

## G02: LINDA CASSIDY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

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

G02: Linda Cassidy	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:35:52	Duration: 01:35:52	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in 1971 in a republican area of Andersonstown in Belfast. Father was a plumber with stable employment, which meant that the family was never short of money. Her childhood spanned the worst years of the Troubles in what was a 'key flashpoint area'. Attended school on the Falls Road. Mother worked as a legal secretary. Has an older brother and younger sister. Recalls early memories of playing on the street as a child and the normality of seeing British troops and army patrols moving about.			
10:00–19:59	Describes moving to the mixed area of Dunmurry, aged ten, where the family were in a minority of Catholics. Believes that her parents were Sinn Féin voters, but were not overtly political or sectarian. Recalls that her parents had both Catholic and Protestant friends. Describes attending church as a child, until she rebelled as a teenager due to the church's policies regarding women. Says that her relatives were 'absolutely horrified' by her refusal to attend mass. Recalls the move from Andersonstown to Dunmurry, which she believes was prompted by the escalation of the conflict.			
20:00–29:59	Recalls making friends easily in Dunmurry, including with Protestants. Attended St Colm's, a Catholic secondary school in Twinbrook, a republican estate on the outskirts of Belfast. Remembers St Colm's as 'a rough old school', populated largely by children who struggled academically. Left school after completing her O-levels and CSEs. Re-took some O-levels at Lisburn Technical College, then completed her A-levels. Describes her nascent interest in media studies, which included undertaking a year-long media studies course. Moved into her own flat near her parents' house.			
30:00–39:59	Applied to university in England, a decision her parents supported. Cites the 'backward views' that prevailed in Belfast as a key reason for leaving NI. Accepted a place on a media studies course at Bournemouth University. Recalls struggling to settle in Bournemouth, which was 'very English' and culturally different from NI. Maintained regular communication with her family in Belfast, which eased feelings of homesickness. Remembers softening her strong Belfast accent in order to make herself understood by English people, whom she describes as generally uneducated about NI and the Troubles.			
40:00–49:59	After her initial homesickness subsided, Bournemouth provided a 'very friendly, lovely' student experience. Remembers being regularly stopped by the police in Bournemouth due to driving a car with NI number plates. Moved to London with her boyfriend after university, having secured a job as a runner for a TV production company. Describes moving to the Wood Green area of north London, where she encountered ethnic diversity and multiculturalism for the first time. Recalls Wood Green as a complete contrast to the white 'monoculture' of Belfast. Claims that the diversity of cultures made it easier for her to blend in, saying, 'I felt like a natural Londoner because everyone was from somewhere'.			

50:00–59:59	Describes meeting her future husband in London in 1994, although they did not begin dating until 2008. As a Birmingham-born Englishman, he knew little about NI, but believed that ‘Irish people were one step removed from the devil’ due to the Birmingham pub bombings. After visiting NI, he took an avid interest in the history of the Troubles and gained new perspectives on the conflict. Says that her family grudgingly accepted her relationship with an Englishman. They married in New York and her son was born in 2009. Discusses her son’s relationship with his Irish heritage.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Recalls occasional instances of anti-Irish hostility, such as being called a ‘stupid Paddy’, but claims the diverse nature of her various workplaces facilitated integration. Believes that ignorance rather than hostility was the defining feature of English attitudes towards NI. Remembers hearing news of the Canary Wharf bombing in 1996 and wishing to distance herself from the perpetrators: ‘I wasn’t that sort of Northern Irish person who supported that activity or thought it was good’. Moved to Glasgow in 2011 for work reasons, feeling that the city was culturally ‘closer to home’. Discusses sectarianism in the city and compares it to her experiences of sectarian prejudice in Belfast.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Comments further on the parallels between NI and Glasgow, stating that Scottish people have a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the Troubles than English people. Discusses her career progression, culminating in her current job as a television lawyer. Critiques present-day NI and the social conservatism that continues to inform public debate, especially regarding abortion and LGBT rights, but also acknowledges the positive aspects of the ‘post-conflict’ era, concluding that Belfast has changed for the better.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Discusses NI’s emerging tourism market, including the growth of ‘Troubles tourism’. Reveals that she paid minimal attention to the 1990s peace process, believing that she’d ‘left it behind’. Describes herself as ‘massively positive’ about NI’s future, despite the ‘shaky foundations’ of the peace process. Expresses concern that Brexit may re-inflate tensions, as sectarian attitudes persist in NI. Says that her view of the conflict has evolved since leaving NI and that living in Britain has helped her to realise that her generation was ‘conditioned’ to think violence ‘was normal, but it wasn’t normal at all’.
01:30:00–01:35:52	Says that she would consider moving back to NI, but is concerned about the persistence of ‘parochial views’ and fears that violence may flare up again. Identifies as more Irish rather than Northern Irish, but does not consider herself ‘overtly republican’. Concludes by considering the liminal status of NI emigrants in Britain as neither fully Irish nor fully British.