G09: J. MARK PERCIVAL INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: J. Mark Percival
Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interview summarisers: Dr Hilary White and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded across two audio files that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

G09: J. Mark Percival	**Start time: 00:00:00**	**Finish time: 02:10:07**	**Duration: 02:10:07**	**Brief description of content:**
00:00–09:59	Born in 1963 in Newry, Co. Down to Church of Ireland parents. Lived in Warrenpoint and Belfast before moving to Portadown in 1968, to what became a 'notoriously' loyalist estate. Recalls getting caught up in a 'battle' between children throwing stones at each other and not realising that it was a sectarian fracas. As he got older, he realised how 'profoundly divided' the town was. Mentions a Catholic-owned pub in a Protestant area that was bombed so regularly during the 1970s that it became the subject of dark humour. Says his parents moved to a more middle-class part of the town in the early 1970s.			
10:00–19:59	Explains that his father ran a menswear shop and that his mother was a district nurse. When Mark and his siblings worried about her going into Catholic areas, she would reassure them that healthcare professionals were considered 'neutral' in political terms. Says that his mother had Catholic friends, which was 'relatively unusual at that time', and that his father was 'profoundly non-religious'. Describes how his father was forced to 'tow the line' by some local loyalists during the strikes of the early 1970s, despite trying to resist. Mark attended Protestant schools in Portadown and was bullied for a period of time.			
20:00–29:59	Went to church when young, but stopped believing in God at the age of fifteen. Always found church a 'chore', although he had a friend there and they bonded over music. Religion was an important part of his mother's life and she was good friends with the minister, 'an inspirational figure' who co-organised peace marches with a local Catholic priest. Explains how his interest in science led to his atheism. Praises his mother's 'spectacular sense of humour' and says he misses the 'speed and dryness' of NI wit and repartee, which 'keeps you sharp'.			
30:00–39:59	Explains that his mother and his Birmingham-born father, who met at a party in London in 1960, talked about politics 'pretty much all the time'. Recalls how his mother was 'regularly appalled' by the violence of NI and 'took the view that terrorists on both sides were [...] equally reprehensible people'. While he thinks his parents voted unionist, his mother found the DUP 'unhelpful and dangerous'. Neither parent was involved in Orange culture.			
40:00–49:59	Refers to the part that social class played in NI political divisions, which he didn't appreciate until he 'started thinking critically' in early adulthood. Explains that he 'didn't see Catholics as the enemy in any way', but did not get to know many of them personally in his younger days. Recalls enjoying hearing Irish folk music and rebel songs in 1978 and kissing a Catholic girl for the first time at Corrymeela in Co. Antrim. Mentions how some of those who developed more serious cross-denominational relationships would receive 'death threats from both sides'. Says that his parents began to consider leaving NI towards the end of the 1970s.			
50:00–56:26	Describes a series of attacks at this time that 'looked a lot like an escalation in things that were directly affecting the family', which convinced his parents that it was only a matter of time before one of them would get 'seriously hurt or killed'.			

	Mark was by now in a punk band, whose first gig was in an Orange hall. Recalls the circumstances surrounding the family's move to Scotland after his mother got a job in Irvine in Ayrshire, where they stayed briefly before settling in Glasgow. Says that he was 'pretty upset' about moving and that his father, who had to sell his business of many years, found the transition 'very, very hard'. The two interview audio files were spliced together here.
56:27–01:06:26	Recalls celebrating his seventeenth birthday in NI on the eve of the move to Irvine. Recalls his early days at secondary school there and being quizzed by three boys about where he was from, who relented on discovering that he wasn't English. Admits that he was surprised by how deeply sectarianism was embedded in Ayrshire. His transition was helped by his being made a prefect after two weeks, which lessened 'the potential of being randomly attacked'.
01:06:27–01:16:26	Describes his academic success at school and subsequent move to Edinburgh University, where he initially studied chemistry, but changed to geology after his first year. States that he made lifelong friends during his undergraduate years and enjoyed the city's conviviality, which was starkly different from anything he'd known in NI, where 'pubs in Portadown in the late seventies were like bunkers'.
01:16:27–01:26:26	Recalls seeing the Undertones perform at the Ulster Hall in 1980 and claims that punk music 'had a really important role to play in [...] bringing Protestant and Catholic kids together' at that time. Mark's graduation from university in 1986 coincided with an economic recession, which limited his employment options. After working in some temporary positions, he returned to study at Strathclyde University, which led to him becoming a research assistant in Glasgow until 1992, while playing gigs with his post-punk band in his spare time.
01:26:27–01:36:26	Recalls his living arrangements in Glasgow at this time and purchasing his first property there in his twenties. Discusses his experiences of the Twelfth of July parades in the city, which irked him and which he describes as 'an expression of straightforward bigotry dressed up in identity politics'.
01:36:27–01:46:26	Continues to share his experience of one particular Orange parade in the city and the anger it provoked in him. Discusses how some people would probe him about his cultural background because of his NI accent, which he found offensive and to which he would respond by being as vague and non-committal as possible.
01:46:27–01:56:26	Reflects further on responses to his accent in the context of his work as a DJ, but points out that he is no longer active on that music scene. Claims that his 'relatively privileged position' as an academic means that he rarely encounters sectarian prejudice nowadays. Admits that while he regards himself as liberal and progressive, his experience of growing up in a culture of religious and cultural intolerance has left its mark on him. Says that visits to today's NI tend to evoke in him a mixture of nostalgia and dismay that regressive elements endure. While he recognises that 'things have improved enormously', he has no desire to live there permanently.
01:56:27–02:06:26	Reveals that he is not an avid follower of current and political affairs in NI. Describes his cultural identity as Northern Irish and his national identity as Irish, even if he is 'legally' British. He regards Scotland is his 'adopted home' and is a staunch supporter of Scottish independence and of Irish reunification, both of which he thinks are now 'well within the realms of possibility', albeit for different social and political reasons.
02:06:27–02:10:07	Offers some further thoughts on how music can act as both a unifying and a polarising force in the arena of politics, culture and identity. Ends by reflecting on his still ambivalent feelings about NI, saying, 'it's not that I hate it, and it's not that I love it, it's kind of a bit of both'.