



When is a justice campaign over? Transitional justice, ‘overing’ and Bloody Sunday

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journals.sagepub.com/home/cac**Tom Bentley** 

Abstract

This article explores the political, strategic and emotional issue of victim groups deciding to continue or discontinue central components of a justice campaign in the aftermath of receiving ‘truth’. Drawing on in-depth interviews, the article focuses on relatives and other stakeholders’ varying positions on (dis)continuing the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march after the publication of the Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry and the UK Prime Minister’s apology for the massacre. I demonstrate that there has emerged an, at times, acrimonious schism between those who feel the apology and report were sufficient to stop the march and those who believe them to be insufficient. Thus, while much of the literature on political apology evaluates its effects on the dyadic relationship between victim and perpetrator, this article develops Sara Ahmed’s concept of ‘overing’ to demonstrate that the ostensible moment of truth can create unanticipated and deleterious intra-victim tensions. The article concludes by suggesting practical measures emerging from the findings that other justice campaigns may consider.

Keywords

Bloody Sunday, justice campaign, ‘overing’, political apology, ‘truth’

If you’ve been involved in a campaign, it’s often hard to say, ‘It’s over, it’s done and dusted, we’ve gone as far as we can, I want to involve myself in other things.’ But I think what’s interesting about the Bloody Sunday families is you see both. There are some people, some relatives, close relatives, who are basically saying, ‘Look, I no longer want to be drawn in every time. As far as I’m concerned, Bloody Sunday is over, we did the best we can, we got a good result, and I want to live my life.’

Robin Percival – Inaugural Chair of the Bloody Sunday Trust (interview).

It is not the time to be over it, if it is not over.

Sara Ahmed (2012: 181).

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Introduction

On 15 June 2010, immediately following the publication of the Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, UK Prime Minister David Cameron apologised for the British army's 1972 massacre of civilians at a civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland. For Rotberg (2006: 33), like many academics working on the politics of remorse, 'apology can usefully create the possibility of closure in post-conflict transitions'. Such a claim elicits difficult questions: what does closure mean? Is it desirable? What are the entailing power relations? On the more critical side of the spectrum, there are scholars who contend that state apology tends to be imbued with hegemonic power relations (Bentley, 2016; Cornassel and Holder, 2008; Gibney, 2002; Somani, 2011). Indeed, from one perspective, political apology can be considered a form of reactionary discourse termed by Sara Ahmed (2012) as 'overing'. This is to say that apology can declare an issue resolved, thereby delegitimising and reducing space for those who point to how the injustice endures. In this vein, Cameron's (2010) apology, like others of the genre, stated the wish to 'move on' and 'close this painful chapter'.

Intriguingly, in the case of Bloody Sunday, it was not only the apologist who engaged in the discourse of closure; certain relatives and others who had campaigned so tirelessly for justice publicly declared that day that 'we have overcome'.¹ Rather than focusing on the overing techniques of the government, this article explores how the injunction to over Bloody Sunday has been variously incorporated, reconfigured and resisted by those who campaigned for justice. In particular, the article focuses on the site of the Bloody Sunday commemoration march, an annual event in which relatives and campaigners retrace the steps taken that day. Controversy has surrounded the event since, following the Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry (henceforth 'the Report') and Cameron's apology, most relatives decided that 2011 would be the final march. Since then, however, some family members, survivors and civil society groups have continued marching, and there has emerged an, at times, acrimonious schism between those who have stopped and those who continue marching. The empirical puzzle thereby informing the article is: why do some relatives and stakeholders wish to continue the annual march and others wish for it to stop? Addressing this question, I explore the debates surrounding the march's (dis)continuation and how this speaks to the politics of overing.

Having undertaken extensive semi-structured interviews with relatives of those killed and members of the justice campaign, I demonstrate that participants' decisions to continue or stop marching pivot on their evaluation of the 'truth' received; those largely favourable of the Report and apology are inclined to cease marching, while those with an unfavourable opinion continue. Moreover, I trace how the issue of the march's (dis)continuation has caused disharmony among relatives and campaigners. Thus, where most literature on political apology focuses on the dyadic relationship between perpetrator and victim groups, this article argues that the ostensible moment of truth can create unanticipated and deleterious intra-victim tensions. The article thereby contributes an added dimension to the concept of overing for which Ahmed had not accounted: the potential for the government's overing manoeuvre to create animosity *within* the victim community between those that wish to continue justice campaigns and those who wish to discontinue aspects of it. Such schisms are detrimental to victim solidarity and efforts at

combating enduring injustice. In this way, as well as adding theoretically to the concept of overing, the article makes a contribution to understanding applied aspects of transitional justice by shedding light on the predicaments communities encounter after receiving an inevitably imperfect truth. In particular, it speaks to the political, tactical and heart-wrenching questions victims face when contemplating bringing aspects of their campaign to a close.

The article proceeds as follows: the first section outlines Ahmed's frequently neglected concept of overing and explores its potential significance to literature on political apology and transitional justice. After next outlining the research methods, the second section turns to the empirical analysis. This is done by initially focusing on those who continue marching, dissecting why they persist and capturing their sometimes deeply held grievances regarding the march's discontinuation. The third section outlines the positions of those who wish to end the march. While overing is a derogatory term, I examine why the compulsion for victims to 'self-over' may be an entirely understandable endeavour. The article concludes by considering the practical lessons other justice campaigns may incorporate from the experiences of the Bloody Sunday families.

Political apology and overing

Academic literature on political apology has expanded in recent years. The research question underpinning most of this work pertains to whether apology can assist intergroup reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. For its proponents, the ritual can clarify contested pasts, bring dignity to victims, indicate a commitment to human rights and be cathartic for victims and perpetrators (see variously Augoustinos et al., 2011; Edwards, 2010; Murphy, 2011; Nobles, 2008; Páez, 2010; Verdeja, 2010). An assumption frequently permeating such literature is that victims will accept the apology if it is suitably and sincerely offered (for a critique, see MacLachlan, 2019). By contrast, a more critical literature has emerged that points to the narcissistic and self-preserving aspects of apology, highlighting how it can recycle many of the inequalities in which the wrongdoing was couched (for example, Bentley, 2016; Gibney, 2002; Gooder and Jacobs, 2000; Muldoon, 2017; Somani, 2011). Two conspicuous gaps cut across both the optimistic and critical literature: first, work that engages in-depth with victims and their opinions is alarmingly sparse (for an exception, see Celermajer and Moses, 2010). Second, the literature is overwhelmingly ontologically dyadic. That is, it assesses the intergroup relationship between victims and perpetrators but not the cleavages, alliances and tensions *within* such groups.² This article addresses both these shortcomings: in interviewing members of the affected community, I found diverse and sometimes vehemently conflicting positions, with participants offering merit to both sides of the debate. There are, as shall be shown, relatives who take comfort from the apology, perceive it as sincere, praise its ability to disseminate truth and emphasise its cathartic qualities. Others see it as a power play, a product of nefarious political dealing and an obfuscation of justice. The point of this article is not to adjudicate between these positions. Rather, through the site of the Bloody Sunday commemoration march, I sketch how these positions speak to the personal, political and strategic question of continuing or discontinuing a central component of a justice campaign.

There is, it should be noted, existing work on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry and Cameron's apology. Certain works focus on how the apology/Inquiry were represented by the media (McLaughlin and Baker, 2015; McNeill et al., 2014). Others, without focusing on victims' positions, provide appraisals of the truth-telling mechanisms (Barcat, 2012; Bentley, 2016; Edwards and Luckie, 2014). Chiming with this article, Rigney (2015) uses the Bloody Sunday case to ask if 'apologies end events'. Yet, despite being largely optimistic about the apology as a 'transformative moment' (256), she, too, does not base this on detailed engagement with victims' standpoints. The exception is Aiken (2015), who, through 'expert interviews', argues that the inquiry 'has been vital in helping to put to rest one of the single most contentious events of Northern Ireland's violent past' (117). Importantly, Aiken's expert interviewees included relatives who are associated with the Bloody Sunday Trust (BST). He does not, however, engage with relatives with more estranged relationships with the BST, who, as I demonstrate, tend to be sceptical about the inquiry and apology. As such, despite its merits, existing literature provides few indications of the cleavages within the community since the Report and apology and fewer clues about how this pertains to the contested issue of the annual march.

Moving beyond the Bloody Sunday literature, there is certainly an intuitive appeal to the idea that an injustice can be overcome and closed. Academic literature on transitional justice sometimes wields such sentiments, with titles such as *Drawing a Line under the Past* (Edwards, 2008); *Transitional Justice in Nicaragua 1990–2012: Drawing a Line under the Past* (Bothmann, 2015) and *Closing the Books: Transitional Justice in Historical Perspective* (Elster, 2004). Equally, there is work that contemplates the conundrums of declaring a matter resolved. Weinstein (2011) discusses 'the myth of closure'. Nader (1990) observed that the appeal to societal harmony and consensus on matters of justice can calcify inequalities. Hamber and Wilson (2002: 35) note that calls to reconcile can overlook victims' individual requirements and 'demand too much psychologically from survivors'. Focusing on apologies, James and Stanger-Ross (2018: 304) challenge the idea that state contrition leads to closure, contending that they can 'fuel, focus, and deepen subsequent activism and inquiry'. But even if we agree that reconciliation can be onerous, that closure is a myth and that harmony can be problematic, there remains space to examine how calls for closure play out within longstanding justice campaigns.

In addressing this, a potentially valuable, yet neglected, concept for transitional justice literature is Ahmed's (2012) notion of overing. Its oversight is a shame, not least because it can enrich our theorisation of the politics of closure. Developed in her book *On Being Included*, Ahmed (2012: 178) details an exchange with a colleague following an 'open call' to an academic event where confirmed participants were 'all male speakers but one, all white speakers but one'. She recounts how she communicated to the organisers that the apparently benign sentiment of being 'open to all' reinforces privilege and produces environments dominated by white men (Ahmed, 2012: 178-179). A colleague subsequently proclaimed that she 'sounded "very 1980s," and that he thought we had "got over" identity politics' (Ahmed, 2012: 178). It is the discourse of having 'gotten over' an issue that Ahmed critiques. It fosters an argument whereby 'feminist and antiracist critique are heard as old-fashioned and outdated, as based on identity categories we are assumed to be over' (Ahmed, 2012: 179).³ Such overing suggests that the injustice

has been resolved and, ironically, it is those who highlight injustice who are troublesome. In raising these issues, it is almost as if it is the feminists and antiracists who are planting patriarchy and racism where it no longer exists (Ahmed, 2012: 180). In this manner, the assertion by a powerful actor that an injustice is 'over' serves to reproduce the wrong that had supposedly been consigned to the past. Moreover, it delegitimises those who continue protesting by painting them as antiquated, oversensitive and belligerent.

What, then, can this illuminate about political apologies in particular and transitional justice procedures more broadly? Ahmed (2014a) has herself linked overing to apologies, observing that they frequently operate for an organisation to 'put x behind them, as if the apology is sufficient to overcome what is being apologised for'. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, although not explicitly mentioning overing, she explores similar themes regarding how national expressions of shame can be less about combatting injustice than engineering a desirable national image (Ahmed, 2014b: Chapter 5). In this sense, self-reproach functions to '*finish the action, by claiming the expression of shame as sufficient for the return of national pride*' (Ahmed, 2014b: 119). This chimes with overing in that, given that the matter is now closed, shame negates the need for ongoing shame.⁴

It is not difficult to concur with Ahmed that political apologies are part of a state's armoury to over thorny issues. This is why they are replete with the language of 'closing chapters', 'moving on' and 'drawing a line under the past'. Such practices are clear in Cameron's Bloody Sunday apology speech: first, he sought to restrict future inquiries into British wrongdoing, saying that 'there will be no more open-ended and costly inquiries into the past' (Cameron, 2010). Second, he employed familiar closure motifs, declaring a wish to:

Come together to close this painful chapter on Northern Ireland's troubled past. That is not to say we should ever forget or dismiss the past, but we must also move on.

That Cameron's apology is an example of overing is, I think, neither controversial nor even especially interesting. What is interesting, however, is how the overing has been incorporated, reproduced and resisted by the apology's recipients.

This specific question emerged as part of a larger research project into victims and campaigners' reactions to Cameron's apology. The project entailed in-depth semi-structured interviews, almost all lasting more than an hour, with 12 relatives of those killed, a wounded survivor, Mark Durkan MP (who, as MP for Foyle, responded to Cameron's apology in the House of Commons), and four non-relatives who are currently or were previously on the board of the Bloody Sunday Trust.⁵ Interviews took place in-person in Derry in 2018. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, with the Museum of Free Derry (MoFD), an organisation largely run by relatives, essentially acting as gatekeeper.⁶ Participants had the option to be anonymous but the vast majority wished to be named. To be clear: before the interviews, I had no knowledge of the discontinuation of the march or the so-called 'splits' among relatives. I did not set out to ask participants about the march or 'splits'; rather, the topic became central owing to the interviewee led structure of the interviews. Nevertheless, after initial interviews where it became apparent that the march was a core topic, I did specifically ask later participants about it.

Continuing the march

The decision to (dis)continue the march has, at times, led to acrimony among relatives and campaigners, with participants frequently talking about ‘splits’. Kay Duddy, sister of Jackie Duddy, described how ‘the British Army couldn’t do it, the British government couldn’t do it, the British establishment, the highest lawyers in the land couldn’t do it, and you’ve managed to cause a split’ (interview). In the interviews, I heard people speaking in highly accusative terms about other relatives and campaigners. With obvious concern, Eamonn McCann – the journalist, campaigner and former Chair of the Bloody Sunday Trust (with now estranged relations with the BST) – told me about ‘all sorts of break ups’, with ‘people calling one another . . . [a] pro-Brit cunt’ at a meeting (interview). Kate Nash, sister of William Nash and an organiser of the continuing march, described how ‘there’s a lot of hatred. They [the BST] can’t stand us simply because we will say the truth’. One participant affiliated with the BST spoke of ‘people who have it in for us’. Julieann Campbell, niece of Jackie Duddy and former Chair of the BST, remarked on people who ‘hold their own events every January’, stating that they ‘are not friends of ours’ (interview).

There are important points to make regarding the origins of such divisions and their relationship with the march. First, some participants portrayed 2010 as the moment the splits occurred. Kay Duddy, for instance, talked of ‘a split where there never was one’ (interview). One survivor described how there was ‘solidarity. After 2010, everything ceased’ (interview). Geraldine Doherty, niece of Gerald Donaghey, told how ‘we were always as a group together, always. And after that [2010], it just went to pot’ (interview). Conversely, other participants discussed how the splits occurred years earlier but emerged more publicly after 2010. Robin Percival, inaugural Chair of the BST, described how ‘the families were always split right from the word go, but they managed to contain those splits in the public eye, so people weren’t aware of them’ (interview). Eamonn McCann discussed how ‘the tensions were hidden, I suppose, or contained and containable until then [2010]’ (interview). In other words, it is unclear whether the Report and apology actively created or merely exposed divides. At the very least, it seems that the moment of supposed closure was a time when divisions became far more apparent.

A second caveat: I do not wish to suggest that the divisions are only about the march. The march, in many ways, operates as a microcosm where wider tensions are played out between those broadly satisfied with the apology and Report and those unsatisfied; between those who remain in campaign mode and those who do not; those associated with the Bloody Sunday Trust and Museum of Free Derry and those more suspicious of them; those regarded (rightly or wrongly) as sympathetic to Sinn Féin and those who dislike the party; and even between those supportive and unsupportive of the peace process. But even if the splits are not only about the march, its importance cannot be underestimated. When asked about the march, Conal McFeely, former Chair of the BST, described the ‘hurt within that constituency’ (interview). John Kelly, brother of Michael and former Chair of the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign (BSJC), spoke of how ‘the organisers are, in fact, insulting the families by continuing to insist on this march’ (quoted in *Derry Journal*, 2011). When I suggested to Eamonn McCann that there is ‘animosity’

about the march, he responded, 'Fuck yes. Jesus, animosity doesn't cover it' (interview).

One might think the decision to march or not is an essentially private matter and wonder why it would be contentious – and there are participants who expressed such sentiments. Nevertheless, the divisions appear with clarity when one explores the concerns held by certain people about its discontinuation. Following detailed coding of the interview transcripts, there emerge three core themes expressed by those continuing to march: (1) That the Report and apology were unsatisfactory in bringing justice; (2) That the apology and the march's discontinuation were part of a nefarious 'deal'; (3) That the inquiry's findings regarding Gerald Donaghey were particularly unjust. These themes are each explored in turn.

1. The continuing pursuit of justice

When contemplating the subject, one might hypothesise various reasons why people may wish to continue marching: community participation, victim remembrance or emotional support, for instance. But such reasons do not feature with any prominence in the interviews. The most clearly stated reason can be summarised in one quote from a wounded survivor: 'Ultimately, the march was for justice. It always was for justice, and that was never achieved' (interview). This crucial reason is also displayed by the organisers specifically naming the ongoing march the 'Bloody Sunday March for Justice'. And, as each person continuing to march told me, justice, for them, means prosecutions. In Kate Nash's words:

Nice as apologies are, I mean, they murdered somebody in broad daylight deliberately and unarmed, unarmed people, is brutal murder, and how can you atone for that? The only way you can atone for that in any way is to go to trial, face the court, and be tried for what you done (interview).

As several interviewees said, prosecutions were a long-held objective of the BSJC, with the three key demands of the campaign being 'the repudiation of Widgery;⁷ the formal acknowledgement of the innocence of the victims; and the prosecution of those responsible' (MoFD, n.d.-a). After relisting these demands, Linda Nash, sister of William Nash, said, 'We are still on that path. Some may have left it'. Conal McFeely, not himself an advocate of continuing the march, articulated how

There may well have been a view that because of the willingness and the generosity that was displayed by the people of Derry, that the British establishment had done enough with the apology, and then they thought, 'This is done and dusted'. And what they didn't plan for was that people still wanted justice. (interview)

And

The British state and politicians just do not understand the pain and the hurt, the trauma of someone who's been killed in the Troubles, and they thought that they could close it down. (interview)

This strongly chimes with Ahmed's critique of overing; that justice has not been achieved, and it would be amiss to expect those afflicted to stop campaigning. Indeed, there is a very understandable and frequently offered argument that victims want equal treatment before the law. As one respondent who continues marching said:

Closure will come when they are treated by the law the same way as the law treats everybody else. If I'm not equal within the law to the man that shot me . . . then what sort of law is it? How can it be guided? How can the Prime Minister stand up there and say, 'Apologies'. (interview).

Kate and Linda Nash offered a similar point:

Kate Nash: All we want them to do is follow the law.

Linda Nash: Treat my brother equally. Equally, the way any other citizen would be treated. Treat my family the same way. It hasn't happened. (interview)

Correlated with the position that justice has not been achieved is a strong critique of the inquiry and the apology. Asked about her first reaction to the apology, Linda Nash's response was, 'I thought, the dirty bastards' (interview). Others are more sanguine but still clear about its limitations: in Kate Nash's words, 'apologies are okay. I don't see how – honestly, you can't atone. How can you atone by an apology for murder?' (interview). Liam Wray, brother of James, also offered key insights into the inadequacy of the apology and inquiry:

The man who fired the bullets into my brother's back was responsible, but his officers and the political machinations that went on before that are equally important because those people are responsible. And we didn't get that. We got [in the inquiry and apology] the easiest thing, and the idea was that we'd all go home quietly and joyously and happy. (interview)

And

Cameron had the ability, had he chose, to say, "I want the PSNI [Police Service of Northern Ireland] now to investigate with expediency, because these people have waited too long, the possible prosecutions into the people who have done this. And if there's a problem with funding, we will assist". There are many ways he could have done that but he didn't. Then we ended up in the situation which proves the quality of the apology in my view; we ended up in the situation where we had a stop-start police investigation into the deaths and attempted murders on Bloody Sunday, where it stopped at a time because it had no funding. They hadn't the resources to do it. So Cameron's apology was just another political stunt. (interview)

In this sense, there are strongly stated positions by those continuing to march that the Report and apology were insufficient in delivering justice and do not meet the families' long-held demands.

2. Deal making

A central plank of the animosity concerning the entwined issues of the apology and the march is the idea that there were compromising deals between vested parties. In Kate

Nash's words, 'It was deal making between Sinn Fein and the Northern Ireland Office. That's who arranged it all'. As she described, 'We feel that was also part of the deal making. We'll apologise and stop the marching'. In her words, 'They all work in that museum [Museum of Free Derry] over there, and they would further Sinn Fein's aims . . . they tried to stop . . . the Bloody Sunday march, then we protested' (interview). In making this point, and illustrating the animosity surrounding the march, she then named immediate relatives of those killed on Bloody Sunday that, in her view, were involved in the alleged Sinn Fein-NIO deal.⁸ For both her and Linda Nash, key figures in the march, there is a clear conflation between Sinn Fein, the Bloody Sunday Trust and the Museum of Free Derry, to the extent that, in Kate Nash's words, 'Sinn Fein, the Bloody Sunday Trust, are one of the same, by the way, they had the whole thing choreographed' (interview).⁹ As the reader might have gathered, the sisters do not think highly of Sinn Fein, and Kate Nash described how 'they create a whole lot of friction in families', 'operate like a sect' and had 'captured' two of their brothers (interview). Linda Nash hinted at intimidation, saying, 'They were desperate to stop us marching. Sinn Fein also said that if we organised the march, they would delegitimise us'. She elaborated, saying, 'The Bloody Sunday march was boycotted by all IRA groups. I says, usually they would come and give you a hiding, or they would give you a battering, they just boycotted us. They couldn't come and tell us why'. Kate Nash explained that they were not worried about getting beaten up, but that 'it's all said quietly and wee stories passed around the town, and they stop support for the march' (interview).

Other people who continue marching offer similar narratives concerning deals. As Liam Wray said, 'They stopped marching – that would be part of it. That would be part of the deal.' He expanded, saying, 'We delivered, we got your inquiry, got your apology, now let's stop confronting people with [the march]' (interview). Mr Wray also discussed another, in his view, 'silent trade off':

A lot of republicans, too, would be happy with it being settled because there are a lot of republicans out there who don't want to do time [go to prison]. So, if we get prosecutions for soldiers, let's be honest about it, they'll be under threat. (interview).

Eamonn McCann cast doubt on the idea that there was an explicit deal in relation to the apology and stopping public campaigns for prosecutions, but said:

I'd be very surprised if there hadn't been communication at least, to set that up, but I can't say that from my own knowledge. But common sense tells me that there was a deal done. I know that there were senior republicans that discussed this matter with British government representatives. (interview)

In relation to the march, McCann described how:

Sinn Fein is doing this deal with the Brits meanwhile,¹⁰ and the SDLP supported ending marches and so on. Moderate parties at the centre of the Alliance Party and so on, they're all in favour of marching and we got a deal now, we've got to have a deal. Everybody can be happy. Nobody is entitled to feel aggrieved. (interview)

The idea critically invoked by McCann that 'nobody is entitled to feel aggrieved' speaks squarely to the politics of overing; just as Ahmed should no longer feel that there

is discrimination in academia, it implies that the Bloody Sunday families should be placated by the Report and apology.

There is also a narrative whereby the Report and apology were part of a transaction regarding the Northern Ireland peace process. Mickey McKinney, brother of William, said, 'I believe we were used as part of the peace process'. Mr McKinney expressed how 'if somebody had have said to me that we were going to be part of a peace process, this was mentioned a number of times, and I said, "No, we are a human rights issue. It sits as a human rights issue – it stays on its own, and it's got nothing to do with the political situation in Northern Ireland"' (interview). When asked about the apology, Kate Nash ventured that 'something tells me that that may have been one of the agreements of Good Friday' (interview). Calling it 'political dirty dealing', Linda Nash asserted that 'Bloody Sunday was on the table as a deal maker for other things. It was on it for the Good Friday Agreement' (interview). Eamonn McCann described how 'it's not a coincidence' that the signing of the Good Friday Agreement occurred just months after Tony Blair's announcement of the new inquiry (interview). On his part, Liam Wray discussed how Bloody Sunday 'exasperated' the conflict and 'gave it a life that mushroomed'. He explained how 'where we have some modicum or example of peace going forward, then deals had to be done'. In his words:

The British government were never ever going to criticise the upper echelons of the British Army. They weren't going to criticise Ford, the commander of the Land Forces, they weren't going to criticise who was then Captain Jackson, Colonel Jackson, who was then going on to be the Chief of the General Staff . . . that's the last thing they were going to do. (interview)

I, perhaps naively, ventured that maybe it could be considered beneficial if the Report and apology aided the peace process. Mr Wray responded: 'If people in power know that for their own expediency that they can take life, that they can abuse people with impunity, that doesn't help the peace process' (interview) Here, then, one sees a concern that the 'truth' was partial, choreographed and traded justice for political objectives. This again feeds into the idea strongly held by some that the Report and apology are insufficient and, without justice, it is not time for the march to be over.

3. *The Gerald Donaghey injustice*

A less frequently mentioned but still prominent reason I encountered for continuing the march is the strong sense of injustice regarding Gerald Donaghey, a 17-year-old who was killed on Bloody Sunday. Despite strong evidence to the contrary, the Report stated that 'Gerald Donaghey was probably in possession of the nail bombs when he was shot' (Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, 2010: Ch 145.25).¹¹ Conal McFeely described how, in his view, 'if there's going to be marches every year, then the one figure who should be always at the front of that march is Gerald Donaghey' (interview). His niece, Geraldine Doherty, described how, amidst the celebrations on 15 June, it felt 'like a death. Another death, reliving it over' (interview). She explained that, shortly after the Report, her dying mother requested that she 'fight on Gerald's case for me and that's just basically what I'm doing'. Regarding the march's discontinuation, Mrs Doherty said, 'I

didn't like it one bit. No, I'm like, who are they to say that that march should have stopped?'. She depicted an attitude among certain people as, 'right, we've had this [Report] now, so we can stop marching'. She described how she told people who stopped marching that "'it's just like you've forgotten", but I said, "I'm still having to fight for Gerald . . . and besides, it's the people of Derry's march, it's not up to you"'. She was very clear that 'I go on the march for Gerald' (interview).

Sitting with the sense that the Report and apology constitute a heavily negotiated and compromised 'truth', Mrs Doherty described how there must be a 'fall-guy, and Gerald was the bait'. In her words, something had to be given to 'the other side . . . We'll give you all this but we're not giving you everything'. Linda Nash called the failure to exonerate him a 'sacrifice', stating that certain people within the campaign sought for 'no ifs or buts, just a straight-out apology, but didn't they settle for less because of Gerry Donaghey?' (interview). Kate Nash considers the case an unacceptable compromise 'to give them [the army/British establishment] something'. In her words, 'it was a crumb . . . there was talks going on between Sinn Fein and the British government about the apology. That's what I mean about it was all pre-orchestrated and absolutely choreographed'.

The outstanding Gerald Donaghey injustice sharply demonstrates the limitations of declaring an issue resolved. In fact, those in favour of stopping the march also recognise this enduring injustice, and the BST continues to press for recognition of his innocence. Tony Doherty, son of Patrick and current Chair of the BST, described it as 'the only fly in the ointment of the whole day [15 June 2010]' (interview). Leo Young, brother of John and who himself was in the car attempting to take Mr Donaghey to hospital, said, 'They got everything they were asking for – justice, prosecutions, except for Gerald Donaghey, which in all honesty, that will never be re-addressed again' (interview).

Stopping the march

Overing, as Ahmed outlines, is a discourse employed by privileged actors that reproduces unequal and exclusionary power relations. This clearly casts it in a negative light and provides an injunction to resist such manoeuvres. But is overing necessarily so pernicious? From one perspective, it could be welcome if there were a genuine end to racist/colonial/patriarchal/classist/ableist inequalities. This, however, is not what Ahmed is describing. Rather, she aims the term at declarations that an inequality is in the past when it palpably persists and is reproduced in the privileged actor's declarations. But perhaps there are reasons why non-hegemonic actors might declare an issue over – and surely this can be an understandable endeavour. Indeed, from one perspective, it could be considered empowering for victims to decide on their own terms when to bring a campaign or issue to an end.

It is relatives who wish to discontinue the commemoration march that I would frame as engaging in degrees of 'self-overing'. To be clear: I am certainly not suggesting that such participants have stopped mourning or commemorating their loved ones, or that they have somehow overcome their grief. I use the term to refer to members of the victim community determining to discontinue a campaign (or aspect of a campaign) on the grounds that sufficient, albeit imperfect, truth has been achieved. In this respect, the sense that a satisfactory truth had been received through the Report and apology was the

central pillar of discontinuing the march. It should be mentioned, however, that most people who have stopped marching continue to raise awareness of Bloody Sunday and other atrocities and most, but not all, continue to press for prosecutions of soldiers.

Analysing the interviews of those who wish to discontinue the march, one can detect three key themes: (1) The Report and apology provided sufficient 'truth'; (2) That relatives wanted to continue their lives beyond Bloody Sunday; (3) That the march had diminished in recent years, and it was better to finish while still enjoying broad public support. These themes are now explored.

1. Sufficient 'truth'

In her book, *Setting the Truth Free*, Julieann Campbell (2012: 214) described how, with the Report and apology, 'the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign [was] essentially at an end'. Regarding the march, she wrote:

In Derry, thousands of relatives, survivors, campaigners and citizens marked a fitting finale to their struggle with a final Bloody Sunday Commemoration March in January 2011. Almost 30,000 took to the streets one last time. Unlike any year since 1972, the huge gathering was cause for shared relief and celebration. Never again need Derry folk congregate in Creggan to walk the long and winding route. (Campbell, 2012: 214)

In our interview, she stated how 'it was decided that it would be the last march because the families had achieved their demands, and they were only marching to achieve the three demands of the campaign – the third one [prosecutions] is on the way, and they have no reason to march any more. It was a big, massive group decision' (interview).

Other interviewees also connected the decision to end the march with the Report and apology. John Kelly, brother of Michael and former Chair of the BSJC, said, 'I thought what Saville delivered to us was reason enough for actually calling to an end [the march],¹² and it was decided that in 2011, the year after Saville . . . that we should call it to an end, and the vast majority of the families decided to bring it to an end' (interview). In relation to the march, Tony Doherty said:

The vast majority of the families felt that . . . what we had achieved on 15 June, with the Saville Report as an exoneration, with the words of David Cameron, with apology and accepting political responsibility for the atrocity of Bloody Sunday, that it was now time for us all to consider moving on. (quoted in BBC, 2011)

Likewise, in my interview with him, he said:

Coming out of 2010 . . . the universal view within the area was that the families had done very well out of the inquiry. So why would we be asking people to march? How could you ask to march for something that many people, including many of the families, actually felt that they had achieved quite a lot already? (interview)

Leo Young said, 'I'm not marching no more . . . I've done it. I can't see what it's going to gain anymore.' In his words, 'after Saville, we all decided that what were we

marching for then?'. He continued, 'I thought that because he [Saville] vindicated everything . . . what are they marching for now? They got everything they were asking for' (interview). Brian Tierney, a local councillor and SDLP representative on the Bloody Sunday Trust, relayed how 'the majority of the families at that particular time said that the march was for truth, and they felt that they had got that truth, and they felt that now was the time to stop the march' (interview).

2. *Continuing life*

The second and interrelated strand here is one that fits squarely with overing; the idea that one needs to continue with life. Eamonn McCann is a strong advocate for continuing the march, but, when asked about it, provided a keen insight into why people may feel otherwise:

I remember Eileen Green, whose husband was killed on Bloody Sunday, and I was saying to her, 'This is not good enough, this idea'. She said, 'Look, Eamonn, I have given 40 years of my life to this. That's enough, I'm moving on now, no matter what you or anybody else says' . . . You have your life to lead, it's not going to bring somebody back. (interview)

He also observed:

Kay [Duddy] said something to the effect of, 'that's how people know me now, because I heard somebody say, "There's the Bloody Sunday woman". She said, 'That's how I'm known now, I don't want that.' (interview)

Although not in relation to the march, Mrs Duddy echoed this point in our interview, saying she has 'tried to put it on the back burner', and wants her 'life back' (interview). Robin Percival described how 'close relatives . . . are basically saying, "Look, I no longer want to be drawn in every time. As far as I'm concerned, Bloody Sunday is over, we did the best we can, we got a good result, and I want to live my life"' (interview). John Kelly said he will 'be 70 in October, so time is flying past, and I don't want to spend the rest of my life campaigning and arguing over Bloody Sunday' (interview). John McKinney, brother of William, captured how 'we're of the opinion that you have to kind of have a bit of closure as well. And I think ending the march was a bit of closure' (interview).

3. *The 'deterioration' of the march*

The third element to the argument to stop the march is in terms of its size, utility and, as some see it, character of its participants. Several participants (Tony Doherty, Jean Hegarty (sister of Kevin McElhinney), John Kelly, John McKinney, Leo Young) mentioned the diminishing numbers attending the march, with Jean Hegarty, Robin Percival and John Kelly using almost identical expressions of the 2011 march ending 'on a high' (interviews). Tony Doherty described how the apparent decline of the march paralleled the Inquiry: 'Since 1998 right up to 2010, the march was clearly going downhill. A blind

man on a galloping horse would have seen that this was something that wasn't working as well as it used to'. Framing it in strategic terms, he contended that 'it was clear to, I think, anybody who has any semblance of political organisation and managing demonstrations . . . that the march had lost its appeal' (interview).

Several participants expressed concern about the march's composition: one person affiliated with the Bloody Sunday Trust described how 'a lot of dissident groups with not very good reputations go on it, and people that the Trust would never have had dealings with were the families, you know, people . . . the bad eggs of society are taking part in the march' (interview). John Kelly hinted at this, too, saying, 'I was not happy the way the march was going. I was not happy the way people were treating the march, disrespecting the march and using it for other means'. Tony Doherty discussed how 'the dissidents . . . [were] attending the march, Sinn Fein was attending the march, the SDLP was attending march, the Socialist Workers were attending the march and our groups. So it became quite factionalised' (interview). According to Mark Durkan MP, 'the danger is that some of the people . . . continuing [to] march, unfortunately some of them are people who are also associated with a continuity IRA mentality' (interview). Robin Percival spoke of how the narrative of manipulative decisions by Sinn Fein and British authorities to end the march was, in his view, fed by

People Before Profit, some of the dissidents . . . IRSP [Irish Republican Socialist Party], people like that. They feed it because it fits the narrative that they want people to believe, which is that nothing has changed even though many, many, many things have changed. That the Brits are devious bastards and that the Saville Report was hogwash and, in fact, par [Eamonn] McCann, little different from Widgery. This feeds that kind of desire on the part of some [who] want to claim that Sinn Fein was party to all of this, which, of course, is utter nonsense. Sinn Fein weren't even party to the decision to end the march. (interview)

It is worth recalling a key warning from Ahmed (2012: 179) regarding overing: those who continue protesting are frequently framed as irrational and hostile. It is, of course, possible that 'bad eggs' do attend the march. But there is also a danger that 'you have to become what you are judged as being' (Ahmed, 2012: 186); that, in being judged as quarrelsome, one becomes quarrelsome. Here, then, there is a risk that certain people who have experienced gross injustice and continue marching become framed as disruptive, a challenge to group harmony and, in the words of one relative, 'mad' and afflicted by 'badness' (interview). The tragedy in this case is that, unlike in Ahmed's conceptualisation, the acrimony emerges not between hegemonic and marginalised figures but between people with a shared experience of colonial massacre.

To be clear: the goal of this article is not to determine the merits of (dis)continuing the march or to untangle whether 'deals' were made to end it. What I do want to point to, however, are the very understandable reasons why people who have been campaigning for justice – some for nearly half a century – may decide to stop marching. It is the case that those who have stopped marching tended to be associated with the Bloody Sunday Trust and had a far more favourable view of the Report and apology. Nevertheless, none see the apology or inquiry as perfect and each interviewee had criticisms. In this sense,

there was awareness that ‘truth’ and ‘justice’, whatever these terms mean, had not been achieved in absolute terms. But there was, for many, sufficient truth to end the march.

Further research and implications for other justice campaigns

A core contribution of this article is in introducing Ahmed’s theory of overing into scholarship on transitional justice. Where Ahmed illustrates the concept within the microcosm of the university setting, this article contends that it can be fruitfully employed to analyse more macro examples of state responses to past atrocity. I hope future research will build on this and the concept developed here of ‘self-overing’ to further examine the social and political implications of how victims, with varying degrees of success, seek to ‘put the past behind them’. Such research may delve further into the personal circumstances that lead people to stop or continue aspects of long-running campaigns. All the interviews in this study took place in Derry; are people who have moved away more or less likely to continue campaigns? What are the roles of age, class, race, employment status and gender in the process? Are there particular structures or even personality traits that have ramifications for how ‘truth’ is received? These are questions that cannot adequately be answered from this study alone, and I hope further research will address these issues.

By moving the discussion beyond the dyadic victim-perpetrator relationship, this article also advances scholarship on political apologies. Where existing literature has much to say about whether apologies heal intergroup relations, this article has focused on the implications for intragroup relations. In particular, it has been demonstrated that the ritual can engender discord *within* victim communities. This challenges prevalent binary ideas that apologies should be thought of as either felicitous or infelicitous, sincere or insincere, successful or unsuccessful; rather, recipients may respond in vastly different ways, potentially with significant intragroup consequences.

Finally, practical implications for other justice campaigns can be drawn from the findings. Even if we acknowledge shortcomings in the inquiry and apology (and the continuing disappointment regarding prosecutions),¹³ it is hard to underestimate how much the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign achieved. Where once the British establishment blamed the protestors, the apology and inquiry have helped inform the world of the ‘unjustified and unjustifiable’ nature of the massacre.¹⁴ It is understandable, therefore, that other justice campaigns have sought to learn from and even emulate the campaign, with groups from across Ireland and around the world regularly coming to meet and absorb knowledge from the relatives. Indeed, it is not a stretch to say that the presentational similarities between Guildhall, Derry, on 15 June 2010 and St George’s Hall, Liverpool, on 27 April 2016 (following an inquest which exonerated Liverpool supporters and found that fans were unlawfully killed in the Hillsborough tragedy) were not coincidental. Moreover, in 2018, the Bloody Sunday Trust launched *The Derry Model*, a project that aims to ‘bottle what appears to work so well here’ to assist peace initiatives and conflict transformation elsewhere (MoFD, n.d.-b). But if there is much to learn from what went right, this article has also highlighted difficulties that other campaign groups may contemplate. For obvious reasons, justice campaigns are geared at achieving an

almost hyperbolic form of truth and justice. The findings suggest that campaign groups should prepare for the medium and long-term implications after the coveted, but inevitably imperfect, truth.

First, it is important that relatives and stakeholders continue to meet to discuss the meaning and consequences of any official findings or apology. Linda Nash told me that the families have 'never met since 2010' (interview). Mickey Mckinney echoed this, saying, 'This report has never been discussed by the families', asking, 'how could you discuss a 5000-page document with 28 families?' (interview). Yet, even with this difficulty, it may help the community understand each other's positions going forward. This relates to overing; between the establishment of the BSJC and 2010, the families worked tirelessly and seemingly (if not actually) with great solidarity in the pursuit of justice. It is peculiar, then, to think that this should abruptly end or be 'over'. On the one hand, the individuals involved were not brought together by friendship but the haphazardness of atrocity. In this sense, if Bloody Sunday really were over, it might be amiss to imagine that bonds should persist. But even with the 2010 celebrations, Bloody Sunday is palpably not over, and there are ongoing issues of prosecutions, grief, trauma and commemorative events, such as the march. As such, it is beneficial that networks do not disband and any report or apology be collectively considered.

Second, campaign groups could anticipate and make allowances for 'truth' not being experienced evenly by all members. The clear example of this was the obvious joy that 15 June induced for some, in contrast to the desolation for Gerald Donaghey's relatives. But beyond this injustice, this is demonstrated more broadly in my interviews, with some people being far more satisfied with the outcome than others. Campaign groups should make allowances not just for 'success' or 'failure' but for a range of emotions, including ambivalence and changing emotions over time. Leo Young was initially derogatory about the apology when we met yet also called it 'the best day ever' (interview). Eamonn McCann, one of the strongest critics of the Report, said that 'the day of the publication of the Saville Report was quite literally one of the greatest days of my life' (McCann, 2010). In anticipating a range of responses, campaign groups may recognise that contrasting positions are equally legitimate. It does not automatically mean that those who continue aspects of campaigns are troublesome, just as it does not necessarily mean that those who stop have made pacts with the establishment. In the case of Bloody Sunday, there was evidently a great deal of thought into how 15 June would be presented outside Guildhall, with platforms, a giant screen, prepared statements and the such. But beyond the day in question, there also need to be long-term strategies for how wrongdoings will be represented, including recognition that people will wish to campaign or commemorate in different ways.

The final point pertains to the need for continuing psychological support. The impact of the massacre on relatives and the community has undoubtedly been profound, and many participants told me about ongoing trauma. A benefit of justice campaigns is the solidarity, clear goals and sense of purpose. Julieann Campbell described how, after 15 June, this may have been absent:

[For] a few people . . . it was like, what now? All that work and effort, but what now? I think there should have been a lot of support for them. We provided support on the day, but there should have been support in the years afterwards (interview).

This speaks to the issue of overing: no matter how categorical the inquiry or apology (and, for all their merit, both had shortcomings), Cameron's injunction to 'move on' is not plausible in many cases. People need support in the build up to 'truth' – a time when support networks are high functioning – but they also need support after the potential highs, ambivalences and disappointments of the day. In the aftermath of 'truth', it is imperative that support networks and, where necessary, professional psychological expertise remain in place. In Ahmed's (2012: 181) words, 'it is not the time to be over it, if it is not over'.

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Notes

1. John Kelly, brother of Michael, announced to a crowd outside Guildhall in Derry that 'we have overcome' (quoted in BBC, 2010). Likewise, Mark Durkan MP (2010) used the phrase in his Westminster response to Cameron's apology. It is a reference to the civil rights song *We Shall Overcome*, sung by protestors on Bloody Sunday.
2. Lind (2008) identifies cleavages within groups that are offering apology, arguing that contrition can cause a 'backlash' of denial and glorification among conservatives.
3. Interestingly, apologies frequently serve to create a 'temporal other' of the wrongdoer's own previous identity (see Gustafsson, 2020). However, to follow Ahmed's analysis, apologies can create a temporal other of the unapologated recipient, who then becomes the one deemed out of date.
4. Nevertheless, Ahmed (2014b: 116) recognises that apologies can open politicians to 'endless demands' for the contrition to be repeated.
5. Several of the relatives I interviewed have also been BST members.
6. As demonstrated, the MoFD does not enjoy good relations with all relatives and could not put me in contact with some. As such, Kate Nash, sister of William Nash and a key organiser of the ongoing march, essentially became a second gatekeeper. She played a key role in spontaneously inviting other relatives to her house while I was there, arranging interviews and organising transportation. I am extremely grateful to Mrs Nash for her kindness and help.
7. The Widgery Tribunal was established by the British government immediately after Bloody Sunday. It essentially exonerated the army and chain of command and blamed the victims, writing that there is a 'strong suspicion' that some of the dead 'had been firing weapons or handling bombs' (Widgery, 2001 [1972]: 100).
8. Participants associated with MoFD and BST strongly deny that there was any deal and, unsurprisingly, there is resentment at such suggestions.

9. The assertion that the apology was choreographed is frequently mentioned by those who continue marching. See Dixon (2018) for an analysis of how politicians deployed choreography or theatricality to win over constituents to the peace process. Whether one agrees or not with Mrs Nash's stance that there was a Sinn Fein-BST-NIO deal, there can be no doubt that both the apology and the events in Derry that day were highly mediated and theatrical.
10. It is not clear whether McCann is referring to the 'deal with the Brits' as the peace process or a 'deal' concerning the march. That he mentioned the SDLP position on the march within the same sentence suggests it is likely he is referring to the march.
11. For a detailed rebuke of the findings, see British Irish Rights Watch (2012).
12. Lord Saville was Chairperson of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.
13. In March 2019, it was announced that just one soldier would be charged for murder on Bloody Sunday. There have been no other prosecutions.
14. In his apology, Cameron (2010) quoted the Report that the killings were 'unjustified and unjustifiable'.

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