

Acknowledgements

I count myself as having a very fortunate and often charmed existence. I have spent more than thirty years studying and working in universities in Ireland, North and South. I have been able to dedicate my time to reading and thinking and writing and teaching. It has been a busy three decades but equally very privileged ones.

Over the course of the three decades studying psychology, I have written many journal articles. Often these papers outline studies and data we had collected as part of a particular project. On occasion I have also written summary and review papers attempting to condense knowledge or articulate a theoretical position. For many years I have wanted to write this book, or maybe an earlier version of it. Somehow, I never quite got around to it.

There were probably two reasons for this. The first is undoubtedly related to time. Life in the academy is privileged but it is also very busy. Prior attempts fell foul to other priorities: teaching that had to be done, students who needed support, development tasks within the university. In 2020, though, I was honoured to receive a European Research Council (ERC) advanced grant. These are hard-won and competitively awarded research grants for cutting-edge research across all areas of the academy. Ireland is still relatively new to securing these awards, and I was one of the first of two Irish women to receive an advanced award. As well as being incredibly proud and delighted with this achievement, I was given the gift of time – time to write and time to research. It also facilitated this book being open access. I am very grateful I live in an EU country and have access to this source of funds that supports progressive frontier research across the humanities and social sciences. And I would like to acknowledge the ERC and thank the Council for believing in me and investing in my work.

The second reason that I was slow to write this book was my need to think through its contribution. In earlier iterations of this volume, I had thought that it might pertain only to traumatic experiences in

Northern Ireland. As the years progressed and I began to consider the fit of some of my ideas to the experiences of other traumatised populations, this seemed less and less sensible. As my own research interests extended, it was increasingly clear that the book needed to examine the impact of trauma across different contexts and groups. Thinking this contribution through and indeed collating the evidence to illustrate these ideas slowed me down.

I have not, of course, done this alone. Indeed, the data collection, analysis and thinking that underpin the book is the product of fruitful, thought-provoking, enjoyable collaborations with colleagues near and far. I have been supported and encouraged from the outset of my education by colleagues and friends in Queens University Belfast; most notably, Dr Karen Trew, Dr Clare Cassidy and Dr Jackie Reilly were particularly influential and helpful in developing my thinking around the role of identity in Northern Ireland in my early career. Along with Dr Karen Trew, Dr John Kremer and Professor Carol McGuinness were incredibly supportive mentors and colleagues. Since I moved to the University of Limerick I have been fortunate to have supportive and engaged colleagues in the Department of Psychology who have always offered a stimulating research environment. I am not sure that I would have followed through on many initiatives were it not for the energetic encouragement and enthusiasm of colleagues such as Professor Stephen Gallagher, Dr Aisling O'Donnell, Professor Mike Quayle, Dr Siobhan Howard, Dr Elaine Kinsella, Dr Sarah Jay and Dr Jenny Roth.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement I got from others at the proposal stage of this writing project. At that stage I was not entirely sure that the book merited either consideration or writing. The encouraging words on this proposal that Dr Aoife-Marie Foran, Dr Grace McMahon, Dr Cillian McHugh, Dr Daragh Bradshaw and Dr Siobhan Griffin offered in the GROWTH lab group at the University of Limerick gave me the necessary push and confidence to move forward. Big thanks too to Margaret Grene, who helped in bringing the volume to completion with her great editorial skillset, and to Edel Collins for so much administrative and background support. I would like to particularly thank Dr Aisling O'Donnell, Dr Sarah Jay, Dr Elaine Kinsella, Professor Mike Quayle, Dr Siobhan Howard and Dr Aoife-Marie Foran for commenting on early versions of this manuscript. And again, thanks to my current PhD students and

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There are others in the wider world of psychology who have also been influential in my thinking about the intersection between trauma and social identity. I would like to particularly thank Dr Robert Lowe of Manchester Metropolitan University, who has been a great collaborator and cheerleader through many projects. His questioning and thoughtful approach to our research has driven many of the insights outlined in this book. In January 2017, I spent a period of sabbatical at the University of Queensland Australia. I very gratefully acknowledge the support of the University of Limerick, which allowed me to take this leave. This was the first time in my career I managed a six-month period of sabbatical abroad. It was a golden period for me personally and professionally. The Australian dream delivered: wallabies in the back garden, sunshine and a stimulating academic environment to write and think. During that time, I worked with colleagues in the SIGN research group at the University of Queensland. I would like to particularly thank Professor Jolanda Jetten, Professor Alex Haslam, Professor Cath Haslam, Dr Tegan Cruwys, Dr Nik Steffens, Christine McCoy and Dr Zoe Walters for the warm welcome I received on arrival. I would also like to thank Alex, Cath, Tegan and Jolanda for their engagement and encouragement as we wrote and developed the Social Identity Model of Traumatic Identity Change. Like all papers and proposals, it had a few rejections and false starts before the theoretical ideas saw the light of day. There is no doubt in my mind that the support and encouragement from these collaborators was pivotal in developing these ideas that are now so central to all of my own thinking.

Theoretical ideas are of course just that, theoretical. In psychology, as in other sciences, ideas of this nature need to be backed up. Much of the evidence in support of these ideas and indeed the development of the ideas is down to capable and energetic PhD students I have worked with over the years. It is one of the greatest privileges of academic life to supervise a PhD student and their research development. Of course, PhD students have also driven my development. I am lucky to count

former students amongst valued friends and colleagues. I would like to particularly acknowledge Dr Katrina McLaughlin, Dr I-Ling Fu, Dr Nichola McCullough, Dr Ciara Downes, Dr Katharina Schmid, Dr Geoff McCombe, Dr Veronica Hakhu, Dr Stephen Walsh, Dr Sarah Jay, Dr Khagendra Acharaya, Dr Catherine Naughton, Dr Clara O'Byrne, Dr Joanne Cantwell, Dr Mary Beth Gallagher, Dr Daragh Bradshaw, Dr Alastair Nightingale, Dr Michelle Kearns, Dr Megan Ryan and Dr Aoife-Marie Foran. Their thoughtful empirical work has influenced my thinking profoundly and their company and support buoyed me up on the greyest of Irish days. I hope this book does justice to their efforts.

I also want to thank a great bevy of supporters and friends who have helped me understand the value of social groups and connections in my own life. I am a 'blow in' to Limerick – this is an Irish way of articulating the fact that you cannot trace your ancestors at this location for generations. However, I have found my tribe here, a group of friends who believe in me even when I don't. Thanks to Dr Maeve Skelly, Professor Deirdre McGrath and Therese Hennessy, who are always available for sensible professional and personal advice. Some day we will manage that lunch! Thanks too to my ever-reliable running buddies Triona Crosse, Carmela Conroy and Caoimh Ryan. The chats are integral to the joy of these runs. And of course, because it is impossible to make old friends, honourable mention to those who have stuck around for so long and still cheer me on: Mary Redmond, Marcella Ronayne, Lynn Carville and Kirsten Thompson. And, last, a big thanks to my book club buddies. The book club features as an important support group in this volume, not least because it is. There I have found friendship, kindness and encouragement, and we have in our fifteen or so years of existence weathered some difficult personal storms. So, thanks to Dr Carmen Kuhling, Annie Girardin, Professor Sue Franklin, Nuria Burrell, Professor Maura Adshead, Edel Farrell and Kathleen Eull, who inspire and encourage in equal measure. Thanks too to the aspiring, albeit gate-crashing adjunct members Professor Kieran Keohane, Dr Brendan Halpin and Dr David Atkinson.

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pivotal influence on my education and career. I am comforted by the fact that they very much enjoyed and took pride in all I did, which perhaps compensates for any lack of gratitude.

To ensure I don't make the same mistake twice, I want to thank my sisters and brother for their friendship and support too. I am one of five siblings, and my childhood home was a noisy house where there was much discussion and debate on the issues of the day. As we moved into adulthood these debates remained a feature of our family life. Opinions particularly of younger siblings were often not taken terribly seriously. I am the fourth of five and so had to learn early and well how to back up claims with evidence. So, thanks to my siblings John, Deirdre, Fiona and Eavan for teaching me that skill early and well. I look forward to hearing your views on this book.

Thanks also to my two children, Tara and Tom. I am immensely proud of the young adults they have become. As well as offering hope for the future, they keep me informed of developments in their social and political worlds. Like my students, they remind me across a whole range of domains that age and generational perspective shape social and political attitudes profoundly.

This book has been an occasion for me to reflect on many of the more difficult times in my adult life. Through all these times, the one constant for me has been the presence of my long-suffering husband, Paul, whom I met at the tender age of twenty. That is now truly a lifetime ago. At that stage I had little belief in myself and certainly no sense of having academic potential. But Paul always had faith in me. His unwavering loyalty and faith have given me confidence, and I want to thank him wholeheartedly.

Míle buíochas.