

#### G04: BARBARA MCKEE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Barbara McKee [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

G04: Barbara McKee	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:56:03	Duration: 01:56:03	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Belfast in 1963. Raised in Carryduff, a village south of Belfast, in a middle-class Protestant neighbourhood. Her mother was a nurse and later a shop worker. Her father part-owned an electrical shop on the Ormeau Road in Belfast, which was frequently the target of paramilitary bombs during her upbringing. Attended primary school in Carryduff and recalls once being confronted by a masked loyalist gunman on her way to school. States that Carryduff was divided by class rather than religion because ‘there were no Catholics’ living there.			
10:00–19:59	Attended Carolan girls’ grammar school in Belfast, which she describes as a ‘safe place’ amidst the Troubles, despite the disruption caused by frequent bomb scares. Recalls that her father, who was the shop’s keyholder, would bring her with him when responding to night-time bomb scares, using her as his ‘shield’. Describes the intense fear she felt on these occasions and the trauma they instilled in her, which manifested itself in adulthood flashbacks. Explains that her move to Britain was a means of ‘running away’ from this childhood trauma.			
20:00–29:59	States that she left NI staunchly believing that Catholics were ‘inferior’ to Protestants, an ingrained attitude that she continues to try and overcome. Mentions her parents having several friends in the UDR and the British Army. Recalls going to discos in Bangor, Co. Down as a teenager, where her social circle was limited to middle-class Protestants. Says that she would never have ventured into a Catholic nationalist area and that the first time she socialised with Catholics was in her early twenties while undertaking a PGCE at QUB.			
30:00–39:59	Religion ‘wasn’t particularly important’ during her upbringing, although the family attended a Presbyterian church in Carryduff. Her maternal grandfather was in the Royal Black Institution and was an influential figure in Portadown. Recalls attending Twelfth of July events in Poyntzpass, Co. Armagh, where her paternal grandparents lived, noting the charged sectarian atmosphere and widespread public drunkenness. States that she recently took her two daughters to Twelfth celebrations in Belfast, and that they were ‘utterly horrified’ by the spectacle. Describes family holidays in various parts of Britain and Ireland.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls further incidents of disorder and mayhem during the Troubles. Discusses her ‘journey’ in coming to terms with her childhood trauma, concluding that her parents continue to ‘live in denial’ and will not discuss the conflict openly with her. Describes the process of applying for university in 1982, aged eighteen, and the various options that were available to her. Keen to escape, she eventually decided to study physics at the University of Manchester.			
50:00–59:59	Recalls experiencing ‘a sense of freedom’ and happiness during her early months in Manchester. Says that her parents were ‘delighted’ to have a daughter at university and that they regularly exchanged telephone calls and letters. Recalls meeting NI Catholic students at university, including one in particular who was ‘very anti the Brits’. Describes herself as having a ‘natural affinity’ with people from the north of England, even though she was sometimes offended by Irish			

	jokes. Having been raised to identify as British, she was often regarded as Irish in Manchester, and 'suddenly adopted this term Northern Irish, even though I didn't know what it meant'.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Returned to NI after graduating in the mid-1980s and completed a teacher training course. Met her husband during her first year back and spent some time teaching in Ballyclare, Co. Antrim. Recalls socialising more with Catholics during this period. Married in 1987 after her husband completed his PhD. They moved to Banbury in Oxfordshire in 1989 and spent seven years there. Barbara changed career and worked for the Nationwide building society. Relocated to Glasgow in the mid-1990s. Chose the city partially because of its cultural similarities to NI, saying 'we felt at that stage we were trying to get home'.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Reveals her PTSD diagnosis, which happened soon after moving to Glasgow. Explains how, during her twenty-five years in the city, she has stopped calling NI home, instead making 'a very deliberate effort' to view Glasgow as home. Discusses sectarianism in the city and the presence of Orange parades. Recalls an encounter with one such parade that triggered painful memories of her childhood and 'just made me very frightened, want to crawl away and hide'. Discusses Scottish people's understanding of the Troubles and the cultural parallels between Glasgow and NI.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Describes her unease when encountering attitudes redolent of 'strong Ulster Protestant narrow-minded bigotedness', which feels 'like stepping into 1980s' NI. Says that her Protestant identity has limited her engagement with Irish community organisations, which she feels are geared towards Catholics from the ROI. Despite her unionist background and the the complexity of her cultural identity, she voices her support for a united Ireland. Reveals that she 'came to faith in 2005', following 'what felt to me like a supernatural encounter, that was a, a call to go and to commit myself to God'.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Discusses the differences between religiosity in Scotland and NI. Describes the Presbyterian church in NI as dreary and 'quite oppressive'. Outlines how her attitudes towards Catholics have evolved and softened during her time in Britain, which forms part of a broader 'journey' to come to terms with her upbringing. Discusses return visits to NI and her views on how society there has changed since she left. Says that she has only recently been able to follow the news from NI, having previously found that it evoked too much trauma.
01:40:00–01:49:59	Mentions bringing her children on visits to NI, but says that she found it difficult to talk to them about the political situation there. Believes that her daughters consider themselves to be primarily Scottish, but are aware of their NI roots. Recalls vague memories of paramilitary bombings during the 1980s and 1990s. Discusses her current views on NI politics in the context of Brexit, commenting that the DUP have brought problems upon themselves through their alliance with the Conservative Party. Believes that many in NI vote for the DUP solely in an attempt to preserve the Union.
01:50:00–01:56:03	Reflects on her political evolution over the past four decades, during which time she has shifted from being a staunch unionist and admirer of Margaret Thatcher to becoming an advocate for Irish unity. Believes that it is only since leaving NI that she has realised how frightening and traumatic her Troubles upbringing was.