G08: DAVID ARMSTRONG INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: David Armstrong [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interview summarisers: Dr Hilary White and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single track with no section breaks

G08: David Armstrong	**Start time: 00:00:00**	**Finish time: 01:03:37**	**Duration: 01:03:37**	**Brief description of content:**
00:00–09:59	Born in 1975 in Lurgan, Co. Armagh, which he says is quite divided in its geography: 'all the Protestants live at one half and all the Catholics live in the other'. Growing up, he had a 'very happy childhood', went to 'good schools' and found it 'very safe'. Raised as a Protestant, he didn't know any Catholics because the town was so segregated. His father was a painter and decorator and his mother worked in a play centre. Has one younger sister. Outside of school, he played football and rugby and attended Church of Ireland services with his mother. While his unionist-voting parents weren't in the Orange Order, he remembers the Twelfth of July as 'a big colourful day out' when he was a child. Comments on the tribal nature of politics in NI and how people tend to vote along religious lines.			
10:00–19:59	Says he still has bigoted friends who shun Catholic-owned businesses, which he finds embarrassing. Discusses the relatively low levels of sectarian violence in Lurgan during the Troubles, although one IRA bomb 'ripped the heart out of the town'. Following this and the Drumcree standoff of the late 1990s, there were more tensions and clashes surrounding Orange parade. Recalls how he became 'very used' to the militarisation of NI society and was surprised that police stations weren't 'covered in armour' when he first came to Scotland. Reveals that he wanted to leave NI and 'get a bit of independence' when he finished school, so chose to study to law at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.			
20:00–29:59	Says he missed home in Glasgow, but not the 'parochialness' and 'small-mindedness' of NI. He made many Catholic friends and says that while the west of Scotland has a reputation for being religiously polarised, it is 'nothing at all' like NI. Claims his parents were 'quite proud' that he was the first in his family to go to university. Even though he found Glasgow 'a really rough, scary city' at first, he experienced no sectarian animosity there, which felt liberating. Around football, there was 'a bit of banter', but 'nothing too toxic'. Explains that he is currently a director and company secretary of St Mirren football club.			
30:00–39:59	Met his wife, who is from Edinburgh, quite early on at university, so only went back to NI for whole summers for the first couple of years. Graduated in the late 1990s and did his traineeship, qualifying as a solicitor in 2000, the same year in which he got married. Reveals that his wife's mother was worried about her daughter visiting NI, even in the 'post-conflict' era, unlike many of his friends, who had fewer concerns. Regarding his accent, he says that many Scottish people 'quite often [...] liked a Northern Irish twang', so 'in many ways it was a positive'.			
40:00–49:59	Doesn't find that Glasgow people have a deeper than usual understanding of the Troubles, mainly because it is 'more liberal' than NI, where 'religion is still a big deal'. He followed political developments in NI from afar and went home to vote for the Good Friday Agreement. Says he still follows the news with interest because his family is there. Discusses how politics in NI has moved from the moderate centre ground to the more extreme fringes, which he thinks happens			

	when people feel ‘uncomfortable or challenged’. Believes that communal divisions persist, including in Lurgan, and thinks that ‘until schools are integrated […] it will stay the same’. He and his wife have four children with whom they visit NI every Christmas, and often twice a year. Says that his children, who are Irish rugby fans, ‘know they’re Scottish’, but are ‘very aware’ of their NI heritage.
50:00–59:59	Regards NI as being safer now than in his childhood, but is still ‘deeply divided’. Doesn’t believe the level of integration that exists in Scotland will happen in NI within his children’s lifetimes. Mentions that friends of his who are in the PSNI are ‘as on edge as they would have been during the Troubles’ because pockets of paramilitarism still exist. States that being an emigrant has changed him in decisive ways and that he now sees ‘the whole Protestant-Catholic thing’ for the ‘full absurdity that it is’. Describes himself as ‘an educated voter’ who takes a broad interest in Scottish politics and is ’very anti-independence’, partly because he doesn’t trust any of the political parties.
01:00:00–01:03:37	Although he still talks about ‘going home’ to NI, he has no desire to return to live there permanently and acknowledges that ‘Scotland’s my home’. He still supports the NI football team, however, and ends by explaining that he would describe his national identity as British.