

G12-SG3: DANIEL BLAKELY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Daniel Blakely [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

G12-SG3: Daniel Blakely	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:22:35	Duration: 01:22:35	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Newtownards, Co. Down in 1976 to Church of Ireland parents. His mother was an Irish international amateur golfer who worked as a secretary, while his father was a professional footballer who later worked as a draftsman in the oil industry. Not wanting their son to be affected by the Troubles, they first moved to London and then Paisley when he was young. Explains that whenever his father was working overseas, his mother would take him back to her family in Donaghadee in Co. Down, which meant that he was ‘back quite a bit’ and had a NI accent until the age of ten or eleven. One consequence of this is that he still thinks of Donaghadee as home.			
10:00–19:59	States that he ‘did feel Northern Irish’ growing up and still does. Explains that his boyhood hero was the NI goalkeeper Pat Jennings, but he also sported a Scotland football strip, and was proud of both until ‘sectarian stuff’ surfaced in his Paisley primary school, which made him conceal his NI affinities and retreat into his shell. Describes the abuse he got for having a Catholic friend, which was ‘quite alien’ to him because his parents had ‘done a really good job of protecting’ him from sectarianism up to that point. Thinks that many people in Scotland lacked a proper understanding of what was going on in NI during the Troubles.			
20:00–29:59	Explains that his relations and cousins in Donaghadee were largely apolitical and primarily concerned with their daily lives as farmers. Outside of school in Paisley, Daniel’s life revolved around football, golf, swimming and the Boys’ Brigade. He attended church, but neither he nor his parents were particularly religious.			
30:00–39:59	Describes how religious culture in NI has a more social and ‘family feel’ to it than in Scotland. Says that he had lost his NI accent by the time he went to secondary school, which helped him to conceal his religious background from his peers, although it didn’t shield him from sectarian bullying: ‘I was either Orange or I was a [...] Fenian, depending who was wanting to have a go at me’. Reveals that such abuse made him repress his NI identity to the extent that it was not until the early 2000s, when he was working in Dublin, that he was able to take pride in it.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls the security checks that were the norm when travelling from Scotland to NI during the conflict. States that he was ‘not at all’ affected by the Troubles and that there was little political flag-waving in Donaghadee, apart from bunting during the Orange marches in July. Explains that while his paternal grandfather was a Mason, his father was ‘firmly against the idea’. Feels grateful to his parents for not politically indoctrinating him, which means he has ‘a reasonably neutral perspective’ on NI. Thinks his parents are ‘reasonably proud to be British’, but are also pragmatically pro-EU in their outlook. Recalls moving to Dublin in the late 1990s to work for IBM and finding the city ‘quite intimidating’.			
50:00–59:59	Says that life in Dublin was ‘a big eye-opener’ for him in terms of the levels of racism and drug use that he witnessed, which made him ‘really uncomfortable’. While he enjoyed his work there, his IBM contract ended in 2001, after which he returned to Paisley to live with his parents, before getting a job with a whiskey			

	<p>company in East Kilbride, where he worked for nine years. Met his Scottish wife while working there and recalls visiting NI with her. Thinks that present-day NI still lags behind Scotland and England in some of its commercial and cultural practices.</p>
01:00:00–01:09:59	<p>Says that he wants his daughter to be aware of her NI heritage, but won't 'force anything on her'. Thinks there are similarities between NI and the west of Scotland, largely because of the continual flow of people between the two regions. Admits that he doesn't visit NI very often now, but still misses the cousins to whom he was very close in his youth, and still takes an interest in NI football and ice hockey. Mentions that his current job in IT involves a good deal of overseas travel.</p>
01:10:00–01:22:35	<p>Expresses concern about the consequences of Brexit for NI, particularly if it provides 'an excuse for extremists to come back and cause a problem'. Says that he never been actively involved in politics or campaigning and has no strong political views. Comments on the ways in which NI has changed since his youth and thinks that people now want to visit because it's 'more friendly' than Dublin. Describes his own identity as Northern Irish and says that while 'a large bit of me is Scottish as well', he doesn't feel British, despite having a British passport. Says that the feeling that 'Donaghadee is my home' persists and that his NI accent re-emerges during his return visits. Ends by reflecting on how his emigration to Scotland has enabled him to fulfil his parents' wish that he escape the bitterness and bigotry of NI, albeit in ways they might not have envisaged.</p>