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**A Social Psychological Perspective on Post-Disaster  
Campaigns for Justice: Strategies in the Aftermath of the  
Grenfell Tower Fire**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology**

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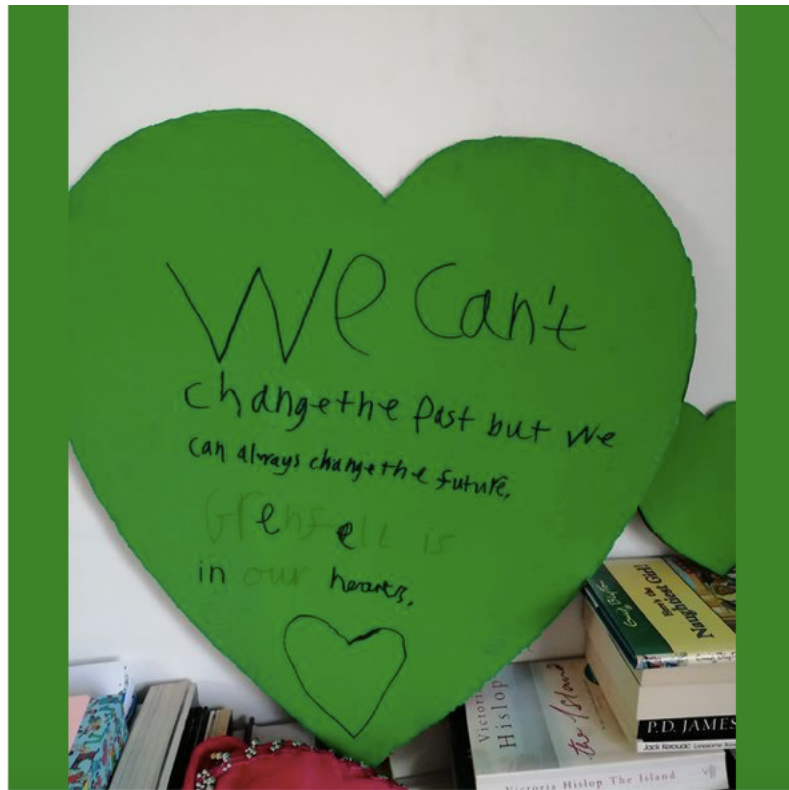
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**September 2021**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree

Selin Tekin

*Signature*.....



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By Noah, 9 years old, friend of Yaqoub who lost his life in Grenfell Tower fire: *"We can't change the past, but we can always change the future. Grenfell is in our hearts."*

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### **Context Statement**

This thesis has been prepared in the format of papers for publication, with the exception of the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), a factual account of the Grenfell Tower fire (Chapter 2), and general discussion (Chapter 6). In Chapter 1 I provided an overview about the thesis topic, background of the topic, my research questions and the methodology that I used to answer my questions. In Chapter 2 I provided information about how the Grenfell Tower fire was considered by media representations and the literature. Chapter 4 has been published in a peer-reviewed journal at the time of the dissertation submission, whereas Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 are currently under review (each has been given ‘revise and resubmit’ decision). I uploaded Chapter 3 to a preprint server. The citation for Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 is provided on the title page of each chapter. Given the paper-based format of the thesis, the text within the chapters is identical to the submitted or published papers. I have created a single reference list at the end of the thesis. I numbered the tables and figures according to the order of their appearance in the thesis (e.g., Figure 1, Figure, 2, Table 1 etc.).

Paper 1, 2, and 3 in the thesis have myself and my supervisor, Prof. John Drury, as authors. I am the lead author on all papers which represents the fact that in all of the papers I collected and analysed the data and wrote the drafts of the papers. I received comments from my supervisor after every draft. The order of the papers in the thesis is based on the chronological order of the studies conducted as part of this research project.

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**University of Sussex**

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

**A Social Psychological Perspective on Post-Disaster Campaigns for Justice:  
Strategies in the Aftermath of the Grenfell Tower Fire**

**Summary**

Previous research has shown that people help each other with different types of needs when there is a disaster or emergency. Moreover, it was also evidenced that rebuilding and restoring the community become successful and sustainable when there is an active participation of community members during the recovery process. However, research on previous disasters also reported that the support doesn't only come from the community members. Sometimes, allies from different communities come together with the survivors and bereaved families to meet various types of needs.

This thesis examined the justice seeking processes of campaigners who supported survivors and bereaved families in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. The overall aim of the research was to understand how justice campaigns arise after the disaster and why the people who are not primarily affected by the disaster also support those campaigns. Specifically, I intend to achieve a better understanding about how post-disaster campaigns succeed or fail. I asked: 1) How do local and wider community members share a social identity and engage in post-disaster justice campaigns in order to empower the disaster community and their actions? 2) How is street mobilisation used as a strategy to seek justice in the aftermath? 3) How does racism and victim blaming delegitimize the identities of victims and their justice seeking actions? In my first study, thematic analysis of interviews with 15 campaigners helped me to understand that reaching out to allies and building shared social identity among supporters were two main ways to achieve campaign goals. In the second study, using ethnography as a framework and thematic analysis of 15 more interviews helped me to understand that people don't just become groups; they also strategically take collective actions to constitute themselves as a group and try to overcome injustice. In my third study, using a critical discursive psychological approach to analyse 416 hostile tweets which attacked victims of the Grenfell Tower Fire delegitimize them and their demands for justice. Throughout the thesis I argue that achieving campaign goals and empowerment of actions are possible when the support is mobilized from beyond the immediate community. Therefore, organizing campaign events strategically in an inclusive way can contribute to this empowerment. Lastly, even though support from

other (wider) communities can be more salient, victim blaming might also happen by individuals from other communities. Moreover, this victim blaming often takes the form of racist attacks. Therefore, even though working class and ethnic minority groups experience disasters disproportionately, they might also face with racist way of victim blaming in the aftermath of a disaster.

### **A Personal Note**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2011, an earthquake occurred in a village, Tabanlı, near the Turkish city of Van. According to reports, 604 people lost their lives while 4,152 people were injured and over 60,000 people were left homeless. The government responded to the earthquake with 1,275 personnel, 290 healthcare workers, 43 ambulances, and six air ambulances. Besides the official responses launched, local people and figures from other cities voluntarily came together with the survivors and bereaved families to meet their material needs and to provide emotional and psychosocial support.

I was a final-year undergraduate Psychology student when the earthquake happened and learnt that the Turkish Psychologists Association (Türk Psikologlar Derneği, TPD) Trauma Unit was recruiting volunteer psychologists to provide psychosocial support to those affected by the disaster. After interacting with the TPD and having attended the workshops of the Trauma Unit, I went to Van with 20 other psychologists, social workers, and consultants. As students, our responsibilities included helping the experts (psychologists and consultants) in their creation of activities designed, often respectively, for children, teenagers, and adults. I specifically helped with the activities instituted for teenagers.

Besides learning how different volunteer and occupational groups work in collaboration in such a context, I also had the chance to observe how disasters may be described as political, wherein different groups experience a given incident via different levels. For example, people who had more financial resources prior to the disaster were able to move to other cities which offered a safer environment. In contrast, working-class people were disproportionately affected as, alongside losing their loved ones and accommodation, they also lost their workplaces and the material/social (re)sources (e.g., neighbourhoods) of their community. Moreover, many families lived together with more than three children alongside extended family members. Subsequently, these residents were provided only with one large tent to live in. In addition, these tents were not fire-resistant. Therefore, 12 people lost their lives and over 160 people were injured because of tent fires.

Women and female teenagers were understood to have experienced more difficulties during the recovery process due to the unequal gender roles assumed. When we organized after-school sessions with teenagers, families allowed their sons to attend but female teenagers were not allowed to go out after their school hours had ended.



Moreover, because women were assigned housework-related responsibilities, they were unable to leave their tents to attend mental-health related workshops or other sessions. At the same time, daughters were tasked with helping their mothers. Even though we, volunteers, and the mental-health experts visited the tents during the day, our numbers restricted the ability to make such visits daily or frequently.

Even though the authorities were quick to respond to the needs of community members in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, they were criticized by the media for mismanaging the recovery process. For example, the Turkish Government received significant donations and aid from other countries and other cities in Turkey, yet this was not managed systematically or strategically. Therefore, some families failed to receive adequate aid. In addition, approximately 20,000 container houses were sent to the area yet mismanagement and an inadequate number of volunteers and officials being available meant that the building of these container houses took months to achieve.

Eastern Turkey is a region in which Kurdish people primarily live. The Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Turkey, comprising between 15% and 20% of the population. After the earthquake, survivors and bereaved families faced expressions of racism in some media reports. For example, an anchor-women of the Habertürk channel, *Duygu Canbaş*, otherized victims when reporting on the situation and stated that: “For the whole of Turkey, even though it happened in Van in the east, this news really shocked and saddened us all.” In doing so, Duygu Canbaş emphasized the perceived “unworthiness” of the people who live in the east of the country. In another example, a TV show presenter, Müge Anlı, stated that “Everyone will know their position. You will throw stones when you want, you will kill soldiers like a bird; then, call my dearest soldiers in difficult days and ask for help.” Here, Müge Anlı expressed racism by implying and generalizing that Kurdish people are terrorists who kill Turkish soldiers whenever they want and then ask for help from the military. Moreover, through such accusations against the Kurds, she invoked victim-blaming.

These statements were criticized by many commentators via traditional media and social media channels. Moreover, members of the public condemned this racism and pressured the respective presenters to apologize to the victims. Later, the Contemporary Journalists Association took legal action and sued Müge Anlı for her provocations of racism. She was subsequently found guilty and punished by being required to compensate the channel on which she presented her TV show. In addition, Duygu Canbaş also apologized to the public.

However, the original statements were heard by the people who had experience the earthquake and this had a particularly strong effect among the young population. One of the teenagers in our psycho-social activity sessions stated that: “You teachers who came all the way here to help us. You must be really good people. But I heard the comments of Müge Anlı, why do people say these kinds of things. Don’t we deserve to be helped?” With this question, I realized that some people can use disaster and emergency situations to blame a specific group which already faces discrimination. Even though there were only a few racist comments, especially when compared to the high level of support received, such hostile expressions can have a practical effect upon the public.

Attending the recovery process post-earthquake allowed me to experience and observe this disaster situation from different viewpoints. Here, I was able to observe how community support arose and how people from different cities solidarized with survivors and bereaved families to overcome the negative effects of the disaster. Moreover, I was also able to observe how people from different parts of Turkey pressured those who expressed racism to apologise and/or make amends. These experiences led me to read literature as to disaster and emergency situations. Moreover, my Social Psychology studies and knowledge of the behaviour of individuals and groups during emergencies helped me to understand the importance of encountering solidarity during a recovery process.

Seeing the news about the Grenfell Tower fire reminded me of my experiences of the recovery process undertaken following the Van Earthquake. The most prominent similarity I identified was that similar groups - e.g., working-class and racial/ethnic minority populations - were disproportionately affected by these two disasters. Consistent with previous disaster and emergency situations, my observations evidenced that disasters are political events rather than natural processes. However, a primary difference between the Van earthquake and the Grenfell Tower fire was that people created post-disaster justice campaigns to fight against systemic injustices experienced before and after the fire. Therefore, I have aimed to develop an in-depth understanding as to the different features of such post-disaster justice campaigns and strategies that people follow in order to achieve their goals. I have also sought to understand if there is a way of combating attacks raised against victims and expressions of racist language. I believe this work contributes practical and theoretical knowledge as to the fight against systemic injustices in the aftermath of disasters.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Grenfell Tower was a 24-storey building in North Kensington, London. It was managed by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). It contained 120 flats, comprising a mix of social housing and private homes. A fire began on the fourth floor on 14 June 2017, which became out of control within 30 minutes and lasted over 60 hours. It spread to other flats in the building very quickly because of the cheap and flammable cladding that was used during the refurbishment projects carried out by the KCTMO in the year before the fire (Bulley, 2019). In the end, 72 people lost their lives and over 200 people in the neighbourhood lost their accommodation. Many more people were traumatized (Booth & Wahlquist, 2017; Bulley, 2019).

Even though residents repeatedly raised their concerns about fire safety in the building in the four years preceding the fire, action necessary to make the building safe was not taken by the local council or by the KCTMO. Rather than blaming a simple electrical appliance fire, it is seen that survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters consider the underlying reason for the fire as deriving from the negligence of the authorities. Therefore, campaigners, volunteers, members of that neighbourhood and wider communities gathered together immediately after the fire in order to meet the material needs of survivors (e.g., food, donations, and accommodation). They also continued acting together for two more reasons. First, in order to raise their voice against the negligence of the authorities and, second, because of the inadequate and delayed responses of the authorities.

In this thesis, I seek to understand the social psychological processes of people who supported the survivors and bereaved families via justice campaigns in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. The thesis has been prepared in the format of three studies for publication. Prior to presenting these studies, I provide a literature review as to general disasters literature and social psychology literature in Chapter 1. In addition, I describe the methodology used to answer my research questions. In Chapter 2, I provide information about a specific case, the Grenfell Tower fire, including the history of the neighbourhood and the events that followed during the first year after the fire.

In Chapter 3, I examine the shared responses of those involved in the campaign processes enacted following the fire. Here, I specifically focus on understanding the

main aims and reasons for the campaigning enacted. I conducted 15 interviews between February and April 2018. When I started my interviews, there was already discussion about the inquiry process and people were planning a petition to call upon the Prime Minister to take action in building public trust towards the inquiry. This petition, as a feature of the campaigns launched, became successful very quickly and gained the signatures of 156,835 people. Therefore, I have aimed to understand what the main reason for their success was, how campaigners defined success, and what were the different strategies employed when campaigning.

One of the most prominent campaign features was a monthly “Silent Walk”, as began one month after the fire and continued for over four years. In Chapter 4, I consider how campaigners used these Silent Walks as a way of mobilizing others. Through individual semi-structured interviews, I became more familiar with such campaign activities and began to contribute to the campaigning process. In doing so, I was able to combine my ethnographic observations and interviewing while analysing the narratives gained in the study. In fact, because the responses of my interviewees mainly related to the pre-existing system, history of the environment, and background of the campaigning action, my ethnographic observations helped me to analyse the interviews conducted more thoroughly.

Throughout the research, I recognised that attacking victims was occurring in different ways (especially in racist ways) in the aftermath of the fire. In Chapter 5, I cover how previous literature has considered attacks against victims in cases of disaster, focusing specifically on how language is used to delegitimize the justice-seeking actions of survivors and bereaved families. My primary concern was to understand what was said, how it was said, how it functioned, and how the meaning of hostile expressions are shaped by context. Therefore, I collected hostile posts or comments from Twitter and analysed those tweets via a critical discursive psychological approach.

In Chapter 6, I provide an overview of my findings from the preceding three studies. I further compare these studies with previous literature, identifying similarities and how the present research contributes to the existing literature. Overall, I have used different methods through which to collect and analyse data. This has helped me to understand the supporting processes of campaigners from different perspectives.

## 1.1. Literature Review

### 1.1.1. Defining disasters: Disasters are political rather than natural incidents

For over 50 years, disasters have been the focus of researchers from different disciplines – such as Geography (Bunge, 1973), Anthropology (Oliver-Smith, 1991), Sociology (Quarantelli, 1991), and Psychology (Sime, 1985). Since each discipline considers the topic from its own perspectives, the definition given as to what constitutes a disaster also varies. Traditional research has mainly emphasised the physical features of such events, therefore classifying disasters between natural disasters, technological disasters, and/or human made disasters. However, contemporary research, especially studies that focus on emergency planning and disaster management, use specific terms that stress disasters as social phenomena (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Smith, 2006).

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2016) has defined a disaster as:

a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.

Consistent with this definition, previous research on disasters has suggested that societal conditions in all phases of a disaster need to be considered when describing disasters and emergency situations (Cleaver, 1988). Before a disaster, the availability of potential resources in a community affects the causes, vulnerability, preparedness, results, responses, and reconstruction witnessed (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999). Regardless of whether an incident happens because of a natural phenomenon or by human act, different sections of society can experience disasters on different scales (Quarantelli, 1991). Therefore, we cannot talk about disasters, emergency situations, emergency planning, and risk reduction without talking about inequalities. This is because some sections of society – especially working-class, minority ethnic, marginalised, and lower socio-economic groups or individuals – experience disasters disproportionately (Dominey-Howes, 2021). In other words, people and groups who already have fewer resources in society are usually more negatively affected by an emergency situation than groups which are socio-economically advantaged.

Disasters therefore make pre-existing inequalities more salient, with the mismanagement of authorities exacerbating the social injustices faced among

communities in the aftermath (Drury et al., 2020; Perry et al., 2021; Templeton et al., 2020). The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic has affected over 80 million people around the world and has emerged as an emergency of international concern (Worldometer, 2020). In reflection of emergency cases in recent history (Drury et al., 2019; Ntontis et al., 2018), besides the physical costs of the pandemic, certain groups have suffered disproportionately due to the pre-existing social inequalities they face and the socio-economic consequences of the emergency (Templeton et al., 2020). For instance, minority ethnic and racially-marginalised populations are more likely to be impacted upon by the COVID-19 Pandemic than White populations (ONS, 2020; The Independent Sage, 2021).

When combined with the mismanagement of authorities, such inequalities might become more pronounced in an emergency situation. In responding to COVID-19, countries across the world continue to take action to prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The successful implementation of, and compliance given to, such measures heavily depend on how the situation is managed by authorities (Drury et al., 2020). For example, authorities all over the world have recommended public guidelines for self-isolation, stating this as being of vital importance to prevent the spread of the virus. However, the following of these guidelines is difficult, especially for ethnic minority and working-class populations as many are not able to afford isolating themselves. In other terms, they have to work even during the pandemic in order to afford their expenses (e.g., paying their rent or bills). In addition, these groups have been unequally affected by the pandemic because they are more at risk of coming into contact with the virus in being more likely to work as key workers (e.g., in having public-facing jobs in offering health-care, delivery, cleaning, and transportation services). Moreover, some of these groups are more likely to live in densely-populated areas or multigenerational households (Bravo et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2000). As a result, protecting themselves and their cared ones by self-isolating is not always possible.

While facing institutional barriers, working-class and ethnic minority groups have been blamed by some for being the reason for COVID-19's spread and for their own suffering or death (Kendi, 2020). Media reports and statements from the authorities have also blamed the public for being selfish or stupid. For example, their effort as to avoiding running out of resources has been blamed as 'panic buying'. However, it would be wrong to name this survival tendency as selfish given that people naturally wanted to

be prepared for a lockdown (Drury & Tekin, 2020). Some experiences of COVID-19 have not been too different from that of previous disasters. According to early disaster research that focused on building fires, fire safety regulations have primarily focused on mitigating people's 'panic' behaviour, implying that victims die because of their uncontrolled behaviour (Cocking & Drury, 2014). For example, in the Cocoanut Grove Theatre fire in 1942 in Boston, 492 people lost their lives. Even though some media representations blamed the victims for their deaths due to their panicking during the fire, Chertkoff & Kushigan (1999) found that people could not escape from the building because the emergency exit doors were locked and there were no exit signs in the building. In the end, the management were held accountable for the fire and prosecuted for their neglect of building laws.

Besides blame being given to the behaviour demonstrated, people who experience a disaster can be blamed by describing them as possessing illegitimate identities. Ninety-four people lost their lives on the day of the Hillsborough Football Disaster, in 1989 at Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield. One person died in hospital days later and another person died in 1993 after being in a persistent vegetative state for four years. After the incident, the police and some media reports represented the victims as 'drunk hooligans' responsible for their own deaths. However, in the Hillsborough Independent Panel Report (Independent Report, 2012), it was suggested that the police blamed the victims to shift responsibility for the incident. In reality, people lost their lives because the police directed the crowd into already crowded pens (Scruton et al., 1995).

Even though mismanagement by the authorities may be the main reason for a disaster, victims may be the target of blame. As has been evidenced in previous research, victim-blaming might occur in different ways. As the COVID-19 Pandemic process has exemplified, individuals and communities' experiences during and/or in the aftermath of a disaster can be explained via an understanding of institutional racism (Smith, 2006). Besides, Black and ethnic minorities are affected disproportionately because of systemic inequalities and structural racism, often being the first targets of blame by the authorities, media, and racist people in society (Tierney et al., 2006). Since minority ethnic groups experience racism in their daily lives at different levels (from individual to systemic levels via physical violence and structural violence), emergencies can become an opportunity for racists, the media, and authorities to legitimise their attitudes. When thirteen young Black people lost their lives in a New Cross house fire in

1981, the bereaved protested against the inaction of the authorities and the police. Even though one of the claims about the fire was that it was a racist attack, there was no adequate investigation on the fire (McQueen & Rogan, 2021). Moreover, authorities stigmatized victims by claiming that 'Black teenagers are irresponsible' and 'something illegal had been going on in the party', therein blaming the victims for their deaths (Ismain, 2019).

While disadvantaged groups may suffer from a disaster because of social injustice and systemic inequalities, such aspects can also be the driver of disasters and emergencies. For example, policy reports and previous studies have suggested that working-class and deprived people are less likely to be able to afford fire protection services and are more likely to live in unsafe buildings (Crawford, 2004). Therefore, those groups experience more fire-related injuries when compared to groups who can afford safe housing (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1997; Shai, 2006).

Rather than describing disasters simply as natural events or 'accidents', systemic inequalities and social injustices that can lead to disasters need to be emphasized when providing a description of a disaster or an emergency (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Quarantelli, 1991). Moreover, disasters also need to be considered as social and political phenomena, where people actively become involved in the recovery process in order to overcome injustices, to demand more resources from the authorities, and to create systemic change through which each section of the community can receive support according to its specific needs (Aldrich, 2013; Fominaya, 2011; Sarfatti, 2019). Lastly, besides understanding the reasons for a disaster, people need to be considered as active members of their community and as figures who can/shall create different strategies for overcoming the negative effects of a situation (see Solnit, 2009).

### **1.1.2. Campaigning as political action after a disaster**

Describing disasters as a situation where mainly working-class and ethnic minority populations are affected disproportionately might cause an issue of representing survivors as passive actors in that situation. As Preston (2016) has criticised, the agency (or lack thereof) of disadvantaged populations only becomes more salient to decision makers, middle-class populations, and researchers when there is an emergency. However, they are often interpreted as victims or political heroes of the situation rather than being described as active responders (Skeggs, 2004). For example, when 116 children and 28 adults (many students and teachers) at Pantglas Junior School



lost their lives in a catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip on 21st October 1966 in Aberfan, Wales, authorities and some media reports represented them as passive victims who did not report possible issues beforehand (National Library of Wales, 2016). However, using a historical approach, Preston (2016) has suggested that schools and children demonstrated agency in terms of being aware of the potential danger and by politicizing the issue through letters, petitions and public meetings.

People who suffer from a disaster because of pre-existing inequalities are often described as 'vulnerable'. However, instead of being vulnerable or passively waiting for help to overcome the emergency's negative effects, community members sometimes plan their own strategies to re-build their community (Hajek, 2013). For example, at the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic process, even though an inadequate response was given by the authorities in many countries, mutual aid groups supported their community members with sustainable involvement via localised actions (e.g., shopping and delivering food for those who needed to self-isolate) (Bowe et al., 2021; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2021). As shown by previous research on emergency situations, the holding of a sense of community belonging leads to prosocial behaviours while prosocial behaviours and help inversely create a sense of community belonging (Omoto & Packard, 2016).

New Orleans was one of the cities most affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Smith, 2006). Besides the hurricane itself, residents also suffered for a long time after the incident because the U.S. Government was late to respond to the emergency (Tierney, 2006). However, community members who experienced the hurricane, volunteer groups from neighbouring cities, and faith communities gathered together and helped survivors and bereaved families to meet their needs – such as food, accommodation, medical supplies and financial assistance (Solnit, 2009). Besides the sense of community belonging being held that led residents of New Orleans to support each other, inadequate responses from the authorities also brought people from wider communities together with the people directly affected by the hurricane (Tierney et al., 2006).

Supporting disaster communities with material resources (e.g., food, accommodation, donations) is not the only way to re-build communities. As disasters are the result of the systemic inequalities and social injustices of society (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Quarantelli; 1991), affected community members and their supporters might also gather together to demand investigation and justice from the authorities

(Hajek, 2006; Aldrich, 2013). They can take different types of action here – such as street mobilisations, protests, or campaigns (Fominaya, 2011; Sarfati, 2019). For example, in 2012, after an earthquake that affected the region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy, protestors fighting against corruption, environmental damage, and the emergency mismanagement of the authorities came together with the survivors of the incident in order to demand solutions and reconstruction from the authorities. In the beginning, activist groups (supporters of the No Tav movement) came together with survivors to meet their material needs (e.g., accommodation and food). However, later, via protest, they criticised the authorities for their inadequate responses, not only in the aftermath of the Emilia-Romagna Earthquake but also in the aftermath of previous emergency situations (e.g., the L'Aquila Earthquake in 2009). Hajek (2013) has suggested that coming together to meet material needs and to protest against the authorities created bottom-up community empowerment that inspired people in other parts of the country to raise their concerns against various decisions made by the authorities (e.g., decisions related to high-speed trains that negatively affected local farmers).

Such protests can extend to other areas in the aftermath of a disaster, where campaign activities further demand enquiries and justice from the authorities. After three hundred and four people lost their lives and 9 people were missing in the aftermath of the Sewöl Ferry Sinking in April 2014 in South Korea, the media accused the South Korean Government of not having maintained and appropriately supervised the ferry. Therefore, campaign activities began with a petition that aimed to reach 10,000,000 signatures to change the law and to ensure the investigation and accountability of those responsible for the accident. Here, activists also aimed to change health and safety regulations (Brown, 2018). In addition, campaigners protested spontaneously for two years. Between 2016 and 2017, more than one million people attended, every Saturday night, a candle vigil protest in Kwanghwamun Square to hold the South Korean President accountable. The actions were successful and the South Korean President was impeached in 2017. Campaigners in the aftermath of this disaster invoked very strong mobilisation and achieved their goals of accountability and transparency (Sarfati & Chung, 2020).

The Hillsborough Football Disaster was another case where survivors, bereaved families and their supporters had to seek justice against how the police and people in power treated them. This disaster happened during an FA Cup semi-final football match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield, on 15<sup>th</sup>

August 1989. Ninety-six fans lost their lives because police directed them into already crowded pens. In the end, many had crushed asphyxia and hundreds of people were injured and traumatised (Scruton et al., 1995). The first coroner's inquest was completed in 1991 and held the deaths to have been accidental. In response, the bereaved families formed the Hillsborough Justice Campaign to fight for a new inquest and to seek justice for the victims. Following the campaign, which lasted 30 years, a new inquest held that the supporters had died because the police were reluctant to take necessary action on time (Cronin, 2017).

Coming together and supporting victims and bereaved families are important steps in achieving justice. Even though campaigns or collective action might decline over time (e.g., those which arose following Hurricane Katrina), some continue and achieve their full goals (e.g., Sewol) or partial goals (e.g., Hillsborough). These examples are *prima facie* evidence that people affected by disasters achieve their goals when they act as one rather than act individually. Furthermore, campaign groups might be more powerful when they act together with allies against those who hold systemic power.

### **1.1.3. Social psychology of behaviour when there is a disaster**

Previous research has focused on different phases of disasters from different perspectives. Besides the geographical or generic characteristics of respective incidents, the responses of different groups have also been considered by researchers. For example, as discussed in previous sections of this chapter, pre-existing inequalities and injustices differentially affect disparate groups. However, as previous research has evidenced (Drury, 2018; Hajek, 2013; Sarfati, 2019), even though victims of disasters are often represented as passive actors, they nonetheless take actions to prevent and overcome the negative effects of the circumstances they encounter. For example, mothers, teachers, and community members of Aberfan created and signed petitions about the danger of the colliery tip, however their concerns were not taken seriously by the authorities. Moreover, even though people do not always take action before a given disaster, this does not always mean that they are unaware of the problems faced. Fear of losing their resources (e.g., fear of unemployment) sometimes prevents individuals/groups from taking action before an incident happens (Preston, 2016).

Besides such pre-existing conditions, understanding people's behaviour during a disaster is also important in comprehending how the negative effects of such incidences

can be overcome or minimised. Therefore, social psychology research has helped to explain the different aspects of human behaviour witnessed during disasters (Cocking et al., 2009; Drury 2018; Drury et al., 2019). The earliest studies of emergency behaviour were conducted to understand the behaviour of soldiers during the Second World War. Here, it was suggested that military soldiers experienced ‘mass panic’ that caused the dissolution of social group norms (Freud, 1921/1985) and a loss of discipline when being attacked by enemies (Strauss, 1944). Moreover, ‘mass panic’ was also given as the reason for individualistic and uncontrolled behaviour that emerged and became dangerous during emergencies. It was also suggested that managing those situations might be difficult because contagion manifests as a mechanism for spreading excessive fear and uncontrolled behaviour within crowds (Le Bon, 1895/1965; McDougall, 1920).

However, in different disasters, research has evidenced that a few cases may represent dissolved social bonds, this does not always evidence irrational behaviour. For example, in the aftermath of the Cocoanut Grove Theatre fire in 1942 in Boston, some media outlets reported that people lost their lives because they were pushing and shoving each other. However, according to the systematic analysis of Chertkoff and Kushigan (1999) on the event, people lost their lives because there were no exit signs inside of the building and the victims were trapped inside by jammed doors and windows. The inability to find an exit and the mismanagement of the building managers were the main reasons for the deaths.

As suggested in previous research on behaviour during fires (e.g., Johnson 1987, 1988; Feinberg & Johnson, 2001), pre-existing social bonds – such as family and friend relationships – among survivors have an effect on the support provided during emergencies. For example, during the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire in Kentucky on 28th May 1977, survivors tried to remain in their affiliation groups.

However, existing bonds are not always necessary for gaining/providing support in emergencies and disasters. In a survey study, Bartolucci and Magni (2017) found that even in the absence of relationship figures, there was widespread solidarity among strangers during the Haiyan (Philippines) Typhoon in 2013. Cocking and colleagues (2009) have suggested that support and prosocial behaviours among strangers can be seen when people perceive a situation in which they share a common fate and where they identify themselves in the same category – like “being a victim of the same threat”.

According to Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), collective behaviour is possible when people share a social identity (Turner, 1981). Following SCT (Turner, 1981,

1985; Turner et al., 1987), Drury (2018) has argued that people who experience disasters or emergencies together can come to share an emergent identity and support each other during the given incident. Drury and colleagues (2009b) have examined how survivors behaved in the bombed trains in the immediate aftermath of the London Bombings on 7th July 2005, where 56 people lost their lives and 700 were injured. After analysing different data sources (interviews and media coverage) they found that sharing water, checking if others were OK, and physically supporting people as they were evacuated were some of the behaviours that survivors described. In addition, even though survivors suggested that they felt in danger, prosocial behaviour and helping more commonly arose than individualistic behaviour. The researchers also observed a sense of unity emerging via the 'we' language that survivors used when describing the situation. People can share an emergent identity through a feeling of experiencing the same emergency together and thereby sharing a common fate. Sharing an emergent identity can be a motivation for people to support each other (Drury, 2018; Drury et al., 2019). Therefore, as the opposite of panic theories (e.g., Le Bon, 1895/1965; McDougall, 1920), previous research has suggested that instead of self-centred behaviours, collective help and prosocial behaviour are common during emergencies and disasters.

As Bowe and colleagues (2021) have argued, when there is an emergency (e.g., COVID-19), a sense of community belonging (in Omoto & Packard (2020), this is termed as a 'psychological sense of community') can motivate prosocial behaviours – such as volunteering. Another interesting finding is that community belonging can also be built because of volunteering over time. Therefore, while volunteering may be motivated by group identification, it can also shape group identification, community belonging and group membership. As Kaniasty and Norris (1999) has noted, overcoming the traumatic effects of a disaster is usually possible when individual reactions become shared reactions in a 'coping community'.

Alongside people affected by the same emergency situation being seen to solidarize and help each other during or after an emergency, sometimes people who did not directly experience that emergency shall come together and support survivors to overcome the negative effects faced. Ntontis and colleagues (2018) have suggested that in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 December York Floods, people from non-affected communities shared an emergent identity with the directly-affected community, as represented a sense of unity and as provided support to the community who had

suffered from the flood despite those communities not knowing each other beforehand. This help arose through the distributing of available resources, gathering of donations, and sharing of information.

In addition to sharing an identity via the supporting of survivors with material and emotional help, sometimes solidarity and unity emerges through political action. As certain groups are disproportionately affected by a disaster because of the systemic inequalities and injustices in society, people might also come together and solidarize to demand justice and more stringent investigation from authorities. After 5,000 people lost their lives in the aftermath of the 19th September 1985 Mexico City Earthquake, it was seen that survivors, bereaved families, and people not directly affected by the earthquake demonstrated solidarity in demanding justice from the authorities. As Cleaver (1988) and Solnit (2009) have suggested, many people died because of poor construction and a lack of compliance being given towards building regulations. Moreover, inadequate and non-immediate responses were given by the authorities in the aftermath. Therefore, besides people taking care of each other and responding to different needs in the aftermath, they gathered together and acted collectively to protest against the authorities.

Literature on collective action (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008) has suggested that the sharing a social identity among groups can predict collective action. On the other hand, the Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM; Drury & Reicher, 2005) suggests that collective action can actualize the social identity of individuals. Empowerment can be the outcome of this action. Using ESIM, previous studies on different collective events – such as campaigns (Drury & Reicher, 2000), riots (Stott et al., 2017), and protests (Stott & Drury, 2000) – have explained that an emergent sense of empowerment enables group members to challenge opposing groups (e.g., the police; Drury & Reicher, 2020).

Where an emergency occurs, people can share an identity through sharing a sense of injustice. Therefore, a sense of injustice might lead them (survivors as an in-group) to take action against how they were treated by authorities (the opposition as an out-group) before and after the disaster. These actions against opposing out-groups (such as authorities) might be supported by out-groups (such as allies from wider communities). Action in the aftermath of a disaster can therefore take a political form of collective action, motivated by the empowerment of supporters who share a sense of

injustice. As well as acting as a motivator, this empowerment can also be the consequence of a shared identity (injustice) forming.

From previous disasters, it is seen that support campaigns can be formed by people who have suffered from an incident and injustices in the aftermath. Some campaigns fail overtime, while others might continue and achieve their goals. For example, even though the survivors of Hurricane Katrina were supported by a wider group of people from different communities in meeting their material needs – such as accommodation – such support campaigns declined overtime. Besides the physical effects of the disaster, racial and ethnic minority working-class people experienced the disaster disproportionately because of the injustices faced. However, even though people raised their concerns about this inequality (see the documentary ‘Trouble the Water’, 2008), a lack of success was achieved in terms of accessing justice in the aftermath. On the other hand, despite happening in different years and different countries, action in the aftermath of the Mexico City Earthquake in 1985 and the Emilia Romagna Earthquake in 2012 continued until the survivors and bereaved families achieved their goals in seeking justice.

Even though previous studies on disasters have reported that people enact different types of action in emergency situations, the patterns of such action need to be investigated more systematically in order to understand what strategies people use to overcome the negative effects of a range of incidents and the systemic inequality encountered. According to previous literature on disasters, which has reported the successful consequences of the steps people have taken in the aftermath of emergencies, it can be suggested that achievement can be gained when people are empowered through the actions they take (e.g., campaigns). In other words, as suggested by the ESIM, a strong sense of ‘us’ and empowerment can be the consequence of collective action. However, empowerment of this type does not emerge coincidentally or unintentionally. Empowerment can arise when people who are directly affected by an incident are supported by wider community members (allies) who have not directly experienced the disaster in question. To achieve the goals held, survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters might take strategic steps – such as including allies in the process of empowerment (as emerged via the action taken in the aftermath of a disaster – e.g., justice-seeking campaigns).

#### **1.1.4. Importance of a social psychological perspective when working with disaster communities**

Psychology research has long been applied to consider behaviour enacted in disasters by using various approaches. Alongside disasters and emergencies causing severe damage to society, distress in the aftermath of such an occurrence is experienced at different levels (Williams et al., 2021). As an incident is likely to be experienced among a group of people, psychology research has evidenced that overcoming trauma is possible when action is shared with others during the recovery process. For example, community psychology researchers have suggested that community-based actions (Trickett, 1995; Ponce-Rodas, 2018) can overcome the negative effects of trauma where all stakeholders in an affected community (including social workers, police officers, nursing assistants, and school staff) are included. In considering the immediate aftermath of a disaster and the material and psychological needs that those community members subsequently encounter, this approach can be useful in strengthening a community's re-building process. However, sometimes, support needs to be received from beyond the community level. In addition to meeting these material needs and when overcoming trauma, people need to surmount the effects of the injustice caused by unequal societal systems.

Puerto Rico was severely affected by Hurricane Maria, as happened in 2017. Researchers and students created a nine-day intervention (Ponce-Rodas, 2018) to contribute to the recovery phase using a community psychological approach. This action aimed to provide mental health training in churches and community spaces by using an 'accept, talk, heal' approach. They travelled to over 30 locations and reached over 1,000 people by collaborating with local stakeholders (such as staff from schools and hospitals, police officers, and social workers). According to reports, this team was quickly accepted and trusted by the community. Their approach was found to be productive for many people who had directly experienced the disaster (Berardi et al., 2019). In other words, the community intervention designed by experts and contributed to by different community agencies was successful in fulfilling the material and emotional needs of those affected by the disaster.

However, it was reported in the media (Guardian staff and agencies, 2020) that Puerto Ricans have protested against the government to demand emergency aid for those who have suffered from different disasters – including Hurricane Maria.



Unfortunately, the aftermath outcomes of Hurricane Maria is also reflected in a number of different cases – e.g., in the protests of health-care workers at the beginning of the COVID-19 process (Villarreal, 2020). Even though support at the community level can help community members to reach material resources or to overcome the traumatic effects of a disaster, lacking responses or the mismanagement of authorities in the rebuilding of communities and recovery of the aftermath might fail to achieve sustainable solutions. Therefore, political action may be organised to support community members in demanding justice and more resources from the authorities. This can also allow clearer criticism to be aimed at local authorities and governments for their failures.

In this thesis, I describe two different groups who actively participated in campaigns in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. The first group includes survivors and bereaved families who experienced the disaster first-hand or who lost loved ones in the fire. I considered this group as directly affected. The second group comprises those indirectly affected, as includes the people who lived in the neighbourhood or who attended the campaign activities formed by different communities (e.g., people from other cities or different parts of London). My research findings and literature review conclusions evidence that even people who have not experienced a disaster first-hand sometimes can unite around any injustice faced and thereby see themselves as a single group at one level.

Community empowerment and sustainable recovery can be possible only with the involvement of others who support survivors and bereaved families in overcoming the negative effects of a disaster (Ntontis et al., 2018) and the systemic injustices witnessed in society (Tekin & Drury, 2020, 2021). Therefore, instead of acting individually, people support each other in meeting different types of need – such as for material and emotional needs and the need for justice. Moreover, because groups usually act against how authorities have treated them, these actions need to be considered beyond the community level. Therefore, a social psychological analysis of the system and actions of the agents (groups) in that system is important in understanding how and why some groups are disproportionately affected by disasters and how different sections of society can be supported (e.g., in identifying which specific resources such groups lack because of inequality). To understand what steps need to be taken to mitigate the negative effects of a disaster and to re-build communities with sustainable resources, we need to understand the dynamics of different groups.

### 1.1.5. Campaigns in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire

What happened in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire is an example of group processes which emerge when facing an emergency. Even though the fire started due to a malfunctioning electrical appliance, the reason for the quick spread of the fire was the cheap and flammable cladding used during the refurbishment projects carried out by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organization (KCTMO) one year before the fire. In the media, these refurbishment projects were presented as 'regeneration' projects because the aim held was to create an area that was attractive to wealthier people (Bulley et al., 2019; Kernick, 2021). Using flammable cladding was the cheapest way of producing social housing, where mainly working-class communities live, while remaining acceptable for the wealthier community members who live in the same area.

The neighbourhood of Grenfell Tower, North Kensington, has a long history of struggle between community members and the authorities (Bulley, 2019). Campaigns against those authorities have long been active in seeking to protect the area from gentrification. This is because those authorities have sought to take economic advantage of the area. The Grenfell Tower fire has become the deadliest result of these gentrification projects. Therefore, people (mainly working-class and ethnic minority groups who experience systemic discrimination and structural violence in different communities) have organized with survivors and have supported justice campaigns in the fire's aftermath. Due to the long-term systemic inequality faced, campaigners have organized their activities in a way in which wider communities and people from other cities can become involved in the justice-seeking process. In doing so, the Grenfell Tower fire has been positioned as an issue of the UK, rather than constituting action solely local in nature (Renwick, 2019).

Consistent with previous disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, the Mexico City Earthquake), help and support in the Grenfell Tower context firstly emerged through local action – like finding accommodation for survivors and the providing of charitable donations (Charles, 2019). However, justice campaigns also arose and were supported by local and wider communities because the authorities were blamed for the fire (e.g., by installing flammable cladding on the building) and were criticised for their inadequate response in the aftermath (Kernick, 2021; Renwick, 2019; Scraton, 2019). The most prominent feature of such justice campaigns were the Silent Walks that

happened on the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month after the fire. It continued for four years, with at least 500 people gathering each month (except during times in which COVID-19 restrictions were in place). Even though the main group of people involved comprised residents of North Kensington, many people from wider communities and different cities also attended to support survivors and bereaved families in seeking justice (Chapter 4, Tekin & Drury, 2021).

Previous research on disasters has focused on post-disaster justice campaigns. However, an adequate explanation on the social psychological processes associated with (successful) campaigning has yet to have emerged. In this PhD thesis, I seek to produce an understanding of how campaigners have attempted to meet their needs for justice in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. As represented in the literature review of this thesis, the aftermath of the fire was not unique to the Grenfell Tower context. Even though North Kensington's history might have played an important role in allowing campaigners to take rapid and more strategic actions when compared to the steps taken after previous disasters, I suggest that the respective processes involved in building empowerment among survivors and supporters have similar patterns. Instead of solely sharing an identity under the sense of injustice and waiting for support, people have been seen to actively take steps through which to gain empowerment. Creating activities that involve allies in this empowerment process can be an important strategy in achieving the campaign goals held in the aftermath of a disaster. Therefore, my purpose in this research is to understand what strategies campaigners may follow to involve people from outside (allies) in their campaign activities and how they achieve empowerment and some specific campaign goals.

## **1.2. Rationale, research questions and overview of studies**

Previous literature on disasters has shown that people take action in order to overcome the negative effects of any disasters and/or injustices they experience (Cleaver, 1988; McQueen & Rogan, 2021). Even though the different steps and actions taken by people in such aftermaths have been documented (Hajek, 2013; Solnit, 2009), the patterns of these steps has not been systematically examined. In addition to this disasters literature, social psychology research on collective behaviour suggests that empowerment can be an outcome of gathering together and acting as one (Drury & Reicher, 2005). However, in previous research, this empowerment was not considered as a consequence of the steps that were taken strategically in order to achieve some

specific goals. Therefore, by linking disasters literature and social psychology literature, I have aimed in this thesis to understand the patterns followed by the survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters in the aftermath of disasters.

The first study addressed here explores three different questions. First, what motivated survivors, bereaved families and their supporters to attend justice campaigns in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. Second, what aims did these campaigners plan to achieve when they attended such campaign activities. Lastly, what specific strategies did campaigners use to meet their need for justice. In answering these questions, I contribute to the literature by suggesting that campaigners meet their needs for justice through an empowerment process. This process includes two strategies. The first strategy sees campaigners build a shared identity within their internal relations. Empowerment among survivors, bereaved families, and community members is achieved through sharing a sense of injustice, common spaces, and the same actions. The second strategy sees ‘others’ (e.g., wider communities) being involved in the campaigning process.

From this understanding that empowerment can be built through campaign action, focus is given to one of the most prominent and long-lasting campaign activities enacted in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, that of the Silent Walk. For my second study, two main questions are asked. First, what was the meaning of the Silent Walks for the survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters from local and wider communities. Second, how was empowerment achieved strategically via street mobilization in the aftermath of the disaster. In this study, I identify how the Silent Walks had two different meanings for the campaigners. One meaning relates to the building of solidarity among campaigners, where people gather together to respect the 72 people who lost their lives and to solidarize under a sense of injustice. The second meaning pertains to ascribing a political meaning to the Silent Walks, where campaigners constituted themselves to challenge the authorities and to overcome injustice. In answering these questions, I contribute to the literature by suggesting that besides becoming a group under a shared emergent identity, people have also consciously taken strategic steps to achieve their goals.

In these two studies I identify that empowerment is achieved by acting strategically when ‘allies’ are involved in the justice-seeking process. Therefore, campaign actions (e.g., Silent Walks) can be organized in a way whereby people from different communities can gather together and support survivors and bereaved families

in the aftermath. In these two studies, when I use the word ‘others’, I refer to wider community members who support the campaign actions enacted. However, there is another type of ‘other’, figures who attack victims, survivors, and their supporters. Compared with the supportive ‘others’, such opposing ‘others’ (e.g., outsiders) are of a much smaller number yet those groups still appear on social media to attack the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, especially in racist ways. In the third study, I seek to understand how attacking victims and expressions of racism in language can be used to delegitimize victims and their actions. In collecting posts that attacked victims on Twitter, I analyse what has been said, how it was said, and how it functioned. In doing so, I contribute to the literature by suggesting that attack against victims in the aftermath of a disaster might happen in two different ways. The first way happened to delegitimize victims via ascribing the victims with illegitimate identities (e.g., as illegal immigrants and criminals). The second way happened to delegitimize victims via emphasizing conspiracy theories which suggest that the victims of a disaster benefit from the support of people in power (e.g., liberal elites).

These three studies assist in comprehending the respective behaviours of different groups. It is found that support is salient in the aftermath of a disaster and empowerment among supporters can be achieved by including wider communities. However, racist language can also have a function for victim-blaming, as may have a practical effect on the justice-seeking process. Throughout this thesis, I seek to produce a better understanding of the strategies, both successful and unsuccessful, that people follow in order to achieve their goals of justice in the aftermath of a disaster. Therefore, besides contributing to the social psychology knowledge held as to group behaviour post-disasters, systematic analysis can have practical applications for future incidents.

### **1.3. Methodological issues in finding research strategies**

The data gathering and analysis methods I followed in each respective study depended on the research questions asked. My specific aim was to understand the social psychological processes of victims, survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters when they campaigned to meet their need for justice. As my studies have focused on producing an in-depth understanding of these processes, information has been gathered through language and behaviour in natural settings. Therefore, the need for flexibility while collecting data led me to use ethnography as a framework. Moreover, in order to understand the campaigners’ definition and description of their own context, behaviour,

and group behaviour, I used semi-structured interviews. However, as previous research on individual and group behaviour has also used other methodologies, below I explain what strategies could be used and which could help to answer my research questions.

### **1.3.1. Possible methodologies**

#### **1.3.1.1 Experimental social psychology**

Experimental methods have long been widely used in social psychology research. Besides the conducting of studies solely based in controlled laboratory experimental environments, researchers have also created less-controlled field-based settings in which to conduct their experimental studies. This is especially true among social psychology research on group behaviour which has used experimental methods in order to understand the causal relationships between different variables (Turner et al., 1987; Sherif, 1961). Therefore, one can say that one of the main advantages of experimental designs is that the question of ‘why do things occur?’ can be answered. Even though explaining the cause of an action is important in research that focuses on behaviour, experimental research does not give much power in examining the processes and motivations of the behaviour that emerges in natural settings (Reicher & Levine, 1994). Moreover, because group behaviour usually happens in real-life settings in which researchers do not have the power to control different variables, experimental research might not be the best option through which to meet the research questions held (where answers must be derived from real-life settings).

As I have aimed to understand the responses of people when they experience a disaster, the designing of experiments would not help to meet my research objectives. In addition, because the experience of a disaster usually depends on pre-existing inequalities, experiments would not help me to gather information from real-life settings. In considering the possible social identity processes and justice-seeking actions of community (local, wider) members in an emergency or disaster context, investigation as to the process of change is important and can allow one to understand which steps are taken and what gains are possible (and not possible). Therefore, in my studies, instead of measuring the effects of specific variables in a controlled setting, I have explored which decisions and strategies groups follow when seeking justice against an existing system when an unplanned situation (like a disaster) arises.

### 1.3.1.2. Survey questionnaire research

Survey questionnaire methods have been widely used by researchers focused on understanding the effects of different types of support provided to victims and survivors of disasters (Kaniasty & Norris, 1993; Muldoon et al., 2017; Zagefka et al., 2011). Moreover, the effects of different variables on group behaviour and the relationships which exist between those variables can be measured using survey designs (van Zomeren et al., 2008; McNamara et al., 2013). Using closed-questions and pre-determined possible answers that mainly represent standard options allow survey questionnaires to collect data from large numbers of people quickly. In doing so, accurate and consistent measures can be gained. In other words, enhanced reliability can be accessed. However, because the range of responses liable to be gained are limited in advance, participants do not have the freedom to represent their own definitions or any new concepts. Therefore, the subjective validity achieved will be lower than gained via other methods (e.g., semi-structured interviews). In addition, even though measuring the relationships between specific variables is possible, understanding the processes undertaken, how subjects interpret events and/or what strategies are used in specific contexts cannot be explained by using survey questionnaire methods (Drury, 1996; Marsh, 1977).

Understanding the processes of how behaviours evolve in natural and real-life settings is not possible when using survey questionnaires. As behaviours, especially in disaster contexts, can occur suddenly without any prior information, the collecting of data via survey questionnaires might not be possible here. Even though this research has examined the process of supporter behaviour in the aftermath of a disaster (rather than during an emergency), the strategies were shaped according to different conditions throughout the process. Therefore, survey designs would not have been able to answer my research questions about how strategies can be shaped in order to achieve empowerment among supporters.

As questionnaires usually need to be completed in settings where participants have time to respond, the ability to understand presented contexts, behaviours and processes might not be possible by using survey questionnaires. This is especially true when considering research on group behaviours in cases of an emergency. Besides the difficulties of this method in relation to its practicalities, the ethical concerns invoked when using this method must also be considered. As disasters are usually traumatic

events (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Muldoon et al., 2017), understanding and responding to the needs of the disaster population must be the primary consideration rather than the collecting of data.

Using survey questionnaires was especially difficult in this research as the questionnaire method was liable to remind community members of the approach used by the authorities when gathering information from community members about the disaster itself. As my research questions also required the collecting of in-depth information about the event and the steps taken by community members, the use of survey questionnaires was not possible.

### **1.3.2. Research Strategy**

In my studies, I gathered data via three different methods – ethnography (participant observation), semi-structured interviews, and scraping online posts from social media (Twitter). As the research topic was based on the behaviours of people after a traumatic event, and because the context also involved the issues of racism and systemic discrimination, there was a need to listen and to be flexible. Therefore, I decided to start my research process by using ethnography as a framework.

#### **1.3.2.1. Ethnography as a framework**

Some studies use ‘participant observation’ as a synonym for ethnography (Drury & Stott, 2011). Ethnography has been used as a research method on its own as well as a framework by being integrated with other research methods. In cases where a researcher aims to understand ‘what people do’, ‘how they do it’, and ‘how it influences the social setting or how it is influenced by the social setting’, ethnography can have a wide variety of benefits (Dallos, 2012). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have suggested, ethnography allows researchers to participate in people’s daily lives and to learn details about the responses that might or might not change according to context. Moreover, using ethnography can, in fact, help researchers to collect whatever data are available in a specific context, allowing one to understand and explain the specific concerns that motivated that research (Lumsden, 2009).

Even though the terms ‘ethnography’ and ‘participant observation’ are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, ethnographers sometimes distinguish ‘ethnography’ as describing four levels of involvement and ‘participant observation’ as only using the first three of these levels (Drury, 1996; Junker, 1972). The first level is



‘complete observer’. Here, the role of the ethnographer depends on observing with no direct communication. The researcher does not participate in any of the activities or actions of the observed group members. Even though there is no risk in this observational activity, ethnographers do not have the opportunity to share the experiential world of the participants (Argyle, 1972). The second level is ‘observer as participant’. Here, the researcher becomes involved in group activities with the expressed intention to observe. In this level, ethnographers emphasize their objective and empathic positioning to the group members who are being observed. Moreover, the observer has more flexibility in asking questions, however confidentiality needs to be considered when reporting observations (Vetere & Gale, 1987). The third level is ‘participant as observer’. Here, the ethnographer takes responsibilities in being involved in the observed activities – with this role being characterized by the involvement of group members. This is a more active level when compared to the ‘observer as participant’ level. The primary advantage of this role is that the researcher has the opportunity to understand the group’s processes while being one of the group members, thereby becoming more familiar with the group’s roles and responsibilities. However, practicality can be an issue because more time and energy needs to be spent even though access to some private information can still be limited (Gilgun et al., 1992). The last level, ‘complete participant’ sees the researcher take the role of being an ‘in-group’ member and shares private information with the group. However, information that is gathered in the field cannot be shared publicly. If the ethical concerns faced are not considered carefully, there could be a risk that the researcher is categorized as a spy. The primary advantage of this level is that participants have the opportunity to understand the intimate relationships held between the group and its context. Moreover, there could be more flexibility in interpreting the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of group members (Rosenhan, 1973).

Throughout this PhD thesis, I seek to understand the social psychological processes of campaigners when utilising strategies to gain justice in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. In order to understand the reasons and aims of such campaigns, I first needed to understand the community dynamics in the specific area of North Kensington. Moreover, I also needed to be careful about when I asked interview questions, giving recognition that this action was occurring after a traumatic incident. In addition, as the actions had political features, I needed to gain the trust of the community members involved. Therefore, I undertook an ethnographic approach.

Considering my levels or roles (from complete observer to complete participant) as a researcher, I noted that positioning myself only in a single category would be difficult because I did not have any information about the area, campaign groups, or context faced. Therefore, depending on the actions and campaign agenda witnessed, my role as an ethnographer changed over time.

Initially, starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2017, I only attended Silent Walks, visited the area, and took notes of the written pieces and artwork on the walls in that locality. In doing so, I further sought to understand which walkways are connected to each other and what type of buildings are in the neighbourhood of Grenfell Tower. Four months after my first visit, through my interactions with community members around the area and some online research, I began to learn the names of some of the campaign groups and tried to interact with their members. Understanding the dynamics witnessed among the campaign groups was important in understanding the processes of these groups. This is because while some of the campaign groups were formed by the local authority, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, others were community-based. Furthermore, while some campaign groups were community-based groups that used community spaces to meet, others used buildings under the control of the local authority. As community members, survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters were taking action against the authorities, those campaign groups who used the resources of the local authority were not accepted by the groups which were solely community-based. Moreover, some pre-existing campaign groups (e.g., Grenfell Action Group) had already been taking actions against the authorities to raise the voices of residents against unsafe building conditions and local gentrification for many years.

As trust was an issue in the community at the beginning, many campaign groups and community members did not accept people coming from outside of the community. As a researcher visiting from a different city, I needed to assume responsibilities to gain the trust of such community members. Therefore, one thing I did was to organize a public film screening event for the documentary, *Failed by the State* (Francis-Murray & Renwich, 2017), as was produced by campaigners. I organized this event at the University of Sussex and invited campaigners as speakers. My aim in organizing this event was to let people at the University of Sussex understand how injustice and inequality can become more pronounced when a disaster occurs. After this event, I was able to access community-based campaign groups and attended related activities – such as their banner making, decision-making as to possible action, children-focussed events,

and stewarding of Silent Walks. These activities helped me to reach out to more people who supported these campaigns, to understand the dynamics of the campaign groups, and to view their planning of justice-seeking action.

Besides attending campaign activities or organizing activities designed to raise awareness, I also took notes about what I observed during the campaign events I attended. I further collected materials during these events – such as flyers provided by the campaigners, newspapers, and photographs that I took. Moreover, I conducted semi-structured interviews as another ethnographic data gathering method (Drury, 1996). As I became familiar to some of the campaign groups, I was able to gain their trust and then take part in different activities. In doing so, I could ask some of the campaigners to participate in my interviews. Therefore, I could use my ethnographic observations while analysing my interviews. Besides gathering information from different parts of the community via ethnography, the undertaking of semi-structured interviews helped me to question people about their experiences, reasons, aims and identities within their campaigning. In other words, these semi-structured individual interviews helped me to understand and explain the context witnessed in more detail.

#### **1.3.2.2. Semi-structured individual interviews**

Researchers can use interviews at any stage in their research process, either as the only research method or in combination with other methods – depending on the research questions held. In addition, interviews can be conducted in different ways, ranging from fully-structured to totally unstructured (Breakwell, 2012). As interviews are flexible in format and function, they can be helpful in collecting different types of information. Besides the conducting of interviews according to the specific research questions held, different types of research question might be generated by a researcher in accordance with the responses of the interviewees. Moreover, the analysis of the data collected from interviews can be analysed and represented different ways. Researchers usually conduct two different types of interview. The first interview type is fully-structured, as has a fixed schedule and order of questions. The information gathered via a fully-structured interview can easily be quantified and the responses compared. Researchers can easily make sure that certain topics are followed. However, this leaves little room for new descriptions or definitions about the topic(s) in question.

The second interview type is semi-structured (called partially-structured in some sources), as allow more flexibility for researchers and interviewees. Semi-structured

interview schedules include questions that require open-ended answers. Here, researchers have the freedom to cover a number of topics and the order of the questions is not fixed. Moreover, responders can answer the questions asked as briefly or as detailed as they prefer (Burgess, 1982; Green, 1993).

For my research process, I conducted interviews while my ethnography-based process was on-going. Even though during the ethnographic practice I was able to observe the dynamics among various campaign groups, I also sought to understand how the campaigners categorized themselves as supporters and what motivated them to be involved in these campaign processes. In addition, I wanted to learn of the campaigners' own definition and description of their aims and processes. For example, when campaigners stated during their campaign activities that 'we want justice', I wanted to understand this definition of justice. Besides observing the identification and categorization processes of the campaigners, I wanted to understand how campaigners defined and described these identities and how such gathering and acting-as-one made sense from their accounts. For this reason, the conducting of interviews was a necessary method in helping me to answer my research questions.

For the methods used in analysing collected interview data, the quantification of responses is not usually the main aim of semi-structured interviews. Some analysis methods – for instance, content analysis – focus on the frequency of the themes covered during the interviews. However, rather than focusing on the frequencies or quantities of certain responses, researchers who employ qualitative analysis as to interview data generally aim to emphasise the descriptions and definitions that their research participants provide in relation to a specific event or term. I used thematic analysis when analysing the semi-structured interviews. I followed the six steps suggested by Braun and Clark (2006) during this analysis. After I transcribed all of the data, first I familiarised myself with the data by reading the transcripts several times. Second, I generated codes by selecting the important terms and sentences used by the participants. The importance of these codes depended on the research questions I had asked before starting my analysis. Third, I compared and constructed these codes to search for themes that could be generated by gathering related codes together. Fourth, after generating themes, I reviewed these themes in case some could be merged under a single theme. Fifth, I named these themes and defined them. The definitions and names given to those themes were mainly based on my research questions and the social psychological approach (social identity approach) used when I worked on my research.

Sixth, I reported on the findings by providing an example quotation that represented each theme.

Instead of using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and focusing on the interpretations given as to the personal experiences of the participants towards a phenomenon (disaster), I focused on how their perception of the justice campaigns enacted was shaped by the taking of steps as a group. Moreover, because I tried to answer my research questions via a social identity approach, I did not follow the steps of Grounded Theory which focuses on creating a new theory solely from the collected data. Therefore, in considering my research questions and aims, thematic analysis was identified as the most suitable analysis method when approaching the interview data.

### **1.3.2.3. Collecting online posts from social media (Twitter)**

When I focused on understanding people's behaviour in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, besides survivors and bereaved families, I found two 'other' group types. The first 'other' group type comprised allies from wider communities who supported survivors and bereaved families while seeking justice through different campaign activities. The second 'other' group type was opposed to the campaign actions and blamed victims in racist ways.

As my main research aim was to understand the strategies of support groups, I specifically focused on interacting with supporters engaged in different campaign activities. However, as I followed the news and updates about the Grenfell Tower fire online, I learned that some racist individuals had attacked victims and blamed them for the disaster - giving various reasons here (e.g., blaming them for their own deaths or blaming them for being undeserving). As Twitter allows people to post their views in a way that other users can see by using specific hashtags – such as #Grenfell and #GrenfellTowerfire – I was able to reach these posts when I searched for content related to the Grenfell Tower fire. I decided to collect my data solely from Twitter for this reason. In order to understand what was said, how it was said, how it functioned, and how the meaning of racist statements were shaped by the context in which they were made, I analysed such tweets via a critical discursive psychological approach (Parker, 2002).

Discourse analysis focuses on how social reality is constructed through language. Therefore, when using discourse analysis, researchers aim to gain a better understanding of how conversations and interactions arise in a specific culture and

system (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Instead of treating language as something that simply reflects objective constructs that already exist and that can be accessed via appropriate methods, discourse analysis considers language as something that is used to construct a social reality and versions of events. In broad terms, discourse analysis can be classified as manifesting a social constructionist perspective that emphasizes that our world, assumptions, and categories used to interpret ‘reality’ and ‘the objective’ are built-up through social processes, especially through linguistic interactions. This means that these aspects are inherently culturally and historically specific (Burr, 2015; Coyle, 2012).

There are three forms of discourse analysis that psychologists use in responding to different versions and combinations. The first form is discursive psychology, as considers language as a form of social action (Wiggins, 2004). Analysts who use the discursive psychological approach focus on the form of interaction witnessed and consider language as an active tool that speakers use to achieve specific aims in a social context (Potter & Edwards, 1996; Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005). The second form, Foucauldian discourse analysis, suggests that the world has a social reality which is described in terms of power relations. According to the Foucauldian approach, discourses ‘facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when’ (Parker, 1992). Users of the Foucauldian approach are concerned with issues pertaining to ideology, power relations, and social change (Willig, 2008).

The third form, critical discursive psychology analysis, attempts to combine elements of the Foucauldian approach and discursive psychology. Analysts who use the critical discursive psychological approach focus simultaneously on the strategies of speakers when using language and the power relations of a social context (Edley & Wetherell, 1999; Wetherell, 1998). Analysts consider discourses as systems of statements that construct subjects that are related to issues of power. Alongside this, focus is given to how language is used by speakers as a tool to achieve some functions in their interactions.

As racist ways of victim-blaming have arisen in different disaster contexts – for example, in the cases of Hurricane Katrina and the New Cross fire (Tierney et al., 2006; Ismain, 2019) – and because racist statements usually do not represent what is happening in reality (regardless of the occurrence of a disaster or not) (Solnit, 2009; Tierney et al., 2006), understanding how language is used to legitimize racism is important as it can demonstrate how racism can be prevented and how community

empowerment processes can be contributed to by preventing victim-blaming. Even though the most affected groups in a disaster context are often working-class or minority ethnic populations due to the systemic injustice encountered, they can be seen as easy targets of blame because they will likely have been blamed prior to the given disaster. Therefore, in addition to the ethnographic work and interviews I conducted in this research, I also collected data from Twitter and used a critical discursive psychological approach to understand how racist language functions while survivors and their supporters create strong strategies through which to fight injustice.

## **Chapter 2**

**A factual account of the Grenfell Tower fire and aftermath**



## **2.1. Background to the Grenfell Tower fire**

### **2.1.1. Introduction: Disasters, inequality, response, and recovery**

Over 50 years of research on disasters and emergency situations has shown that the impacts of such occurrences are not always the same and in fact vary as widely as the communities that have suffered from them (Ferris, 2008). Various studies have suggested that while the impacts of disasters vary from country to country – among both developed and developing nations - some populations experience such outcomes more severely than others (Hillier & Nightingale 2013). Research has reflected a world in which politically, socially, and economically marginalized populations (such as working-class, ethnic and racial minority groups) are usually disproportionately affected by disasters and are more likely to experience greater difficulties in the recovery phase (Fothergill et al., 1999). Notably, these demographics possess a greater likelihood of living in unsafe housing and a lower likelihood of being able to evacuate themselves in the case of a disaster. In addition, they also have difficulty accessing post-disaster aid from authorities (Ahrens & Rudolph, 2006).

A case in point, Hurricane Katrina (2005) has ranked among the worst disasters of the 21st century, with the hurricane and its aftermath having had a great impact on working-class populations in areas such as New Orleans. These effects were further felt disproportionately among low-income African-Americans (Sastry, 2009), particularly when compared to White communities (Craemer, 2010). Some media reports as to this event have shown that the majority of people left behind were African-Americans with a low socioeconomic status (Fussell et al., 2010). In addition, some media has represented the survivors and victims as “barbarians” who ‘looted’ stores and shot at police officers (Tierney et al., 2006) – suggesting that the aftermath faced and the neglect of the Black working-class population by the authorities was due to their undeserving status (Solnit, 2009).

On the other hand, community reactions contradicted the media representations given here, representing how community effort brings individuals together when facing government inaction (Solnit, 2009). Survivors and community members indirectly affected by the hurricane became their own resources (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999). Moreover, people from different cities and states also came together with these community members to support each other and to meet the basic needs faced - such as the accommodation, clothing, and food required by survivors (Solnit, 1999). Therefore,

it may be said that the psychological and social consequences of disasters need to be considered at the community level rather than at the individual level. Here, the “individual reactions” of community members can become “shared reactions” within a “coping community.” In other terms, community reactions can affect individual reactions in positive and negative ways in a post-disaster recovery process (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999).

In the aftermath of a disaster, shared grievances can also bring community members together in enacting different forms of collective behaviour – such as campaigning. Most often, people come together to meet the basic needs of survivors (e.g., for food and accommodation) and, later, to coordinate their justice-seeking activities (Drury & Tekin Guven, 2017). The factual account presented in this chapter provides an understanding of the Grenfell Tower fire that occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 in London and further raises questions that can be answered via social psychological analysis of the group processes witnessed in the aftermath of the fire. The aim held is to explore the underlying reasons for the fire, the impact of the disaster on community members, and the campaigns formed in the recovery period among those directly and indirectly affected by the fire.

## **2.2. Background: Social housing and the North Kensington area**

Recent research (Bulley, 2019; Cornish, 2021; Kernick, 2021; Tekin & Drury, 2021) has suggested that the Grenfell Tower fire occurred because authorities neglected individuals with a lower socioeconomic status who lived in that social housing. Moreover, across traditional and social media, authorities were criticised for creating social injustice by giving priority to the needs of nearby residents with a higher socioeconomic status (Ahmed, 2017). It has been argued that mitigation and emergency preparedness as to private homes were prioritised, whereby those dwellings were built to be significantly less susceptible to disasters such as the one that occurred in Grenfell Tower (Keenan, 2019). To understand the injustice that Grenfell Tower residents experienced both before and after the fire, it is important to explore the concept and evolution of social housing in the UK and how the consequences of the Grenfell Tower fire correspond to the neglect of authorities.

### **2.2.1. History of social housing in the UK**

In the 1860s, the City Council of Liverpool became the first local authority in England to recognize the link between public health and housing (Hanley 2017), however such discussions can be traced back to the 1840s when Friedrich Engels detailed the idea of social housing (Streets of Liverpool, 2015). In 1842, Britain experienced an influx of migrants from Ireland and surrounding areas as a result of industrialization (University of the West England, 2008), whereby those migrant families settled in areas such as Salford as they could seek employment in the cotton and silk spinning and weaving mills. However, although the area had a strong economy due to an enlarged working-class being witnessed, overpopulation became a long-standing problem. The social stratification of Salford prompted Friedrich Engels to examine the linkage between poor housing and poverty, as detailed in his first book, “The Condition of the Working Class in England” (published in 1845 and cited in Hanley in 2017). According to Engels, only private builders were building houses at the time and, notably, their large and terraced houses were targeted at wealthy people. Working-class families could therefore not afford to own their homes and thus people put pressure on the government to create more affordable housing (University of the West England, 2008).

Between 1840 and 1890, the UK Government started to pass various acts to improve the housing in poor areas. One of the most important acts, the Housing for the Working-Class Act, came into force in 1890 and saw the UK Government provide housing for single men in dormitories (Strode, 1890). Despite new housing in towns and cities having been supplied by private builders prior to the First World War, the provision of private houses for working-class populations post-war was limited due to shortages of material and labour. Consequently, the UK Government only supplied housing needed by soldiers returning from the war as a national responsibility. At the beginning of the 1930s, all local authorities focused on submitting a programme of clearing slums from their district (Hanley, 2012). By the beginning of the Second World War, many buildings in slum areas were replaced with three-to-five storey buildings modelled on those found in Europe. Building houses was stopped a second time due to the war and, in exacerbation of this, Britain faced a worsening housing shortage as thousands of houses had been damaged due to the conflict. Later, housing became a

central focus in the election of the Labour Government in 1945 (University of the West England, 2008).

This social housing policy was supported by the Attlee Government post-Second World War, whereby local authorities were required by law to provide housing to people. The rationale held at the time was that this mandate was designed to bridge housing disparities alongside other socioeconomic disparities in education and health facing the country following the post-war economic difficulties encountered (Çaylı, 2017). The UK Government also sought to actively mitigate the risk of ghettoization and therefore some social housing was built in city centres (such as Kensington, in London) that were predominantly populated by economically privileged-groups. Nonetheless, the emergence of neoliberalism changed the policies that Attlee's Labour Administration had created in the late 1940s, with the 1980s witnessing an era of wholesale privatisation championed by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Administration (Hanley, 2012).

This Conservative Government introduced a "right-to-buy" policy, as supported the privatization of housing estates with regard to both ownership and management. Such a 'right to buy' allowed citizens to buy their council house from the given Local Authority at a huge discount, unsurprisingly seeing millions of such homes being sold off (Tucker, 2017). For the housing not privatized, its management was outsourced and renovation delegated to sub-contractors. Building projects started to decline as more people bought houses and councils became restricted in how much they could build. Consequently, a housing shortage became a problem for the country. Here, the economics of demand-and-supply came into play and the prices of homes surged, thereby making them less available to those economically-disadvantaged. When homeowners realized that their houses could rise in value, they started favouring politicians and policies that would swell those prices even further. In a bid to gain the highest possible return on their investments, property owners further began compromising the well-being of their tenants (Lammy, 2017). Private developers also joined this action. Since housing demand outstripped supply, developers were in a position to build less while charging more.

Following the 2007-2008 Financial Crisis, social housing policies were threatened when the idea of "real estate" increased (Çaylı, 2017). Therefore, non-privatized multi-storey social housing in city centres were challenged by the idea of privatization that real estates brought. During this time, the affluent were focused on changing the perceptions

of these buildings (Çaylı, 2017) – including by prominent people, such as Prince Charles who described such architecture as “worse than rubble” (Murphy, 2014). The media has also played a significant role in changing the perceptions of social housing in city centres. For instance, some UK liberal newspapers have made strong statements after disasters involving social housing. As a case in point, an article in *The Guardian* after the Grenfell fire stated that, as a lesson to be learnt, developers should stop building high-rise blocks in cities as such buildings are “antisocial, high maintenance, disempowering, unnecessary, mostly ugly and can never be truly safe” (Jenkins, 2017).

On the other hand, proponents of social housing assert that the stopping of multi-storey building construction will not solve the health and safety issues faced by social housing residents and that only the prevention of flammable cladding being used will significantly decrease the risk of a disaster akin to the Grenfell Tower fire (O’Carroll, 2017). Trellick Tower, a multi-storey building built around the same time as Grenfell Tower (i.e., the early 1970s), also experienced a fire in April 2017 but this was contained and did not spread as the tower’s cladding was fire-resistant (Doward, 2017).

### **2.3. Grenfell Tower**

Grenfell Tower, as was situated in West London, was designed in 1967 by Clifford Wearden and Associates. The tower block was named after Grenfell Road which fell at the south of the building - the road being named after Field Marshall Lord Francis Grenfell who was a senior British Army officer who lost his life in 1925 (Cambridge et al., 2017). Kensington and Chelsea Council approved the construction of the tower in 1970 as part of Phase One of the Lancaster West Estate Redevelopment Project and the building was completed in 1974.

Local people nicknamed the building ‘Moroccan Tower’ (Graham-Harrison, 2017) as the majority of its initial renters came from the local Moroccan migrant community (Short, 2017). Moreover, the area around the building was home to a large North African population. The 24-storey housing block was originally managed by the local authority, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) but was placed under the management of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) in 1990s (KCTMO, n.d.). By 2017, Grenfell Tower contained 120 flats comprising a mix of social housing and private homes sold or rented out by KCTMO on behalf of Kensington and Chelsea Council (Cambridge, Christodoulou,

2017). Some residents had become leaseholders under the right-to-buy scheme. By the time of the fire, 14 flats in the tower and three in Grenfell Walk had been leased.

### 2.3.1. Demographics

Grenfell Tower was situated in one of the most deprived areas of London yet it also neighboured the most affluent area. In this sense, extreme poverty and wealth were living side by side (Barr, 2017). According to the English Indices of Deprivation, Kensington and Chelsea ranked in the poorest decile in the UK – with 11 lower super<sup>1</sup> output areas.

According to census statistics in 2011 (Baker, 2011), 72.1% of the Kensington and Chelsea population worked as managers, directors, professionals, and associate professionals. Furthermore, many of the residences of the borough had an average price of £2 million, with some reaching ten times this amount. This data further revealed a higher proportion of high earners residing in the borough than anywhere else in the country. In this regard, fewer people worked in skilled trade occupations and more people worked in banking in this area than anywhere else in Britain (Baker-Jordan, 2017). The average salary in Kensington and Chelsea is £123,000, among the highest in Britain where the median is £32,700.

The 2011 census further illustrates that the private rental sector in Kensington and Chelsea grew by 10% between 2001 and 2011, manifesting one of the highest proportions of private rented households (35.8%) in London (Baker, 2011). During the same period, the proportion of social rented housing in Kensington and Chelsea decreased from 26% to 24.6%. Media reports in the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire stated that the increasing number of private rented housing had resulted in a depletion of affordable houses (Downing, 2017). Overall, these facts evidence how the gentrification of Kensington and Chelsea has enabled the displacement of minority populations. For Grant, (2003), gentrification can be held as:

“a general term for the arrival of wealthier people in an existing urban district, a related increase in rents and property values, and changes in the district’s character and culture. The term is often used negatively, suggesting the displacement of poor communities by rich outsiders”.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of National Statistics(ONS) in the U.K. provides different codes to represent geographical areas of the U.K to tabulate census and other statistical data. Lower Layer Super Output Areas are the smallest geographical areas that were defined by ONS. They contain 4 to 6 Output Areas with a population of around 1500 ([NHS,2018](#)).

Media reports have also argued that structural inequalities allowed the Grenfell Tower fire to occur, with one resident being quoted by a newspaper as stating: “If someone in those houses complained about their rubbish bins, the council would sort it out immediately. But because we weren’t White, no one cared when they said their homes were dangerous” (Foster, 2017).

### **2.3.2. Health and safety issues**

In May 2016, a refurbishment project (referred to as a “regeneration project” by some media reports) for Grenfell Tower was completed, the majority of such work pertaining to modernizing the tower with cladding and new windows (Baker-Jordan, 2017). The original contractor, Leadbitter, was dropped by the KCTMO as their request for £11.27 million was £1.6 million in excess of the KCTMO’s proposed budget (Hills, 2017). Subsequently, Rydon, a British construction company, carried out the refurbishment for £8.7 million, this being £2.5 million less than Leadbitter had requested (Wilmore, 2017).

Two types of cladding were used during the refurbishment – 1) coil-coated aluminium purchased from an American industrial company called Arconic and 2) polyisocyanurate (PIR) thermal insulation produced as a foam and purchased from a French company called Celotext. It was reported in the media that these two types of cladding were cheap alternatives and were highly combustible and flammable (Booth, 2020).

Health and safety issues relating to the building had been reported by its residents for twelve years preceding the fire. Indeed, in 2012, a resident campaign group, the Grenfell Action Group (GAG), criticised the KCTMO for neglecting the safety concerns raised (Grenfell Action Group, 2012, 2015, 2018). Moreover, the GAG published its fire safety concerns on their online blog, whereupon they were threatened by the KCTMO with legal action on the grounds that the campaigners were harassing the KCTMO. At the beginning of 2016, the GAG reported that the building had only one entrance and one exit, that corridors were allowed to be filled with rubbish, and that no sprinkler system had been installed (Croydon Council, 2017; Guyoncourt, 2017). Besides the GAG’s public raising of concerns, an independent assessor also reported to the KCTMO that there were 40 serious health and safety issues inside the building and, in October 2016, recommended that the KCTMO take urgent action to increase the health and safety conditions identified (Bushby, 2018). However, as reported by

traditional media and across social media, these issues were not taken seriously (Cox et al., 2017).

## **2.4. Grenfell Tower fire**

The Grenfell Tower fire occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 and is reported to have begun on the fourth floor (Bulley, 2019; Kernick, 2021). The residents of the fourth floor have stated that a neighbour's fridge caught fire around 00.50 am (BBC, 2018). They then alerted other neighbours and began to evacuate the building, however the fire was out of control within 30 minutes due to it having spread to other flats quickly as the exterior cladding of the building was not fire-resistant (Swinden, 2018). Some witnesses have reported that they saw people trapped inside the burning building (Lubin, 2017), switching the lights in their flats on and off or waving from windows with their phone lights on to attract help. Some of these trapped individuals were holding their children.<sup>2</sup> The Emergency services received the first report of the fire at 00:54 local time, with more than 250 fire-fighters and 70 fire engines from stations all over London ultimately becoming involved in trying to control the fire (Stevens, 2017). In addition, over 100 London Ambulance Service crew and over 20 ambulances with specialists from the Hazardous Area Response Team (O'Mahonny, 2017) were utilised.

The fire burned continuously for a total of approximately 60 hours and firefighters managed to rescue 65 people. The National Health Service (NHS) subsequently confirmed that seventy-four people were in six hospitals across London, with 20 being in critical care (NHS, 2017, 2018; Weaver, et al., 2017). It was later identified by the Metropolitan Police and Coroner that 71 people had lost their lives during the fire and one person died one day after the fire. Occupants of 23 of the 129 flats died, while 223 people survived out of 293 residents (Moloney, 2017).

### **2.4.1. Lakanal House fire, 2009**

The Grenfell Tower fire invoked bad memories for Londoners of the Lakanal House fire that happened in 2009 in Camberwell, London (Twinch, 2017). Here, three children (one being a 20-day old baby) and three adults lost their lives in a fire that was also caused by botched and unsafe renovation work (Stevens, 2013). The media and

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<sup>2</sup> Some people also stated that somebody dropped a baby to people below from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> floor. However, according to a later investigation by BBC Panorama, there was no evidence that those claims were credible (Telegraph Reporters, 2017).



local community has pointed out that the Lakanal House fire was similar to the Grenfell Tower fire because, in each case, the respective councils had been responsible for undertaking the renovation of those buildings (Barling, 2017). As with the Grenfell Tower case, the results of the Lakanal House fire Inquest showed that the cladding panels affixed to the outside of the building were not fire-resistant, therein causing the fire to spread very fast from its initial source (Walker, 2013). After this event, Judge Frances Kirkman asserted that landlords should be responsible for fitting sprinkler systems in their buildings and that the UK Government should publish guidance clarifying how residents should leave buildings in the case of a fire. Eight years later, and during the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, a bereaved family member of a Lakanal House fire victim noted that ‘nothing was learned’ (Killelea, 2017).

#### **2.4.2. Shepherd’s Court fire, 2016**

Another tower block fire happened on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 in Shepherd's Court, an 18-storey building in Shepherd’s Bush Green. The fire started as a result of a broken dryer in one of the dwellings on the seventh floor (BBC, 2016), consequently spreading to the eighth and ninth floors via the outside of the building because the cladding material used was not fire-resistant. Notably, this cladding comprised the same material as that used on Grenfell Tower. 20 fire engines and 120 firefighters were needed to extinguish the fire and, despite there being no fatalities, many people suffered from smoke inhalation injuries (Al-Othman et al., 2016). As with the Grenfell Tower fire and the Lakanal House fire, the local council was accused by residents, members of the public and the media of neglect (Hosken, 2017). After this fire, the London Fire Brigade warned all London councils, via a letter, that the external faces of some buildings in London did not meet requisite fire safety requirements (Daly, 2017).

#### **2.4.3. Impact of the Grenfell Tower fire**

In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, focus was given by many journalists as to the fact that up to 30,000 buildings in the UK had the same cladding material used for Grenfell Tower (Davies, 2017), with 60 of such buildings being high-rise across 25 local authorities (Rodger, 2017). These buildings included Granville Point Harpenmead (in North East London) Point-Templemead Point (in Barnet), and River Apartments (in Tottenham). In London, Camden Council evacuated five high-rise buildings on the Chalcits Estate and in Swiss Cottage as firefighters had raised concerns

over their fire doors, gas pipes, insulation, and external cladding (Rodger, 2017). Secondly, Clements Court in Hounslow also failed its fire safety test, whereupon the local council stated that it would institute a fire watch patrol and would “remove the cladding as soon as possible.” Wandsworth Council further stated that Castlemaine Tower in Battersea did not meet fire safety requirements and that its external cladding needed to be removed because the material was the same as used for Grenfell Tower (Rodger, 2017).

Mental health practitioners working with the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire and other residents have stated that many people struggled to deal with the psychological trauma of the event (Sherwood, 2017), therein experiencing eating and sleeping disturbances and encountering anxiety and depression. Psychologists also reported post-traumatic stress disorders among some of the residents who witnessed the fire, with many conveying that they were re-experiencing the event through nightmares and were unwilling to visit the area or to talk/think about the event (Grenfell NHS, n.d.). Some arousal symptoms - such as cold sweats and irritated behaviour in response to loud noises - were observed by psychologists working with those residents. The fire also indirectly affected children and manifested various behavioural symptoms - such as concentration problems, sleep disruption, loss of appetite, and low energy levels (Gentleman, 2017). Their parents and psychologists stated that the effects of the fire also arose during their games, where they acted as if they were dead, firefighters, or ambulance people (LBC, 2017).

The Grenfell Tower fire was an unforgettable event for both community members and survivors. Many of whom have had to deal with emotional and mental problems post-fire. For example, Winston Dowarris, a resident of Hurstway Walk, as located very close to Grenfell Tower, had a bedroom view which looked directly onto Grenfell Tower (Taylor, 2018). Dowarris was a pensioner dealing with skin cancer and witnessed some of the residents of Grenfell Tower who were trapped inside the building. Having suffered a heart attack that night, his oncologist requested that Kensington and Chelsea Council rehouse him, yet this request was not considered for seven months – during which he needed to sleep at the houses of his friends.

Moreover, residents of three buildings adjoining Grenfell Tower - Barandon Walk, Hurstway Walk, and Testerton Walk - were also forced to live in temporary accommodation because of the safety issues of those buildings (Walker, 2017). Over 200 people lost their accommodation and around 100 households from those blocks

were still in hotels and temporary accommodation as of March 2018, more than nine months after the fire (Rawlinson, 2018). According to media reports in 2021, six Grenfell Tower households were still living in temporary accommodation (Andersson, 2021), suffering from traumatic memories of the fire and fearing that they could be forced to return to the same place upon the estate being refurbished (Rawlinson, 2018). Additionally, some people have been asked to move to other cities (such as Manchester or Birmingham), thereby separating them from their communities and support networks. Many community members have accused Kensington and Chelsea Council of failing to respond to the needs of residents because they have left those people with uncertainty (Khan, 2017). Residents have, in this sense, been put in a position where they shall need to return to their old places (i.e., locations where they will feel uncomfortable due to the trauma experienced there). Another group of residents has stated that the authorities' responses began to improve five months after the fire, with Kensington and Chelsea Council being seen to have begun listening to the survivors and seeking solutions as to their needs (Gentleman, 2017). Nonetheless, as of May 2018, more mental health specialists and better solutions to the faced housing problems were needed (Ewens, 2018). Mental health services further stated that spending such a long time in temporary accommodation was inhibiting the recovery of the survivors (Gentleman, 2017). According to the Grenfell Recovery Taskforce Initial Report ([2017](#)) on January 31, 2018, 320 households were still living in hotel accommodation.

Another group deeply affected by the fire has been firefighters. In the past decade, more than 10,000 firefighters have been dismissed, many fire stations have been closed (including the Knightsbridge Station), and the UK Government has reduced its Fire Service budgets by 30% (Scattergood, 2017). The General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, Matt Wrack, has stated that due to the inadequate number of firefighters able to attend the Grenfell Tower fire, firefighters had to enter and leave the building several times, and this caused adverse health effects for those individuals (Gentleman, 2017). Notably, the insulation of Grenfell Tower, when burnt, released cyanide gas which could affect firefighters as well as residents - with King's College Hospital having confirmed that residents were poisoned by deadly cyanide gas (Boyle & Knapton, 2017). Moreover, some of the firefighters who tackled the fire have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, having been exposed to repeated trauma that night (Evans, 2017).

## 2.5. Analysis of the Grenfell Tower fire

Newspaper interviews with the residents of Grenfell Tower have highlighted how such figures believe the fire should be considered to be a result of institutional racism and racial stereotyping supported by the policies, procedures and official acts of the authorities. As has been stated widely, it was mainly ethnic minority and working-class populations endangered here as those groups often cannot afford to live in safe accommodation (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019).

While the cause of the Grenfell Tower fire may seem to be very straightforward - an electric appliance fire - the underlying reasons and ongoing impacts of the fire have their roots in political and economic inequality. According to media reports, the survivors have stated their belief that the KCTMO was focused on improving the appearance of the building in order to attract tenants to the area who could/would pay higher rents than working-class residents. The consequences of the fire have been considered in the context of gentrification by community members and journalists, with a conclusion often being reached that Kensington and Chelsea Council primarily focused on the outside of the building to prevent wealthy neighbours from viewing the structure as an “eyesore” (O’Connor, 2017).

It has been suggested in recent literature (e.g., Kernick 2021; Bulley, 2019) that prior to the fire, a battle was already ongoing between community members and authorities about the ownership of the land – with it being perceived that the authorities had for many years been seeking to gain economic advantage over the land and its community spaces while campaigners fought to protect the area from gentrification projects. It may be argued that the Grenfell Tower fire was a deadly result of such gentrification and a primary reason for the fire being reported as a “systemic injustice” faced by working-class and racial/ethnic minority groups.

Community members, survivors and supporters from different communities have further expressed anger in the media and across social media, claiming that the authorities had failed to provide the necessary response in the immediate aftermath of the fire. Consequently, community aid groups and campaign groups came together with the survivors and bereaved families to meet their immediate needs. Lastly, because the fire was described as a political issue, people from different areas campaigned with survivors and bereaved families to seek justice (Bowie, 2017).

## 2.6. Recovery period

### 2.6.1. Campaign and support groups

As government negligence was obvious in this context (Wishmeyer, 2017), community members organized themselves quickly and became their own resources rather than waiting for the resources of the authorities (Tekin & Drury, 2021). Akin to the disaster communities documented by Kaniasty and Norris (1999), Solnit (2009), and Drury and Cocking and Reicher (2009), it was seen that campaigners, volunteers, and others directly or indirectly affected by the fire came together to create a community to meet the basic needs of survivors - such as by providing food and temporary places for victims to sleep (BBC, 2017). The organizers of sport centres, churches, mosques, and rugby clubs further created temporary accommodation while huge amount of clothing was donated from across the UK (Sherwood, 2017). However, some of these donations were found to be inappropriate and unnecessary, thereby requiring volunteers and campaigners to sort these. Community centres, youth clubs, mosques, and churches offered spaces to house these donations. A community member and co-producer of the Grenfell Tower fire documentary, *Failed by the State*, (Renwick & Francis, 2017) Daniel Renwick, has stated that many volunteers and campaigners created a community through which people could work collectively to organize all donations by wearing the same t-shirt design.

The delayed response of Kensington and Chelsea Council after the disaster angered even more people and strengthened the campaign for justice. The first protests occurred just two days after the fire. On the 16th of June, people directly and indirectly affected by the fire started protesting in front of Kensington Town Hall during the first meeting of the leadership of Kensington & Chelsea Council since the fire (Wright, 2017). Media reports showed that the police and security guards confronted the protestors, forcing them back (Collier & Rose, 2017). The police then formed a line to block the entrance to the reception. Reports from social media have placed the number of protestors at approximately 350 – with Lily Allen, the singer, being among them (Starkey, 2017). Campaign and support groups sprung up all over the area, a selection of which are detailed below.

#### *Campaigns that existed before the fire*

Grenfell Action Group (GAG): This group was set up to oppose the Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre (KALC) development following the destruction of

Lancaster Green in 2010 (GAG, 2015). Lancaster Green, as located in North Kensington, was a green space neighbouring Grenfell Tower which offered residential amenity space to the neighbours of Grenfell Tower (GAG, 2012). The KALC aimed to become one of the biggest development projects instituted under the regeneration project sponsored by Kensington and Chelsea Council. The purpose of the GAG was to defend the rights of Lancaster West Estate residents, a population which is mostly working-class, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic in demographic. In campaigning post-fire, the GAG's primary aim pertained to collecting evidence as to the mistreatment of their community by Kensington and Chelsea Council and the inadequate fire safety provisions of its social housing management agents, KCTMO. (GAG, 2017).

Westway23: This group had its roots in the early 1970s when a new motorway, the Westway, was built to make it easier for people to drive out of London. However, the new highway carried the traffic above the lives of people living in North Kensington. Since that time, local residents have formed community action networks to fight for better housing opportunities and open spaces in which children can play (Westway23, n.d.). Following campaigns, the North Kensington Amenity Trust, now the Westway Trust, was set up in 1971 as the custodian of the 23 acres of land under the motorway in partnership with the local authority (Westway). Later, some community members claimed that the Westway Trust had planned to find alternative ways of using the 23 acres – where the community members of Ladbroke Grove, Notting Hill, and West London had settled. One such plan was a construction project, “Destination Westway”, which invoked local residents to create another organization, Westway23, to serve their interests. Local residents, artists, and traders from different ethnic backgrounds formed this grassroots organization to defend the rights of residents in Ladbroke Grove, Notting Hill, West London against inappropriate construction projects, poor air quality, and noise pollution. After the Grenfell Tower fire, the group supported survivors with public speeches, art, and sports activities alongside a diverse range of festivals designed to bring communities together.

Al Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre: Al Manaar provided help, support, and counselling to victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. The centre had a special section, “Grenfell Halls 1&2”, with a capacity of about 100 which was opened to provide temporary sleeping places for the fire's survivors. Once the Grenfell victims had been resettled, the space was used for meetings and community/cultural activities. From

October 2017, this space was also used as a weekly Winter Shelter for the homeless in and around North Kensington (Almanaar, 2017).

Faith communities - such as the Notting Hill Methodist Church, St Clement's Church, and West London Synagogue - began to help survivors and bereaved families right after the fire, initially supporting survivors by offering temporary accommodation until they were moved to hotels and organizing funerals for the victims without charge (Sheerwood, 2017) while, later, setting up different activities for community members. The Notting Hill Methodist Church constituted a choir of survivors and bereaved families to allow them to access the therapeutic value of music. The Al-Manaar Mosque and Community Centre also offered "winter camp" activities with the West London Synagogue for the children of the local community.

#### *Campaigns organized after the fire*

Grenfell United: This group was comprised of a community of survivors and bereaved families of the Grenfell Tower fire. From its inception, its members emphasised the solidarity given to the survivors and community members affected by the fire. The aim held was to demand justice and to fight for everyone who has experienced systemic injustice, believing the best way to do so is to enlarge the number of active supporters. Therefore, they share updates via e-mail, on their website, and across social media while organizing meetings and activities to keep the fire and its victims on the agenda of the authorities (Grenfell United, 2021).

Justice4Grenfell (J4G, n.d.): This group was officially set up on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June with the first Silent Walk from Ladbroke Grove to the Grenfell Memorial Wall under Westway. The members have supported bereaved families and survivors by holding the authorities to account - both for the event itself and their inaction post-fire (Justice4Grenfell, 2017). In seeking justice for survivors, their families, and local community members, the group joined and supported Silent Walks, council meeting protests and other meetings/public speeches. Eight months after the fire, in February 2018, the group raised its concerns by renting three vans carrying three billboards stating "72 DEAD", "AND STILL NO ARREST", "HOW COME?", beginning in front of the former Grenfell Tower building and then making their way through Central London. This action was a powerful reminder for the authorities not to forget the community members seeking justice (Justice4Grenfell, 2018).

The Grenfell Muslim Response Unit: This unit was set up in the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire by Muslim agencies and volunteers to provide

support to survivors and their families “regardless of their religion and race.” In focusing on helping those inadequately addressed by Kensington and Chelsea Council and other authorities post-fire, they collaborated with other campaign groups and organizations (such as The Curve Community Centre) to address the legal concerns of immigrant families. This unit also organized activities such as public speeches and art-related activities.

Grenfell Support, (n.d.) a resource led by Kensington and Chelsea Council, provided information as to the housing, financial help, and health services available. The Curve Community Centre, as a related resource, has ten rooms which survivors can use in holding individual meetings, accessing therapies and arranging crèches. The Curve’s members define the centre as “an independent Board of Governors and Residents Steering Group that ensures it is as accountable to the community as it is to [Kensington and Chelsea Council].” Even though The Curve is an independent entity, it uses the resources of Kensington and Chelsea Council, and council members have the right to decide what help is offered to help survivors here. In January 2018, members of the Kensington and Chelsea Council stated that the therapists working with survivors at The Curve needed to leave their position as new NHS-linked mental health specialists would be provided instead (Taylor, 2018). Those therapists were helping 150 survivors alongside other residents, many of whom stated that they had found it difficult to build a relationship of trust with the authorities and that this was exacerbated upon the government taking this opportunity from them. Community members stated that they were unable to trust The Curve post-fire, although later said that The Curve had changed, become successful and built a relationship of trust with community members.

### **2.6.2. Silent Walks**

For over 4 years, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of each month, community members, people from wider communities in London, and people from other cities came together to honour the victims of the fire. A local person who lived opposite Grenfell Tower was the main organizer of the Silent Walks. The first Silent Walk was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June by community members (Justice4Grenfell, 2017). Later, the supporters continued these walks on the 14<sup>th</sup> of each month (Allen, 2017). In the first Silent Walk, thirty people met at Notting Hill Methodist Church and walked down St Marks Road and Cambridge Gardens, past bus stops and railings where posters were calling for information about



missing loved ones. It then passed under a multi-colored railway bridge and past Latimer Road Underground Station (Topping, 2017).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, while hundreds of people walked through the city in a similar pattern as with previous Silent Walks, they were asked to carry a candle or yellow ribbon in tribute to those who lost their lives two months prior. They walked through the residential streets of North Kensington to nearby Ladbroke Grove before ending near a memorial. A post on a Facebook group, Silent March - Grenfell Tower, stated: “A silent and peaceful walk to take place on the 14th of every month. This is to pay respect to those who are no longer with us. This is also a movement to ensure we get Justice4Grenfell. The silence can speak a thousand words. We are more powerful together!” (Cred, 2017) While some sources have recorded the number of Silent Walk attendees as increasing every month, no exact numbers are available (Renshaw, 2017).

In the first two years following the fire, the Silent Walks had been taking different routes, the organizer citing “the main reason for the route change [being] to spread that message of peace and unity to the part of the borough.” While people from other communities attended every month, others provided support in their own locality by organizing parallel Silent Walks (Dailymail, 2018). For instance, a simultaneous silent walk was held in Manchester on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 while, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2018, a Silent Walk was organized by Bristol4Grenfell group in Bristol (Smith, 2018) and in Liverpool (Lewis, 2018).

Physically gathering for Silent Walks stopped between March 2020 and May 2021 because of the restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic, yet Grenfell United published videos every month to convey information to their followers and supporters as to their ongoing justice-seeking process. Moreover, allies have been asked for their support via online posts. On the fourth-year anniversary of the fire, the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, the campaign group Grenfell United announced via Twitter that the walk was only going to happen among community members. However, over 3,000 people from wider communities attended walks to support community members. After the fourth-year anniversary, walks have continued mainly among community members.

### **2.6.3. Spaces**

Community members created an area for those directly and indirectly affected by the fire under the Westway, this being in front of the Maxilla Social Club. This

space, the "Wall of Truth Area", is so named as a big wall was provided for community members and campaigners from wider communities to write out their demands and truth about the fire. The aim of doing so was to create a sense of community among the survivors and other community members of Latimer Road indirectly affected by the fire. This was an open space for everybody and included furniture, books, a piano, a mural and different notes and paintings on the walls (Priest, 2018). A few days prior to the first-year anniversary, the furniture was moved away by the local people to create more space for the campaigners who attended the Silent Walks in 2018. However, this space has continued to bring together different members of the community for different activities and meetings.

Since the outside space was not suitable for the winter months, community members took over a large council building designated as an adult social-care hub under the Westway. Campaigners used this space for different activities - such as community meetings, playing music and other art-related activities. It is worth noting that the space served not only survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire but also other disadvantaged community members (such as homeless people, teenagers on the streets and people with disabilities). This space, officially "Latimer City", has been defined by its organizers as "a community initiative to re-purpose an unused building into a much-needed community hub for [the] W10/W11 area (which is in the neighbourhood of Grenfell Tower)." As Kensington and Chelsea Council and some campaign groups have sought to take ownership of the space, it was closed until reconciliation was achieved among community members, campaign groups, and the council.

Another important space for community members, the Henry Dickens Community Centre, was organized by local teachers who dedicated themselves to providing free after-school sessions for children affected by the fire. Besides these child-centred activities, art therapists were available to help community members who had experienced trauma in the aftermath of the disaster. This place was also used to create the green heart-shaped banners held by campaigners during the Silent Walks as a symbol of the Grenfell Tower community.

The Space, another community provision set up in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, offered the local community a health and wellbeing hub during the recovery process and played a key role in allowing community members to meet their different needs – such as in accessing donations, food and mental/physical wellbeing (SPACE, 2021).

#### 2.6.4. Key events during the campaign process

*Second Year Anniversary, 14 June 2020:* One of the most prominent Silent Walks happened during the second-year anniversary of the fire, as occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 with the attendance of thousands of participants including celebrities and politicians (Brewis & Wills, 2019). Many activities were held for community members around the former Grenfell Tower building, yet people from different parts of London and other areas also attended - thereby showing this extended beyond a community-based issue and that it had a national impact (Booth, 2019).

*National Campaign “End Our Cladding Scandal”:* After the Grenfell Tower Fire, it was reported that over 2,000 buildings in the UK had cladding with similar material to that which exacerbated the fire of Grenfell Tower. Therefore, the “End Our Cladding Scandal” campaign arose in collaboration with many other campaign groups (including Grenfell United). Besides Grenfell Tower community supporters, this campaign also mobilized supporters from other cities - e.g., Liverpool Claddiators and Manchester Claddiators (End Our Cladding Scandal, 2021).

*Public Inquiry:* The Grenfell Tower fire Public Inquiry was ordered by then-Prime Minister Theresa May one day after the fire. Two weeks later (on 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2017), May announced that the inquiry would be chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a retired judge. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, bereaved families and survivors organized a petition, “Call on Prime Minister to take an action to build public trust in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry”, to demand a debate in Parliament as to the justice-seeking process and to include survivors and bereaved families within the inquiry process. To achieve its goals, the petition needed to be signed by 150,000 people. In two weeks, 156,835 signatures were received (Petitions UK Government and Parliament, 2018).

The aim of the inquiry was to understand the full context of the Grenfell Tower fire and what kinds of action need to be taken to prevent similar events from happening in the future. The report on the first phase of the inquiry was published on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, wherein it was stated that the primary reason for the fire’s spread was the flammable cladding used during the refurbishment projects. In addition, even though the attending firefighters were noted as having demonstrated meticulous and hard work, criticism was given as to the systemic miscommunication of commanders and the control room witnessed and the lack of appropriate training possessed by the commanders (Grenfell Tower Inquiry, 2019).

The second phase of the inquiry commenced on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2020. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2021, six key points of the public inquiry were discussed in the media. The first point was related to the inadequate evacuation plans that were available to the Grenfell Tower residents. In the fire risk assessments conducted in 2012, 2014, and 2016, it was reported that the building was adequately equipped for the escape of disabled residents. However, in reality, because there was no evacuation plans for the disabled residents, 40% of the victims were disabled. The second point pertained to the unqualified fire risk assessor used for Grenfell Tower, whom lawyers for the survivors accused of inventing his fire risk assessment qualifications. The third point responded to how necessary health and safety action was not taken as the risk assessor did not identify the health and safety issues in the building. The fourth point was about the broken fire doors of Grenfell Tower, which did not shut automatically during the fire and therefore allowed smoke to spread quickly inside the building and to trap people in communal areas. The fifth point focused on how authorities disregarded the health and safety (including fire) issues raised by Grenfell Tower residents. The final point regarded the unrepaired smoke ventilation system of Grenfell Tower, as identified by the building's residents six years prior to the fire and which was not fixed until a few hours before the fire ( Apps, 2021).

Campaigns in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire continued for over four years and inspired many campaign actions (e.g., End Our Cladding Scandal) in different parts of the UK. While nobody has yet to be held accountable for the fire, fight has been given for justice.

## **2.7. Issues of significance**

The survivors, media, and wider community have generally held the UK Government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire as negligent (Gentleman, 2018), therein identifying inadequate support being given from both local and national authorities. As Kaniasty and Norris (1999) have stated, the "individual reactions" of community members can become "shared reactions". This is reflected in how people indirectly affected by the fire (including from other cities) came together to meet the primary survival and social needs of the survivors. Media and social media discourses have noted that the long history of fighting social injustice (gentrification) in the area by local community members allowed and motivated those populations to organize themselves rapidly after the fire. Instead of waiting for the responses of authorities,

community members could come together right after the event and continued to act collectively for a long time.

The factual account presented here helps us to understand that the primary reason for the catastrophic event of the Grenfell Tower fire was the neglect of authorities. Furthermore, it is evidenced that such disasters need to be considered at the community and systemic level rather than just the individual level (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Rappaport, 1987; Solnit, 2009). In the recovery period, campaign groups demanded justice for bereaved families and punishment for responsible institutions. Community members and their supporters created their own strategies through which to support each other when governmental inaction was encountered. In doing so, they displayed their identities in different campaigns and activities (such as Silent Walks) and took action to empower their community.

Defining success in this sphere is very difficult as the expectations and definitions of justice are likely to differ among respective campaign groups. However, in the context of the Grenfell Tower community and its actions, all involved parties seem to have been aware of the importance of campaigning collectively to reach the institutional aims held. For example, the way that campaigners created their activities (e.g., petitions and Silent Walks) highlighted how the sustaining of such community action and empowerment was only possible when the activities undertaken were approachable to “others”. Besides sharing an identity under a sense of injustice, people had a chance to act collectively and to strategically achieve their justice-seeking goals.

## Chapter 3

### **Study 1 - How do those affected by a disaster organize to meet their needs for justice? Campaign strategies and partial victories following the Grenfell Tower fire**

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#### **3.1. Abstract**

Previous research has shown that disasters often involve a sense of injustice among affected communities. But the empowerment process through which ‘disaster communities’ organise strategically to confront such injustices have not been investigated by social psychology. This study addresses this gap by examining how community members impacted by the Grenfell Tower fire self-organized to demand justice in response to government neglect. Thematic analysis of interviews with fifteen campaigners helped us to understand the strategies of those involved in support campaigns following the fire. Campaigners aimed to: overcome injustice against the government inactions in the aftermath of the fire; empower their community against government neglect; create a sense of community for people who experienced injustice. Community members created a petition calling on the government to build trust in the public inquiry; they achieved their goals with the participation of people from wider communities. We found that reaching out to allies from different communities and building shared social identity among supporters were two main ways to achieve campaign goals. The study suggests ways that empowerment and hence organizing for justice can be achieved after a disaster if campaigners adopt strategies for empowering collective action.

**Keywords:** Campaigning, Grenfell Tower fire, disasters, injustice, justice, empowerment, social identity.

### 3.2. Introduction

Disasters are hazardous incidents leading to human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts. Interacting with social conditions, they disrupt the functioning of a community (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2016). Whether or not the hazards occur as a natural process or are human made, the results can be experienced on different levels in different sections of society (Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2006). Therefore, disasters can be considered as political events which lead to political responses from those communities directly and indirectly affected by them (Cleaver, 1987; Smith, 2006). Sometimes, those affected by a disaster develop campaigns which tackle the social conditions that led to the catastrophe, in addition to their immediate needs and injustices after the disaster (Heldman, 2010).

The recovery process does not only involve replacement of resources or rehabilitation of those affected; it is a complex social process that involves rebuilding and restoring the community (Cabinet Office, 2013, p. 83). Besides meeting community needs for shelter, medical assistance, and financial support (Oliver-Smith, 1991), disasters might also bring people together to demand justice (Cleaver, 1988; Hajek, 2013) and more resources from authorities, typically because these services are lacking. Since the effects of disasters are often related to social inequalities in a society as a whole (Smith, 2006), sometimes, wider communities also share a sense of injustice with survivors and bereaved families and support them in ‘political’ responses such as protests and campaigns (Aldrich, 2013).

Previous research evidenced that sharing an identity motivates people to support others affected by an emergency (Drury, 2018). The ‘individual reactions’ of survivors and their supporters can become ‘shared reactions’ (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999). Therefore, the shared reactions of people who experience an emergency may lead them to act as one, and support each other with different needs (Drury et al., 2009a). What has not been examined yet, however, is how justice can be achieved when people who are directly affected by a disaster solidarize with allies from wider communities during the empowerment process. Therefore, in this study we considered empowerment as a process in which campaigners take an active role to reach out to allies from wider communities to fight for justice.

### **3.2.1. How do those affected by disasters meet their needs for justice?**

After the initial response to a disaster, those affected may see themselves as a single group fighting against inadequate responses from the government (Luft, 2009). In the cases where disasters lead to such campaigns, the people affected sometimes aim to broaden the ‘disaster community’ to include wider support networks, hoping to hold authorities to account for inaction (Cleaver, 1988; Solnit, 2009). The extent to which they create such allies can affect whether they are successful in meeting their needs for justice.

One example is the Hillsborough Football disaster of April 15, 1989, which occurred after police directed people into already overcrowded pens. Ninety-six people lost their lives and hundreds of people were injured and traumatized. The first coroner’s inquests in 1991 decided that the deaths were accidental. However, the bereaved families fought for a new inquest (Scruton, et al., 1995). The Hillsborough Justice Campaign was formed by the bereaved families to demand justice and was supported by people from around the country even 30 years after the disaster. Following the campaign, a new inquest ruled that supporters were unlawfully killed because of the negligence of the police and ambulance services, vindicating the campaigners (Cronin, 2017).

In another example, Solnit (2009) describes how ‘ordinary men and women’ created an alternative ‘government’ in the absence of an official response following the 1985 Mexico City Earthquake. Many lives were lost, and survivors held the authorities accountable because of poor construction and building regulation fraud prior to the earthquake (Cleaver, 1987). Community members affected by the earthquake and supporters from other cities campaigned against the government and their inadequate building regulations. As a result, a citywide housing rights campaign was born. Those affected by the earthquake came together, created organizations and worked with existing groups to defend the homes, jobs and rights of the survivors through creating a stronger civil society after the earthquake (Solnit, 2009).

According to previous research, people can take political action to overcome injustices and inequalities in the aftermath of an emergency (Aldrich, 2013; Fominaya, 2011; Hajek, 2013; Sarfati, 2019). Moreover, even though these actions for justice can be taken by the people who experience the disaster first-hand, people from wider communities also can also contribute (e.g., Scruton, et al., 1995; Solnit, 2009).



However, the psychology of reaching out to an extended audience as a strategy to empower campaign actions has not been examined by previous studies. In order to examine the group processes of campaigners who seek justice in the aftermath of a disaster, we turn now to social psychological research on disaster communities.

### **3.2.2. The Social Psychology of Disaster Communities**

Previous social psychology research widely focused on how trauma can be experienced collectively (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999), and on how certain groups in communities are affected at different levels in the aftermath of a disaster (Zagefka et al., 2011). For example, post-traumatic stress, depression, and other types of mental health issues are most often observed in disadvantaged groups (e.g., women and people from lower-socioeconomic level) because these groups are socially excluded and have fewer social and economic resources (Muldoon et al., 2017). Moreover, it was also suggested in the previous literature that distress, trauma and a subsequent sense of loss can also mobilize support networks that help people who experience a disaster improve their wellbeing (Kaniasty, 2020). In addition, a social cure among community members can arise when there is a disaster or an emergency (Stevenson et al., 2020). For example, recent research on community support during COVID-19 pandemic suggests that community support and volunteering can predict better mental health among community members (Tierney & Mahtani, 2020).

Social psychology research on disasters suggests that shared social identity is a key mechanism whereby community members act as one to overcome the effects of a disaster (Drury, 2018). Social identity is defined as individuals' self-concept based on their social group memberships with the related value connotations and emotional meaning (Turner et al., 1987). Community spirit, solidarity, and emergent togetherness are commonly seen as powerful mechanisms of collective resilience when there is an emergency (Drury et al., 2009b). In addition to resilience among the individuals who experience the emergency, it has also been evidenced that, by sharing a community identity, people who were not physically affected by an emergency can also support those who experience the disaster first-hand. For example, Ntontis and colleagues (2018) found that community members who were not physically affected by the floods in York, UK (in 2015) supported the affected population when they shared a community identity with those affected based on the experience of common fate.

Community support in the context of an emergency can be similar in some ways to collective action processes (e.g., Chile Earthquake in 2010, Drury et al., 2016; Kobe earthquake in 1995, Kurimoto, 2019). As suggested in the collective action literature (e.g., social identity model of collective action [SIMCA]; van Zomeren et al., 2008), individuals' engagement in action is predicted by group identification. In other words, individuals' psychological connectedness with their group predicts their willingness to take collective action.

Community members support each other when they share the same goals and same identity, act united and aim to overcome the effects of the emergency together (Ntontis et al., 2018). However, keeping the support and solidarity sustainable or achieving shared goals can be rare. For example, in the aftermath of different contexts such as, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Peruvian earthquake in 1970, the riverbank erosion in Bangladesh in 1984, and bushfires in Australia in 2020, even though disadvantaged groups were affected unequally because of the result of systemic injustice (Adams et al., 2011; Elhawary & Castillo, 2008; Henkel et al., 2006; O'Brian et al., 2009; Vardoulakis et al., 2020; Zaman, 1989), coming together to take political action and overcome injustice (e.g., riots, demonstrations, and protests) were not reported, or actions declined after a while (e.g., protests after Hurricane Katrina and bushfire in Australia in 2020; DW, 2020; Mercer, 2020; Nossiter & Eaton, 2007).

As was evidenced in the previous literature, post-disaster justice campaigns and actions can succeed in organizing when empowerment is achieved via receiving support from community members and allies from wider communities (e.g., protests after Emilia Romagna in 2012; Hajek, 2013). In the literature on collective empowerment, it is suggested that common self-categorization, sharing a social identity and a sense of unity among group members leads to expectations of mutual support in achieving group goals (Drury & Reicher, 1999). Therefore, a sense of empowerment becomes the outcome of the collective action (Drury & Reicher 2005; Drury & Reicher, 2020). However, previous research on collective behaviour has mostly examined empowerment as something that *happens to* participants. In the present research we examine empowerment as a process that participants take strategically to achieve shared goals. In addition, the role of expected support can be seen as coming together and acting as one with the wider group of people who did not experience the disaster first-hand. Therefore, these shared goals and empowerment process can be achieved by receiving help from this extended group (allies).

Even though studies from different disciplines (anthropology, sociology, political science) evidenced successful actions and post-disaster justice campaigns in the aftermath of disasters, social psychological processes of these actions have been left unexplained. To understand this empowerment process, in this study, we addressed the following questions: first, for those affected by the fire and supporters from wider communities, what were their reasons for coming together and self-organizing to campaign for justice in the aftermath?; second, what strategic steps did campaigners take to achieve their shared goals during the empowerment process?; lastly, how did reaching out to allies from wider communities contribute to collective empowerment and therefore the justice seeking goals?

### **3.2.3. Current Study**

Grenfell Tower, in North Kensington, London, was a 24-storey housing block that contained 120 flats in mix of social housing and private homes. It was managed by Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management organization (KCTMO) on behalf of the local authority, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). The fire occurred on 14 June 2017. Once the fire started from the fourth floor, it was out of control within 30 minutes because cheap and flammable cladding was used during refurbishment projects carried out by KCTMO the year before (Bulley, 2019, p. 10). Seventy-two people lost their lives and over 200 people from the building and the neighbourhood lost their accommodation in the aftermath. Even though residents repeatedly voiced their concerns about fire safety in the tower four years before the fire, necessary actions were not taken by the council and KCTMO to make the building safe (Booth & Wahlquist, 2017).

Similar to the disaster communities documented in the previous literature (e.g., Drury, et al., 2009a; Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Solnit, 2009), campaigners, volunteers and people affected by the fire came together to meet survivors' material needs. Subsequently, they escalated their efforts by campaigning against the way that they were treated by the local authority before and after the fire (Booth & Wahlquist, 2017; Booth, 2018). Even though the council provided money for temporary accommodation (hotels and private homes) immediately after the fire, it was reported four years after the fire that five families were still temporarily housed in private rented accommodation inside the RBKC, and, one household was, again, temporarily housed outside of the borough (Andersson, 2021).

Survivors and bereaved families created Grenfell United, a group which campaigned for justice and, more broadly, for safe homes for social housing residents. Specifically, campaigners who supported Grenfell United aimed: (1) to hold the authorities responsible for their decisions in the refurbishment and their subsequent inaction in the recovery phase, (2) to ensure that similar events would never happen again, (3) to honour those who lost their lives, and demand that survivors are heard by the wider community (Grenfell United [GU], 2019). One of the most powerful features of campaign was the monthly Silent Walk that was organized by a community member who lived opposite the tower (Tekin & Drury, 2021). In these walks, community members (residents of RBKC), people from different parts of London (residents from other boroughs), and supporters from other cities (e.g., Hastings, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham etc.) came together to walk silently around the Grenfell Tower area every month to honour the 72 victims and to seek justice for the survivors and bereaved families.

A public inquiry was initiated to determine what happened during the fire, why it happened, and what could be done to prevent anything similar happening again. A significant achievement of the campaigners relates to the inquiry process. To demand a debate in Parliament and to include survivors and bereaved families in the inquiry process, at least 150,000 people needed to sign a petition. The petition closed with 156,835 signatures (Petitions, UK Government and Parliament, 2018). Before the Parliamentary debate occurred, however, the Prime Minister conceded that two community-chosen experts would be involved in the inquiry process. The success of the petition is *prima facie* an example of reaching out to allies to enable community members to achieve goals they could not accomplish alone.

Our study aimed to understand the strategies that were taken by the campaigners who sought justice in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. Based on the literature on disasters, we were particularly interested in whether and how campaigners reached out to others. Based on the social psychology literature, we asked whether and how campaigners achieved their specific goals for justice by following certain strategies, such as connecting with others, during the process of empowerment. We interviewed people affected by the fire and supporters from wider communities to ask them what reasons and aims motivated them to be involved in the campaigning process after the Grenfell Tower fire disaster, and how they explained their steps to achieve partial victories during their campaign.

### 3.3. Methods

#### 3.3.1. Interviews

Previous literature on qualitative data analysis suggests that data saturation happens when researchers reach approximately 12 interviews (e.g., Guest et al., 2006). In other words, researchers do not receive new information after around 12 interviews. Based on this, we planned our study around 15 interviews. We did not receive new information after the 13<sup>th</sup> participant.

In terms of recruitment criteria, we<sup>3</sup> sought to interview anybody who attended campaign activities once or more and who was willing to share their experiences. Before introducing our research to our interviewees, between October and February in 2017, we attended various campaign events such as monthly Silent Walks and meetings of different campaign groups. We interacted with campaigners during those events and had a chance to share our research aims during our informal conversations. Later, after community members become familiar to us (e.g., inviting us to their upcoming events and including us to some of their WhatsApp groups), we asked their willingness for participating in our research. We approached 40 people but 25 of them chose not to participate<sup>4</sup>. We carried out semi-structured interviews with 8 female and 7 male participants. Nine of our interviewees were residents who lived around the Grenfell Tower area and six interviewees attended campaign activities from different districts in London and beyond. Three of our local interviewees, who lived around the Grenfell Tower (who are the residents of RBKC), had lost their loved ones in the fire (See Table 1).

Shortly after we completed seven of the interviews, news came through that the petition was successful. This was therefore an opportunity to ask participants about the steps that campaigners took to achieve that success. Therefore, we made small changes to our interview schedule by including a few more questions about campaign strategies during the petition, and we then interviewed eight more campaigners. We therefore had two different waves of interviews. We began the first wave in February 2018 and ended

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<sup>3</sup> This research was conducted by two researchers. The corresponding author, the first author, took overall responsibility for the research purposes, designing the study, collecting interviews, transcribing, analysing and reporting the results. The second author took responsibility for supervising the first author by attending the campaign events together with the first author, revising the report, providing academic feedback on the results and suggesting academic resources to the first author.

<sup>4</sup> Some of them stated that because they still felt trauma, they were not ready to talk about the issue. Some of the others said they felt politically unsafe to talk about the issue.

April 2018. We began our second set of interviews in May 2018 and ended in June that year.

Interviews lasted between 43 minutes to 90 minutes each, with a mean average of 62.4 minutes. The interviews usually took place in the local campaigning environment which is around the Grenfell Tower area in Notting Dale, West London. We carried out two of them in other places (Brixton and Hastings) because these interviewees were from these places. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Both interview schedules began with open-ended questions about participants' experiences of being involved in the campaign. The other sections of the interviews comprised questions on topics related to their identities, perceptions of other supporters, local authority, government and campaign activities. We asked '*How would you describe yourself?*' to understand how they defined themselves. The question '*What sort of people are involved in the campaign?*' was to understand how they saw other supporters. Lastly, we wanted to learn what activities were successful from their point of view; for this reason, we asked '*what do you consider as successful steps during the campaigning process?*' The full schedules are in the Appendix.

Table 1: Demographics of the interviewees

	Age	Sex	Location	Group Affiliation
Interviewee #1	28	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner -lost a loved one
Interviewee #2	40	Male	Hastings	Campaigner from another city
Interviewee #3	40	Male	Resident of another borough in London – Brixton.	Campaigner from wider community in London
Interviewee #4	38	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner lost a love one
Interviewee #5	37	Male	Resident of another borough in London	Campaigner from wider community in London
Interviewee #6	45	Male	Resident of another Borough in London	Campaigner from wider community in London
Interviewee #7	40	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner
Interviewee #8	42	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner
Interviewee #9	57	Male	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner – lost a loved one
Interviewee #10	36	Female	Resident of another borough in London	Campaigner from wider community in London
Interviewee #11	38	Female	Resident of another borough in London	Campaigner from wider community in London
Interviewee #12	63	Male	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner
Interviewee #13	41	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner
Interviewee #14	38	Female	Resident of North Kensington	Local Campaigner
Interviewee #15	34	Male	Residents of North Kensington	Local Campaigner

### 3.3.2. Analytic Approach

Thematic analysis was used in this study to provide a rich description of the data in relation to the research questions on reasons and aims, factors in success, and the role of shared social identity. This analysis method helped us to examine experiences, meanings, and the subjective reality of the participants in relation to their reasons for campaigning, aims of campaign activities, and strategies to achieve their campaign goals. Moreover, thematic analysis also gave us an opportunity to acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and in turn the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings.

We mainly used the theoretical (deductive) type of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) since our research questions aimed to understand social psychological processes of campaign groups based on the social identity approach. Therefore, many of the themes that we found, such as ‘reaching out to allies’, ‘building shared identity’, and ‘sense of community’, had a theoretical background. However, some of the themes evident in the interviews and relevant to the research questions were not necessarily related to social identity - such as ‘problems before the fire’, ‘authorities’ neglect’, ‘authorities treat rich and poor unequally’, and ‘trauma after disaster’. Therefore, we also employed the inductive type of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The steps that we followed during the analysis were as follows. First, we listened and transcribed the fifteen audio-recorded interviews and read the transcripts several times carefully to identify the codes that enabled us to develop themes. Second, we chose the codes that were repeated by the interviewees and identified them according to our research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Later, we labelled, described, and grouped those codes systematically to generate themes. Fourth, we identified our themes depending on the categories of the codes to present broader patterns of meaning across the data. Later, we reviewed the themes across research questions to ascertain reliability and validity of the categories. Lastly, the themes that directly address the research questions were selected and cross-checked against the data.

### 3.4. Analysis

The analysis is organized as follows. First, we present the thematic analysis results of our first wave of interviews (focused on reasons for and aims of campaigning); then, we present the analysis of second wave (focused on achieving campaign goals).



### 3.4.1. Wave 1

#### 3.4.1.1. Reasons for Campaigning

In response to our questions about reasons for campaigns, interviewees mainly focused on three different themes (see Figure 1).

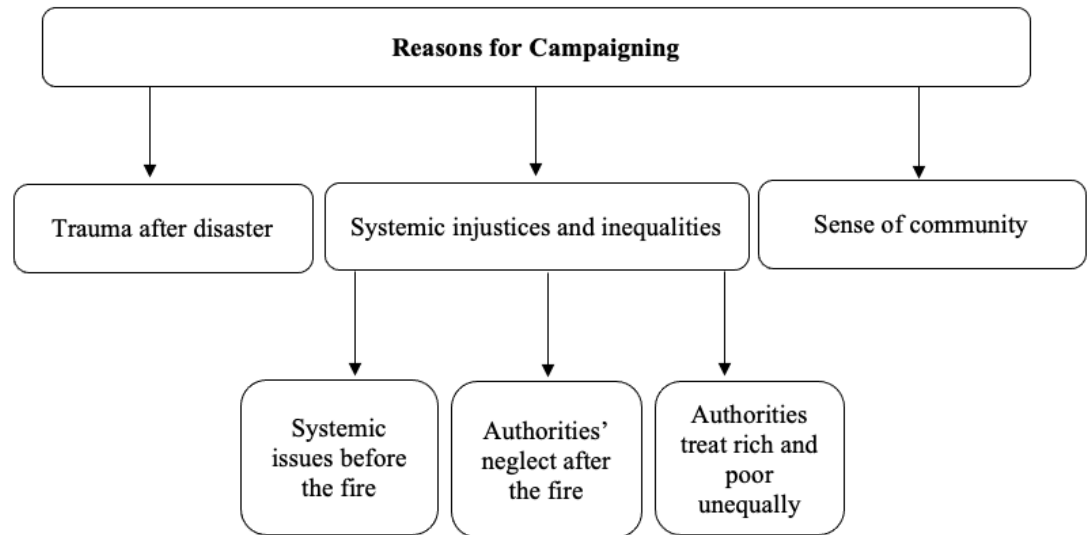


Figure 1: Three themes and subthemes in participants' reasons to be involved in campaign activities

##### 3.4.1.1.1. Trauma after disaster

Five of the interviewees in the first wave stated that they decided to participate in campaigning activities because even if many community members did not live in the building, everybody locally felt traumatized after the fire. Extract 1 presents the comments of one of our interviewees who lost loved ones during the fire:

Extract 1. I walked around for months and months on end. I couldn't understand by how and why I was feeling like this. I know why because I was traumatized by what I saw. We were helpless to those people dying. You couldn't do anything and that ripped something out of me and I couldn't go back to my normal life. My children, my family I forgot all of them, I didn't give them that time. They were my first concern, and then, after the tower, it was like 'yeah they are ok', I have looked after them for so long, they are ok. Grenfell needs me right now. It wasn't just a point of that Grenfell needs me, I needed Grenfell, I need it. Even if you told me to stay away, I couldn't stay away. I didn't know how to shut off, I didn't know how to close off or think about something other

than Grenfell apart what I saw. I witnessed that night, and then meeting families after, and the aftermath of nobody coming to help and we see and witnessed altogether just try and get help to these families, you know.

[Alice.<sup>5</sup> Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre for Grenfell survivors and bereaved]

As Kaniasty and Norris (1999) suggested, trauma is experienced collectively among the community members after a disaster. Therefore, shared reactions of people help them to overcome trauma collectively. In extract 1, the interviewee implied that gathering together is motivated by the traumatic event. As she stated, her daily rituals and primary concerns were disrupted with the fire. She indicated that she needed to stay with the other community members to overcome the trauma together, even at the cost of her own family. The activities helped them to overcome trauma as well as addressing the need they perceived in survivors and bereaved families. In addition, by stating ‘we see and witnessed together’ she emphasized the sense of ‘we-ness’ among the community members. Besides the support, she explained this sense of we-ness when stating how community members felt helpless when they were neglected by the authorities.

#### **3.4.1.1.2. Systemic Injustices and Inequalities**

Consistent with previous disasters (e.g., Aldrich, 2013; Hajek, 2013; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Quarantelli, 1988), people lost their lives, loved ones, and accommodation, because of the *systemic injustices* in the Grenfell Tower fire (Kernick 2021; Renwick, 2019). Interviewees talked about these injustices under different topics. Therefore, we can explain this theme via three different sub themes.

The first sub-theme that we found is *systemic issues before the fire*. Six of the interviewees in the first wave argued that they were already campaigning in the area of Grenfell Tower even before the fire because of the issues before the fire, such as issues around gentrification. Extract 2 provides a statement from one of those interviewees who lost one of his friends during the fire that they attended the previous campaign activities together:

Extract 2. So, like I said, Freddie was there on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor and we’d been working together for three years prior to the fire and various other struggles with this land: with library, with the Maxilla nursery, the local stables, the college...

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<sup>5</sup> All names have been changed to preserve interviewees’ anonymity.

you know... trying to stop them shutting down the local communities. So, we were already there.

[Bill. Local male campaigner. Interview; in a community space near Grenfell Tower]

He stated that they defended some of the places that community members were actively using such as the library, nursery, and local stables. By referring to 'struggles with this land', the interviewee implied that gentrification was happening around the area prior the fire. This quote is also an example that campaigning was already a part of the culture of community of North Kensington. As suggested in previous literature on Grenfell Tower fire (Bulley, 2019; Kernick, 2021), for many years, there was a battle between community members and authorities (RBKC) about the ownership of the land and the fire was seen as the deadliest consequences of authorities' decisions about the area (e.g., using flammable cladding for social housing buildings). By stating 'we were already there', the interviewee in extract 2 emphasized that injustices have already brought people together against the actions of the authorities relating to the local control of space.

The second sub-theme under the systemic injustice and inequality was *authorities' neglect* in the recovery phase. Extract 3 provides one of the comments of one of our interviewees when we asked her reason for campaigning:

Extract 3. we needed to think for the community and make sure that those things were set up and put place in. Like, something as simple as clothes. The government didn't think about them at all. like I remember yesterday these families walked out with their pyjamas and some ran out with even shorts. They literally they lost their everything and the government didn't run with any form of provisions...nothing, nothing, we waited and waited and waited and they didn't do anything, so we had to do.

[Alice. Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre for Grenfell survivors and bereaved]

Consistent with previous disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, Mexico earthquake), all of the interviewees (seven) we interviewed in the first wave stated that there was no response from the authorities for nine days after the fire. In the extract 3, the interviewee stated that government did not provide essentials such as clothes for survivors; therefore, campaigners came together to locate resources for these immediate needs. She used the term 'we' to emphasize that the community members took

responsibility and worked collaboratively to meet basic needs. By stating ‘we had to do’, the interviewee emphasized that supporters of bereaved families gather together because there was no other help from authorities. In other words, supporters were obligated to create strategies to help each other because of the lack of response from the authorities.

The third and last sub-theme that we found in the accounts of interviewees in response to the question about reasons for campaigning is *authorities treat rich and poor unequally*. Four of our first-wave interviewees stated that social housing residents, working-class and ethnic minority groups do not receive the same service and resources from the authorities as wealthier residents received in RBKC. As illustrated in this quote from someone who lost their loved ones in the fire, this inequality was their other reason to support campaign activities:

Extract 4: If it had happened uptown, everyone would have got involved and sorted it a long time ago. They’d put up a whole tower block in a month if they wanted to. People who are supporting it want to see some results in terms of justice, and justice is going to take on different forms.

[Zack. Local male campaigner. Interviewed in a sport centre near Grenfell Tower]

By referring to ‘uptown’, the interviewee emphasized that wealthier communities would receive necessary support if the fire happened in their buildings. The interviewee also suggested that the reason of people who support campaign activities is to receive the same support and resources from the authorities. ‘Justice’ is described as ‘equal treatment’ from the authorities.

### *Sense of community*

*Sense of community* was the last theme that was evident in some of the interviewees’ accounts of reasons for campaigning. Five of our interviewees in the first wave stated that they participated in campaigning activities because they had strong commitments to their community. Thus, one of the interviewees (extract 5) stated that she felt emotionally obligated to help her community after the fire:

Extract 5. it might sound very selfish, but, for me, because it’s the area that I have come in to work, people that I know survived down there, people died I knew... So, for me, I felt like I had to be here.

[Karen. Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre for Grenfell survivors and bereaved]

As Stevenson and colleagues (2020) evidenced, pre-existing community identity predicts helping behaviour in the context of an emergency. The interviewee in extract 3 described her sense of community belonging with the place that she worked around the area and the people that she lost during the fire. In the extract, by stating ‘I had to be here’, she expressed the feeling of obligation for helping the community members that she belongs to.

#### 3.4.1.2. Aims of the Campaign

In relation to our questions about the aims of campaign actions, the responses of our interviewees can be organised into three different themes (see Figure 2).

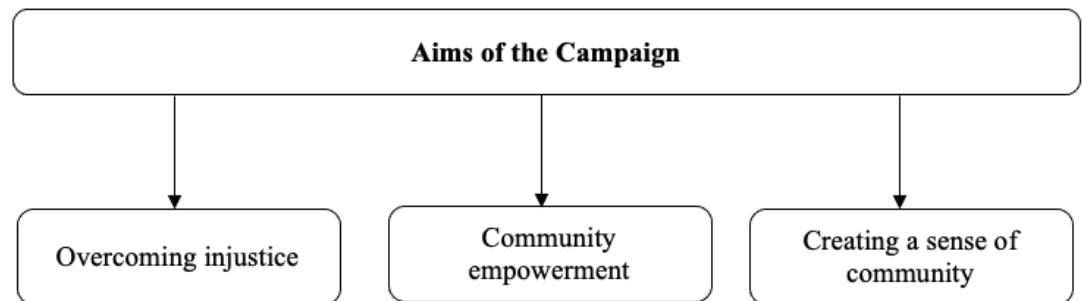


Figure 2: Three themes of main campaign aims

##### 3.4.1.2.1. Overcoming injustice

Consistent with the previous disasters (e.g., Hillsborough, year earthquake in Mexico), in the context of Grenfell Tower fire, people lost their lives because of systemic injustices. Therefore, when we asked people for their aims, the first theme in the responses was that of *overcoming injustice*. When we asked them what they meant by ‘injustice’, six of the first-wave interviewees stated that they wanted the people responsible for the fire to be held accountable. In addition, they also argued that health and safety conditions of social housing residents in general need to be improved by the authorities. Many campaigners stated that they took successful actions such as monthly Silent Walks because they could achieve gathering hundreds of local and non-local supporters in the same area to walk all together (Tekin & Drury, 2021). However, they also said that they will keep these activities going until they finally achieve justice for the survivors and bereaved families. Below, one of the non-local participants stated that

campaigners will continue their actions until the responsible people were held accountable:

Extract 6. you know, we are there to remember every single month of the tragedy that has happened, until somebody goes to prison, until justice is done because nobody is going to prison till now.

[Chris. Non-local male campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre run by Grenfell survivors and bereaved]

Even though the interviewee in extract 6 was not a local campaigner, he used the word ‘we’ when he talked about campaign aims. The language of ‘we’ shows an implicit sense of shared identity based on the shared sense of injustice. By saying that ‘we are there to remember every single month’, the interviewee means that Silent Walks bring community members and supporters from wider communities together to seek justice.

#### **3.4.1.2.2. Community empowerment**

All of our interviewees in wave 1 stated that the authorities were neglectful. Therefore, community members had to develop the capacity to act to take care of their needs themselves, they said. For this reason, interviewees felt they had to take steps to empower their community. Therefore, we named this next theme *community empowerment*. Extracts 7 presents the comments of one of our interviewees on campaign aims:

Extract 7: Oh, the community responded in a way that the government didn’t respond. So, we came together immediately without questioning and we had to be intuitive. We hadn’t been in that situation before, but we found a way to deal with it at the time while it was happening.

[Zack. Local male campaigner. Interviewed in a community space near Grenfell Tower]

The interviewee emphasized that campaigners created their own supporting strategies because the government did not respond in a way that the community members needed. By stating ‘...but we found a way to deal with it at the time while it was happening’, the interviewee suggested that empowerment is a process where community members achieved by working together from the first day after the fire. They had to create and sustain community empowerment, and campaign activities served this aim.

*Creating sense of community*

We named the last theme about the aims of campaigns as *creating a sense of community*. One of the interesting findings is that even though campaigning began because the community members had a strong sense of community, five interviewees in wave 1 also stated that they aimed to keep united and gain more supporters against injustice. Below, in extract 8, we present one of our interviewees' responses when we asked her the campaign aims:

Extract 8: Keep staying together. Keep coming together and in unity and love as that's what we all say in unity and love. One for all, all for one is the saying around here now

[Carol. Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre organized for Grenfell survivors and bereaved]

By stating 'keep staying together', the interviewee emphasized the pre-existing solidarity around the area. In other terms, it can mean that people were already taking their actions together; therefore, one of their aims is to keep community together. By mentioning 'unity' and 'love' in the campaign events, she also emphasized that unity around the area is one of the campaign aims.

### 3.4.2. Wave 2

After the successful petition, we aimed to understand how campaigners felt they achieved their goals. For this reason, we began our second set of interviews by including more questions about the successful steps taken by campaigners.<sup>6</sup> In the second wave of interviews, we identified two themes in their accounts that related to ways to achieve campaigners' goals: 'reaching out to allies' and 'building shared identity' (see Figure 3).

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<sup>6</sup> In relation to the *aims of the campaigners*, interviewees in the second wave gave similar responses to those in the first wave.

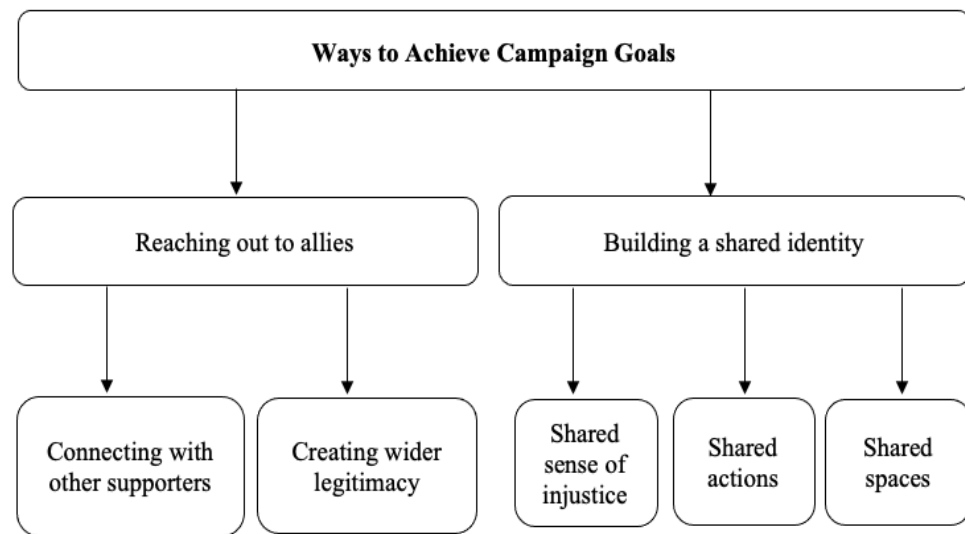


Figure 3: Two themes and their sub-themes for the ways to achieve campaign goals

### 3.4.2.1. Ways to Achieve Campaign Goals

#### 3.4.2.1.1. Reaching out to allies

When many interviewees commented on activities to achieve their goals, their statements under the theme of *reaching out to allies* mainly referred to relations with people who were not from the area (i.e., external relations). We found two different sub-themes here. The first sub-theme was *connecting with other supporters*. Six of our wave 2 interviewees stated that ‘coming together’ and showing that they are one big group made the government see them as a powerful force able to make a change in society.

Extract 9 presents a comment from one of the local campaigners:

Extract 9: Edinburgh and different little towns, Hastings, you know, from Brighton and Bristol to most of the big cities to Liverpool to Manchester to Birmingham... So, yes there is definitely a feeling that lots of people are supportive and I think lots of people were very touched, very moved by what’s happened and want to do something to support. I think social media has been a big help in that because otherwise people wouldn’t know how to connect in and wouldn’t be able to find the information

[Chloe. Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre near Grenfell Tower]



Previous literature on allyship defines allies as members of advantaged groups who take action to improve the conditions of disadvantaged groups (Louis et al., 2019). In our context, rather than using the term ‘members of advantaged group’, we considered allies as ones who support campaign activities even though they did not experience the disaster first hand. For example, in extract 9, by stating the names of towns and cities, the interviewee emphasized that support came from other communities. Besides wider communities in London (residents of other boroughs), people from outside of London also united with campaigners in different ways. As the interviewee mentioned, social media was one of the ways that people used for gathering information, connecting with each other and solidarizing.

The second sub-theme was *creating wider legitimacy*. By creating activities that many others nationally could support and get involved in, campaign participants were able to demonstrate the wider legitimacy of their demands to external audiences (e.g., authorities). One of the campaign strategies that they used was the petition. Below, in extract 10, one of the local campaigners stated that petitions were useful actions that enabled campaigners to take the issue to the national level (i.e., parliament):

Extract 10. I think petitions are definitely way useful because it brings it to a national level. If it gets to parliament, then at least it’s being spoken about in the news, and then, the debate is going to be actually happening. So, it’s actually in their minds. They [authorities] have to take a day out and talk about that.  
[James. Local male campaigner. Interviewed in a community space near Grenfell Tower]

In the first sentence, the interviewee emphasized the importance of the petition as a way of campaign action to reach authorities. Because the fire happened as result of systemic injustice, campaigners took actions for change at the systemic level. Therefore, as the interviewee suggested in the second sentence, the petition aimed to create a debate in the parliament. As the interviewee emphasized in the last sentence, petition was a way of reaching out to authorities. When campaigners aimed to reach out the authorities, they decided to take a legitimate action, creating a petition, which requires to reach out to as many allies as possible. Therefore, petition was a useful action to achieve the goals of making the Grenfell community more visible to the authorities.

#### **3.4.2.1.2. Building shared identity**

*Building shared identity* was the other main theme that we found in relation to talk about achieving campaign goals. This theme is related to other ingroup members

(i.e., internal relations). We found three different sub-themes. The first was *shared sense of injustice*. Many interviewees in wave 1 stated that their main aim in supporting campaign activities was to overcome the injustice that they experienced in the aftermath of the fire. Seven interviewees in wave 2 stated that this aim brought them together. Creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity, in order to achieve campaign goals to overcome injustice, campaigners identified themselves under a shared identity which we named as *the shared sense of injustice*. Many interviewees stated that nobody was held accountable after the fire; in addition, there was no policy change in relation to safer social housing; therefore, campaigners continued their activities together. As one of our interviewees stated in extract 11, the sense of injustice was the main idea that brought many supporters together:

Extract 11. Well, you have a responsibility after Grenfell. It's our legacy.

Seeking justice works in different ways, holding people accountable by making sure there's a better way for this and justice about the tragedy never happening again. Beyond the culprits of this tragedy is about the system that didn't work.

That system needs to change.

[Sally. Local female campaigner. Interviewed in a community centre for survivors and bereaved]

She invoked a sense of 'we-ness' when she referred the campaign 'legacy'. She also emphasized that seeking justice was the responsibility of campaigners. Besides holding people accountable for the fire in order to overcome injustices around Grenfell, there was also a wider 'systemic' injustice that needs to be addressed by aiming a systemic change. By emphasizing that seeking justice is a legacy of campaigners, the interviewee created the idea of sharing an identity under the shared sense of injustice'

A second sub-theme that was evident when many interviewees referred to building shared identity was *shared actions* of campaigners. The petition was an example of an action that many people were involved with. In addition, five of our wave 2 interviewees stated that there are also other specific activities that brought them together and led them to be united. Thus, the Silent Walks helped them to act as one and build a shared identity. As one of our interviewees stated in extract 12, by walking together with 'thousands and thousands of people' they kept the community united:

Extract 12. Silent Walk is very powerful because you march with thousands and thousands of people in a very civilised manner whereas a bit of silence it speaks volume. It speaks much more. You remind the community month on month that

this is still happening, it should not be forgotten. I think, it unites the community together.

[Meg. Non-local female campaigner. Interviewed in a café]

In the first sentence, the interviewee defined Silent Walk as a powerful activity because it is supported by big numbers of people. Moreover, interviewee also used the phrase ‘civilised manner’ in order to emphasize the characteristic of the walk. When the actions are shared by a big number of people, solidarity and unity can happen among the people who also share the same aims.

The last sub-theme that we found when interviewees explained the ways that they achieve their goals referred to the *shared spaces* used by community members. These shared spaces, including the ‘Wall of Truth’ area (a space under the Westway motorway that campaigners gather at the end of Silent Walks), walkways around Grenfell Tower, and community centres - brought people physically together to organize their activities and act as one. As expressed in this quotation from someone who lost loved ones in the fire, these public spaces were only used by the community members or supporters of campaign activities:

Extract 13. If we come here [Wall of Truth area], they [council members] can’t come in here. So, it was all about creating a safe zone because people were being depressed by lawyers and by ignorance of council do you get what I am saying. This space is our space, this is our home.

[Alan. Local male campaigner. Interviewed in a community space near Grenfell Tower]

By using the word ‘they’ to describe council members (or authorities) the interviewee emphasized that authorities and campaign supporters are separate groups. By referring to a ‘safe zone’ the interviewee also emphasized that community spaces the places where community members and campaigners feel safe. It was suggested in the extract 13 that sharing spaces is important for creating a safe and inclusive environment and protecting their community from the ‘depressing’ experiences lawyers and the local authorities created.

### 3.5. Discussion

We aimed to contribute to the disasters literature by explaining what kind of strategies campaigners follow in order to achieve empowerment during post-disaster justice campaigns. Therefore, we first aimed to address why people affected by the fire

and those from wider communities get involved in the campaigning process. Second, we asked what kind of common aims the campaigners pursued during these post-disaster justice campaigns. Lastly, we aimed to answer what kind of strategies the campaigners followed to achieve their goals for justice; and how reaching out to allies contributed to the empowerment process.

In line with the previous disaster contexts, the example of the Grenfell Tower fire also evidences that disasters are the results of systemic injustices and inequalities in society (Cleaver, 1988; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Quarantelli, 1988). People who lost their lives, loved ones and accommodations were mainly working-class and ethnic minority groups and KCTMO did not respond to their warnings about unsafe building conditions before the fire (Charles, 2019, p. 172); in addition, there was also an inadequate response from the authorities in the aftermath of the fire. Therefore, again consistent with some of the previous disaster contexts (e.g., Aldrich, 2013; Cleaver, 1988; Hajek, 2013; Solnit, 2009), survivors, bereaved families, community members, and non-local supporters needed to come together to overcome injustice as well as to help each other for the immediate needs.

In addition, consistent with the previous literature, we found that overcoming trauma was one of the reasons that community members came together and supported each other in the aftermath (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999). Using the ‘we’ language, interviewees implied a shared identity; therefore, sharing the reason of overcoming injustice also motivated people to come together and support each other. As Kaniasty and Norris (1999) suggested, individual reactions became shared reactions when people support each other to overcome trauma collectively.

We also found evidence in line with previous literature by suggesting that coming together and supporting each other is motivated by community identity. Moreover, keeping this sense of community identity can also be the aim of this collective response. Previous studies on prosocial behaviour and community identity suggested that while psychological sense of community (Omoto & Packard, 2016) can motivate people for community help (e.g., volunteering), community identification can also be built as a result of helping community members (Bowe et al., 2020). As we also found in our analysis, sense of community was a reason for gathering together as well as being an aim for campaigners in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire.

### 3.5.1. Contribution to the literature

According to ESIM (Drury & Reicher 2005), empowerment can emerge as a result of participating in collective action. Besides supporting this suggestion, in our analysis we suggested that the empowerment need to be considered not just as an outcome but also as an aim – i.e., as a process whereby people strategically take actions for example to link up with allies. Our brief review of this literature on disasters suggested that disaster communities often seek to reach out to allies to meet their needs for justice (e.g., Aldrich, 2013; Cleaver, 1988; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Funabashi & Kitazawa, 2012). However, what kind of steps they follow and what kind of activities are organized to reach out these allies haven't been the primary consideration of previous literature. Therefore, the present study is the first that we know of that has looked specifically at the question of how the empowerment process is deliberately undertaken by campaigners who aim to achieve justice by reaching out to supportive others or allies who were not directly affected by the disaster first-hand.

Previous research suggests that, after a disaster, shared experiences of a threat can motivate sharing a sense of social identity; therefore, prosocial behaviours during disasters can be a function of these shared identities (Drury et al., 2009b). Moreover, it was also suggested that pre-existing community bonds, like sharing a community identity, can also predict helping behaviour when there is an emergency (Stevenson et al., 2020). However, how a history of activism can motivate further support to fight for justice in the context of a disaster has not been explained. The history of North Kensington seemed to have had an effect on strategies of campaigners when they organized their campaign activities in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. Because community members came together to achieve their goals on different occasions in the past (e.g., saving local library, local nursery, local staples), they have already had the cultural resources and skills to act. Our interviewees stated that there was already a battle between authorities and working-class residents of the area even before the fire over injustices, and so there was a continuity from the campaign groups and identities before the fire to the reasons people had for getting involved after the fire. Therefore, the history of North Kensington and experiences of activism have already created strong community identification. Therefore, the strategies for community empowerment could be achieved easier because people were familiar with steps that they need to take for seeking justice.

Previous research on collective resilience when there is a disaster suggests that a social identity can be shared among strangers (Drury et al., 2009b). In the context of Grenfell Tower fire, strategies to receive support happened in two different ways. First, campaigners maintained the sense of community with their internal audiences which are community members. Second, campaigners organized their activities and achieved the empowerment process by reaching external audiences who are the allies from different communities. By doing so, campaigners expanded their campaign aims as well as expanding their audiences. For example, our non-local participants provided information about injustice of unsafe homes affecting many others across the country, not just those at Grenfell. Therefore, in addition to explanations using the social identity approach and collective resilience, our study contributes to the literature by focusing on the strategy of including others in community-based action while fighting for justice against authorities and the systemic inequalities.

### **3.5.2. Limitations and Caveats**

Our study has certain limitations. First and foremost, the practicality of our methods was an issue. Although Grenfell United was the leading campaign group, there were also over 200 campaign groups in the area (Still\_I\_Rise\_GT, 2018), and so interacting with all the groups was not possible for practical reasons. Second, we had a small sample. Within this already small sample, we had two waves of interviews (seven for the first wave and eight for the other wave) reflecting the timing of the petition. Therefore, we only asked half of our sample about the petition (second wave). However, both of the first and second wave interviews provided similar answers to our questions about reasons and aims of the campaigns. Another point about our small sample is that because the fire and what happened in the aftermath were very distressing topics, people were not always willing to talk about the issues. For this reason, we had to keep the number of our sample small. In addition, because the topic is also politically sensitive, some people expressed fear of being identified by the authorities. For this reason, many people that we asked for an interview declined our request.

Third, the definition of ‘success’ usually depends on the context. We were able to identify a success of the campaign (i.e., the petition). However, when we asked our participants’ thoughts on success, many of them stated they had not achieved their goals because the inquiry process was not completed, the responsible people or companies were not held accountable, and people who had lost their homes were not rehoused.

Because justice-seeking was still an ongoing process and the longer-term consequences of the campaigning process is not reported in this study.

### **3.5.3. Conclusions**

Disasters do not always affect just particular communities, as they can have implications for wider populations, who may therefore come together to support survivors and bereaved families. In the aftermath of disasters, empowerment process can be strategically enacted by the campaigners when they aimed to achieve justice. Besides sharing a shared social identity among community members, reaching out to allies can have an effective role for this achievement. Our work contributes to the literature by being the first study that explains the steps in the aftermath of a disaster are taken deliberately. Besides sharing identities, people actually plan their strategies to overcome injustice during the empowerment process.

## Chapter 4

### Study 2 – Silent Walk as a Street Mobilization: Campaigning following the Grenfell Tower fire

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#### 4.1. Abstract

This paper uses ethnography and interviews with 15 participants who were actively involved in the campaign following the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire to address the question of how campaigners use street mobilization to seek justice in the aftermath of a disaster. Analysis of observations and themes suggests that campaigners used street mobilization to do two things. First, they used it to build solidarity with supporters through accessibility, the use of shared social spaces and collectively showing respect for losses. Second, they used it to protest in a way which challenged negative stereotypes and projected their power to the authorities, who could not ignore such a large and dignified mobilization. Whereas previous social psychology research on disaster communities focuses on the determinants of the immediate responses of people who experienced a disaster, we show the strategic aspects of such disaster communities. Please refer to the Supplementary Material section to find this article's Community and Social Impact Statement.

**Key words:** Grenfell Tower fire, silent walk, street mobilization, justice, injustice, disasters, disaster communities, campaigning, social identity



## 4.2. Introduction

Post-disaster campaigns might arise to seek justice in the aftermath of a disaster because working-class and ethnic minority are often affected disproportionately (Quarantelli, 1998). Problems experienced by different sections of society in an aftermath evidence that disasters are political and human made rather than simply natural events (Solnit, 2009). A sense of common fate among survivors can give rise to emergent shared identity, and that shared identity might enable them to coordinate their actions (Drury et al., 2009b). In this paper, we examine the identity-based coordinated actions of a post-disaster justice campaign. We used ethnographic observations and interviews with campaigners in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the worst fire in the UK since World War II, to understand *how* campaigners use street mobilization to gain support and seek justice in a post-disaster justice campaign.

One of the most prominent campaign features through which those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire sought justice was a street mobilization, a monthly Silent Walk, which both commemorated the dead and sent a message to the authorities (Renwick, 2019). Based on both the social psychology and disasters literature, we examined how post-disaster campaign activities such as this can operate as a mechanism to collectively overcome injustice and enable campaigners to articulate their identity politically.

### 4.2.1. Disaster Communities

Research on group responses to disasters shows that people who are affected by a disaster often come together and act as one in the aftermath (e.g., Drury et al., 2009a; Kaniasty, 2020). Such ‘disaster communities’ have been understood in terms of emergent shared social identities (Drury et al., 2019) which can sometimes extend to wider communities who are not directly affected by the disaster. In social psychological terms, the individual reactions of survivors and their supporters can become ‘shared reactions’ (Ntontis et al., 2018).

As well as focusing on immediate needs, sometimes disaster communities campaign to demand investigation, accountability and justice in the aftermath (Fominaya, 2011; Sarfati, 2019; Tekin & Drury, 2020). Campaigning is therefore one of the possible shared reactions of survivors and their supporters. Examples from the disasters literature suggest that to have any success, these post-disaster justice campaigns need to orient to both ‘internal’ audiences (members, supporters) and

‘external’ audiences (the authorities they are challenging or pressuring) (Tekin & Drury, 2020).

Active and successful campaigns may help people affected to meet these needs for justice (Aldrich, 2013). Ninety-six people lost their lives and hundreds were injured and traumatized in the Hillsborough football disaster on 15 April 1989. Although that disaster occurred because police directed people into already overcrowded pens (McMillan & Sharman, 2009), the deaths were declared accidental at the end of the inquests held in 1991. Therefore, the Hillsborough Justice Campaign arose to demand justice and its campaigning eventually led to a new inquest which ruled that the supporters had been unlawfully killed because of the negligence of the police and ambulance services (Scruton et al., 1995).

#### **4.2.2. Post-disaster justice campaigns**

Besides supporting survivors and bereaved families for immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster (Kaniasty, 2020), community members and supporters can also support campaign activities to demand investigation, accountability and justice (Luft, 2009). Sometimes those campaign activities decline over time, but sometimes they might continue in different forms. Commemoration activities in the aftermath of disasters are some of the features of those campaigns at which communities represent their respect and mourning, empowerment and responses against injustice (Eyre, 2007).

The forms of such activities for justice in post-disaster campaigns include legal actions (Sarfati, 2019), petitions (Aldrich, 2013), demonstrations (Luft, 2009) and boycotts (Williams & Treadaway, 1992). Tekin and Drury (2020) found that reaching out to allies and building a shared identity with supporters from wider communities were two main ways of achieving campaign goals. Campaigners created a petition calling on the government to build public trust in a public inquiry in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. They obtained over 150,000 signatures in two weeks; this pressured the authorities to include community members in the inquiry process.

Street mobilizations can be used as post-disaster justice campaign activities to bring different groups together within a campaign and canvass intergroup solidarity against injustice (Fominaya, 2011). In the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, many different youth groups organized demonstrations on the streets to express their anger against the authorities’ lack of transparency during the decision-making process regarding energy-related policies (Aldrich, 2013). Having common activities and

mutual spaces (i.e. streets) was an opportunity for campaigners to sustain their political action in the long term (Sarfati, 2019).

Previous studies have examined the psychological conditions for the emergence of disaster communities (Drury et al., 2009a) and have described some of the campaigning activities of such groups (Tekin & Drury, 2020). In addition, the disaster literature has shown that campaigners can achieve justice using street mobilizations in an aftermath (Aldrich, 2013). But what has not been addressed is the question of *how* street mobilizations are used strategically by participants in such groups in the aftermath of a disaster. A systematic analysis of the experiences of campaigners in such groups can help us to understand *how* this achievement is possible psychologically, which will be useful for other post-disaster campaign movements.

In line with others who have examined mobilization strategies (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; Hopkins & Reicher, 1997), we approached groups and social categories as strategic accomplishments rather than just cognitive reflections of social relations. Based on previous work, we therefore suggest that social identity will play an important role in the strategic use of a street mobilization; participants' actions not only reflected their shared sense of injustice but also sought to create or maintain connections with others within the wider group (building the identity), and to communicate about the group to those from whom they were demanding justice.

#### **4.2.3. The Current Study**

This paper addresses the question of how street mobilization was used and sustained by participants as a campaigning strategy following the Grenfell Tower fire, by focusing on the monthly Silent Walk. Grenfell Tower was a 24-storey housing block managed by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) on behalf of the local authority. It contained 120 flats in a mix of social housing and private homes. A fire began on the fourth floor on 14 June 2017 and got out of control within 30 minutes. It spread to the other flats rapidly because flammable cladding had been used during refurbishment projects carried out by KCTMO in the year before the fire (Bulley, 2019). Seventy-two people lost their lives, over 200 people in the area lost their accommodation and thousands were traumatized (Booth & Wahlquist, 2017).

The underlying reasons for the fire have their roots in the negligence of the authorities rather than a simple fire in an electrical appliance. Even though residents had repeatedly voiced their concerns about fire safety in Grenfell Tower for the four years

preceding the fire, necessary actions were not taken by the council or KCTMO to make the building safe (Charles, 2019). Campaigners, volunteers and people affected by the fire therefore immediately came together to meet survivors' material needs (e.g. accommodation). They also campaigned against the local council: first, because of the negligence of the authorities before the fire; second, because of the long delays in sorting out appropriate replacement accommodation. A local person who lived opposite the building organized the first Silent Walk with the permission of the campaign group of survivors and bereaved families, Grenfell United. Community members and people from wider communities came together on the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month to walk silently. They walked in the neighbourhood of Grenfell Tower for approximately 90 minutes, some wearing green t-shirts, scarves or badges shaped like green hearts, as the colour green had become the symbol of Grenfell. Announcements and reminders about the Silent Walks were made through the social media accounts of Grenfell United. Even though Grenfell United was the prior campaign group which organizers of the Silent Walk prioritized while organizing the event, nobody or any group took exclusive ownership of the walks.

We were interested in understanding this powerful street mobilization from the campaigners' perspective. We sought to examine the concrete appearance and symbolism of the event. In addition, we wanted to learn their strategy in supporting and promoting it, and how they saw and experienced the event. So, in order to answer our question about how participants use street mobilizations in a post-disaster campaign, we carried out ethnographic observations and interviews with participants.

### **4.3. Method**

#### **4.3.1. Ethnographic framework**

Using ethnography as a framework enabled us to experience and observe the campaigning activities which began after the Grenfell Tower fire. For two years, we attended most of the Silent Walks. Observations from 20 of them were used in this analysis. In addition to the walks, we participated in activities such as meetings of campaign groups, council meetings, banner-making sessions and activities for children. Participants got to know us and some of them agreed to participate in our research with interviews. We used the materials which we gathered during our ethnography, to provide contextual evidence when we explain and analyse our themes.

#### **4.3.1.1. Field Notes**

The first author took notes after each Silent Walk, during campaign meetings and after campaign activities. The notes included the slogans which were on the banners, the estimated numbers of participants, brief descriptions of the meeting locations, arguments about the activities of different campaign groups, and discussions among different members. The amount of notes made for each activity ranged between 50 and 200 words, with approximately 115 words being the modal amount for each day.

#### **4.3.1.2. Archive Materials**

We took over 500 photographs during the Silent Walks. The photographs included some of banners which had slogans related to Grenfell Tower, solidarity with community members and campaigners' demands from the authorities. We collected 98 articles from different newspapers and magazines, 43 flyer-event announcements and blogposts, 19 reports and announcements from government-related websites, three radio broadcasts and four television documentaries. Finally, we collected social media posts from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to follow the campaign strategies. These resources helped us to become familiar with the discussions and news about community and campaign events and activities.

#### **4.3.2. Interviews**

We carried out semi-structured interviews with 15 participants (five female, ten male, with ages ranging from 25 to 65 years). After we felt that campaigners were familiar with our participation in their events, we asked if they would agree to participate in our research. We specifically aimed to recruit activists who attended campaign activities from the beginning, or who were active on social media if their physical attendance was difficult. We approached 40 campaigners. Twenty-five of them declined to participate because some of them found the topic traumatic to talk about whilst others stated that they did not feel safe about their voices being recorded. Four of our interviewees had lost loved ones during the fire. Nine were residents who lived around the Grenfell Tower area and six had attended campaign activities from different districts in London and beyond. We began our interviewees in February 2019 and ended in May 2019. We continued to interview people until saturation point was reached and we stopped receiving new answers to our questions.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 74 minutes with a mean of 46.5 minutes. The interviews usually took place in their campaigning environment, which was around the Grenfell Tower area in Notting Dale, west London. We carried out two of them online because one of the interviewees had mobility difficulties and the other was living in Manchester. All of the interviews were audio recorded (with the participants' consent) and fully transcribed.

The interview schedule began with open-ended questions about their experiences of being involved in the campaign. The other sections of the interview comprised questions on topics related to their identities, the Silent Walk, other supporters and the fire. We asked, "*How do you think the Silent Walk was a useful action?*" to understand their views of the Silent Walks. The question "*What are your reasons as someone involved in campaigning activities?*" was to understand the aims of the Silent Walks and other campaign activities. Finally, to learn about campaigners' experiences and perspectives of the Silent Walks, we asked "*Can you tell me your experiences about Silent Walks?*"<sup>7</sup>

#### **4.3.2.1. Thematic Analysis Procedure**

We wanted to learn what features of the Silent Walks allowed campaigners to organize to achieve their justice aims and the extent to which shared identity played a role in this. We were interested in learning about the campaigners' perspective on how they experienced the event and their strategy in supporting it. Therefore, thematic analysis was employed on the transcriptions of our interviews.

The themes which we found described the experiences of our participants in relation to different features of the monthly Silent Walk. We mainly used the theoretical (deductive) type of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) since our research questions aimed to understand the social and psychological processes in the Silent Walks based on the social identity approach. However, some of the themes were derived from the responses that participants provided during the interviews rather than based on a specific social psychology theory. A first superordinate theme, 'solidarity', included themes of 'accessibility' (sub-theme 'importance of spaces') and 'respect for the community's loss', each of which concerned ways that people came together (i.e.,

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<sup>7</sup> The full schedule is in the Supplementary Materials.

internal relations). The second superordinate theme, ‘political actions’, included the themes ‘challenging stereotypes’ and ‘projecting power to the authorities’, both of which concerned relations with authorities.

#### **4.4. Analysis**

We begin our analysis with a description based on our ethnography during the Silent Walks. In addition, before presenting each theme, we include details about the context (based on our ethnography), related to those themes.

The Silent Walks were the main collective events which involved many different supporters of survivors gathering in the same place. There were more than 200 campaign groups related to the fire (Still\_I\_Rise\_GT, 2018). The issues that they focused on were accommodation, holding the authorities and cladding companies accountable and changing social housing safety regulations. Even though their campaign aims differed slightly among the groups, the Silent Walks appeared to create a ‘we-ness’ among them.

##### **4.4.1. Solidarity – Internal Relations**

Solidarity was an observable feature of the Silent Walks in that many people wore green articles of clothing, as well as green scarves which were given out by the campaign groups to symbolize Grenfell. Some of the banners which campaigners carried were shaped like green hearts; the heart symbolized ‘love’ and ‘support for the community’ (Renwick, 2019). In addition, banners displayed words related to support that campaigners sought to give. Some of the words were related to we-ness among the supporters such as ‘together’, ‘unity’, ‘solidarity’, ‘community’, ‘ComeUnity’, ‘remembrance’ and ‘United for Grenfell’. In the Silent Walks, different groups and individuals moved as one and maintained a collective silence.

In the interviews, *solidarity* was suggested by the words and phrases used by most of our interviewees. When we asked about their experiences on the Silent Walks, they frequently used the term ‘we’, and they often used phrases and words such as ‘unity’ or ‘united’, ‘supporting each other’ and ‘being one group’ when describing the Silent Walks, suggesting that there was a shared identity among supporters. In extract 1, the interviewee states that the Silent Walk was a ‘reflective’ event showing that community members were sad because they had lost people during the fire; however,

the walks were still ‘dignified’ and ‘powerful’ because they gave people a space to come together as one and manifest solidarity:

Extract 1: I find it [the Silent Walk] deeply affecting, actually. There's a beautiful calm and a sleepless tranquillity to it. It really is very powerful, and it's very dignified. It is an expression of sadness and solidarity, and it's very reflective. And there's also that coming together of people. You get to know the people.

[Harry<sup>8</sup>. Non-local male campaigner]

Solidarity was a superordinate theme evident in most of our interviewees' accounts. Themes associated with solidarity were *accessibility* (who was involved in the campaign), and *respect for community's loss* (why they got involved).

#### 4.4.1.2. Accessibility

We attended meetings of different campaign groups and various campaign activities. Some of them involved only people who had been invited, although we observed that the Silent Walks were open and accessible to everybody who wanted to support the Grenfell community. Although agendas differed among campaign groups (see Bulley, 2019 for more examples of campaign agendas such as social housing, ideological concerns and union-related agendas), they could gather under a shared identity defined in terms of injustice and act as one during the Silent Walks to seek justice.

Seven of our interviewees stated that the Silent Walks were *accessible* for both local and non-local supporters, and were a practical way for them to come together. One of our participants stated (Extract 2) that many people from the UK and all over the world were affected by the Grenfell Tower fire and they could come together in this event. When he said ‘this is Grenfell Britain’ he was arguing that the fire needed to be considered in a broader context related to inequalities. Even though the fire happened in one building, it embodies the injustices experienced by the working-class in the whole of the country. Campaigners therefore need support from the wider population. This feature, the accessibility of the Silent Walks, allowed other supporters to be in the same place at the same time with local campaigners:

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<sup>8</sup> All the names have been changed to preserve interviewees' anonymity.



Extract 2: This is Grenfell Britain, not just Grenfell W10 [North Kensington]. Actually, we need to get together with other people. Well, 90% of the people who are involved in the walks are our neighbours, but, people from all over the country and international, indeed, came to support. I think that's reflected in the Silent Walks that there's a whole range of people based in North Kensington but much wider than that.

[Peter. local male campaigner]

#### **4.4.1.2.1. The Importance of Spaces**

As we observed during the ethnography, the accessibility of the Silent Walks seemed to be linked to the physical spaces on the route which the campaigners had sense of belonging to. Particular community spaces and walkways around the area had historical significance to local people. Residents and the local council had been battling over the ownership of some of these spaces for years (Charles, 2019). A number of interviewees expressed a strong identification with North Kensington and they showed this in the spaces where they felt safe and to which they belonged.

Usually, the Silent Walk ended under the motorway, the Westway. That area was called the 'Wall of Truth' Area. It is an open, public space and community members had covered the walls with a mural in the aftermath of the fire. As we observed and many campaigners stated, it was one of the main spaces where community members felt a sense of collective ownership and where supporters could also gather. Extract 3 presents the response of one of our interviewees when we asked how the campaign would operate if campaigners did not have those spaces. She explained that campaign spaces, especially the Wall of Truth area, were vital for campaigners to organize Silent Walks. The Wall of Truth was an open, inclusive space for 'everyone', which means that all participants and supporters could be part of it:

Extract 3: I think the Silent Walk is very key to the community. It serves a lot of purposes for the community. Wall of Truth and the walk, it's something that all the groups, all the people who aren't in groups, everyone can be part of it. I think that it would be a lot harder for people to campaign or be active without things like that. The walk and the Wall of Truth is open to everyone and anyone, no matter how they're involved, no matter where they live, no matter their history. It would be very hard I think without those sorts of spaces, to keep.

[Karen. Local female campaigner]

#### 4.4.1.3. Respect for the Community's Loss

During our ethnography, we observed that silence during the walks was a sign of respect for the loss of community members. At the end of each Silent Walk, people gathered together in front of the Wall of Truth and paused for 72 seconds in silence facing Grenfell Tower. Campaigners then read 72 people's names, saying "Forever in our hearts" in unison after every twelve names. Extract 4 presents the comments of one of the local members on this feature of memorializing the meaning of the Silent Walk activities. She described the attendance of the wider community members as a way of showing their respect to the Grenfell community. She expressed her opinion by comparing the Silent Walks with family gatherings. People come together every month to share the sense of community and show their respect to the Grenfell community:

Extract 4: Yeah, there's a respect there. On a base of course, like Grenfell United say thank you to the wider community after every silent walk. But they're still turning up. That's beautiful. People don't even go see their families that often. Do you know what I mean? There's a sense of family as well. With Grenfell United or just Grenfell in general. I feel like there really is people that are impacted.

[Jessica. Local female campaigner]

#### 4.4.2. Political Action – External Relations

We also observed that the Silent Walks had a 'political' meaning for campaigners in that they were part of a campaign to challenge the authorities and to seek justice. The form of the street mobilization was like that of a political demonstration, including people carrying placards and speeches at a rally at the end. In addition, some of the words on banners and placards were related to the 'political' meaning of the walks in that they represented what community members demanded from the authorities: 'justice', 'change', 'truth', 'clarity', 'truth will not be hidden', 'justice for Grenfell', '72 dead and still no arrests' and 'safe affordable housing'.

In line with our observations, eleven of our interviewees stated that the Silent Walks were protests against the inactions of the authorities. In extract 5, when our interviewee stated that the 'community were angry' and 'it could have easily gone into riots', he was referring to the 2011 riots which happened across London. The Silent Walk was an expression of community anger, as were the riots. However, the idea of the organizer was to use a different strategy by generating a non-violent and normative

type of mobilization to help campaigners to create a sustainable event which keeps supporters together until justice is achieved:

Extract 5: This community were angry. It could have easily gone into riots, and people were coming with the intention of provocation. In fact, basically the state thought there was going to be riots. \*\*\* [name of the organizer], at certain points has talked, in a way, that he's building a kind of non-violent resistance. It's a community action that says that people aren't going away, and that we're not going to stop, and it won't stop until there's a semblance of justice. And I can't ever see those silent marches ending. I think you have a core support for it, and for me and for many people, I block out the 14th every single month. Well, I'll be here, rain, snow or shine. And I'm not alone in that. There's hundreds of us. There's thousands of us.

[Lucas. Non-local male campaigner]

#### **4.4.2.1. Challenging Negative Stereotypes**

Working-class and minority populations who seek justice against the way that they are treated by the authorities are sometimes delegitimized by being denigrated as disorderly, disorganized or aggressive (Cocking & Drury, 2014). We observed during the Silent Walk events that the participants were a diverse group of people who had different ethnic and religious backgrounds (i.e., Black, Muslim, White). During the Silent Walks, they showed their political responses against the authorities by placards and banners; but the way that people acted challenged the stereotypes put out by the authorities.

The organizer of the Silent Walk suggested a 'respectable' form of collective action to influence those in power. In line with our observations, six of our interviewees stated that they expected the city council to characterize them as loud and noisy if they carried out confrontational types of protest. However, the Silent Walk was a way of 'challenging the stereotypes of the authorities'. As one of the local members of the community stated in Extract 6, although the Silent Walk was a way of demonstrating respect for the community's loss, it also had a political meaning. She commented on how Black and ethnic minority populations are stereotyped by the authorities and that the Silent Walk was a way of challenging those stereotypes: if the gathering is legitimate and peaceful, its cause cannot be challenged on other grounds, something which she said it had succeeding in doing:

Extract 6: The Silent Walk is a way of us showing respect for and remembrance for the 72 people who died. It also is a way, initially, of us shutting down the idea that actually you have people from black and minority ethnic communities that get stereotyped as we're noisy, loud, and angry. We're thugs, yeah. So, we said okay we'll challenge that. Actually, we'll go quietly down the street, but there'd be a lot of us. What are you going to do? You can't challenge us. We're not making noise. We're not being rude. We're just walking. So that's been very successful. So, it's done two things. It's given a space for the bereaved families to remember and to grieve once a month and for them to know that actually the community still holds them in our heart.

[Amelia. Local female campaigner]

#### **4.4.2.2. Projecting Political Power**

At the end of all of the Silent Walks, there were public speeches by campaigners about what needed to be done to demand accountability from the cladding companies responsible for the fire. After the speeches, the crowd chanted 'Justice' several times.

We named this theme 'projecting political power' because, according to the descriptions given by eight of our interviewees, through gathering many people together, the Silent Walk made them stronger and more visible to those in authority. In extract 7, one of the interviewees focuses on the idea of expressing campaigners' power in relation to the authorities. When she said "It's our chance for us to come together and show authorities that we are standing together", she meant that the Walk is a highly visible expression of unity and public support for their cause which the authorities therefore cannot ignore. The interviewee also used the words 'we' and 'us' to express that she identified herself with the community and the campaigners; on the other hand, she used 'they' or 'them' when she referred to the authorities, who were seen as 'other':

Extract 7: They're [Silent Walks] really powerful, and really meaningful. About the community coming together, it's our chance for us to sort of come together and show the authorities that, yeah, we are standing together. Whether the numbers are up, down, whether there's loads of us, whether there's ten of us or a hundred of us, it doesn't matter. I found them useful because I think it still puts it in their minds that, yeah, we're not resting.

[Lily. Local female campaigner]

## 4.5. Discussion

We found that campaigners used the Silent Walks to build solidarity (a superordinate theme) among supporters of survivors and bereaved families, thereby focusing on internal relations ('we', 'us'), by coming together and mobilizing at the same time against injustice. Moreover, the second superordinate theme, 'political action', describes the way that campaigners used the Silent Walks to orient to external relations as well as internal ones by pressuring authorities with their demand for justice. Shared identity was evident both physically (in the common symbols) and in the interviews. We-ness was referred to both in relation to solidarity (the 'we' of the local community and the 'we' of the wider group of supporters) and in relation to the political function of the walk ('we' in relation to the authorities). Maintaining we-ness was a key function of the Silent Walks.

### 4.5.1. Contributions to the Literature

In line with the social psychology literature (Drury et al., 2009a), what happened in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower was an example of how disaster communities form based on their shared identity to meet their needs. Survivors and bereaved families led a campaign that help to achieve their goals of justice and accountability. Many other local people and other supporters campaigned for these goals, including by street mobilization which brought different supporters together. Examples from the disasters literature suggest that in order to be successful, post-disaster justice campaigns need to orient to both internal audiences (members and supporters) and to the external audiences which campaigners are challenging and pressuring (Tekin & Drury, 2020). This study adds to the literature on disaster communities by focusing on the strategic angle. In line with Hopkins and Reicher's (1997) approach, we found that people don't just become groups (and therefore get mutual support) because they share a common fate (Drury et al., 2019). They also consciously *do* things (activities) collectively to constitute themselves as a group and to try to overcome injustice and challenge or pressure authorities. Identity is achieved deliberately through common action not just passively as a function of a common fate. Even though the social psychology literature on disaster communities explains how emergent shared identities appear during the response and recovery phase (Ntontis et al., 2018), research on the factors promoting the continuity of those support groups has been neglected in the literature, despite its importance both to the theory and practically, in relation to the needs of survivors. In

other words, there has not previously been an analysis of how those affected by a disaster and their supporters act to keep the group alive. Even months or years later, they still need the social support which comes from being a member of a group. The Silent Walks were an activity as a commemoration which kept campaign activities alive for over two years. Campaigners acted collectively, strategically and deliberately to maintain the group and activities to achieve their demands for justice.

Another contribution of this study is related to the functions of spaces. Consistent with the recent social psychology literature (Bettencourt et al., 2021), we found that the history of the spaces and knowledge about the spaces play a vital role in the identity processes of residents. However, instead of considering spaces as contested between groups and intergroup conflict (Dixon et al., 2020), our study adds to the literature by suggesting that spaces are a basis for collective action. In other words, we have suggested that spaces have functions for campaigners to organize their actions collectively.

Finally, some previous studies have suggested that unaffected residents can share identities with those affected by a disaster, referencing a we-ness when they were acting collectively with affected people (Ntontis et al., 2018). However, most of the existing social psychology research on emergencies has focused on the immediate response phase when people share with each other because of their material needs. In contrast, our findings have shown the actions, the Silent Walks of campaigners when they were seeking justice against repeated inaction by the authorities over months and years after a disaster. Memorialization as a way of not only remembering but physically mobilizing has been shown to be a crucial strategy.

#### **4.5.2. Limitations**

Interviewing members of all the different Grenfell campaign groups was not possible since there were over 200 different campaigns (Still\_I\_Rise\_GT, 2018). Because members of different campaign groups might have different agendas for attending the campaign activities, especially the Silent Walks, we might have found more themes if we were able to reach all of those groups of people. Also, it is important not to overstate the homogeneity of the responses. Most of our interviewees and the campaigners with whom we interacted during the ethnographic phase of the study agreed that the Silent Walks were useful, powerful and important events for the community members; however, some participants also stated that silence can easily be

ignored by the authorities. For this reason, they also mentioned the importance of ‘vocal’ events (i.e., demonstrations or riots) in addition to Silent Walks.

The generalization and representativeness of our findings is another limitation which we need to acknowledge because the area of Grenfell Tower and the context of the campaigning have a unique history based on activism against injustice and inequality (Charles, 2019). In other contexts where community members do not have a local heritage of actions and resistance to draw upon, or a lack of the physical spaces which we found to be important, campaign activities might not be as sustainable as the Grenfell Silent Walks. Even so, the evidence is still consistent with the argument that under particular conditions, street mobilization can be used to build internal solidarity and external pressure, which can apply to other post-disaster justice campaigns.

#### **4.5.3. Wider implications**

Community responses against unequal treatment by the authorities have also been seen in the context of another type of emergency: epidemics. In the case of the Ebola virus, because the authorities treated socio-economically advantaged groups better than disadvantaged groups, and because government decisions were not transparent during the spread, people rioted in different cities (Cohn & Kutalek, 2016). We saw a similar situation in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. Although socio-economically advantaged groups were able to find and afford protective materials more easily and could work from home, working-class populations often had to work in unsafe conditions (Templeton et al., 2020). In some countries, people protested against the unequal policies of their governments (redfish, 2020), and in other countries, people who lost their loved ones took legal action to seek justice from people in leadership positions who had not taken necessary actions equally for everybody (Giuffrida, 2020).

#### **4.5.4. Conclusions**

The Silent Walks and the justice-seeking actions for Grenfell Tower fire survivors and families continued after we stopped collecting data. We also continued to attend the walks and to support campaigners’ actions on social media. When the COVID-19 outbreak started, the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire was suspended, but campaigners maintained the pressure on the authorities and their actions have been successful in keeping the Grenfell Tower on the agenda of the authorities (GrenfellUnited, 2020).

Our study contributes to the literature by being the first social psychology research study which links the existing social psychology literature and disaster literature on the same topic. In addition, it is the first social psychology study to use a combination of ethnography and interviews together to understand how campaigners use street mobilization as a feature of post-disaster campaign activities.

We have demonstrated that campaign activities have different meanings which also encourage people to be united and to keep their activities alive. Organizing Silent Walks for two years had two types of meaning which our participants (campaigners) specified. One of the meanings was solidarity, which is related to internal relations (community members and supporters); whereas, the other meaning was political, which was related to external audiences (the authorities which the campaigners were challenging). In each case, we have shown the value of looking at post-disaster groups from a strategic perspective – that is, understanding relations both within the group and between the group and other groups as something conscious and deliberately achieved rather than simply being a passive function of given contextual features such as a common fate.



## Chapter 5

### **Study 3 – A critical discursive psychology approach to understanding how disaster victims are delegitimized by hostile Twitter posts: Racism, victim blaming and forms of attack following the Grenfell Tower fire**

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#### **5.1. Abstract**

Previous research has suggested that victims of disasters can face attacks in different forms in the aftermath. Sometimes, these attacks happen with expressions of victim blaming and racism in the language in order to delegitimize the victims and their demands for justice. Even though, racism and various forms of victim blaming in the context of a disaster have been the focus of previous research, how expressions of racism, victim blaming and attacks in different forms might function to delegitimize the support that victims might receive from the public have not been the primary focus of the literature. In order to understand how some tweeters used forms of attacks in language to delegitimize the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, I collected 416 hostile tweets from Twitter and used a critical discursive psychology approach to understand what was said, how it was said, and how it functioned. I found that attacking victims was accomplished in two ways: 1) Twitter posts drew upon a conspiracy theory in which survivors and victims benefited from the support of a supposed ‘liberal establishment’ 2) Twitter posts delegitimized victims via ascribing them illegitimate identities. I also discuss the importance of counter-discourses that might be used to challenge these attacks and facilitate the representation of community empowerment when there is a disaster.

**Key Words:** Grenfell Tower fire, disasters, racism, victim blaming, critical discursive psychology.

## 5.2. Introduction

Whether or not disasters occur via a natural hazard or are human made, they are defined as incidents that disrupt the functioning of a community and lead to severe human, material, economic and environmental damage or losses (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2016). Research suggests that disasters are the result of systemic inequalities and structural issues in societies (Cleaver, 1988; Aldrich 2013); and many fatalities happen because of mismanagement by the authorities (Drury et al., 2020; Oliver-Smith, 1991); therefore, disasters are usually defined as political events rather than natural processes or mistakenly happening human made incidents. Moreover, even though disadvantaged sections of society are disproportionately affected (Smith, 2006; Tekin & Drury, 2020), they usually face disaster myths (Drury et al., 2013; Easthope, 2018; Tierney et al., 2006) that can include victim blaming and various forms of attacks against victims (Cocking & Drury, 2014; Davis & French, 2008).

Tierney and colleagues (2006) defined disaster myths as erroneous beliefs about the situation and people's behaviours in disasters. Disaster myths can be harmful, especially when they are propagated by media representations (e.g., looting and lawlessness) because they can lead to blame of victims and attacks against victims in different ways (Davis & French, 2008).

For instance, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when survivors were abandoned in their communities by the authorities (Smith, 2006), their efforts to find resources for survival were represented as opportunist 'looting' behaviour (Solnit, 2009) and they were stigmatized as violent criminals in media reports (Tierney, 2006). Instead of reporting how the Black and minority ethnic population were neglected by the authorities and trapped in the disaster area, the media framed victim behaviours of these communities as equivalent to civil unrest. Because of the social injustices and systemic inequalities, while minority ethnic groups have already faced racism in society (Burke et al., 2020; Cervone et al., 2021; Gibson, 2020), regardless of whether there is a disaster, they can be seen as easy targets and blamed or attacked in fatalities (Tierney et al., 2006).

Previous research has widely focused on the language of delegitimization of various types of groups (e.g., woman, religious minority, ethnic minority etc) (Bar-Tal

& Hammack, 2012; Tileagă, 2007; Volpato et al., 2010); however, what has not been examined previously is that how expressions of racism and other forms of attacks in language can be used to delegitimize the actions and demands of victims in the aftermath of a disaster. In this paper, I aimed to understand how hostile Twitter users attacked Grenfell Tower fire victims via expressing racism and victim blaming in the language to delegitimize their actions and justice seeking demands. The main concern of my analysis is to understand what was said, how it was said, how it functioned, and how the meaning of an individual post was shaped by the context. Analysing language that functions to attack victims is important to understand how support seeking efforts of victims might be delegitimized by these statements. Furthermore, it is also important to understand and expose the constructed and ideological nature of racist features of disaster myths in order to combat them and nurture the space for alternative ways of talking about disaster victims who fight for justice.

### **5.2.1. Delegitimizing victims of disasters: Racism and victim blaming**

Early disaster research focused on building fires (Sime, 1983). In line with traditional panic theories (Le Bon, 1924), fire safety regulations primarily focus on mitigating the ‘panic’ behaviour of people, expressing a myth that victims died because of their uncontrolled behaviours in crowds (Clarke, 2002). However, social psychology research (Chertkoff & Kushigan, 1999; Sime, 1990) suggests instead that people often die in fires because of mismanagement. For example, when 492 people lost their lives in the Cocoanut Grove Theatre fire in 1942 in Boston, some media representations blamed victims for the loss of life due to panicking and overacting during the fire; while, in reality, people died because the emergency exit door was locked and there were no exit signs or drills in emergency evacuation (Chertkoff & Kushigan, 1999).

The victim blaming forms of disaster myths (Tierney et al., 2006) are often linked with racism. In early panic theories (i.e., Le Bon, 1924), it was suggested that some ethnic and racial minority populations (e.g., African American) were more prone to panic (Bendersky, 2007). Pre-existing stigma (Redclift, 2014), hatred, and discrimination (Goodman & Rowe, 2014) against minority ethnic groups can become more pronounced and these groups can be positioned and blamed as being reasons of their own suffering or death in the traditional media or social media when there is a disaster. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, even though

disadvantaged populations suffered disproportionately because of mismanagement of the authorities (Drury et al., 2020; Templeton et al., 2020), racial and ethnic minority groups have been the targets for being a reason for the spread and their own suffering. In other words, targeting racial and minority ethnic populations for the spread of COVID-19 was used as an excuse to attack and blame these groups (Kendi, 2020; The Independent SAGE, 2021).

Regardless of being victims of a disaster, as Nadim and Fladmoe (2016) suggest, minority ethnic groups (e.g., Jewish and Muslim people) face derogatory language more than the majority groups (cited in Cervone et al., 2021). For example, after the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015, in social media, a far-right protest movement, the English Defence League (EDL), delegitimized Muslim and Jewish people by representing these groups as problematic (e.g., claiming that Jewish people deserved to die because they were weak) and dangerous (e.g., claiming that Muslims are terrorists) populations (Burke et al., 2015). In other words, Facebook group members of EDL justified their anti-Semitic and Islamophobic arguments via delegitimizing the identities of Muslim and Jewish people.

Indeed, in general, social media gives the users an opportunity for sharing comments with others and seeing posts of others more easily compared to off-line communications (e.g., face-to-face interactions, leaflet, public speeches); however, characteristics of accessibility and anonymity can easily be exploited by the users who aim to attack certain groups (e.g., via using expressions of racism in their language) and spread information that may cause victim blaming about these groups (Cervone et al., 2021). For example, spreading conspiracy theories around 'how dangerous racial and ethnic minority groups are' might achieve the legitimacy and reasoning hostile language or attacks against minority ethnic groups. Moreover, the characteristics of 'accessibility of the social media' can serve the spread of these attacks which are based on conspiracy theories (Burke et al., 2020).

In previous discursive research (Petterson, 2019; Sakki & Petterson, 2016; Wood & Finlay, 2008), it was suggested that far-right groups can also justify their attack on racial and ethnic minority groups via building conspiracy theories around how a supposed 'liberal establishment' (e.g., 'Marxist/multiculturalist elites') threaten the homogeneity of the nation (as cited in Cervone et al., 2021). In addition, expressions of attack in language can happen by implying that the White population, who supposedly

lost their historical power because of diversity, are vulnerable because ‘others’ (minority groups) threaten their jobs, resources, culture, and nation (Redclift, 2014; Rhodes, 2010; Skey, 2014). By making the minority population the ‘other’ via representing them as a privileged group in society, delegitimizing the rights and identities of minority groups can be achieved. In other words, the construction of ‘victimization of the White population’ serves to delegitimize the actions, identities and rights of specific groups (Mondon & Winter, 2019).

Although victim blaming and attacks against victims have been the focus of social psychology literature on disasters (Chertkoff & Kushigan, 1999; Drury et al., 2020; Sime, 1983), how language can achieve delegitimizing the demands and rights of the victims of a disaster has not been systematically examined by previous research. In this chapter, using a critical discursive psychological approach, I aim to understand how Twitter users expressed racism, victim blaming and other forms of attacks in language, in tweets, in order to delegitimize the efforts of victims, survivors and bereaved families, and prevent them receiving material (i.e. housing and welfare), socio-psychological (i.e. feeling secure) and justice (i.e. rights for equality) related resources.

Addressing the language that express attack against specific racial and ethnic minority groups is important because this type of language use has specific functions such as perpetuating prejudice against minority groups, maintaining of pre-existing groups hierarchies, and legitimizing violence and social exclusion (Cervone et al., 2021). Moreover, these negative practical effects of the language can also function to delegitimize the efforts and justice demands of the people who suffer from a disaster. Even though racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by the disaster because of the systemic injustices in the society, their efforts to overcome this injustice can be delegitimized by these expressions of attacks and victim blaming. By focusing on the attacks against Grenfell Tower victims on the social media (Twitter), I aimed to understand how delegitimizing the victims and their efforts can be achieved via using the expressions of racism and different forms of attacks in language. Because racism and attacks against specific minority groups has negative effects on people who already suffer because of inequality (Burke & Goodman, 2012; Goodman & Rowe, 2014), understanding how the language is used is also important for suggesting alternative discourses (Cocking & Drury, 2014; Willig, 2001)

### 5.2.2. The Grenfell Tower fire

Grenfell Tower was a 24-storey building in North Kensington, London and originally managed by Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organization (KCTMO). It contained 120 flats in a mix of social housing and private homes. Residents were mainly British (17 visa holders out of 351 residents), working-class, and ethnic minority population. The fire happened on 14th June 2017 and got out of control within 30 minutes because cheap and flammable cladding was used during the refurbishment projects carried out by KCTMO one year before the fire (Bulley, 2019). Seventy-two people lost their lives, over 200 people lost their accommodation (from the building and the neighbourhood), and thousands were traumatized (Renwick, 2019). It was the worst, biggest, and deadliest fire in the U.K. since the second world war.

Even though residents had raised concerns about fire safety in the building for four years before the fire, their concerns were not taken seriously by the council and KCTMO to make the building safer (Booth & Wahlquist, 2017). While the authorities wanted to benefit from the area economically and gentrify the neighbourhood to make the area more attractive for wealthier people, residents were fighting to retain and reclaim their spaces (Charles, 2019). Unfortunately, the Grenfell Tower fire was the deadliest result of the gentrification projects (Kernick, 2021).

The Grenfell Tower fire embodies many different issues including systemic violence, classism, and gentrification. Lack of response from the authorities before and after the fire led survivors and bereaved families to form campaign activities such as the Silent Walk, which happened every month for over three years after the fire. Moreover, these campaigns were supported by wider communities who were from different parts of London and even from different cities. In fact, the actions in the aftermath of the fire encouraged many disadvantaged populations and their allies around the U.K. to raise their voice against the injustice that they have been experiencing for years (Kernick, 2021; Renwick, 2019). Moreover, supporting each other also facilitated achieving some of their goals (Tekin & Drury, 2020).

However, a small minority of people attacked victims of Grenfell Tower fire on social media (e.g., Twitter) expressing racism and various forms of attacks in their language. Understanding the ways that hostile Twitter users use language and specific constructions are important to understand how victims of the Grenfell Tower fire can be

delegitimized by the expressions of assumptions, conspiracies and stigmas (Mumby, 2017; Simpson, 2017). In this way means of challenging those attacks could also be possible. Therefore, in this study, I aim to understand how some Twitter posts used racist arguments and other forms of attacks to delegitimize the campaign actions and justice demands of the victims, survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters. Moreover, I discuss possible liberatory alternative ways to effectively communicate in response to those hostile discourses.

### 5.3. Methods

I collected the data from Twitter from four different time periods that involved specific events (between 2017-2020) that were important to Grenfell Tower fire victims, survivors, bereaved families and their supporters. These four events were chosen because they were the times when there was social media activity using the hashtags such as #Grenfell, #GrenfellTower, #GrenfellTowerfire. When supporters of the Grenfell community posted their supportive statements during those events, or any traditional media platforms (i.e., The Guardian, Sky News etc.) published their news on Twitter, there were some attacks and hostile comments replying to those tweets or using the same hashtags to represent their opposing views against victims and their supporters.

Each time-period covered two weeks including the date of specific events. I used the “Advanced Search” option on Twitter to locate the tweets in those specific time periods. In addition, in my search I used the words and phrases ‘Grenfell’, ‘Grenfell Tower’, ‘Grenfell Tower fire’ and, I also used the hashtags ‘#Grenfell’, ‘#GrenfellTower’, and ‘#GrenfellTowerfire while searching for Grenfell Tower fire-related tweets<sup>9</sup>. I read each tweet and the responses under those tweets. Lastly, I saved the ones that expressed racism, blaming and different forms of attacks against the Grenfell Tower fire victims and their demands for justice. In the end, I found 416 (260 tweets with hashtags) tweets that blamed victims, survivors, and bereaved families via

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<sup>9</sup> Seeing the numbers of the tweets related to specific hashtags or words are not possible if tweets were posted more than 7 days ago. For this reason, in order to see the numbers, we downloaded all tweets from these websites: [tweepy.org](https://tweepy.org), [developer.twitter.com](https://developer.twitter.com), [kaggle.com](https://www.kaggle.com). To process the data, we used Pandas Package - [pandas.pydata.org](https://pandas.pydata.org).

attributing negative and illegitimate characteristics to them based on their ethnic and racial backgrounds<sup>10</sup>

The first time period for data collection was between September 7 and 21 in 2017. This centred on the formal opening of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017. I collected 104 (90 tweets with hashtags) tweets out of 6,348 Grenfell Tower fire-related tweets from this period. The second data collection time period was during the time of the petition that Grenfell supporters created to demand a debate in Parliament to include survivors and bereaved families in the inquiry process. The petition began on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and it ended on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018. I collected 224 (111 tweets with hashtags) tweets out of 7,578 Grenfell Tower fire related tweets between those dates. The third data collection time period was between 23<sup>rd</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> November in 2019. This included the date of the first inquiry report on 30<sup>th</sup> October. I collected 55 (46 tweets with hashtags) tweets out of 11,718 Grenfell Tower fire-related tweets during this period. The last data collection time period was between 7<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. This included the first Silent Walk<sup>11</sup> that was cancelled because of the COVID-19 outbreak. I collected 33 (13 tweets with hashtags) tweets out of 1,010 Grenfell Tower fire-related tweets.

I collected data from Twitter rather than any other social media or networking services for practical reasons. First, Twitter provides more opportunities for accessibility and anonymity to its users comparing to other social media accounts (e.g., Facebook; Ott; 2017). In addition, using specific hashtags makes the post available for everybody who is interested in viewing related posts on the home page of Twitter; therefore, the accessibility allowed me to reach big numbers of tweets which use the hashtags about the topic that I was interested in.

### **5.3.1. Analytic Procedure**

In this study I used critical discursive psychology (CDP) to understand how words were used within a social, cultural, political, historical context when tweeters achieve particular aims (e.g., delegitimizing the actions of campaigners). Researchers

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<sup>10</sup> Data is available in the author's university research repository. Please see <https://doi.org/10.25377/sussex.14345732.v1>.

<sup>11</sup> Campaigners, who supported Grenfell Tower fire survivors and bereaved families to seek justice, organized Silent Walk after the fire. These walks took place every month until the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed them (Tekin & Drury, 2021).



who use CDP combine two approaches, Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) and discursive psychology (DP) (Budds et al., 2017). Therefore, before explaining my method, I will give brief explanations of these two approaches.

According to FDA, a particular version of an object, event or category of person is constructed by a set of discursive resources. In this approach, discourses are the implications of people's experiences and participations in the social world (Willig, 2008). Moreover, as Davies and Harre (1990) described, when people embrace and take on a specific position, they perceive the world from that position which is named as 'subject positions'; therefore, images, metaphors, stories and concepts within people's particular discursive practice become relevant based on these subject positions (Willig, 2008).

On the other hand, DP considers language performative within social actions or interactions of people (Goodman, 2017). In other words, the perspective of discursive psychology aims to understand how language performs and what it achieves for people within their social interaction (Budds et al., 2017). Unlike FDA, it does not focus on the motivations behind language use; the main aim is that discursive psychology considers discourse as a tool that people use to construct their social world (Goodman, 2017; Parker, 2002).

Critical discursive psychology (CDP) combines both approaches (Parker, 2002). As well as focusing on understanding how discursive resources are used by people as a tool to accomplish social actions and interactions, CDP also considers how these discursive resources are also shaped by the social, cultural, and historical context (Edley, 2001). Considering the subjectivities within the discourse, besides focusing on understanding how discourse can form subjectivities, CDP also aims to understand how discourse can be shaped by subjectivities (Budds et al, 2017).

My analysis took place in six stages (Budds et al., 2017). First, I downloaded all tweets that used specific hashtags such as #Grenfell #GrenfellTower, #GrenfellTowerfire. Second, I code the ones that targeted victims of Grenfell mainly using derogatory, accusatory, racist language with explicit and implicit statements. In this stage I aimed to identify the discursive constructions of the topic of the study (attacks on victims and their supporters). Third, I aimed to identify discourses; therefore, I broke down to discursive constructions of these attacks. In this stage, I categorized tweets according to semantic themes that I identified linguistically and

conceptually. For example, instances of being an illegal immigrant are categorized according to the statements related to victims' legal residency permits in the UK. or their ability to understand language. In another example, I categorized the statements that attack the deservingness of the victims according to their socio-economic statuses.

Fourth, I identified subject positions. In that stage I aimed to understand how tweeters positioned themselves and victims. For example, in some extracts, some tweets racialized victimhood by expressing that the 'liberal establishment' is biased against White working-class position. They position themselves as the victims of the supposed 'liberal elites' who threaten their homogenous culture via supporting racial and minority ethnic population. Therefore, the victims of Grenfell Tower fire were positioned as 'privileged groups' who are supported and 'protected' by the 'liberal establishment.' In the fifth stage I aimed to observe how tweeters practiced the implications of these subject positions. In other words, I aimed to identify how tweeters choose a specific way of talking to achieve certain aims (e.g., attributing negative characteristics, representing victims as criminals etc.).

In the sixth stage I focused on the constructive ability of discourse. I aimed to understand what the discursive resources were building or resisting against. For example, by attributing negative characteristics to victims, tweeters aimed to construct victims as 'undeserving because they were criminals.' In addition, I focused on explaining how language was used for achieving functions (e.g., delegitimizing the victims).

#### **5.4. Analysis**

Tweeters delegitimized the victims in two ways. The first way was to imply that a supposed 'liberal establishment' were biased against the British White working-class. Some Twitter posts claimed that White British working-class population is 'ignored' and 'left behind' by the 'liberal establishment'. In order to legitimize their argument, they expressed the idea of 'poor nationals' (who are strangers in their own land – Mondon & Winter, 2019) through racializing being working class as being a White British person and used the subject position 'victimhood' when representing White working-class population. Therefore, by representing the minority ethnic populations as a privileged group who are supported by those in power (a supposed 'liberal establishment'), the White working-class was constructed as the real victims. The

second way of delegitimization occurred when the tweets implied that Grenfell victims did not deserve the rights that they claimed from the authorities. In order to justify their argument, hostile tweeters used different subject positions (illegitimate identities) such as ‘illegal immigrants’, ‘fraudsters’, ‘criminals’, and ‘opportunists’.

First, I will present how racism against Grenfell Tower fire victims was legitimized via blaming ‘liberal establishment’ for bias against the White working-class. Second, I will try to explain how victims of the Grenfell Tower fire and the support that they received were delegitimized by those hostile tweets through constructing them as illegitimate. Based on my analysis, I will discuss some possible ways to counter hostile language.

#### **5.4.1. Blaming Victims via Conspiracies About a ‘Liberal Establishment’**

Conspiracy theories have been employed in various ways to attack disaster victims (The Independent SAGE, 2021). Consistent with the previous disaster contexts, in the case of the Grenfell Tower fire, I observed that delegitimizing victims was achieved by accusing the ‘liberal establishment’ of bias., accusing the establishment was achieved via two ways: 1) Articulating victimhood based on racial identities and by expressing a conspiracy theory around the ‘Liberal Establishment’ being biased against the White working-class population 2) Delegitimizing victims’ demands by expressing untrue, wilful event, a terrorist attack, that is hidden by liberal elites.

##### **5.4.1.1. Constructing ‘Bias’ Against the White British Population**

In some of the hostile Twitter posts, being working-class was racialized by implying that the White working-class population are the main sufferers who are disadvantaged by the (liberal) establishment. Racism was expressed by hostile tweeters via blaming ‘liberal elites’ for being a reason that ‘immigrants’ were supposedly a privileged group. The posts implied that immigrants have an unfair advantage compared to White working-class British people because they have the groups in power (liberal elites) on their side.

The Manchester Arena bombing<sup>12</sup> happened around one month before the Grenfell Tower fire. The Grenfell Tower fire public Inquiry first report was released on

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<sup>12</sup> At the end of a concert in Manchester Arena on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2017, an Islamist extremist suicide bomber detonated a homemade bomb. Twenty-three people lost their lives and over 800 were injured.

the same day as the Manchester Arena bombing anniversary in 2018. Similar to examples in the competitive victimhood literature (e.g., Andrighetto et al., 2012; Pilecki & Hammack, 2014), some of the expressions of racism in language appeared in these tweets by comparing ‘White British victimhood’ with the Grenfell Tower victims using ‘victimhood’ as a subject position and claiming that the White British population is the ‘real’ victim of a disasters (the Manchester Arena Bombing). Moreover, the tweets, which used the language of attacking, delegitimized the victims of Grenfell Tower fire via using a subject position, ‘Grenfell Tower fire victims are privileged’. The tweets expressed ‘White British victimhood’ and ‘privileged Grenfell Tower victims’ by claiming that victims of Manchester Arena bombing were not supported by the people in power as strongly as Grenfell Tower victims were. The tweeter in extract 1 suggests that the White British population does not receive what it deserves by comparing being White British to the Grenfell Tower survivors:

Extract 1



In order to emphasize the degree of victimhood that the White British population has experienced, an extreme case formulation is used (‘never’) (Pomerantz, 1986; Potter, 1996). While talking about the Manchester Arena Bombing and flood victims in Cumbria, the tweeter asked a rhetorical question implying that White British people were the ‘victims’ of two disasters that did not receive adequate support. Moreover, the compound noun ‘illegal ethnics’ is a racist expression (see Peach, 2002 for the use of the term ‘ethnics’) that the tweeter used in order to delegitimize the support that they received. The expression of racism in the language that the tweet used appeared with another subject position ‘Grenfell Tower victims are illegal’. In order to delegitimize the victims and the support that they received the tweet expressed the conspiracy or bias that a supposed ‘liberal establishment’ is in favour of ethnic minorities (in this case the survivors and victims of Grenfell Tower) at the expense of the White British population.

#### 5.4.1.2. Victims are terrorists and ‘Liberal Elites’ are hiding this

In the second time-period, during the petition in 2018, some Twitter posts expressed conspiracy theories about the reason for the fire. Even though experts and news coverage explained that the fire started from an electrical appliance and spread to the whole building quickly because of the flammable cladding (Bulley, Edkins, & El-Enany, 2019), some tweeters insisted that the fire actually arose from preparations by terrorists. Moreover, as exemplified in extract 2, they accused people in power of hiding a terrorist attack:

Extract 2



In the first post, by writing the words ‘WHO’ and ‘WHAT’ with capital letters, tweeter D emphasized the speculations about the hidden realities about the fire. Moreover, using a rhetorical question (Freesmith, 2007), ‘Why is that deemed of such low interest?’, the tweeter implied that the reasons for the fire are deliberately hidden. In the second tweet, through sarcasm (Anderson & Huntington, 2017) - ‘This is what happens when you keep highly unstable explosives in the fridge’ - tweeter E implied that the fire was a terrorist preparation. Moreover, by using the word ‘Jihadis’, the tweeter nominalized a Grenfell survivor as a terrorist (Freesmith, 2007). Besides blaming the occupant as a terrorist, in the sentence ‘Jihadis are a bit short in the grey matter area’, the tweeter also implied that the supposed terrorist resident is stupid.

Lastly, expressions of racism in language in the tweets appeared via using the subject position, ‘Grenfell Tower victims were terrorists.’ Because many residents of Grenfell Tower had Muslim identities, this subject position is used in these tweets in order to delegitimize victims and their demands via claiming that these groups are dangerous as they are terrorists.

#### 5.4.2. Blaming victims and delegitimizing their support through ascribing them illegitimate identities

After the public announcement of the petition had been launched, as well as support from a large number of people, there were also a small number of tweets that attacked victims of Grenfell Tower fire. Some of those comments relied on specific rhetorical devices and semantic strategies that constructed the identities of survivors and bereaved families as undeserving of the support that they received. Consistent with Burke and Goodman’s (2012) discursive analysis of internet discussions regarding asylum seeking, the first way of speaking that I identified is the “*illegal immigrant identity*” of residents of the Grenfell Tower fire:

Extract 3



The tweet in extract 3, through a rhetorical question and writing the word ‘understand’ with capital letters, blamed residents in two possible ways. First, it was implied that the residents were immigrants who did not understand English instructions; second, residents were blamed for being stupid and not understanding the fire safety procedure. In both cases, the language in the post expressed a way of blaming residents for being the reasons for their own deaths or losses. The second question in the post implied that residents were uncooperative and irresponsible that they did not help the fire brigade to complete fire security checks. Therefore, residents were presented as

obstacles to creating a safe building instead of social housing occupants who suffered through the fire. In the third rhetorical question, by rounding the numbers of the flats as ‘+100’ and ‘+200’ and adding a rhetorical flourish by doubling the numbers (from 100+ to 200+), the tweet expressed a conspiratorial argument which implies speculations about ‘Grenfell Tower being more crowded than its capacity through residents subleasing their flats’. By describing Grenfell Tower residents with a compound noun, ‘illegals’, this tweet also expressed racism in its language. Moreover, this claim also delegitimized the identities of victims and the support that they demanded via expressing another conspiracy which implies that victims are not British and do not belong in the U.K. Moreover, by using another compound noun, ‘subletters’ while describing residents, as it was also expressed in the second sentence, the same conspiracy, ‘immigrants take advantage of the social housing system and sublease their accommodation’, was implied. Lastly, in the last sentence, by referring to an inexplicable immunity, the tweet expresses another conspiratorial element which suggests that the ethnic minority population is a privileged group who are protected by people in power. In other words, the tweeter expressed racism in their language via accusing a supposed ‘liberal establishment’ and using speculations (i.e., residents were illegal, residents sublet their flats) in order to delegitimize victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Another illegitimate identity that I found in the tweets which attacked Grenfell Tower fire victims was ‘*criminals*.’ Victims and Grenfell Tower community members were attacked on Twitter after news items appeared in the media reporting that people who were not related to Grenfell Tower fraudulently claimed compensation from the authorities. In some of the hostile tweets, ‘Grenfell’ was equated with ‘fraud’ through compound nouns that linked two words in a single phrase ‘Grenfell fraudster’. Therefore, I found that representing Grenfell Tower survivors and bereaved families as ‘*criminals*’ who committed fraud was a way of communicating to construct Grenfell Tower survivors as undeserving and self-interested people who take advantage of the disaster, as in extract 4:

Extract 4

Another day, another #Grenfell fraudster.  
Has ANYONE involved in this been held accountable for  
simply handing our money out to so many criminals?



'Conman' pocketed £31,800 pretending he lived in Grenfell, trial hears  
A man accused of defrauding Chelsea and Kensington council by pretending to  
be a Grenfell Tower resident has appeared in court. It is alleged Shaffick Brim...  
dailymail.co.uk

10:54 PM - Mar 17, 2020 - Twitter Web App

51 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 73 Likes

There were different ways that Grenfell community could have been described or referred to such as 'Grenfell Tower occupants' or 'residents of Grenfell Tower', etc.; however, in the tweet, in extract 4, being a fraudster and 'Grenfell' was combined to represent Grenfell survivors who claim compensation as dishonest. In addition, using the cliché 'another day, another Grenfell fraudster', the tweeter implied that there were many fraudsters who came to light almost on a daily basis. Even though, in this statement, the attack was not against victims, by emphasizing the link between 'Grenfell Tower fire' and 'fraud', using cliché and extreme case formulation (e.g., ANYONE) (Pomerantz, 1986; Potter, 1996), the tweet aimed to delegitimize the help the victims or community members receive. Including a rhetorical question in the last sentence, the tweet also implied that even if there were many people who committed fraud, no one was held accountable. Here, besides delegitimizing the help and support that Grenfell residents received, the tweeter also expressed the conspiracy theory that people in power protect minorities who committed fraud.

Delegitimizing victims and their demands also occurred by using a subject position, '*victims are opportunists who use taxpayers' money unnecessarily*'. As exemplified in extract 5, some hostile tweeters attack victims by representing them as people who made unreasonable demands:



## Extract 5



In the tweet by Tweeter A, the word 'only' was used to minimize the numbers of flats that were affected; moreover, by asking 'why do Grenfell residents need 210 new homes, when only 106 flats were involved?' Tweeter A attacked victims by claiming that their demands were over and above what was needed. This tweet was posted at the time the petition called on the prime minister to take action to create public trust in the inquiry in the aftermath. Therefore, in the last sentence, 'there should be a public inquiry, into the exploitation of the taxpayers' money', the tweeter aimed to delegitimize the actions of the survivors pertaining to the public inquiry by implying that there was a better reason for an inquiry. In the later post of Tweeter A, it was asked that 'if these people aren't working why are we housing them in the most expensive city

in the U.K.? Again, I am feeling exploited'. With these two sentences, the tweeter expressed that the residents of the Grenfell Tower were undeserving poor (Shilliam, 2018) because they did not have adequate income to live in London. Therefore, the tweeter delegitimized victims and their demands by expressing that they exploit taxpayers' money to live in luxury without having adequate financial resources.

Grenfell Tower survivors sought justice for four primary issues. They aimed to: 1) pressure authorities to provide temporary homes for the ones who were left homeless after the fire, 2) obtain compensation for their losses, 3) hold the responsible people and companies accountable for the fire, 4) pressure authorities to strengthen the conditions of social housing for the residents (Grenfell United, 2019). However, besides attacking Grenfell Tower victims by representing them as 'illegals', 'fraudsters', and 'opportunists', as exemplified in extract 6, some expressions attacked victims by claiming that they were demanding more than they deserved:

#### Extract 6



Focusing on two non-residents of Grenfell Tower who defrauded council after the fire, the tweet of tweeter Y expresses a reason why public sympathy decreases. Even though it is not clear, perhaps, this statement might aim to delegitimize the political and financial support that Grenfell Tower victims and survivors received and demanded. Tweeter X retweeted the post of tweeter Y with a quotation that invoked the idea of undeserving poor (Shilliam, 2018) and delegitimized the demands of victims by expressing that they demand more than what they deserve. By telling a story about people who experienced a disaster and accepted living in inappropriate conditions, the

post of tweeter X used a subject position, ‘Grenfell victims are ungrateful people’. Therefore, tweeter X delegitimized victims and their demands by claiming that victims demand beyond their needs (luxury accommodation)’. By stating ‘because Grenfell anyway’, the tweeter also implied that Grenfell Tower residents were poor social housing residents who do not have the position to demand luxury accommodation.

## 5.5. Discussion

In this study, I used critical discursive psychology approach to understand how delegitimizing victims can be achieved through the language that tweeters use when they attack victims of a disaster, Grenfell Tower fire. Delegitimizing victims happened through the expressions of racism, victim blaming, and attacking in language in the Twitter posts. I found two patterns that tweeters used to delegitimize the victims. First, tweeters attack victims via accusing the ‘liberal establishment’ for being biased against the White working-class population (cf. Andrighetto et al., 2012; Pilecki & Hammack, 2014) and hiding a terrorist attack that Grenfell Tower residents were preparing. Second, victims who were from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were attacked by these Twitter posts via ascribing them illegitimate identities such as ‘criminals’, ‘illegals’ and ‘opportunists’.

### 5.5.1. Research Contribution

While racial and minority ethnic population have already face attacks in different contexts and on social media, when there is a case of an emergency, these expressions of attacks can represent these groups as scapegoats of the situation (Evans, 2020). Moreover, these attacks can delegitimize the identities and support seeking efforts of those who experience racism, disaster, or both. In this research, by analysing social media (Twitter) posts, I contributed to the literature by identifying two possible patterns of these expressions of racism and blaming when the minority ethnic populations become the main victims of an emergency and disaster.

I found that attacking does not only happen between two parties such as ‘attackers’ and ‘victims.’ In my material, in order to delegitimize victims and their actions, those who attack disaster victims can hold people in power (e.g., ‘liberal elites’) responsible for being biased against White working-class groups. As was suggested in the previous literature on the language that far-right groups use (Burke et al., 2020; Cervone et al., 2021; Pettersson, 2019; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016; Wood & Finlay,

2008), by positioning the White working-class as the victims of a supposed ‘liberal establishment’, it was argued that the White working-class do not receive the support they deserve compared to other disadvantaged groups. Therefore, comparing ‘White British victimhood’ with the positions of disaster victims, expressing ‘unworthiness’ of Grenfell Tower victims and delegitimizing the support of Grenfell Tower victims can be achieved.

In line with the findings of previous studies (Solnit, 2009; Tierney et al., 2006), I found that attacks against victims of disasters happen via attributing negative characteristics to them. For example, consistent with the case of Hurricane Katrina (Tierney et al., 2006), I showed how racist assumptions and expressions against minority ethnic groups can be used to delegitimize the demands of victims of a disaster. My findings contribute to the literature by explaining how expressions of racism, victim blaming and different types of attacks in language can function to delegitimize justice-related demands of disaster victims. I found that in order to delegitimize the demands of the Grenfell Tower fire victims, hostile tweets attributed negative characteristics to the victims’ ethnic backgrounds positioning them as ‘criminal’, ‘illegal’ etc.

The critical discursive psychological approach gave me an opportunity to carry out a systematic analysis of the language that attacked disaster victims in various ways. Expressions of attacks against racial and minority ethnic groups have been studied in different settings, previously (Goodman & Rowe, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2017; Mondon & Winter, 2019); however, my findings show that even though racial and ethnic minority groups have been disproportionately affected by a disaster they also face expressions of attacks which delegitimizes them and their actions in the aftermath. In other words, my findings contribute to the literature by explaining how discourses of racism, victim blaming, and different types of attacks can be used to delegitimize disaster victims.

### **5.5.2. Limitations**

In addition to a theoretical and practical contribution to the social psychology literature, my study also has some limitations. First, in the case of Grenfell Tower, I only focused on attacks that happened through individual or anonymous tweets on social media. However, in the traditional media, some authority figures also blamed victims for their own deaths. For example, authority figures and a few other people blamed victims by implying that they had lacked common sense. After the report of the

public inquiry was published on 30 October 2019, the leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg, stated in a radio programme: ‘I think if either of us were in a fire, whatever the fire brigade said, I would leave the burning building. It just seems the common-sense thing to do. And, it is such a tragedy that didn’t happen’. That statement was offensive and deeply disrespectful to the victims who had lost their lives during the fire. Since the purpose of this study was to focus on expressions of racism, victim blaming, and attacks on social media, future research might focus on other types of sources that people use to attack the disaster victims (Drury et al., 2020).

Second, even though I respect and support making research data publicly available, because of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), I could only use the tweets which had used Grenfell Tower fire-related hashtags. Moreover, because I analysed tweets that were published in four time periods, there could be more hostile tweets that might have been posted outside the dates which I had set.

Third, in addition to Twitter, there are also other platforms (for example Facebook) on which expressions of attacks might be used to delegitimize the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, but my research only involved the posts on Twitter. Moreover, compared with other platforms, Twitter allows tweeters an anonymity which other platforms might not allow (for example, personal information such as age, race, religion and gender). In addition, this anonymity is likely to empower hostile individuals to express themselves (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). Lastly, because personal information about users is not always available, I were not able to identify whether the accounts which I accessed were real or fake.

### **5.5.3. Implications**

Willig (2001) argued that discursive constructions might have real effects and Cocking and Drury (2014) suggested that disaster narratives might have an influence on emergency responses. So, examining the attacks against victims is important when there is a case of a disaster because these attacks might negatively affect disadvantaged groups when they most need to receive material (housing and welfare), socio-psychological (feeling secure) and justice (rights for equality) related resources. If we become more aware of the effects of expressions of attacks in language, we could apply some possible ways to prevent them. As Willig (2001) suggested, discourses can be used to legitimize existing social structures, but creating counter-discourses can also be an effective alternative.

In line with previous disasters (Solnit, 2009; Tierney et al., 2006), in the Grenfell Tower fire context, the ways in which victims, survivors and bereaved families were represented in hostile tweets did not represent many people's experience (see Bulley, Edkins & El-Enany, 2019). In fact, the Grenfell community was supported by a large number of people from local and wider communities, including supporters from different cities (Tekin & Drury, 2021). Moreover, community members and supporters of the Grenfell community refuted those online attacks by using extensive evidence and counterarguments intended to represent the reality against conspiracy theories or incorrect information which the hostile tweeters used. Even though those expressions of attacks which delegitimize victims via emphasizing conspiracy theories and incorrect information, supporters of the Grenfell Tower victims actively contradicted hostile tweeters by providing evidence from official websites and sharing hashtags for their campaign. Moreover, supporters also represented their counterarguments by using language in a respectful way. For example, when the expressions of racism in language appeared by using a subject position as 'illegal immigrant' to describe a Grenfell Tower residents, supporters of the Grenfell survivors, described the resident as a 'Grenfell Tower tenant'.

Consistent with evidence from previous disasters and the literature on emergencies (Aldrich, 2013; Tekin & Drury, 2020; Tekin; Drury, 2021), instead of representing selfish behaviours, Grenfell Tower community members and their supporters were actively involved in a community empowerment process. Moreover, justice campaigns were organized to overcome injustice against the way that community members were treated by the authorities. One of the features of those campaigns was the Silent Walk events which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month in the aftermath of the fire (Tekin & Drury, 2021). By coming together every month and walking silently around the Grenfell Tower neighbourhood, people showed their respect for the 72 people who had lost their lives and protested against the gentrification projects of the authorities. In summary, the Grenfell Tower context shows that instead of taking advantage of the situation in opportunistic ways, community members, survivors, bereaved families and their supporters from wider communities demonstrated solidarity in order seek justice and overcome systemic racism and inequality.

#### **5.5.4. Conclusion**

Even though minority ethnic populations suffer disproportionately from disasters, attacks against them happens against them in different forms. When there is a disaster, people often try to find explanations for the reasons for fatalities. Because minority ethnic populations have already faced attacks regardless of whether there is a disaster, they can be the easy targets to attack when there is a disaster. The use of language, especially when there is a disaster case, is important because the language use might have a real effect on delegitimizing victims and their efforts. However, even though discourses can be used to delegitimize victims via racism and victim blaming, alternative discourses are also possible ways to create a respectful description of reality. My research is intended to contribute to the application of social psychology by representing the importance of language for creating a legitimate and fair response in the aftermath of disasters.

## Chapter 6

### General Discussion

In the first chapter of this thesis, presented as a literature review, I provided an overview of the disaster literature from different disciplines alongside Social Psychology research on the behaviours of people after a disaster. The first aim of this chapter was to show how research has long-approached disasters from different perspectives. The second aim of this chapter was to provide an understanding as to how my research can contribute to such prior literature. The third aim was to show how my PhD bridges general disaster literature and social psychology literature, achieved by evidencing how people actively create strategies and involve allies in their campaign processes to empower their communities and to achieve their goals in the aftermath of a disaster. From this, I provided my general research questions and explained the methodology used when answering those questions. My first question asked why people campaign in the aftermath of a disaster. My second question asked what kind of strategies are followed by campaigners to achieve their goals for justice. My third question asked how allies (supporters from wider communities) contribute to the empowerment process witnessed and seek justice for those directly affected by a disaster. My last question asked how attacks against victims on social media seek to delegitimize victims and their actions in the aftermath of a disaster.

In the second chapter, I provided details about the context of the campaigning undertaken in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, this being what I have focused on throughout my empirical studies. Here, I gathered different material from literature, traditional media, and social media to understand the reasons for the fire, the history and the culture of North Kensington, what motivated campaigners to take action against the injustices they perceived, how pre-existing local campaigns and new campaigns came together to seek justice for the survivors and bereaved families, and why the campaigns sought to overcome injustice. After this chapter, I began to answer my research questions with my first study.

In the third chapter, I presented my first study. Here, I aimed to understand what strategies campaigners followed to achieve their goals of gaining justice and how allies from wider communities contributed to the empowerment processes witnessed. Alongside summarizing the different features of these campaigns, I also focused on the results of a petition which called on the UK Prime Minister to take action in building



public trust towards the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Notably, campaigners collected 156,835 signatures by reaching out to supporters from different areas. Besides sustaining a community identity among those who had experience the disaster first-hand, the reaching out to allies from wider communities was an important strategy in seeking justice during the empowerment process.

In the fourth chapter, my second study, I focused on another particularly-powerful feature of the campaign organised in the aftermath of the fire. Here, campaigners used monthly Silent Walks as street mobilization to achieve two things. First, they aimed to build solidarity among supporters by creating these walks as accessible to anybody who wanted to support the campaigners. In addition, the using of shared spaces for campaign events and acting as one (e.g., being silent during the walk and reading out the names of those who died) arose to show respect to the 72 people who lost their lives in the fire. These practices were employed as strategies for achieving solidarity. Second, campaigners used these Silent Walks as a protest form aimed at challenging negative stereotypes and at projecting their power to the authorities. Throughout this study I was able to observe and examine the steps that were taken by the campaigners while they create their strategies during the empowerment process. I found that empowerment can be achieved via solidarizing with ingroup relations and by expressing political action against external groups.

In the fifth chapter, I presented the last study in which I focused on a type of outsider who attacked the victims, bereaved families, and their supporters in different ways in an attempt to delegitimize these figures and their demands. Even though there were many more supportive people than opposing people, the ways in which such attacks occurred were similar to what happened in the contexts of other disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, COVID-19; Tierney et al., 2006; The Independent SAGE, 2021). Besides considering the strategies accessed to gain empowerment and desired achievements, I also aimed to understand the ways that victims can be attacked in the aftermath of a disaster. I found that there were two different forms of attack. First, Twitter posts were used to attack victims through ascribing them illegitimate identities (e.g., ‘criminals’, ‘fraudsters’, and ‘illegal immigrants’). Second, attacks arose through the drawing upon of a conspiracy theory which claimed that those victims and survivors benefited from people in power (e.g., ‘liberal elites’).

In addition, all three of the studies detailed above were in parallel and contributed to existing literature in various ways. Moreover, besides making theoretical contributions, the studies have helped me to provide some practical recommendations.

### **6.1. Theoretical contributions**

The physical features of disasters can be predictable or unpredictable and may emerge suddenly or slowly. Moreover, they can also differ from one another in relation to the demands and needs invoked among communities which experience a disaster (Quarantelli, 1991). However, two things are often similar in different disaster contexts; that 1) working-class and minority ethnic groups are disproportionately affected because of systemic injustices and that 2) community-based support arises when there is neglect from authorities. Previous research has suggested that trauma is shared with others (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999) and social identity processes can help people to overcome trauma in the aftermath of a disaster (Muldoon et al., 2017). The results of my first study (Chapter 3) contribute to prior literature by suggesting that shared social identities can be an aim as well as being a reason for support. For example, I found that sharing a sense of community and identifying with the same community were core aims for campaigners and motivated their participation in the justice campaigns launched. On the other hand, I also found that keeping this community identity with others was also an aim of their participation.

In addition, I found that the processes which underlie what people do to overcome the negative effects of a disaster or to achieve their goals do not happen coincidentally. People can consciously take steps and plan strategies to come together in campaign events with allies to empower their communities and their action in the aftermath of a disaster. Drury and Reicher (2005) have suggested that empowerment and identification with a group (empowered identity) can be an experiential outcome of action as well as being a function of the participating in action. In addition to these findings, in Chapter 3, my first study has suggested that empowerment needs to be considered as a process that can be successful when actions are planned in a way whereby outsiders (allies) can become involved.

Political action by survivors in the aftermath of disasters have been the focus of previous literature (Aldrich, 2013; Hajek, 2013; McQueen & Rogan, 2021). When people fail to receive adequate responses or resources from authorities, they may protest or campaign against this neglect. Previous research has emphasized that such action can

sometimes decline over time (e.g., Hurricane Katrina) or that these actions can be successful (e.g., Emilia Romagna or Mexico City Earthquake). However, previous research has not focused on the social psychological processes underlying such achievement or what strategies are followed by protestors or campaigners. In Chapter 4 of this thesis, where I set out my second study, I found that the Silent Walks action had two main meanings for campaigners. The first meaning corresponded to the solidarity held among supporters. These Silent Walks were organized in a way whereby everybody who supported the Grenfell survivors and bereaved families could attend. They were accessible events that were happening in spaces where community members had a sense of belonging. In addition, ingroup solidarity was also expressed by being silent to show respect to the 72 people that the community members had lost. The second meaning of these Silent Walks arose in terms of it representing political action against authorities. Besides solidarizing with other supporters, campaigners also considered the views of the authorities and therefore organized Silent Walks in a way through which campaigners could challenge external groups (authorities). While silence has the meaning of being respectful, it also has a political meaning which shows that working-class ethnic minority groups do not always behave in a way that external groups expect them to behave (e.g., being disorderly or violent) – the latter being behaviour which could be dismissed. Moreover, even though the walks happened silently, some of the banners held had words and phrases with political meaning which responded to how the local community was treated by the authorities before and after the fire.

The first two studies (as presented respectively in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this thesis) have contributed to the literature of this area by evidencing that post-disaster campaigners met their needs for justice through an empowerment process. During this empowerment process, campaigners acted strategically and planned their actions deliberately in order to achieve their campaign goals. While some of their strategies were about solidarizing internal relations (survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters), other actions were about challenging external groups (e.g., authorities). It is important to mention again that in order to achieve empowerment, outsiders (as figures from wider communities) needed to be involved in the campaigning process as ingroup members. In this context, campaigners strategized their actions in a way that allowed support to be received from outsiders.

In the third study, as presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis, I focused on a hostile type of outsider – figures who attacked the victims, survivors, and their supporters alongside their campaign actions. The various types of attack launched against victims and the variety of victim-blaming forms encountered in the aftermath of disasters have been the focus of previous research (Cocking & Drury, 2014; Davis & French, 2008; Tierney et al., 2006). In addition, previous literature has provided examples of the expression of racist language in different contexts (Burke & Goodman, 2012; Renolds et al., 2017; Mondon & Winter, 2019), including in post-disaster instances (Tierney et al., 2006). In my research, I have produced an understanding of how outsiders use expressions of attack via language in order to delegitimize victims and their demands in the aftermath of a disaster. I have found that language can be used in an attempt to delegitimize victims and their demands by attributing negative characteristics to the target group (e.g., victims). In addition, I have contributed to the literature by suggesting that even though racial and ethnic minority groups and working-class populations suffer from disasters unequally, expressions of attack via language can construct White British groups as those disadvantaged.

## **6.2. Practical implications**

Previous research has suggested that recovery is a complex process which involves rebuilding and restoring the community through the active participation of people who experienced the given disaster (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Quarantelli, 1991). Besides helping each other during a disaster (e.g., evacuating a building), people also help each other in the aftermath in meeting different types of needs – such as in accessing medical supplies, donations, and food/accommodation (Solnit, 2009). Throughout this thesis, I have evidenced that people do not only support each other with material or well-being related needs as they sometimes also come together to campaign against injustice (which may have been the reason for the given disaster's occurrence). Most importantly, these actions can be supported by people who did not experience the disaster first-hand. Such support from outsiders contributes productively to justice-seeking actions and helps campaigners to empower their actions and to achieve their goals. My two studies on the Social Psychology of community organizing and one study on racist victim-blaming have not only contributed theoretical knowledge to the field of disaster research, but have also provided four practical recommendations that can be used by community members who have experienced

systemic injustice and authorities who must consider equity when meeting the needs of different sections of a community in the aftermath of a disaster.

First, keeping a shared emergent identity – or a sense of community – alive is a crucial mechanism for ensuring community empowerment (Drury et al., 2019). The importance of this aspect relates to how most ‘disaster communities’ tend to decline as they run out of energy and resources. My recommendation is that groups use specific norms, names, places, and spaces as well as mundane conversations to consciously and actively keep their group identity alive (Tekin & Drury, 2021). For example, in the case of the Grenfell Tower fire, to maintain the sharing of a sense of injustice, campaigners continued to seek justice by participating in Silent Walk events on the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month. This grouping comprised people gathering together at the same time, in the same place, carrying placards bearing the same messages to pressure authorities to take action.

Second, disaster communities need to bring supporters and allies together through legitimate, sustainable, and inclusive events. In the context of the Grenfell Tower fire, the Silent Walk events were open to the public and to anyone who wanted to support the survivors and bereaved families. This and other reaching-out activities (such as the launching of petitions and the undertaking of public speaking) enabled people from around the country to become a part of these campaigns and to support them, empowered the survivors and bereaved and projected this power to the authorities (Tekin & Drury, 2021).

Third, governments and local authorities need to be transparent and inclusive when they take action in the context of an emergency. Governmental action should not be taken without the involvement of community members. Local authorities should therefore work together with the emerged support groups in ways accepted by other community members. In addition, an immediate, equitable, and inclusive response from the authorities in the aftermath of a disaster will likely encourage community members to be more willing to work with authorities. When the inquiry process began in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the survivors and bereaved families were not involved through formal legal representation (Tekin & Drury, 2020). For this reason, a petition to call on the UK Prime Minister to take action in building public trust towards the inquiry was set up by campaigners. In two weeks, the petition received 156,835 signatures. Two members of the community were consequently involved as panel members in the inquiry process (Petitions, UK, Government and Parliament, 2018).

Even after four years, the justice-seeking process has continued with reliable updates from the community representatives.

Fourth, authorities need to work with community members or community groups to prevent various forms of attack against victims and any victim-blaming. Governmental transparency about a disaster is also important in preventing victim-blaming narratives. While ethnic minorities and working-class populations experience disasters unequally, they also face different types of attack – especially those racist in form. Language can have a real effect upon people's actions and therefore people use language in a way designed to delegitimize victims and their actions. As an outcome, the emergency responses and empowerment processes encountered can be influenced negatively by such narrative types. In the context of the Grenfell Tower fire, especially in the early post-disaster stages, inadequate responses were given by the authorities when victims were blamed by traditional media or across social media. However, by providing accurate information about the fire and the demographics of the residents of the building, community members defended the victims, survivors, and bereaved families against racist attacks and conspiracies. As community members can access reliable information about the issues related to their communities, authorities must work with community members to provide a better picture of the given situation in each context.

### **6.2.1. How the lessons of the Grenfell Tower context can be applied to COVID-19**

My review of the previous literature and consideration of the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire has provided an understanding of how disasters and their negative effects can be prevented. These three studies are offered to help community members and authorities deal successfully with current and future disasters and emergency situations. As the COVID-19 pandemic process has some features which are similar to those of the Grenfell Tower fire context (as well as previous emergency situations), in this section I provide practical recommendations which community members and authorities may use to successfully empower different sections of a community.

First, as mentioned previously, during the COVID-19 process, working class and ethnic minority populations have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with many people having lost their lives and loved ones because of the systemic injustices faced. Even though campaigns have been launched seeking justice from authorities, such campaigning has not been sustainable. Creating campaign activities in

a way through which people can express their responses at the same time and within certain/regular periods (e.g., every week, every month) can help these activities to be sustained until a response is received from decision-makers and authorities.

Second, campaign activities need to go beyond community action. According to the first two studies presented in this thesis, empowerment can be achieved when campaign actions are supported by wider communities. Even though sharing the same physical space has been dangerous in the COVID-19 context because of the risk of the virus being transmitted, online actions are seen as being beneficial in allowing members of different communities to show their responses at the same time using the same or similar types of communication (e.g., in providing posts using the same hashtags). Therefore, the creation of wider solidarity among the members of different communities can help this empowerment process to be sustainable.

Third, in order to create an inclusive and trusted environment for effective action, authorities could collaborate with community support groups, mutual-aid groups, and any other stakeholders who share the same community identity (Bowe et al., 2021; Templeton et al., 2020). As community support groups and mutual aid groups are often created by members of an affected community, they are usually aware of the specific needs faced by each section of that community. If authorities and decision-makers can collaborate with such community support groups and mutual aid groups, they can learn more about the specific needs faced by different sections and interventions can emerge in response to the resources available and ready to be delivered. Identification can also be given to what resources are lacking and need to be fulfilled.

Fourth, as victim-blaming can have real-life outcomes (such as manifest discrimination), the language used by authority figures needs to be carefully selected while creating safety guidelines for communities. This is because working class and ethnic minority populations have been represented as a contributory reason for the spread of COVID-19 in some traditional media and social media reports. While these narratives divide communities between ‘spreader’ and ‘vulnerable’ groups, they also lead to stigma and hate crimes – especially against minority ethnic populations. Therefore, authorities and decision-makers are responsible for preventing incorrect information from being disseminated about community members.

### 6.3. Limitations and future directions

The three studies presented in this thesis have provided in-depth analysis as to the social psychological processes of people who experience a disaster, who provide support to affected communities, and who attack affected communities. Despite the explanations, descriptions and definitions provided as to this context, certain limitations have been encountered.

One major issue here has been the practicality of the methods I have used. Here, I collected data through individual interviews and ethnography for the first two studies. As mentioned earlier, over 200 campaign groups were formed to seek justice for the survivors and bereaved families (Still\_I\_Rise\_GT, 2018). Even though during the Silent Walks I observed that the aims of many campaign groups were the same and pertained to the wider goal of achieving justice, different agendas may have been held. Moreover, because my research questions aimed to understand how support occurs among community members and their supporters, I was not able to examine the different dynamics among these campaign groups. In this sense, some groups may have held different opinions about the justice-seeking process, the steps that needed to be taken, or what was defined as success. However, I was not able to examine the relations arising among different campaign groups.

It is also important to acknowledge that there were particular features of the Grenfell area that might mean that some of the processes I identified would not be seen in other disasters. Therefore, the generalizability of my findings is an issue that must be taken into account. For example, campaigning around the Grenfell Tower area has a long history because of the systemic injustices and inequalities that the community members had experienced over preceding years. Through this prior experience, campaigners could self-organize and plan their strategies quickly in the aftermath of the fire. This long-standing culture of activism and campaigning around North Kensington might not be witnessed in other communities and therefore post-disaster justice action might not emerge or be sustained in the same way as witnessed with the Grenfell Tower justice campaigns.

Another limitation of the studies conducted as part of this thesis is that they were unable to access the psychological and emotional effects of the post-disaster justice campaigns launched in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. As Norris and Kaniasty (1996) have suggested, the initial support given in the aftermath of a disaster can cease



before people who experienced that event have been able to overcome the negative emotional and psychological effects encountered. Notably, people's expectations of support can be affected by the support they receive in practice. In other terms, the perceived support received in the aftermath of a disaster can be positively associated with the actual support received. In addition, received support can have an indirect effect on the mental health of community members when perceived support was preserved by received support. In the context of the Grenfell Tower fire, the post-disaster justice campaigns launched are understood to have had a positive effect on the well-being of those who experienced the incident and their supporters. Therefore, future research can focus on explaining how the act of coming together to fight for justice can have a positive effect on the psychological wellbeing of survivors, bereaved families, and their supporters.

Previous research has also focused on providing possible intervention methods through which to overcome the negative effects of disasters and emergency situations in different community sections (Trickett, 1995). For example, a socio-ecological model has been used by researchers to explain how disasters need to be considered at different levels – such as the individual level, community level, and systemic level. In addition, this approach has been used to give practical recommendations to practitioners and authorities in productively intervening in emergency situations (Velázquez et al., 2017). In this thesis, rather than focusing on potential intervention strategies, I have developed an understanding of the steps members of the public took when campaigning against their treatment by authorities before and after the fire. Understanding the process of post-disaster justice campaigns at different levels (e.g., individual, community, and systemic) and providing recommendations using a socio-ecological model as a framework can also be undertaken by future researchers who aim to approach disaster communities from different perspectives.

Only Twitter was used to collect data for my third study, a result of this platform providing greater anonymity and accessibility than other platforms (e.g., in it allowing users to keep their personal and demographic information confidential). This anonymity might empower users to more easily express racist views. Equally of note is that such anonymity restricts the ability to identify if each account belong to different individuals or if an individual holds multiple accounts. In addition, while presenting example extracts, such confidentiality meant that I had to limit myself to using those posts that used hashtags. Lastly, because I analysed the racist discourse and language used to

attack victims via individual Twitter posts, and while recent research has examined the social-psychological and group processes which underlie racist actions (Hoerst & Drury, 2021), my study was not able to understand if there were group processes arising among hostile tweeters.

Previous literature on collective action suggests that when disadvantaged groups work together, they can increase their group statuses and bring about policy change for social justice (Dixon et al., 2012; Acar & Uluğ, 2016). In my research, even though I was able to understand some of the strategies used to achieve empowerment and long-lasting campaign actions, I was not able to examine if the campaigns ultimately succeeded or failed in achieving justice as many of those campaign actions are ongoing in the Grenfell Tower area.

The definitions of being disadvantaged and advantaged also differ in my studies when compared to previous studies. Prior research on collective action has provided explanations about the allyship which is formed among disadvantaged and advantaged groups, whereby the definitions set for such groups have mainly depended on socio-economic, gender, sexual orientation, or racial and ethnic backgrounds/demographics. However, for the purposes of my studies, I identified disadvantage in regards to people's relations to the fire. For example, the victims and survivors of the fire, the bereaved families, and the community members who witnessed the fire are described as disadvantaged in my studies. In contrast, people who have attended the campaigns from wider communities are described as allies. Individuals who attended such campaign activities may not have been disadvantaged in the same way as previous research has identified.

It has also been suggested in previous literature on collective action that the witnessing of racial discrimination can predict the forming of alliances with groups who have experienced racial discrimination first-hand. Moreover, it has been found that when allies witness racial discrimination, their motivation to participate in collective action can increase (Uluğ & Tropp, 2021). In considering the campaigns raised in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower Fire, I have not been able to examine if witnessing the disaster or discrimination motivated allies to be involved in the resultant campaign activities. Instead, I have suggested that a sense of injustice can bring allies from different communities together to seek justice.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

The effects of systemic injustice and inequality become more explicit during disaster and emergency situations. When an imbalanced distribution of resources arises in accordance with the respective socio-economic levels of different community sections, it is seen that working class and ethnic minority groups suffer disproportionately. However, when mismanagement or neglect by authorities also arises, community members might create their own strategies to help and support each other and to meet different need types. This support can decline or disappear over time for different reasons. For example, when support providers also become victims of a disaster, the help of the community base can decline and be seen as interpersonal help instead (Kaniasty & Norris, 1999). Moreover, during global emergencies, the sustainability of the help and prosocial behaviour needed may not be achieved due to the continuous nature of the emergency (Albayrak-Aydemir & Gleibs, 2021). Lastly, the resources available in a community can decline and community members might not be able to identify or replenish the material needed to support each other.

However, the first two studies of this thesis have evidenced that support is not only provided via material help. As systemic injustices are a primary reason for the suffering faced in the aftermath of a disaster or emergency, people can also support each other to seek justice. More importantly, support and prosocial behaviour can sustain for a long time when people follow specific strategies during the empowerment process. Moreover, besides receiving support from community members, solidarizing with allies from wider communities can facilitate campaign actions to achieve justice. Therefore, campaigners can follow two main strategies to receive positive outcomes when fighting against injustices. First, they can create their actions in such a way that survivors, bereaved families, community members, and their allies from wider communities can solidarize with under the same actions and with the same identification of injustice. Second, these actions can have political features which project power against authorities and challenge the stereotypes held by authorities.

Besides these ‘supportive others’ (such as the allies of campaigners), sometimes ‘hostile others’ can attack victims in different ways via social media. Moreover, while working class and minority ethnic groups experience disasters disproportionately, they can also face these attacks in racist ways. As the way that people use language when they attack victims can have negative practical effects – such as in preventing the

achievement of justice – understanding the patterns of hostile language use is important. Future research therefore needs to focus on the ways through which these types of language use can be combatted.

In this thesis, using Social Psychology knowledge as guidance in addressing the negative effects of disasters, I have set out possible strategies that people can follow to fight against injustice. Besides contributing to Social Psychology literature, my findings also contribute to the practical knowledge held as to supporting different community sections according to their needs in the aftermath of a disaster. Moreover, I have further set out guidance that can be considered by authorities and the public in supporting equity, building empowerment and strengthening communities.

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## Appendix 1: Consent Form for the Interviewees



### CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS PROJECT TITLE:

#### Project Approval Reference:

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- - Be interviewed by the researcher
- - Allow the interview to be audio recorded

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way, up until the study is written up for publication, May 2019.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 1998](#).

Name:

Signature:

Date:

E-mail:

Comprehending the Directions and Results of the Campaigns in the Aftermath of The Grenfell Tower Fire



## **Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet**



### **STUDY TITLE**

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Comprehending the Directions and Results of the Campaigns in the Aftermath of The Grenfell Tower Fire

### **INVITATION PARAGRAPH**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The goal of this research project is to learn more about the actions of campaigners, specifically after the Grenfell Tower fire. We are interested in learning under what conditions the campaigners succeed or fail when they are seeking for justice after a disaster. In addition, we aim to understand how the campaigners perceive the responses of the authorities and the people who criticise those affected by the disaster on social media.

If you agree to participate in the interview it will last approximately 60 minutes. I will audio-record the interview for accuracy. Individuals who are at least 18 years old are eligible to participate in the study.

### **DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide not to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF TAKING PART? (WHERE APPROPRIATE)**

Although we believe that participating in the interviews will not cause you any distress, there is always some slight risk that someone might find them upsetting or otherwise stressful. In the event that you become upset or uncomfortable, you can always withdraw your participation.

In case you decide to withdraw your participation after the interview has finished, you need to mention it by May, 2019 because our study will be submitted for publication by May. After that date, the requests for withdrawal will not be possible.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?**

Although there is no direct benefit associated with your participation, I believe that participating in this interview will give you an opportunity to voice your experiences and observations about being a supporter, campaigner, volunteer and community member after a

## Comprehending the Directions and Results of the Campaigns in the Aftermath of The Grenfell Tower Fire

disaster. The findings of the study will be used to better understand and serve the needs of the community members who are directly or indirectly affected by disasters like the Grenfell fire and people involved in future campaigns following disasters. We would like to understand better how campaigns like that following Grenfell succeed in meeting their needs following a disaster.

### **WILL MY INFORMATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

No personal identifying information will be used in the study. If any such information is present, it will be de-identified when I take notes or transcribe the audio-tapes. Pseudonyms, that is made-up names, will be used while reporting research findings. There will be no documents linking you to your responses. The audiotapes and consent forms will be stored in separate locked file cabinets. The audiotapes will be destroyed in 2027.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?**

The results of this study will be used for my PhD Thesis and the research will be published in an academic journal. You can always e-mail me ([S.Tekin-Guven@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:S.Tekin-Guven@sussex.ac.uk)) to obtain a copy of the published research.

### **WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?**

I am conducting this research as a PhD student at University of Sussex in the School of Psychology. My education and the research are financially supported by the Ministry of Turkish Education.

### **WHO HAS APPROVED THIS STUDY?**

This study has been approved by the Sciences & Technology Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee ([crecscitec@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:crecscitec@sussex.ac.uk)). The project reference number is ER/ST440/1.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact me and my supervisor, Dr. John Drury.

Selin Tekin Guven: [S.Tekin-Guven@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:S.Tekin-Guven@sussex.ac.uk) or Tel: 07384 208029 Dr. John Drury: [J.Drury@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:J.Drury@sussex.ac.uk)

University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

### **THANK YOU**

Thank you for taking time to reading the information sheet.

### **DATE**

### **Appendix 3: Interview Schedule for Wave 1 (interview for the first study)**

#### **Background**

##### **Interview Schedule**

- 1) Tell me how you got involved in the campaign.
- 2) What activities related to Grenfell Tower have you been involved in?
- 3) Have you been involved in the silent marches?
- 4) Have you been involved in the protests at council meetings?
- 5) Have you been involved in the gathering under Westway protests?
- 6) What are the reasons that the campaigners are campaigning in those activities?
- 7) Did you know anybody before you involved, did you get involved because you knew people?
- 8) Have you been involved in anything like this campaign before?
- 9) How did you know that people?
- 10) Why did you choose to get involved?

##### **Needs/Issues**

- 1) What are the aims of the campaign?
- 2) What are the things come to your mind when you think about the needs of the survivors?
- 3) What are the needs of larger community members who are not directly affected by the fire?
- 4) What do you think about the aims of campaigners? What are the reasons that campaigners are campaigning?
- 5) Why was supporting this event important for you?
- 6) What are the problems of supporters?
- 7) What are the needs of survivors?
- 8) How much do you think they are met the current resources in the community?

##### **People/ categories**

- 1) What sort of people are involved in the campaign?
- 2) How would you describe them?
- 3) How would you describe yourself?
  - a) Community member
  - b) Campaigner

##### **Relations with Wider Community**

- 1) What do the relations look like with the wider community?

- 2) What do the relations look like with the rest of the country? How much do you feel you or people on your side are supported?
- 3) Have you come across any critical comment outside in public?
- 4) Have you ever felt that local people are criticizing people in Grenfell or who are seeking for justice?
- 5) Some people in the social media mentioned that the area of Grenfell Tower is overcrowded and the survivors are undeserving. Who do you think said those kinds of things?
- 6) How much do you think the other campaign or political groups are relevant to the actions?

How much do you think that they are supportive?

#### **What is helpful, what is not?**

- 1) What are the challenges/barriers that survivors/other community members face with?
- 2) How do you think government or other community members have responded to it?
- 3) How do you think the Maxilla Social Club is useful?
- 4) What do you think about the volunteers from CURVE?
- 5) How do you think the silent march is a useful action?
- 6) What are the reasons to go to council meetings?
- 7) What are the reasons to joining those activities?
- 8) What activities do you think more useful than the other ones?
- 9) What do you think about the posters, photographs and notes on the walls?

#### **Next Steps**

- 1) What do better support and facilitate a positive and successful end?
- 2) What kind of steps can be taken by the government?
- 3) What kind of steps can be taken by campaigners or community members or survivors?
- 4) How do you think you will keep contributing?

Is there anything you want to add about any of these topics? Potential Probes to Unclear Responses

- “Can you tell me more?”
- “Would you explain further?”
- “Would you give me an example of what you mean?”
- “Is there anything else?”
- “Please describe what you mean.”

## **Appendix 4: Interview Schedule for Wave 2 (interview for the first study)**

### **Background**

#### **Interview Schedule**

- 1) Tell me how you got involved in the campaign.
- 2) What activities related to Grenfell Tower have you been involved in?
- 3) Have you been involved in the silent marches?
- 4) Have you been involved in any activities after whitewashing the wall of truth area?
- 5) What are your reasons as someone involved in campaigning activities?
- 6) Have you been involved in anything like this campaign before?

#### **Needs/Issues**

- 1) What are the needs of community members right now?
- 2) Why was supporting campaign important for you?

#### **People/ categories**

- 1) How would you describe yourself? (maybe at the beginning?)
- 2) How would you describe them?
  - a) Community member?
  - b) Campaigner?
  - c) What else?
- 3) What sort of people are involved in the campaign

#### **Relations with Wider Community**

- 1) What are the relations between the campaign groups? Do you think all of them support each other?
- 2) What groups are you collaborating with?
- 3) What are relations like between those affected by the fire and the wider community?
- 4) What are relations like with the rest of the country? How much do you feel you or people on your side are supported?
- 5) Have you ever felt that local people are criticizing people in Grenfell or who are seeking for justice?
- 6) Some people in the social media mentioned that the survivors are undeserving. Who do you think said those kinds of things?

#### **What is helpful, what is not?**

- 1) How do you think government have responded to fire?
- 2) How do you think the government responded to campaigns?
- 3) What do you think about the Curve?

- 4) What spaces or community centres are more useful for the community members?  
Why?
- 5) How do you think about the silent march is a useful action?
- 6) What campaigning activities do you think more useful than the other ones?
- 7) What do you think about traditional forms of protest, such as demonstration marches with lots of chanting?
- 8) What steps do you consider as successful steps during the campaigning process?

### **Next Steps**

- 1) What are the aims of the campaigns? What do the campaigners want to achieve?
- 2) What do the community need facilitate a positive and successful end?
- 3) What kind of steps can be taken by the government?
- 4) What kind of steps can be taken by those affected by the fire and their supporters?
- 5) How do you think you will keep contributing?

Is there anything you want to add about any of these topics? Potential Probes to Unclear Responses

- “Can you tell me more?”
- “Would you explain further?”
- “Would you give me an example of what you mean?”
- “Is there anything else?”
- “Please describe what you mean.”

## **Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Wave 3 (interview for the second study)**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Background**

- 1) Tell me how you got involved in the campaign.
- 2) What activities related to Grenfell Tower have you been involved in?
- 3) What are your reasons as someone involved in campaigning activities?
- 4) Have you been involved in anything like this campaign before?

#### **People/ categories**

- 1) How would you describe yourself?
  - 2) What sort of people are involved in the campaign?
  - 3) How would you describe them?
- a) Community member?
  - b) Campaigner?

#### **Government Response**

- 1) How do you think government have responded to fire?
- 2) How do you think the government responded to campaigns?

#### **Needs/Issues**

What are the needs of community members now?

#### **Silent Walk and Spaces**

- 1) Do you do to every Silent Walk
- 2) Can you tell me your experiences?
- 3) What do you think Silent Walk is a useful action? What are the aims of those Silent Walks
- 4) What do you thing about the spaces that people are using? (for e.g., under Westway, Acklam village, Henry Dickens)
- 5) How would campaign operate if campaigners did not have those spaces
- 6) What do you think about the online networking? How it was useful throughout this process?

#### **Other activities**

- 1) What campaign activities are effective?
- 2) How do you think your actions contribute to the process for justice seeking? (e.g. petition)
- 3) What do you think about traditional forms of protest, such as demonstration marches with lots of chanting?

- 4) What steps do you consider as successful steps during the campaigning process?

### **Relations with Wider Community**

- 1) What are the relations between the campaign groups? Do you think all of them support each other?
- 2) What groups are you collaborating with?
- 3) What are relations like between those affected by the fire and the wider community?
- 4) What are relations like with the rest of the country? How much do you feel you or people on your side are supported?
- 5) Have you ever felt that local people are criticizing people in Grenfell or who are seeking for justice?
- 6) Some people in the social media mentioned that the survivors are undeserving. Who do you think said those kinds of things?

### **Next Steps**

- 1) What are the aims of the campaigns? What do the campaigners want to achieve?
- 2) What do the community need facilitate a positive and successful end?
- 3) What kind of steps can be taken by the government?
- 4) What kind of steps can be taken by those affected by the fire and their supporters?
- 5) How do you think you will keep contributing?

Is there anything you want to add about any of these topics?

### **Potential Probes to Unclear Responses**

- “Can you tell me more?”
- “Would you explain further?”
- “Would you give me an example of what you mean?”
- “Is there anything else?”
- “Please describe what you mean.”



## Appendix 6: Ethics Certificate of Approval for thesis



Sciences & Technology C-REC  
crecsctec@admin.susx.ac.uk

Certificate of Approval	
<b>Reference Number</b>	ER/ST440/1
<b>Title Of Project</b>	Comprehending the Directions and Results of the Campaigns in the Aftermath of The Grenfell Tower Fire
<b>Principal Investigator (PI):</b>	John Drury
<b>Student</b>	Selin Tekin Guven
<b>Collaborators</b>	
<b>Duration Of Approval</b>	13 months (note end date is 1 year later than indicated on application, at applicant's request)
<b>Expected Start Date</b>	09-Jan-2018
<b>Date Of Approval</b>	31-Jan-2018
<b>Approval Expiry Date</b>	20-Feb-2019
<b>Approved By</b>	Karen Long
<b>Name of Authorised Signatory</b>	Anna Hobbs
<b>Date</b>	01-Feb-2018

\*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

**Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:**

**Amendments to protocol**

- \* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

**Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects**

- \* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

**Feedback regarding any adverse(1) and unexpected events(2)**

- \* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Science and Technology C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

**Monitoring of Approved studies**

The University may undertake periodic monitoring of approved studies. Researchers will be requested to report on the outcomes of research activity in relation to approvals that were granted (full applications and amendments).

**Research Standards**

Failure to conduct University research in alignment with the Code of Practice for Research may be investigated under the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research or other appropriate internal mechanisms (3). Any queries can be addressed to the Research Governance Office: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk

(1) An "adverse event" is one that occurs during the course of a research protocol that either causes physical or psychological harm, or increases the risk of physical or psychological harm, or results in a loss of privacy and/or confidentiality to research participant or others.

(2) An "unexpected event" is an occurrence or situation during the course of a research project that was a) harmful to a participant taking part in the research, or b) increased the probability of harm to participants taking part in the research.

(3) <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rqi/policy/research-policy>

## Appendix 7: Certificate for approval - Wave 2 Amendment



Sciences & Technology C-REC  
crecsctec@admin.susx.ac.uk

Certificate of Approval	
<b>Reference Number</b>	ER/ST440/8
<b>Title Of Project</b>	AMENDMENT TO ER/ST440/1 [Comprehending the Directions and Results of the Campaigns in the Aftermath of the Grenfell Tower Fire]
<b>Principal Investigator (PI):</b>	Selin Tekin Guven
<b>Student</b>	Selin Tekin Guven
<b>Collaborators</b>	Approved by Chair's Action
<b>Duration Of Approval</b>	8 months
<b>Expected Start Date</b>	09-Jan-2018
<b>Date Of Approval</b>	20-Jun-2018
<b>Approval Expiry Date</b>	20-Feb-2019
<b>Approved By</b>	Karen Long
<b>Name of Authorised Signatory</b>	Anna Hobbs
<b>Date</b>	20-Jun-2018

\*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

**Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:**

**Amendments to protocol**

- \* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

**Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects**

- \* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

**Feedback regarding any adverse(1) and unexpected events(2)**

- \* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Science and Technology C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

**Monitoring of Approved studies**

The University may undertake periodic monitoring of approved studies. Researchers will be requested to report on the outcomes of research activity in relation to approvals that were granted (full applications and amendments).

**Research Standards**

Failure to conduct University research in alignment with the Code of Practice for Research may be investigated under the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research or other appropriate internal mechanisms (3). Any queries can be addressed to the Research Governance Office: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk

(1) An "adverse event" is one that occurs during the course of a research protocol that either causes physical or psychological harm, or increases the risk of physical or psychological harm, or results in a loss of privacy and/or confidentiality to research participant or others.

(2) An "unexpected event" is an occurrence or situation during the course of a research project that was a) harmful to a participant taking part in the research, or b) increased the probability of harm to participants taking part in the research.

(3) <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rqi/policy/research-policy>

## Appendix 8: Certificate or Approval – Study 3



Sciences & Technology C-REC  
crecsctec@admin.susx.ac.uk

Certificate of Approval	
<b>Reference Number</b>	ER/ST440/9
<b>Title Of Project</b>	A critical discursive approach to understanding how disaster victims are blamed and delegitimized: Racist discourse following the Grenfell Tower fire
<b>Principal Investigator (PI):</b>	John Drury
<b>Student</b>	Selin Tekin Guven
<b>Collaborators</b>	
<b>Duration Of Approval</b>	12.5 months
<b>Expected Start Date</b>	18-Dec-2020
<b>Date Of Approval</b>	18-Dec-2020
<b>Approval Expiry Date</b>	31-Dec-2021
<b>Approved By</b>	Karen Long
<b>Name of Authorised Signatory</b>	Lauren Shukru
<b>Date</b>	18-Dec-2020
<p>*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.</p> <p><b>Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to protocol</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback regarding any adverse(1) and unexpected events(2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Science and Technology C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitoring of Approved studies</b></p> <p>The University may undertake periodic monitoring of approved studies. Researchers will be requested to report on the outcomes of research activity in relation to approvals that were granted (full applications and amendments).</p> <p><b>Research Standards</b></p> <p>Failure to conduct University research in alignment with the Code of Practice for Research may be investigated under the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research or other appropriate internal mechanisms (3). Any queries can be addressed to the Research Governance Office: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk</p> <p>(1) An "adverse event" is one that occurs during the course of a research protocol that either causes physical or psychological harm, or increases the risk of physical or psychological harm, or results in a loss of privacy and/or confidentiality to research participant or others.</p> <p>(2) An "unexpected event" is an occurrence or situation during the course of a research project that was a) harmful to a participant taking part in the research, or b) increased the probability of harm to participants taking part in the research.</p> <p>(3) <a href="http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rqi/policy/research-policy">http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rqi/policy/research-policy</a></p>	

**Data Availability Statements**

**Study 1:** Research data are not shared

**Study 2:** Research data are not shared

**Study 3:** Data is available in the author's university research repository. Please see <https://doi.org/10.25377/sussex.14345732.v1>.