

## M06: MARY JEFFERS INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Mary Jeffers [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interview summarisers: Dr Jack Crangle and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

M06: Mary Jeffers	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 00:56:38	Duration: 00:56:38	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Belfast in 1951. Her father was a soldier and her mother died while giving birth to her twin sister, who also died. She has an older sister whom she has not met since childhood. Raised in north Belfast by her maternal uncle, his wife and their twelve children until the age of ten, when her father took custody of her. When she was fifteen and experiencing epileptic fits, he moved her out of school to Muckamore Abbey, a mental health facility, where she remained until the age of twenty-one. Reveals that her father raped her between the ages of ten and sixteen, and that her aunt's husband 'did the same with me'.			
10:00–19:59	Recalls the strict religious atmosphere and cramped living conditions of her aunt and uncle's small terraced house. Describes the pre-Troubles Belfast of her upbringing as 'very bad', with routine stone-throwing and petrol bomb attacks. Speaks of the fear she felt during the 1970s: 'I was scared for my life and I was scared for my family, and I was thinking if I talk to a soldier or a fella or anything they'd have been shot'. Recalls getting caught up in a violent incident in 2000 that culminated in her having a knife held to her throat by a UDA man, which prompted her to leave Belfast immediately for Leeds, where her partner lived.			
20:00–29:59	Recalls the all-pervasive watchfulness and threat of violence during the Troubles, and seeing many people leave Belfast. Mentions the practice of tarring and feathering women accused of fraternising with British soldiers. Outlines the impact of her poliomyelitis, which prevented her from securing employment, and the stigma attached to it: 'In them days we were hidden away, nobody wanted to know you or anything'. Recalls painful memories of being held in various institutions in NI as a disabled girl, including having to endure hard manual labour and harsh schooling. Aspired to a career in nursing, but was unable to pursue it.			
30:00–39:59	Reveals that the conflict was an impediment to her and others accessing health care. Recalls being rushed to hospital with appendicitis, only for bricks to be thrown at the ambulance carrying her. Describes a female neighbour being shot dead by paramilitaries upon joining the police. Expresses sympathy for security force personnel killed during the Troubles: 'I seen a lot dying. It doesn't matter if there were kids or not, they still, they still die'. Recalls her aunt and uncle's strict attitude to relationships – 'They would tell you when you can kiss and when you can get married and all that' – but also her enjoyment of a holiday in Portrush.			
40:00–49:59	Notes the complete absence of sex education during her upbringing and her belated awareness of 'the facts of life'. Reveals that she once got engaged in England, but implies that the legacies of her childhood trauma caused the relationship to fail. Testifies to the chronic effects of this trauma: 'my father and my uncle abused me that much I couldn't have any children, and I wouldn't want to have a child'. Recalls moving to England in her fifties because 'I thought my time was up in Belfast. I just wanted to start a new life again'. Remembers the bus and boat journey from Belfast to Leeds, which was her first time travelling alone. Characterises English people as 'really nice' compared to the 'two-faced' Irish.			

50:00–56:38	Describes her initial experiences in England, including getting a bus to Yorkshire with some friends and helpers. Remembers being overwhelmed by England, which she felt was 'too big'. Reveals that the anxiety and fear instilled during the Troubles continued to plague her in England, where she was frequently nervous and watchful. Describes the death of her aunt and uncle and her return to Belfast for her aunt's funeral. Says that she often thinks about and feels spiritually close to both of them. Interview ends prematurely when Mary's friend, Deirdre Quill, who has been present throughout, interrupts to say that she needs to leave, and Mary decides to leave also.
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