

11 History Teaching, ‘Truth Recovery’, and Reconciliation

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The “Back to the Future” workshop that spawned this chapter was an important influence in deepening my understanding of ‘memory’ as a fertile area for academic exploration. The variety of approaches found in the papers presented—the knowledge explored and the methodologies employed, particularly those that were arts-based—were challenging and stimulating. As a formal high school teacher educator, this was an academic environment with which I was unfamiliar. Yet, the workshop did two things for me. First, it emphasized the value of bringing interdisciplinary perspectives to bear on its theme of productive memory and social action. Second, it encouraged me to concentrate on the particular role of formal history education in promoting that productivity and action.

My path to the workshop lay in previous research that explores the interface between history learned in communities and that learned in formal history classes in schools. That had led to myself and my co-researcher (Barton & McCully, 2003) making a contribution to the theme of *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict* (Cairns & Roe, 2003), but this was framed very much within the confines of learning and teaching and the formal curriculum. The “Back to the Future” workshop in Montreal in October 2008 was a reminder of the importance of taking into account other disciplines, particularly sociological and psychological stances to reconciliation and dealing with the legacy of the recent past, in societies emerging from conflict.

The reminder was timely, for as a history educator, the ‘legacy of the past’ has become increasingly pertinent for Northern Ireland society as it struggles to emerge from a period of civil strife that claimed the lives of over 3,600 people, both combatants and civilian bystanders. Arguably, the conflict centred on a clash of Nationalist allegiances between those in the unionist (mainly Protestant) community who wish to remain British and those in the nationalist (mainly Catholic) community who aspire to the reunification of Ireland as a political entity. From the late 1960s to the 1990s, paramilitary groups drawn from the nationalist (or republican) community engaged in a guerrilla war with British security forces, which included the police force drawn mainly from the unionist community.

The violence was further fuelled by the intervention of unionist (or loyalist) paramilitary groups who directly attacked the Catholic population. On the one hand, civil society has, at last, seriously begun to seek mechanisms to address the challenges arising from the recent past. On the other hand, research amongst young people demonstrates that a generation on from the Good Friday/Belfast peace accord of 1998 (which brought unionist political leaders face to face with former republican combatants in shared government) there is confusion and uncertainty as to why society descended into violence. Before proceeding, the context of ‘dealing with the past’ requires elaboration.

To date, there has been no consensus on how this should be handled. Legal enquiries into specific contentious events, most of which have yet to report, have tended to heighten anxiety by exciting a ‘blame game’ culture. A number of nongovernment agencies do work in the field, and they have been joined by statutory intervention in the form of a *Commission for Victims and Survivors*. Here, the emphasis tends to be on the psychological and material well-being of individuals and communities caught up in conflict. References to the needs of the postconflict generation are sparse; there is little reference made to formal education in general, and there is a conspicuous absence of historians and history educators amongst those participating. This is surprising since the area under consideration is ‘the past’.

However, in January 2009, a government-supported *Consultative Group on the Past* reported. Amid uproar caused by its decision to acknowledge all victims of the Troubles (the euphemism given to the period of violence) as equally deserving of financial recognition, little attention was paid to the report’s clauses directed at young people and education. The report suggests that intergenerational trauma is a possible root cause of problems many young people face (that “many are affected by the legacy of the past while often having only indirect experience of that past” [Consultative Group on the Past, 2009, p. 87]) and expresses concern “that resources are not being made available to support the next generation to cope with the legacy of conflict” in order to prevent a repeat of the past (Consultative Group on the Past, p. 27). Thus, its authors stress the importance of educational intervention to build a better understanding of the nature, causes, and impact of conflict. Interestingly, they make no direct reference to history teaching but recommend storytelling and use of the creative arts as potential approaches.

Recent research into young peoples’ attitudes to reconciliation in Northern Ireland (Magill, Smith, & Hamber, 2009, pp. 46–65) reinforces the Consultative Group’s concerns in that it affirms the view that neither family nor community nor formal education has served young people that well in making sense of the Troubles. The two comments following are indicative of the research responses. One young man acknowledged the fragmented nature of his observations in the community:

Growing up in the Bogside and seeing all the murals. . . . The likes of the fourteen people shot dead. You don't really take notice when you're running about, but as you get older you start to ask questions . . . it's like all of a sudden it's like a filter. . . . Nothing gets through at the start, and then all of a sudden stuff starts to get through. (Magill et al., 2009, p. 60)

Many respondents in the study expressed frustration that schools had failed to help them understand why the Troubles had occurred. One young male commented, "People need to know how it started and why it started. And if they don't know that . . . it is just going to turn out into what it went to forty years ago, because people were never taught this" (Magill et al., 2009, p. 105).

My career as a history teacher and educator has largely coincided with armed conflict in a deeply divided society. Orally and visually, you do not have to be in Northern Ireland long to realize through political utterances, wall murals, and other symbolism that history is frequently used to justify contemporary positions. As an educator motivated both by academic commitment and the need for civic change, I have had no reservations in directing my teaching at those who abuse the discipline in their pursuit of justifying highly partisan positions. Therefore, the uneasy transition toward a postconflict environment seemed an appropriate time to reexamine the contribution that history teaching might make towards understanding the conflict and the reconciliation process, especially with regard to events associated with the Troubles, post-1968. As Cairns and Roe (2003) have pointed out, if the relationship between memories and conflict is not addressed, "a sense of 'victimhood' that stems from unacknowledged and unreconciled historic losses" (pp. 4–5) can be a powerful barrier to peace-making and create a new sense of injustice, thus creating potential for future conflict. There are already alarming signs that armed factions are regrouping in Northern Ireland and that young people are a willing source of recruitment (BBC News, 2009).

EDUCATION, CONFLICT, AND HISTORY TEACHING

The relationship between education and conflict has become an increasingly important focus for study, and in recent years there has been a greater understanding of the relationship between education and the causes of conflict as well as education's potential to facilitate peace building and social cohesion (Gallagher, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Tawil & Harley, 2004). Smith and Vaux (2003) identify the "emerging from conflict" phase as the time when it is likely that governments will have to undertake fundamental reform, thus enabling education to play an important part "in the process of reconciliation by addressing the legacies

of conflict” (pp. 2–3). They target history as a key area of the curriculum for change because it can harbour both bias and prejudice but, also, because it has positive potential to contribute to consolidating a common sense of national identity.

This chapter concentrates on the role of history teaching in this post-conflict or transitional justice phase. Chapman (2007) defines the latter as “the processes and mechanisms in which many post-conflict societies engage as they seek to come to terms with a divisive and violent past” (p. 321). The chapter presents history education’s position as complex but argues that there are possibilities for history teaching to make a distinctive contribution to transitional justice while remaining true to its disciplinary foundations. The work draws on experience in Northern Ireland, but there is much in the experience of history teaching during 40 years of violence and postconflict reconstruction that makes it worthy of wider study. There are also aspects that are contextually specific.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In examining the role of history education in Northern Ireland, two concepts are valuable: ‘collective memory’ and ‘historical consciousness’. Seixas (2004) defines collective memory as “the study of how ordinary people beyond the history profession understand the past” (p. 8). As indicated in Northern Ireland, the ‘dominant’ narratives of the unionist and nationalist communities, respectively, are prominent in community expression and political posturing (Walker, 1996). Therefore, Northern Ireland provides a rich case study for what is defined as the study of historical consciousness, which Seixas (2004), drawing on a definition from the journal *History and Memory*, explains as “the area in which collective memory, the writing of history and other modes of shaping images of the past in the public mind merge” (p. 10). Understanding how these forces interact is central to examining history teaching’s role, particularly in regard to the transitional justice process.

HISTORY TEACHING’S RESPONSE IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

Teaching history in a divided environment creates special challenges, especially because history is so closely tied to emotional identity, collective belonging, and identity politics. Further, ‘deeply’ divided societies often experience violence and human rights abuses. In handling the legacy of the past, such societies, Chapman (2007) argues, need “multiple levels and types of healing and reconciliation” (p. 321) far beyond the intervention of a reformed history curriculum. Yet the argument here is that history education has a role to play.

Intercommunal conflict is often associated with situations where educational resources are scarce, but it is not confined to developing countries and can occur where sophisticated educational provision is in place (Smith & Vaux, 2003, pp. 9–10). Northern Ireland presents such a situation. Throughout the period of violence, the province continued to outperform other areas of the United Kingdom in relation to high achievement in external examination results, albeit also producing a greater number of students who failed to gain any qualifications. Further, its financial and educational infrastructure remained relatively unscathed by the communal violence, and because of direct British rule from London, political control of education, for most of the time, remained out of the hands of local protagonists. Thus, atypically, the educational system attempted intervention to alleviate conflict, even as the violence unfolded.

In 1991, a statutory common curriculum for students aged 5 to 14 was introduced. Consequently, all students in a system largely segregated by religion, whether attending Controlled (90% Protestant), Maintained (95% Catholic), or Integrated (5% of the school population) schools, have followed a common history curriculum (Kitson, 2007; McCully, 1997; Phillips, Goalen, McCully, & Wood, 1999; Smith, 2005). Importantly, the content of the curriculum put considerable focus on the study of the history of Ireland but placed it in the wider context of British and European developments. Many of the events designated for investigation were potentially contentious precisely because they were deemed pertinent to students' respective cultural and political identities. However, compulsory provision extended only as far as dealing with Ireland's history up to partition in the 1920s since it was felt that the recent conflict, then ongoing, presented too many challenges, especially for younger age groups. A module of work addressing the 1965 to 1985 period was devised but as an elective topic for older students.

Crucially, presenting an agreed narrative of the past was not an option in a society where national identity was contested. Instead, emphasis was placed on a process approach as developed by the Schools' Council History Project in England from the 1970s (Shemilt, 1980), an approach already adopted voluntarily by some teachers in Northern Ireland in the 1980s as a way of challenging the historical myths perceived to be contributing to communal division. This focused on developing in students the skills and concepts to enable them to investigate the past through the examination of primary and secondary evidence and to treat any narrative of the past as provisional and open to question. Thus, students were encouraged to view history as enquiry, to recognize that actors in the past often saw events differently, and to evaluate differing (and conflicting) interpretations in the light of available evidence.

Cole (2007) argues that history education can contribute to the alleviation of conflict by revising historical narratives to reflect "critical truths" that are more inclusive but that might also offer multiple interpretations of

the past. The 1991 history curriculum scores well against this criterion in that curriculum developers recognized that in Northern Ireland there can be no master narrative that justifies the stance of one community at the expense of the other. Importantly, the evidence available from classrooms substantially affirms that teachers at least subscribe to the rhetoric of ‘multiperspectivity’ in practice. Governmental school inspection reports (Education and Training Inspectorate [ETI], 2006) indicate that most teachers consciously strive to be true to the curriculum’s intentions by trying to present material in a nonpartisan way and by reflecting a range of perspectives and interpretations.

This is borne out, too, by empirical work with students. In a study of 253 students aged 11 to 14 carried out in 11 schools across all sectors in Northern Ireland, Barton and McCully (2005, 2007, 2009, 2010) found that young people valued school history’s commitment to balance and welcomed exposure to others’ views of the past as an alternative to the partisan histories they often encountered in their own communities. The researchers concluded:

Students encountered multiple sources of historical information and they navigated amongst these in a conscious attempt to refine and extend their historical understanding. Sometimes this led to them assimilate new knowledge with their existing narrative, and at other times to open up new lines of enquiry. This suggests that the current curriculum may have directly influenced students’ ability to question the authoritative stories of their communities and to base their conclusions on evidence. (Barton & McCully, 2007, p. 20)

Indeed, they indicate that it may be that the enquiry approach helps account for Northern Ireland students’ capability to engage in what Bakhtin (1981) calls “internally persuasive dialogue”—that is, individuals beginning to think in “an independent, experimenting and discriminating way” (p. 345). This is in contrast to studies from other jurisdictions (Letourneau & Moisan, 2004; Mosborg, 2002; Porat, 2004), where students have conformed to Wertsch’s (1998, 2002) idea that individuals either appropriate or resist dominant narratives. It appears that Northern Irish students are interacting with a range of perspectives to find personal meaning, albeit often tempered by influences from their own backgrounds.

Cole (2007) also advocates the use of more inclusive textbooks and the employment of active teaching methodologies to help enhance students’ critical thinking skills and to encourage more democratic practice, thereby fostering the reconciliation process. Matched against these criteria, Northern Ireland history teaching’s performance is more uneven. In many postconflict situations, history textbooks are frequently held up as a barometer as to how far a state’s education system is prepared to accommodate minorities and former adversaries (Crawford, 2000; Janmaat,

2007; Stradling, 1997; Zajda, 2007). Caution is necessary in that in Northern Ireland there have never been officially recommended texts, and the system continues to allow market forces to prevail in schools' selection of books. In recent years, on the positive side, textbooks have been produced to meet the aims of the common curriculum, and a number of these have been coauthored by writers drawn from both unionist and nationalist backgrounds. Yet, Kitson's (2007) study of a selection of such books raises concerns. Although she found that textbooks presented a largely balanced view of Irish history, characterized by a careful and sensitive use of language, they "tend to stop short of asking more challenging questions and contain virtually no explicit links between the present situation and its historical antecedents" (Kitson, 2007, p. 146). Further, in their presentation there was a veneer of enquiry but little structural guidance to help teachers to engage their students in active, investigative approaches.

This reluctance to address the more sensitive aspects of the past, particularly when they impinge on contemporary attitudes, is reflected in other research studies involving teachers in Northern Ireland (Conway, 2004; Kitson, 2007; McCombe, 2006). Kitson's (2007) work with history teachers in eight postprimary schools gave a very mixed picture in which willingness to tackle more sensitive issues varied according to teachers' personal biographies, the location of the school, and the age and ability of students. In categorizing responses, she refers to Slater's (1995) "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" purposes of history teaching (pp. 125–126). The former are those aims that are inherent in the subject discipline. The latter are the "broader educational aims" (p. 126) focused on changing society. Kitson's findings support an earlier hypothesis (McCully, 1998) that tension exists in Northern Ireland between history teachers who may be prepared to engage in innovative practice, provided it remains within the intrinsic framework, and those risktakers whose teaching seeks to influence social change (Kitson & McCully, 2005).

Empirical evidence (Barton & McCully, 2005, 2010; Magill et al., 2009), then, indicates that students in Northern Ireland value what school history has to offer but are also frustrated that the implications of their learning are not made explicit in helping them to understand the present. Yet, if this is not done, there is a danger that as students get older they selectively assimilate aspects of their formal learning to reinforce the dominant popular narrative in their respective communities (Barton & McCully, 2005). Barton and McCully (2010) conclude that a cognitive-skills-based approach to learning, with its emphasis on objectivity, is not enough. It must be accompanied by an exploration of the affective or emotional impact of learning as it resonates with deeply held community loyalties, and that in any case, students are less interested in the purely 'academic' side of history and more interested in its usefulness in helping them to understand the origins of contemporary conflict.

When placed alongside research findings (Barton & McCully, 2005) that demonstrate that among 11- to 14-year-olds there is a major gap in students' knowledge of the period 1960 to 1985—the era leading up to and including the worst years of violence—this desire to better understand the contemporary situation has great significance. As pointed out earlier, this modern period is on the syllabus as one module of the external examination programme taught to 14- to 16-year-olds but as an elective. Therefore, only a minority of young people encounter formal teaching of the recent past. Further, in the context of examination work there must be question marks as to how far teachers are able, and prepared, to engage students in the interactive pedagogy necessary to enable them to work through the emotional dimensions of learning associated with dealing with controversial and sensitive issues (McCully, 2006).

In summary, history educators in Northern Ireland have come some way in exploring the subject's potential to respond to conflict. Yet, research indicates that there are limitations. Efforts to date have encountered resistance in challenging the impact of community identity on students' thinking, and by concentrating on events more distant in time, these efforts have not always met students' expectations in helping them to understand contemporary divisions.

DEALING WITH THE RECENT PAST

In countries emerging from conflict, dealing with events of the recent past is especially problematic because the situation is still heavily disputed, raw, and characterized by personal trauma, anger, and grief. Unsurprisingly, in the immediate aftermath of conflict, some jurisdictions have placed a moratorium on history teaching. In Rwanda, this was for 10 years. Yet, in the pursuit of transitional justice, it is vital that “social amnesia” (Chapman, 2007, p. 321) does not prevail and that societies, groups, and individuals are called to account for past injustices. If the origins of the conflict are not addressed effectively, then instability remains, and, as Gartan Ash puts it, “Dirty fragments of the past constantly re-surface and are used often dirtily, in current political disputes” (as cited in Minow, 1998, p. 119). ‘Truth recovery’ is the term often given to this process of publicly acknowledging “abused power, complicit actors and the harms to individuals” (Minow, 1998, p. 127). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa and the Historical Clarification Commission in Guatemala are examples of formal structures established for this purpose. Hamber (2007), an academic involved in the TRC and now working in Northern Ireland, identifies recognition of the need to deal with the past as a first vital stage in the reconciliatory process.

The concept of ‘reconciliation’ is a difficult and contested one but a brief exploration may help to determine what specific role there is for history

teaching within the process. Cole (2007) acknowledges that the word's Christian overtones have made it a problematic idea in many eyes but that in the last decade the concept has acquired a deeper and more complex meaning when applied in postconflict situations. It has come to be understood as a process involving a transformation to new relationships between political communities, rather than between individuals. Central to creating this new reality is the realignment of group identities and trust, based on a strong sense of justice, as well as forgiveness. This is borne out in the language of postconflict literature in which relationship words such as 'accountability', 'restorative justice', 'forgiveness', 'trust', 'hurt', 'healing', 'therapy', and 'vengeance' are consistently referenced. It becomes clear that the postconflict reconciliation process is a multifaceted one drawing on a range of approaches and disciplines, including philosophy, human rights law, sociology, and psychology (Devine-Wright, 2003). In fact, Cole and Barsalou (2006) conclude that while history education should be an integral instrument of transitional justice and social reconstruction it is an "under-utilised" one (p. 2).

So why are historians and history educators often absent from this process? Is it, simply, that the latter groups have an aversion to the risks associated with reconciliation work? The answer may lie in a telling distinction made by Minow when considering the nature of the outcomes of truth-recovery programmes. She refers to them as being about "psychological but not historical truth" (Minow, 1998, p. 127). This is interpreted here to mean that the stories collected represent each person's own grasp of the past, perceptions that must be confronted in building new relationships between citizens and the state. They are important fragments of the historical record but they are not, at this stage, subject to the critical scrutiny of the historical process. Thus, this begs the question as to what role history teaching should have in dealing with the recent past.

Emphatically, history has an important and distinctive part to play. For a start, drawing an arbitrary line at a point in the past to determine when historical study should stop or start is not an option. In conflict and postconflict situations, past events and present positions are intricately entwined (McCully & Pilgrim, 2004). Unless young people are encouraged to recognize the impact their lived experiences (including family and community accounts of the conflict) may have on the way they see the past, they are unlikely to overcome those emotional barriers that inhibit critical understanding.

As to the exact function of history education, the contributions of Lee and Shemilt (2007) to current debates on the desired relationship between history teaching and citizenship education in the United Kingdom are of value. Their underlying principles are that, first, the uniqueness of history lies in its disciplinary approach and that this cannot be compromised and, second, that "history is central to citizenship formation in any open and democratic society" (p. 17). Consequently, they dismiss the possibilities that either history

should ignore the need to demonstrate its contemporary relevance or that it might become simply a carrier for citizenship education. Instead, they opt for a distinctive but complementary role in which history maintains its disciplinary rigour but also provides the background and context for citizenship education. They argue that history has three specific contributions to make. It has the potential to foster an open and democratic environment through its aims and pedagogy. With its commitment to the concepts and processes of rational enquiry, it can both debunk mythic pasts and develop democratic dispositions. Finally, it can develop and refine students' understanding of historical consciousness. Translating this to the postconflict context, the complementary function should be one of bringing synthesis, criticality, perspective, and overview to psychological truth recovery, thus preparing young people for the possibility of societal change.

The truth recovery process is often conducted through the individual testimonies of those who lived through the time, be they classified as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, or survivors. Such biography is very powerful in allowing voices to be heard and to facilitate redress. In time, these stories have the potential to be a very valuable resource in the history classroom, provided they represent a full range of perspectives. In South Africa, extracts from the TRC are now being used as resources in history lessons (Cole & Barsalou, 2006, p. 10). However, initially, when the stories are being told, this is likely to be in a cathartic environment where having the teller's perspective heard is of paramount importance. Such personal stories can prove very powerful in generating empathetic understanding and can unlock the emotional barriers that resist the scrutiny of the recent past, thus facilitating recognition, redress, and repair. Yet, at that point it may be difficult to verify such testimony through the objective vista of historical investigation. Shriver (2007) refers to this stage as the telling of "personal or narrative truth", "to tell the story of one's suffering is to connect with innumerable stories that our neighbours can tell, too" (p. 4). Yet, as he points out, "Some truth too simply stated becomes a lie. Publicly, there is only complex truth" (p. 3). This, he suggests, is established through "dialogical truth" (p. 4): the coming together of stories through interaction, discussion, and debate.

It is at this stage that history teaching can begin to play its part. It can use the power of individual stories to engage young people's interest. It can also encourage them to place accounts in their broader context and assimilate them into an overview that both recognizes the complexity of synthesizing alternative and often conflicting perspectives and the relationship between individual experience and wider societal trends. Minow (1998) defines the particular role that historians can adopt:

Work by journalists and historians, rather than political figures and government officials, can collect and connect seemingly disparate accounts of the violence, its causes, and its consequences. Historians can,

and should, combine distance and empathy with all involved, even the perpetrator, in order to pursue the aspiration of truthfulness. (p. 143)

History teaching's distinctive role should be to pursue objectivity in the light of the evaluation of evidence. Any enquiry approach to history teaching must convince young people that it is their duty to pursue truth but that in the light of competing interpretations it is unlikely that there is a final destination. Therefore, they must become comfortable with complexity. Yet, this is not "the plague of history writing" that Shriver (2007) deplors, "the passive voice" that pretends "things just happen outside any human agency" (p. 12). The empathetic dimension, or "caring for those in the past", must be fostered as it is crucial to unlocking the doors (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 228). Simon (2004) brilliantly outlines the way that stories as testimony, by demanding our "attentiveness", can transform the way we question the past and thus open up enormous pedagogical potential that can be capitalized upon through history teaching (p. 195). Therefore, this chapter argues for Shriver's (2007) "humane" approach, one that is "moral but not partisan" (p. 22). Within the parameters of the disciplinary process, it is still legitimate to ask such questions as who were the transgressors, what is it important to remember, and what can we learn together to move forward (Cole, 2007).

AN ACTION PLAN

So what might be the distinctive contribution of history education to the dealing with the past agenda in Northern Ireland, given that the province has proved resistant to establishing public truth recovery mechanisms? A decade has passed in which a new generation has reached secondary school age with any knowledge of the conflict largely acquired through family, community, and the media. In such circumstances, formal education cannot wait for the civic process to work itself through as has been the case elsewhere. The time is appropriate for history education to take the initiative in confronting more emotive aspects of the recent past not covered in the (nonetheless valuable) elective option on offer at examination level. Otherwise, there is the possibility that delay will conspire to create, at best, a sullen avoidance or, at worst, a nostalgia for past violence.

What form might an initiative take? Following, a proposal is outlined that endeavours to put the ideas outlined earlier into practice. The suggestion is to conduct an oral history project in pairs of schools, representative of each of the unionist and nationalist communities. The schools would be from the same town, selected because they have been significantly affected by the conflict. The focus of the project would be "Living during the Troubles". Students in each school would first develop oral-history data-collecting skills and then conduct interviews with those who had experienced

the period. The project would aim to gain insight into ordinary people's experience through telling their stories, thus "becoming grounded in people's lives, fears and hopes" (Cole, 2007, p. 14). No special effort would be made to locate combatants or victims, but they would be interviewed as they emerged. In the event of encountering particularly sensitive material, students (and teachers) would require preparation for managing the strong emotional responses that might follow. Opportunities would be created to allow schools to share their material, and, hopefully, as trust developed, schools might facilitate students interviewing subjects from the 'other' community. It may be possible to locate the study in the current external examination module studying the Ireland 1960–1985 period, but if examination demands made this difficult, then the work might be positioned at the end of the previous academic year. Either way, students should, by then, be well prepared in critical enquiry and be able to engage in bringing together and evaluating complex and sometimes divergent views of past events. Indeed, it may be that there will be considerable common ground in people's everyday recollections that will encourage mutual empathy. It is envisaged that the culmination of the work would be some form of presentation in a public venue accessible to both participating communities. The idea here is that not only the venue but the project itself would represent the "shared space" regarded by a number of writers as essential to building new intergroup relationships (Minow, 1998, p. 138; Morrow & Wilson, 1996, pp. 8–13; Shriver, 2007, p. 6). The project would be "moral but nonpartisan" in that it would point participants forward from historical learning to a more democratic and inclusive society. Coordination with teachers responsible for the newly established course in Local and Global Citizenship might then allow the learning to progress to considering future options and actions. In this sense, the project might become what Shriver (2007) calls a "trigger"—it might "start the process [to] educate future lawmakers, ministers, artists, and university teachers to new articulate versions of a national past" (p. 16).

CONCLUSION

The postconflict, transitional justice phase is an important stage in peace building, and central to this is the need for a society emerging from conflict to come to terms with the causes and events of conflict. This chapter argues that while maintaining its disciplinary rigor, history teaching has a distinctive role to play in helping young people to understand the impact of the past and to provide them with a foundation to reimagine the future. In the context of Northern Ireland, circumstances are conducive, if urgent. Wider civic society is now engaging with the issue of dealing with the past and this, in turn, will provide momentum and material for the history classroom. Further, a revised curriculum introduced in September 2007 offers

greater flexibility by going beyond the intrinsic aims of the subject to further encourage teachers to make students' studies relevant to contemporary society (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment [CCEA], 2007). Finally, in the Republic of Ireland, too, the curriculum, for the first time, albeit with pupils at senior examination level, has included enquiry studies of controversial aspects of Northern Ireland's recent past in its syllabus (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2006). If teachers in both jurisdictions are bold enough, they still have a window of opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of history in shaping new relationships. When I entered the profession, my motivation for change came from the despair of watching a society descend into bitter enmity. From the perspective of a teacher educator entering the last phase of his career, it would be very satisfying to know that the next generation of history teachers was inspired by a vision of creating a more harmonious Ireland, comfortable with its past.

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