

Bloody Sunday

Trauma, Pain and Politics

Patrick Hayes and Jim Campbell

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The authors dedicate this work to the memory of the 14 men who lost their lives as a result of shootings on the streets of Derry, 30 January 1972 during a civil rights march and to their families, their children and future generations who will continue to work with courage and dignity to achieve justice in order that they may grieve their dead.

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I Wasn't Even Born

I remember people happy and the confidence of that morning.
The Creggan Shops.
I remember the banner that was carried. The gathered message.
I remember live fire.
A pool of blood on the pavement.
I remember Hugh Gilmore and Patrick Doherty.
I remember running. The Flats.
I remember Jim Wray and Michael McDaid.
I remember screaming.
English accents.
I remember William Nash and Gerard McKinney.
I remember a crazed army.
A white hanky.
I remember Michael Kelly and John Young.
I remember it black and white. But blood is always red.
I remember Jackie Duddy and Bernard McGuigan.
I remember looking for my friend from the confusion and then
through the quiet.
I remember Gerard Donaghy and Kevin McElhinney.
I remember hearing the news.
I remember John Johnston and William McKinney.
I remember thirteen coffins. Black flags.
I remember a young woman with an old face.
The funerals.
I remember my father crying hot, angry tears.
I remember the lies.
And I wasn't even born.

Killian Mullan and Sharon Meenan, Derry, 1997
used with permission.

Introduction

On 30 January 1972, in Derry,¹ Northern Ireland, 13 unarmed male civilians were killed by the British Parachute Regiment during a banned civil rights demonstration. Another man died later from gunshot wounds received that day. This event, commonly known as 'Bloody Sunday', is marked yearly with anniversary commemorations. Although it happened in 1972, recurring press coverage of the original events, the ongoing 'Troubles' (a term commonly used to describe the conflict in Northern Ireland over the past 35 years), recent family attempts to seek redress, anniversary marches, and the commission of the Saville Inquiry to establish the truth of what happened that day mean that Bloody Sunday is frequently recalled and referred to by people in Northern Ireland.

The significance of the incident is such that it is also regularly discussed in general literature on the Troubles and a number of specific books have been written about this subject over the years. Most of these have sought to 'tell the truth' about the events to correct the perceived inaccuracies and injustices which flowed from the Widgery Tribunal which was convened in the months immediately following Bloody Sunday to investigate the events of the day (HMSO, 1972). The writings range from personal and journalistic, to legal accounts of the period before, during and after the event: McClean's (1997) *The Road to Bloody Sunday*; McCann, Shiels and Hannigan's (1992) *Bloody Sunday in Derry*; McCafferty's (1989) *Peggy Deery*; Pringle and Jacobson's (2000) *Those Are Real Bullets, Aren't They?*; Mullan's (1997) *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday*; and Walsh's (2000) *Bloody Sunday and the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland*. These texts manage to piece together the story of the day through eyewitnesses or in the stories of family members and the wider community. What emerge are compelling accounts of human pain and tragedy, as well as political and legal contributions that seek to reveal substantive injustices.

The impetus for *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics* arose from the convergence of two sets of personal experiences. Patrick Hayes spent the first nine years of his life in the Bogside, Derry,

the densely populated Catholic area of the city that was to become the site of Bloody Sunday some three decades later. His interest in psychological trauma acquired as a psychotherapist for many years in the United States prompted him to inquire about how the event may have affected the Derry community, in particular families who had been bereaved. A preliminary study (Smyth and Hayes, 1994) indicated that substantial levels of trauma may exist among the Bloody Sunday families whose relatives were killed. Family members, some of whom witnessed violence and were subjected to life threatening danger, were still living in the community and subjected to daily reminders of their trauma. This initial work encouraged Hayes to carry out an in-depth investigation as part of his doctoral research at the Queen's University of Belfast (Hayes, 2000). Jim Campbell, who became involved in the project as supervisor of the thesis, has spent all of his life in Northern Ireland and was aged 16 and living in Belfast at the time of Bloody Sunday. He was brought up within a Protestant, Unionist family who, like many others at the time, assumed that the state must have had good reason to have killed and injured protestors. His subsequent interest in researching the effects of the Troubles on health and social care services coincided with a concern, shared with Patrick Hayes, that there was a need to re-examine the social, psychological and political impact of Bloody Sunday on family members.

Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics seeks to build upon other accounts by offering a different, but complementary, approach to this significant event in the history of Northern Ireland. It uses a primarily qualitative methodology complemented by two quantitative measures, to examine the narrative content of interviews carried out with family members of those who were killed on Bloody Sunday. It is important from the outset to explain that this account is necessarily partial for a number of reasons. It is not possible to generalise findings from this study and apply them to all families who lost a relative on Bloody Sunday, let alone other groups of people who have suffered because of the violence in Northern Ireland. Qualitative research by its nature seeks to explore and construct meaning from interview data provided by subsections of wider populations. For this reason we can only seek to summarise and analyse the views of

the sample of Bloody Sunday families who participated in the study. We were not involved in exploring many other important issues around Bloody Sunday, for example the relatively neglected area of those who had been injured, or the task of establishing the facts of the day that have been comprehensively discussed in the books identified above.

We also must acknowledge, as others who have carried out research into violent conflicts have done (Smyth and Robinson, 2001), that we did not come to this study as neutral observers of a traumatic event. The important point here is not so much that bias is inherent in much social research, we know this to be the case, but that implicit values and assumptions should be brought to the open, acknowledged and factored into subsequent claims made by researchers (Dawes, Tredoux and Feinstein, 1989). Although we have quite contrasting biographies and life experiences, we generally agree that the way the state behaved on Bloody Sunday was unjust and that subsequent neglect of the issue, and more importantly the suffering of victims as a result of it, was wrong. We believe that, in such situations, it is important to find a way in which those who have suffered can have a voice. The opportunity to tell these stories in this text is just one of a number of ways that family members can have their views heard.

Hayes' study provides the framework for this book about the event that many believe served as the catalyst for the most recent round of political violence in Northern Ireland that has spanned more than 30 years. Research from other parts of the world suggest that one way of coping with trauma is to integrate it into one's life story (Aron, 1992; Hadden, Rutherford and Merrette, 1978; Herbst, 1992; Hunt, 1997; McGoldrick, 1995; Nagata, 1990; Shepherd, 1992; Solkoff, 1981; Solkoff, 1992; van der Kolk, 1994; van der Kolk and Fisler, 1995; Weine et al., 1995). For example, telling the story to one's children will inform them of what happened, may illuminate confusion about family members' behaviour related to the trauma, and may promote their general health (McGoldrick, 1995; Nagata, 1990; van der Kolk, 1994; van der Kolk and Fisler, 1995). This book presents the stories of a sample of surviving family members illustrating unresolved grief complicated by ongoing trauma, which may have intergenerational consequences. It also reveals traumatic memories of the

day and of lost family members, inter-group conflict, views on politics and society, health and social care, and perceptions about the Saville Inquiry.

In writing this book we wished to avoid viewing Bloody Sunday as an isolated incident, somehow detached from the maelstrom of social, economic and political events that have occurred in the last 30 or more years. For this reason, we provide an overview of theoretical and historical perspectives related to trauma and politics which are helpful when we begin to interpret the complexity of individual and family narratives.

Chapter 1 sets Bloody Sunday in context by providing an overview of the historical backdrop of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. This includes an account of competing political, ethnic/cultural and economic perspectives on the causes of the Troubles, and the problems that flowed from the partition of Ireland in 1921. The specific circumstances of Derry in the late 1960s and early 1970s are outlined, with a particular emphasis on the geo-politics of the city, sectarian discrimination and increasing civil unrest leading to the events of Bloody Sunday. Bloody Sunday is also discussed in the context of many other traumatic incidents caused by political violence, which occurred in the last 30-plus years. All these events, and many more, led to multiple deaths, injuries and subsequent trauma and also raise important ethical and political questions about victimhood. Without denying the very real and acutely painful suffering experienced by other individuals, families and communities caught up in these terrible events, it is argued that Bloody Sunday was of special significance, because of the nature of state involvement in the killings, a flawed, inadequate and suspect investigation into the killings, and the profound impact the incident had on fuelling subsequent paramilitary and state violence.

A variety of perspectives have been used to explain the nature of state violence, both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the world. We believe that a critical exploration of the role of state in society is important in explaining how events like Bloody Sunday happen and the resulting traumatic consequences for victims.

Chapter 2 begins by highlighting competing discourses on violence for and against the state using international examples. Of particular interest to the authors is the way in which states, before and after the events of 9/11, presented their worldview on the

causes of insurgency. The chapter then focuses on the specific context of state violence in Northern Ireland, from the early periods of the Troubles in the 1920s and 1930s to the more recent events of the last three decades. It is argued that throughout this period the state often used excessive violence and repressive law to deal with insurgencies and street violence. It is only in recent years, following the Belfast Agreement in 1998, that opportunities are beginning to emerge to explore and address the impact of such violence. The chapter concludes by reflecting upon ways in which the state can deal with past injustices which may lead to the resolution of trauma suffered by groups such as the Bloody Sunday families.

A central issue raised throughout this book is the complex relationship between political violence and trauma. Chapter 3 reviews literature on the concept of trauma, with a particular focus on the term Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The works of contemporary thinkers such as Horowitz, van der Kolk, Herman, and others, provide a basis for understanding PTSD. It is also recognised that earlier views on PTSD need to be modified by recognising the impact of biological, social, environmental and political determinants. The chapter also examines the interaction between grief and mourning and trauma, ways of helping those affected by trauma, and research about the concept in the context of Northern Ireland. The importance of narrative as part of a healing process is also highlighted in the literature.

Chapter 4 discusses the framework for the study methodology and the rationale for using a primarily qualitative, narrative approach complemented by two measures, one which examined evidence of possible PTSD symptomatology and the second, the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) which measured aspects of general health. The study sample is described along with procedures and data analysis for both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Findings from the measures are reported and provide an explanatory backdrop for interpreting the narratives. Chapters 5, 6, 8 and 10, and parts of Chapter 7, concentrate on the description and analysis of the accounts that were provided by family members. Data was coded into coherent themes and theoretical perspectives related to trauma, grief and mourning, and storytelling is used to explain and interpret narratives.

Chapter 5 presents stories about the day of Bloody Sunday told

in the actual words of relatives of the victims at the time of the 25th anniversary. The intense and compelling imagery in the language reveals a sense of the intractability of the trauma resulting from the perception of helplessness, injustice and betrayal along with the horrific realisation that one's life is at imminent risk. The immediate aftermath of the event, including family shock at learning of the deaths, followed by the funerals that appeared to paralyse, not only the families, but also the wider Derry community, is poignantly described. These events set the stage for incomplete grieving and for potential continuous traumatic stress.

In Chapter 6 narratives, a range of phenomena emerge in the aftermath of trauma: feelings of irrevocable loss, not just of the family member, but of future generations; loss of one's identity as an individual which was subsumed into the collective identity of being a Bloody Sunday family member; loss of innocence, faith, security, childhood, trust, and family celebrations and rituals. A sense of betrayal and injustice following the findings of Widgery Tribunal and harassment by security forces compounded the trauma and the grieving process for the lost relative. Other themes that became evident included attitudes towards politics and the way in which parenting styles and coping were affected. This was the case not only for parents who lost a son and who were rearing their other children in the years immediately following Bloody Sunday, but also for the siblings and children of those killed as they became parents of a new generation many years later. In the face of loss, the general family response was to protect the next generation through silence about Bloody Sunday and by instilling an anti-violent, apolitical ethic in their children. These strategies may have been used to protect family members from future loss. The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign often became a support for family members and provided them with a means to seek justice for the death of their family member.

Subsequent chapters of the book include a focus on the way the state generally failed to respond to the social and psychological needs of those who have been traumatised in these ways.

In Chapter 7, the history of health and social care services during the Troubles in Northern Ireland is critically analysed. It is argued that there continue to be problems for groups who have been victimised or see themselves as being victimised by the state,

when the state is perceived as the perpetrator of the violence. Nonetheless, current political and social change in Northern Ireland, along with new developments in the provision of health and social welfare, may provide some help to those, like the Bloody Sunday families, who have suffered. The views are tested by reference to some of the narratives collected during the second stage of interviews in 2001.

Chapter 8 includes an update of findings from interviews carried out with some of the original cohort of families five years after the original study at the time of the 25th anniversary. Family members were asked to talk about their views on the events that has transpired in Northern Ireland since that time, especially the peace process and the emergence of the new inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday. Family members shared perceptions of the peace process, changes in the Derry community attitudes towards Bloody Sunday and the media, and the impact of the Saville Inquiry on family members and the Derry community. Their narratives suggest that the Inquiry might deal with some longstanding concerns and may help in some aspects of trauma resolution; however, this alone will not be a panacea for all of the ills that flowed from Bloody Sunday.

Because questions remain for many of the families about the resolution of issues surrounding and subsequent to the events of Bloody Sunday, Chapter 9 focuses on the background to and the processes involved in the establishment of the Saville Inquiry and whether this process is likely to mitigate or exacerbate the trauma or lead to resolution of issues related to truth and justice for family members. The peace process in Northern Ireland appears to have fostered an environment which was more favourable for considering a re-examination of the events of Bloody Sunday and for addressing the flaws of the Widgery Tribunal.

The conclusions of the Widgery Tribunal, which was hastily convened and concluded shortly after Bloody Sunday, left family members and the Derry community with a profound sense of injustice, victim blaming, and a conviction that the truth would never be learned about what happened that day. Prime Minister Tony Blair announced the setting up of the new Saville Inquiry which began its work on 3 April 1998. This has been the most expensive and exhaustive investigation into such an event in the history of the British

state. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the Inquiry alone is unlikely to resolve all the guilt, blame, and needs for reparation that stemmed from Bloody Sunday or from other painful events during the recent Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 10 recounts family members' experiences, hopes and fears for the outcome as testimony unfolded in the day-to-day events of the Inquiry. Respondents generally found the help and support of other family members, and the wider Derry community, to be comforting as some questions which had remained unanswered for so long were addressed. Family members acknowledged that, despite intense distress at hearing testimony about loved ones' deaths and at times, frustration with the conduct of the Inquiry, it was 'worth it' if truth and justice will be served.

The conclusion draws together a variety of themes that arose in the book. We argue that a number of important issues were raised in the course of the research, including a sense that many of the respondents were still experiencing symptoms of posttraumatic stress, grief, guilt, loss, anger and injustice about an event which happened more than 30 years ago. Nonetheless, there were optimistic accounts about hopes for the future and a willingness to try to move on. What concerned some respondents were the dangers of another perceived compromise which might emerge from the Saville Inquiry that may simply echo the injustices of the Widgery Tribunal. This raises the possibility of once again compounding the original trauma of Bloody Sunday. The authors argue that there is a need for broader policy approaches in helping individuals, families and communities who, like the Bloody Sunday families, have suffered so much during the Troubles. This may include more comprehensive, sensitive services, but also mechanisms for allowing people who have been traumatised to understand and talk about the past.

Note

- 1 The authors use the name Derry to describe the city because it was the common description used by respondents and many other citizens. We wish to recognise, however, that a sizeable minority of the city's population have the right to express their own sense of identity and citizenship by referring to it as Londonderry.

1 Bloody Sunday in context

While Bloody Sunday in Derry is but one event in the history of Northern Ireland, it played an important role in the escalation of the recent Troubles, which have their roots in centuries of political and social conflict. In recognising this past, it is also important to acknowledge that any attempt to describe it will necessarily be partial and value-laden. There is no one history of Ireland; instead multiple, contested versions exist from which to choose (Farrell, 1992; Stewart, 1977; Foster, 1988). The same can be said of contemporary analyses of the current conflict and its causes. What we have are significant events which are viewed, interpreted and reconstructed by institutions and social forces. What is provided below is a brief interpretation of what we believe are relevant factors in a long history of political violence. This, we believe, will help contextualise significant events which occurred before and after Bloody Sunday, and provide background detail to the chapters which follow.

The origins of the conflict

Much has been written about the origins of the conflict, which has lasted for at least 600 years. A significant factor in this history has been the impact of English colonialism on early modern Ireland which led, in turn, to conflict between the indigenous population and settlers from the island of Britain. Although the relationship between the metropolitan centre and the colonised island of Ireland entailed various degrees of exploitation and oppression, it would be too simple to describe these processes as linear and one-dimensional.

The plantation of Ireland took place in different historical phases involving a complex set of social, economic and political factors. What emerged from these experiences are what Foster (1988) describes as ‘varieties of Irishness’ in which Planter and Gael, at various periods in history, both clashed and coexisted. It was, however, the particular character of the plantation in the province of Ulster in the northeast which created the conditions

for sectarian violence from the seventeenth century onwards. The Williamite revolution established the primacy of the Protestant faith, although the established Anglican Church continued to battle with nonconformists as well as Catholics until after the rebellion of the United Irishmen failed in the late eighteenth century. The impact of the Industrial Revolution also had a profound effect on socio-economic relationships in Ulster, suggesting to some that the lack of such development elsewhere on the island created conditions for the maintenance and replication of sectarian violence and inequality (Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, 1996; McVeigh, 1997).

By the nineteenth century the growing demand for an independent Irish nationhood created a dilemma for Unionists on the island, who were mostly concentrated in the nine counties of the traditional province of Ulster and the area around Dublin. Unsuccessful attempts in the late nineteenth century to introduce a series of Home Rule bills at Westminster, mass resistance to Home Rule in Ulster prior to the First World War, the Easter Rising during that war, and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21, were key moments in a process that ultimately led to the partition of Ireland in 1921. The Government of Ireland Act created the state of Northern Ireland with the old province of Ulster, now reduced to six counties but with an in-built Protestant and Unionist majority. Northern Ireland remained constitutionally part of the United Kingdom, whilst the new Free State was provided a large degree of independence under the Treaty conditions, but still with only dominion status.

These new political and constitutional arrangements marked Northern Ireland out as a contested geopolitical space, ‘a place apart’ within the United Kingdom. Many Catholics, who constituted a large minority of Northern Ireland’s population, perceived themselves as Nationalists ‘trapped’; their political aspirations to be part of the new Republic of Ireland in the 26 southern counties were hardly recognised during most of the 50-year period of the local devolved administration at Stormont. Conversely, most Protestants saw the Union within the United Kingdom as a guarantee of civil and political rights and felt threatened by what appeared to be an alien and hostile culture in the Free State, and later the Republic of Ireland.

Interestingly, the city of Londonderry (the city council changed its name to Derry in 1984) has played a central role in the history of Ireland, before and after partition. The site of the current city on the banks of the Foyle hosted centuries of Gaelic culture before the extensive plantation of the county of Londonderry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The original Gaelic name had become anglicised by the addition of the prefix 'London' when artisans and tradesmen from London guilds colonised the region and constructed the city walls to protect against native Irish attack. Crucially, it was the siege of Derry and the role that the Apprentice Boys played in holding out against the forces of the Catholic king, James, which established an important myth in Protestant Unionist culture, which remains to this day. In the centuries that followed, Catholics tended to be marginalised, excluded from the city walls and located in poorer lands to the west of the city, including the Bogside.

Simplistic notions of national identity, religious affiliation and ethnic difference cannot, however, fully explain the history of the political conflict in Northern Ireland. There have been, for example, various moments in Northern Irish history when nationality has not been an organising principle around which politics revolve. For example, the motivation of class interest can help explain the revolt of the United Irishmen in 1798, the Poor Law Relief riots in Belfast in 1933 and the rise of the Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1960s. Although some academic and political discourses reinforce the notion that the conflict in Northern Ireland is essentially one of 'two warring tribes', the role of the British, and, to a lesser extent the Irish political establishment in managing, and at times exacerbating, the conflict, should not be ignored (Whyte, 1991; McGarry and O'Leary, 1995).

The weakness of the local economy has also been a contributory factor in this political instability. Although industrial activity was characterised by dynamic periods during the nineteenth century, the manufacturing base went into almost continuous decline in the twentieth century (Borooah, 1993). As a result the Northern Ireland state depended upon subventions from Westminster in order to deliver a wide range of spending commitments on social security, health and education, agriculture, industry, and defence. High levels of unemployment, poverty

and a range of unmet health and social needs have been features of the political economy of Northern Ireland. When statistics on inequality are disaggregated, some groups are shown to have been worse off than others. For example, concepts of indirect and direct discrimination have been used to explain why Catholics continue to be more than twice as likely as Protestants to be unemployed (Teague, 1993; McGarry and O'Leary, 1995). Westminster's disregard of the internal affairs of Northern Ireland since its inception in 1921 allowed a form of politics to develop that is typified by sectarian conflict (McVeigh, 1997). Even the geopolitics of the region reflect such divisions, with Catholics tending to live in the west and Protestants in the east. Thus, the people in Derry, where Bloody Sunday took place, have been multiply disadvantaged. This is partly because the region's natural trading hinterland was blocked by the erection of the border in 1921, and also because industrial and commercial policies tended to focus on the interests of the population in the east of Northern Ireland (Probert, 1978: 54).

Northern Ireland: a contested state

From the outset, the devolved administration in Northern Ireland faced many difficulties: a continuous threat of insurgency and the existence of a very large minority (about one third) of its citizens who generally looked across the new border for national identity and allegiance. These precarious beginnings for the new state may explain, but do not excuse, the use by successive governments of repressive laws and policing, and the gerrymandering of electoral districts (Walsh, 2000). In addition, a system of economic discrimination often disadvantaged the large, mostly Catholic Nationalist minority, whilst leaving many working-class Unionists also impoverished (Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, 1996). Violence was an ever-present feature of the state in its early years. For example, between June 1920 and June 1922, 428 people lost their lives in a spate of sectarian violence; two-thirds of these were Catholics (McKittrick and McVea, 2001: 4).

It has been argued that social changes introduced by the Westminster government after the Second World War, especially free secondary education, led to the rise of a Catholic middle class,