Paisley, now the largest Unionist political party. They boycotted the talks because of the presence of Sinn Féin.

⁹ John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995). See also, Seamus Dunn, ed., *Facets of the Conflict* (New York: Basingstoke Macmillan St Martin's Press, 1995); Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *Dynamics of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 202.

¹¹ Adrian Little, "Multiculturalism, Diversity and Liberal Egalitarianism in Northern Ireland" *Irish Political Studies* 18, no. 2 (1997): 23-39.

¹² Joanne Hughes, *Partnership Governance in Northern Ireland: the Path to Peace* (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1998); Democratic Dialogue, *Reconstituting Politics* (Belfast Democratic Dialogue, 1996).

¹³ McGarry and O'Leary.

¹⁴ See Michael Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland 1968-1989* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Brendan O'Leary, "The Conservative Stewardship of Northern Ireland 1979-97: Sound-bottomed Contradictions or Slow-Learning?" *Political Studies* 45, no.4 (1997), 663-76.

¹⁵ For the classic account of the production of hegemonic understanding of politics and conflict see Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds., trans., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1971). For a more recent treatment see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics* (2nd ed.) (London: Verso, 2001).

¹⁶ Hugh Frazer and Mari Fitzduff, *Improving Community Relations* (Belfast: Community Relations Council, 1994).

¹⁷ Robbie McVeigh, "Between Reconciliation and Pacification: The British State and Community Relations In The North Of Ireland," *Community Development Journal* 37, no. 1 (2002), 47-59.

¹⁸ Joanne Hughes and Caitlin Donnelly "Attitudes to Community Relations in Northern Ireland: Signs of

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

Optimism in the Post-ceasefire Period?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (2004), 567-592.

¹⁹ See the Community Relations Council website at www.community-relations.org.uk.

²⁰ For example, the community relations unit of the Northern Ireland Civil Service is located presently within the equality and reconciliation division.

²¹ Sir James Craig, Unionist Party, then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 24 April 1934 Reported in: Parliamentary Debates, Northern Ireland House of Commons, XVI, Cols. 1091-95.

²² Harry Calvert, *The Northern Ireland Problem* (London: United Nations Association, 1972).

²³ Fionnuala O'Connor, *In Search of a State, Catholics in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1993).

²⁴ "Disturbances in Northern Ireland" (report of the Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Cameron appointed by the Governor of Northern Ireland, Cmd. 532, Belfast: HMSO, 1969); Public Services Organization Review Group, "Report of the Public Services Organization Review Group," 1966-1969, Prl. 792 (Belfast: HMSO 1969).

²⁵ Ed Moloney and Andrew Pollak, *Paisley* (Belfast: Poolbeg, 1986).

²⁶ Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

²⁷ Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: the Army in Northern Ireland 1969-84* (London: Methuen, 1985).

²⁸ Tim Pat Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades: Ireland 1966-87* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987).

²⁹ Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London: Coronet, 1999).

³⁰ For example in an interview published in the *Belfast Telegraph* in May 1969, the more liberal minded Northern Ireland Unionist Prime Minister Terence O'Neill argued, "It is frightfully hard to explain to Protestants that if you give Roman Catholics a good job and a good house, they will live like Protestants...they will refuse to have 18 children...If you treat Roman Catholics with due consideration and kindness, they will live like Protestants in spite of the authoritative nature of their Church." See also Merlyn Rees, *Northern Ireland: A Personal Perspective* (London: Methuen 1985), 332.

³¹ Ruane and Todd, 186.

³² Terence O'Neill, *The Autobiography of Terence O'Neill* (London: Hart-Davies, 1972).

³³ Community Relations Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, Chapter 23 (London: HMSO 1969).

³⁴ Tony Gallagher, "The Approach of Government: Community Relations and Equity" in *Facets of the Conflict*, ed. Seamus Dunn (London: Macmillan Press, 1995).

³⁵ Chris McCrudden "Mainstreaming Equality in the Governance of Northern Ireland," *Fordham Journal of International Law* 22, no. 4 (1999), 1704. For an overview see Committee on the Administration of Justice, *Equality in Northern Ireland: The Rhetoric and the Reality* (Belfast: CAJ, 2006).

³⁶ One notable exception was the support in the some Unionist quarters for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland from the 1970s onwards. See Committee on the Administration of Justice, *A Bill Of Rights For Northern Ireland Through The Years—The Views Of The Political Parties* (Belfast: CAJ, 2003).

³⁷ Rhoda Margesson, *Changing Perceptions about Resolving Conflict in Northern Ireland: The Failure Of The 1974 Sunningdale Agreement and its Implications for Settlement in the 1990's* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Law School, 1991).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Robert Fisk, *The Point of No Return: The Strike Which Broke the British in Ulster* (London: Times Books, 1975).

⁴⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly: Official Report 3, No. 1, (3 April 1974).

⁴¹ Terry Robson, "Northern Ireland: Community Relations and Community Conflict," *Development* 43, no. 3 (2000), 66; Terry Robson, "The Co-option of Radicalism: Conflict, Community and Civil Society:

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

Community Action and Social Change in a Post-colonial Context," *Critical Sociology* 27, no. 3 (2001), 221-245; Robbie McVeigh, "Between Reconciliation and Pacification: the British State and Community Relations in the North of Ireland," *Community Development Journal* 37, no. 1 (2002), 47-59; Hugh Frazer and Mari Fitzduff, *Improving Community Relations* (Belfast: Community Relations Council 1994).

⁴² Gallagher, 30.

⁴³ Community Relations (Amendment) Act 1975.

⁴⁴ Gallagher.

⁴⁵ McVeigh, 49; Joanne Hughes and Paul Carmichael, "Community Relations in Northern Ireland: Attitudes to Contact and Integration," in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland: The Seventh Report*, ed. Gillian Robinson et al (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing 1998).

⁴⁶ See Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1995 and the Search for Peace* (London: Randon House, 1995).

⁴⁷ Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey, *Northern Ireland: The Thatcher Years* (London: Red Books, 1990).

⁴⁸ Ruane and Todd.

⁴⁹ Rees, 332.

⁵⁰ See generally Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapter 9 and Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), chapter 5.

⁵¹ Gaffikin and Morrissey.

⁵² Gallagher, 32.

⁵³ Peace People Strategy for Peace 1977 (Discussion Paper 5th January 1977), 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁵ See Ciaran McKeown, *The Passion of Peace: The Movement of the Peace People in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1984).

⁵⁶ As Bowyer Bell argues, "Their general condemnation of violence seemed to distinguish between paramilitary violence, dreadful, and British army violence, not so dreadful. The call for the withdrawal of toleration for members of the various secret armies—the advocacy of felon setting, aiding the police, even informing, in Irish society—cost the movement further support but not yet amongst its advocates." John Bowyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence 1967-1992* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1993), 521.

⁵⁷ Bowyer Bell, 523. See also Ciaran McKeown, *The Passion of Peace* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1984); Sean Byrne, "Consociational and Civic Society Approaches to Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 3 (May 2001), 327-352.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of this concept, see Marieke Kleiboer "Ripeness of Conflict; A Fruitful Notion?" *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 1 (February 1994), 109-116.

⁵⁹ See Roy Mason, *Paying the Price* (London: Robert Hale, 1999).

⁶⁰ For discussion and analysis of these events, see Kieran McEvoy (2001); Lawrence McKeown, *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners Long Kesh 1972-2000* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2001).

⁶¹ Jim Prior, *A Balance of Power* (London: Hamilton, 1986), 192.

⁶² See Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*, especially chapter 6 (3rd ed.) (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006).

⁶³ <http://www.community-relations.org.uk>.

⁶⁴ Gallagher.

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

⁶⁵ Hughes and Carmichael.

⁶⁶ Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*, (3rd edition) (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006).

⁶⁷ Hughes and Carmichael.

⁶⁸ See CAJ 2006. The MacBride principles are available at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/links/macbride.html>.

⁶⁹ The ineffective 1976 Fair Employment Act was ultimately replaced in 1989 by a stronger piece of legislation. The 1989 Fair Employment Act introduced compulsory religious monitoring by employers of the religion of their employee, affirmative action including target setting for employers, an outlawing of indirect discrimination and new investigatory powers for the Fair Employment Commission with regard to discriminatory work practices. See Chris McCrudden.

⁷⁰ Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The social identity theory of intergroup behavior" in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986).

⁷¹ Ed Cairns, *A Welling Up of Deep Unconscious Forces, Psychology and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (University of Ulster: Coleraine, 1994).

⁷² John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990).

⁷³ Bill Rolston, "What's Wrong with Multiculturalism? Liberalism and the Irish Conflict" in *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism*, ed. David Miller (London: Longman 1998), 254.

⁷⁴ Eamonn Mallie and David McKittrick, *Endgame in Ireland* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001).

⁷⁵ See Brendan O'Leary, "The Nature of the Agreement," *Fordham Journal of International Law* 22, no. 4 (1999), 1628-67.

⁷⁶ "A Favourite Curmudgeon" *Irish Times*, 20 October 1998.

⁷⁷ Kieran McEvoy and John Morison, "Beyond the Constitutional Moment: Law, Transition and Peacemaking in Northern Ireland," *Fordham International Law Journal* 26, no. 4 (April 2003), 961-1014.

⁷⁸ McEvoy (2001), especially chapter 11.

⁷⁹ See generally Margesson.

⁸⁰ The PUP and UDP were the political wings of the two main Loyalist paramilitary groupings, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association.

⁸¹ "Chronology 1996," *Fortnight Magazine*, See Fortnight chronology of the peace process, (24 April 1994).

⁸² Claire Mitchell, "Protestant Identification and Political Change in Northern Ireland," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 4 (2003), 612-631.

⁸³ McVeigh, 51.

⁸⁴ Robin Wilson, "Asking the Right Question" *Reconstituting Politics*, no. 3, (Belfast: 1996), 49.

⁸⁵ Richard Couto, "The Third Sector and Civil Society: The Case of the 'YES' Campaign in Northern Ireland," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 12, no. 3, (September 2001), 221-238.

⁸⁶ See for example Rick Wilford and Robin Wilson, *A Route to Stability: The Review of the Belfast Agreement* (discussion paper, Democratic Dialogue, Belfast: 2003).

⁸⁷ See Jeremy Harbinson, *Review of Community Relations Policy* (Belfast: OFMDFM 2002) regarding the need for a reexamination of the value and working methods of community relations in light of the agreement.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, paragraph 7.06.

⁸⁹ Duncan Morrow, "Sustainability in a Divided Society: Applying Social Capital Theory to Northern

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

Ireland," *Shared Space 2* (2006), 63-79.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹¹ Harbinson, 5.

⁹² Billy Leonard, "Hope and History: Study on the Management of Diversity in Northern Ireland" (Final Report, University of Ulster: INCORE, 2001), 5.

⁹³ Many regions of Northern Ireland register less than 0.5 percent of their population as belonging to an ethnic group other than white, including Newry, Armagh, West and South Tyrone, Mid Ulster, Fermanagh, South Down and North Antrim. See Census 2001 Univariate Tables, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency at http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/Census/Census2001Output/UnivariateTables/uv_tables1.html#ethnic%20group.

⁹⁴ John Darby and Colin Knox, *A Shared Future: A Consultation Paper on Improving Relations in Northern Ireland*, (Final Report, Community Relations Unit, Belfast: OFMDFM 2004), Executive Summary, 3.21.

⁹⁵ For a useful discussion of this phenomenon from a feminist and critical race perspective see Diana Fuss *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁹⁶ Morrow, "Sustainability in a Divided Society: Applying Social Capital Theory to Northern Ireland," (2006). For an overview of social capital theory and its application see David Halpern, *Social Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

⁹⁷ John Field, *Social Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

⁹⁸ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 22-3.

⁹⁹ Duncan Morrow, "The New Common Sense? Implementing Policy for Sharing over Separation" (speech, Community Relations Council Policy Conference, Belfast: 27 April 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Duncan Morrow, "Towards a Shared Future" (speech, CRC Policy Development Conference, Belfast: 28 May 2004).

¹⁰¹ Madeleine Leonard, "Bonding and Bridging Social Capital: Reflections from Belfast," *Sociology* 38, no. 5 (2004), 927-944, 928.

¹⁰² Sharon Gewirtz, "Cloning the Blairs: New Labour's Programme for the Resocialization of Working Class Parents," *Journal of Education Policy* 16, no. 4 (2001), 365-378.

¹⁰³ See for example Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, "Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of Its Role in Development," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 2 (May 2000), 529-547.

¹⁰⁴ "A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland," Policy paper, (Belfast: OFMDFM, 2005), 12.

¹⁰⁵ Committee on the Administration of Justice (2006), 158-161.

¹⁰⁶ In 1982, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland published a circular (1982/21): "Improvement of Community Relations: the Contribution of Schools" which stated that it was the responsibility of *everyone* within the education system to promote the principles of community relations.

¹⁰⁷ See for example Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, eds., *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion* (Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ Emile Durkheim, trans., *Education and Society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1956); Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage, 1977).

¹⁰⁹ Tony Gallagher, "Balancing Difference and the Common Good: Lessons From a Post-conflict Society," *Compare* 35, no. 4 (December 2005): 429-442.

¹¹⁰ Marion Molteno, Kimberly Ogadhoh, Emma Cain and Bridget Crumpton, eds., "Towards Responsive Schools: Supporting Better Schooling for Disadvantaged Children" (paper, Save the Children Fund, Department for International Development, United Kingdom, 1999); Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli, eds., *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peace Building Education for*

Reconciliation as a Dirty Word

Children (paper, Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF, Florence, 2000).

¹¹¹ Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Penny Enslin "Citizenship, Identity and Myth: Educational Implications of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Change: Transformations in Education* 3, no. 1 (May 2000), 80-90.

¹¹² Tony Gallagher, *Education in Divided Societies* (London: Palgrave, 2004).

¹¹³ For a detailed overview of the education system in Northern Ireland and its origins see Laura Lundy *Education Law, Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: SLSS, 2000); see also Dominic Murray *Worlds Apart: Segregated Schools in Northern Ireland* (Appletree Press Ltd., 1985) for an analysis of the impact of the separate school system.

¹¹⁴ The Department of Education for Northern Ireland finances the "Schools Community Relations Programme" which encourages contact schemes involve joint school ventures between Catholic and Protestant schools, such as field trips, educational visits, etc.

¹¹⁵ Una O'Connor, Brendan Hartop and Alan McCully, *The Schools Community Relations Programme: A Review* (Bangor: DENI, 2002) and *A Research Study of Pupil Perceptions of the Schools Community Relations Programme* (Bangor: DENI, 2003).

¹¹⁶ The Education Reform Order (1989) made a commitment to support integrated education and provided mechanisms by which existing school could transform to integrated status. For a somewhat uncritical overview of the history of integrated education in Northern Ireland see Fionnuala O'Connor, *A Shared Childhood: The Story of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press/Integrated Education Fund, 2002).

¹¹⁷ See for example Claire McGlynn "Education for Peace in Integrated Schools: A Priority for Northern Ireland?" *Child Care in Practice* 10, no. 2 (2004): 85-94; Claire McGlynn, Ulrike Niens, Ed Cairns and Miles Hewstone "Moving Out of Conflict: The Contribution of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland to Identity, Attitudes, Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Journal of Peace Education* 1, no. 2 (2004), 147-163.

¹¹⁸ Claire McGlynn et al.

¹¹⁹ Caitlin Donnelly, "Constructing the ethos of tolerance and respect in an integrated school: the role of teachers" *British Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 2 (2004), 263-278; Caitlin Donnelly, "What price harmony? Teachers' methods of delivering an ethos of tolerance and respect for diversity in an integrated school in Northern Ireland," *Educational Research* 46, no. 1 (2004), 3-16.

¹²⁰ Tony Gallagher, "After the War Comes Peace? An Examination of the Impact of the Northern Ireland Conflict on Young People," *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 3 (2004), 629-642.

¹²¹ In its simplest terms the contact hypothesis suggests that increased contact can lead to a reduction in prejudice at an intergroup level. Recently the increasing number of conditions which are being attached to its meaningful operation have led to a questioning of its applicability to real life situations. For an excellent overview of the theory and its criticisms see Paul Connolly, "What now for the contact hypothesis? Towards a new research agenda," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 3, no. 2 (2000), 169-193 and John Dixon, Kevin Durrheim and Colin Tredoux "Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 7 (2005), 697-711.

¹²² Donnelly, above.

¹²³ Bernie Hayes and Ian McAllister, "Those who Dared to be Different: Integrated Education in Northern Ireland" (August 2005); see also "Integrated Schools Dilute Sectarianism," *Guardian*, 18 January 2006.

¹²⁴ The Social Democratic and Labour Party, the second largest nationalist party after Sinn Féin, did for a brief period begin to describe themselves as a "post-nationalist party." However this proved electorally unpopular and the party has recently reverted to a traditional nationalist stance. See SDLP Strategist Calls for Change. Monday 11 June 2001 http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1383000/1383176.stm.

¹²⁵ This was established by the Education Reform Order (above) which also made provision for a common history program of study and a core syllabus for religious education in all school types.

¹²⁶ Bush and Salterelli.

Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

¹²⁷ Alan Smith, "Citizenship education in Northern Ireland: beyond national identity," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 33, no. 1 (2003), 15-32.

¹²⁸ Lesley McEvoy and Laura Lundy, "In the Small Places: Education and Human Rights Culture in Conflict-Affected Societies," in Gordon Anthony, Kieran McEvoy and John Morison, eds., *Judges, Transition and Human Rights* (forthcoming, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹²⁹ For an overview of the development of this aspect of the curriculum see Mike Arlow "Citizenship Education in a Divided Society: The Case of Northern Ireland," in Tawil & Harley, 255-313.

¹³⁰ See Keith Faulks, *Citizenship* (Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000).

¹³¹ See "Curriculum Review," Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment website: <http://www.ccea.org.uk>.

¹³² Coiste na n-Iarchimi, *Responses to the Government Consultation on Community Relations and Ex-prisoners* (Belfast: Coiste na n-Iarchimi, 2003).

¹³³ See Peter Shirlow, Brian Graham, Kieran McEvoy, Dawn Purvis and Feilim Ó hAdhmaill, *Politically Motivated Former Prisoner Groups: Community Activism and Conflict Transformation* (Belfast Community Relations Council, 2005).

¹³⁴ See Kieran McEvoy and Anna Eriksson (2006).

¹³⁵ See Brian Graham, Kieran McEvoy and Pete Shirlow, *Beyond the Wire: Ex-prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland* (forthcoming, London: Pluto, 2007); *Healing Through Remembering Making Peace with the Past: Options for Truth Recovery in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Healing Through Remembering, 2006).

¹³⁶ Brian Graham et al.

¹³⁷ Healing Through Remembering.