

M20-SG5: JERRY GRADY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Jerry Grady [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

M20-SG5: Jerry Grady	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:28:11	Duration: 01:28:11	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Sheffield in 1992 to a Protestant mother from Coleraine and a Catholic father with family roots in the ROI. Moved to Manchester aged three or four, then lived in Stockport and then Wilmslow, Cheshire. Mother worked as a probation officer and later lectured at the University of Salford. Father lectured at Manchester Metropolitan University. Recalls that he ‘struggled with authority’ at school and found concentration difficult due to dyslexia, but also formed close friendships. Moved to a Derbyshire school on a football scholarship for sixth form and was signed by Manchester United aged eleven. While sport was central to his life – he became known as ‘Jerry the footballer’ – education was also valued.			
10:00–19:59	Signed on a four-year contract by Wolverhampton Wanderers while studying for his A-levels. Played one Premier League game for Wolves before being released aged twenty. Played for Leyton Orient for a year before moving into non-league football. Began considering alternative career paths and enrolled on a university course in psychology aged twenty-five. States that he holds an Irish passport and does not ‘really identify as being English, other than my accent and where I was born’.			
20:00–29:59	Speaks of not wishing to ‘overdo’ his claim to Irishness for fear of irritating Irish-born people, though wearing an Ireland football shirt ‘was definitely a point of identity and pride’ growing up. Recalls frequent family visits to NI when younger and forming close bonds with his cousins there, describing them as ‘essentially like siblings’. He was initially selected to play for the ROI youth team, but soon switched to play for NI, where he felt more at home. Called up to the NI senior team aged seventeen and earned nine caps under manager Nigel Worthington.			
30:00–39:59	Describes a minor internal divide in the ROI team between Irish-born players and English-born players of Irish heritage, whereas ‘there was nowhere near as much of a divide’ in the NI team, although both squads contained those ‘who hadn’t a clue about anything to do with Irish history, didn’t have a clue about the Troubles’. States that his extended family in NI preferred that he play for NI rather than the ROI, and he himself had ‘more of a sense of feeling more at home there because I’d gone over there a lot [...]. I didn’t feel like I was faking it by playing for them. It felt very much like playing for my home country’.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls being nervous about how his move from ROI to NI teams would be seen, but felt ‘settled’ to find several other players in the NI squad held Irish passports and that the team ‘was very inclusive of both religions’. Explains that religion was not ‘a big deal’ in his family and that he himself does not judge people by their faith. Has no first-hand memories of the Troubles, but recalls being ‘fascinated’ by wall murals and army barracks during visits to NI. Discusses his interest in Irish history and mythology, and his being ‘always open to learning more’ about his cultural heritage, which, he implies, is part of an ongoing process of identity differentiation and validation: ‘I feel like I can validate myself a little bit more by saying no, actually I’ve got an Irish passport, I’ve played for Northern Ireland’.			

50:00–59:59	Remembers that teachers would often dismiss his Irish heritage, claiming that he was ‘not really Irish’, but now that he has played for NI he feels he can ‘openly say well, actually I am’, which is ‘all the validation you need’. States that while he often wishes he grew up in NI, he accepts that being raised in England has been more beneficial ‘due to the fact of the opportunities and what’s happened to a lot of my cousins’, who have had to leave NI for work. Mentions that his childhood interest in art sparked his curiosity about paramilitary murals when visiting Belfast. Recalls reading books and watching documentaries about the Troubles as a teenager, but encountered no sectarian animosity in Manchester.
01:00:00–01:09:59	States that Islamophobia was the main source of religious tension in Manchester when he was growing up, ‘not anything to do with [...] Catholics and Protestants’. Reveals that he has never been to an Irish centre nor is he religious, although his mother ‘used to enforce going to church’ fortnightly when he was young, ‘which used to infuriate me because it meant I missed rugby games every two weeks’. Explains that his mother’s religious convictions have waned over time. Reflects on the role of religion in society in general, arguing that ‘if you’re going to be religious it should be for positive reasons not for negative reasons’.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Reflects on the Brexit debate, stating that he supported the remain campaign. Believes that English and Welsh voters had little understanding of the Irish border or how Brexit might affect the NI peace process. Notes the subsequent increase in Britons applying for Irish passports, despite many having never previously considered their Irish heritage. Reveals that the acrimony Brexit provoked made him ‘want to be less British’ and pushed him ‘more towards identifying as Irish’. Goes on to articulate a composite identity that includes a resolute repudiation of Englishness (‘I’d never be English’), a proud embrace of Irishness (‘I’m just from Ireland, that’s my heritage’) and a clear-cut Mancunian affiliation (‘if anyone ever asked me where are you from I’d say Manchester’), which is, he says, ‘a hundred per cent’ different to being English.
01:20:00–01:28:11	Reflects on the stereotypes that are applied to the Irish in Britain, including the trope that ‘Irish people are dirty and all they do is drink’. Believes that Irish people are generally more relaxed, empathetic and welcoming than the English. Concludes by explaining that representing NI in football ‘cemented that feeling of not being second generation’, enabled him to assert that he is ‘actually just Northern Irish and here’s my validation for it’, and gave him ‘more of an emotional feeling towards the country’.